vets beyond borders
A world of better health for animals & people
ANNUAL REPORT 2016
Vets Beyond Borders is an Australia-based, registered not-for-profit organisation. It was founded in 2003 by vets committed to improving animal and public health in developing communities and fostering the spirit of volunteering amongst their profession.

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Our Mission

MISSION STATEMENT

Vets Beyond Borders (VBB) exists to improve animal welfare and public health in developing communities. VBB aims to provide sustainable veterinary services to improve animal and community health in Asia, Australia and the Pacific.

Core Values

Vets Beyond Borders respects religious beliefs and is non-political; members respect the cultures within which they offer their veterinary skills.

OUR GOALS

We aim to work in areas of greatest need to:

- Establish, develop and support programs dedicated to improving the welfare of stray and domesticated animals and wildlife, including Animal Birth Control and Anti-Rabies Vaccination (ABC-AR) programs, and programs targeting the control of zoonotic diseases
- Provide veterinary support to local animal welfare organisations in developing countries
- Co-ordinate the sourcing, placement and support of veterinary volunteers seeking to assist the work of animal welfare organisations nationally and internationally
- Develop and promote best-practice protocols for animal welfare work
- Develop and promote education programs designed to encourage respect, care and take responsibility for animals in the global community
- Develop strategic alliances with similar organisations in Australia and worldwide
- Develop and promote training programs to increase the skills of local veterinary and animal handling staff
- Assist in the provision of volunteers and veterinary support services for disaster relief, where and when possible, and promote veterinary input to wildlife conservation programs
- Secure ongoing funding for the governance of Vets Beyond Borders and programs with which it is involved
- Promote the concept of One World, One Health as appropriate.
The past year has been one of consolidation of our new operational structure. While fundamental changes have been made, at all times during this process we have been conscious of the objects of VBB, listed in our constitution:

- To assist developing communities in the provision of healthcare for animals and the control of zoonoses;
- To promote a caring attitude to animals;
- To establish and promote sustainable animal and public health programs;
- To provide assistance via provision of veterinary support services for disaster relief, where and when possible.

This brief has guided us through the implementation of our new programs, VetMatch and AVERT, which complement our existing VetTrain program and enable us to expand our activities on a truly global scale. Both initiatives are detailed elsewhere in this Annual Report.

Following this comprehensive restructuring, a reinvigorated VBB is looking to a bright future and is set to build on its existing and hard-earned reputation for devising and delivering innovative and effective programs. I would like to thank current and recent directors for their support and commitment during this process. The positive attitude and diligent efforts of the executive have also been critical. Significant achievements include the granting of deductible gift recipient status: VBB is now a DGR-registered Australian charity and donations to the organisation are therefore tax-deductible.

Although under our new program format we will no longer establish or operate our own field projects, volunteering is still at the heart of the organisation. As VetMatch develops, the range of opportunities for volunteers will greatly increase.

Significantly, AVERT heralds our first collaboration with Australian authorities, supporting groups involved in disaster and emergency relief, and addresses our previously limited capacity to assist in such responses.

Our emphasis on targeted education continues under VetTrain, with the recent launch of our Humane Dog Handling manual and video package, detailing a six-day training course. These materials were produced at the request of the Chairman of the Animal Welfare Board of India, with the aim of improving and standardising the skills of Humane Animal Handlers working with animal birth control and anti-rabies projects across India. I would like to offer my personal thanks to long time VBB supporter and respected animal handling trainer, Dr Mark Johnson of Global Wildlife Resources, who provided a wealth of materials for this project.

Financial support is essential to enable VBB and its programs to continue to operate. Sincere gratitude is expressed to all our sponsors and donors, especially major sponsor, Fondation Brigitte Bardot.

As always, the success of VBB is predicated on the work of our big-hearted volunteers. Our new programs greatly increase volunteering opportunities for veterinarians, veterinary nurses and allied professionals. I encourage current and prospective members to become familiar with these initiatives and to consider their active involvement. Volunteering is a deeply enriching experience.

I cannot conclude this report without acknowledging the achievement of Dr Thinlay Bhutia, coordinator of the Sikkim Anti-Rabies & Animal Health Program, our first and most successful collaborative field project. Thinlay recently received the 2016 World Rabies Day MSD Individual Award, with respect to his outstanding efforts in community rabies prevention in Asia – a very appropriate recognition of his untiring work over the past decade.

