

Rotarians Against Malaria

Annual Report 2018 – 2019

The lead international agencies in the fight to eradicate malaria, the WHO and Roll Back Malaria Partnership (RBM) are strongly advocating for accelerated investment to secure the global gains that have been made since 2000. They are concerned that progress to reduce the global malaria case load and death rate has stalled and there is a risk that hard won gains will be lost without renewed and sustained effort. However progress is being made and we can congratulate Paraguay, Uzbekistan, Argentina and Algeria in being certified malaria free this year. In more good news from our region China and El Salvador have reported zero cases in 2017 and in the Greater Mekong region cases have fallen by 75% and deaths by 93% in five years.

It has been a busy year for RAM starting with our strong participation in the World Malaria Congress in July, and a great annual RAM Conference in August leading to new program developments in Solomon Islands, Indonesia and Vanuatu. RAM's links with Rotary malaria programs in other parts of the world have been strengthened and incoming RAM Manager, Dr Jenny Kerrison, has also accepted the role of Secretary to REMaRAG; the RI Action Group on malaria.

In **PNG** RAM operates two separate sets of programs and has a permanent staff led by Chairman Ron Seddon and Project Manager Tim Freeman. RAM is effectively responsible for the PNG National Malaria Program, through collaboration with the Global Fund and Against Malaria Foundation. This includes ensuring maintenance of the household level bed net distributions as well as ensuring adequate stocking levels of diagnostic kits and drugs and monitoring patient outcomes in clinics throughout the nation. RAM PNG is currently undertaking the forth replacement cycle distributing more than one million bed nets every year.

The second major program 'Chasing Malaria' is trialling strategies to prepare low transmission regions for elimination programs. The project is operating in

Central and Gulf Provinces and the National Capital District improving malaria surveillance and identifying case clusters for intervention. Experience has shown that close cooperation with local schools including student malaria clubs has been very effective in locating and destroying mosquito breeding sites contributing to a significant reduction in local transmission.

A new malaria hot spot was recently identified at Kuriva, only one hour's drive from Port Moresby. In response RAM has established malaria clubs in six local primary schools and trained teachers to diagnose and treat malaria in their students. Through cooperation with the Institute for Medical Research, studies including malaria screening in students, entomology to determine local mosquito biting habits and testing of bed nets in use in local villages have been undertaken to refine interventions to reduce transmission.

In the **Solomon Islands** RAM has designed a new project to assist the MHMS to address resurgent malaria in Central Islands Province. 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. 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.

The RAM sponsored TRF Grant to assist **Timor Leste** to achieve malaria free certification is on track with 40,000 bed nets and 80 new spraying units delivered to the National Malaria Program (NMP). Planning is underway to facilitate training of midwives and RC Dili Lafaek Rotarians 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.

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. RAM has been invited to assist further coordination and to develop a new project for NTT and this work is progressing. Another new project proposal is being

considered for **Vanuatu** following an approach from WHO after a review of the Vanuatu NMP. RAM is maintaining a dialogue with Vanuatu NMP officials and WHO representatives and they have been invited to present at the 2019 RAM Conference which will be held in Melbourne.

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. The Institute played host to the very successful 2018 RAM Conference which included laboratory sessions for interested delegates.

The coming year will include many challenges and exciting developments as RAM PNG works to restore the downward trend in malaria cases and RAM supports Timor Leste to achieve malaria elimination. The developing new projects in Solomon Islands, NTT and Vanuatu will all need active fund raising support in Australia to produce tangible results in our partner countries and contribute to the goal of eliminating malaria in our region by 2030.

David Pearson.

RAM National Manager

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