

VIRAGE NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



The VIRAGE initiative touched me deeply by revealing the real impact of limited rabies awareness in communities.

SIN Sitha
Soc Sci Field Coordinator

Concluding First Year : Generating Evidence to Support National Rabies Elimination

At the end of its first year, the VIRAGE research initiative has reached a key milestone with the completion of a nationwide survey conducted between June and November 2025. Led by the Institut Pasteur du Cambodge and supported by the Fonds Équipe France (FEF) of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs through the French Embassy in Cambodia, **VIRAGE generates updated, nationally representative evidence to support Cambodia's efforts toward rabies elimination.**

Implemented across all 25 provinces, in close coordination with the Ministry of Health (MoH/CDC), the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF/GDAHP), and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS/SHD), **the study provides critical data on rabies exposure, dog populations, access to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and community knowledge and practices.**

These findings offer **a robust evidence base to inform national policies and operational planning aligned with the goal of Zero Human Deaths from Rabies by 2030.** In parallel, VIRAGE has strengthened intersectoral coordination through the One Health Interministerial Coordinating Committee (IMCC-OH) and invested in communication and awareness tools to reinforce public health action.

As the initiative enters its second year, the focus will shift toward consolidating burden estimates through modeling and translating evidence into technical recommendations to support informed decision-making.

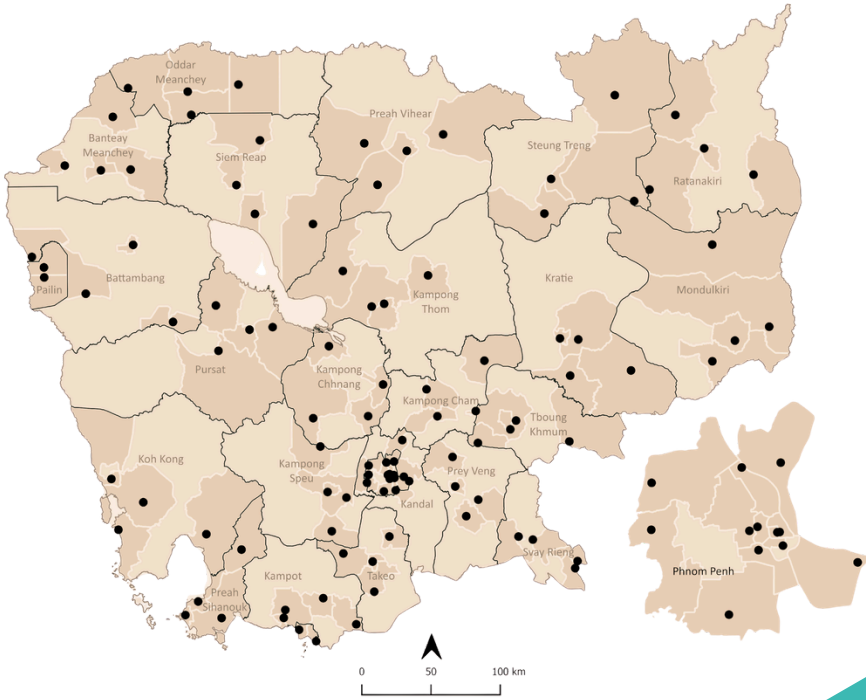
Concluding First Year : Generating Evidence to Support National Rabies Elimination

VIRAGE APPROACH

- 1 | National Survey
- 2 | Analysis & Evaluation
- 3 | Training & Capacity Building
- 4 | Awareness Raising

INTEGRATED VIGILANCE TO INFORM MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND ELIMINATE RABIES IN CAMBODIA

Survey implementation june - november 2025



 **104**
villages

 **4,160**
households

 **15,507**
participants



INTERVIEW

SIN SITHA - SOC SCI FIELD COORDINATOR

Q1: What was the most memorable moment for you during the data collection of VIRAGE?

During my fieldwork with the VIRAGE project, I encountered many stories that helped me understand the real impact of rabies on communities. One moment that particularly stood out was meeting a family who had lost a relative after a dog bite. The man had been bitten by his own dog but didn't seek post-exposure vaccination, not fully understanding the risk. This story reminded me why our work matters, not just collecting data, but helping bridge the gap between knowledge and action.

Q2: What were the main logistical or human challenges you encountered in the field?

Working in the field, it's anything but easy. In some remote areas, we couldn't even use a car. We had to take tractors, ferries, boats— whatever could get us there. During the rainy season, some provinces were completely flooded. No internet, sometimes no network for days.

And then there were the people. Many refused to participate not because they didn't care, but because they had their work, their shops to run. Others had left the village to look for work somewhere else. In indigenous communities, we didn't speak the same language. Without a local guide to translate, we couldn't have done anything in those areas.



YEAR TWO: FROM EVIDENCE TO INFORMED DECISION-MAKING



As VIRAGE enters its second year (2026), the initiative will transition from nationwide data collection to consolidation, analysis, and structured engagement with national authorities.

Building on the robust evidence generated during Year One, priorities for the coming year include refining updated national rabies burden estimates through modeling approaches, preparing technical briefs to support the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) in strategic planning, and contributing analytical inputs to coordination efforts aligned with the objective of Zero Human Deaths from Rabies by 2030. Communication and awareness activities will also be further developed to complement national prevention strategies.

Year One established a comprehensive national evidence base. Year Two will focus on translating these findings into practical, decision-relevant outputs that can support Cambodian authorities in guiding and strengthening rabies elimination efforts.

Supporting National Priorities Through Partnership

With the support of the Fonds Équipe France and the active engagement of Cambodian ministries and institutional partners, VIRAGE contributes technical and scientific evidence to ongoing national efforts.

The first year has generated updated data, reinforced intersectoral coordination, and strengthened collaboration across sectors. These foundations position VIRAGE as a research and technical support initiative aligned with Cambodia's public health priorities and committed to supporting informed policy and operational decision-making in the years ahead.



AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank our field teams, provincial authorities, ministerial partners, the IMCC-OH, and community stakeholders whose collaboration embodies the spirit at the heart of VIRAGE.