With its new programs, experienced and dedicated staff and strong volunteer base, Vets Beyond Borders is positioned to make an even greater impact on animal welfare and public health in communities desperately in need of such support.
The year has gone very quickly for Vets Beyond Borders, with a lot of positive progress to report.

In November 2015 I was invited to attend a meeting of the Commonwealth Veterinary Association’s (CVA) incoming committee in Sydney. Subsequent to this, the outgoing CVA president, Dr Abdul Rahman invited VBB to enter into a Memorandum Of Understanding with the CVA to enable us to work more closely with them and to allow a pathway for our volunteers to work on projects in the many Commonwealth countries around the world. The agreement was signed in December and we have been working closely with CVA to partner with their in-country representatives, local authorities and NGOs when deploying our volunteers.

In February 2016 we were advised by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) that our application for Deductible Gift Recipient status (DGR) had been successful and we have been registered as a Health Promotion Charity. This sub-type was applied for after taking advice from the ACNC based on the work we do with rabies prevention and human-animal health.

Work continues in Sikkim on the SARAH project under the care and guidance of Dr Thinlay Bhutia, as well as on the Ladakh ABC-AR program where we work with the local government and local NGOs. Our work in Bylakuppe, South India, has finished with local organisations taking over the project. VBB continues to have a remarkable level of support from the Fondation Brigitte Bardot for our projects in India and their ongoing funding assistance to our projects is very much appreciated.

The VetMatch and VBB AVERT Programs were officially launched at the Australian Veterinary Conference (AVA) in Adelaide in May this year and again at the ASAVA Conference in August on the Gold Coast. These two programs have been well received by the industry as a whole and are gaining an increasing number of volunteers wishing to work overseas and in Australia.

We have had several new VetMatch Partner Organisations sign up, including those in Africa, the EU and Asia, with recent pilot projects having deployed VBB vets to Olbia, Sardinia and to Dili in Timor Leste.

The AVERT Program has registered over 190 volunteers to date, both vets and vet nurses, who are now on the database and willing to be deployed to assist in natural disasters and emergency animal disease outbreaks that occur across Australia. They may be required to assist in treating, managing, evacuating or euthanasing animals affected by bushfires, floods, cyclones and droughts. VBB has received excellent strategic support from the Department of Agriculture in Canberra and communicate regularly with our State and Territory Emergency Response coordinators. We’ve also received strong support from the AVA and Animal Health Australia.

I attended the board Strategic Planning meeting in April on the Gold Coast and have had many more meetings with federal and state governments promoting the work of VBB throughout the year. This includes working with other NGOs in promoting the AVERT program, meeting with many of the veterinary industry organisations including making a presentation at an Emergency Disease, Zoonotic and Notifiable Disease Seminar for vets at Batemans Bay on the NSW South Coast.

As to the future, VBB will have a wonderful new interactive website online in December 2016. I was fortunate to meet with Ian Warren from Inner Circle (New Zealand) at the AVA Conference in Adelaide in May where he kindly offered to donate his company’s services and team of designers build a new website for VBB!
We are truly grateful to Ian for his fantastic contribution and we look forward to having the new site up and running. We have also had a fantastic response from some of our new volunteers who have been doing fantastic work in the area of marketing, communication and fundraising.

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of my Operations Manager, Mandy Lamkin who works tirelessly to manage the VetMatch program and membership, to Linda Hart who manages our Alumni Program and to Paul Vines who has looked after our bookkeeping and accounts - thank you; I appreciate all your hard work. My thanks also to the VBB directors who have given me their trust and constant support during some challenging times this year.

This year we have had the continuing wonderful support from our sponsor, Fondation Brigitte Bardot for our work in India. Without their help in funding our work in Sikkim and Ladakh, we would not be in a position to continue this important work of the ABC-AR work with the street dogs in India.

I would also like to acknowledge the great support we receive from the Australian Veterinary Association in Australia. Each year they allow us to use the community stand at the annual AVA and ASAVA conferences. This allows us to talk to a very wide audience of vets, vet nurses and industry organisations and to promote the work of VBB. Our thanks also go to the Commonwealth Veterinary Association who are now firm partners with VBB in helping us promote our overseas work.

