



An archival examination of environment and disease in eastern Africa in recent history

L. Larsen

Ireland (llarsen@tcd.ie)

In order to better understand present interactions between climate and infectious disease incidence it is important to examine the history of disease outbreaks and burdens, and their likely links with the environment. This paper will present research that is currently being undertaken on the identification and mapping of historic incidences of malaria, schistosomiasis and Rift Valley fever (RVF) in eastern Africa in relation to possible environmental, social, economic and political contributing factors. The research covers the past one hundred years or so and primarily draws on a range of archival documentary sources located in the region and the former imperial centres. The paper will discuss the methodologies employed in the building of a comprehensive historical database. The research is part of a larger EU FP7-funded project which aims to map, examine and anticipate the future risks of the three diseases in eastern Africa in response to environmental change. The paper will outline how the construction of such a historic database allows the contextualization of current climate-disease relationships and can thus contribute to discussions on the effects of changing climate on future disease trends.