



Strengthening Rabies control in Malawi: Rabies Strategic Plan



United Against Rabies Meeting

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Cape Town, South Africa

A decorative graphic consisting of a vertical line of red dots on the left side of the title.

Strengthening Rabies control in Malawi: Rabies Strategic Plan

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Rabies Focal Point
Malawi

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- ❖ Rabies is estimated to cause approximately 59,000 human deaths per year globally
 - ❖ In Malawi, rabies is estimated to cause about 500 human deaths and economic losses of 13 million USD per year
 - ❖ 11% of deaths in children under 15 years at a referral hospital in Southern Malawi diagnosed as cerebral malaria were actually due to rabies (Mallewa et al, 2007)
 - ❖ Absence of a rabies control plan
 - ❖ WHO defines rabies as a neglected tropical disease(NTDs) ,
 - ❖ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for action to end epidemics of NTDs



Challenges in Rabies control

- Rabies is endemic across Malawi
- Low dog vaccination coverage
- Inadequate laboratory diagnosis (and capacity)
- Ineffective rabies surveillance system
- Lack of sharing of rabies information
- Weak OH structures

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Rabies Encephalitis in Malaria-Endemic Area, Malawi, Africa

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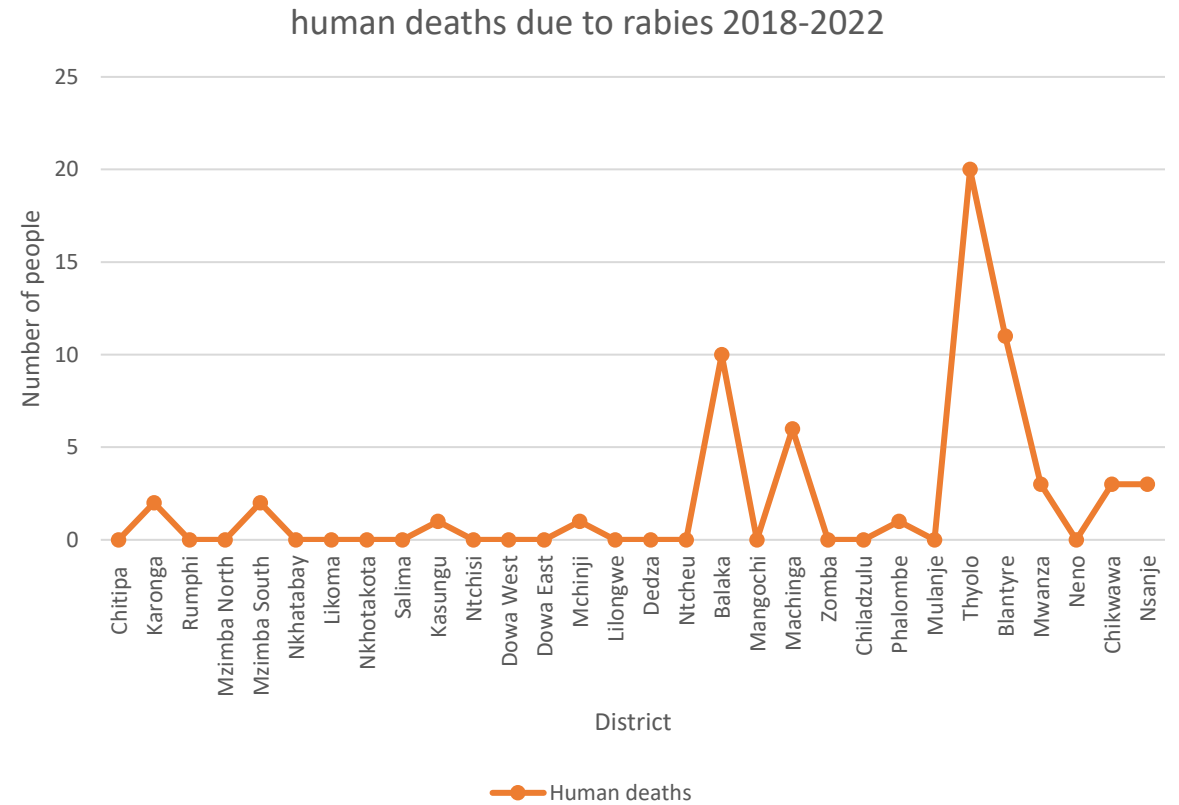
Abstract

In a malaria-endemic area of Africa, rabies was an important cause of fatal central nervous system infection, responsible for 14 (10.5%) of 133 cases. Four patients had unusual clinical manifestations, and rabies was only diagnosed postmortem. Three (11.5%) of 26 fatal cases were originally attributed to cerebral malaria.