I look forward to heading into the next exciting year ahead for VBB.
EXCITING NEW DIRECTIONS for VBB in 2015-2016

Australian Veterinary Emergency Response Team

AVERT

Australia is well known for being subjected to regular natural disasters in the form of bushfires, cyclones, floods, droughts and extreme weather conditions which lead to considerable disruption and hardship to the communities they affect. These unfortunate events place a huge strain on resources to assist not only human but also animal life including domestic animals and pets, production animals and wildlife.

The Vets Beyond Borders AVERT Program was developed in mid-2015 with the purpose of establishing a national database of experienced volunteer veterinarians, veterinary nurses and veterinary technicians who would be prepared to be deployed to assist state and territory emergency response officials in natural disasters or emergency animal disease (EAD) outbreaks in Australia.

Emergency situations arising from natural disasters require specifically experienced veterinary volunteers to assist in managing, evacuating, treating and/or euthanasing animals. Volunteer vets may also be required to treat and care for animals during and after emergencies.

The program has received strategic support from the Department of Agriculture in Canberra through the Chief Veterinary Officer and ongoing support from Animal Health Australia and the Australian Veterinary Association. We have established contact and communicated with the state emergency response officials in each state and territory allocated to us by the Department of Agriculture and will be working closely with these people as and when emergency situations arise.

Volunteers are asked to register their details with VBB where they will be placed on the secure AVERT database. Information collected details their experience, qualifications, specialty areas of practice, training courses undertaken and any previous experience in past natural disasters or EAD outbreaks in Australia.
As many readers of this Annual Report will know, the focus of Vets Beyond Borders since its inception in 2003 has been in the Asia/Pacific region, with a spotlight on India as a location for establishing projects in the areas of animal birth control and rabies prevention.

During that time VBB has built a highly respected reputation for recruiting and placing highly qualified expert veterinarians, veterinary nurses and other skilled volunteers who bring capability, ethical practice and dedication to the projects they are assigned. There is, as a result, a marked improvement in the welfare of animals and public health practices in areas they’ve worked.

In 2015 the VBB board made the decision to make several changes to the organisation’s operational model, including a move from the past format of creating and managing our own projects. Largely autonomous projects, such as the Sikkim Anti-Rabies Animal Health (SARAH) project, will continue to be supplied volunteers directly.

While the reason for the change was motivated by some weaknesses in the old model, it was the realisation that the potential for assistance offered by VBB was not being realised to the extent it could that inspired the board for change. A new ‘borderless’ model for Vets Beyond Borders would mean we could share the positive impact of our volunteers’ dedication to help meet the increasing need that exists across the spectrum of veterinary intervention and especially its potential in under-resourced communities.

Hence, in early 2016 VBB introduced the VetMatch program, which now concentrates on offering our expert volunteers to other non-government organisations that operate projects overseas and in Australia.

VetMatch brings together an extensive group of international VBB Partner Organisations in need of volunteer support, and VBB-sourced Volunteers of the highest professionalism, commitment and specialised ability. This means that the quality volunteers we’ve been known for on our own projects for over a decade are now available to other organisations’ projects all over the world, helping those that need the expertise and support VBB-sourced volunteers can bring, to grow and increase in their effectiveness.

We have received several applications from the operators of such projects to become a VBB VetMatch Partner Organisation, which means they are approved to host VBB-recruited volunteers.
Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health (SARAH) Project

Thinlay Bhutia - Project Administrator

Introduction

The Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health (SARAH) Division is a first state-wide Animal Birth Control and Anti-Rabies program and also a first Government sanctioned initiative on animal welfare and public health sector in India. It is a collaborative project between the Department of AH LF&VS (Government of Sikkim), Fondation Brigitte Bardot (France), Vets Beyond Borders (VBB) and the Sikkim Society for Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (SSPCA). The SARAH project has now entered its tenth year of operation.

