

Rotarians Against Malaria

National Manager's Newsletter

July 2017

RAM - A volunteer-run organisation working to eliminate malaria

HEADLINE NEWS!!

Timor pushes toward elimination:

The RAM Volunteer Team has returned from Timor Leste with the exciting news that the National Malaria Control Program, WHO and Global Fund are confidently pushing ahead toward the goal of **eliminating malaria in Timor Leste within the next five years** and they see RAM as a crucial partner. In any disease elimination program, in the final stages toward zero cases, it is critical to maintain focus on control measures and awareness as it is natural for the community and the health officials to relax when there are few reported cases. RAM is committed to going the distance with the NMCP to see the job done! and we are particularly interested in assisting with controlling cross border infection.

Fantastic end of year results for RAM:

Thanks to the great work of all our RAM District Chairs, Committees, Rotarians and friends 2016/2017 has seen pleasing improvements in malaria awareness and a fantastic result in fund raising. Even though many districts have strongly advocated for the malaria Vaccine project and this Project has raised \$135,000 (donations through RAWCS) the main RAM operating project has also recorded donations totalling \$160,000 representing a 60% increase over the past few years plus a further \$37,000 in transfers from other RAWCS projects. **Well done all of you!!** This is a really fitting tribute to the memory of our longstanding Funding Coordinator PDG Richmond Manyweathers who passed away on 27th May.

RAM Conference:

It's **time to register** for this year's RAM conference in Sydney 19th/20th August. Exciting developments and interesting research will be presented and planning sessions will be a great opportunity to contribute to RAM's organisation and program planning.

RAM PNG

RAM bed net distribution funded by the Global Fund:

Because of our long standing collaboration with the Global Fund to fight HIV, TB and malaria, set up by Ron Seddon, RAM has achieved international recognition and is considered a role model for NGOs by the WHO. This collaboration has seen RAM PNG distribute 1.2 million LLINs (bed nets) to households in the past Rotary year as well as a further 180,000 LLINs to vulnerable groups. The household distribution is part of the third round of distribution to ensure that every family has access to functional 'in-date' LLIN protection.

Delivering nets in these numbers, in PNG conditions, requires robust logistics and close coordination with the outlying offices of the National Dept. of Health (NDOH). Project Manager Tim Freeman and his staff have delivered

this fantastic result across the eastern archipelago of Milne Bay Province and the Bougainville Autonomous Region as well as the Highlands, during the recent PNG election, without any serious setbacks.

Chasing Malaria Pilot Project:

The Chasing Malaria project is currently the main program in PNG funded by donations raised by RAM in Australia. It is in effect a test bed for strategies that will be required to drive down malaria to elimination in areas of low disease incidence. The program identifies malaria case clusters, investigates the causes and works with community volunteers to stop malaria transmission and cure those who are carrying the disease. Details of the program were described in my last newsletter.

During the past year the Chasing Malaria programme has delivered 2,163 family sized LLINs to clinics for distribution to positive cases of malaria of which 1,630 have already been registered during this period. Single LLINs are also distributed to expectant mothers. On behalf of the NCD and Central Province health authorities 8,100 courses of ACTs (malaria treatment drugs) have been provided by RAM as well as 13,375 Rapid Diagnostic Test kits (RDTs).

The important task of locating, mapping and monitoring mosquito breeding sites around the areas where case clusters occur is handled by Community health Volunteers. These people have generally completed at least a six week course on Community disease prevention and are guided by RAM staff to identify anopheles mosquito larvae and work out ways to destroy them, such as spraying larvacide. They work with school students to ensure thorough surveillance of the area and RAM has provided them with bicycles to help them get around to the different monitoring sites and spraying equipment and chemicals to deal with larvae hatchings.



Tim Freeman will be speaking at the **RAM Conference** and be available to answer questions about the PNG programs and planning for future developments.

RAM Solomon Islands

In the Solomon Islands RAM's Healthy Villages program has now provided 139 villages with sets of tools to help them eliminate mosquito breeding sites and complete other projects to maintain a tidy and clean living environment. Mr Ben Rickie Kiokimo who has been supervising these projects for the Solomons Health Dept. has now been promoted to Director of the Dept. of Health Promotions and has agreed to attend this year's **RAM Conference** and will provide an overview of the program and the collaboration with RAM.

Below are two recent photos of village people in Guadalcanal using RAM provided tools to improve village drainage by carrying out work planned as part of the Healthy Village program:



Recently I received a paper from former SI Government Malariologist Dr Nathan Kere titled “Cyclic Malaria in Solomon Islands”. In this paper Dr Kere reviews the known history of malaria epidemics in the Solomons and expresses concern at the risk of reduced immunity, as a consequence of the current low infection rates, together with decreased vigilance are potentially setting the conditions for a significant increase in malaria. In fact some recent figures suggest that the annual infection rate may have bottomed. In these circumstances it is all the more important that RAM, DFAT and other NGOs continue our support and encouragement to the SI Ministry of Health to get elimination completed in the current three pre-elimination stage provinces. If you would like a copy of this paper, email me and I will send it on.

RAM Timor Leste

The Oecusse LLIN distribution being carried out by the National Malaria Control Program is proceeding with logistics and support funded by RAM. During this program more than 40,000 LLINs (bed nets) funded by the Global Fund will be distributed in four sub-districts and despite a slow start caused by flooding the program is now more than half completed.

