Achievement and Innovative Proposals of the SARAH Programme during the 100 days Programme

- **Humane control of street dog numbers through an ABC (Animal Birth Control) Programme** as required under the Rule 6(1) to (3) of the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 as implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)
  - We have achieved 1100 desexings up till 20\textsuperscript{th} June 2011. This was achieved under difficult circumstances particularly shortage of manpower as two veterinary officers were posted out from SARAH Division and no replacement has been made so far.
    - We expect to desex another 3000 animals till March ‘2012.
    - (22743 nos. of dogs and cats have been sterilized till 20\textsuperscript{th} June 2011 since inception)

- **Reduction in the incidence of animal and human rabies, by the systematic rabies vaccination of at least 70% of stray and pet dogs throughout the state. The aim is to eradicate human rabies deaths and eventually create a rabies-free Sikkim.**
  - No reported cases of human rabies in Sikkim.
  - No reported cases of animal rabies during this financial year
  - 1091 doses of rabies vaccine administered by SARAH till 20\textsuperscript{th} June 2011 (50813 doses) doses of rabies vaccine have been administered till 20\textsuperscript{th} June 2011 since inception.

- **Reduction in the incidence of other zoonotic diseases posed by dogs and cats, by providing veterinary healthcare and routine worming of animals and by ensuring that Sikkim has a small, healthy and manageable street dog population.**
  - In addition to the rabies vaccination program, SARAH has also wormed and vaccinated for distemper/hepatitis/parvo/lepto puppies wherever possible during this 100 days programme.

- **Increasing public awareness of rabies and other zoonotic diseases and how to prevent such diseases.**
  - Regular meetings and briefings are held with townspeople, public leaders, and the army regarding SARAH activities and rabies control.
  - Dr Thinlay N. Bhutia, Programme Coordinator attended the Animal welfare conference organized by one of the Asia’s biggest animal welfare organization called Asia for Animal which was held in Chengdu, China wef 10\textsuperscript{th} June 2011 to 14\textsuperscript{th} June 2011. The main aim of the conference was to share the experiences, to improve, develop the animal welfare activities, to collaborate with each other and finally to make our world a better place to live in. Dr Thinlay N. Bhutia made a presentation primarily on SARAH Programme highlighting the unstinting political commitment /will of the present Government. None of the other state in India has such programme where a state wide Government initiated animal welfare and Rabies control is being implemented vigorously and this was further appreciated by one and all. The topics of the presentation was ‘Humane Animal Birth Control for the Street Dogs of India: Empowering the whole Team Through ‘Vet Train’.”
The Programme Coordinator also had an elaborate discussion, interaction based on history, evolution of the SARAH Programme and political commitment of the State Government towards the programme. Apart form this, the Programme Coordinator also deliberated upon many issues pertaining to animal welfare, current Rabies incident in Andra Pradesh.

- Public display material including banners and brochures are used to educate the public and one was conducted during world veterinary Day on 30th April 2011.
- Lessons in animal care and the role of animals in our ecosystem are being incorporated into the School curriculum.
- SARAH veterinarians visited 4-5 schools (government and private schools) across Sikkim to teach schoolchildren about rabies prevention and control.

- **Provision of clinical training to Sikkimese veterinary personnel in sterilisation surgery and life-saving procedures in dogs, cats and other animals.**
  - VBB volunteers continuing to provide practical training and give seminars to local staff. Recent topics include Radiographic Techniques, Interpretation of Radiographs, Practical Management of Urinary Disease, Update on eye disease.
  - Difficult medical and surgical cases are referred by the State Veterinary Hospital to SARAH.

- **Provision of veterinary care for all stray dogs and cats**
  - Increasing numbers of sick/injured stray dogs/cats are being brought in by the community for treatment.
  - SARAH has provided hospital care for 50 animals for a total of 500 days (average 12days hospitalisation per animal) with over 60% of the cases involving wounds or injuries requiring some surgical intervention. Street dogs often require extended hospitalisation for they cannot be released until they are sufficiently recovered to be able to fend for themselves again on the street.
  - SARAH has provided consultation for 287 animals including referral case which often involves complicated and emergency case.
  - SARAH has done around 45 nos of major, minor surgery and chemotherapy treatment to pets, stray animals.

