



HBCA

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR CHANGE FOR ANIMALS

CASE STUDY



MANU MITRA: SUSTAINABLE DOG MANAGEMENT

ORGANISATION JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE NEPAL

COUNTRY NEPAL

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Project Background

In Nepal's capital, the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) authority is devolving responsibility for street dog management and rabies control to the smallest unit of local government – the ward. An Animal Management Committee (AMC) is established in each ward, with the prerogative to ensure that all street dogs are registered to a named guardian, rabies-vaccinated, and (if desired) sterilised, and all residents are educated in responsible dog ownership. Communities are empowered to resolve other animal issues, such as wild animal conflict, locally and humanely. The project, named 'ManuMitra' (meaning 'friend of human' in Nepali) was launched in March 2016 as a core program of KMC's Urban Health Division.

“For 50 years KMC poisoned 10,000 street dogs per year (half the population) with no effect on rabies or nuisance issues. Then we spent 15 years relying on NGOs and the private sector for a solution, but dogs are there because of the community so the solution must lie within the community. We looked at other models of municipal dog management in south Asia but they seemed to lack a mechanism of community mandate and empowerment.”

Hari Kumar Shrestha, Chief, Urban Health Division, KMC.



Overview of Intervention

A household questionnaire in 2016 found that half of Kathmandu’s 80,000 owned dogs have the freedom to roam publicly at any time (contributing to a street dog population estimate of 22,000) and abandonment of sick or unwanted dogs is high.

One of the responsibilities of each AMC is to identify local residents who care for street dogs, and recruit them as ‘Animal Management Assistants’ (AMAs). Each AMA joins a peer-supported training program and is given an official ID badge and first aid kit. By harnessing the energy and dedication of AMAs, the KMC is building a people-powered model of dog management, which can be activated to respond to other animal management issues, such as unregulated slaughter, human-wildlife conflict or abandoned cattle.

“It was a risk to design a project which hinges entirely on the community. But we found no shortage of local people willing to work voluntarily for street dogs. Even (or perhaps especially) in the most underprivileged communities there are individuals who resolve human-dog conflict or unofficially act as a font of knowledge on dogs. They are the experts in their local dogs and local humans, and they are permanent residents. It would be inappropriate for us to come and attempt to do their job – the only question we should ask is, ‘how can we help these people?’.”

Basanta Gautam, ManuMitra Community Coordinator

Welfare Concerns

Some of Kathmandu’s dogs experience poor welfare. A 2016 survey by Humane Society International found that 5.3% of observed street dogs had visible skin disease; 0.5% were emaciated. Canine distemper, parvovirus and rabies are enzootic in dogs, and other agonizing diseases such as transmissible venereal tumors are common. Street dogs also suffer from climate extremes and inhumane treatment by humans.

Welfare challenges are not limited to dogs. Each year, more than 35,000 people in Nepal seek anti-rabies vaccine following a dog bite, and a small percentage die from the virus. People are adversely affected by dogs’ nighttime barking and howling; fear of being bitten or chased; and the emotional toll of seeing diseased, parasite-ridden, or injured animals. The thousands of livestock living in the city are also vulnerable to roaming dogs.



ManuMitra conducts participatory research including focus groups to understand community knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about street dogs.

“Now we can walk through the wards and see that all of the dogs are ear-notched [sterilised]. AMAs will call us if there are any new unsterilised, sick or suspect rabid dogs. Our AMAs are becoming frontline community animal health workers, literally saving lives by preventing rabies, protecting children and vulnerable people from dog bites, and making the community a better place to live by combatting cruelty and ensuring the welfare of street dogs for their lifetime.”

