

Chairman's Message

My Rotary friends and friends of Rotary,

"Start by doing what's necessary, then what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."St Francis of Assisi.

We have just passed the five year mark since the "Adopt A Village" (AAV) Program was developed for Papua New Guinea (PNG) and introduced a year later to the Solomon Islands (SI). I wonder if any person who may have been involved in the development and introduction of the program at commencement, irrespective of their location in either PNG, or SI, or Australia, had any real idea of how successful it would be and to be able to achieve that success in such a short timeframe.

The words of St Francis of Assisi quoted above caused me to reflect on what we have been able to achieve. I concluded that suddenly it would seem that we have arrived at the point at which we are achieving the seemingly impossible.

Annual donations by clubs, districts, businesses and individuals are now consistently in excess of \$100,000 – 2009/2010 approximately \$130,000. This means that not taking into consideration funds received from The Rotary Foundation through Matching Grants or Health, Hunger, and Humanity Grants, we have now received approximately \$750,000 over the past five years or so. There is no doubt that this is a magnificent effort.

However, the real success story relates to the benefit being achieved with more than an acceptable reduction in the incidence of malaria among children. Consider the following examples of the successful outcomes being achieved in PNG that is directly attributable to the use of Insecticide Treated Bed Nets and the general improvement in health that the people are now enjoying as a result of this intervention:

- Big reductions in the number of premature births;
- General increase in birth weight;
- Many children's wards in hospitals enjoying a significant reduction in malaria cases or all the beds in these wards are completely empty of such cases.

In relation to this last point, the reduction in the incidence of malaria has resulted in an increase in children attending school with the consequence being a shortfall in class room accommodation and teachers.

The Solomon Islands are also very successful in their endeavours, having recorded, in some areas, an overall reduction in the incidence of malaria from over 330 per 1,000 population per year to below 20 per 1,000 population per year.

The improvement in health being recorded, particularly with children, is a major step forward towards achieving our objective. Significant work remains to be done in our effort to reduce the incidence of malaria in our near neighbours but the ongoing level of support and activity we continue to generate will ensure our success. It seems to me that the words of St Francis of Assisi now take on significant meaning when applied to RAM; we started 'by doing what's necessary' and 'suddenly (we) are doing the impossible'.

*PDG Bill Dethlefs
National Chairman*

OUR OBJECTIVE

"The prevention of mortality, and a reduction in morbidity and social and economic loss caused by malaria through a progressive improvement and strengthening of local and national capabilities in malaria control."

Malaria Awareness Day 2010

Malaria Awareness Day 2009 was acknowledged as a very successful day. The driving force was RAM Australia supported by a number of people in vital roles.

A significant number of clubs played a crucial part in ensuring their community was aware of the impact of this dreadful disease with particular emphasis on club organised events. An important result was members of the public making a donation towards the purchase of a bed net.

A TV Community Service Announcement (CSA) was broadcast on a number of channels. In addition, we were fortunate in that one or two radio networks and one community radio station also broadcast a CSA. Use of radio did not form part of our plans at that time.

A special emphasis for Malaria Awareness Day 2010 will be accessing the 600 community radio stations in Australia. We are working towards two broadcasts, one in March and the other in April which will include 30 April. This date is Malaria Awareness Day in Australia.

An Action Plan has been prepared with the first two actions being the development of the required data bases. The data bases are expected to be completed during December.

In the meantime, might I suggest that clubs (and districts) prepare their own plans as to how they would like to highlight Malaria Awareness Day in 2010? The information posted to our website for the 2009 event remains in place so it is recommended you also use this source, www.ramaustralia.org

It is planned that the February 2010 RAM Newsletter will provide a variety of information for your information and reference.

Welcome to Rotary Club of Kundiawa

September saw a new club chartered in Kundiawa in the Papua New Guinea Highlands. Dr. Sommers has spent many annual visits working and training at the Kundiawa Hospital and has for some time considered the township could support a Rotary Club. It has taken a while to get off the ground and they have finally made it. We welcome the new Club and Rotarians to District 9600.

Source: D9600 World Community Service November 2009 Newsletter – PDG Bill Waterfield.

DID YOU KNOW

In 2006, according to the World Health Organisation, malaria was present in 109 countries and territories. In all, 27 countries reported a reduction of up to 50% in the number of malaria cases between 1990 and 2006.

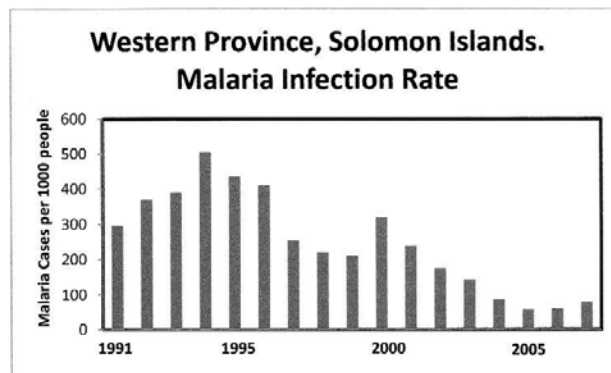
Fighting Malaria in the Solomon Islands

Between October 19th and November 9th, 2009, I visited the Western Province of Solomon Islands with a team of Rotarians led by Trevor Taylor, RC of Glass House Mountains, to (among other things) build an extension onto Gizo Primary School. While in Gizo, I met with Department of Health officers in charge of the provincial malaria eradication program. At the end of the school project, I stayed on an additional five days, which were spent in the capital Honiara. This time was used to review the City Council, mostly RAM funded, anti-malaria program.

