

A Compilation: Good Practices and Lessons Learned for the National Rabies Prevention and Control Program Project Implementation in the Visayas

A World Health Organization and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Support (2009 – 2015)

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Acronyms

ABTC	Animal Bite Treatment Center
AT	Agricultural Technicians
BHW	Barangay Health Worker
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
BRB	Bantay Rabies SA Barangay
CVO	City Veterinary Office
DA	Department of Agriculture
DepEd	Department of Education
DILG	Department of Interior and Local Government
DOH	Department of Health
ERIG	Equine Rabies Immunoglobulin
LCE	Local Chief Executive
LGU	Local Government Unit
MAO	Municipal Agriculture Office
MHO	Municipal Health Office
MRPCC	Municipal Rabies Prevention and Control Committees
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	National Rabies Committee
PCSO	Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PRPCC	Provincial Rabies Prevention and Control Committee
PVO	Provincial Veterinarian Office
RCCC	Rabies Control Consultative Committee
RA	Republic Act
RAC ADCE	Regional Advisory Committee for Animal Disease Control and Emergency
RADDL	Regional Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory
RHM	Rural Health Midwife
RIG	Rabies Immune Globulin
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

The selected good practices in this document is a combination of good governance and typical Filipino creativity. Each local government unit is unique and therefore may have its own adaptation of Republic Act 9482 (The Anti-Rabies Act of 2007) in their communities. Along with this is the sheer willingness of the community to engage in a wide range of activities with one single purpose: to eliminate the Rabies virus from the environment.

Noteworthy are the men and women of the different LGUs in the Visayas Region who made these good practices functional and sustainable in their respective Rabies Free Communities. As implementers of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Rabies Free Visayas Project fully supported by the Philippine Department of Health, they have shown the rest of the country and the world that in eliminating Rabies, harmony is still the best policy.

Rabies Situation in the Philippines¹

Rabies is a zoonotic disease and human infection caused by *Lyssavirus*, usually occurring after a transdermal bite or scratch by an infected animal. Transmission may also occur when infectious material, usually the saliva, comes into direct contact with the victim's mucosa or fresh skin lesions. Very rarely, rabies may occur through inhalation of virus-containing aerosol or via infected organ transplants. It is a highly fatal disease characterized by fluctuations in consciousness, phobic or inspiratory spasms and autonomic instability. It is estimated to cause 55,000 deaths every year worldwide. It is present on all continents with the exception of Antarctica. Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is nearly always fatal.

Rabies remains as a neglected disease of poor and vulnerable populations whose deaths are rarely reported. It occurs mainly in remote rural communities where measures to prevent dog to human transmission have not been implemented. Under-reporting of rabies also prevents mobilization of resources from the international community for the elimination of human dog-mediated rabies and therefore remains to be one of the neglected tropical diseases globally.

In the Philippines, Rabies remains to be a disease of public health importance. It is the most acutely fatal infectious disease responsible for the death of at least 200 Filipinos every year. At least one-third of human rabies deaths are among children less than 15 years of age. Two thirds of human rabies cases are males. Dogs are the source of the vast majority of human rabies deaths. The high cost of anti-rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin, expenditure for medical consultations and the loss of income are an additional burden to a regular Filipino family confronted with a potential rabies exposure.

In the late 1980s, the Department of Agriculture through the Bureau of Animal Industry and the Department of Health through the then Communicable Disease Control Service initiated efforts to prevent and control rabies in the country.

In May 1991, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed among the Secretaries of Health (DOH), Agriculture (DA), Local Government (DILG) and Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) now Department of Education (DepEd) with representatives from the LGUs committing their agencies to launch concerted efforts in eliminating rabies in the country. This also led to the creation of the Rabies Control Consultative Committee (RCCC) composed of top level officials from these four Departments and representatives from NGOs. The function of the RCCC was to provide guidance in the implementation of the program. At the same time a National Rabies Committee (NRC) composed of the technical experts from DA and DOH served as the implementing body².

On March 13, 1999, President Joseph E. Estrada signed Executive Order No. 84 declaring March as Rabies Awareness Month mandating the National Rabies

¹ The National Rabies Prevention and Control Program Medium Term Plan (2011-2016)

² National Rabies Prevention and Control Program Manual of Operations 2012

Prevention Committee composed of representatives from the DOH, DA-BAI, DILG, DECS (DEPED) and NGOs to conduct massive information drive on rabies prevention complemented by mass dog vaccination in March.

In 2007, R.A. 9482 (The Anti-Rabies Act of 2007) was passed into law, strengthening further the National Rabies Prevention and Control Program.

In support of the National Rabies Prevention and Control Program, the Department of Health in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and the Local Government Units of the Visayas Region implemented a project on dog vaccination against rabies in the Visayas regions hoping to control and eventually eliminate rabies in the islands. This project in the Visayas is one of the 3 demonstration sites supported by the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)** through the World Health Organization. The global goal of the WHO-BMGF supported project is to prevent human rabies through the control and eventual elimination of canine rabies, creating a paradigm shift for human rabies prevention in Asia and Africa. It also aims to catalyze similar initiatives for the control and elimination of rabies in Asia and Africa within the next decade

The project covers 25% of the total number of animal rabies cases, 28% of the total human rabies cases and 27% of the total animal bites in the entire country. Three of the 17 administrative regions in the country with a total of 16 provinces and 31 cities are included.

