

DRIVE AGAINST MALARIA

Drive Against Malaria invited by the Royal Geographical Society in London to give a lecture about the fight against malaria in Africa.

By: Hans de Jong

The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) is a world leading learned society and professional body that has been advancing geographical science and supporting its practitioners since 1830. RGS is the largest and most active of the scholarly geographical societies in the world. RGS is an independent organisation with a strong reputation for quality and dynamism.



The Society

The Society is based in central London where it welcomes 150,000 people a year to events and activities. As a registered charity, most of the Society's activities are accessible to all. The members support the work of RGS and receive further benefits. The membership ranges from professional geographers, researchers and teachers, to expeditioners and enthusiasts; some 14,000 people in more than 100 countries. Anyone can join – professionally as a Fellow or Chartered Geographer, as an enthusiast, Member or as a Young Geographer.

The history of the Society enshrines such famous names as Livingstone, Stanley, Scott, Shackleton, Hunt and Hillary. The Geographical Society of London was founded in 1830 as an institution to promote the advancement of geographical science. Like many learned societies, it started as a dining club in London, where select members held informal dinner debates on current scientific issues and ideas. Under the patronage of King William IV, it later became known as The Royal Geographical Society and was granted its Royal Charter under Queen Victoria in 1859.



The invitation

Drive Against Malaria was invited last month by the Royal Geographical Society in London to give a illustrated lecture about the fight against malaria in Africa and the biggest killer of children under the age of 5. David Robertson and Julia Samuël provided a unique insight into the 'Drive against Malaria' which has covered 159,000kms through 63 countries to the most remote corners of Africa, by driving a Land Rover Defender. Urgent attention about the growing threat of malaria is given. Mosquito nets and anti malaria treatment are given without charge to families with young children and pregnant women. Special guest speakers are David Warrell, Professor Emeritus of Tropical Medicine at the University of Oxford and David Overbosch, Director of the Travel Clinic and Harbor Hospital Tropical diseases in the Netherlands.

The Subject

MALARIA : The lives of 2.5 billion people are threatened by the Anopheles Mosquito. And one bite is enough. Bites from this mosquito can be prevented through the use of a mosquito net, and malaria itself be cured with modern medicine. But sadly, many of the people affected by this terrible disease live in areas that are hard to reach, and in which mosquito nets and effective medicines are rarely available. 90% of all malaria deaths (RBM) occur in sub-Saharan Africa – a region that is demanding, challenging, dangerous and unsafe.

For the past 10 years, The "Drive Against Malaria" has travelled through these regions and throughout Africa, crossing deserts, forests, swamps and mine fields in their efforts to reach out to communities in high malaria risk zones. David Robertson and Julia Samuel travelled from Cameroon to be at the RGS.

They have provided thousands of mosquito nets and medical treatment to the most inaccessible corners of Africa since 1999.

David Warrell, Professor Emeritus of Tropical Medicine at the University of Oxford

David Warrell, Professor Emeritus of Tropical Medicine at the University of Oxford has lived and worked as a physician, teacher and researcher in many tropical countries. And in 1979 he started the Oxford Tropical Medicine Research network whose units in Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Kenya and elsewhere have had a major research interest in malaria.

He has treated and studied malaria in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Kenya, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea and Peru and has written numerous scientific papers and book chapters on this subject.

He has been on the World Health Organization's Expert Advisory Panel on Malaria since 1989 and is consultant to the British Army on malariology.



David Warrell's subject of the evening was "Malaria and the burden on African Mothers and Children and the size of the problem".