Key achievements for the year in summary

* State-wide Animal Birth Control surgeries and anti-rabies vaccinations continued over the state.
* No cases of human rabies reported in Sikkim.
* Rapid response to three cases of possible canine rabies near the state border with West Bengal.
* Vigorous efforts made in terms of ABC-AR program throughout the state.
* The SARAH project rescued and gave relief to more than 361 stray animals in distress.
* Medical, surgical and hospital care provided to thousands of sick and injured domestic animals and wildlife.
* A veterinarian was appointed as the first step in bringing the staff complement back to previous levels.
* Carried out were 5,487 sterilisations, and 24,571 doses of rabies vaccine and 113 doses of distemper vaccine administered.
* 17,526 animals were vaccinated during the sixth State-Wide Annual Rabies Vaccination Campaign in 2015; efforts were made to visit every Sikkim village.
* Thirteen veterinarians received training on animal welfare, rabies control and prevention, dog-bite management, surgical training for ABC-AR, and treating in-patients.
* Sixty farm and field paravets received refresher courses on animal handling, administration of drugs, rabies prevention, animal welfare laws, treatment, and management of large and small animal disease.
* Twenty-two paravets from the polyclinic were trained in rabies prevention, post dog-bite management, need for post-exposure prophylaxis, dog handling and administration of vaccine; they were also given exposure to ABC surgery protocols.
* Forty village-level veterinary health workers were trained in animal welfare, dog handling, vaccine administration, animal management and it is anticipated they will be able to assist in the 2016 Mass Anti-Rabies Vaccination Campaign.
* Thirty-one schools were visited to provide education on dog bite prevention, post bite management, animal welfare and rabies control.
* Eighteen panchayats (village councils) in East Sikkim in three meetings were given information to increase awareness of rabies and distemper, as well as their role and responsibility in ensuring village participation in the state-wide rabies vaccination campaigns.
* Twenty-one people from Government of Bhutan visited SARAH to observe its operations and procedures.
* Public education was given about rabies through school visits, meetings and public media.
* Eight-four awareness camps were undertaken to educate the public about rabies, distemper and animal welfare.
* SARAH Local Coordinator, Dr Thinlay N. Bhutia attended on invitation by OIE/WHO the Global Elimination of Dog Mediated Human Rabies Meeting in Geneva in December 2015 and was member of the Proof of Concept expert panel.
* Twelve highly qualified volunteers from around the world worked on the project for a total of 40 weeks and also provided training to local staff.
* SARAH continues to act as animal advocate and the need to continue to protect and improve animal welfare of all animals in the development of Government policies.
Animal birth control. The animal birth control (ABC) program is an important activity of SARAH with wide community support. The SARAH team continued to work very hard undertaking over 5,480 ABC surgeries this year, surpassing the previous year’s number of surgeries by 1,107.

Because of SARAH’s best practice approach in overall treatment of animals, the majority of pet owners seek its help. Large numbers of dogs were also desexed in East and South West Sikkim via mobile clinics.

Annual rabies vaccination campaign. The sixth State-Wide Mass Anti-Rabies Vaccination Campaign was undertaken by SARAH in the pursuit of keeping Sikkim a rabies-free state. More than 17,526 animals were vaccinated during the campaign and numerous awareness programs on rabies prevention, dog bite prevention and animal welfare were simultaneously carried out.

Rabies incursions. In December 2015 to March 2016 three suspect animal rabies deaths were reported in Pipalay and Gelling villages close to the border with West Bengal. The SARAH program implemented a rapid response, with meetings held with hospital doctors, police, panchayats and villagers to try identify what happened and what systems are needed and possible with existing resources for a more effective response.

The need for intersectoral communication and cooperation for appropriate veterinary and health clinical protocols and facilities for responding to possible rabies outbreaks, together with ongoing epidemiological investigation and surveillance was stressed. Following meetings with the village council, the council gave an assurance that the total dog population of the village will be brought for vaccination and sterilisation.

“Rabies-free Sikkim” The status of rabies-free Sikkim is moving in a right direction. Sikkim is the first state in India to issue a notification where in Rabies is now a Reportable/Notifiable Disease in both human and animals. Legislation to further support Rabies Free Sikkim is currently before Government to better enable dog population management and rabies control.

Awards and recognition. Dr Thinlay N Bhutia was conferred a Letter of Appreciation by the Government of Sikkim on the occasion of Independence Day for his commendable work in animal care and treatment.