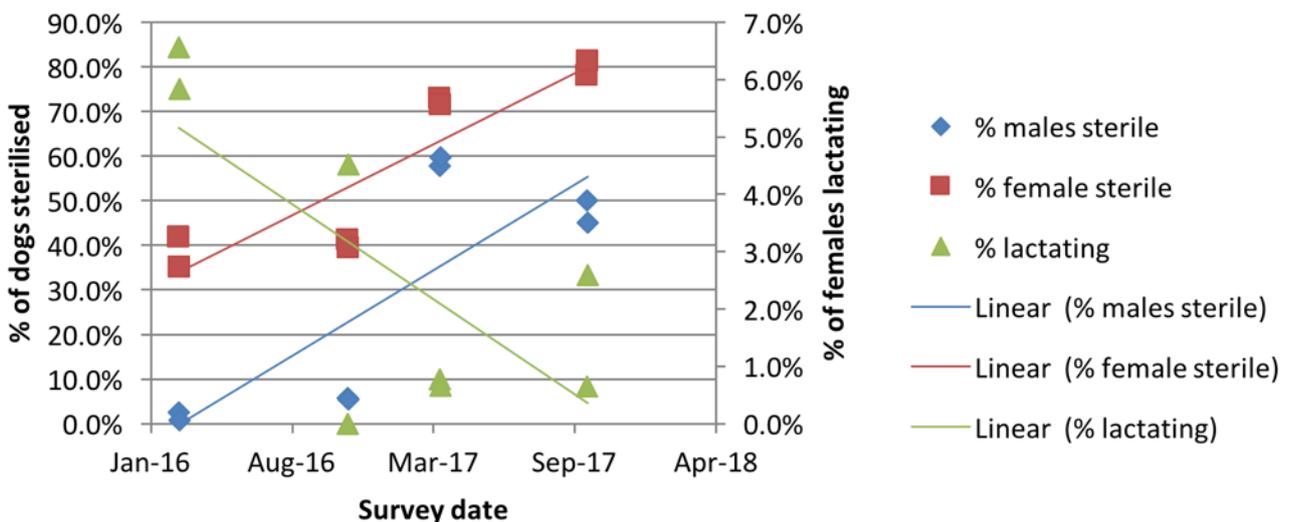
Dr. Prabin Thapa, ManuMitra Veterinary Coordinator.



To date, AMCs have been established in 20 of the city’s 32 wards, and 126 AMAs are now active across the city. Under ManuMitra, all government schools include education on rabies and dog bite prevention, while ‘Dog Managed Zones’ are established in areas that require more urgent intervention (e.g. Parliament, schools and hospitals).

Biannual street surveys show a declining density and changing composition of street dogs in ManuMitra intervention zones, including a 70% reduction in lactating females, which the partners attribute to intensive community participation.

Change in sterilisation and lactation in Zone 2



Achievements

Across the globe, when a dog population management program is launched, a common approach is to spay/neuter and vaccinate as many dogs as possible, sometimes with a community outreach and education component. Many population management programs are short-term either by intent (moving to a different community) or failure to sustain funding.

ManuMitra takes a very different approach. It seeks to help communities identify their community-specific goals for dog populations, and then identify what is needed to achieve those goals. In the pilot community, Ward 20, ManuMitra spent the first four months engaging diverse community members (some of whom began at odds with one another regarding dogs), slowly building support, and focusing on technical requirements to support achieving community goals. Now Ward 20 is talking about creating their own animal clinic in response to what it sees as a community need. Supported by laws and other technical measures like dog registration, plus soft laws brought in by ward level, the initial time and resources invested in community empowerment should help ensure that the work will be sustainable and successful.

Challenges

How is success measured? It's common to measure success by the numbers of dogs sterilised or vaccinated against rabies, and this creates pressure to maximise numbers. However, the ManuMitra model doesn't focus on sterilisation numbers, but rather community engagement and leadership to create a sustainable model with longer-term positive impacts. This can create some tensions.

Staying focused: It can be challenging to remain focused on the core project purpose. For example, intensive engagement and education within the pilot ward led ManuMitra to become the go-to source for every dog and animal issue in the ward. In response, ManuMitra has tried to help ward-level Animal Management Committees (AMCs) address requests and explain to the community that ManuMitra is trying to address the cause of the problem by empowering communities to protect dog welfare, rather than drain resources dealing only with the symptoms of the underlying issue (something that would have been all too easy to do!). In the case of the pilot ward, discussions revealed that the community felt it lacked technical resources and capacities, so community empowerment will involve building a veterinary clinic within the ward.

Precedent programs and laws: Unlike neighboring countries in south Asia, there is no precedent of government-supported dog management in Nepal, and no federal laws pertaining to rabies control or animal welfare. Hence it was deemed necessary to create a working model for how a municipal authority could assume its responsibility to control dogs and rabies, where protocols could be tested and refined, and how dog management personnel from across the country could be trained. This is an extra step and challenge, but an important one to help ensure program success and sustainability.

