



# Rotarians Against Malaria

## National Manager's Newsletter June 2019

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

### HEADLINE NEWS!!

**Argentina and Algeria certified malaria free:** The WHO has recently announced two more countries certified malaria free. Argentina and Algeria become the second nations in their continents to be certified and it is particularly notable that Algeria was where the malaria parasite was first identified by Dr Laveran in 1880. A feature of the elimination programs, in all recently certified countries, is that they offered free and fast reliable diagnosis and effective treatment.

**RAM Annual Conference: 24th and 25th August, Melbourne, REGISTER NOW!!**

**Dave's swansong:** I step down as RAM National Manager on 1<sup>st</sup> July when Jenny Kerrison takes over, so this will be my last RAM Newsletter. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in our RAM-malaria community, our representatives, donors and friends for the wonderful support they have given me over the past four years and for all the great work they have done in supporting RAM. I have every confidence that Jenny will be a great Manager for RAM and that our programs and practices will be improved under her guidance.

### RAM PNG

#### RAM - managing the PNG National Malaria Control Program:

RAM PNG is responsible for delivery of most aspects of the PNG National Malaria Program. A team of 75 dedicated staff led by Project Manager Tim Freeman deliver LLINs to families and institutions all over the country on a three year rolling replacement cycle. Malaria treatment drugs and rapid diagnostic test kits are supplied to health clinics ensuring adequate supplies are always on hand. RAM's Regional Malaria Coordinators (RMCs) regularly visit all accessible clinics to ensure commodity stocks are adequate, are accounted for and to mentor clinic staff to improve records and reporting as well as monitoring patient care outcomes. Part of this quarterly routine is to ensure all diagnostic results are recorded regardless of outcome and that complete records are submitted to the NHIS

Approximately 1¼ million LLINs were distributed during the year as part of the 4<sup>th</sup> replacement cycle. During calendar 2018 2.5 million RDTs and 1.6 million ACT drug courses were distributed. This work is funded by the Global Fund to Fight



AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Against Malaria Foundation (supplying LLINs) and the PNG Government. RAM continues to coordinate funding for the Institute of Medical Research (IMR).

### **Chasing Malaria Project:**

The Chasing Malaria project has now expanded into Gulf Province and continues to evolve through practical experience in implementation. Malaria rates in the previously identified case cluster around Bareina and Waima in Central Province have fallen in response to interventions such as rapid diagnosis and treatment and mosquito larvae destruction. Responses by School student malaria clubs and local health volunteers initially seemed to halt when the RAM team was not at the sites but now seem to be being sustained.



Ongoing surveillance, thanks to the RAM reporting improvements have identified another significant case cluster around Kuriva in Central Province, located only one hour's drive from Port Moresby. Building on their experience at Bereina, the Chasing Malaria team have established new school malaria clubs at six schools in the area and, with the assistance of the IMR, conducted screening blood tests of school students to determine the extent of asymptomatic cases in addition to cases recorded at local clinics.

School teachers have been trained to use RDTs to diagnose and then to treat positive malaria cases in students and student groups have been busy identifying mosquito breeding sites. The IMR has also assisted by conducting entomological studies to determine the biting habits of the local anopheline mosquitoes, testing for insecticide resistance and testing the efficacy of LLINs currently in use in the area. They have also surveyed the population to find out if LLINs are routinely in use.

These studies concluded that malaria transmission in the Kuriva area is driven by the following factors:-

- Early evening biting of Anopheline vectors
- presence of large water bodies acting as habitats during dry periods,
- the vast majority of people being outside and exposed during peak biting times
- apparently diminished bio-efficacy of LLINs currently in use
- fact that houses are not adequately equipped with things like fly wire
- lack of access to treatment (some people considered the health centre is too far away)

Armed with this information RAM is providing new LLINs for all positive cases, conducting community disease awareness programs, identifying and destroying mosquito breeding sites and encouraging people to seek timely diagnosis and treatment. RAM in Australia also supports the RAM PNG Private Sector Retail initiative which is making high quality LLINs available for purchase at an affordable rate to assist families to maintain and enhance their disease protection.

