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# NEWSLETTER

October - December 2019



## *SEASONS GREETINGS*

*WELCOME to RAM Quarterly Newsletter October - December 2019.*

Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) is a national Australian activity managed by a group of Rotarians passionate about eliminating malaria in our Asia-Pacific region. Governed by Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) Ltd., we are an Australian Rotary initiative that dates back to the 1990s. RAM's mandate is to eliminate malaria in our partner countries (PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor Leste and West Timor [Indonesia]). Nationally and internationally, RAM is recognised for its successful humanitarian work.

This edition contains updates on our RAM regional activities, and the work with our partner countries. Two of our RAM Executive Committee members were overseas, and their brief reports are presented below. For those attending the

Rotary International Convention, RAM Global (a Rotary Action Group) invites you to their first Malaria Symposium, on 5 June 2020, one day before the RI Convention.

We hope you enjoy the news brought to you in this Newsletter.



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## **BREAKING NEWS!**

### **World Malaria Report 2019**

The much anticipated [World Malaria Report 2019](#) is available! The good news is that there was a reduction in malaria cases with three (3) million cases less in 2018 than in 2017. The number of deaths has also reduced with an estimated 405,000 in 2018 and 416,000 in 2017. Ninety-four (94%) percent of deaths were in WHO African Region. Globally, the World Health Organisation (WHO) African Region had 93% of the total number of malaria cases. In contrast, the WHO South-East Asia Region contributed 3.4% to all malaria cases, and 2.1% from the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. An important message is that globally, progress flatlined over the last four years between 2014 and 2018.

### **Malaria terminologies**

[World Health Organisation \(2016\)](#) provided the following definitions:

Malaria *elimination* is the interruption of local transmission (reduction to zero incidence of indigenous cases) of a specified malaria parasite species in a defined geographic area; continued measures are required to prevent re-establishment of transmission.

Malaria *eradication* is defined as the permanent reduction to zero of the worldwide incidence of malaria infection caused by all species of human malaria parasites. Once eradication has been achieved, intervention measures

are no longer needed.

## Malaria ERADICATION

*"Malaria is eliminated at the edges; a military analogy would be that one defeats the enemy where they are weakest (e.g. Vanuatu, Lihir) before moving on to areas of relative strength (e.g. Bougainville, New Britain)".*

***Prof G. Dennis Shanks, Australian Defence Force Malaria and Infectious Disease Institute***

### **Malaria Eradication - Message from Prof G. Dennis Shanks, Australian Defence Force Malaria and Infectious Disease Institute, Enoggera QLD**

In September 2019, an important report was issued by [The Lancet Commission on Malaria Eradication](#) (LCME): malaria eradication within a generation: ambitious, achievable, and necessary. The LCME report is a grand overview whose importance to RAM is that in addition to the major efforts currently aimed at decreasing malaria mortality in Africa, the LCME shows how malaria elimination is possible in the Indo-Pacific Region when resources are concentrated on areas of marginal transmission with a special emphasis on relapsing (vivax) malaria. Malaria is eliminated at the edges; a military analogy would be that one defeats the enemy where they are weakest (e.g. Vanuatu, Lihir) before moving on to areas of relative strength (e.g. Bougainville, New Britain).

Three classes of interventions to achieve malaria elimination in our region:

*Hardware:* Better management is key to prevent a continuing cycle of control followed by resurgence. Improved data leading iteratively to improved management is vital. Getting the best from marginal health delivery systems will remain a challenge but malaria is one aspect where success can be demonstrated to the local population whose active participation is absolutely required. Private sector (e.g. mining industry) is also important as governments cannot do everything.

*Software:* New tools will be needed and big investments are being made

especially in surveillance technologies in order to find the last remaining malaria parasites. Tafenoquine is the new primaquine-like drug likely to defeat relapsing malaria but only if we can use it safely with improved glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase screening. Gene drive technologies are on the far horizon as a means to make mosquitoes not transmit malaria.

*Finances:* It is estimated that another \$US 2 billion per year is required most of which will have to come from national governments and perhaps new donors; such an investment makes good economic sense.