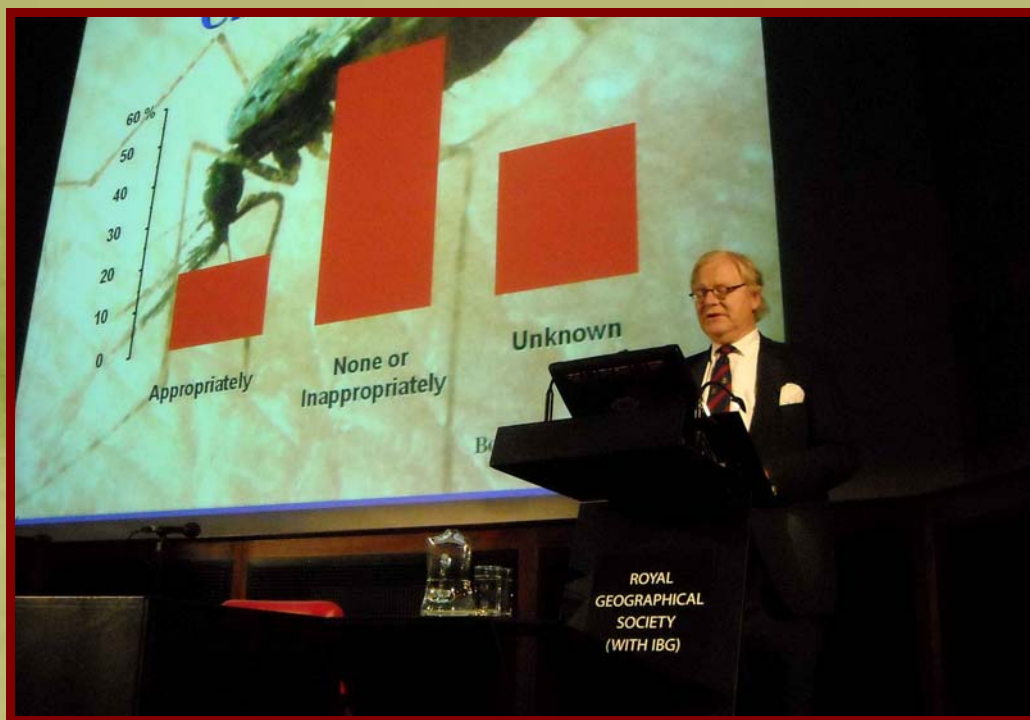
In the RGS he said: "I move to an aspect of malaria that is for the clinical doctors as myself. I like to introduce you to some of the African countries where I have been work from on malaria, and show you some of my patients. I want to give you an idea of why this disease is such an incredibly amassing killer. Plasmodium Falciparum that is one of the species of malaria that is the killer of human beings.

There is evidence of 500 million clinical attacks of malaria. 75% of attacks of the deadly Falciparum occur in Africa. Malaria is a killer and we know it is a threat of the lives of mothers and their babies and their unborn babies. There are deaths before immunity is developed. 10 % of the survivors among young children suffer from permanent brain damage. Despite this gloom: Malaria can be conquered with existing and established techniques. With the help of Drive Against Malaria and the dedication of Julia Samuël and David Robertson I think we have a real opportunity here to start making impact on this appalling disease in some of the un-explored and remote parts of Africa."

Dr. David Overbosch , Director of the Travel Clinic and Harbor Hospital of Tropical Diseases in the Netherlands

Dr. David Overbosch, FRCP, was born on 14th of July 1947 in Amersfoort, in the Netherlands. He studied medicine at Utrecht University, after which he trained to become a consultant in internal- and infectious diseases at the Harbour Hospital Rotterdam & Institute for Tropical Diseases. He worked in Surinam, Sudan and Egypt, among many other countries. From 1985 - 1996 he was consultant Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases and head of the teaching unit internal medicine at the Red Cross Hospital in The Hague. Since 1996 he is a consultant at the Harbour Hospital, Rotterdam and since October 2000 also director of The Travel Clinic and Institute for Tropical Diseases of the Harbour

Hospital. He is married and has three children. His main interests concern all aspects of Travel Medicine and Expatriate Health in developing countries. Malaria and travel-related diseases form the main part of his studies and teaching. He is consultant to the Port of Rotterdam.



David Overbosch said: “ Our concern is about travellers. The global problem of malaria has of course a far more dimension than just the travellers.

Millions of travellers yearly go around the world and contract several diseases. The World Travel Organisation is showing a picture of the year 2020, and we can see there is almost an exponential rise in travelling. Especially to Africa the travellers are increasing enormously. When we talk about malaria, the subject of this evening, we see it is a quit astonishing picture. You should look at the malaria index. The highest index are given in the poorest African countries. In these countries money and treatment is needed the most. The money is not there to fight malaria in this case. In the past we did not know that there is a very high correlation between malaria, death and age. And through the leek of funding, organisation, climate change, the rising number of month of malaria transmission, we get more malaria in Africa.”

The Drive Against Malaria: Julia Samuël and David Robertson

Julia Samuël

Julia Samuël is currently a prominent and tireless supporter of the Drive Against Malaria, the organisation in which she has been very actively involved for the past eight years.....”