Current practice

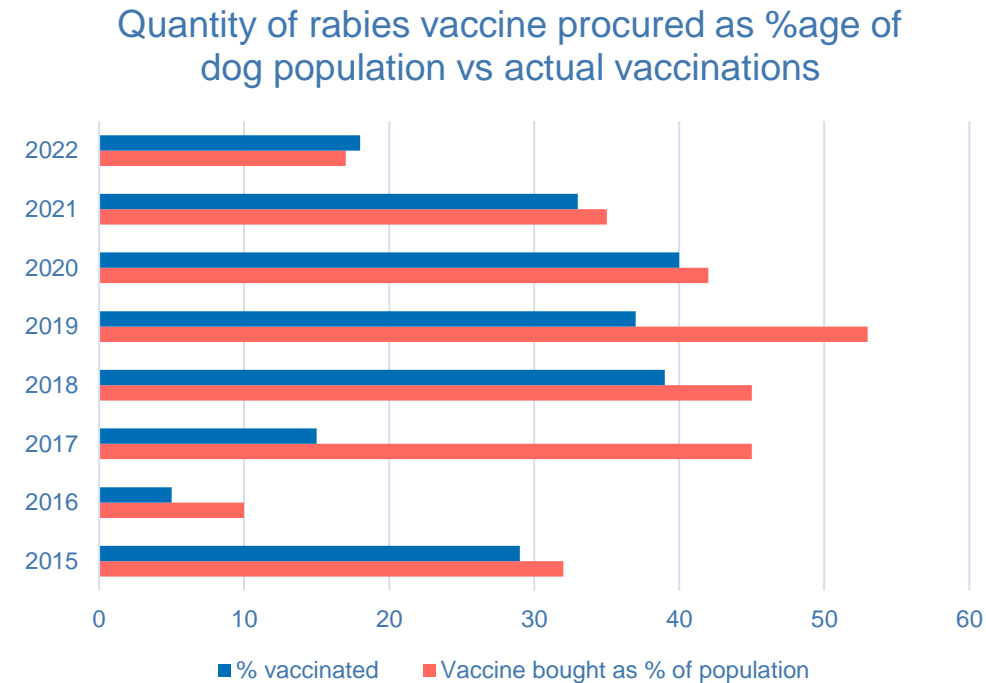
- ❖ Rabies vaccination targeting “hotspots”
- ❖ Vaccine procured centrally by government, based on allocated finances which are not based on any data
- ❖ Vaccine distribution may be based on dog population, occurrence of rabies in humans or dogs or arbitrary





Overview of One Health Project findings

- ❖ Even though rabies is notifiable, the legal framework (laws and policies) do not provide a platform for HH, AH and other stakeholders to share information
 - Rabies remained a veterinary services issue
 - Blame game has been order of the day
- ❖ Efforts by Veterinary services and later , the animal welfare NGOs and other partners to bring various institutions together have not yielded much
 - In '90: DAHLD, CESTAS
- ❖ Absence of a strategy meant that rabies control activities were conducted haphazardly, without any possibility for effective monitoring and evaluation
- ❖ Vaccination coverage was consistently very low
- ❖ Communities participation is very low
- ❖ Frequent PEP stockout



- ❖ A National Rabies Control Strategic Plan has been developed and endorsed
 - Developed and validated by OH stakeholders
 - A Rabies Task Force, as envisioned in the plan has been appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture
 - Also OH with representation from academia, AH, HH, NGOs involved in animal welfare and human health



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

The Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health

National Rabies Strategic Plan

For the elimination of dog-mediated human rabies in Malawi by 2030

April 2024 - 2029



Strategies to generate data

- ❖ Guided by studies and the plan:
 - Strengthen collaboration with NGOs to coordinate vaccinations and rabies sample collection
 - Mission Rabies –whole southern region
 - LSPCA - in capital city
 - CCEI- in the North, new
 - Active and passive sample collection and laboratory diagnosis
 - DFAT
 - qPCR
 - Strategize on access to PEP and WOHV vaccine bank
- ❖ Community participation

- ❖ How to overcome challenge to obtain human samples
- ❖ Task Force at national and district levels
 - Data synthesis
 - Policy briefs





Way forward

- ❖ Strong collaboration and partnerships with local and international NGOs
 - Strong OH platform
 - Data sharing
- ❖ Take advantage of opportunity provided by WOAHA support to twin with OVR to build capacity for sample collection, testing and participation in proficiency testing to ensure quality
- ❖ Build and strengthen regional and international networks
- ❖ Research collaboration is key
- ❖



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Thank

