**ROTARIANS AGAINST MALARIA**

**PRESENTATION TO RAM INFORMATION SESSION**

**20 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**Why do we do this?**

In 2019 there were 229 million new cases of malaria worldwide, with 409,000 deaths. It’s an enormous human, social and economic burden. The heaviest toll is among the poorest communities, mostly in Africa and other tropical regions, including our neighbourhood. The good news is that since 2000, deaths from malaria have halved. According to the WHO, in the past 20 years 1.5 billion cases and 7.6 million deaths have been averted.

[Forty countries have now been certified as malaria-free by the WHO. You might have seen that China was declared malaria-free in June this year. Malaria elimination is possible, and Rotary is part of the global effort.]

Nonetheless, since 2015, progress is at a standstill. Old tools remain effective but new tools are desperately needed as we aspire to achieve WHO 2030 targets of reducing global malaria incidence and mortality rates by at least 90%.

Today I will giving a very brief overview of Rotarians Against Malaria and RAM’s activities and plans in our region.

Let’s start at the global level. In 2020 Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation awarded the first Rotary Program of Scale grant of USD 2 million to the Rotarian-led Malaria Partners International (MPI) for a project to eliminate malaria in Zambia. MPI has partnered with World Vision and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to garner an additional USD4 million for the project.

The project will train thousands of community health workers to test and treat local communities and will benefit around 1.3 million people. In talking about this project, Past RI President KR ‘Ravi’ Ravindran sees an important role for Rotary in spearheading the global fight to end malaria as we have demonstrated our capacity to do with polio.

**Rotarians Against Malaria (Australia)**

Rotarians in Australia established Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) in 1990 to end the scourge of malaria in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Since then, RAM has coordinated Rotarians’ support to eliminate malaria in our partner countries. Rotarians have helped reduce malaria in Vanuatu, PNG, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste and we are now starting new projects in West Timor, Indonesia.

RAM is a national Rotary activity of RAWCS – Rotary Australia World Community Service. RAM is funded by donations from Rotary clubs, Rotarians and individuals. Donations to RAM through RAWCS are tax deductible. RAM also receives project funding from District and Global Grants through The Rotary Foundation.

RAM supports projects that aim to control and ultimately eliminate malaria. We work with Rotary clubs and government health programs in our partner countries and follow the recommended WHO guidelines on the best strategies for control and elimination. RAM’s Scientific Committee keeps us abreast of the latest research and development in malaria elimination.

Most of our projects target vector control, that is, reducing the mosquito population and the opportunity for mosquitos to bite humans and thus spread the malaria parasite. RAM funds the provision and distribution of Long Lasting Insecticide-treated bed Nets (LLINs); Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS); and environmental improvements to destroy mosquito breeding sites. We fund the training of community health volunteers to participate in mass bed net distribution and malaria education, and also support government health bodies to improve malaria surveillance.

Let me give you a few examples of RAM’s work in our region.

In **Papua New Guinea** RAM Australia is a long term supporter of RAM PNG’s **Chasing Malaria** program which aims to increase malaria education in selected primary schools via ‘School Malaria clubs’. Children are sent out each week to look for mosquito breeding sites and destroy them where possible. The program also increases access to malaria services to local communities through the availability of school teachers who are trained in testing and treating malaria.

The Chasing Malaria team supervises malaria medical facilities and provides training, diagnostic kits and drugs. It also maps the incidence of malaria to identify hot spots for more intensive anti-malarial operations. RAM Australia has provided around AUD 870,000 to the Chasing Malaria Program since 2014.

**Timor Leste**

In 2006 Timor Leste reported an estimated 223,002 indigenous cases of Malaria. By 2016, with help from the Global Fund, WHO and RAM, cases were reduced to less than 100. Timor Leste reported no indigenous malaria cases from July 2017 until late 2020. Unfortunately late last year three cases were reported in the border enclave of Oecusse. This demonstrates the need for a sustained effort, especially at border areas.

In 2018, through RAM, the Rotary Club of North Hobart D9830 received a USD251,000 Global Grant from The Rotary Foundation to support the Timor Leste National Malaria Program. The project galvanised wide-spread Rotary support across Australia with fifteen of 21 Rotary districts and 15 Rotary clubs providing funding.

This grant, plus a smaller follow-up grant in 2021, funded 50,000 insecticidal nets for pregnant women, training for more than 100 Community Health Workers, 80 sprayer machines, diagnosis and treatment supplies for health facilities plus education and promotional materials. The Global Grant was revised this year to include provision of PPE for malaria workers so that they can continue their work during Covid.

**West Timor (Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia)**

Across the border in West Timor, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, Indonesia, the Provincial Health Office is partnering with RAM. A Rotary Global Grant of USD 125,350 was awarded in May 2021 for a project in three border districts to support malaria surveillance by village malaria cadres, capacity building of cadres for early testing and treatment, and mosquito control.