*"Eradicating malaria would both save lives and boost economies."  
Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General*



## RAM SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

**An excerpt from a report from Dr. Bruce Anderson, RAM Scientific Committee Coordinator**

### **Vector Control**

The results of the largest ever trial undertaken to assess the malaria-fighting power of long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) were presented last week (November 20) at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. Of particular interest was the use of nets augmented with piperonyl butoxide (PBO), a chemical that blocks the enzyme used by mosquitos to detoxify the pyrethroid insecticides in standard LLINs. Blood tests showed children sleeping under the PBO augmented nets had a 27% lower rate of positive tests for malarial parasites after one year of net use, and households had 80% fewer malaria-carrying mosquitos compared with households using conventional LLINs.

The nets containing piperonyl butoxide (PBO) are the newer generation nets for example, the [Sumitomo Olyset Plus](#) and [PermaNet® 3.0](#).

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RAM is an activity of Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) Ltd. and is governed by the [RAWCS Constitution](#)

## RAM REGIONAL NEWS

RAM welcomes the following RAM members:

- Howie Oh in D9830 is our National Treasurer, a new position in RAM
- Rotaractor Netalia Lim has accepted the Public Relations & Media Coordinator.
- Professor Susan McDonald in D9800 is the new District 9800 RAM Supervisor. Susan has also joined the RAM Scientific Committee

With the pending amalgamations of Rotary districts, RAM is gathering information to understand the post-amalgamation support needed in the Districts and Regions.

## INVITATION: ADOPT A RAM PROJECT

All RAM Regions are encouraged to identify projects that they can adopt and implement with technical support from RAM.

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**Southern Region RAM Supervisor is Gloria Hargreaves.** There are six Districts in SR: 9780, 9790, 9800, 9810, 9820, 9830.

Gloria Hargreaves has worked hard to promote the Adopt A RAM Project in her region. Most of the Rotary districts in the region have pledged to adopt Vanuatu as their project. Our first Zoom planning meeting will be held on 18 December with the World Health Organisation Technical Consultant Dr. Tessa Knox and staff from the Malaria and Other Vector Borne Diseases Control Program (MOVBDGP), Ministry of Health; and PDG Lindsay Ford (New Zealand Rotary D9910); and Vanuatu Country Coordinator Virginia Turner (D9800).

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**Northern Region RAM Supervisor is Dr. Russ Stephenson. This Region** has five districts: 9550, 9570, 9600, 9630, 9640. Timor Leste is in D9550; and Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea are in 9600. Timor Leste is in Rotary district 9550. RAM has supported Timor Leste since 2006.

RAM Australia will support RAM PNG in the Chasing Malaria Program. In addition, there is interest in one District to support the Chasing Malaria Program via a Rotary Global Grant.

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**Eastern Region RAM Supervisor is John Macpherson. This Region** has five Districts: 9650, 9670, 9675, 9700, 9710.

John Macpherson and District RAM Supervisor Steve Carroll (D9670) are tasked with identifying a suitable venue for the next annual 2020 RAM Conference that will be held in Newcastle, NSW.

District 9670 RAM Supervisor Steve Carroll and wife Doreen have kept busy during the year. Based in Newcastle, they've travelled as far as Western Australia, promoting RAM and the Malaria Vaccine Project. They spoke to an impressive total of approximately 12 clubs. Well done, Steve and Doreen! Thanks for setting a good example for us all.

RAM Project Manager AG Andrea Grosvenor who is also the incoming ER RAM Supervisor has been canvassing clubs to support Solomon Islands as part of RAM Adopt-A-Project initiative. Discussions have begun with a couple of clubs.

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**Western Region RAM Supervisor is Peter McKenzie. This Region** has two



districts: 9455 and 9465

Peter McKenzie will focus on border malaria elimination in West Timor, Indonesia. This work is important as malaria elimination in West Timor will benefit both West and East Timor (Timor Leste). Several of Timor Leste's districts share the same border with West Timor, Indonesia. Thus, malaria elimination in West Timor is also an important goal for Timor Leste.

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**Central Region RAM Supervisor is Milton Lewis.** This Region has two districts 9500 and 9520 that may have amalgamated. No additional news available.

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[CLICK HERE TO CONTACT A RAM SUPERVISOR](#)



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## NEWS: RAM PARTNER COUNTRIES

RAM Australia currently supports: Papua New Guinea (PNG); Solomon Islands; Timor Leste. This year, RAM will expand support to include Vanuatu and West Timor (Indonesia).