Sustainability

The reality is that (outside) interventions providing a service to the community (e.g., free dog sterilisation, free rabies vaccination, "problem" dog removal services) require significant and long-term investment. This creates a risk that a service will come to an end, and impact will be lost. If an intervention depends on the commitment and action of the community, then if it progresses at all, that progression can only be in a sustainable direction.

ManuMitra's vision is that communities humanely and effectively manage their own street dog populations according to their specific needs.

The design of ManuMitra reflects the subjective and local nature of the street dog problem. In some parts of the city, the primary concern of residents is that they are kept awake at night by dogs barking. In another part, residents are concerned for the safety of their children as they walk to school. Each ward has its own unique conflict issues and hotspots and its own unique resources to develop a solution. As ward AMCs become more empowered, instances of self-governance are on the rise, such as the momo shop owner who poured boiling water on a street dog and was forced to pay 'compensation' to the dog, or the truck driver who hit a street dog causing a head injury, and was tracked down by the AMC and forced to pay the dog's veterinary bill.

Lessons to Pass On

Defining the “problem”: The ManuMitra team played a key role in initiating the project in the pilot ward, but it did not define a specific “problem” when starting the project. After all, those implementing a program don’t have the right or authority to state that a population is excessive. The bigger issue is whether a community can take care of the animals that are present. In the ManuMitra pilot ward, the community played a big role in determining what was needed to achieve its goals. This is important to community buy-in (and thus behaviour change) and program sustainability.

Human behaviour: ManuMitra is not about managing dogs; it’s about managing people to manage dogs. As such, thus far it is proving to be more time consuming than interventions that focus directly on dogs. Yet, it is vital to acknowledge and respect the nuances and complexities of human behaviour and emotions to have a successful community-driven and sustainable program.

Community education and engagement: Sterilising and vaccinating dogs is straightforward, but getting someone else to do it (i.e. the community) in a way that is scientific, humane, and likely to be sustained is less so. Many understandings and learnings emerged from the community education and engagement phase in the pilot ward. One is that community engagement and education is often an afterthought, but early results from ManuMitra reinforce the idea that this should be the foundation. Another lesson is the importance of being patient as stakeholders who will ultimately be leading a project learn their role in the process, rather than doing the work for them. The patience ultimately paid off!

Many stakeholders: A community program will have many stakeholders, both obvious ones and less obvious ones. The ManuMitra program thus far has engaged priests, butchers, teachers, dog owners, non-dog owners, veterinarians, officials from many city and Ward-based government agencies, not-for-profit organisations, funders, international agencies (FAO, WHO), and more. It’s important to engage all stakeholders and ensure that they are communicating effectively with one another. In one exercise, each AMC member was given a “new” identity (e.g. mayor, sweeper, teacher, health worker) and asked to list dog-related problems from their new perspective, encouraging them to consider other points of view when planning dog management.

Staying focused: It is important to stay focused on the core project purpose. As noted above under “challenges,” intensive engagement and education within the pilot ward led ManuMitra to become the go-to source for every dog and animal issue in the ward. In response, the team has tried to help AMCs address requests and explain to the community that ManuMitra is focused on addressing the root cause of the problem by empowering communities to protect dog welfare.

Any Other Information

ManuMitra is being monitored and evaluated according to indicators established by the International Companion Animal Management (ICAM) Coalition. A comprehensive set of indicators has been selected against each output to enable monitoring and evaluation of ManuMitra, including some novel indicators that have yet to be tested in the field of dog management. The ICAM Coalition is providing assistance to ManuMitra in monitoring and evaluation as part of the Coalition’s objective to recommend “valid, reliable, practical and feasible ways of assessing the impact of domestic dog population interventions.”

ManuMitra: Sustainable Dog Management Model - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3FPTZB4xaM>

A Woof of Fresh Air - <http://nepalitimes.com/article/Nepali-Times-Buzz/woof-of-fresh-air-for-street-dogs-in-kathmandu,4132>



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Valuable information is not easily accessible to those planning and involved with projects aiming to apply HBC theories and principles . Hence, HBCA is developing a resource that provides an overview of interventions and the lessons we can learn from them. If you have a case study to submit or any enquiries about this case study, please get in touch.