

To: Veterinarians Without Borders Sweden  
From: LSPCA, Malawi

Date: 7.5.2019

## **Report on Grant Agreement between VSF Sweden and LSPCA Malawi**

### **Stray Dog Project in Lilongwe, Malawi: October 2018 – March 2019**

LSPCA and VSF have to date partnered on several grants to address the stray dog problem in Lilongwe, Malawi. Anna Eriksson has visited Malawi to lead a stray dog control programme, whilst training staff of the LSPCA team and Dr Tino Razemba has partnered with MAWO and VSF on a training programme in Tanzania on stray dog population management and catch/spay/neuter/release approaches and best practices.

Since September 2018 LSPCA has driven the process of establishing a national One Health Rabies (OHR) platform in Malawi to plan for a multi sectoral collaboration on rabies control and elimination plans for Malawi.



*An OHR task force has now been established (1<sup>st</sup> meeting conducted on 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2019) for Malawi, working towards global goals of eradicating dog mediated rabies in humans by 2025.*

LSPCA partners with VSF Sweden on dog population management and with Welttierschutzgesellschaft (WTG) from Germany on mass rabies vaccination campaigns (delivered by LSPCA over 5 consecutive years in Lilongwe). However, rabies remains endemic to the city despite the repetitive vaccination campaigns reaching 80% of the estimated dog population. It is now clear that vaccinating easy to reach dogs alone,

could potentially provide a false sense of achievement in rabies control programmes. Increased surveillance on rabies in dogs in Lilongwe, since January 2018 already show many more cases of rabies than recorded in the past 5-7 years. To find the hard to reach dogs more work needs to be done to find community owned/stray dogs in the city. LSPCA and its partners will now deliver a Community Based Response and Surveillance programme to the Lilongwe community. LSPCA will further pilot a continuous vaccination strategy to enable us to find and vaccinate the stray/community owned dog population in Lilongwe, in other words find and vaccinate/castrate the hard to reach dog population in the city.

From time to time LSPCA receives calls from organisations/owners of larger compounds (industrial truck/container depots, hospital, government offices etc) to intervene and help control the stray dog populations on their premises. Very few feedback loops exist between community market places and dump sites near or in residential areas.

During this grant period, the LSPCA team focussed specifically on calls from the public to help with stray dog population, mapping the city for areas of high rabies/dog bite incidents and areas where we have received complaints regarding stray dog populations.

In places where the stray dog population problem is clearly linked to environmental mismanagement and human negligence regarding responsible pet ownership, the LSPCA team now provides consultation on the problem and suggests a plan to improve the situation before attempting to deliver free castration and vaccination services. This advice and related plans were developed by and shared with LSPCA by Anna Eriksson during her volunteer placement with the LSPCA in 2017. Once an assessment has been done on site where the problem persists, the management are given a period to improve on issues such as fencing, waste management and clauses in contracts for staff living on site relating to pet numbers allowed per household and that pets sharing a common compound should be castrated.

**For the period of this grant, the following milestones were achieved:**

- **Stray Dog Population Management**

1. Respond to stray dog problem at Bwaila Hospital in Lilongwe
2. Respond to stray dog problem at Capital Hill, Government of Malawi Headquarters
3. Respond to stray dog population problem at Bridge Shipping Container site

At all 3 above sites, the LSPCA team conducted site visits to assess problems with stray dog populations and appropriate advice was given. An action plan was developed to allow for improvements to be made and a follow up visit will take place to castrate dogs once the suggested and agreed improvements are in place. All organisations have been afforded a 3-month window to improve and implement recommendations when a repeat visit will take place in May 2019 to evaluate measures put in place discuss the castration of dogs.

4. Dr Tino shared experiences from MAWO training in Tanzania and is committed to help develop a plan for stray dog population management plans for the LSPCA.

- **MAWO training in Tanzania**

Dr Tino Razemba, Veterinary Hospital Manager LSPCA, took part in a training in Tanzania, funded by VSF Sweden to share best practices in stray dog population management programmes. A report has been circulated and the event was a success. We are grateful for the opportunity to visit our neighbouring country to learn from their experiences and comparative environments in which we work.

- **Vaccination/Castration of stray dogs**

### **Rabies Intervention in Area 50 and Mngwangwa**

#### **Rabies incidence case 1**

Recently in November we were tipped of a suspected rabies case by the relative of the deceased girl from suspected rabies case. She was five-year-old Rose Katondo from area 50 in an area led by Chief Milanzi close to Chikungu CCAP.