In addition to this, RAM is working with the Cross Sector Development Partnerships Initiative (XSPI), the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance, and the National Malaria Programs in Indonesia and Timor Leste to conduct a Community Assessment to understand the current malaria situation and needs in both NTT Province and Timor Leste. The outcome is a costed implementation plan to accelerate malaria elimination in both countries.

RAM is seeking additional funding for the project (USD43,000) via a Rotary Global Grant, so if any of your clubs or Districts would like to participate - in this or in any RAM projects - please contact us!

**Vanuatu**

**A malaria-free Vanuatu is within reach.** Vanuatu was recently included in the WHO E2025 target for malaria elimination.

In 2020, jointly with NZ District 9910, RAM received a Rotary Foundation Global Grant of USD110,000 for the “End Malaria in Vanuatu – for Good” program. The program will train and equip a national indoor residual spraying team in hot spot locations in Malampa and Sanma provinces. However, implementation of this program, along with a RAM-funded household mapping project has been delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions and health staff involvement in the rollout of covid vaccinations.

RAM Australia’s Southern Region is still happy to accept donations to help Vanuatu fund priority activities in its National Strategic Plan.

**Solomon Islands**

You might have heard of the Adopt A Village program which started in the 1990s in the Solomon Islands to supply bed nets to whole villages. When the Global Fund took over national supply of nets, RAM turned the funds to provide tools to villages to enable them to keep their villages free of mosquito breeding areas.

Working closely with RAM Solomon Islands and the Rotary Club of Honiara, RAM Australia provided tools to 160 villages from 2013 to 2017 for a cost of around AUD$200,000. The program has had mixed success and RAM has paused further funding pending an evaluation.

You’ll hear about a new project being developed in the Solomon Islands in one of the next presentations.

[RAM Australia is currently working with RAM Solomon Islands, the Rotary Club of Honiara, and WHO Solomon Islands on a pilot project to trial a surveillance model for active case detection of malaria in high transmission areas of Honiara.

The project will involve teams going house to house. Patients with fever will be tested with Rapid Diagnostic Tests and positive cases will be treated with antimalarial drugs. It will also include education and training material. If the pilot is successful it may be adopted as a model for other parts of the country and other countries in the region.]

**PhD Scholarship**

RAM has funded a PhD scholarship for Dr Edgar Pollard from the Solomon Islands who recently completed his PhD on mosquito behaviour at the Australian Institute for Tropical Health and Medicine at James Cook University in Cairns.

Edgar is now working for the WHO in the Solomon Islands and is a key contributor to developing the new RAM project.

RAM is currently in discussions with James Cook University to support a PhD student from PNG with a top-up scholarship for the final year of his study.

**‘Finish the Fight’ Campaign**

RAWCS/RAM has formed a strategic partnership with the Global Fund to accelerate malaria elimination in the Western Pacific Rim.

This partnership will build on a fundraising campaign aiming to raise US$12 million over a five-year period to scale up support for malaria elimination programs in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Timor Leste.

The Finish the Fight Campaign is targeting large corporate and individual philanthropic supporters for large-scale projects.

[Our efforts to date through RAM are invaluable in addressing immediate malaria needs at the community level and we have contributed to saving thousands of lives. We are not going to stop doing this.

But, as we have seen with Rotary’s push in the global eradication of polio, it will take more than barbecues and mango drives to fully rid the world, or even our region, of malaria.

We are calling on Rotary Districts, clubs and Rotarians to use your networks and contacts to promote the Finish the Fight Campaign so that we can reach the target of raising 12 million USD over five years.]

I recommend you check out the Finish the Fight website. There will also be a presentation at the virtual National Conference in November.

**RAM National Conference**

I hope that you will all be able to attend the **Rotarians Against Malaria Virtual National Conference** to be held on the 13th and 14th of November.

The Conference program includes expert speakers on a range of subjects that I’ve just skimmed the surface of today. You will hear more about RAM’s activities and also developments in malaria research, including vaccine research, and progress towards malaria elimination in our region. If last year’s virtual conference is anything to go by, it will be a really interesting and informative event.

***Malaria vaccine research***

*The Australian Malaria Vaccine Project is a project of Rotary District 9640. More than $1.2 million has been raised to support work on the malaria vaccine PlasProtecT® being undertaken at the Institute of Glycomics, at Griffith University in Queensland.*

*The project is one of the few in the world working on a whole parasite vaccine that targets the blood stage of the malaria parasite. Laboratory studies are showing promising results and the plans for a Phase I trial of this vaccine in 2022 are progressing well.*

*This work has been made possible through the contributions of Rotarians.*

*Of course many labs around the world are working on malaria vaccines. The University of Oxford group that developed the Astra Zeneca Covid 19 vaccine that many of us have received has developed a vaccine that has proved to be 77% effective in preventing malaria in children in a small early trial in Burkina Faso. Further trials are under way in several African countries.*