

Theory of Change: Community-Based Dog Welfare

Karuna Society believes that Animal Birth Control (ABC) and Anti-Rabies (AR) interventions are most effective when delivered as part of a continuous, community-based dog welfare programme. Sterilisation and vaccination alone cannot create lasting change if sick, injured, unsterilised and newly entering dogs receive no care, and if communities lack a reliable local service. Since 2002, Karuna has sterilised more than 13,000 dogs and continues to provide free veterinary treatment and shelter for animals in distress.

The problem

Community dogs in Puttaparthi and surrounding villages face injury, disease, abandonment, cruelty and uncontrolled reproduction. Many have no owner able or willing to pay for treatment. Short-term ABC programmes that move from one location to another, without follow-up care or local monitoring, can leave remaining dogs unsterilised and allow the population to increase again. This also undermines vaccination coverage, animal welfare and community confidence.

Our approach

Karuna will operate an integrated, locally based programme combining:

- ABC and Anti-Rabies vaccination for community dogs.
- Free outpatient treatment for sick and injured dogs.
- Inpatient care for accident cases, fractures, wounds and serious illness.
- Treatment for conditions including parvovirus, distemper, tick fever, transmissible venereal tumour and skin disease.
- Emergency surgeries, fracture repair, amputations and post-operative rehabilitation.
- Ambulance support for rescue, transport and release.
- Lifetime care for dogs that cannot safely return to the community because of paralysis, blindness, age or permanent disability.
- Humane euthanasia only when an animal is suspected of rabies or is experiencing unbearable suffering with no realistic prospect of recovery, following an agreed veterinary and management review.

The programme will be delivered by Karuna's veterinary and animal-care team through its clinic, inpatient facilities and local rescue network. Each animal will be photographed and recorded from intake through treatment, recovery, release, death or permanent admission.

ABC dogs will be individually identified, and records will include treatment, surgery, vaccination, location and outcome data.

Expected results

Inputs: Veterinary staff, trained animal attendants, clinic and recovery facilities, medicines, surgical equipment, ambulance services, data systems and grant funding.

Activities: Treat approximately 1,500 dogs annually; perform approximately 500 ABC/AR procedures; provide approximately 150 additional surgeries; conduct vaccination and community outreach; monitor the project area; and analyse treatment and population data.

Immediate outputs: More dogs receive timely medical care; injured and diseased animals recover or receive humane end-of-life care; sterilised and vaccinated dogs are returned safely; permanently disabled animals receive secure lifetime care; and reliable evidence is generated on dog health, population movement and programme outcomes.

Short- and medium-term outcomes: Improved welfare and survival for community dogs; reduced reproduction and improved vaccination coverage; fewer untreated injuries and disease cases; greater continuity of care; and increased community willingness to report and assist animals in distress.

Long-term impact: A healthier and more stable dog population, reduced risk of rabies transmission, fewer preventable animal deaths and improved coexistence between dogs and people. The evidence generated will help demonstrate that ABC/AR is more sustainable when implemented as **community-based, inclusive animal care**, rather than as a series of short-term sterilisation campaigns.

Assumptions and learning

This Theory of Change assumes continued access to the project area, cooperation from local authorities and communities, adequate veterinary capacity, and sustained funding for both direct animal care and essential staff and operational costs. Karuna will review its data regularly to refine the geographic scope, identify underserved areas, measure outcomes and share evidence with government and animal welfare partners.