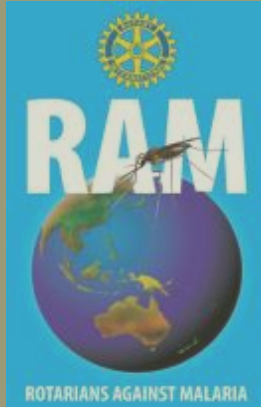


August 2009
Issue 9

RAM Newsletter



Chairman's Message

My Rotary friends and friends of Rotary,

Our Adopt a Village programme (AAV) in both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands continues to enjoy tremendous success, both financially and in the resulting benefits.

Financially, nearly half of all Australian clubs provide support either through direct donations, or in association with their district through a Matching Grant. Financial support is also received from Inner Wheel, Interact, Rotaract, and others including individuals. Donations have also been received from overseas sources including the USA.

The benefit resulting from our financial support makes the effort by all concerned something of which we can be justifiably proud. An excellent example is that many children's wards in hospitals in PNG are enjoying a significant reduction in malaria cases or all the beds in these wards are completely empty of such cases. This 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.

Over time, we have also been fortunate in the number of individuals and businesses who have been willing to provide financial support. As RAM is an activity of Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) these donations attract tax deductibility.

Earlier this year, we celebrated Malaria Awareness Day (MAD). That day, and during the week leading up to MAD, enabled us to make the general public and Rotarians more aware of this dreadful disease. It was a very successful campaign encompassing a variety of events including a Community Service Announcement on both TV and radio.

MAD also seemed to provide the impetus for an increase in donations from individuals and businesses. Donations received ranged from \$10 to \$10,000. Remember, that a \$10 insecticide treated bed net (manufactured to WHO standards) will provide protection from mosquitoes for a family for up to five years.

As a result of these generous donations we have decided to work towards developing the opportunity and means by which donations from individuals and businesses are able to be made at any time. Our intention is that these donations are able to be made using BPay, designated charge cards, or by cheque. Individuals and businesses making these donations will be provided with a tax deductible receipt.

In due course you will be provided with the appropriate advice that the planned additional means of making a private donation is available.

Together in Rotary service,

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: Another Global Action

An international partnership – the Affordable Medicines Facility for Malaria – has been launched to put affordable malaria medicines within reach of millions of people, especially children, in 11 sub-Saharan Africa and Asian countries by reducing the price of effective malaria drugs to the level at which they will drive older, ineffective drugs out of the market.

The Facility was developed through Roll-Back Malaria, a broad partnership of public and private institutions such as the World Bank, UNICEF, the Dutch Government, the Global Fund (a global public/private partnership that raises and spends resources to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Clinton Foundation.

The initiative is to be offered at first to 11 countries (Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda). If it is successful after two years, a decision will be made on whether or not it should be expanded.

Global Fund Executive Director, Dr Michel Kazatchkine, said that there was no reason that any child should die of malaria anymore. “We have insecticide-impregnated bed nets to protect families from mosquitoes. The combination of bed nets and drugs that cure malaria quickly had reduced malaria deaths by between 50% and 90% in areas where both are widely available,” he said. “But, because many people in Africa did not have immediate access to public health facilities, they bought their drugs at local market stalls and private pharmacies.”

Artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs) are 10-40 times more expensive when sold over the counter than the old drugs which have lost their effectiveness because the malaria parasite has developed resistance to them.

The initial costs of the Facility of A\$308-319 million for medicines in the first two years will be shared by UNITAID, (an international mechanism to finance quality-assured medicines and diagnostics against HIV/AIDS) and the UK Government.

Prices of ACTs will be reduced from anywhere between about \$8.25 to \$13.60 per treatment in Australian money to between 25-50 cents via a combination of reduced production prices by drug companies in exchange for increased and predictable demand and a subsidy funded by international donors.

Source: Australian Medicine 18th May 2009.

Solomon Islands

Note: This is a supplementary report on activities in the Solomon Islands following a recent visit by PDG Peter Thomas to Honiara. The original report was presented to the May 2009 National RAM Conference.

Carpenter John Ori and his team have completed the Honiara house. An excellent job, we could not have done better with a team of qualified Rotarians! This is a rewarding effort in skill transfer.

I met with the new Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Dr. Lester Ross, to discuss the future infrastructure building requirements that Rotary might be required to consider. Dr. Ross expressed his and the Government's sincere thanks for the work we have undertaken over the past two years, and what has been programmed for the remainder of this year.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services has requested that Rotary continue to provide support for their infrastructure program for a further two years. Their prioritized list includes 9 houses and 1 shed/office to be erected in three provinces. This is within the capacity of RAM to arrange and coordinate. I have been assured by Dr. Ross and Mr. Justin Baguley, AusAID advisor to the Ministry, that funding is available to undertake this program and will be forthcoming when required. The Permanent Secretary and AusAID are satisfied with the accounting procedures we have in place.

