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Rotarians Against Malaria Chairman's Newsletter

February 2016

To all the representatives of Rotarians Against Malaria and our family of supporters and friends: Happy New Year!

2016 is a year full of opportunity for all of us to continue our efforts to drive down malaria and give the chance of a better life to families throughout our near neighbour nations.

Last year WHO reported that 438,000 people lost their lives to malaria across the globe but this terrible figure is a significant improvement on the losses of over a million people per annum only a few years ago. We still have more than 200 million cases per annum and so the hard times and poverty that this causes is still very real. But! We are slowly but surely making progress and there is enough confidence that this disease can be defeated that the WHO has now set a target of 2040 for its total eradication.

This newsletter includes reports from our frontline workers, information about our programs and an invitation to you all to contribute your ideas about the best way to raise community awareness about the ramifications of the ongoing malaria burden and what we are doing to counter it, as well as a call for your ideas about a new logo and slogan for RAM. The work we do is important and very meaningful so let's share thoughts on how we can freshen it up!

Best Wishes for an active and satisfying year contributing to RAM.

David Pearson .

RAM PNG.

The following is an up-dated review of RAM work completed in PNG in 2015 prepared by Project Manager Tim Freeman:-

RAM is the Principal Recipient to Global Fund Round 8 for the delivery of LLINs throughout Papua New Guinea and we completed a major Round Eight contract; November 2009 to March 2015. From April 2015 we have commenced a program under the ' New Funding Model'. Sadly this Model has less money than previous years so now some areas above 2000m are not covered (e.g. Kandep in Enga) and many areas in the highlands plus Lae and Port Moresby now have distribution restricted to only households with children under five years of age.

A total of 849,169 LLINs were delivered to households during 2015 bringing the total for Phase 1 and 2 of the previous Global Fund contract to 6,616,276 LLINs. The impact on malaria has been massive in most places. Clinical

malaria incidence has fallen by as much as 70%, following a distribution of nets in a district, and the recorded prevalence of malaria has fallen by 75% in some regions.

People have been generally very happy with the program. Teams worked well despite many problems and 271,966 LLINs were delivered in the last quarter. A lot of RAM officers worked hard and efficiently resulting in 93% of target being reached for household level which is a reasonable result and no one was injured.

Recent program constraints have included, weather delayed flights, flooded roads, a ship running aground at Milne Bay, landslides, tribal fights, drought causing low rivers, inefficiencies caused by trying to use free services offered by well-intentioned third parties and routine 'third world' field staff management issues.



RAM Solomon Islands.

Currently our main program in the Solomon Islands is 'Healthy Villages' where villagers develop a plan of work to remove mosquito breeding areas near their homes, apply to the Government Health Promotion Director for approval and RAM supplies the tools for approved plans so the community can undertake the work. To date 68 villages have benefited and 81 more have been approved, at an estimated cost of \$142,000. RAM is currently fund raising to meet this need and expected extensions as more villages are approved. In the second half of 2015 a further \$30,000 was forwarded to support the program but currently the demand is greater than the funds we have at hand.

We are currently preparing a Rotary Foundation Global Grant Application and several DG's have indicated that they would support the initiative with District Designated (Foundation) Funds. Christine Williams in D9820 continues to promote Healthy Villages as the DG's Partner project and recently we were grateful to receive a \$1000 grant from the Pink Umbrella Foundation through Eastern Region RAWCS.

RAM PhD Student Edgar Pollard.

Edgar has just returned from his first field sampling trip back to the Solomon Islands with his supervisor Prof. Tom Burkot. This trip was an unexpected opportunity and the travel was funded by a generous donation from RC Hornsby D9685. Edgar reports:-

“My studies will aim to look at where anopheles hotspots exist within a village and what are the factors that are related to these locations. I will also be looking at mosquito movement within and around a village. A main method that I will be using is in the form of barrier fences which are basically shade cloth that is 1.8x15m set up in and around villages to intercept mosquitos as they rest on them. This trip involved setting up and collecting mosquitos from the barrier fences, learning to identify mosquitoes and differentiate Anopheles from Non-Anopheles and processing mosquitoes in the field ready for lab work and DNA analysis back in Australia. The trip also served to establish relationships with colleagues from Vector Control in the Solomon Islands and also with the people in villages selected for my study.

Initial results indicate that 7-10pm is the crucial movement time for Anopheles mosquitoes, however we did find some resting on the fences at midnight and will trial a 6-6 survey next time. It seems that the distance from the sea is an important factor for Anopheles movement, with fewer mosquitos closer to the sea. We also found that mosquitoes can be found in unlikely places including some that we thought would yield no results and so we will need to be thorough with our sampling.”