### **RAM Solomon Islands**

In the Solomon Islands RAM has designed a new project to assist the MHMS to address resurgent malaria in Central Islands Province(CIP). The project has been proposed for collaborative funding with DFAT and has been developed in close consultation with national and provincial malaria staff. As part of this process RAM sent a team of technical specialists to consult widely in Honiara and Tulagi. The team (pictured here with Dr Leslie Bunabo) included AG Andrea Grosvenor, Tim Freeman and Dr Ivor Harris.



The proposed program envisages placing a qualified Project Manager in the Solomons to integrate into the CIP malaria program to mentor and facilitate timely, accurate delivery of malaria interventions in vector control, diagnosis and treatment that, we know from experience elsewhere, will control and drive down transmission rates. The program will involve community malaria disease education as an integral part of community health and RAM will ensure that malaria commodities are adequately resourced. Additionally the project will accumulate georeferenced data that will provide a basis for accurate disease surveillance which will be required for future malaria elimination programs.

If approved, the project will have a 3 year budget of AUD\$1M with scope for Rotary Volunteer work contributions and could act as a pilot for similar programs aimed at reducing transmission to pre-elimination levels.

## RAM PhD candidate progress

RAM sponsored PhD student Edgar is in the writing up and publishing phase of his PhD and has been granted an extension of his scholarship until October to enable completion and final submission of his thesis before returning home to the Solomon Islands.

## RAM Timor Leste

The RAM sponsored TRF Grant, to assist Timor Leste to achieve malaria free certification is on track with 40,000 LLINs and 80 new Hudson IRS spraying units delivered to the National Malaria Program (NMP). Planning is underway to facilitate training of midwives and RC Dili Lafaek Rotarians to help to educate community members and expectant mothers, regarding malaria prevention, whilst ensuring they receive the protective nets. The project has received positive proactive feedback from TRF Cadre Dr Noel Alidio who has twice reviewed progress on site.

Pictured unpacking the LLINs are Dr Manel Yapabandara (Consultant to the NMP), Maria Mota (Manager NMP), Dr Alidio (TRF Cadre) and Andrea Grosvenor (RAM).



## Indonesian Timor NTT Province

The 2018 RAM Conference was host to discussions between the head of the malaria program of Indonesia's NTT Province, Dr Sarlyn Ralo, and Timor Leste NMP representatives regarding malaria control over Timor's land border.



The adjacent picture shows Dr Merita Monteiro (Head of Communicable Disease Division of Timor Leste MoH), Dr Therasia Sarlyn Ralo (Head of NTT Malaria Program) and Dr Manel Yapabandara at the RAM Conference.

RAM has now been invited to assist further coordination and to develop a new project for NTT and this work is progressing including building links with the recently re-established Rotary Club in Kupang.

## Vanuatu

Ongoing dialog between WHO Malaria Program Technical Advisor for Vanuatu, Tessa Knox and RAM Vanuatu Country Coordinator Virginia Turner has resulted in Dr Knox and Vanuatu Dept. of Public Health Director Mr Len Tarivonda committing to participate in the 2019 **RAM Conference**. Dr Knox and Director Tarivonda will present a pre-Conference workshop on the malaria program in Vanuatu as well as speaking in the Conference sessions and it is expected that these presentations and Conference discussions will help determine how RAM might best support the malaria control and elimination programs in Vanuatu.

## Malaria Vaccine Development

Fund raising (D9640 project) to support human trials of the PlasProtect® malaria vaccine candidate, under development at the Institute for Glycomics, reached \$530,000 by April when the Australian Government added a further \$500,000 to the fund. Phase 1 Clinical Trials have commenced and a freeze drying technique to facilitate safe transport has been developed.

In 2016 the world's first malaria vaccine RTS,S/AS01 received scientific approval by the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and conditional endorsement from WHO. This was the culmination of 30 years of development and completion of multiple Phase 3 Clinical Trials for an estimated cost of USD\$ 500 million. In April 2019 the first large scale pilot implementation of the vaccine in 360,000 children located in Malawi, Ghana and Kenya commenced.

The RTS,S vaccine also known as Mosquirix™ requires administration of four shots and Phase 3 trials indicate that, whilst it is safe, it will only prevent 39% of Pf malaria cases and only 29% of severe Pf cases. Development of this vaccine to this stage was only possible with huge funding support from global partners such as the Gates Foundation on top of the sustained investment of big pharmaceutical company Glaxo Smith Kline.

