

# UNITED AGAINST RABIES FORUM



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## 2021 Review



### Message from Lord Trees, Chair of the United Against Rabies Forum Steering Group

*I am pleased to be writing to update you on our activities since we formally launched the UAR Forum in September 2020, and to highlight key events related to our efforts.*

*The purpose of the United Against Rabies Forum is to provide an inclusive platform for information exchange, collaboration, and to offer support to rabies-endemic countries. Ending human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030 remains the shared goal, although the coronavirus pandemic has seriously impacted efforts, especially at community level.*

*Despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19, over the past year, the UAR Forum's Steering Group has further developed its governance structures and established three working groups, each dedicated to the objectives set out in [Zero by 30: the global strategic plan to end human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030](#).*

*The first working group is focused on the effective use of vaccines, medicines, tools and technologies to strengthen surveillance sys-*

*tems, the second is focused on strategic and operational support to countries, while the third and newest working group focuses on advocacy and resource mobilization. The working groups encompass more than 30 institutions and have members from over 25 countries, putting the collective spirit of the UAR Forum into action.*

*Due to the pandemic, our 2021 UAR Forum meeting was once again held online, taking the form of 3 webinars. Key topics covered included how rabies control and prevention fits into a global One Health approach and highlighting success stories, with the second and third meetings showcasing the progress of our working groups to advance [Zero by Thirty](#). We hope to be able to hold a combined online and in-person meeting next year – please mark your calendars for the end of September 2022!*

*Thank you for being part of the United Against Rabies Forum and I look forward to making even more progress in the coming year. While rabies is a terrible disease, we have the knowledge and tools to beat it and, if we continue to work together, we will.*

*Best wishes,  
Sandy Trees (Lord Trees)*

## Governance and Working Groups

The United Against Rabies Forum is guided by a Steering Group chaired by Lord Trees. Members of the Steering Group include chairs of the working groups (see below), as well as representatives of the Tripartite (FAO, OIE, WHO) and experts.

A key objective in the past year has been to create working groups to address key challenges in rabies control as set out in Zero by 30. The groups are led by experts in rabies control and welcome members from a range of disciplines.

1. Working Group 1, 'Effective use of vaccines, medicines, tools and technologies' is co-chaired by Dr Thumbi Mwangi and Dr Ryan Wallace. 20 participants have come together from 16 organisations and institutions to improve and streamline reporting, map rabies control activities and provide tools to support them, and to enhance access and use of dog vaccine and testing. The results of some of these efforts will be made available on the new UAR Forum website in coming months
2. Working Group 2, 'Strategic and operational support' is co-chaired by Dr Katinka de Balogh and Dr Vivian Iwar. 29 participants representing 21 organisations are working together to support integrated country and regional strategies, including the development of a national strategic plan template which is now available in English and French. The group has drafted a roadmap to provide countries with a pathway towards rabies elimination and identified the main constraints faced by countries in order to identify solutions to overcome these. Work has begun to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for countries, update recommendations for the use of oral rabies vaccines in dogs and explore opportunities for the integration of rabies with other disease programs.
3. Working Group 3, 'Advocacy and resource mobilization' is our newest working group and is chaired by Dr Isabelle Dieuzy-Labayé with contributions from 15 participants representing 14 organisations. This group has started developing strategies and messaging for the engagement of national resource partners, exploring opportunities to engage inter-

national resource partners to invest in rabies elimination as part of health system improvement, and creating a toolbox of advocacy and investment materials to engage public and private investors, media and civil society.

To contact any of the Working Group chairs, please write to Dr Rachel Tidman, the Global Rabies Coordinator [globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int](mailto:globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int)



(World Animal Protection)

## United Against Rabies Annual Meeting 2021

The United Against Rabies Forum annual stakeholder meeting took place against the backdrop of the global pandemic and rising interest in the concept of One Health – a defining principle in designing zoonotic disease intervention strategies and pandemic preparedness. The meeting consisted of 3 webinars with the first focused on rabies control as a practical route to One Health implementation. The second and third webinars explored key issues being covered by the working groups. All 3 meeting recordings are available on our [Youtube channel](#). Between 200 – 400 participants, representing both human and animal health sectors from 92 countries, attended each webinar.

### **Webinar 1 “Rabies, One Health and COVID-19”**

How rabies control and prevention fits into a global One Health approach, especially in low income settings, highlighting success stories.

Speakers include Lord Alexander Trees (House of Lords, UK), Dr. Thumbi Mwangi (Kenya), Dr. Bernadette Abela-Ridder (WHO), Dr. Yewande Alimi (Africa CDC),

Dr. Lucille Blumberg (South Africa), Dr. Naseem Salahuddin (Pakistan), Dr. Nigel Swift (Boehringer Ingelheim) Dr. Onphirul Yurachai (Thailand). Includes Rabies Alliance film for World Rabies Day.

