

REORGANIZATION OF THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON REGION AND MALARIA CONTROL

BERNARDINO CLAUDIO DE ALBUQUERQUE

Institute de Medicina Tropical de Manaus, Av. Pedro Teixeira s/nº, 69040-000, AM, Brasil

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To talk malaria control in the Brazilian Amazon region, it is necessary to consider the determinative factors of the present situation, that are responsible either for environmental, socioeconomic or cultural changes occurring in this region.

The 1970's was the starting point for the process of reorganization of the Amazon region, when the following principal facts were verified:

a) Implementation of a project to integrate the Amazon region to the rest of the country, which was made possible by the construction of highways such as the Transamazonica, Belem-Brasilia, Guaiaba-Porto-Velho, Perimetral Norte, etc...

b) Consolidation of the Amazon region as a frontier area for agriculture – characterized as the third frontier wave of Brazil, in reality a replay of the previous. Its basic objective was to function as a relief valve of the social tensions generated by the traditional agricultural areas and to permit the increase of agricultural production, without either altering the land system or the predominant forces of social organization. The remarkable difference was the influence of the State in the decisions related to how to realize this occupation.

c) The discovery of the Amazon as a great mineral reserve of the country. This was verified by the investigation realized by the RADAM project in 1975, when the great mineral potential, principally, gold, iron, cassiterite, radioactive minerals, etc... of the Amazon began to be discovered.

The search for land by the small farmer dispossessed in other regions, the illusion of gold and even the option of survival in the urban nuclei of the region, determined a sub-

stantial increase in the population and in the 1970's a relative increase of 62% against the 38% observed in 1960's was verified. Rondonia was the state where the greatest populational increase in the 1970's (333.1%) was noticed against only 59.1% in the previous decade.

The impact on malarial endemicity, despite its explicitness, was never the cause of real preoccupation, except in areas of interest such as, big civil constructions, some urban areas and private enterprises where the disease is maintained under an effective control. For these reasons, in the North region the number of cases passed from 20172 cases in 1970 to 442579 in 1990.

Presently, malaria endemicity is configured by a mosaic of epidemiological situations with different standards of transmission, where the risk factors in each situation assume different values and magnitudes.

In this context, we understand as the essence of control, an effective and efficient presence, within a programme based on the reality of each situation, defining the more adequate intervention measures, strategies and tactics. In this manner, we are combating the great focus of the disease that unquestionably are the source of high endemicity levels and responsible for the introduction or reintroduction of malaria in undamaged areas.

However, it has been verified that the political determination of malaria control in the Amazon has its areas of interest. The maintenance of the actual endemic levels in other areas seems to play an important role in the process of deterioration and reproduction of the small producer, the mining prospector, the Indians, the caboclo population, etc... In reality this is a less explicit form to facilitate the incorporation of lands, minerals, etc., in the Amazon region by large capital concerns.