In the RGS she said: “One of the worst aspects of this disease is the nature of its victims – pregnant women and children. This is the real tragedy of malaria.

Over the past 8 years I have visited 29 African countries in the Drive Against Malaria Land Rover. I would like to share a few of these experiences with you in South East Cameroon, in order that you may see the situations with which we are confronted on a daily basis. Bosquet is a small village in the middle of the forest, close to neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central Africa Republic. The people live far below poverty level. Even if they were able to afford the treatment, the closest hospital is 35 kilometres away. This seems like nothing, but when you have to make your way there on foot with sick children in your arms, it is an almost impossible challenge

Many mothers have lost more than one baby as a consequence of contracting malaria during pregnancy. This is an everyday tragedy. This is the daily reality among the poorest people in Africa.

This is why, every day that DRIVE AGAINST MALARIA spends doing this work, is of vital importance. After 8 years in Africa, I could write an entire book. And if I were to describe this book, and our experiences, and our work, in a few short words, I would say this. The majority of people in Africa live in extreme poverty. Many of them have never bought anything NEW in their entire lives. They have nothing...except each other. Their world is their family. Their lives are their children. And their children are dying.”

David Robertson

David Robertson is the founder of the DRIVE AGAINST MALARIA, a field malaria expert and consultant for UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health in Africa. He explored the globe in the 80ts and was shocked about the effect of malaria in the continent of

Africa. He contracted malaria several times himself. And started his campaign to fight malaria after his research in 1988: there was NO organisation that fights the biggest killer of young children.



He said: "We have just returned from the Eastern Cameroon , where we gave hundreds of families with young children, long lasting mosquito nets. For example in the east part of the country pygmies are an endangered tribe of hunter gatherers who have lived off the forest for thousands of years. The Baka pygmies are among the oldest populations of Africa They have little knowledge about money and have all they need in the forest. However due to activities of the industrialised world, malaria is spreading into their forest and their water is being poisoned by the influx of workers.

20 years ago I started my first overland expedition to drive from London to Cape Town. I sold my house in Bedford to buy a 4X4 and pay for the expedition. The journey began in Algiers, July 1988.

When we give mosquito nets we ask the people about protecting their environment – especially from the logging companies. Logging causes global warming as temperature in the forest are around 10 degrees cooler. Deforestation and malaria are closely connected. After machinery is driven through the forest, holes are left in the mud. Holes collect water to produce a new breeding ground for the anopheles mosquito. And daylight is allowed to penetrate through the forest canopy for the first time. Mosquitoes need direct daylight if its life cycle is to be

completed. And the raise in global temperature contributes towards the spread of malaria to places never effected before.....” ■

The reactions

- ▶ I really enjoyed the talk. It was great to have so many different perspectives on fighting malaria so everybody could relate to it, in one form or another.
- ▶ Many subjects of this evening were new to me: I am shocked to hear how many children and mothers are infected and the consequences of the disease.
- ▶ The combination of the speeches and the video films made the evening very interesting.
- ▶ I enjoyed the science especially being a biologist. the part on deforestation i really liked and had never thought of it before.
- ▶ It was not all doom and gloom: this evening inspired me because the solutions, given by Prof. Warrell and Dr. Overbosch, got a stage as well. It's great the Drive Against Malaria hit the right spot.
- ▶ Having a good panel and good invited people meant that interesting questions were asked and answered very well by the panel. The RGS is a very nice venue.
- ▶ I will remember this evening for the rest of my live.
- ▶ I think Julia Samuël should write her book.
- ▶ I wish I brought more people.

Drive Against Malaria in 2008

and our special thanks to ExxonMobil, Land Rover Netherlands, Tropicare, SONY, MalariaNoMore NL, Unicef, Vestergaard Frandsen, PermaNet, Unicef, WHO, RBM, NMCP, MOH, DFID, PSI, UN Foundation, WFP, Land Rover UK, World Vision, CCF, SFH, JICA, US Aid, Ambassadors, MSF, RedCross, Food For The Hungry, Alliance HealthCare, ClaxoSmithKline , GGD Netherlands, Ernst & Young and many others !!!!

We thank you for joining us, and our many volunteers in our fight against Malaria
'Drive Against Malaria' is a campaign of Transparent World Foundation

www.driveagainstmalaria.org

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