The RAM Rotary Volunteer team Led by Dr Jenny Kerrison spent 14 days in Timor Leste from the end of May. They took part in bed net distributions with the NMCP and had in-depth briefings from NMCP and WHO as well as meetings with the Global Fund representatives, RC Dili and RC Dili Lafaek. In addition to RAM related programs they also participated in a water purification program on Aturo Island and visited the Biro Pite hospital. An important development is the news that the NMCP and WHO are now planning to exploit their success in controlling malaria to aim at elimination of the disease in Timor Leste in the next five years and they expect RAM to have a significant support role. Team Leader Jenny and several team members will be at the **RAM Conference** to share their observations and experience. Team reports will be posted on RAM’s web site.

The volunteer team spent two weekends with the Rotarians of the Rotary Club of Dili Lafaek observing the Timor version of the Healthy Village project in action. The RC Dili Lafaek program has now reached 12 villages delivering twelve transportable 2.4 cubic meter steel rubbish units and one concrete bin together with Community education and site cleaning programs backed up by the presentation of tool sets. Volunteers observed the village activities, planning sessions and assisted with village clean-ups. Some of you may have heard the team call to “Macka” and the ‘Australia All Over ‘ show on ABC radio where they were great ambassadors for Rotary, RAM and the Timor Leste malaria program.

The following photos show Dr Jenny helping with the LLIN distribution and members of the RC Dili Lafaek team in action with one of the steel bins:



RAM PhD Student Edgar Pollard.

Edgar Pollard is currently hard at work in the field in Solomon Islands sampling and tracking mosquitoes around selected villages. He will be at the **RAM Conference** in August to tell us all about the latest discoveries in his research.

Malaria Vaccine Development

The project to raise funds to accelerate the next stage of human trials for the malaria vaccine candidate PlasProtect[®] has been making great progress toward the \$200,000 mark which will be enough for the research team to make a start. Together with the \$135,000 currently recorded by RAWCS the project team is confident of additional funds which are building toward that interim goal and a great start towards the ultimate target of \$500,000. Project Manager PDG Graham Jones and Senior Research Fellow Dr Danielle Stanisic will present the latest developments at the **RAM Conference**.

For more information about this project please contact Project Manager PDG Graham Jones on 0406 040 038 or graham.a.g.jones@gmail.com or visit the project web site <http://rotary9640.org/page/malaria-vaccine-project/>

Annual RAM Conference

Our annual Conference and AGM will be held in Sydney over the weekend of 19th and 20th August 2017 at 'Rowers on Cooks River' (St George Rowing Club). This is a really good venue in a picturesque site which is located adjacent to Sydney airport within a short walk from several hotels. The Conference registration portal is now live and you can register at <http://ram.rawcs.com.au/ram-national-conference/> The Conference flyer is being widely distributed and is on our website; contact me if you have not received it. We have been able to keep registration costs at similar levels to last year thanks to sponsorship from the host District D9675. The Conference is a must for all RAM District Chairs and we are particularly keen to see as many Sydney and NSW based Rotarians as possible attend as this is why we have brought the Conference to Sydney.

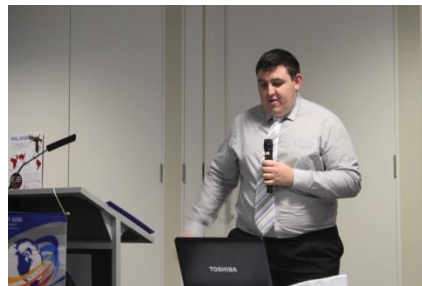
RAM Schools Video Competition.

An enthusiastic Committee has been working in Southern Region to progress the idea of a competition among Primary Schools to develop short videos about malaria. Several videos have been produced and will be exhibited and judged at the **RAM Conference**. I'm looking forward to seeing what they have come up with!

Malaria Awareness Day.

Some great events were held around the country to mark World Malaria Day (25th April) and Malaria Awareness Day (30th April) this year. Activities included quizzes organised by D9630 Chair John Paskin, a kilometre of coins put together by D9640 Rotarians and students at Griffith Gold Coast campus, plans for RAM buckets for fund raising in D9820 and sausage sizzles to buy bed nets in Brisbane (Griffith Uni Drug Discovery Group) and in D9830, Tassie. Articles in local newspapers, Street stalls selling RAM badges to buy nets, donations recognised by sticking laminated mozzies on a bednet and other great ideas all raised awareness and funds for both RAM and the Vaccine project.

In Melbourne District RAM Committees and Rotaract Australia Against Malaria, joined forces under the leadership of D9810 Chair Gloria Hargreaves to host a MAD fund raising dinner. Eighty five people attended and \$4,000 was cleared to be donated to WEHI and The Institute for Glycomics.



Rotaract's Ben Hill



Dr Julie Healer from the WEHI.



Coin km Griffith

RAM Web site.

The new RAM website is constantly improving under the direction of RAM PR and Media Coordinator Holstein Wong. Check it out at www.ramaustralia.org or www.ram.rawcs.com.au. Holstein is building more resources into the Gallery section and here you can view the new Malaria Awareness Day leaflet.

RAM's Facebook page has been getting regular postings since Holstein took over and is easily accessible from the website and www.facebook.com/ram.australia/.

RAM Appointments and Procedures.

In the near future I will circulate an up-dated RAM Procedures Document for consideration by all RAM Chairs. This document has been endorsed by the RAM Executive committee and RAM Regional Coordinators and I will seek to have it further endorsed by a vote at our Annual Meeting at the **RAM Conference** Sunday 20th August. I will also shortly be calling for nominations for RAM Executive Committee positions including Deputy Manager, Funding Coordinator and Scientific Committee Coordinator. These positions will be determined by vote at the same meeting.

For any RAM related enquiries please contact:

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RAM is a National Activity of RAWCS



David Pearson :
National Manager RAM, 18th July 2017.