



Rabies Free Africa Newsletter | June 2020

## Rabies Free Tanzania analysis continues during pandemic



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rabies Free Tanzania team isn't taking time off – they're busy crunching numbers.

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Joel Changalucha is

Rabies In The News

[Wall Street Journal - Pet Facial Recognition Helps Find Lost Cats and Dogs](#)

Be a Rabies Hero  
on World Rabies  
Day

This World Rabies Day we are launching the Rabies Hero campaign to help keep the rabies virus at bay closer to home.

assessing all costs of the rabies vaccination program. The goal: to determine the most cost-effective mass-dog vaccination strategies.

By assessing the costs of the program, the team can reach more dogs. The more dogs reached, the more human and animal lives can be saved.

Changalucha is a researcher pursuing his PhD through WSU's Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health.

In Dar es Salaam, he said people in need of rabies vaccines show up at Mnazimmoja Health Centre almost every day. They may or may not have been bitten by a dog infected with the rabies virus but going without the virus' post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a gamble that could cost them their life.

"Rabies kills. There is no treatment, once you have the symptoms you are dead," said Changalucha.

In some regions of Tanzania, the Rabies Free Tanzania team is often the first point of contact if someone has been bitten by a potentially rabid dog.

While the Rabies Free Africa programs in Kenya and Tanzania have temporarily stopped their mass-dog vaccination campaigns to protect our teams in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the hotline remains open to assist the public from a distance. "They will always call us and say, 'I have this person here who was bitten,'" Changalucha said. "I've met a lot of people who have been bitten."

Next month you will get special communication on how your veterinary hospital can create a rabies vaccination clinic that brings in clients who missed wellness appointments during the pandemic to prevent rabies locally.

To learn more in the meantime, contact Christie Cotterill at [rabiesfreeafrica@wsu.edu](mailto:rabiesfreeafrica@wsu.edu).



**Congratulations**, Rabies Free Tanzania Director Felix Lankester! Lankester was nominated for a **Rabies Hero award by MSD Animal Health**.

The award recognizes those who have worked to make a difference in the fight against the virus!

Staff, training, travel, vaccines, and advertising are some of the main costs associated with the program. So far, the team has trained community members in four of the nine districts but they are considering circling back to the first four districts -- Serengeti, Butiama, Tarime DC, and Tarime TC -- due to the long hiatus from COVID-19. All nine districts make up the Mara Region in northern Tanzania.

By training community members, referred to as rabies coordinators, the hope is more members of the community will attend and engage in the vaccinations.

Changalucha has been working with rabies for nearly a decade. "It's the thing I love," he said. "Even at the moment, it is very encouraging. There are just a few people dealing with rabies right now. It is motivating work."

He hopes to continue working to eliminate rabies as the World Health Organization encroaches on its goal to eliminate the virus by 2030.

Currently the program's mass-dog vaccinations are on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic but some social activities could begin soon. Changalucha said with many stringent social distancing guidelines he and the team are assessing how to conduct training. "We're making arrangement for hand sanitizers and masks," he said. "If everything goes as planned, many of our activities will begin by early July."



Since 2016, Sig Nottingham, Coe Lindner and Eileen Lindner - all DVM alumni from WSU - have been giving \$1 for every rabies vaccination administered at All Creatures Animal Hospital in Puyallup, Wash.

For Nottingham, it is just one of the many ways he can support human health from the veterinary half of medicine.

It's also a way to back the One Health mission - the

## Spotlight: Machunde Bigambo



Meet Machunde Bigambo, the longest-standing member of the Rabies Free Tanzania team. Bigambo was a member of the Carnivore Disease Research Program in Serengeti National Park before WSU took over the program in 2009. He is now the assistant program manager.

### **Where do you live?**

*I live in Mwanza, the second largest city in Tanzania. It's located by Lake Victoria, the second largest freshwater lake in the world.*

### **What is your role in the program?**

*I am the assistant to the rabies coordinators we train to organize mass-dog vaccinations. We train them on how to use the rabies vaccine, how to track which dogs were vaccinated for rabies, how to properly use cooling devices, and we supply them needles and all the equipment.*

premise that human health is directly tied to the health of animals and the environment.

“Sixty-thousand people die from rabies and it is preventable through mass-dog vaccination,” Nottingham said. “I have always thought human medicine could use veterinary medicine more than they do. This is a way for veterinarians to directly impact human health.”

The only rabies case Nottingham has witnessed in his nearly four decades on the job is a video back at Montana State University where he completed his undergraduate degree in 1982.

“They showed us people with rabies and it was horrible,” he said.

“Thankfully rabies isn't very common here but we don't think about it as much as we probably should.”

Nottingham said veterinarians will always aid human health by identifying zoonotic diseases but combating

**Why is it important to eliminate rabies?**

*Because no one else is combating rabies. Rabies is killing people, especially kids, which matter the most to me. I care about the wildlife and the big cats too. It's a community and most of these people are from villages and they can't afford PEP.*

**Have you known anyone who has died from rabies?**

*I have known at least four people who have died from rabies. They were all children under the age of 15. Most were bitten by dogs but one was bitten by a rabid hyena.*

**Can you see the program having an impact?**

*Through this mass-dog vaccination we are combating the disease. Currently human rabies cases are going down.*

**What do you do when you aren't fighting rabies?**

*I like to exercise. I like bicycling. I also am a big soccer fan. My favorite team is Arsenal.*

those diseases is the next step.

"It is a difficult time right now for everybody and some clinics are struggling but people can't forget about the impact they can make," he said.

**Thank You Clinic Partners!**

Over 100 veterinary clinics from around the US support the life-saving work and research of the Rabies Free Africa team. Thank you for your continued support, we couldn't do it without you!

To see a list of our supporters, visit us [online](#).

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# Social Highlights

## Twitter

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@RabiesFreeKenya

We fight viruses. That's why WSU's Global Health Kenya team of epidemiologists, physicians, nurses, & laboratory technologists are working with the Kenyan healthcare system to help keep communities safe from #COVID19. #Rabies is next.  
More on the program:  
[globalhealth.wsu.edu/initiatives/ra...](http://globalhealth.wsu.edu/initiatives/ra...)



## Facebook

 Rabies Free Kenya  
Published by Josh Babcock (?) · May 7 · 🌐

We aren't just waiting for the dogs to come to us. We're tracking the true incidence of rabid dog bites in Kenya to ensure the nation knows how many people are bitten annually and how many life-saving post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatments to have on hand.



 Rabies Free Africa Retweeted



**Rabies Free Tanzania** @RabiesFreeTZA · May 18

Here's a photo taken earlier this spring of our team training livestock officers on how to monitor the temperature of vaccines stored in low-tech cooling devices. Due to #COVID19, our mass-dog #rabies vaccinations are on hold. We can't wait to get back to it. #EndRabiesNow



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 Rabies Free Africa  
Published by Hootsuite (?) · May 12 · 🌐

Shout out to our newest partner -- Mountain Vista Veterinary Services, located about 9 miles from Canada in Eureka, Montana! Together, we can equip rabies coordinators in Kenya and Tanzania with the tools to save lives. #EliminateRabies



## Quick Links

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