

VIRAGE NEWSLETTER

MAY 2026



LISTENING TO THE FIELD: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ACROSS CAMBODIA

VIRAGE is engaging directly with frontline health professionals to understand the operational realities of rabies surveillance and prevention at the subnational level. Conducting these consultations nationwide is essential to capture the spatial heterogeneity of practices, resources, and challenges across provinces, and to ensure that national strategies are grounded in local realities.

Between March and May 2026, 25 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted across Cambodia's provinces, bringing together human and animal health sectors from the district to provincial levels. These structured consultations captured firsthand accounts of surveillance practices, access to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), dog population management, and intersectoral coordination challenges.

As of 15 May 2026, all provinces have been reached. A total of 254 participants have contributed to the discussions, including 162 human health and 92 animal health professionals.

By enabling the systematic documentation of local challenges and gaps, VIRAGE will provide a solid evidence base to inform strategic development. The FGD results will also feed into the national-level stakeholder workshops scheduled for the initiative's second year, supporting the development of evidence-based recommendations aligned with Cambodia's rabies elimination priorities.



"These discussions revealed how current practices and challenges exist at the subnational level for rabies surveillance and prevention, and how we can channel into national strategies for ending rabies in Cambodia"

CHEA Bunna
Royal University of
Agriculture (RUA)



EMERGING THEMES FROM FRONTLINE CONSULTATIONS



✔ Surveillance & Reporting

Participants identified gaps in rabies diagnosis capacity at the subnational level and limited reporting from communities. No formal mechanism currently links human and animal health reporting systems. Strengthening intersectoral coordination and digital surveillance tools was among the recommendations raised.

✔ Access to Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

PEP availability in public facilities remains uneven. Private providers are often more accessible in practice. The vulnerable population in remote areas faces the greatest barriers. Participants recommended expanding PEP availability at the district and provincial levels of the public health facilities.

✔ Dog Population Management

Free-roaming dogs represent the vast majority of the dog population. Vaccination and sterilization coverage remain very limited. Participants called for stronger community awareness, regulation, and engagement with animal welfare organizations.

✔ Identified Needs

Across provinces, participants consistently highlighted the need to improve training among health workers and Rapid Response Teams, community outreach through existing platforms (health centers, schools, social media), and operational resources for prevention and response.