To date, 3 provinces, 5 island municipalities and 5 smaller islands were declared as Rabies Free Zones. 1 province and 2 independent/chartered cities has been free of human rabies for at least 3 years.

This document compiles the selected Good Practices of the different provinces and cities declared as Rabies Free Zones and areas free from human rabies for at least 3 years. These good practices demonstrate how these local government units addressed obstacles that may prevent them from attaining or maintaining their human rabies free status.

Innovativeness, community participation, multi-sectoral coordination, consistency and commitment described the good practices of the communities declared as Rabies Free Zones. The challenge is to sustain measures year after year. It is the aim of this compilation to share experience so others may learn and enjoy life living in a community that is rabies free.



Photo 1. Activities during world rabies day celebration.



Photo 2. Dr. Maria Nerrisa Dominguez of WHO, during the monitoring and validation of records.



Photo 3. Owner and their dogs lined up for vaccination.



Photo 4. Dr Raffy A. Deray, Program Manager of National Rabies Prevention and Control, during the monitoring and data validation.

Region VI Western Visayas

Guimaras Island (*declared 2013*)

Background

Guimaras is an Island Province composed of 5 municipalities and 98 barangays. Before the declaration on September 2013 as a Rabies Free Zone, the island had 1 canine rabies case in 2010 and zero human case since 2009.

With the clear intention of eliminating the rabies virus from the island, the local government, upon the enactment of RA 9482, embarked on an island wide campaign to strictly implement the anti-rabies act of 2007, particularly, the dog population control measures.. The local chief executives on the other hand, showed full support of the policy by

spearheading “Covenant Signing” events. While they saw that the dog population was under control, the canine vaccination rate remained below the minimum requirement of 70% of the total dog population.



Photo 5. Hon. Samuel T. Gumarin, Governor of Guimaras, during the National Dog Summit expresses support of the provincial government in eliminating rabies in the island.

There is Strength in Unity: Mass Dog Vaccination

Cognizant of the need to increase human resources to improve canine vaccination coverage, the Philippine Veterinary Medical Association Western Visayas Chapter decided to aid the local government of Guimaras. Thus on August 2012, after a series of coordinative meetings among its members, a team of 30 veterinarians from across the surrounding provinces of Region 6 and several groups of trained dog vaccinators trooped to island province and conducted mass dog vaccination for two weeks. This resulted in an increase in vaccination coverage of 58% from 51% in 2012. Thus, in 2013 following this remarkable show of cooperation and brotherhood and all other requirements satisfied, the island province of Guimaras was declared a Rabies Free Zone.



Photo 6. Dog vaccinations in remote barangay of Guimaras during the “One Time Big Time dog vaccination” last August 2012.



Photo 7. Volunteer veterinarian from the Philippine Veterinary Association, Western Visayas conducting orientation before the teams will be dispatched to their respective designated areas.



Photo 8 An owner brings his dog for vaccination.



Photo 7. Dog vaccinator in action.



Photo 8. Place assigned by the province where impounded dogs were housed.

Boracay Island (*declared Rabies-Free in 2013*)

Background

Boracay Island is a part of the Municipality of Malay in the province of Aklan. It is composed of 3 barangays namely; Manokmanok, Yapak and Balabag.

The island was declared Rabies Free Zone in 2013 after maintaining zero human and zero canine rabies cases since 2008.

Sustained Active Inter-agency Cooperation



Photo 9. Spay and Neuter Campaign at Boracay and Mainland Malay Aklan performed by LGU veterinarians, OPVET and ASU-SVM last June 29-30, 2015.

In 2007, the Aklan Provincial Veterinary Office and Aklan State University School of Veterinary Science partnered to implement dog population control like spaying and neutering as part of their veterinary services in the island. This event was made possible with the augmentation of manpower and other logistics needs from several agencies. In fact in 2012, “The One Time, Big Time” mass dog vaccination by the PVO was successful in achieving high dog vaccination coverage thru inter-agency wherein each agency such as Seoul (Korea) National University College of Veterinary of Science, LGU of Aklan through the PVO, LGU of Malay, Boracay Rotary Club, Philippine Veterinary Medical Association Western Visayas Chapter.

Since then the PVO has identified multi-sectoral cooperation as an integral part in the conduct of veterinary services and other appr
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hes in the implementation of Rabies Control and Elimination Program activities. Sustaining the active participation of these agencies previously involved in the rabies control program was obtained by continuously including them in the planning as well as in the implementation of the program.

In fact in 2012 the “One time, Big Time” mass dog vaccination spearheaded by the PVO was successful in achieving a 74% dog vaccination coverage through this inter-agency



Photo 10. Dog registration, before spaying or neutering.

cooperation wherein each agency take in responsibilities in accordance with their expertise and capacity.

