

A Success Story – one of many

by Janet Jagan - July 14, 2007

Stabroek News rarely misses the opportunity to publish letters that denigrate the PPP/Civic government. Its record of letters that use all forms of abuse is phenomenal. So many letters carry the negative theme that there is “little to be proud of” that any sensible person will wonder if the letter writers are for real or are ghost writers from the newspaper itself. What is even more disgusting about the letters attacking the government and the PPP is that the majority of abrasive letters carry Indo-Guyanese names – part of the subtle racial character of that paper’s attacks on the PPP.

What is interesting, however, is that the barrage of attacks – and as I have written many times before about this – particularly in last year’s run of that newspaper, is that it was totally ineffective in changing the course of the elections. Its support of a new party and its efforts to reduce the PPP’s continuing wins at general elections blew away with the wind. No one paid attention!

Despite the general theme of Stabroek News that Guyanese are disgusted with the PPP/C government and have “little to be proud of,” let me tell about one of the success stories of the PPP/Civic. We can feel proud that this present government has taken the lead in the worldwide efforts to reduce the number of cases of malaria and to reduce the number of deaths. In fact, there has been only one recorded death due partly to malaria in Guyana, and that case was not a direct result of malaria, but combined with another medical problem. Guyana has succeeded in reducing the number of cases of malaria by 54% in 2006 over the year before. Taking the reduced number of cases for this year so far, the statistics show that since 2005, there is about a 75% reduction. This year shows that there are about 4800 cases, down considerably from about 20,000 a year and a half previously.

We can certainly be proud of this achievement that puts Guyana in front of many countries dealing with this serious problem. This was not achieved without great efforts on the part of the Minister of Health and those health workers operating in the field.

Guyana was able to make use of a new anti-malaria drug since 2003. This drug includes a 3-day usage – a very important factor in treatment. Before this new drug came into use in Guyana, malaria patients were provided with a drug that required a longer period of intake, which many patients did not complete, thus reducing the effects of the medication. The shorter period for intake – only 3 days is more realistic in having patients take the full dosage.

Guyana was one of the first countries to use the new drug. This is because those responsible for health care in Guyana, led by the Health Minister, succeeded at two levels. Firstly, Guyana succeeded in completing a clinical trial for use of the 3-day medication. Secondly, the drug originally cost \$55 (US) which was obviously beyond the means of the government. The Health Ministry succeeded in getting a reduction to \$1.50 (US), so that with the two successes, it became one of the first countries in the world to make use of the new anti-malaria, 3-day medication. Only recently has the World Health Organization (WHO) started to use the drug in the countries affected by malaria.

Guyana, like many countries, has distributed the special mosquito nets impregnated with the insecticide deltamethrin, which not only protects those who use it, but also kills mosquitoes; their potency lasts for about 5 years. These have been distributed widely in Guyana at the rate of three per family. They are also distributed in the mining areas and to dormitories where some miners live. Miners are urged to use the nets, some of which are designed specially for use of persons using hammocks.

The Ministry of Health has a good supply of impregnated nets, which are used worldwide and which has greatly reduced the cases of malaria where used.

Malaria kills more than a million people each year. Some 300 million people worldwide are infected with the disease. Malaria suppresses the immune system of its victims, making them more susceptible to tuberculosis and AIDS. It is a dangerous disease, but one that can be controlled and contained as Guyana has succeeded in doing.

It is another success story for the PPP/Civic, one for which all Guyanese can feel proud!

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