In the Solomon Islands the main RAM activity has been the supply and distribution of long life insecticide-treated bed nets. Early this year the Global Fund informed RAM that the Fund, working through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (formally the South Pacific Commission) would supply very large numbers of bed nets and therefore the RAM bed net program was no longer required. Regrettably the first Global Fund supplied nets are only just arriving, perhaps eight months late. On a positive note over 360,000 nets should arrive in Honiara over the next 3-4 months.

Rotary has now somewhat refocused its anti-malaria efforts in the Islands. Using funding from AusAid, Rotary volunteers from all over Australia have been assembling prefabricated sheds in far flung parts of the Solomons. These will be used for the bulk storage for bed nets and internal spray insecticides for regional distribution. The units are neat, cheap, cyclone proof and can be assembled in a matter of days, once a concrete slab has been laid.

In Gizo, I met with Jance Oscar and Hendrik Reuben of the Provincial Malaria Eradication Program. They are upbeat about progress of their local campaign. They estimate that about 40% of the people of the Western Province now have reasonable access to a clinic with a microscopist for the accurate diagnosis of malaria. The graph below, generated from clinical data, shows a drop in the infection rate from 50% in 1994 to about 7% recently. The RAM bed net program commenced here in 2001.



In Honiara the City Council's Department of Health operates the National Vector Borne Disease Program. Health officers here are enthusiastic and very pro-active in the fight against malaria and their efforts are mainly funded by a Rotary Foundation 3H (Health, Hunger and Humanity) grant: Coordinator PDG Peter Thomas (RC of Barossa Valley D9500), Local administrator PDG Wayne Morris (RC of Honiara D9600) and International Partner Club RC of Kenmore (managed by PDG Bill Waterfield). Initially the 3H budget was approved for the supply and distribution of bed nets in urban Honiara. With the involvement of the Global Fund it was decided there was a compelling argument to change the focus, and the plan details, of the 3H grant rather than abandon it. This was successfully argued and the 3H grant is now funding allied anti-malaria activities essential to the success of the bed net program. These include an active internal house

Fighting Malaria in the Solomon Islands (*cont.*)

residual spray and external misting spray programs, regular school presentations, short courses for teachers and an ongoing outreach program directed through the ten dominant city church groups to inform mothers of the benefits of residual spraying and the use of bed nets, etc. (This is imperative as there is a natural reluctance to allow access into homes to spray.) In many areas illiteracy is a problem and drama has been incorporated into the education program with encouraging success. Bill boards are being placed in prominent positions around the city advertising malaria awareness and an excellent pamphlet is being distributed.

In addition to this RAM funded effort, each of Honiara's eight clinics has microscopes donated by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) and trained microscopists to man them. Any patient presenting with malaria-like symptoms has a blood smear taken and is then quickly and very accurately diagnosed. Treatment is then available if test results are positive. A fundamental part of the medication process is to ensure that patients take the full course of tablets. It is common (as with the administration of antibiotics) for patients to stop taking the medicine because they start to feel better. This of course allows the malaria parasites to develop drug resistance – which regrettably is proceeding worldwide at an alarming rate.

The good news is that infection rates around Honiara appear to be dropping – in 2007 it was 129 per 1000 population per year (12.9%) and this year might fall below 80/1000/yr (although the wet season is starting?).

In spite of the hiccup in the supply of bed nets, the sheer size of the Global Fund will give the opportunity to every Solomon Islander to sleep under a bed net within the mid-term future. Pivotal to malaria eradication, however, is the education of villagers in mosquito control – good drainage of villages and surrounds, removal of rubbish, internal residual spraying of huts, habitually sleeping beneath nets and reporting to clinics when symptoms arise. RAM is a key driver in this endeavour and while Rotarians continue to support these programs the prognosis for malaria eradication in the Solomon Islands appears very good indeed.

*Tim Richards
Rotary Club of Kenmore
D9600*

DATE CLAIMER

NATIONAL RAM CONFERENCE

15 & 16 MAY, 2010
(Tentative date only)

**St Columban's Catholic Secondary College,
Caboolture, Qld
(on the Northern outskirts of Brisbane)**

Same location as the 2009 Conference.

**Advice, including accommodation arrangements,
will be made available late Feb / early Mar 2010.**

Successful Project Volunteers Team Visit

*Report from the Rotary Club of Devonport South East, Tasmania, District 9830
Nendo Island, Solomon Islands.*

Recently five members from our Club; Clyde Eastaugh, Julie Pinel, David de Cani, Jim Colley and Steve Willatt went to Lata, Nendo Island, Tomotu Province in the Solomon Islands.