Other endeavors that utilized the inter-agency cooperation were the integration of Rabies Control Program in the elementary and high school curriculum and the sustainability of dog population control activities through regular consultative meetings by the Aklan Provincial Veterinary Office, Malay Mayor's Office, Aklan State University School of Veterinary Medicine and the Rotary Club of Boracay.

Iloilo City (*undeclared*)

Background

Iloilo City is a chartered city in the province of Iloilo. A busy metropolis, the city used to be in the top 10 areas in the province with high incidence of Canine Rabies. Human cases were also reported. This was the scenario before the BMGF-WHO Rabies elimination project in the Visayas.

It may take a few years more before Iloilo City and its residents enjoy the confidence of being declared a Rabies Free Zone. But with the enduring resilience, innovativeness and consistency of both leaders in the ABTC and the City Veterinary Office, Iloilo City has managed to free the city from human rabies for at least 3 years and counting.

Sto. Rosario Health Center/Iloilo ABTC: Ensuring High Compliance of animal bite victims to rabies PEP

The ABTC noted that some of the animal bite victims specifically category 2 and 3 were unable to complete their PEP. In 2014 for instance, only 75% cases of Category I and II animal bites received complete doses of active vaccination; 20% of Category III received RIG. Reasons like poor understanding of the



Photo 11 Provision of PEP by Health Service Providers.

rabies infection and its control and lack of access to anti-rabies vaccine due to non-membership to PhilHealth program as well as financial constraints were mostly seen among these patients.

In order to improve the completion of **PEP management** for these animal bite cases, the ABTC **strengthened** their information campaign as well as



Photo 12. A health worker provides health education for rabies elimination.

giving assistance in securing anti-rabies vaccine.

To promote completion with prescribed vaccination and increase community awareness on Rabies, a cohort of animal bite patients (which may reach a maximum of 30 patients on Mondays) are gathered and seated in the ABTC waiting area to watch a 20 minute video on Rabies Disease, its Signs and Symptoms with actual footages of cases, and the Do's and Don'ts in the management of animal bites. After watching the video, Rabies IEC materials are distributed and an assigned staff answers questions from the patients and relatives. When this entire interactive session is done, patients are now called according to priority number to be seen by the ABTC Physician for consult and evaluation. With the prescription on hand, patient proceeds to Treatment Room for proper wound care and PEP.

Health Care Financing to the Rescue

To ensure that patients have complete doses of anti-rabies vaccine a system was



Photo 15. Spaying and neutering of dogs in Iloilo City

created in acquiring vaccines by the ABTC in accordance to the clients need. For patients without PhilHealth, the ABTC Physician created a Medical Abstract Form acknowledged by the local chief executives and the local Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) for financial assistance. The form is filled up by the ABTC Doctor and gives it to the patient. The patient has the option to either go to PCSO or their LCE of choice.

All patients with category 2 or 3 animal bite for PEP that are PhilHealth members can avail the anti-rabies vaccine through this health insurance. But for Category 3 patients with PhilHealth the ABTC supplies all the 3 doses of active vaccines as well as the required first vial of ERIG Passive Vaccine vial while the rest of the requirements can be availed through the PCSO or a local chief executive (LCE) of choice.



Photo 16. Patient accomplishes and submits PhilHealth Forms for rabies vaccination assistance.

For non-PhilHealth members with category 2 and 3, the first and third doses are given free of charge by the ABTC. Patients are then advised to seek assistance from the PCSO or the LGU of choice for the second dose and last (if needed) dose. Category 3 patients who are non PhilHealth members are referred to their respective Barangay Captain so that an Emergency PhilHealth Enrollment can be issued by the latter thus assuring a complete course anti-rabies vaccination.

The ABTC also collaborate with the City Veterinary Office (CVO) to conduct investigation of the biting animal. Upon history taking from the patients and the bite was inflicted from a stray animal, the ABTC will inform the CVO personnel to go to the area where the stray dog was identified, catches and brings the dog to the city dog pound for observation.



Photo 17 Patients' date of follow-up were recorded for Dafaulter Tracing Mechanism

Defaulter Tracing: Another innovative strategy to ensure high PEP completion rate that the ABTC created is the following up of PEP schedule by tracing defaulters. Using a Treatment Follow-Up Calendar, ABTC Staff are able to visualize vaccination schedule. Contact Numbers of Patients are recorded for follow-up purposes, in case of non-adherence to treatment follow-up schedule.

With these strategies, the ABTC achieved at least 97% PEP completion rate in the past 3 years and RIG coverage of 63% in 2013.

MONTH OF SEPTEMBER FT. LIP SCHEDULE OF PEP						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Photo 138. Follow up schedule of PEP patients for defaulter tracing.

