LOOKING FOR AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE PROJECT THAT SAVES LIVES?

Malaria is preventable and treatable. Yet, the disease kills one child every two minutes. Rotarians Against Malaria, in conjunction with governments in each of its partner countries, is working to eliminate this deadly disease.

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THE malaria parasite *Plasmodium* is carried by infected female *Anopheles* mosquitoes and transferred to humans during a blood meal. In malaria endemic countries, children under five; pregnant women; farmers and forest workers are vulnerable. The poor are disproportionately affected.

Globally, over the past 20 years, progress against malaria was impressive but has now stalled. The recent WHO-approved first malaria RTS,S vaccine, *Mosquirix*, may reduce child mortality in African nations and other regions with moderate to high malaria transmission of *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria. However, *Mosquirix* is not a panacea for malaria. The vaccine has low efficacy, and WHO has called for the use of the vaccine with other tools for malaria prevention and treatment,

PICTURED: RAM team members Dr John Wettenhall, left, District Governor Nominee Andrea Grosvenor and Peter McKenzie.
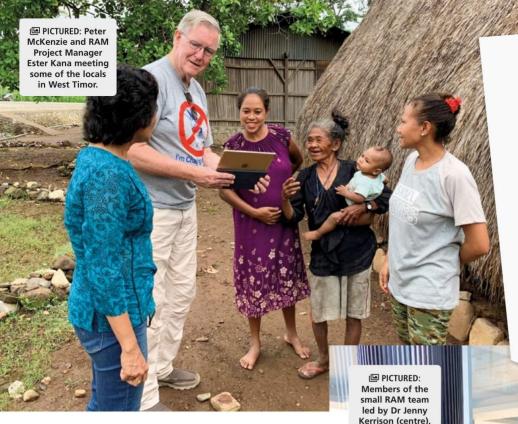
to benefit from the synergistic effect of the combined interventions.

Relevant to us, progress in the Western Pacific Region (WPR) towards achieving the malaria Global Technical Strategy 2030 targets is off track.

Through generous donations from Rotarians, RAM Australia contributes to ending malaria in five countries: PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste and West Timor (Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia). Timor-

Rotarians are encouraged to adopt a RAM project or learn how to apply for and manage a global grant in malaria work. **Contact Dr Jenny Kerrison via national.ram@rawcs.org.au.**

📷 PICTURED: Peter McKenzie and RAM Project Manager Ester Kana meeting some of the locals in West Timor.

📷 PICTURED: Members of the small RAM team led by Dr Jenny Kerrison (centre), including Chander Bhatia, of the Rotary Club of Kupang Central (seated right).

Leste, Vanuatu and West Timor are now close to malaria elimination. In contrast, malaria is increasing in PNG and the Solomon Islands.

Working closely with governments in partner countries, RAM's key areas of support included the provision of long-lasting insecticidal nets, indoor residual spraying equipment and insecticides. This year, RAM projects included training staff and community volunteers in malaria surveillance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically reduced funding to RAM Australia. To continue its commitment to its partner countries, in 2020-21 RAM successfully initiated and 'brokered' four successful Rotary global grants.

Through the West Timor grant, the Rotary Club of Hillarys, WA, is working with the Rotary Club of Kupang Central, Indonesia, and the government to train and post village malaria cadres at remote, illegal entry points along the international border between West Timor and Timor-Leste.

In West Timor, cadres will conduct home visits, test fever cases with rapid diagnostic test and treat uncomplicated malaria. RAM, in partnership with Cross Sector Development Partnerships Initiative, is also conducting community assessments across Nusa Tenggara Timur Province and Timor-Leste. The project is funded by the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance.

Results will be available to Rotary clubs interested in submitting a global grant for regencies in the Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, including West Timor.

Likewise, in the Solomon Islands, RAM Australia and RAM Solomon Islands are working with the government to conduct malaria surveillance via home visits. The 'search for fever, test, and treat' approach will see quick reductions in malaria incidence.

Preventing a malaria rebound will be important in the above projects.

RAM's key message is that it costs less to eliminate malaria now than to treat severe malaria, which creates additional burden on developing countries' already fragile health system. It is certainly less costly than the loss of lives.