Dr Thinlay attended by invitation the joint OIE/WHO global conference “Global elimination of dog-mediated human rabies - the time is now” in Geneva in December 2015. The conference involved key participants from Ministries of Health and Veterinary Science, national rabies coordinators from member Countries, experts from the veterinary and human health sectors and international organisations, policy-makers, other experts, non-governmental organisations, donors and the private sector. Dr Thinlay was involved as an expert in the “Proof of concept for elimination” of rabies session on the first day of the conference - one of only three people on this expert panel.


Animal welfare. Road traffic injuries continue to be a major problem for dogs in Sikkim and many of the animals we rescue are victims of road traffic accidents. Dog abandonment continues to be a problem. Responsible pet ownership must be encouraged through education, and the Rabies Free Sikkim legislation currently before Government will support responsible pet ownership.

Over 2000 medical consultations were undertaken in 2015/2016, and hospital care was provided for 365 animals mostly stray. Each hospitalised animal required an average of 29 days hospitalization reflecting the severity of injuries and sickness. The Polyclinic has assisted with case management reflecting the severity of injuries and sickness of more than 365 animals mostly stray. Each hospitalised animal required an average of 29 days hospitalization reflecting the severity of injuries and sickness. The Polyclinic has assisted with case management.

Major surgery. SARAH performed 355 major surgeries apart from routine ABC surgery in 2015/2016. Most of the surgeries were lifesaving and involved complex procedures. Orthopedic and soft tissue surgery, caesarian section of cows, tumour resection, hernioplasty, eye and ear surgery and chemotherapy were undertaken. Due to the lack of facilities and trained manpower in other centres, the majority of such cases are referred to SARAH. This work is performed in addition to SARAH’s other workload where annually more than 5,480 ABC surgery and 24,500 ARV are performed.
Bodhgaya Animal Medical Camp. The SARAH team and other veterinary volunteers again offered commitment to His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa (seen in the picture on this page) and the Kagyu Monlam committee for long-term support to this noble cause.

During this camp, a total of 1421 treatments were given to a wide variety of animals. This included a successful Animal Birth Control-Anti-Rabies program where 303 of Bodhgaya’s roaming dogs were surgically sterilised, 325 dogs vaccinated against rabies 18 vaccinated for distemper and 136 other essential surgeries undertaken. Around 639 animals were belonging to poor farmers from remote villages in the outlying areas of Bodhgaya were treated for various ailments. Awareness camps were conducted for 2000 students, monks, nuns and farmers on rabies prevention, how to approach and handle dogs, dog behaviour, dog bite prevention and its management, general animal care and husbandry, animal welfare laws and policy, responsible pet ownership, environment, garbage management etc.

Education. Training was provided to veterinarians, paravets, and village level veterinary health workers on animal welfare, rabies control and prevention, dog-bite management, surgical protocols, treating of large and small animal disease. The veterinary orientation course provides an important introduction to new graduates so they can more effectively carry out their departmental duties. 22 paravets from the polyclinic received training in rabies prevention, post dog-bite management, dog handling and administration of vaccine. They were also given exposure to surgery protocols. 60 farm and field paravets received training on animal handling, administration of drugs, rabies prevention, animal welfare laws, treatment and management of large and small animal disease.

Public awareness. Publicity and public support is the main cornerstone for a successful programme. 84 Public Awareness camps were conducted throughout the state to provide information about rabies and the need for rabies vaccination. Meetings were held with 18 panchayats in East Sikkim to increase awareness of rabies and distemper, state-wide vaccination campaign, dog registration, responsible pet ownership, and the Panchayat role and responsibility in ensuring village participation in the state-wide rabies vaccination campaign.

Wildlife conservation. Wildlife conservation through feral dog control continues to be a priority for SARAH. The high altitude ABC camps were resumed in North Sikkim and East Sikkim at the request of the public and Army. There has been continuous report of livestock losses especially yaks’ calf and sheep due to predation by feral dogs. The program was interrupted in the previous year because of adverse weather. It recommenced in June 2015 and 85 dogs were desexed under difficult circumstances.

Vets Beyond Borders volunteers. A significant part of the success of the program has been due to unstinted support from the volunteers from Vets Beyond Borders who came to SARAH from different countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Britain. They continued to contribute to SARAH by sharing their expertise with local staff.

In 2015/2016, twelve international volunteers contributed 40 Weeks of professional expertise. The imputed value of volunteer professional time and donated travel costs is approximately A$100,000.