Constant Adequate Supply of Canine Anti-Rabies Vaccines for the Regular Mass Vaccination Activities: Consistency and Commitment

A year before the BMGF project started in the city, local decision makers from all 180 barangays were informed that the City Veterinary Office Personnel headed by Dr. Tomas Forteza, Jr., Iloilo City Veterinarian, will conduct mass dog vaccination campaign for a period of three months. The canine anti-rabies vaccines used during the activity were procured by the city government. With the success of the activity, the plan was to continue conducting this activity regularly every year, at the same month, preferably same date.



Photo 14. Dog registration and mass dog vaccination.



Photo 15. Dog catching activities led by the provincial government.

at the same period of time in all barangays.

In 2010, then DOH-WHO-BMGF Project started giving in 2009 and dog vaccines to cover at least 70% of the dog population. However, during the implementation of the project, it was observed that the dog vaccines are not delivered on time. To complement the vaccines coming from the project the conduct of the scheduled vaccines as planned, the LGU was able to stock buffer vaccines upon approval of the city council by increasing the budget for the procurement. With this strategy, the scheduled mass dog vaccination of the city was not affected by the late arrival of the vaccines from WHO. Since then the city was able to consistently conduct mass vaccinations in the community regularly and

Being consistent in steering the cooperation of the community towards dog vaccination, what used to take 6 hours vaccination activity later became 2 hours because the community have adapted to the event thus making the vaccination process less time consuming and more efficient. Thus, the city was able to maintain a consistent dog vaccination coverage of more than 70% and zero human rabies since 2009.

Region VII Central Visayas

Siquijor Province (*declared Rabies-Free in 2008*)

Background

The island of Siquijor, is the 3rd smallest province in the country in terms of population as well as its land area of 343.5 sq. km. or (132.6 sq. meter) with 6 (six) municipalities and 25,231 population as of 2010 census. It is the first province declared jointly by DOH and DA as rabies free zone.

Records from the Siquijor Provincial Veterinary Office shows those three decades (1987) before the island province was declared rabies free in 2008, three (3) cases of endogenous canine rabies were recorded. One (1) human rabies case was also recorded by the Provincial Health Office.

“One Time, Big Time”

This triggered a cascade of events that culminated in the first province-wide rabies vaccination campaign where eighty percent (80%) or 10, 687 dogs & cats were covered in a period of three (3) months, from January to March 1988. This resulted to zero canine rabies case in the next five years then.

However, in 1993, the province saw the resurgence yet again of the virus within the canine population. From 1993 to 1996, four (4) cases were reported. Two (2) human cases were also recorded. This prompted the provincial government to toughen its stance towards eliminating the virus from the island. A second province wide rabies vaccination campaign was initiated for ten (10) days, from November 3 – 14, 1997, Dog vaccinators, with the full support from the community were able to vaccinate 12, 362 dogs & cats. Post-vaccination activities included the following:

1. Submission of list of vaccinated dogs by barangay and by municipality
2. Determination of the percentage of dog population being vaccinated
3. Stray dog control/elimination
4. Follow-up vaccination of unvaccinated dogs
5. Strict enforcement of veterinary quarantine regulations

With this major event, a committee led by the provincial government was created by virtue of RA 9482. A multi-sectoral network was developed branching from the Provincial Rabies Control Committee (Rabies Control & Eradication Program), the Municipal Rabies Control Committee down to the Barangay Rabies Control Committee. As its mandate, Provincial & Municipal Rabies Control Ordinances were crafted and Provincial Rabies Prevention and Control Program was rolled out to the community.



Photo 16. National Declaration of Siquijor.



Photo 17. Dog vaccination and catching activities in Siquijor.

comprehensive implementation of other rabies

The objective is to maintain the rabies free status of the province. The provincial rabies prevention and control program focused on dog vaccination, responsible pet ownership, control of stray dog massive information education campaign and strict enforcement of veterinary quarantine regulations (24 hours manning of ports and wharves; shipper or dog owners must secure shipping permits when transporting their pets; orientation/briefing of shippers on quarantine laws, rules and regulations).

With the creation of the local Rabies Control Ordinance and the existence of a functional multi-sectoral Rabies Control Committee in all three levels of governance, there was less resistance in achieving the goal. In addition the “one time, big time” province-wide dog vaccination where at least 80% of the total dog population was covered served as a catalyst for a base dog population to be created and a starting point where control programs will have to begin.

Sustaining a Rabies Free Zone: Preventing Re-entry of Rabies Virus. “No Certificate, No Entry” Policy

Prior to island being declared as a Rabies Free Zone, port area quarantine measures suffered a decline due to inadequate manpower. In effect, passengers from incoming commercial and passenger sea vessels were left uninspected of possible inbound small animals. The province was at increased risk of admitting unvaccinated animals or those with unknown vaccination history. However, when the province was declared a rabies free zone, the provincial

government of Siquijor became aware of danger of re-introducing the rabies virus in the province if quarantine measures are not adequately implemented. Thus through the efforts of the local government, an ordinance was crafted to augment the



Photo 18. This banner was posted in entry and exit points in the island, to remind passengers that boarding dogs and cats without shipping permits will not be allowed.

number of veterinary quarantine inspectors. Personnel from the Department of Agriculture, the Provincial Veterinary Office and the Municipal LGUs were deputized to act as veterinary quarantine inspectors to ensure that no dogs can enter into the province without anti rabies vaccination.

