

Rotarians Against Malaria

Annual Report 2009-2010

The past year has again seen significant successes being recorded. So many of these successes are the result of the on-going initiatives put in place over a number of years. Our flagship RAM program, Adopt A Village (AAV) is the outstanding reason for the successes we continue to achieve.

Nevertheless, I firmly believe that the successes we have achieved are due in no small measure to the passionate support and commitment provided by numerous Rotarians throughout Australia and our near neighbours. This is evident so regularly through the invaluable advice and assistance provided by each member of the executive team, some of whom have maintained their interest over a long period.

The objective of Rotarians Against Malaria (RAM) is 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.

RAM provides leadership, financial and strategic support to implement its mission through: control strategies; education; research; partnering with other funding providers; and working collaboratively with Governments in our Region (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste). RAM is working on this combination of ways of combating malaria as we recognise that no one approach in isolation will be successful.

The RAM catch-cry over the past three years has been described as Communication, Communication, Communication. We have continued with the communication modes we have so successfully used in the previous two years, namely, quarterly newsletter, website, Malaria Awareness Day Campaign, and our Annual National Conference.

The AAV program continues to be highly successful in both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The successes in Papua New Guinea attributed to the nation wide fight against malaria include an approximately 50% reduction in mortality; big reductions in the number of premature births; a general increase in birth weight; many children's wards in hospitals enjoying a significant reduction in malaria cases or all beds in these wards are completely empty of such cases. In relation to the last point, the reduction in the incidence of malaria is an increase in children attending school. The successful outcomes being achieved in PNG is directly attributable to the use of Long Life Insecticide Treated Bed Nets which has resulted in a general improvement in health that the people are now enjoying as a result of this intervention.

The Solomon Islands are also very successful in their endeavours, having recorded, in some areas, an overall reduction in the incidence of malaria from over 330 per 1,000 population per year to below 20 per 1,000 population per year. During 2010 over 360,000 bed nets will be distributed. This country is continuing with the malaria elimination program for both Temotu and Isabel Provinces. Based on results achieved so far in Temotu Province, malaria elimination in the Solomon Islands is likely to be feasible.

In addition, as a practical and natural extension of AAV, the Ministry of Health in the Solomon Islands has agreed that villages which agree to implement appropriate management

structures will receive tools, equipment and training to enable them to eliminate breeding sites in and around their villages.

We are working towards introducing the Adopt A Village program to Timor Leste.

We introduced a quarterly newsletter in August 2007 with a direct distribution of about 115. A target was set to achieve a direct circulation of 200 by no later than 30 June 2010. This target has been achieved. In addition, some districts are posting the newsletter to their website and circulating it to certain district groupings and even to all clubs in their district. Some clubs are now circulating the newsletter to every member in their club. Circulation also occurs internationally including all 29 districts in RIBI. We are aware that one Australian Research Institute ensures the newsletter is available to their staff.

We again conducted a Malaria Awareness Day Campaign using 30 April as our preferred date in lieu of World Malaria Day which is observed on ANZAC Day. Our objective was to increase Public and Rotarian Awareness of this dreadful disease and to provide a positive influence with membership development in each of our clubs. Accordingly, we focused on two aspects that could produce the best outcome, TV and Radio.

WIN Television – the largest free-to-air commercial network in Australia – extended the 30-second Community Service Announcement (CSA) to virtually all of their stations by adding South Australia both regional and Channel 9 in Adelaide, and their regional station in Western Australia to their coverage. Overall, we received the benefit of about 240 broadcasts.

Two CSAs were developed for the nearly 400 community radio stations in Australia, one for broadcast in March the other for broadcast in the week that included Malaria Awareness Day. There is no way of knowing how many stations responded to our request to broadcast. However, I am aware of positive feedback from a number of sources. It would seem that the most outstanding result was a network of nearly 80 radio stations covering Queensland, Northern Territory and South Australia.

We were fortunate that international company, Vestergaard Frandsen, provided sponsorship. They have since advised that they will again support us next year with an increased amount.

One of the most important events is our annual National Conference held this year in mid-May. Attendees came from most parts of Australia as well as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The enthusiasm, involvement and commitment generated by each person provided us with renewed energy as we continue our fight against this dreadful disease. The dinner keynote speaker was Prof. Ron Quinn, Director of the Eskitis Institute for Cell & Molecular Therapies at Griffith University, Brisbane.

RAM Australia accepted an invitation from the Pacific Islands Regional Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism (PIRMCC is made up of 13 island countries in the South Pacific Ocean) to be a full voting member of that organisation. PDG Peter Thomas is our representative and has since been formally elected to the Executive Committee of PIRMCC.

This report completes my third and final year as Chairman. It has been an exceptional period in so many ways highlighted to a significant degree by worthwhile reductions experienced in both mortality and morbidity. I am thankful for the opportunity to be so directly involved in our fight against this dreadful disease.

PDG Bill Dethlefs
Chairman, 2007-2010
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