

## **Abstract:**

**Background:** Malaria remains a major public health problem in Africa, Uganda and Kanungu district specifically. This paper is drawn from an Masters Public Health study which focused on risk factors for contracting malaria and access to health centre/hospital-based healthcare services by making a comparison of the Batwa indigenous people and their non-Batwa neighbours in Kanungu district. Specifically this paper presents an investigation and comparison of the burden of risk factors of contracting malaria among the Batwa and non-Batwa in Kanungu district.

## **Methods:**

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was adopted and applied both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The methods used included face to face interviews with a structured questionnaire where all 129 Batwa household heads from 10 settlements and 131 non-Batwa randomly sampled household heads plus 6 health facility incharges of the facilities that serve both population groups formed the major source of data. This was complemented by data from 4 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 13 key informants. In addition direct observation of housing characteristics and surrounding environment and review of relevant literature were also used.

## **Results:**

In terms of risk factors related to environment, housing type and characteristics, usage of mosquito nets, the Batwa households performed poorly exhibiting higher risk of contracting malaria compared to the non-Batwa households. However the Batwa had a higher net ownership. Both population groups exhibited good knowledge of the causes, symptoms and prevention measures of malaria.

**Conclusions:** The study established that Batwa households had a higher risk burden of contracting malaria compared to their non-Batwa neighbours due to differences in immediate environment, housing characteristics and usage of mosquito nets. These findings are important in focusing interventions like housing and environment improvement, promoting use and maintenance of mosquito nets to reduce the risk to malaria.