- **Implementation of wild life conservation measures**
  - There is increasing concern about the negative impact of feral dogs on endangered endemic wildlife such as the Bharal (Himalayan Blue Sheep), Red Panda, Shapi (Himalayan Tahr) and Kiang (Tibetan Wild Ass) by hunting & killing them for food. The dogs are also competing with the Snow Leopard & Tibetan Wolf for scarce food resources, & as these dogs hunt in large packs they have a significant advantage over the leopard or wolf.
  - Accordingly, ABC programmes are being implemented in areas adjacent to wildlife conservation areas. These areas are often in restricted areas and require the cooperation of the Army and Forestry for the work to be performed.
  - SARAH maintains good communications with the Department of Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Management so that problem areas can be identified, and humane, sustainable ABC-AR programmes are implemented with concurrent vaccination for diseases such as canine distemper which has been recognised to be a potential threat to snow leopard and other native cats.
o By implementing this important programme the state will get numerous positive impact in term of tourism, research point of view, ecological balance, it helps maintain the legacy of bio-diversity hot spot, improves Army/public and wildlife relation and prevents conflict. It will have huge economic saving and revenue generation.

o But due to shortage of manpower, the feral dog control program have not been started during this year.

• Analysis of data and a survey of public knowledge of rabies, which will be published and presented as a model for use in other regions of the world.
  o A survey to assess the Knowledge Attitude and Practice on Rabies and animal bites in Sikkim has been completed. The objective is to collect information on (1) the knowledge of rabies transmission and prevention; (2) the practices about dog and cat bites; (3) the attitude towards stray dogs; and (4) the pet care attitude in the different areas in Sikkim. The results of the KAP survey will provide crucial information to assess the impact of the activities carried out by SARAH as well as to plan the future activities to ensure the local needs (i.e. education, access to treatment) are targeted properly.
  o Publication of the results of the survey will lead to greater awareness of the SARAH programme in the animal welfare arena nationally & internationally. *(The Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia & the Pacific has provided funding for the survey.)*

• Provision of numerous public health and animal welfare benefits, all of which are consistent with Sikkim’s aim to be an eco-friendly state.
  o The SARAH programme continues to be a successful advocate for the welfare of dogs in Sikkim and works with the Sikkim government to adopt a statewide, holistic and sustainable approach to dog population and rabies control, and protect and improve their welfare. SARAH played a key role in the public consultation process to develop strategies so that the street dogs could continue to live in harmony in MG Marg while protecting the landscaping and amenities of the mall.
  o SARAH is collaborating with Dr Elizabeth Murchison, a geneticist with the Sanger Institute in Cambridge, UK in her study of the genetics of Transmissible Venereal Tumours which commonly affect undesexed dogs in Sikkim.
  o SARAH is critical in enabling a prompt response to suspect rabies cases in dogs and wildlife in Sikkim. The need for prompt response to wildlife rabies may increase with the increasing economic development of Sikkim and destruction of the natural habit of foxes, jackals and other wildlife.

  o A 2nd state-wide mass rabies vaccination programme is planned for September 2011. An annual programme is planned to provide booster vaccinations for dogs that have already been vaccinated for rabies so as to maintain their immunity and ensure that 70% of dogs in Sikkim have effective vaccination for rabies. The first state wide mass rabies vaccination camp which was carried out in September-October 2010 has been a huge success. SARAH has done more than 13000 ARV during that programme.

  o A Pet Show, which aimed to highlight the responsibilities of pet owners and the human/animal bond, was held on 30th April 2011 during the World Veterinary Day and has been a great success.
FUTURE PLANS AND INNOVATIVE PROPOSALS:

- Continue important animal welfare work throughout the state of Sikkim as a Division of the AH.L.F&VS Dept.
- Develop SARAH Hospital as a Veterinary Referral centre for the North Eastern States.
- Promote awareness and understanding about the more than 300 zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans.
- Promotion of the veterinary workforce as the first line of defense in containment and eradication of emerging zoonotic diseases.
- Develop a computer facility to encourage web based veterinary post graduate learning.
- Proposed to amend and make laws/rules in regard to pet registration (implanting microchip), pet import, pet sterilization etc.
- Implementation of oral rabies bait vaccination for the entire sylvatic rabies reservoir like foxes/jackal and other wild canids which is known to be a rabies reservoir. Until we vaccinate the sylvatic cycle the Rabies incidence will continue to occur in the State as our state is surrounded by many porous national and international borders as well as huge tract of forest land. There is a need to make people understand the importance of dogs that act as a barrier between wild life and human preventing an imminent conflict and rabies transmission. They guard the street, community against wildlife intruder.
- Proposed to start vet-train project for the entire north east states to impart training on latest veterinary clinical, surgical and ABC protocol.