After lengthy discussions with many players in the malaria elimination project, where I expressed my concern that the lengthy delay in acquiring the long-life, insecticide treated bed nets was a disgrace and should not have occurred, RAM has been requested to obtain copies of the tender and contract documents from RAM PNG for review by Secretariat of the Pacific Community staff (previously known as South Pacific Commission), the Principal Recipient under the Global Fund. It is possible that RAM will be asked to be a Sub-Recipient to acquire the bed nets for Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (some 600,000 nets over the next two years). I expect to receive the information required from Ron Seddon and Rio Fioco in the near future.

Others I spoke to indicated that my thoughts in the first part of this report regarding the supply of nets were probably close to the mark.

Staff at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) have indicated that they will be asking RAM to be Sub-Recipient (under the Global Fund) to acquire marine equipment, including boats and outboard motors, under the latest funding proposal. The Rolling Continuation Channel Malaria grant between SPC and the Global Fund is about to be signed and funding flow should commence early in September. I expect that formal requests to RAM to undertake the Sub-Recipient roll as indicated above to be made following the commencement of funding. We have the capacity and knowledge to be able to efficiently undertake the request, to the benefit of the people of both countries.

The next meeting of all Pacific Island Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism members is scheduled for October. I intend to request a discussion on the delays in acquiring the bed nets and the potential disaster this might have caused. The Global Fund should be made aware of the problem their bureaucratic bungling has caused.

All this is a good lesson for us and RAM in PNG. We need to be very aware of the frustrating ways of the Global Fund hierarchy.

The Ministry of Health staff very favourably received the possibility of changing the focus of Adopt-a-Village in the Solomons. There has been considerable work done on establishing village health committees and the Vector Borne Control Program staff is anxious to consolidate the clean village, improved sanitation and safe water aspects of our proposal. We can expect to receive requests for tools, pig fencing wire, water tanks and materials to improve basic sanitation. I will develop some basic literature on this proposal and email it to everyone in the near future. In the meantime, we are holding some A-a-V funds for the Solomons that will allow us to get pilot projects underway in most Provinces. This fits in with Rotary International's holistic health and welfare concept.

Peter Thomas 24th July 2009

World War 11 and the Malaria problem

The power of the mosquito to knock out our soldiers was particularly manifest in the South and Southwest Pacific. I shall not forget Gen. Douglas MacArthur's statement to me in May 1943:

"Doctor," he said, "this will be a long war if, for every division I have facing the enemy, I must count on a second division in hospital with malaria and a third division convalescing from this debilitating disease!"

The general was not at all worried about defeating the Japanese, but he was greatly concerned about the failure up to that time to defeat the Anopheles mosquito.

Source: Russell, Dr Paul F, p2, Chap 1, Vol. VI, Communicable Diseases, Malaria, Official History of the Medical Department, United States Army in World War II, Vol. VI

Good News Story

PP Virginia Turner, a member of Rotary Club of Brighton North (also Regional RAWCS Secretary and D9800 RAWCS Project Advisor), reports that, on a recent trip to Vanuatu to inspect her club's project on Tanna Island, she inquired as to the progress of the phase two WHO malaria experimental program.

She was pleased to be advised that all seems to be going well.

Most villages in the rural areas are now under bed nets (nets are being stored at the hospital) and this was the first time in her four visits to Tanna that she was able to sleep under a bed net.

Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI)

PDG Bob Christie (D1020), and currently International Resource Group Chairman in RIBI, was impressed with the information provided by PP Ron Seddon (Chairman – Rotarians Against Malaria in PNG) during the Birmingham RI Convention with respect to the tremendous work being carried out by RAM in Australia, PNG and elsewhere.

He requested we include him in the normal distribution of our quarterly RAM Newsletter. Bob advises that he intends to distribute the newsletter to all 29 Districts in RIBI.

Thank you Bob for your generous offer of support, particularly as it will ensure that many more Rotarians are made aware of this dreadful disease and what Rotarians and their friends in this part of our Global Village are doing about it.

DID YOU KNOW

Unlike other vector borne diseases, the dengue virus can be controlled and almost eliminated through control of the larval mosquito production sites. These sites are common in residential, urban, tropical areas through standing water in wash areas, discarded tyres, and water storage containers.

Website

RAM Australia has a new website.

It includes a new logo, developed in District 9710, which centralises our region. The logo was first introduced with our November 2008 Newsletter.

Features include:

A brief history;

Adopt A Village information, which incorporates the village allocated to each club (please note some information was not available at time of preparation);

Annual and Conference Reports;

Malaria Awareness Day.

www.ramaustralia.org

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Contributions and comments are welcome.