

Rotarians Against Malaria

Annual Report 2008-2009

It is with significant pride and satisfaction that I present my second annual report. This has been an exceptional year in so many ways. It could only have been achieved by the continued enthusiasm and commitment by those Rotarians who mostly are heavily involved at the District and Regional level within the RAWCS structure, as well as the ongoing dedication of the members of the national executive most of whom have maintained a high level of involvement dedication over many years. Even by Rotary standards it can be argued that no other area of activity in which Rotarians are continuously and actively involved in Australia and with our near neighbours has been able to maintain such a high standard of endeavour with outstanding results as has RAM.

Our stated objective continues to be: “The prevention of mortality, and a reduction in morbidity and social and economic loss caused by malaria through a progressive improvement and strengthening of local and national capabilities in malaria control.”

The RAM catch-cry over the past two years has been described as Communication, Communication, Communication.

The improvement in our communication has been achieved in a number of ways including:

- The introduction of a quarterly newsletter;
- The development of a new website – www.ramaustralia.org
- The introduction of a new logo;
- The Malaria Awareness Day Campaign.

Acceptance of our newsletter has been widespread and continues to be very well received. Direct circulation has increased from just under 115 in August 2007 to currently about 180 – our original target was to achieve a direct circulation of 200 by June 2010. A number of districts also post the newsletter to their website as a matter of course. In addition, with effect from the August 2009 newsletter, a contact in RIBI is now distributing our newsletter to all 29 districts in that region.

The development of a new website was of critical importance as the old website had passed its use by date and was difficult to access. It remains a work in progress with some past history still to be identified and posted to the site. Major headings include the Adopt A Village Programme (AAV) and Malaria Awareness Day. All RAM newsletters and reports are included as well as contact information including where clubs and personal donations should be sent.

The introduction of a new logo developed in District 9710 has one major advantage. Australia is now in the centre of the logo. Change to the new logo will occur over time.

Malaria Awareness Day was celebrated in Australia on 30 April 2009. As World Malaria Day had been recognised by WHO as 25 April, we decided that as this date has special significance in both Australia and New Zealand, we needed to alter the date in Australia so as not to clash with Anzac Day.

Malaria Awareness Day had two objectives, namely, 1) Improvement in Rotarian and Public Awareness, and 2) Membership Development.

The Malaria Awareness Day campaign was multi-faceted with significant highlights being: Article in April 2009 RDU including front cover photo; Article in March 2009 issue of RI Health & Hunger Resource Group Newsletter; the development of 'A Community Statement' which enables Rotarians and the general public to appreciate what we are doing; articles in District Governor's Newsletters; A TV Community Service Announcement which was broadcast on a number of networks; some radio broadcasting; numerous activities by clubs and districts.

The Adopt A Village Programme continues to be a huge success story. During the past year total donations, including General and Malaria Awareness Day, and donations from overseas sources, approximated \$132,000. A tremendous effort and wonderful support from so many contributors.

Total contributions to AAV currently total approximately \$775,000. We sincerely express our thanks to all districts, clubs, and individuals for their ongoing support.

The current Health, Hunger and Humanity Grant in the Solomon Islands is continuing in the Honiara urban area, with a targeted completion date of December 2010. Numerous volunteer teams from Australian districts are engaged in a variety of work, including constructing storage sheds and staff housing, in support of the Malaria Elimination Program, with money for this aspect of the work being allocated by the Australian Government through AusAid.

RAM in Papua New Guinea is currently the principal recipient of Australian sourced donated funds for AAV. The Rotary Club of Port Moresby, through the RAM Programme, has been responsible for the purchase of more than 2,350,000 nets for the first 75 districts of the 89 districts in PNG. In addition, RAM PNG advises the PNG Department of Health on Malaria and Global Fund related issues.

The AAV programme in PNG continues to receive reports of successful outcomes with big reductions in the number of malaria morbidity cases in districts where 100% coverage had taken place. The results vary from 50% to 80% fewer cases. Districts continue to report big reductions in the number of premature births and a general increase in the birth weight. This is directly attributable to the use of Insecticide Treated Bed Nets and the general improvement in health that the people are now enjoying as a result of this intervention.

In late May 2009, Rotarians and guests attended (at their own expense) a two-day National Conference at Caboolture, Queensland, to review RAM activities and plan for the future. Presentations were made by a variety of people. Major decisions included the need to upgrade our current brochure in time for the next reprint, and to develop a Forward Statement on RAM that will address the evolution from simply the supply of bed nets to a more holistic approach to improving village living conditions. As is usual a most successful and rewarding conference. A RAM National Conference is again being planned for May 2010.

PDG Bill Dethlefs
Chairman, 2007-2010
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