### **Webinar 2 “Effective Use of Vaccines, Medicines, Tools and Technologies Toward Zero By 30**

A deep dive into rabies data gaps, mapping and tools for rabies control, led by the co-chairs of Working Group 1. Includes a discussion on lessons to be learned from successful rinderpest eradication.

Speakers include Prof Peter Roeder (rinderpest eradication), Dr Bernadette Abela-Ridder (WHO), Dr Thumbi Mwangi (Kenya), Dr Ryan Wallace (CDC), Dr Terence Scott (GARC), Dr Sean Shadomy (FAO).

### **Webinar 3 “Strategic and Operational Support Towards Zero by 30**

Practical insights from UAR Forum Working Group 2 on strategic and operational support for national rabies control programs, particularly the process of gaining OIE endorsement. Speakers include Dr Reildrin Morales (The Philippines), Dr Katinka de Balogh (FAO), Dr Vivian Iwar (ECOWAS), Dr Marija Popovic (OIE), Dr Andrew Coetzer (GARC), Dr Thomas Müller (FLI), Dr Anna Fahrion (FLI), Dr. Madi Savadogo (Burkina Faso).

## **Rabies and One Health - from global concept to practical action**

While there is considerable interest in the concept of One Health at a global and national level as a strategy for pandemic prevention, the challenge is to turn the concept into practice, especially in low-income settings. Rabies, for which there are effective vaccines and proven control strategies, is increasingly recognised as a disease that can put One Health into action, delivering concrete results for affected communities, as well as building the integrated systems that can protect us against future zoonotic shocks. By far the most effective methodology for controlling rabies and eliminating human deaths is to combine investment in human PEP provision with mass dog vaccination as a public health function, alongside integrated bite case management (IBCM), improved reporting systems, and community education and engagement.

The COVID-19 pandemic set back rabies control efforts in many countries. A detailed survey commissioned by the UAR Forum, published in [Rabies and the pandemic: lessons for One Health](#), showed that pandemic-related restrictions led to resources being directed away from rabies control, disrupted mass dog vaccination programmes and reduced access to post exposure prophylaxis. The Forum has sadly received reports of increased outbreaks of rabies and rabies deaths attributed to reductions in control measures. It will take some years for these setbacks to be overcome.

Despite these setbacks, many countries have made progress. For example, India, which currently records approximately 36% of global human rabies deaths transmitted by dogs, announced on World Rabies Day 2021 that it would [launch a new National Rabies Control](#) programme, making the disease fully notifiable, alongside a new National Action Plan for Dog Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) by 2030. Namibia and the Philippines were the first countries to have their national rabies control programs endorsed by OIE – recognition of the quality of their policies and commitment to achieving rabies-free status.



(G7 UK 2021)

At global level, the UAR Forum welcomes the G7's strong support for One Health implementation including the establishment of a One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) by WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP. We will continue to make the case that we cannot successfully detect new or unknown pathogens, including those with pandemic potential, if we do not adequately apply One Health principles to control and monitor known zoonotic diseases like rabies.

## Membership

United Against Rabies Forum membership is open to organisations committed to rabies control and elimination and whose work contributes to this goal. Members are encouraged to promote and support the goals and activities of the Forum and are asked that their own activities align with the objectives, vision and purpose of the Forum. Members are invited to the Annual Stakeholder meeting and to regular online discussions and events. Membership is free of charge and is valid for 3 years. Prospective members are encouraged to contact the Global Rabies Coordinator ([globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int](mailto:globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int)) to complete a brief application form and agree to the United Against Rabies Forum's Terms of Reference and Privacy Policy.

## Focus areas for 2022

In 2022 the United Against Rabies Forum will focus on engaging and empowering national stakeholders and local authorities including inviting local authority networks into our working groups. We will also advocate for rabies control and elimination as part of the Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Roadmap and ensure that rabies remains on the global One Health agenda.

We will facilitate in-country support, particularly the development of national strategic plans for rabies control and we will promote OIE endorsement of those plans. We will aim to link national rabies strategic plans with Gavi's agenda on PEP access as well as the global rabies reference centre network.

We will engage the wider health development community, including the NTD community, and explore synergies and mutually beneficial ways of interacting to strengthen health systems.

We will support and facilitate knowledge transfer with the creation of a new website, regular webinars and newsletters. We will continue to expand and engage our membership to build alliances for effective rabies control and One Health implementation and hope to hold a hybrid (virtual + in-person) annual stakeholder meeting at the end of September 2022.

Please stay in touch with us and share your events, news and updates by writing to Dr Rachel Tidman at ([globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int](mailto:globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int)). Rabies is a disease we can beat, if we work together!



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## Contact

For further information about our work, membership or to contact any of the Working Groups, please write to Dr Rachel Tidman at [globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int](mailto:globalrabiescoordinator@oie.int)