INNOVATIVE PROPOSALS:

1. Vet-Train Project Sikkim: Fundamental to the success of the SARAH program has been the provision of clinical training to Sikkimese veterinary personnel in sterilisation surgery and life-saving procedures in dogs, cats and other animals and animal handling and dog catching. Three of the SARAH veterinarians and two paravets undertook intensive training in small animal medicine and surgery procedures with particular emphasis on animal birth control in Project VetTrain which was run by Vets Beyond Borders at the National Institute of Animal Welfare, Delhi in 2009. Veterinary volunteers from VBB have also provided postgraduate veterinary training on a wide-range of clinical matters to SARAH veterinarians through seminars and presentations.

ABC-AR programs are being carried out throughout India as the legally prescribed method for dog population and rabies control, endorsed by W.H.O. However there is a lack of technically trained personnel available to deliver these programs. Agencies carrying out ABC-AR programs are required to adhere to the AWBI SOP’s, however there is currently no training being offered on this. The SARAH program adheres to the Standard operating Procedures for ABC-AR programs published by the Animal Welfare Board of India.
Program Outline
It is proposed that the existing ABC-AR program being undertaken by SARAH will be used as a training program for veterinarians and other allied personnel in North/East India in VBB VetTrain Sikkim. SARAH’s day-to-day activities will continue and in addition, trainees will have the opportunity to learn from SARAH vets and staff on surgical techniques and other matters needed for a successful ABC-AR program. Additionally there will be a short lecture component provided to trainees. This lecture component is a high quality course developed by VBB.

The initial pilot program will run for 12 months December 2010 - November 2011. Up to six courses for each subject will be run during this time. The first training course is envisaged to start at the end of January 2011. We envisage 116 trainees graduating per annum comprising 36 vets, 60 paravets and 20 program managers.

The VBB VetTrain courses will be accredited by the AWBI and National Institute for Animal Welfare. These courses may also be accredited by the University of Edinburgh as Continuing Veterinary Education courses which will be recognised in the UK. SARAH program veterinarians will also receive this accreditation.

Sikkim is proposed to be the site of the regional training centre for North East India. Regional training centres are also proposed in Delhi, Gurgoan, Jaipur and southern India in due course.

Key Stakeholders
Key stakeholders will be State Government of Sikkim, State Animal Welfare Board of Sikkim, VBB, AWBI. Negotiations are pending with Worldwide Veterinary Services - International Training Centre and National Institute of Animal Welfare, Animal Welfare Division, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

Benefits to State Government of Sikkim
• National/International recognition and certification of best practice standards in ABC-AR programs for State Government personnel
• Formal mechanism for future training of State Government personnel eg vets and paravets to ensure continued high standards and sustainability
• Promotion of SARAH Division and State Government nationally and internationally
• Marketing of the State and Government of Sikkim as progressive with a model ABC-AR program leading to a rabies free state. This is important for both eco-tourism and economic development and consistent with the Green Initiative.
• Upgrading of surgical equipment/surgical furniture at SARAH hospital at no cost to SARAH Division
• Successful trainees will be offered the opportunity to join the SARAH volunteer program thus providing additional workforce at no cost
• Involvement of international professional trainers adding to tourism, economic development and international promotion of Sikkim
• Improving animal welfare and public health in Sikkim and assisting the whole of India to achieve the same goals.
Resources Required from State Government of Sikkim
There will be no additional cost to the SARAH program, for the day-to-day activities of SARAH Division provide an ideal training opportunity. Contribution will be an in-kind provision of existing facilities, equipment, expertise, personnel, medicines, kennels and dog catching. SARAH Division will contribute personnel in terms of both giving lectures and supervision of trainees while undertaking normal SARAH duties. The Vet Train program will not reduce the productivity of the SARAH Division and the collaboration will provide synergism to both programs.

Food and accommodation will be organised by the State Government buts costs will be recovered from trainees on a cost recovery basis. It would be appropriate for any existing government facility such as the State Veterinary Polyclinic to be converted in to accommodation and lecture room/training hall. The anticipated cost of setting up such a facility for 16 people is approx.3 lakhs including beds, mattresses, bedding, pots, pans for kitchen etc.

The Government will also promote the course through its media and provide assistance with permits, office equipment and space.

Resources Required from VBB:
VBB will provide training curriculum, materials, equipment and trainers. It will manage the training roster, curriculum, budget and certification. It will promote Sikkim and SARAH internationally through its media, professional networks and online mediums eg websites, forums and newsletters. It will manage international certification of trainees through accreditation with Edinburgh University.

VBB is seeking funding for the project management and trainer fees.