The province has four main entry-exit points: Larena and Lazi Piers, Siquijor and Tambisan Wharfs Ship owners and operators were requested and informed not to allow boarding of dogs and cats from going in and outside the province without shipping permits and rabies vaccination certificate. Common islands of origin are Dumaguete City (Negros Island), Cebu City (Cebu Island), and Tagbilaran City (Bohol Island). Through the RAC ADCE, port quarantine personnel from these areas are made aware of their roles.

Section 8 of Provincial Ordinance # 02-2008 stipulates that no dog or cat shall be allowed entry into the province unless vaccinated with rabies (21) days prior to its entry. In case an unvaccinated animal is found to have entered, it shall be immediately vaccinated and impounded for 21 days in a designated dog pound.

Maintaining a rabies free Siquijor is a great challenge. Effective quarantine measures and a well-informed community are the true vanguard against the re-introduction of this disease. This was made by the dynamic management and leadership of the LGU's with the collaborative efforts of the NGO's, People's Organization, the academe, national government agencies, community members and barangay officials.

With this strategy, together with the other rabies program strategies, seven years after its declaration as a rabies-free zone, Siquijor is still free of human and animal rabies.

Camotes Island (*declared Rabies-Free in 2011*)

Background

The Island of Camotes at the northern tip of Cebu Island is a composite of four municipalities: Poro, Tudela, San Francisco and Pilar. The last recorded human rabies case was in 2009 from the municipality of San Francisco. Since then no human rabies case was recorded. Dog heads submitted likewise yielded negative results. Canine vaccination rate was maintained beyond 70% except in 2010 where records show it went down to 60.35%. But in 2011, through intensive massive dog vaccination and the availability of more logistics, it went back to a redeeming 80.35%. In 2011, the island was declared rabies free zone



Camotes Island Municipalities (Tudela, Poro, Pilar, and San Francisco) in coordination with the Office of Provincial Veterinarian conducted Animal Health Care for dogs such as deworming, vitamin supplementation and treatment of animals.

A Compilation: Good Practices and Lessons Learned for the National Rabies Prevention and Control Program Project Implementation in the Visayas

Canine rabies prevention and control program includes: information and education campaign on Rabies; responsible pet ownership advocacy; massive anti-rabies vaccination for dogs/cats; dog population management such as spay and neuter. There is also strict quarantine operation for the in and out of dogs and cats. This is from Danao wharf, Mandaue wharf and Pier 1 going to Camotes Island. Each Municipality has Veterinary Quarantine Inspectors for monitoring ingress and egress of livestock and pet animals.

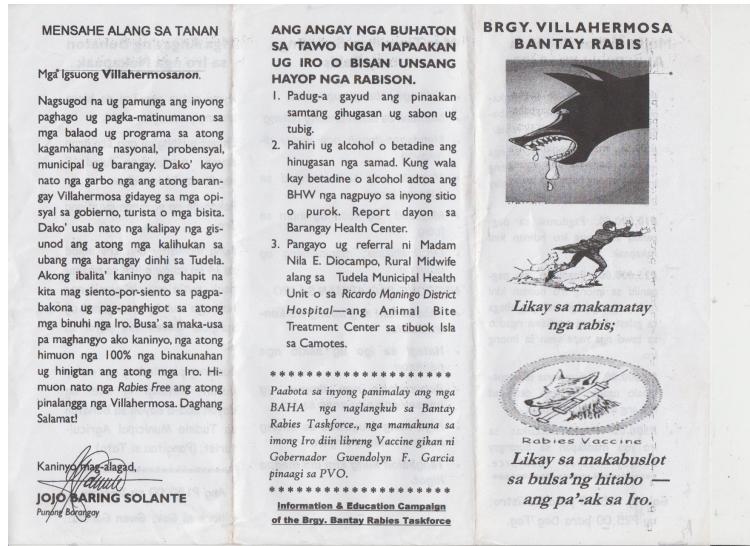


Photo 19. IEC material given to the community of Limasawa.

Innovate to improve a compliance: Linking Dog Registration and Obtaining a Barangay Clearance

The Provincial Rabies Ordinance and Anti Rabies Act of 2007 paved the way for its strict implementation at the municipal level with its creation of local ordinances. This led, for each barangay, the creation of a Barangay Rabies Ordinance in support to the Barangay Rabies Program. This included enhancement of community awareness on Rabies and responsible pet ownership through mandatory canine registration and vaccination in the provisions. Barangay leaders, then conceptualized an administrative sanction of a 3-day community service or non-issuance of a Barangay Clearances as a penalty to those who choose to neglect the said mandate (Barangay Resolution on Rabies). A Barangay Clearance is a mandatory document for an individual to accomplish as a requirement for employment apart from the Police and National Bureau of Investigation Clearances. Thus, once a pet owner needs this, he proceeds to the Barangay Hall and requests for one. The Barangay Secretary will then check the Barangay Registry to validate his compliance to the dog registration. If found that he had failed to register or had his pet vaccinated, he would then be put under a 3-day community service. Upon compliance, a Barangay Clearance is issued.

