We can fight malaria without DDT

By Ellady Muyambi
GUEST WRITER

I am writing in response to the article titled ‘Spraying of ‘DDT begins next month’ that was published in The New Vision of Monday, January, 14 2008.

In the article, Dr. Myers Lugemwa, a senior researcher under the Malaria Control Programme in the Ministry of Health, is reported to have said that the government is planning to extend indoor residual spraying (IRS) using DDT to the malaria endemic district of Apac. He added that the ministry is expecting to cover 15 districts this year.

Before advocating DDT, our health experts need to know that the environmental damage this pesticide can cause goes beyond the decimation of hawks, eagles, fish, and frogs documented during its previous use. For instance, recent research shows that the class of pesticides to which DDT belongs stunts the growth of legumes such as alfalfa and soya beans, limiting their ability to fix nitrogen and so provide their own fertiliser and improve the soil and thus negatively affecting the climate.

Besides, the pesticide DDT is an endocrine disrupting (ED) chemical, a compound that alters the normal functioning of the endocrine system, potentially causing disease or deformity in organisms and their offsprings.

Our Public Health experts should also realise that other malaria control measures such as mosquito nets have been advocated for as a method of minimising exposure to malaria. It is vital to note that mosquito nets do not cost much, they are not likely to affect the environment significantly, and do not require investment in research or development to work.

*The writer is the General Secretary, Uganda Network on Toxic Free Malaria Control (UNETMAC) E-mail: Elladmuyambi@yahoo.com*