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## TIMOR LESTE

**Visit to Timor Leste  
1 - 8 December 2019**

Dr. Jenny Kerrison conducted a monitoring visit to the Rotary Global Grant

USD251,334 project in Timor Leste - a joint project between RAM and the Rotary Club of North Hobart. Jenny was also there to accompany the Rotary Foundation Cadre Auditor Biju Anthony from Western Australia.

In Timor Leste, malaria cases dropped from 220 per 1,000 in 2006 to 0.006 per 1,000 in 2019. Imported malaria cases have also reduced. The success can be attributed to Timor Leste's National Malaria Program with major funding from the Global Fund, and technical support from the World Health Organisation (WHO).



Photos above: Dr. Jenny Kerrison (L); National Malaria Program (NMP) Manager Maria Mota (M); and the Rotary Foundation Cadre Auditor Biju Anthony from Western Australia (R).



Photos above: Bed nets are stored in 40-foot containers. At the Community Health Centre Balibo, pregnant women receive bed nets and education from the Assistant Malaria Officer.





Photo on Right: Past President Acku (R), Rotary Club of Dili Lafaek, our Host Partner. Earlier this year, the National Malaria Program trained members and volunteers from the Rotary Club of Dili Lafaek, in bed nets education and distribution to communities in District Dili.



In Timor Leste, Community Health Volunteers are trained by the National Malaria Program to conduct yearly Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) in high risk villages at the



border with West Timor (Indonesia). The IRS is also conducted as part of malaria case response when positive cases are identified.



## PAPUA NEW GUINEA



### Report to RAM Australia on New Ireland Provincial Malaria Alliance (NIPMA)

Dr Russ Stephenson, Northern Region RAM Supervisor, D9600, was visiting Papua New Guinea (PNG) when he was called by RAM Australia to attend the NIPMA mid-project review meeting on 5 December, in Kavieng, New Ireland Province (NI) in north-east PNG (see map above). Thank you to Dr. Dan Evans, NIPMA, for the invitation. The notes and recommendations below were from Russ' report submitted to RAM.

## **Malaria in New Ireland Province**

The malaria burden in NI is 2.5 times more severe than in the rest of PNG. In 2018, there were 240,000 people in New Ireland and 232 cases of malaria per 1000 (55,680 cases of malaria!), 80% *P. falciparum*, 20% *P. vivax* causing many relapses from the initial infection. One contributing factor to the malaria burden is the prevalence of swamps on the islands. The introduction of Tafenoquine has proved to be a game changer and malaria rates are now down to 90/1000 but this is still above the PNG average of 69/1000.

Briefly, NIPMA was established with Government and private investment support for malaria elimination on the island. Scoping studies were conducted followed by feasibility studies to test out models for malaria elimination that align with the [World Health Organisation Global Technical Strategy 2016-2030 \(2015\)](#).

## **Recommendations to RAM Australia**

1. Be formally involved in some way in the NIPMA work.
2. Hold further discussions with NIPMA team with a view to the possible involvement of RAM Australia in the NIPMA Project (similar to point #1).
3. Invitation to the NIPMA team, to present at the next RAM conference.

Thank you to Russ for volunteering his time for RAM Australia. Follow up discussions will be held with RAM PNG and NIPMA, in the new year.

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## **Updates from RAM Papua New Guinea (PNG)**

RAM PNG is the Principal Recipient of a Global Fund grant for malaria elimination in PNG. They work closely with the Government's National Malaria Control Program, to deliver essential malaria services for the Government. Their work is saving lives in PNG.

By September 2019, RAM PNG had delivered 11,125,277 Million bed nets to households. Bed nets were also delivered to specific target groups who are vulnerable for malaria disease, in particular pregnant women, and children under 5 years old. By June 2019, RAM PNG had delivered 1,423,286 Million bed nets to pregnant women. It was noted that bed nets distribution included New Ireland Province where New Ireland Province Malaria Alliance (NIPMA) has a major malaria elimination project, as mentioned above.

Despite RAM PNG's efforts to bring bed nets to rural and remote communities throughout

PNG, the country is experiencing increased number of malaria cases. As noted in the latest World Malaria Report ([World Health Organisation, 2019](#)), PNG has seen an increase in estimated cases of 40.2% since 2015. Papua New Guinea is not on track to reduce the malaria mortality rate by at least 40% by 2020.