## RAM and other Rotary International malaria programs

RAM was strongly represented at the RI Convention in Hamburg. RAM Exec. Committee members Dr. Jenny Kerrison, Dr. Bruce Anderson, Virginia Turner and Ron Seddon attended as well as District Chairs, Greg Berry, Dai Mason and Gil Padarin-Innes. RAM Australia did not have its own Booth but with help from several Rotarians, we were able to display our banner and distribute brochures via Booths held by the Rotarian Malaria Partners (RMP), Rotarians Eliminating Malaria Rotary Action Group (REMaRAG), and RAM PNG.

The REMaRAG AGM was held on 3 June 2019 and attended by Jenny, Bruce, Ron and Dai where the following officers were appointed:- Interim Chair Ellen Blasi (Florida, USA); Secretary **Dr. Jenny Kerrison (RAM Australia)**; Treasurer Stephen Baker (Canada); Scientific Officer, the immediate past Chair REMaRAG, Ian Priestley (UK); and Education Officer DG Gillian Pearce (UK).



(Far left) Dr. Joel Okalany (awarded the Superman Cape for being successful in obtaining two Grants this year); Dr. Jenny Kerrison (crowned for being the new 'Queen' of RAM Australia); Larry Granat, RMP; Drake Zimmerman (Co-Founder REMaRAG); (Far right, Chair Ellen Blasi for REMaRAG (crowned for being the new 'Queen' of REMaRAG). The Superman Cape and crowns were provided through the courtesy of Drake Zimmerman.

Having RAM's new National Manager appointed to REMaRAG is a great development in building a stronger profile for Rotary in the global effort to eradicate malaria. REMaRAG needs support to maintain its current RI recognition and is in the process of developing a new website and membership portal. When this site is up and running it will be circulated to all those on our mailing list with RAM's encouragement to visit their website and join up.

## **Malaria Awareness Day - April 30<sup>th</sup>.**

This year World Malaria Day (WMD, 25th April) was the focus of numerous conferences and publicity events around the world to keep malaria at the forefront of global health issues. As reported by RBM (May Newsletter) under the theme of "**Zero Malaria Starts with Me**" WMD sought to encourage people from all walks of life to make a personal commitment to end malaria. Events took place in Paris and worldwide, including Abuja, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Dakar and London. The Commonwealth Malaria Commitment was further endorsed by a gathering of Commonwealth leaders in London, which marked a year since Commonwealth leaders committed to halve malaria by the year 2023. Commencement of the RTS,S vaccine pilot program in Malawi was timed to coincide with WMD.

In Australia RAM observes Malaria Awareness Day (MAD) on 30<sup>th</sup> April to avoid clashes with ANZAC Day. This year District RAM Chairs all over the country observed MAD with dinners, Rotary events and articles in local Newspapers. RAM National Manager Dave was interviewed for 15 minutes on the ABC's prime time NSW State-wide drive program and National Secretary Gloria was interviewed on Melbourne radio. Once again activity in D9810 was of particular note.

The D9810 RAM Information and Fundraising Dinner held on the 18th of May was their Malaria Awareness Day activity and was hosted by the Rotary Club of Doncaster. The event run by Shelley Gurney (incoming RAM Chair for D9810) and her Committee was highly successful and managed to raise over \$4,000. Guest speakers were, Justin Boddey from WEHI, who gave an overview of malaria research at the Institute and Professor Edward Ogden who presented a practical guide to staying well overseas with an emphasis on protection against contracting malaria.

Shelley Gurney took on RAM as the D9810 DG's partner Special Project and has done an outstanding job raising awareness of RAM throughout the District and has raised over \$31,000 in the 2018-19 Rotary Year. It was a wonderful effort and a Certificate of Appreciation was presented to her at the District Changeover.

