



HEALTH INSECURITY: A STUDY OF MALARIA AS A HINDRANCE TO DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper looks at how health condition of the people has a bearing on the developmental processes. World's largest organisation, the United Nations (UN) has clearly emphasised the inter-relationship between development and health in its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The focus area of this paper is deduce to the diseases, Malaria which is mention in goals number six of the MDGs. The paper examines how Malaria has undermined the developmental process in India, and Mizoram in particular.

INTRODUCTION – THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In September 6-8, 2000, the United Nations (UN) had its Millennium Summit in New York to commemorate the new millennium. In this summit, the world leaders from different countries were present. They discussed the role of the UN at the turn of the 21st century. In this august meeting, they have adopted the UN Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Declaration had mentioned set of varied goals to deal the crisis that confronts the world. To achieve the Millennium Declaration in a better way, the UN had launched the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are derived from this Declaration, and each has specific targets and objectives.ⁱ

The main purpose of the MDGs is to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women and enhancing global partnership for a better world. The MDGs blueprint was agreed to by all countries of the world and all the world's leading development institutions. These institutions have given great efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest.

The millennium declaration and development goals have portrayed that the UN has clearly recognise that the development and health are co-join. The MDGs has pointed out three distinct features on health related issues. Goals number four deals to 'reduce child mortality rates'; goals number five mentions 'improve maternal health and number six has seek to 'combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases'.

Besides the developmental concern in contemporary world, new area of security has emerged. Human security is one of the new imperative which we need to address. The security of human being, security of the people, community and individual cannot be ignore. This relationship between health and development must be given due importance.

Why Malaria?

The target set in the MDGs is quite extensive. Health related topic alone are extremely large to analyse in one go. One area of health issues that has tremendous impact on the Mizo society is in the case of Malaria. So, we decided to deduce our focus of study to goal number six of the UN MDGs i.e., to 'combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases'. And thus the paper only deals with the case of Malaria and emphasis how the particular disease hinders the developmental process. Quoting from Mizoram Health Department sources, The Hindu revealed that, "119 people including 40 women died of malaria in Mizoram during 2009"ⁱⁱ This clearly brings forward that malaria is still the one of the biggest threat to the process of development and health in Mizoram.

Malaria – which the World Fights Against

Malaria had spread out in 106 countries. An estimated 3.3 billion persons were at risk of Malaria. And 86 percent of Malaria deaths occurred in children less than 5 years of age and the majority from Africa's Sub-Saharaⁱⁱⁱ. Incidence of Malaria had



decreased by 17 percent globally from 2000 to 2010. Malaria mortality rate had decreased by 26 percent following increases in prevention and treatment during the same period.^{iv} The high plenary on the UN General Assembly had issued a document on the MDGs in 2010 to review its achievement. It mentions, “Malaria kills a child in the world every 45 seconds. Close to 90 per cent of malaria deaths occur in Africa, where it accounts for a fifth of childhood mortality.^v” The document further stated that half the world’s population is at risk to malaria. In 2002, alone there were an estimated 243 million cases of malaria which caused 8, 63,000 deaths.

To combat this severe crisis, the UN has increases funding to control malaria. The global production of Mosquito nets rose from 30 million to 150 million annually between 2004 and 2009. Funding for malaria control has risen sharply in recent years, and reached \$1.5 billion in 2009 — still far short of the estimated \$6 billion needed in 2010 alone to meet the MDGs target. Insecticide-treated bed nets have been distributed. Close to 200 million nets were delivered to African countries during 2007-2009. To accelerate the UN works, the US President’s Malaria Initiative, the Canadian Red Cross, WHO, UNICEF, etc. has taken commendable work for combating Malaria.

A Serious Case for India

Malaria can be said to be one of the most widespread diseases in India. It is claim all states except Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir are Malaria prone area. The states of West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, and the Northeast states are Malaria high prone area. The Times of India had revealed that more than twenty times of what the government had recorded had died of Malaria. According to official record, only 1,023 people died of malaria infection in 2010. However, Lancet study (2011) mentioned an estimated 46,800 Indians died of malaria in 2010. World Malaria Report, 2011 reported that over 70% of India's population face the risk of Malaria infection. Around 31 crore people face the "highest risk" of getting

infected. India has over 10 crore suspected Malaria cases but only 15.9 lakh could be confirmed in 2010. However, the Indian Medical Research Council (IMRC), former Director General, Dr Pradhan estimates that India records between 30,014 and 48,660 malaria deaths per year^{vi}. Thus is clear that India needs to flex its muscle in its fight against the dreaded Malaria.

The Case of Malaria in Mizoram

In Mizoram too, Malaria is one of the most fearsome disease which is a hazard to the health of the people. Since the year 2000 (starting year MDG), 1, 25,420 people were infected by Malaria. Most of the infected people were the case of Malaria PF (Plasmodium Falciparum). However, the Annual Parasite Incident (API) was always lower than the earlier year.

If we analyse the available data, we found that in every year (since 2000) 62.07 people die of Malaria. In every month, 5.17 people died due to Malaria. This suggests that in every fifth day, one person fall a victim to Malaria. According to the Mizoram Health Department records, out of every 1, 000 people 8.38 are infected by Malaria.

