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The relocation of several thousand members of the Kamba tribe from the Kyulu Hills to the Thange valley near Masongaleni in Kenya provides an excellent opportunity to study the development of the immune response to schistosomiasis mansoni in a population with little or no previous experience of the infection. An adjacent, well-established Kamba community with similar patterns of water contact provides a suitable endemic control population. The immigrants were, uniquely, examined shortly after their arrival in the endemic area, while the prevalence of infection was still low. At this time faecal egg counts peaked atypically around 30 years of age. Over the next 12-18 months infection increased rapidly, especially among teenagers, producing a pattern of infection more typical of endemic communities. This substantially narrows estimates of the time required to develop the important determinants of the age-intensity profile, supporting the notion that changes related to age per se, rather than duration of infection, dominate. Age-dependent factors might include behaviour or physiology, including immune response. This paper provides the background for continuing longitudinal studies on the development of immunological responses to this parasite.