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## SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands has a population of 650,000 in 2018 ([World Bank 2019](#)). The malaria incidence varies across the country with API 285.2 in Central Islands Province and annual parasite incidence (API) 150.0 in Malaita (Malaria Program Review 2018).

According to the latest World Malaria Report ([World Health Organisation, 2019](#)), Solomon Islands has seen an increase in estimated cases 99.6% since 2015. The country is not on track to reduce the malaria mortality rate by at least 40% by 2020 (World Health Organisation , 2019).

Project Manager AG Andrea Grosvenor are holding discussions with RAM Solomon Islands Wayne Morris, to identify projects that RAM can support. A meeting is also planned with RAM and Mr Alby Bobogare, Director National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDGP).

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## VANUATU

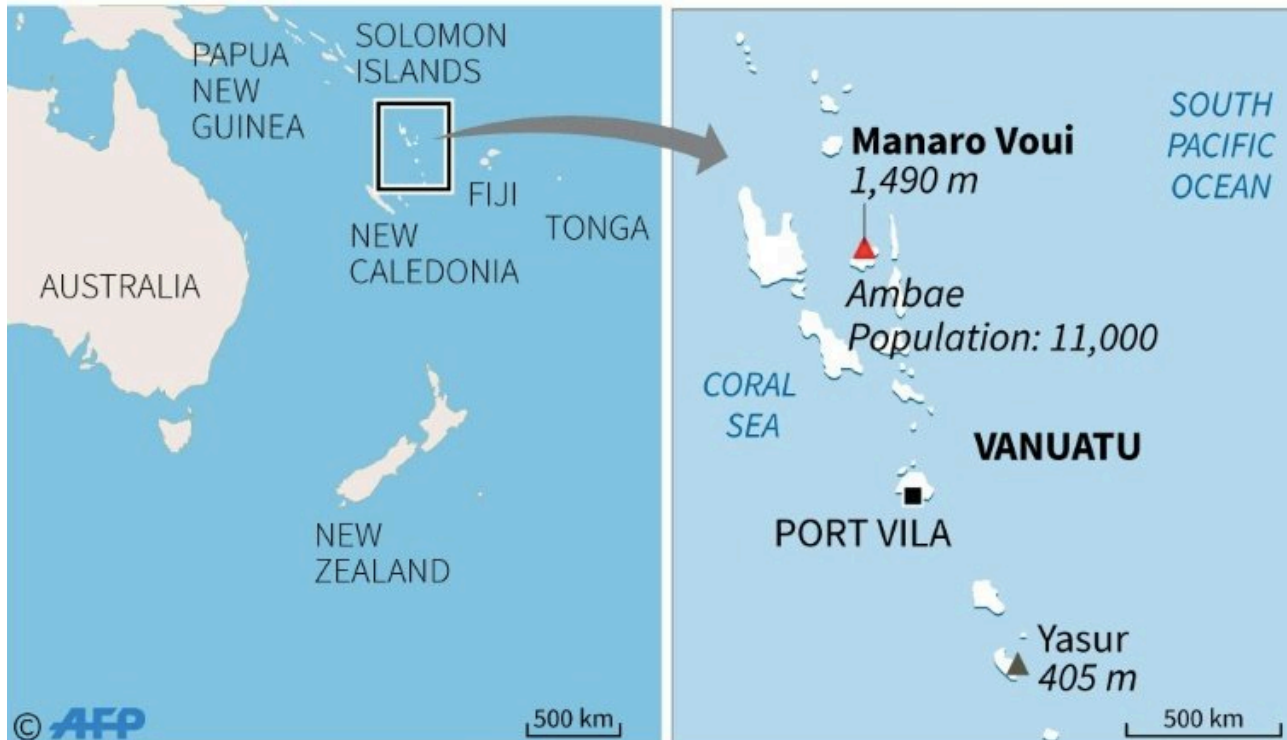
The latest World Malaria Report 2019 ([World Health Organisation, 2019](#)) revealed that Vanuatu has seen an increase in estimated cases of 37.3%, since 2015.

