



# Rotarians Against Malaria

## Chairman's Newsletter June 2016

*RAM - A volunteer-run organisation working to eliminate malaria*

**Did you know ?** That the famous Portuguese navigator Vasco Da Gama, who opened up the trade route from Europe to Asia died in 1524 at Cochin, India from malaria? That Kemal Ataturk was suffering from malaria in August 1915 when he halted the Anzac's attempt to break-out on Gallipoli, that malaria prevented Alexander the Great from extending his empire to include India and later contributed to Genghis Khan stopping short of conquering Europe?

Some of these facts and plenty more are outlined in a new book by Ian Howie-Willis "*An Unending War: The Australian Army's struggle against malaria, 1885-2015.*" This is bound to be a good read and RAM's good friend, Prof. Dennis Shanks, who will speak at our **RAM Conference**, has written the preface. (many thanks to PDG Ian Sayers for bringing it to my attention)

### **International Progress to defeat Malaria.**

The period 2000 to 2015 has seen a 37% decline in malaria incidence worldwide and an impressive 60% decline in deaths. WHO has estimated that malaria control in this period has averted the deaths of 5.9 million children. At the same time the incidence of probable and confirmed malaria cases in our region has declined by 65% in PNG, 87% in Solomon Islands, 99% in Timor Leste and 98% in Vanuatu. Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) has had an active role in PNG and the Solomons, since 1995 and more recently in Timor Leste in contributing to these results.

### **RAM PNG.**



In PNG, RAM continues as the Principal Recipient for the Global Fund Grant and a member of the Country Coordinating Mechanism. Using this grant, RAM has managed the distribution of more than 1 million LLINs (Long Lasting Insecticidal bed nets) to households and vulnerable groups in the last 12 months. Most provinces have now received two rounds of bed net distribution to all households since 2009. At the **RAM Conference**, RAM PNG Project Manager, Tim Freeman will present all the latest progress and experience in delivering these programs.

The pilot program 'Chasing Malaria', mostly funded by RAM, is making great progress in Central Province and the National Capital District (NCD). This program trains local health clinics to use accurate Rapid Diagnostic Test kits (RDTs) and record patient information so that malaria outbreaks can be mapped. RAM also supplies protective LLINs

to all positive cases. In 2015 Central Province reported 19,759 suspected cases, 93.1% were tested with RDTs of which 22.7% were positive.

Villages with locally transmitted malaria are identified and visited by RAM teams led by Ross Baibuni – (Chasing Malaria Team Leader) to recruit and train volunteers, to map and plan local disease prevention works and to assist with tools, LLINs and education to control the outbreak. Malaria incidence in Central Province is 11 cases per 1000 people but in high burden villages such as Adio the incidence is 307/1000. Detailed on-ground knowledge, such as that generated by the 'Chasing Malaria' program, is what will be required as elimination programs are developed.

## **RAM Solomon Islands.**

In the Solomon Islands, RAM pioneered the universal distribution of LLINs but that role has since been taken over by the Global Fund working with the Ministry of Health and Australia's DFAT. To assist these programs RAM has constructed warehouses and staff accommodation and is actively supporting the 'Healthy Villages' program. RAM supplies sets of tools to assist villages which have developed approved plans of earth works and construction aimed at reducing mosquito breeding sites and generally creating an improved tidy and hygienic village environment.

Since 2013 a total of 100 villages have been provided with tools at an average cost of \$1750 per village. This year RAM has sent AUD\$ 60,000 to provide tools to 32 villages. Malaria incidence has fallen markedly in these villages. Many more villages have been approved and it is proposed to seek a Rotary Foundation Global grant to service 33 communities in Malaita Province. The Healthy Villages project received tremendous support over the past year by funding from the D9820 DG's partners project and a grant from the Pink Umbrella Foundation. It is also very pleasing to also acknowledge local corporate support from the Solomon Forest Association who have pledged SDB 100,000 per annum (AUD\$16,000) for the next three years. PDG Wayne Morris OBE will update progress in this program at the **RAM Conference**.



## **RAM PhD Student Edgar Pollard.**

Edgar is hard at work progressing his research but will take time out in August to meet all the RAM Chairs, Coordinators and supporters at the **RAM Conference**. This will be a networking and getting to know-you opportunity. Edgar will make the first formal presentation of his research progress at the 2017 RAM Conference.

## **RAM Timor Leste**

In Timor Leste a program to distribute LLINs, supplied by RAM, to pregnant women was completed during the year with the distribution of 28,230 LLINs. RAM has been asked to assist further by funding the distribution to vulnerable population of LLINs provided by the Global Fund under their latest grant. Under the terms of this grant the Timor Leste Government had agreed to fund the distribution costs, however that budget has been frozen due to lower than expected oil revenues. RAM has offered to help get the program back on track by offering to match funding \$ for \$ to an initial limit of US\$20,000 and to send Rotary Volunteers to assist. We are currently awaiting a response to our offer but we should have all the details at the **RAM Conference**.