Thank you. Our appreciation and gratitude is expressed to Fondation Brigitte Bardot for its continuing generous help and support of the SARAH program, and to the many volunteers of Vets Beyond Borders.
Bylakuppe Rabies & Disease Control Project

David Gray & Andrea Britton

THE PILOT PROJECT for the Bylakuppe location was carried out in 2009 and launched as an ongoing Vets Beyond Borders project in 2011. This ABC-AR (Animal Birth Control Anti-Rabies) project was an active collaboration between Fondation Brigitte Bardot (FBB), Tibetan Volunteers for Animals, Social Action Movement, and local monasteries and the Tibetan community.

The project initially began in facilities provided by the Sera Mey Social Services within the H. Pointer (human) Health Care Centre. In mid-2012 it moved to a building in the same district that was rented to VBB by the Geluk University, providing greater opportunity for ABC-AR and visibility of the program. The 2013-2014 season was the first time ABC-AR camps were extended outside the Tibetan community providing desexing services in three nearby Indian villages.

While there was appreciation in the local community as to the value of ABC-AR and education activities initiated by the project, VBB was unable to find a local organisation ready to take ownership of the project. This aspect alone is an important element for a sustainable program given the long term nature of dog population management and rabies elimination programs.

The financial drain and human resources requirements of this program, coupled with the failure to achieve substantial ABC-AR targets and the difficulties of administering such an operation from a distance, had become very evident in 2014. Hence a decision was made by the VBB Board to seek alternative resolutions for continuing an ABC-AR program given the endemic dog-mediated rabies in this community.

A long-time supporter and frequent volunteer to the Bylakuppe project, Dr Michael Heath, was engaged on a pro bono basis to assess options for the program’s future. After extensive research into alternatives, including an on-site visit to the project in November 2015, Dr Heath advised that a transfer of responsibility for the project to World Veterinary Services (WVS) located in Udhagamandalam or Ooty (as it’s more commonly known) in Tamil Nadu, India was the most viable option. The VBB Board agreed to pursue this option for the project.

Subsequent to engaging with WVS on the basis of its interest in the project, it unfortunately became evident that the Gelug University planned to demolish the building housing the clinic in 2016. A meeting of significant stakeholders including FBB was held in Bylakuppe in March in order to ascertain a way forward for the project. Regrettably, plans for continuation of a service to the settlements surrounding Bylakuppe was not forthcoming, principally due to the lack of identification of appropriate premises for a clinic.

World Veterinary Services, supported by FBB, has committed to provide clinical services and ABC-AR to the Bylakuppe community when feasible. As such, the former VBB clinic was closed in April and the clinic contents relocated to WVS.

The program’s impact

Over the period of operation since the 2009 pilot in Bylakuppe, a total of 1,457 dogs were desexed and vaccinated, over 1,431 dogs received vaccinations only, and 3,250 dogs received basic veterinary treatment - a total of 5,388 dogs. This was achieved through dedicated project managers who lead the ABC-AR and education programs over a three-to-six month period each year (around October to February). We are very grateful for the work and commitment of the following Bylakuppe project managers: Dr Sally Nixon (2011-2013), Dr Amelia Fung (2013-2014) and Dr Bronwen Evans (2014-2015).

We also acknowledge and thank VBB volunteer, Ben White, a high school teacher from Australia, who visited the Bylakuppe program twice for two weeks during the project’s operation to deliver presentations to local schools on rabies prevention, post-exposure prophylaxis and animal welfare. Each year, events and educational activities for World Rabies Day (28 September) were conducted to increase the awareness of...
rabies prevention, especially annual vaccination of stray and owned dogs.

A puppy-rearing project, supported by VBB volunteers when possible, was conducted at one of the local Kagyu Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. Here, young monks were given the responsibility of raising puppies, ensuring they were fed and cared for, and vaccinated for rabies. The presence of these vaccinated dogs has prevented unvaccinated stray dogs entering the monastery.

VBB is grateful for the support of Buddhist nun, Ani Samten who provided the invaluable link between VBB and various monasteries. She was also a key champion for education of the monks in her care and monastery staff in promoting animal welfare and the benefits of ABC-AR to provide a safe, stable and well-socialised population of dogs which can harmoniously co-exist with local communities.