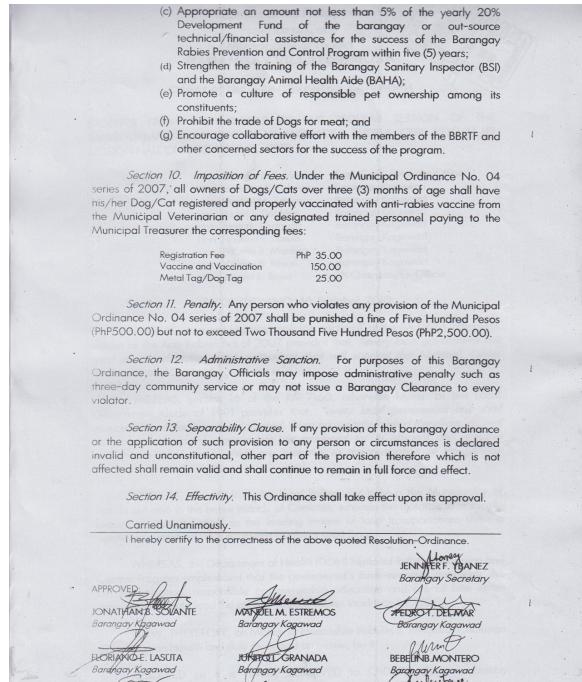


Photo 20. An ordinance penalizing owners of unregistered and unvaccinated dogs/cats.

Region VIII Eastern Visayas

Biliran Province (*declared Rabies-Free in 2012*)

Background

Biliran is a fourth-class province in Region 8 consists of eight municipalities namely Almeria, Biliran, Cabucgayan, Caibiran, Culaba, Kawayan, Maripipi and Naval. It has a total population of 169,266 based on the 2010 national census with a total land area of 55,550 hectares. The province has only one provincial hospital which is located in the capital town of Naval.

From 2003 – 2008, a total of 2,667 animal bite cases were reported. Of these about nine (9) victims were found positive for rabies infection. Within the same time period, there were twenty eight (28) canines that were confirmed positive for rabies by RADDL.

Although it was in 2007 that the Republic Act No. 9482, also known as the “Anti-Rabies Act” was signed into law, the province of Biliran started its implementation only in January 2008. The Provincial Rabies Prevention and Control Committee (PRPCC) were organized in response to the alarming increase in the number of rabies cases in the past 3 years. It led the province in controlling and eliminating rabies as a disease burden in the province of Biliran through active multi-sectoral cooperation and coordination.

Likewise, the PRPCC drafted the Provincial Action Plan for Rabies Prevention and Control and revitalized the Provincial Ordinance No. 1 s. 2005, also known as the “Ordinance for Responsible Dog Ownership and other Domestic Animals in the Province of Biliran”.



Municipal Rabies Prevention and Control Committees (MRPCC) and the Bantay Rabis sa Barangay (BRB). This paved the way for prompt and effective referral network in the management/treatment of bite victims and surveillance for the biting animal in the

community. The BRBs were also responsible for the control of dog movements in their respective barangays, emphasizing the importance of registration and vaccination of ALL dogs and for the strict implementation of compulsory leashing as well as monitoring the entry of new dogs in their catchment areas.

The rabies control and elimination program was successfully implemented especially with the assistance of WHO-Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) Project. As a validation there were no human and canine rabies cases noted from 2009-2011 so that in October 11, 2012, the province was Declared Rabies Free Zone. In the implementation laudable practices were observed in some areas of the province that contributed to the success of the program. The status as rabies-free province was sustained up to now for no human or canine rabies was reported.

1. Barangay Lico, Naval, Biliran: Mandatory Leashing of Dogs (RPO):Ensuring High Dog Vaccination Coverage Against Rabies

Majority of the barangays in the province of Biliran adopted RA 9482 by creating a barangay ordinance and one of these is Barangay Lico, Naval. The local officials have strong involvement and commitment by taking “ownership” to implement the Rabies Control Program in their area. A BRB was organized tasked as front liners to enforce the local rabies ordinance. Some BRB members even volunteered to train as vaccinators to help during mass dog vaccinations particularly in their barangay.

It was noted that in their barangay most dogs were stray and were not confined within the premises of the owner's house when the program implementation started. They experienced difficulties in conducting mass dog vaccinations during house to house campaigns because of unleashed dogs. Only few dogs were vaccinated in a day because it was time consuming since the owner, vaccinators and BRB helped to catch the stray dog before it is vaccinated. In some occasions they were bitten by these animals while trying to catch them. Vaccinators are provided with PEP booster unless their PEP is still within the period of protection. With the help of the MRCC information campaigns were conducted in the area through barangay assemblies and during Mothers classes in which rabies program was integrated in their activities such as by film showing and giving lectures.