Even though the overall API is declining in Mizoram, the API is high in Lunglei, Mamit and Lawngtlai District. The API also is high among the Brus and Chakma community of the state. These communities are those who live in developmentally backward areas. This confirms the linkages between health and development. Malaria or any diseases, is a hindrance to the process of development. And the emphasis of MDGs or a welfare state is its eradication.

Data on Malaria during 2000- 2012

Year	Number of Blood Test	Malaria Infested(PV)	Malaria Infested(PF)	Number of person died
2000	1,97,841	8,117	4,806	33
2001	2,04,492	10,929	5,955	43
2002	2,19,522	7,859	3,932	35
2003	2,03,188	7,290	4,167	48
2004	2,17,316	7,830	4,170	72
2005	2,02,155	8,458	6,079	84
2006	2,05,535	8,649	6,956	121



2007	1,54,045	5,289	4,189	75
2008	1,65,441	7,361	6,172	91
2009	1,71,793	9,399	7,390	119
2010	3,29,771	15,495	14,321	31
2011	2,13,149	8,861	8,373	30
2012	1,63,421	9,883	9,437	25

Data of Malaria during 2000 -2010.

Estimate available from the data of the Government of Mizoram recognised the declining API in the state. However, Malaria remains the biggest killer disease in Mizoram.^{vii}

Health and Development – Malaria a Hindrance to Development

Let look how malaria affects the process of development –

Economic Drainage: Malaria has drainage the government exchequer. Every now and then, he government need to paid more attention in its fight against Malaria. The public money has been drain to combat Malaria. This is through buying costly medicine, research funding, treatment of the infected people, etc. Insecticide treated mosquito net are being given to every two member of a family and to those who meet their subsistence by working in the forest. The National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) has allotted huge amount for combating Malaria. If we are healthier or free of Malaria, all of these sums could be use for other development projects. International funds for malaria control had risen to a peak of US\$ 2000 million in 2011^{viii}. If these amounts are slated to be use for global malaria programme, alot of purposeful work could be done if the world is free from Malaria.

Decreasing Workforce: Better health is dependent on the quality provided by the economy. The health condition has affected the workforce of the country. It is making a complication in the economic development of a nation. Unhealthy people have reduced the workforce population. And that fewer workforces can herald economic crisis. When people have a better health, it can increase the performance of the country by increasing production. It said that, “Human capital is one of the chief cornerstones of economic development, and any economy that is deficient in this vital component will suffer from the effects. A correlation between health and economic development can be seen in undeveloped countries with inadequate health care systems”.

In agricultural or jhum-base economy like Mizoram, people need to stay in the forest or jungle for a week or a month. If these people are infected by Malaria or any diseases their production is considerably reduce. Thus there is a dire need to take

care of the health of the people in order to enhance our economy.

Worsen health condition: According to the USAID, more than 25 million African pregnant women are at risk of malaria annually^{ix}. The malaria infected pregnant women gave birth to a new born underweight baby that consequently affected their health condition. Children less than five years are at the risk of Malaria and many children died of Malaria too. The same problem of maternal and infant malaria is face by the northeastern states including Mizoram^x. Along with Jaundice and Tuberculosis, Malaria is the most common diseases in the northeastern states of India.

Treatment Problems: Like other diseases, Malaria infected people need a proper treatment. However, there are more complications in the treatment of Malaria. There are several instances that people infected by Malaria parasite are given wrong treatment. This stands true, especially in the case of Mizoram where medicare has not yet been satisfactory. Malaria is not incurable and researches are undergoing to find a way for more effective treatment. Combating and fighting Malaria need lots of monetary funds, energy and time. If this disease be reduce, if not eliminated attention could be diverted to other areas.

CONCLUSION

It is a known fact that health is an important ingredient for growth and development. Amartya Sen rightly opine that, “enhancement of health is a constitutive part of development”.^{xi} He further laments, “good health is an integral part of good development”. Surmountable task in the path to development is face by every state. The impediment of development may vary; however, if we achieve better health condition of living it can be assure that we are proceeding to a higher level of developmental process.

Meeting of Senior Officials and Ministers of Health organised by WHO in South Africa mention agreed that “Health, in turn, contributes to economic, social and environmental development through multiple pathways. Improved health feeds sustainable development, and sustainable development feeds improved health in a virtuous cycle, supported by effective health services”^{xii}. So the linkage between health and development is further established. Both



have to go together for the attainment of effective development.

Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) states: "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature"^{xiii}. Besides development, climate change also deeply affects the health condition of living beings. "Climate change poses a major, and largely unfamiliar, challenge to the efforts to manage human health"^{xiv}. WHO estimates that Malaria alone slowed the "economic growth in Africa by up to 1.3% each year"^{xv}. So, the deteriorated health condition could vehemently hinder the process of development. If those things could happen in Africa, it is implicit growth could also be hamper in India.

The present decade has witness drastic change in our lives. Technology has developed and knowledge has multiply. However, several diseases like Malaria have not been eradicated yet. To sustain and enhance the process of development, the health condition of the people has a great influence. The UN and other organisations, governments, civil societies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are deeply involve and continue to do so to improve the health condition of the masses. In this engagement, eradication of Malaria is among the priority.

The prevalence of Malaria in India is 3, 697 per 10, 000 population. In Mizoram, this figure is 7, 359 per 10, 000 population^{xvi}. This makes clear that the presence of the disease in Mizoram is much higher compare to the national average. Thus, here arise the compelling needs to heighten the steps taken by the state's in combating Malaria.

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END NOTES

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