1. LSPCA received a call from help from the father of a young girl child who died at Kamuzu Central hospital of suspected rabies. The LSPCA conducted surveillance and focus group discussions in a 2km radius of the area where the victim was bitten.
2. The outcome of the above was that there are a large number of dogs in the given area which had never been vaccinated against rabies, despite an annual vaccination site in their area within 500m of the static vaccination point.
3. It was agreed that the dogs, though not 100% stray, were community owned and tolerated by the community in which they roamed freely.
4. Although community owned, the dogs could not be caught and restrained by the community members to be taken to the static point.
5. LSPCA rabies team mobilised a catch/vaccinate/castrate/release effort to ensure all dogs in the given 2km radius received rabies vaccine and offered free castration services to the communities. Door to door vaccinations were conducted and other more difficult to reach dogs were lured with treats and caught in catch nets, restrained, castrated and/or vaccinated and released.

<b>Area</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>No of vaccinated dogs</b>	<b>Number of Sterilised dogs</b>
Area 50, Chief Milanzi	08/01/2019	54	1 castrated
Area 50 Chief Sanude	9/01/2019	76	5 spayed
Area 50 Chief Kachikada	10/01/2019	43	0

## Rabies incidence case 2

A boy called Chipililo Banda died from confirmed rabies disease, the boy was bitten by a dog in November 2018, from Chilombo Village TA Kabudula.

Steps 1. – 5. As above were followed in this very similar case.

Area	Date	No of vaccinated dogs	Number of Sterilised dogs
Mngwangwa EPA Chirombo CDSS Area 25	17/01/2019	39	3 spayed
Mngwangwa EPA Jambo village Area 25	18/01/2019	43	3 spayed

6. In both areas, community meetings with chiefs or block leaders were held to understand the dog dynamics in their areas. Whilst some dogs do have owners, most were living in the community, roaming freely and couldn't be caught or put on a leash. Most of the people interviewed did not understand rabies and how it affects people and other animals.

7. A small number of the community allowed for castration to take place. Many people still feel dogs lose their natural guarding instinct when neutered and female dogs were sources of income to sell puppies to vendors.

8. A small number of animals could undergo castration by the LSPCA vet team.

9. At the same time the LSPCA team delivered messaging about responsible pet ownership, rabies transmission, TVTs and the benefits of a castrated pet that stays at home and stays healthy, less fighting and less puppies!

- **Mapping and planning for interventions under the 2019 rabies surveillance and response programme**

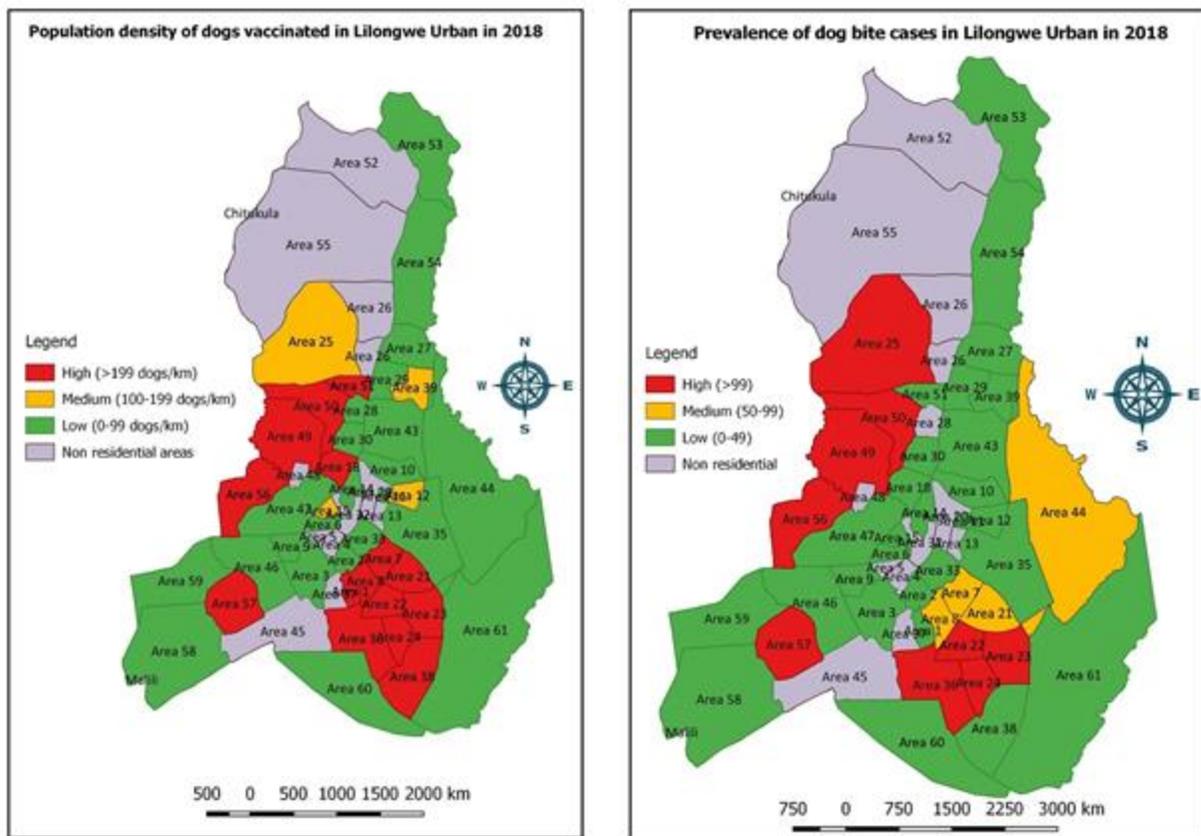
**Although this activity was not in this agreement, it feeds directly into the next agreement (May 2019 – December 2019) and LSPCA management had to prioritise the preparatory work to develop the community-based surveillance and rabies control programme. Under the CBRS programme LSPCA will have a) a permanent presence in communities, b) where established feedback loops will identify the whereabouts of stray/community owned dogs in need of welfare and care and c) confidently inform our dog population management programme in areas where there is high incidence of dog bites and positive rabies results being tested by the Central Veterinary Laboratory.**