In the meantime a new Rotary Club is being Chartered in Timor Leste the Rotary Club of Dili Lafaek . PDG Phil Dempster has proposed that they adopt a project modelled on the Solomons 'Healthy Villages' scheme as a major project to assist with malaria elimination in Timor.

## **Malaria Awareness Day.**

Considerable awareness and fund raising activity around MAD occurred in various districts in April but the outstanding example was D9640. RAM D9640 Chairman, Sam Doumany, collaborated with Griffith University and the

Institute for Glycomics, to set up a very successful seminar to mark the occasion by emphasising the outstanding progress towards an effective malaria vaccine being made by this research group. D9640 is now proposing a very large TRF Global grant to help fund the ongoing vaccine trials. Rotarian Dr Danielle Stanisic will describe the latest progress on vaccine development at the **RAM Conference** .

## Rotaract's National Malaria Project.



Since the start of April, #RotaractorsAgainstMalaria has raised over \$3400 for malaria prevention in the Asia-Pacific region and they are still hard at it with innovative personal and group fund raisers. For example, tickets are available for the Victorian Malaria Ball! It will be held September 3 at the Royal Melbourne Zoo . Follow their progress on the Rotaract Australia web site, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Rotaractors including National Chairman of Rotaract Australia Against Malaria, Michael Shields will join us at the **RAM Conference** , their enthusiasm is infectious.

## Australian Government role in Malaria Elimination.

I received a letter from DFAT in April in response to a letter that I had addressed to the Australian Prime Minister requesting a summary of his Government's malaria activities. At the 2015 East Asia Summit Australia played a major role in securing leaders' endorsement of the Asia Pacific Leaders' Malaria Alliance (APLMA) roadmap for elimination of malaria in our region by 2030. Australia Chairs APLMA and has committed AUD \$6 million to funding the Secretariat over the next three years. This positioning is in part the result of Australia's *Health for Development Strategy 2015-2020*.

The letter noted the ongoing bilateral malaria programs in the Solomons and Vanuatu and acknowledged RAM's ongoing contributions, stating that we (RAM) had an 'important role to play' in achieving the APLMA goal of eliminating malaria in the Asia Pacific by 2030.

## Rotary International and Malaria

As you know, one of RAM's core objectives is to help to convince Rotary International of the merit of making a substantial contribution to eradicating malaria after the job of eradicating polio has been completed. RI has much to offer to the global campaign against malaria, once an effective mass producible vaccine has been developed. We hope that both the vaccine and Rotary's willingness to commence will roughly coincide in the early 2020's. To assist with this RAM has developed a briefing paper describing the challenges and opportunities inherent in a 'PolioPlus' scale campaign to inform senior Rotary decision makers.

# RAM Conference 2016

## 20<sup>th</sup> / 21<sup>st</sup> August 2016



The **RAM Conference** is our once a year chance to get together, network and share experiences whilst reviewing the latest progress on RAM's field programs and the latest exciting developments in research aimed at defeating malaria. This year we will meet in Melbourne for the first time which hopefully makes it easier for southern delegates and provides access to research going on at the Burnet Institute and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute.

In addition long term supporters of our Conference, Prof Denis Shanks and Dr Danielle Stanisic, from Brisbane, have agreed to travel to join us and Prof Ric Price from the Menzies institute in Darwin will give an insight into malaria control in Indonesia and help us plan for future programs to assist in controlling cross-border transmission around Timor Leste. Program reports from PNG, Solomons and Timor Leste will be delivered and Steve Merrit will describe progress on getting 'Operation Buzz-Off' started in Vanuatu. The RAM AGM is a small part of the Conference agenda.

The Conference is always good fun and a great way to get RAM District Committee members informed and inspired, as well as giving all participants a say in planning RAM's future programs. So please spread the word, pass on the Conference flyer and make your arrangements to participate.

RAM has made a block booking of rooms at the Conference venue; Ciloms Airport Lodge, at a special rate, on a first come first served basis so register now and secure your accommodation. Ciloms operates a regular free airport shuttle just call them on arrival. The Conference sessions run from lunch time Saturday till lunch time Sunday to make it easy to fly-in and fly-out. For those with more time, there will be additional planning sessions on Saturday morning and an optional visit to Burnet and WEHI probably on Monday morning.

Enquiries contact: Virginia Turner: [vm.turner@bigpond.com](mailto:vm.turner@bigpond.com) or Dave Pearson: [dave@sugarloafne.com](mailto:dave@sugarloafne.com)

REGISTER at [www.rawcs.org.au/ram-conference](http://www.rawcs.org.au/ram-conference)

## RAM is a National Project of



David Pearson :

National Chairman RAM, 22<sup>th</sup> June. 2016.

P.S. Check out this malaria TED Talk; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI\\_OhvOumT0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI_OhvOumT0)