Photo 21 Dog registration and vaccination activities.

Barangay residents became highly aware about Rabies Control Program and Responsible Pet Ownership. Dog owners were obliged to be a responsible pet owner wherein they must register and submit their dogs for vaccination. They should also leash their dogs or confined them in their premises.

To ensure that enforcement of local ordinances particularly on compulsory leashing of pet dogs is strictly followed the BRB conducts regular information disseminations through "Bandillo" on this regard. They also diligently conduct monitoring and surveillance of dog movement in the barangay.

This mandatory leashing of pet dogs by their owners greatly helped increase the coverage of mass vaccinations for they can easily carry or bring their dogs to the identified vaccination area. It also facilitated the conduct of vaccination because their dogs are easily handled, thus, less time consumed. Moreover, there were fewer reports of animal bites victim.

2. Caibiran, Biliran Province: Updating Dog Registration to Improve Vaccination Coverage

Dog registration is one of the important aspects to achieve the vaccination coverage of the target dog population. Estimation of the number of dogs in the municipality was recognized as a contributing factor that affects the coverage outcome of the mass dog vaccination.

The Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) realized this concern so that in order to improve their dog vaccination coverage they should ensure that they must have a good estimation of the number of dogs through an updated and timely registration of all dogs in every barangay in the municipality. All the staffs in the department particularly the Agricultural Technicians (AT) were involved in this endeavour by integrating dog registration in their field work.

A functional communication and referral network was set up by the MAO with all the Barangay Officials in the municipality. The MAO's office directly communicates with the BRB through the Barangay Captain and the Barangay Council for Agriculture, Health and Peace and Order to create a barangay order or mandate for the implementation of any identified activities of Rabies Control Program.

Prior to the regular dog vaccination, the MAO conducted dog registration through a dog population survey that would be performed by BRB members and BHWs in their respective areas. Then these data that were gathered will be used to update the barangay dog registry in municipality. The updated registry will be used to compute their vaccine requirement and monitor the dog vaccination campaign.

The MAO will notify ahead the Barangay Officials and the BRB about the scheduled vaccination activity in their barangay. Upon knowing the schedule of the activity the

Barangay Officials conducts information campaign usually through “Bandillo” to inform their constituents. A mandate is also given to the BRB and the BHWs to monitor any dog not registered during the survey and to ensure that dog owners must submit their pet dogs for registration and vaccination.

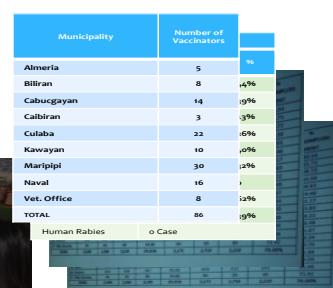
During mass vaccination, the MAO in collaboration with BRB Identifies and vaccinates all registered dogs and the registry will be updated to include dogs not previously entered in the registry.

This strategy of maintaining and updating frequently a dog registry enabled the municipality to have better estimate of their dog population and their dog vaccine requirement. It also improved the municipality’s dog vaccination coverage. Owned and ownerless free roaming dogs are also registered in the dog registry. This practice was even replicated in the other municipalities of the province in achieving a detailed account of all pet dogs’ thus improved registration and vaccination coverage.

Barangay	Dog Population	Sex		Age	
		Male	Female	3mos. below	3mos above
Yapak	410	179	231	79	331
Balabag	317	135	182	72	245
Manoc-Manoc	484	217	267	81	403
TOTAL	1,211	531	680	232	979

Photo 22. A sample of dog registry book.

Conducted inventory of dogs in every barangay to ensure a reliable data for planning purposes and to identify dogs which are vaccinated or not.



Limasawa Island, Southern Leyte (*declared Rabies-Free in 2012*)

Background

Limasawa is a 6th class island municipality in the southern tip of the province of Southern Leyte in Region 8. It has a total population of 5,870 and 1,319 total numbers of households with a total land area of 632.5465 hectares.

To support its rabies control program and achieve a rabies free status, Municipal Ordinance No. 2011-07 was passed in 2011 adopting and implementing RA No. 9482 entitled “An Act Providing for the Control and Elimination of Human Rabies”. The Municipal Rabies Control Committee (MRCC) was created to oversee the implementation and enforcement of the RA 9482 which is spearheaded by the Limasawa Rabies Task Force as the implementing body. The Bantay Rabies sa Barangay (BRB) were also organized and activated by the LGU as an important support system in the successful implementation of the rabies program. Information and education campaigns to all residents in the island were done focusing on dog owners encouraging them to strictly observe and follow the Local Rabies Elimination Program and municipal ordinance/namely: Leashing Law, Anti-S stray Ordinances, Mandatory Registration and Vaccination of dogs. The result, dog vaccination coverage of at least 85 % from 2011 to 2014. And the declaration of the island as a rabies free zone in 2012



Photo 23. Registration during mass dog vaccination.