Timor Leste

I'm afraid our communication with the Timor Leste NMCP is a bit sketchy at the moment and we are still awaiting confirmation that all the maternal LLINs supplied last year have all been distributed as well as any new proposals for RAM to assist. I'll keep trying.

Malaria Global strategy.

A Discussion Paper prepared by Steve Carroll RAM Chairman D0670.

Steve has put a lot of thought into how we promote Rotary's role in the accelerating international push to eradicate malaria. Steve has also suggested programs for fund raising and awareness raising and a call for a catchy title, logo and slogan for the program calling for feedback from all the Chairs. I will circulate the entire discussion paper to you all soon but here is a taste:-

Discussion Paper: The Next Major Challenge in World Community Health.

The fight to achieve global Polio eradication is in sight with only 51 cases reported in the last 12 months all centred on Pakistan and Afghanistan. The stage has therefore been reached where we need to commence the planning phase for Rotary's next global health initiative while in no way detracting from current Polio eradication efforts.

The fight against Polio has brought together some of the best minds in the world. We have supported their efforts with funding channels, administrative systems, reporting structures and feet on the ground. Overlaying this activity we have developed levels of cross border collaboration that we cannot afford to allow to disperse.

Global health initiatives don't finish or commence overnight. We don't simply declare one initiative over and then commence the next. While we continue the Polio eradication fight we need to start the development of what will for now be the junior partner in our Global Health focus. This paper challenges us to consider what our next major health challenge should be. We suggest that Malaria eradication should be that initiative.

Rotary Ride Around Australia Against Malaria RRAAAM

Steve and Doreen Carroll's RRAAAM initiative raised \$30,000 as well as increasing awareness across Australia of the damage that malaria does to the lives and economies of our near neighbours.

After a self-funded trip to PNG and the Solomon Islands, to determine where these funds could best be directed as an independent project, they concluded that although RAMs programs in these areas could always use more funding it was unclear how an independent new initiative could fit in. As a result they are currently investigating how the RRAAAM funds could be used to assist in eliminating malaria from Tanna Island in Vanuatu.

Tanna is the most southerly point in the Pacific where malaria still exists and it has been the subject of detailed malaria research by the Australian Army Malaria Institute and others. It is also the location of numerous RAWCS building projects some of which have received RAM funding in the past. It will be interesting to see how this develops and where RAM might be able to assist in the future.

Malaria Awareness Day.

Malaria Awareness Day is again coming up on 30th April and we are keen that RAM Chairs in every district take this opportunity to promote community understanding of the global campaign to eradicate malaria by 2040. WHO estimates that international malaria control programs, since the year 2000, have saved the lives of 5.9 million children and RAM can be proud of our contribution to this in our part of the world.

I know that many RAM Chairs have been considering how we can develop a National coordinated program to promote Malaria Awareness Day and I encourage you to share any ideas that you have by sending them to me or National Secretary Virginia to circulate to the group. Currently we are considering approaching supermarket type retailers, with a national presence, to sponsor and support a national relay or similar activity that can proceed District to District across the country involving as many Rotary Clubs as possible. Clearly we will not have this organised in time for 30th April 2016 but we have to start somewhere.

So I encourage you all to seek clusters of Rotary Clubs in your Districts that could engage in a relay or similar activity this year. It could involve passing a bednet (as a RAM Baton) from hand to hand and Club to Club to promote awareness and fund raising through sponsorship. I'm sure we could source additional bednets if required and the orange MAD brochures distributed last year are not date stamped and so are usable again this year. Let me know if you need more and if there is sufficient demand we could do another print run.

RAM Logo and printing. Call for your ideas for a fresh Logo and Slogan.

RAWCS has recently launched it's new logo:



This has the approval of the RI style police and we have been told to cease using the old RAWCS logo. I am still awaiting guidance from RAWCS as to how we are to use the RAM logo in conjunction with this but apparently we are not to use the old Rotary wheel in whatever logo we adopt. Apparently RI has never been comfortable about the use of Rotary or Rotarians in our name but we will let that sleeping dog lie! Obviously this affects any future publications and so I am seeking a clear lead from RAWCS so that we can proceed with a new pamphlet as well as other printing and promotional needs.

In the meantime Deputy National Chairman George Mills and, as indicated above, RAM D9670 Chair Steve Carroll, are keen that we seek suggestions for a fresh new logo. This should not include the Rotary wheel and it would be safest to simply incorporate RAM as our name rather than spelling it out. Please submit your ideas to George at gecym@yahoo.com.au or our National Secretary Virginia at vm.turner@bigpond.com as well as any ideas for a catchy slogan e.g. "RAM - swatting malaria!".