The Bylakuppe program has been involved with studies associated with Canine Transmissible Venereal Tumour (CTVT) research being conducted by the University of Cambridge. The CTVT samples sent from Bylakuppe were very unique and showed that the cancer had persisted in this area for thousands of years.

The Bylakuppe community has a much greater appreciation of animal welfare issues and a better understanding of the risk and post-exposure treatment for rabies, and the need for vaccination of dogs in order for its effective control and elimination. In November 2015 a small dog census pilot project was conducted using a mobile phone app developed by the NGO, Himalayan Animal Rescue Trust in Nepal, and customised for use in this community with many monasteries. The use of this dog-census monitoring tool is being assessed for use in the Sikkim Anti-Rabies project.

Vets Beyond Borders is grateful for the ongoing commitment of FBB in supporting the project. We also thank Dr Michael Heath and the local staff employed at Bylakuppe, particularly the paravets Ms Sonam Paldon (engaged for five years) and Mr Lhakpa Dhondup, both of whom managed local operations under often very difficult circumstances. We also thank Stephen Farrell from Mysore B&B for hosting many volunteers on route to the Bylakuppe program and for assisting VBB on many occasions.

Unfortunately rabies continues to be a significant threat to both human and animal health in Bylakuppe and its surrounding Indian communities. In 2014 a Sera Monastery monk died subsequent to a dog bite and the disease was subsequently lab-confirmed as the cause of death in one dog in November during a rabies outbreak. This was followed up by mass dog vaccination campaign led by a WVS rabies response team. It is hoped WVS will soon be in a position to continue this program in Bylakuppe, and we wish it well.

Thank you

Thank you again to our volunteers, main donor Fondation Brigitte Bardot and to our dedicated donors without whose financial and in-kind assistance the project would not have achieved its outcomes for the dogs and communities of Bylakuppe.
The Leh Street Dog Sterilisation Program began in 2006 as a collaborative project between Vets Beyond Borders (then Vet Charity), Fondation Brigitte Bardot (FBB), the Marchig Trust and the Ladakh Animal Care Society (LACS). VBB volunteers participated over the summer season in Ladakh, continuing up to 2014 when VBB involvement was suspended, principally due to policy issues which developed with local stakeholders.

Having seen the benefits of the LACS ABC-AR program, a group of veterinarians employed by the Ladakh Department of Animal Husbandry (LDAH) and with its support, resolved to create a new project for the purpose of performing ABC-AR work and servicing the animal welfare needs of the street dogs of Ladakh.

The Ladakh Animal Welfare Society (LAWS) was formed in 2014 and in collaboration with the LDAH and the Young Drukpa Association (YDA), a purpose-built clinic was constructed on LDAH land close to Leh.

Negotiations began in 2015 with VBB to provide veterinary expertise for the project, and with Fondation Brigitte Bardot to provide financial support for the project. VBB’s Dr Helen Byrnes visited Leh in October 2015 for discussions with LAWS the other local stakeholders, along with Brigitte Auloy from FBB. Arrangements were finalised with an MOU signed in November 2015 under which VBB would provide supplementary veterinary services to the project, initially for a 12-month trial period.

The dog population work began at the LDAH/LAWS clinic in February 2015 with LDAH volunteer vets performing surgery on street dogs as their work schedule permitted. The first VBB volunteer arrived on the project in July 2016 (subsequent progress of the project will be provided in the next Annual Report).

VBB is indebted to FBB for their continued support of this project, to Dr Stenzin Rabgais, director of animal birth control operations for LDAH, Dr Stanzin Thakchos, controller of clinic operations and the active support of the CVO in Ladakh, Dr Fida Hussain.

It is anticipated that this project will be incorporated into the VetMatch program in the near future.

**Thank you**

Our resumed presence in Ladakh has great promise due to the collaboration of this new project’s key stakeholders, including Fondation Brigitte Bardot.

Our sincere thanks go to our partners on the project and especially to the expert VBB volunteers who travelled at their own expense to support the aims of the project.
The 2016 Financial Year has again been a period of considerable change in regard to the finances of Vets Beyond Borders.

Over the course of the year, the VBB board has had to make some difficult decisions in regard to the focus of our organisation and the manner in which we seek to achieve our goals.