RAM has previously supported Vanuatu in malaria control, in 2004 and is keen to return to Vanuatu, to accelerate malaria elimination in the country. In the recent proposal "Ending Malaria in Vanuatu – for Good", the Vanuatu Government highlighted three (3) priority projects:

1. Fill the net gap in selected health zones and enable vector control response to prevent re-establishment of malaria - in particular in Tafea province where distributions have not been conducted since 2015-2016
2. Target indoor residual spraying in hotspots of malaria transmission in hotspot areas particularly in Malampa and Sanma provinces

3. Conduct nationwide advocacy campaign for malaria elimination - to enhanced public support for malaria elimination

## Vanuatu



## WEST TIMOR (INDONESIA)

West Timor is located in Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) province, Indonesia, Rotary District 3420. It has a population of [5.3](#) in 2016 and is one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. In 2017, malaria was endemic in most parts of NTT province. Fifteen (15%) per cent of malaria cases in Indonesia were from NTT ([Dr. Theresia Ralo, 2018](#)).

### RAM small team of volunteers to visit West Timor in 2020

RAM hopes to contribute to accelerating malaria elimination at the border districts between the two nations West Timor and Timor Leste. In early 2020, Dr. Jenny Kerrison and Western Region (WR) RAM Supervisor Peter McKenzie will lead a small RAM team of self-funded volunteers to conduct a community



needs assessment in three districts in West Timor at the border between West and Timor Leste. In NTT province, the Rotary Club of Kupang Central (previously Kupang Timor Raya), and the NTT Province Malaria Control and Prevention Program will accompany the RAM team. To support this activity, the Rotary Club of North Hobart D9830 has obtained a Rotary District Grant to assist with the data collection and management. The community assessment data will be used for a Rotary Global Grant application by National RAM and Western Region RAM.

Rotarians who are interested to support West Timor are encouraged to contact us on our [website](#).

## MALARIA VACCINE

### Malaria Vaccine Project, Australia

Dr Graham Jones AM, Chair of the Malaria Vaccine Committee, thanked all supporters for their continuing efforts to raise funds for the project. The [Gold Coast Clinical Trials](#) to test the efficacy of the vaccine with humans have gone very well. The project received a matching grant of \$500,000 from the Australian Government to reach AUD \$1.12 million. Next year, the vaccine will be tested in a cryo-preserved form that can be transported anywhere in the world. The 2020 trials will be with a larger sample of volunteers in Australia that are expected to be the forerunner for 2021 clinical trials in overseas countries. This will be very expensive but critical in reaching the project's goal to eliminate Malaria worldwide.

## ROTARY ACTION GROUP FOR MALARIA



The re-formed malaria Rotary Action Group has a new name **Rotarians Against Malaria Global (RAM Global)**. Our MISSION is to engage and

support Rotarians in the Global effort to control and eliminate malaria. One of the goals for this Rotary Action Group is to be a central point for all Rotarians to access for resources on malaria disease and its control and elimination.

Our RAM Global Board consists of Rotarians from United States of America, France, England, Nigeria, and Australia. Two of the Board of Directors are from RAM Australia.

The RAM Global website is currently being developed but can be accessed for registration and payment of membership. You can contact us via [info@ram-global.org](mailto:info@ram-global.org) or via [RAM Australia](#).

**Join RAM Global: A Rotary Action Group**

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## RAM PhD Scholarship 2020

With the successful completion of RAM's first scholar Edgar Pollard from the Solomon Islands, RAM will open applications for a PhD Scholarship in mid-2020. Call for applications will be made in 2020.

## UPCOMING EVENT

**Malaria Symposium,  
RI Convention, Honolulu, Hawaii  
5 June, 2020**

GOING TO RI CONVENTION, HONOLULU?

Do join us at the Malaria Symposium.

Learn how Rotarians are helping to eliminate malaria world-wide. Hear about the latest advances in this war against the greatest killer since mankind evolved.

**Register before 31 December, to qualify for the Early Bird fee  
of USD\$75 per person**

Accommodation is available onsite - contact Rotarian Larry Granat -  
larry@lgranat.com

Early Bird Registration before 31 December



## VACANCIES

If you have the skills and wish to help strengthen this great humanitarian organisation, please apply for the following positions:

1. National Deputy RAM Manager
2. National Project Managers: Two positions are vacant. We require project managers to develop grant applications, implement and conduct in-country monitoring of grant implementation.
3. District RAM Supervisor position in D9550 and D9640. Please contact your DG if you are interested to help RAM in your district.

[Contact us via RAM website.](#)

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