Canine Rabies Blueprint - Sustainability

5.7.1 How do we ensure sustainability of the rabies control programme?

The design of sustainable mechanisms will be crucial to ensure effective rabies control programmes and maintain freedom from canine rabies once elimination has been achieved. There are a number of aspects that you will need to consider to create long term sustainable strategies:

- Political stability needs to be in place to ensure government commitment, sustainability and staff safety.

- Raising awareness among policy-makers about the burden and health and economic impacts of rabies is a critical factor in generating political commitment, contributing to higher regional and national priorities for rabies control and mobilizing resources.

- High commitment towards multisectoral involvement linking veterinary and medical sectors as well as other ministries is required to provide countrywide cooperation. Click here for the list of agencies that should be involved and their responsibilities. Good inter-sectoral and inter-institutional communication needs to be maintained throughout the rabies control programme. Depending on the setting, international collaborations involving relevant agencies of neighboring countries will also be needed to avoid reintroductions of rabies and promote canine rabies control in adjacent areas.

- High awareness among local communities is also important to ensure strong community participation and commitment towards rabies control. This section will provide guidelines on how to develop effective communications plans.

- Strong leadership at the central and community levels is needed to champion the cause of dog rabies control and engage and motivate all parties involved.

- Sufficient infrastructure for rabies surveillance (surveillance networks and laboratory diagnosis) should be in place or should be quickly put in place and sustained. Further information on establishing an adequate rabies surveillance programme can be found in section 3 of the Rabies Surveillance Blueprint.

- Continuous education and targeted awareness campaigns should be conducted for professionals involved in rabies control, including border inspection officers.

- Adequate financial resources will be a prerequisite for long-term sustainability. Integration of budgets for rabies prevention and control across sectors, especially veterinary and medical, could provide a mechanism to sustain dog rabies control using savings in human rabies prevention. The role of the private sector in rabies control (e.g. companies, rotary clubs) and its potential support to governmental efforts might be valuable to explore. Knowledge on existing emergency funds in case of re-introduction of rabies can be critical to take rapid and appropriate action thus avoiding further spread or economic losses. There is information on how to advocate for better financial commitments to rabies control in Section 3.3.4.

- Plans for sustainability should be based on successful pilot projects demonstrating the feasibility of canine rabies control/elimination and benefits for human health. Such projects can provide a benchmark for the successful control of rabies at larger scales and encourage other areas to
engage in similar programmes.

- Careful consideration should be given to possible mechanisms to ensure long-term availability of biologicals provided at an affordable cost (or even free of charge) to the population.

- Strategies should be developed for maintenance of rabies-free areas before these have been created. Click here for information on activities you should carry out to avoid re-introductions of rabies.

- Collaborations with regional and global organizations should be established and it should be ensured that dog rabies control is maintained among their priorities.