

## DEMONSTRATION OF FEASIBILITY OF EFFECTIVE CANINE MASS VACCINATION PROGRAMMES

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In their “Rationale for investing in the global elimination of dog-mediated human rabies”, the World Health Organization described the freedom from dog-mediated human rabies as a “global public good”. Operating 7 projects in 5 rabies-endemic countries, Mission Rabies has successfully demonstrated that vaccination of 70% of the dog population, even in challenging environments, is possible. The benefits of rabies elimination are often clear to local stakeholders, however the methods required to eliminate it and how to practically implement them in the field are more often seen as a challenge. Mission Rabies has found that initial proof-of-concept intensive dog vaccination campaigns in a focused region is effective at growing stakeholder support, enabling subsequent expansion into surrounding areas. This has been demonstrated in both Goa, India and Blantyre City, Malawi, both of which began as vaccination of a single city and have expanded to the surrounding districts, vaccinating over 60,000 dogs annually at each location. Through partnership with the NGO, Worldwide Veterinary Service, capacity to provide basic veterinary care to sick and injured dogs encountered during the campaign has been incorporated into standard operating procedures, as well as including dog population management interventions as a valuable addition to the rabies elimination programme. Providing other human and animal health services and delivery of essential medications through the framework of rabies control is an example of how a “One Health” intervention could be planned to maximise available resources. All Mission Rabies projects are also accompanied by a comprehensive education programme, targeting primary school children in the region. Through identifying children as rabies risk-reduction “champions” in their communities, Mission Rabies has reached a high level of acceptance in local communities which results not only in a better dissemination of the messages that help to protect people from contracting the disease, but also in high turnouts at stationary vaccination clinics in regions where the majority of dogs are owned. Through the development of a novel smartphone application, Mission Rabies have revolutionised the way field projects are managed and the impact of interventions is measured. Recording the vaccination of every dog in the field, the application collects valuable information about the spatial distribution of the dog population, facilitates direction of field teams and collects information about the health status of the resident dog population through customisable forms. This mobile application, together with the philosophy of creating a successful project through local partnerships and stakeholder engagement, as well as educating the communities at risk, have enabled Mission Rabies to vaccinate more than 380,000 dogs in their project areas since 2013, and see sharp declines in canine and human rabies cases.