

Movement Against Malaria gets media support

Actor Robin Padilla promotes use of mosquito nets pro bono

Malaria is endemic in 63 of the Philippines' 79 provinces, and is the eighth leading cause of morbidity in the country. Among the primary factors hindering malaria prevention and cure are widespread misconceptions about the disease. Thus, on 4 July 2007, Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Inc., Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM), Department of Health (DOH), and the World Health Organization (WHO) organized a Media Orientation and Engagement on Malaria at the Manila Golf Club, Forbes Park, Makati City to solicit media support in raising public awareness on malaria.

DOH-Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) Medical Specialist Dorin Bustos reports that 25 percent of people inflicted with malaria die from the illness and its complications. "The good news is that malaria can be prevented and cured. Malarial drugs have 95 percent efficiency rate," she says. "Thus," actor Robin Padilla concludes, "ignorance will be the only reason for our inability to combat malaria".

WHO data in 2003 show that 94 percent of malaria incidence occurs in 26 of the 63 endemic provinces. Of which, Palawan, Tawi-tawi, Sulu, Apayao, and Quirino account for 66 percent, and 93 percent of nationwide recorded deaths due to malaria. With a grant from GFATM, the partners are implementing malaria control measures to reduce malaria morbidity and mortality rates in these 5 provinces by 70 percent against 2000 figures by year 2010.

The program, tagged "Movement Against Malaria" (MAM) will run for 5 years until 2011, and is seen to reach as many as 2 million people. Among the strategies adopted by MAM is promoting wider use of available technologies that prevent the spread of the disease, including Long-Lasting Insecticide-Treated Nets (LLIN) which are lined with insecticide and remain effective for as long as 5 to 7 years.

Padilla, who has previously lent his service pro bono to the malaria control program, agreed to lend MAM his image for posters promoting LLINs. "People can avoid malaria simply by sleeping under mosquito nets," Robin says. "I hope that we will be able to educate affected communities that sleeping under mosquito



(L-R) Actor Robin Padilla, Department of Health-Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (DOH-RITM) Medical Specialist Dorin Bustos, DOH National Center for Disease Prevention and Control Director IV Dr. Yolanda Oliveros, World Health Organization Malaria Scientist Rahman Velayudhan, and DOH National Center for Disease Prevention and Control- Infectious Disease Office Division Chief Dr. Mario Baquilod.

nets remains the most effective way to avoid contracting malaria and prevent it from spreading." Proper use of mosquito nets has been proven to effectively bring down malaria incidence by 70 percent in Africa, which MAM hopes to replicate.

More than 400,000 LLINs have been procured and currently being distributed in the five target provinces. In addition, at least 35,000 houses across the 5 provinces have been covered by indoor residual insecticide spraying.

Asked why he lent his service to MAM pro bono, Padilla replied, "I felt strongly about the program because I learned that our Muslim brothers are not only battling bullets to survive, but also mosquitoes". Bustos pointed out that while there has been a steady decline in malaria cases nationwide, recorded cases in Sulu and Tawi-tawi show increase in incidence.

WHO Malaria Scientist Rahman Velayudhan informed that while vaccination may be our best shot at eliminating malaria, a vaccine may not be available for at least the next 7 years.

MAM adopts 3 other strategies to control malaria: building a wide stakeholder network to help curb the disease, early detection and prompt treatment, and strengthening local capability to implement community-based malaria control measures.

MAM is expanding its network to elicit resources necessary to successfully implement and sustain the program through the Philippine Malaria Network (PMN). The Philippine Association of Medical Technologists (PAMET) of Palawan extends manpower support for diagnosis and validation of blood smears, while the Tawi-tawi Family Life Foundation, World Wildlife Fund, and the Sulu Ulama Council for Peace and Development each pledged to help in the advocacy. Agape Rural Program will help in distributing mosquito nets.

Like our many partners, we encourage interested individuals and organizations to join and participate in the fight against malaria. For further inquiries, please email the Philippine Malaria Network thru dugarganian@pilipinasshellfoundation.org



(Left; L-R) Department of Health (DOH) National Center for Disease Prevention and Control Director IV Dr. Yolanda Oliveros, Pilipinas Shell Foundation Program Manager and Grant Manager Marvi Rebueno-Trudeau, Actor Robin Padilla, DOH National Center for Disease Prevention and Control- Infectious Disease Office Division Chief Dr. Mario Baquilod, and WHO Malaria Scientist Rahman Velayudhan; (R) Net soaking activity for Movement Against Malaria