Resources Required from AWBI/AWD:
AWBI will provide certification of the training program and trainees nationally. It is anticipated it will also provide some funding for trainers and central management of the training program. It will assist in coordinating the trainee schedule through AWBI networks and memberships.

Conclusion

SARAH is the first state wide Animal Birth Control and Anti-Rabies (ABC/AR) Programme in India. The Government recognized the importance of animal welfare activities in the state and in 2009 created the SARAH Division so that ABC/AR and other animal welfare work can be permanently implemented. The high quality training of SARAH staff by Vets Beyond Borders has contributed significantly to the success of the SARAH programme.

There is a pressing need for high quality and carefully-targeted surgical training for veterinary personnel working in animal welfare initiatives throughout India, so as to optimise and standardise the quality veterinary care provided by such programmes. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Government of Sikkim work with Vets Beyond Borders, and the Animal Welfare Board of India in the provision of training for vets and para-vets in North East India. This project is to be known as VBB Vet Train Sikkim.

The implementation of a regional training centre for North East India veterinary and paraveterinary personnel in Sikkim will provide considerable benefits for animal welfare and public health in India, and enhance the skills and training of the veterinary personnel of Sikkim and the reputation, both nationally and internationally of the State of Sikkim as a progressive eco-friendly State.
Annexure-I

Abstract of the Project Report

Funding Model

In order to establish a long-term sustainable program, the costs will be borne by several agencies.

Set Up Costs

- In-kind contributions as listed
- 3Lakh for accommodation setup from Sikkim Government. This could be recovered through trainee lodging fee.
- Management - central and local. Funding to be provided for a Project Manager position by external funder
- Media and promotion - to be shared between all stakeholders
- Volunteer trainer coordination - VBB
- Refining and printing course materials and content/curriculum - VBB will refine course materials, content/curriculum and funding will be provided for printing will be provided by AWBI/AWD
- Equipment - provided by VBB from Project VetTrain

Recurring Costs

- Food and accommodation to be paid by trainees on cost recovery basis
- Trainees pay course fees
- Foreign trainees pay a higher course fee to sponsor further placements for Animal Welfare Organisation trainees
- AWBI/AWD will provide funding for a Management/Chief Trainer position and sponsorship of some AW trainees

Strategic Implementation

- Stakeholders commitment and agreement - MOU
- Appropriate accommodation
- Appropriate lecture facility
- Transfer additional surgical equipment to Sikkim
- Set the training schedule - 6 course to run over 10 months
- Advertise courses
- Arrange volunteers and staff
- Coordinate trainee selection and liaise with trainees
- VetTrain Program Manager will be a separate role from the SARAH Program Local Coordinator and Program Manager
- Vet Train Finances will be kept separate from SARAH program and reimbursement of SARAH program expenses such as food and lodging will be prompt and transparent.
**Personnel Requirement**

- Program Manager - VBB
- Trainers to deliver lectures - volunteer/staff
- Managers Course - 1 lecture - 4 days
- Vet Course - 1 lecturer 4 days; Surgical supervisors - 2 x 11 days (volunteer vet, SARAH vet) - 2 volunteers needed at SARAH at all times during training
- Paravet Course - 1 lecturer - 3 days theory/practical demonstration in Gangtok; 7 days working in field programs with SARAH paravets - supervised by SARAH staff and volunteer trainers.
Other proposals:

**Proposal for New SARAH Hospital & Shelter**

Construction of a model, first-class animal hospital and shelter will improve the welfare of animals of Sikkim, provide an excellent facility for training of veterinary officers and staff, and be a shining example to all of India.

The proposed Gangtok SARAH Hospitals and shelters should be made as a unique facility and first of its kind in India. The proposed centre will be the epitome of Government’s initiative for clean, green and ecofriendly state. It will be an added attraction and gives us the feel good factor. It should preferably be built in the existing place which is in the centre of the town and is accessible to public, so that they can visit and learn many aspects of the project. The detail specification of the proposed facility of Gangtok has already been submitted to the Engineering section for their perusal.

Our society is built upon human values of compassion, mutual respect, respect for the nature and co-existence with all the creations of nature. There is a need to foster love, compassion and a sense of belongings among the people, it will only be possible through spiritualism or welfare oriented project. The SARAH Programme of the State Govt believes that people and animals are intrinsically linked and is an advocate for the relief of suffering and distress of animals. If we perform works like animal welfare, public health programme and show the pains and sufferings that the animals undergo, then only the people especially the growing children will realise and fosters such feelings of love, compassion and sense of belongings. It will further teach them a good moral values and ethics and these are the qualities of a good citizen. Then peace, happiness and tranquillity will prevail and these are the cornerstones of state development and progress. Even the tourist may visit and may appreciate the work of state Government initiative for animal welfare and public health initiative.

