

What impacts dog campaigns?

FIAPO's Inferences and policy implications of the preliminary report on 'Remaking Zoopolis: Human street-dog cohabitation and rabies prevention in India'

1. The study observes that there is no linear relationship between socio-economic class and attitudes towards street dogs. Any person, regardless of their socio-economic status can have a friendly/adverse attitude towards dogs. The fear of dogs was correlated to dislike of them.

A policy recommendation after such a consideration is that education, awareness and community engagement initiatives need to be done across all classes, and not be limited to hitherto perceived 'high risk' groups alone.

2. The study also observes that pavement dwellers and waste workers have a strong relationship and sound knowledge of dogs. This suggests that we can learn from pavement dwellers and waste workers on how to interact safely with street dogs.
3. It was observed that a majority of people felt that street dogs were a problem, while still believing they have a right to live on the streets (78.8%).

The obvious implication is the reinforcement of the unpopularity of culling. This tolerance can also be converted into positive dog sentiment by

- getting more 'desi dogs' to be adopted in regular adoption camps
 - creating a sense of safety by running regular vaccination camps
 - creating a sense of belonging with projects like getting them reflective collars, simple name tags etc
 - community maintained designated dog feeding areas
 - seasonal projects like putting up water bowls in summer, dog sweaters in winter
4. Wasteworkers acknowledged the importance of dogs helping create safe environments, and participants from upper social economic status typically reported the view that dogs don't belong in a city.

This has implications on the messaging that needs to vary across different social economic classes.

5. Barking (53.01%) and chasing (50.1%) were reported to be the biggest complaints about street dogs and rabies was not (15%).

This significantly changes the focus of education, sensitization and engagement activities, and increased the focus on barking/chasing related issues instead of rabies.

6. The study observes that bites and chasing were more likely to be attributed to street dogs than pet dogs. This contradicts data from previous research which suggest bite cases are more likely to be attributed to pet dogs. The study also shows that people's responses to barking and chasing dogs were not always helpful in avoiding bites/injuring the dogs.

Implication: These need to be addressed by directing education campaigns specifically geared to teach people to avoid bites. Education also needs to address key myths about dogs (such as about mange) on priority.

7. The quality of Bite management service offered at the government facilities in the study area (Chennai) was very good. It is not the same in all government facilities as FIAPO has had complaints of vaccines being out of stock from government hospitals in Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. The difference in treatment protocols between public and private hospitals; having to go from one part of the hospital to another for treatment were problems reported by the patients. It is recommended that that
 - a. Chennai model of public healthcare for bite management should be replicated in other states as well.
 - b. A uniform schedule and vaccine type is used in all hospitals across the state
 - c. Dedicated rabies control units are set up in hospitals with post bite prophylaxis and counseling facility- all in one place
8. Dog management- the research shows clear opposition to killing of dogs and equally clear support to relocating them. It can be inferred from this that the people's attitude is to get rid of the dogs but not having to bear the guilt of killing them, not recognizing that relocation does not guarantee a dog-free neighborhood. People who

had a kind attitude towards dogs also supported moving them to shelters, from an assumption that they will have a better quality of life there.

Implication: Public interest campaigns linking ABC to healthy ecology and its merits over other forms of removal of dogs need to be integrated into ABC programmes, along with the problems of keeping dogs in shelters – which includes high mortality rates, low welfare, high cost, unavailability of adequate infrastructure,.

9. Interviews with government authorities highlighted that the focus of an ABC campaign needs to be first to establish the dog population in an area and plan to successfully sterilise 70% of the dogs in a timed fashion in carefully delimited geographical areas. The present system of ad hoc targets, piecemeal implementation that results from public pressure along with limited resources is not the most effective way of approaching ABC or for managing dog populations. Local NGOs' involvement with city corporations in ensuring the AWBI protocol for ABC is followed is critical