

In April 2008, International Malaria Expert Dr. John Storey visited the country and is convinced that the Movement Against Malaria (MAM) has already achieved its five-year goal of reducing malaria mortality by 70%. Dr. Storey considers the efficient management of the program and extensive involvement of partners as the key factors in this accomplishment.

Based on Dr. Storey's evaluation, he recommends, "three of five provinces covered by MAM -- Apayao, Quirino, and Sulu -- may now smoothly shift from malaria control activities to malaria elimination strategies to reach zero indigenous transmission by 2015 and be declared malaria-free by 2020". On the other hand, he advises, "malaria control activities must be consolidated in the Provinces of Palawan and Tawi-tawi with the view of reducing malaria to more manageable levels by 2015 and then reaching zero indigenous transmission by 2020".

Dr. Storey reminds implementers that for malaria elimination to take place and become a successful undertaking, political commitment must be obtained, partnerships must be strengthened and expanded, surveillance must be more regularly and stringently conducted, quality assurance and quality control systems must be instituted, and vector control strategies must be rationalized.

In the case of Palawan and Tawi-tawi, Dr. Storey recommends the same strategies being undertaken. He pointed out that the geography and difficult terrain of both provinces poses challenges in moving people and logistics. He stresses the need to educate patients and parents on maintaining a healthy diet for treated

Malaria Expert John Storey

conducts external evaluation of
malaria control programs in
Apayao and Palawan

and cured malaria patients, apart from informing them of the importance of treatment compliance. "Responsibility does not stop once the tablets go down."

During a trip to Apayao and Palawan, Dr. Storey had the opportunity to observe MAM implementation and the status of malaria in both areas.

The objective of his visit to Apayao was to evaluate the readiness of the province to move to the pre-elimination phase. He applauded the high level of proficiency of microscopists in Apayao. However, he pointed out that the province needs an appropriate Quality Assurance system for Malaria Microscopy and has to engage in slide banking as these are prerequisites for malaria elimination.

Dr. Storey also visited the Municipality of Rizal in Palawan which consistently contributes the most number of malaria cases in the province. While visiting Barangay Ransang, he had the opportunity to observe how Barangay Microscopist Evelyn Paris and Rural Health Midwife Nenita Panguntulan handled the diagnosis and treatment of a child of the Tau't Bato tribe who

was heavily infected with *Plasmodium falciparum*. He commended their good performance and dedication.

Dr. Storey reminds MAM movers that "malaria elimination is a decision that should never be entered into lightly as it involves 'raising the bar' on every one of the program activities". "We must remember that we deal on a daily basis with one of the world's most complex diseases... (involving) an insect vector with complex behaviors... and the human being who can exhibit the most complex but traditional habits and lifestyles that may interfere with what is being done for malaria elimination." He adds, "malaria is like a spring. If you let down your guard, it (malaria) will come back completely but, if you keep the pressure on for a long time, it will eventually never return."

Since 2003, Dr. Storey has served as International Consultant for different programs implemented by the World Health Organization, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, ACTMalaria, and the private sector. He holds a Masters of Health Personnel Education from the University of New South Wales, Australia. *Manites A. Manderi and Darius R. dela Cruz*