Our primary aim was to continue with the building of houses for the Senior Malaria Officers in the Temotu Province, as well as a smaller project that had been started by the Rotary Club of Devonport North in District 9830, Learn – Grow (Food Plants International). *Website: www.learn-grow.org*

Upon arrival we found those involved in the project only too pleased to help us as much as possible, in particular Robert Rauga, Senior Malaria Officer in Temotu Province, the people involved with the building project as well as the people who live on the Island. Our Team Leader Clyde Eastaugh met with the Deputy Premier of the Island Noel Keniano on the first day, extending the teams hand of fellowship & greetings, this was further extended towards the end of our stay when all team members and two representatives from Honiara of the Malaria project met with and had discussions with other members of Parliament.

One of the team members, Steve Willatt, followed through with the Learn-Grow project, meeting with various Officials, Women's Groups on the Island as well as World Aid Groups. This project was most welcomed by all with whom Steve met, and the exchanging of ideas was taken on board by all. The purpose of this project is to try to re-educate the people on the Islands that they have many nutritious foods that are indigenous to their island instead of growing Western style foods with inferior nutritional value.

During our two week stay on Nendo Island we were able to continue building house number two to as close to lock up stage that we could reach with available materials. This entailed installing the roofing iron and cladding the external walls. We also commenced construction of house number three. By our last day of work we had the floor screwed down, all wall frames up and roof structure erected. The roofing iron and insulation was installed, and wall cladding commenced.

Other visits that were made by members were to the Lata School, where we donated a book on Tasmania and soccer and tennis balls for use by the students. These were graciously accepted by the Deputy Principal. Afterwards we were able to meet with some of the students in their classrooms and talk to them about Tasmania. Other places visited were the Lata hospital, where medical supplies and used sunglasses were donated; and the Lata library where a book on Tasmania and Learn - Grow pamphlets were donated.

Postscript by PDG Peter Thomas, RAM Coordinator for the Solomon Islands.

This team did an outstanding job. By undertaking good preparatory work before they left home, they were able to get the Lata building project back on track after a few problems had caused some concern. They developed a wonderful relationship with the island community leaders and enjoyed the company of the school children and local people. They worked well with the local builders resulting in skills transfer at its best.

PP Julie Pinel in an email to me said it all;

“For me I have left a little bit of my heart in Lata & would love one day to return”

**ROTARIANS AGAINST MALARIA
ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 9810**

RAWCS REPORT - MEETING No. 2 - 2009-2010 OCTOBER.

Goal

To reduce the incidence and the mortality rate of malaria for citizens in the malaria endemic areas of Papua New Guinea , the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.

The Committee aims via partnerships:

- To promote awareness of the risks of malaria, its prevention and control, in the Pacific.
- To promote the work of RAM.
- To raise funds in the District, both within Rotary and the wider community, to support anti-malarial projects in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and Timor Leste, in order to slow the transmission of malaria.
- Achieve a RAM donation by each Rotary Club each year.

Activities

- During this period a presentation was made to the Rotary Club of Ringwood.
- The RAM banner, the Club and District websites, the weekly DG Notice Board and the RAM collection tins, are being used to promote Malaria Awareness and to raise funds, across the District and the community.
- As well, planning is underway for a Malaria stage presentation at the District Conference in February 2010.

Donations:

Rotary Club	Donation/Activity	Village(s)	Region
Ringwood	\$230		
Shire of Yarra Ranges	Casual for a Cause \$145		
Collection tins	\$280		
Box Hill	\$1000		
Bentleigh Moorabbin Central	\$2400		
Box Hill	\$500	Nissan High School	PNG
Dingley Village	\$500	Nissan High School	PNG
Total:	\$5055		

- Research project in PNG - malaria infection during pregnancy
- MAD planning: - Letter to schools with DVD.
 - Assist all clubs with fund raiser/awareness event.
 - Press release to newspapers across the district.
 - District function - Timor flavour, mosquito symphony music, fancy dress, cultural presentation, corporate sponsors.

Malaria Vaccine Trails

At various times over the past couple of years this newsletter has been able to include articles regarding progress being made in a variety of research areas pertaining to malaria. Mostly, these articles have originated from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research and been authorised by the Institute's Director, Professor Michael Good. Professor Good has maintained a keen interest in malaria research over many years. QIMR has 600 scientists who research in excess of 50 of the most devastating illnesses.

Professor Good is about to commence pre-clinical trials of a malaria vaccine on humans. The vaccine has been shown to be very effective with animals. Their research has shown that you can use a very small number of parasites and get a very strong immune response as opposed to previous thinking that use of a large number of parasites was required.

Australia Rotary Health and the Rotary Club of Hamilton (D9600) have provided funding for the project.

This newsletter has been produced by PDG Bill Dethlefs, Chairman RAM Committee (Australia), Email: dethlefs@hotkey.net.au in association with PP Leo Smith, Newsletter Editor, Email: orgsys@bigpond.net.au

Contributions and comments are welcome.
