

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, MUNICIPALITIES AND DOG RABIES CONTROL

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Over the past 44 years KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), a province on the eastern seaboard of South Africa, has been battling endemic canine rabies. Given a system of solid regulations, good surveillance and sound veterinary infrastructure, there has been some success in the control of rabies. Elimination of the disease has however eluded the efforts of the programme. This paper aims to elucidate the factors, events and circumstances that played a role in the successes and disappointments in the effort to control rabies in KZN. Most recently, with international support and sponsorship (Bill and Melinda Gates foundation/WHO), the KZN Rabies project has taken significant steps in the direction of an ultimate goal of rabies elimination.

In this paper, we analyse the role of local governments and municipalities, communication strategies and program sustainability within the context of the current project and the history of rabies control in the province. As can be expected, we demonstrated that it is essential to determine the true extent of herd immunity within the KZN dog population, which is in turn determined by the methods and approaches used in the mass vaccinations campaigns. We could demonstrate that failures resulted from institutional pressure on the rabies control programme. These include political pressures, financial constraints, poor management and shifting priorities (outbreaks of other diseases of economic importance etc.)

Successes on the other hand, were largely dependent on the establishment of a core team of capable and motivated individuals. It appears that, in a setting such as KZN, the sourcing of committed and passionate individuals at the local level has been a key component in the creation of a platform from where the elimination of rabies has a realistic chance, regardless of the significant constraints and challenges prevalent in the developing world.