**Animal Needs & Hospital Design**

Animals contained in a hospital, are entirely dependent upon humans to provide the conditions that will satisfy their basic needs. It is therefore important that anyone looking after animals is aware of all their needs. The new SARAH hospital must address five basic animal needs:

- freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
- provision of appropriate comfort and shelter;
- prevention, or rapid diagnosis and treatment, of injury, disease or infestation with parasites;
- freedom from distress;
- ability to display normal patterns of behaviour.

Animal housing areas, whether for single or group housing, must provide at least enough space for each animal held to feed, sleep, sit, stand, lie with limbs extended, stretch and move about. There must be easy vehicle access for dogs to be loaded and unloaded at the hospital.
Preventing the spread of disease must be a priority. Incoming animals must be quarantined away from animals that are ready for rehoming or release. Isolation and quarantine areas must not be accessible to the general public.

**BENEFITS AND IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A PROPER SHELTER AND HOSPITAL**

1. Animals will receive better care
2. People will help an animal in need
3. People will help and support the efforts of the project
4. Economic savings by learning and taking care of animals, thus by preventing various preventable diseases.
5. There will be less abuse and neglect of animals
6. Teaches compassion and respect for all living things
7. Promotes the value of kindness, and ethics
8. Encourages responsible pet ownership and a sense of belonging
9. Helps in understanding animals needs and the way they behave
10. Helps in understanding the consequences of irresponsible behaviour toward animals
11. It creates a citizen that embraces human values.
12. It will help the Government to mitigate various animals related menace especially rabies incidence, dog bite due to rapid urbanisation and economic development.
13. It will be a status symbol and source of attraction for the Department and the Government.
14. It can be a centre for teaching moral education for the school children
15. It can be a big moral booster and gives a sense of dignity and pride for all the veterinary fraternity working under the state government.

**Establishment of kennel and mini Operation theatre in all the District and sub-division hospitals:**

There is a need to have Kennel and OT facilities in every district and sub-divisional hospitals to enable SARAH and the Department to carry out the regular activities on a long term and sustainable basis. The SARAH with the funding from Brigitte Bardot Fondation has established some permanent and makeshift structures. The permanent kennels have been established in Gangtok, Chunthang, Ravangla and Karfectar and are being used regularly. The makeshift structures were constructed in all the places like Soreng, Geyzing, Dentam, Mangan, Rhenock, Namchi, but all the facility have been pulled down due to construction of new departmental infrastructure.
The increasing population and education level in Sikkim is associated with rapid urbanisation. Increased population is almost always associated with increasing dog population unless active measures are taken to control the dog population. Sikkim has many towns, villages with lot of people owning dogs as pet, it is proved that the main source of stray dogs are from people either abandoning or excessive breeding of the dogs and it is a well known fact that other parts of the state has a huge problem with ever increasing dog population, although SARAH is relentlessly working with limited facilities. Moreover, many of the villages in Sikkim are contiguous to forest. With the restriction of grazing in the forests, wildlife are venturing closer to the villages and hence there is increased likelihood of wildlife/man conflict and crop damage. SARAH works with the villagers to advise means of minimising such conflict, including housing livestock in predator proof (jackal/fox) sheds and vaccinating dogs and livestock against rabies.

There is also risk of increased numbers of feral dogs in the forests now that grazing is not permitted. SARAH is assisting the Department of Forests, Conservation and Wildlife Management in their efforts to save several critically threatened wildlife species that are being attacked by feral dog packs in the Cold Desert and national parks. SARAH has undertaken ABC/AR work in villages, army and paramilitary camps in the extreme north and east of Sikkim and is moving towards the Cold Desert region. These villages and camps are contiguous to the forests and national parks and it is thought that the feral dogs are originating from abandoned and stray dogs. The objective is to catch all stray dogs for ABC/AR and reduce the number of breeding feral and stray dogs in the region.

Therefore, to continue and implement this highly beneficial and unique programme, it is highly imperative to establish kennel facility in all the above mentioned places. The maximum area for the said proposals in other parts of Sikkim may not require more than 50x20 ft and may cost the Dept.approx. 3.00 lakhs. All the hospitals has an OT which needs up-gradation and be made functional. There will not be a huge financial implication for setting up such facility.

(Dr Thinlay N Bhutia)
Programme Coordinator/SARAH Division