It had become clear for some years that the modus operandi of seeking to manage projects from a distance without significant commitment from local authorities was neither appropriate nor sustainable. Hence the decision was taken to move to the VetMatch model for volunteer management, where possible. This should result in a lesser financial risk for VBB in the long term.

Fortunately for VBB, over the course of FY2016, CEO Maryann Dalton, Operations Manager Mandy Lamkin and Finance Officer Paul Vines have provided stability and continuity to our day-to-day administrative procedures.

The highlight of FY2016 - thanks mainly to the work of Maryann - was the achievement of obtaining Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status in our own right for donors to our organisation. This has been a long-held but allusive target for the VBB board since our inception 13 years ago.

Budgeting and financial reporting processes continue to be enhanced with the aim for greater transparency in our management processes. Such management processes will continue to be refined over the course of 2016/2017.

Fondation Brigitte Bardot (FBB) remains a strong and consistent supporter of the animal-related aspects of VBB’s work. A focus of activity for VBB finances over the past year has been to analyse the grants received from FBB over the past several years in order to gain a better understanding of the organisation’s funds held by VBB, which remains in surplus.

The 2015/2016 audited financial statements show a deficit for the financial year. This is due, in part, to a considerable decrease in donations and FBB grants, the latter being due to the surplus funds held by VBB.

VBB’s revenue flow remains of concern with a relatively low regular donor base. Hence a focus on securing effective regular fundraising and higher-value corporate donors is required. This requires a renewed focus by the VBB board and management.

We are indebted to the work put in over several past years by the retiring Finance Officer, Paul Vines, who has stepped down after completing the end-of-year financials and audit process. Volunteer Nicola Kapa assumed the role of Finance Officer from the start of FY2017 and we express our since thanks for her commitment.

Acknowledgements and thanks are also extended to the Australian Veterinary Association for its continued support for VBB, which gives us a most valuable stage on which to promote our organisation to the profession. We also extend sincere thanks to Fondation Brigitte Bardot for its ongoing support. which allows VBB to continue to support important activities on projects.
The Board of Vets Beyond Borders is accountable to the membership for the business of the company. Vets Beyond Borders is a company limited by guarantee.

The functions of the Board include:

**Policy development**
- Setting the strategic direction
- Approval of the annual budget for VBB as a whole
- Consideration and approval of financial, operational and clinical policies
- Creation and dissolution of committees and working groups
- Approval of strategies and business plans
- Establishment of delegations, and
- Review and monitoring of a Board Code of Conduct

**Monitoring**
- Ensuring solvency
- Adherence to the annual budget and related fiscal matters for VBB as a whole
- Achievement of strategic direction through the annual business plan
- Recommendation to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) for appointment of the external auditor
- Consideration of reports from both the internal and external auditors
- The employment and performance of the Chief Executive Officer
- The state of health of the Company
- Overseeing the management of business risks, insurance risks, environmental issues and occupational health and safety, and
- Ensuring that the company acts legally and responsibly on all matters and that the highest ethical standards are maintained.

**Composition and operations of the VBB Board**

There are up to nine non-executive directors on the Board, each serving a three year term. Board members are able to nominate for additional terms of office.

The Board elects the office holders from amongst their number at the first meeting following the AGM. Additionally, all Board members are asked to sign onto the Board Code of Conduct at that time which, along with the business plan and budget, provides a foundation for the Board to review itself. The Chair chairs meetings of the Board and general meetings of the membership.

Each VBB project has a nominated Board liaison person, to ensure two-way information flow. Currently the Board also has a Veterinary Committee and a number of working groups. The committees are chaired by a Board member and members of VBB are able to nominate for the committees following their agreement to a Code of Conduct for sub-committee members.

**Sub-committees**

There are three VBB sub-committees: Project & Education; Finance; and Fundraising.

Chaired by Dr Ian Douglas, the Project & Education Committee develops and recommends operational and veterinary policies to the Board. The Finance committee is chaired by Dr David Gray and the Fundraising committee by Gavin Biggs.

**Board operations**

VBB welcomed Maryann Dalton as our part-time Chief Executive Officer in 2014/15. The Board holds many of its face-to-face meetings in Sydney with those Board members living in other locations joining via Skype.

**Directors’ fees and indemnification**

VBB directors perform their roles voluntarily and VBB provides basic liability cover for its directors and officers.