



PHILIPPINES

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr Raffy A. Deray is a Doctor of Medicine with a Master's Degree on Public Health. He is the National Program Manager of National Rabies Prevention and Control Programme (NRPCP) of the Department of Health in the Philippines, and the International Coordinator for the World Health Organization (WHO)–Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation project for human and rabies elimination in the Philippines.

SUMMARY

In the Philippines, rabies is considered a public health concern, responsible for the death of at least 200 Filipinos annually. In 2005, the Department of Health (DOH) identified rabies and four other infectious diseases for elimination as part of its disease-free zone initiative. The country being an archipelago, the National Rabies Programme adopted the island approach of eliminating rabies, prioritising small islands. Joint DOH and Department of Agriculture (DA) declaration of rabies-free zones started in 2008.

To support the objectives of the disease-free zone initiative, the DOH submitted a proposal to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2007 to implement a rabies elimination campaign in the Visayas. The Philippines was eventually selected as one of the three demonstration sites for the WHO–BMGF (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation)-supported rabies elimination projects. In collaboration with the DA and local Government Units, project implementation started in 2010. Dog vaccination started in 2010 in Phase I areas (Western Visayas and half of Central Visayas), followed by Phase II areas (second half of Central Visayas and Eastern Visayas).

In 2014, Rabies was included in the priority diseases of the DOH-KP (Kalusugang Pangkalahatan [Universal Health]) Road Map. The initial results of the WHO–BMGF-supported dog vaccination campaign in the Visayas was used to justify the importance of supporting the DA's dog vaccination campaign in order to achieve the objectives of the roadmap for rabies elimination. The result demonstrated that dog-mediated human rabies can be controlled and eventually eliminated by improving dog vaccination and access to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). The overall outcome was that the Secretaries for Health and for Agriculture signed a Memorandum of Agreement to strengthen their cooperation to eliminate rabies, and the DOH transferred PhP 69.5 million to the DA for the procurement of additional dog vaccines.

Unfortunately, implementation of the project was severely affected by typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in 2013. The damage was so severe that dog vaccination stopped for almost two years in Eastern and Western Visayas. Recovery and rehabilitation from the effects of the typhoon was prioritised by local government units. Catch-up dog vaccination finally started in 2015 in most of the Yolanda-affected areas, even in areas that have yet to fully recover from the devastation of Yolanda.

To date, three provinces, five island municipalities and five smaller islands in the Visayas have been declared jointly by DOH and DA as rabies-free zones. Out of the 362 cities/municipalities in the Visayas, 19 still have human rabies. For this reason, the theme of the project's culminating activity, the Rabies Dissemination Forum in the Visayas was 'The Fight is Not Over', to encourage local government units and all partners to continue what has been started, until all the municipalities and cities in the Visayas are free from human-rabies.