One Health Approach in managing rabies exposures secondary to animal bites

As an island municipality, managing cases of rabies exposures secondary to animal bites is a challenge where, access to PEP is difficult and expensive. Rabies exposures requiring post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) can only receive the vaccines and ERIG in Maasin City where the ABTC is located. This scenario encouraged the local government to develop a strategy to ensure that any animal bite victim should be given utmost management of care.

In 2011, the municipality developed and implemented a one health approach in managing rabies exposures secondary to animal bites. The approach involves the Barangay officials, Bantay Rabies sa Brarangay, Municipal Health Office (MHO) and Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO). The approach requires all dog bite victims immediately inform the Barangay Captain through the BRB of the said incident to help the barangay identify the dog and its owner.

The Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) together with the other Rabies Task Force members will meet the identified dog owner to determine the dog's registration and vaccination status. In this meeting, the MAO and the members of the task force explains to the dog owner/s its responsibilities to victim and the community, as provided for in the national law and local ordinance/s. The MAO is tasked to closely monitor the condition of the biting animal for 14 days, usually in close coordination with the BRB and the dog owner. Usually, the dog is leashed during observation14 day period however, in some cases dog owners volunteered their dog for impounding for the 14 days observation period. Throughout the 14-day observation period, the MAO or BRB gives regular feedback to the Municipal Health Officer (MHO) and the bite victims regarding the status of the biting animal thru the Rural Health Midwife (RHM). Close coordination with the Provincial Veterinary Office, and the DA-DOH Regional offices is maintained in case the dog dies during the observation period and may require laboratory confirmation.

The bite victim is then referred by the BRB to the Municipal Health Office (MHO) for management. The victim is evaluated and managed base on the category of the rabies exposure. With Category 1 animal bite local wound care is advised. Rabies PEP vaccination is not recommended.

Category 2 rabies exposures are also advised to do immediate wound care but are immediately referred to the nearest ABTC for their anti- rabies vaccination. Instead, the patient and dog owner are advised to observe the biting animal for 14 days for rabies infection. If the biting animal, is killed, lost, dies or show signs and symptoms of rabies during the observation period, the BRB thru the RHM, immediately notifies the MHO and inform the patient that he needs to receive anti-rabies vaccine in the nearest ABTC at the soonest possible time. The MHO immediately refers the patient to the ABTC in Maasin City. To this date, all biting animals observed were alive and healthy after the 14 day observation period

A Compilation: Good Practices and Lessons Learned for the National Rabies Prevention and Control Program Project Implementation in the Visayas



Photo 24. Mass dog registration and vaccination activities led by BRB, MAO and RHU.

Category 3 rabies exposures are immediately sent to the ABTC in Maasin city for management. However, in case the biting animal is still alive and healthy after the observation period, the last 2 ID doses on day 28 are not given anymore. However, significant numbers of cases of category 3 exposures are sometimes managing the same way as category 2 exposures-observation. Distance of the island from the ABTC and the non-assurance that PEP will be completed discourages the bite victims to go to the ABTC. Fortunately, the island is rabies free and ever since this strategy was implemented all biting animals observed, were alive and healthy after the 14-day observation period.

Because of this strategy, category 2 rabies exposures referred to ABTC for PEP was reduced to zero, money was save from the cost of transportation and food going to and from the ABTC and anti-rabies vaccine.



Photo 25. An owner accompanies his dog during vaccination.



Photo 26. During the mass dog registration and vaccination.

Lessons Learned

In the past five years, a number of lessons were learned from the operationalization of Rabies-Free Visayas Region Project. These lessons will serve as a guide and reminder for everyone concerned in Rabies Control and Elimination Program implementation in the future.

During the implementation of the project, LGUs saw and bore the challenges besetting mostly the coordinative processes. Given this situation nonetheless, local leaders from both public and private fronts were able to bring together events that bang the drum for a wider community support. Such activities as Rabies Caravans that brought various veterinary services right into the villages; and the Joint Animal-Human Rabies Case Investigation thus became visible in major cities and municipalities. Although widely considered both as a political and a health promotion success, these activities illuminated several lessons learned from the project, overall:

- (1) The presence of an updated baseline/denominator data (e.g. dog population) should serve as a guide in identifying appropriate resource requirement.
- (2) Active multi-sectoral/multi-agency cooperation and coordination is essential to the success of the program implementation.
- (3) An established functional referral and communication network up to the barangay level is a significant system in the management of bite victims, including surveillance of the biting animal.
- (4) A strong LCE support and political will greatly help in funding sustenance and strict enforcement of local program-related ordinances.
- (5) The crucial presence of committed and dedicated project coordinators and volunteers to carry on the program's mission and vision.
- (6) The quality of orientations/trainings provided must be updated and sustained to reflect current global standards on Rabies prevention and control.
- (7) The extent of the level which the policies and guidelines are disseminated should be monitored to ensure its practice among service providers and compliance of the community.
- (8) Community disease surveillance of both human and animal rabies must be established to intensify community awareness on the importance of reporting cases and knowledge of the disease overall.