## **Joint Fund raising proposal from the Global fund**

The Global Fund (GF) is a global public private partnership designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, TB and malaria. In May 2019, Pierre Jaudoin (Global Fund Private Sector Engagement) emailed RAM National Manager, Dave Pearson, to propose the idea of a Global Fund partnership with RAM. The aim of the pilot partnership is to raise much-needed funds to address gaps in malaria elimination services in PNG. The pilot partnership forms part of GF's "Step up the Fight" campaign. See <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/stepupthefight/>

Dr. Jenny Kerrison and Ron Seddon (RAM PNG Chair) met GF representatives John Fairhurst (Head of Private Sector Engagement) and Stefan Stojanovik (Global Fund Senior Fund Portfolio Manager, South and East Asia Team) both based in Geneva, Switzerland in Hamburg. Jenny also organised for John and Stefan to speak at the REMaRAG AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. As a follow-up to the meetings, RAM Australia will conduct further discussions with the Global Fund, and undertake preparatory steps regarding the potential partnership before GF's Sixth Replenishment Investment meeting in October, at the Lyon Conference, France.



## RAM Scientific Committee

DGE Bruce Anderson, RAM Scientific Committee Coordinator, routinely scans medical and scientific literature for developments in research that may have relevance to on-going malaria elimination efforts, and maintains a database of relevant literature citations. Bruce also monitors the local malaria research community in Australia for projects and outcomes which could potentially be of use in future RAM programs, and engages directly with researchers, as appropriate, to inform them of RAM activities.

A recent research development is promoting further work to use long acting Ivermectin injections for humans as a new form of vector control which will reduce malaria transmission by killing biting mosquitoes. This drug already has an established history as an effective control on internal and external parasites in sheep and cattle.

## Annual RAM Conference

The 2019 RAM Conference will return to Melbourne to be held again at Ciloms Airport Lodge on 24th and 25th August. Excellent speakers have been organised to update attendees on such topics as; global malaria statistics; malaria in pregnancy and the malaria vaccine PlasProtect<sup>®</sup> research. Find out about civil societies' roles in malaria elimination. Learn about the malaria elimination needs and achievements in our partner countries: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor Leste and West Timor.

This year, the RAM Conference offers two informative workshops on the Saturday morning (24th August).

**Workshop One:** "Vanuatu Malaria Program review and work required for malaria elimination." With Director Len Tarivonda and WHO Dr Tessa Knox.

**Workshop Two:** "Can the RAM PNG Chasing Malaria Program be replicated in other RAM partner countries?" with RAM PNG Project Manager Tim Freeman.

Other guest speakers will include: Prof. Brendan Crabb (Burnet Institute), Prof. Stephen Rogerson, Prof. Maxine Whittacker and Prof. Dennis Shanks, Covering a wide range of topics including research developments, global malaria eradication strategy and community engagement to achieve local malaria elimination. Other speakers will report on RAM program developments and vaccine trials progress.

Main Conference sessions are Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and will include RAM's General Meeting and planning sessions which will give you an opportunity to contribute to RAM's program development. This Meeting also includes orientation for new Regional Coordinators and District Chairs.

**Online registration:** a more detailed flyer including accommodation details and the Conference Program is available on our website [www.ram.rawcs.com.au](http://www.ram.rawcs.com.au) and the Conference registration portal is now open.

## RAM Web site and Media

See RAM at [www.ram.rawcs.com.au](http://www.ram.rawcs.com.au) and [www.facebook.com/ram.australia/](https://www.facebook.com/ram.australia/) .

Contact RAM National Secretary Gloria for supplies of RAM promotional material including leaflets, banners etc.

Many thanks to Rotaractors Richard Siu and Izabella Spizick who continue to help as our RAM website and Facebook administrators and in providing assistance with MailChimp.

## RAM Positions

We will soon be circulating a call for nominations for the Position of **Deputy RAM National Manager** to enable the position to be filled following a vote at the RAM AGM. Another vacant position on the Executive Committee is the **Media and PR Coordinator** role which will include coordination of RAM's public profile with newly appointed RAWCS Director of Communications and Marketing John Stockbridge. If any member of our RAM community is interested in nominating for either of these positions please contact Jenny Kerrison, Gloria Hargreaves or Dave Pearson for more information and to discuss the roles.

For any RAM related enquiries please contact:

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or Dave Pearson: [dave@sugarloafne.com](mailto:dave@sugarloafne.com)

Contacts for the RAM Executive Committee and all RAM District Chairs can be found on the RAM web site under About Us / Contact Us.

## RAM is a National Activity of RAWCS



David Pearson :

National Manager RAM, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