Promoting the malaria cause within Rotary International.

One of RAM's stated goals is to encourage RI to adopt Malaria as the next Global health challenge following the final eradication of Polio. The RAM Executive committee will be stepping up our 'behind-the-scenes' lobbying of the RI board to achieve this and hopefully they will understand that Rotary has much to offer in the Global campaign against malaria, once an effective mass producible vaccine has been developed. We hope that both the vaccine and Rotary's willingness to commence will roughly coincide in the early 2020's.

In the meantime we are aware that the Rotary Club of Titsey, located just south of London in the UK, has put up a resolution to the RI Council on Legislation stating that: *"the Board of Directors of Rotary International consider adopting and extending the Rotarians Against Malaria campaign of Rotary Australia World Community Service as the model for the next worldwide program of eradication to follow the current PolioPlus program."*

Although undoubtedly well intentioned, this resolution [No. 16-128] may not be helpful to our medium term strategy. This is because; firstly, it is likely to be defeated as I expect most Districts will follow RI's line and not be prepared to contemplate any new Global program until Polio is finished (even my own DG is of this view) and secondly, as it stands, the resolution is about RAM rather than the global fight to eradicate malaria which would likely attract more support.

Obviously we see RAM as a good model in our region and we are seeking to see it adopted in other Rotary Regions, in fact we are currently speaking to the Indonesian Rotary Districts to encourage them to set up a similar project, but the scale of program that we envisage RI could adopt would likely require a different structure and branding. For this reason we have requested that RC Titsey withdraw the resolution.

Rotary Volunteer trips for RAM

Following RAM's successful volunteer team involvement with LLIN distributions in Manatuto and Liquisa Health Districts in Timor Leste, many Rotarians and Rotaractors have expressed an interest in volunteering for similar 'hands-on' trips. We have had several discussions with RAM's Program Managers in PNG and Solomon Islands seeking opportunities for Rotary Volunteers to get involved; these discussions are ongoing and we hope to have some proposals soon.

Understandably the Project Managers are somewhat reluctant to commit to the concept, as from their point of view the current programs are running smoothly, without the assistance of untrained volunteers, and such visits will just increase their workloads in coordinating the logistics. The challenge is to identify part of the program delivery which is located in reasonably accessible parts of the countries where the transport and accommodation arrangements are acceptable and safe for our volunteers.

Notwithstanding these concerns, we are keen to arrange for these trips to increase the number of Rotarians, Rotaractors and supporters who have had hands-on experience of the programs in the field because we value the enthusiasm that we know they will bring home. However, it should be understood that whilst the volunteers will be able to assist with program delivery in a limited way, they will mostly be observers. With the benefit of our experience from the last Timor trip it will be wise to build in a secondary objective, for these team visits, such as distributing resources to schools in the same areas or also assisting with RAWCS projects in the same area.

UNITAID

UNITAID is an organisation overseen by the WHO that has the following stated purpose; "The purpose of UNITAID is to contribute to the achievement of global long-term goals for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria through its interventions in product markets."

They work closely with the Global Fund with the aim of identifying new drugs or control strategies that could assist in controlling malaria, AIDS and TB by seeking to accelerate development of good ideas and to overcome blockages in the rapid distribution of effective intervention techniques by circumventing patents and other limitations. UNITAID has several advisory groups providing feedback to their board. RAM is now in the NGO advisory group and I have joined the malaria working group as part of that.

Facebook and web site

There have been recent postings on RAM's Facebook news feed by Roshni and by Evan Burrell who also supports the RAWCS Facebook page. Check them out and look for relevant snippets of RAM activities to pass on to keep this site fresh.

RAWCS now has a new look, more powerful website www.rawcs.org.au which includes easy links to the RAM web site www.ramaustralia.org. As of October the RAM web site was right up to date with reliable information on our programs, conferences, reports and organisation. Over the next six months or so we will consider if there are benefits in up-dating the format.

Conferences

Make sure you put the **RAM Conference** dates in your 2016 Diary. The conference will be held at Ciloms Airport Lodge near Tullamarine (Melbourne) airport on 20th and 21st August 2016. We anticipate that there will be site visits to Research Institutes in Melbourne, for those interested.

For those of you who have a technical interest in Malaria Research you might consider attending the 'International Congress for Tropical Medicine and Malaria 2016 (ICTMM 2016)' from 18 - 22 September 2016. Details are at <http://tropicalmedicine2016.com/> .

David Pearson : National Chairman RAM, 8th Feb. 2016.