During November, December 2018 and February – March 2019, the LSPCA rabies team (project officer, dog catcher and driver and data collector/mapper) collected information and data from human rabies PEP referral hospitals, the central veterinary

lab and the district vet office. The information we collected was all hand written accounts of dog bite incidents and rabies post exposure treatments in books.

The data collected in hard cover books was then entered into excel spreadsheets to allow for proper reporting and subsequent analysis. This data has now informed the work plan and sites for the next steps in LSPCA's rabies control programme.

Using map overlays from our annual mass urban vaccination campaigns and the data collected from hospitals, district veterinary offices, LSPCA can now with confidence start piloting an effective and targeted response plan to control the spread of rabies and much needed work on stray dog population.



Many of the dog bite victims report bites from dogs that are not known to them, nor the owner or the vaccination status of the dog.

This table below shows the number of dog bite cases recorded in 2018 at the main referral hospital for post exposure prophylaxis.

DISTRICT VET OFFICE DOG BITES STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 2018													
Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
57	21	23	21	43	24	24	52	21	30	31	30	16	<b>336</b>
36	20	18	23	21	21	16	35	30	18	35	27	5	<b>269</b>
25	10	17	21	13	31	21	40	33	25	19	27	8	<b>265</b>
24	15	15	9	16	17	12	28	13	13	17	13	7	<b>175</b>
49	10	9	9	12	9	15	29	13	18	16	8	6	<b>154</b>
23	10	9	8	10	14	4	22	8	13	15	18	3	<b>134</b>
56	13	10	16	12	10	8	17	11	4	7	8	5	<b>121</b>
22	8	9	5	5	6	7	16	18	12	7	8	3	<b>104</b>
50	7	6	6	1	6	13	20	8	8	9	13	3	<b>100</b>

### Conclusion:

In the grant agreement, we indicated that LSPCA would buy dog catching equipment. This purchase was covered under the WTG Rabies 2018 campaign and was therefore not used under the VSF Sweden grant funding. LSPCA is now well equipped with dog catching nets, poles and pole syringes and gloves to conduct safe and humane catching of stray dogs.

LSPCA will now develop a targeted DPM plan in the high density/high dog bite incidence areas in Lilongwe. These areas coincide with the areas for the planned CBRS and continuous vaccination strategy of LSPCA. This activity will take place within the new grant period – May2019 – December 2019.

LSPCA has put forward a proposal to WTG to allow for a year long CBRS and continuous vaccination in these areas. This proposal has not yet been accepted by WTG. The grant funding kindly donated to LSPCA by VSF Sweden will allow us to continue work on the rabies control plan and will allow for a targeted catch/spay/neuter/release programme in these hotspot areas.

LSPCA is grateful to the board of VSF Sweden for granting funds to continue work on stray/free roaming dog population management. Donor organisations aligning their funding to rabies control, see DPM as inefficient use of funds to control rabies and therefore our funding streams to continue this have become scarce.

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