

How Street Art is helping Mission Rabies win the fight against rabies in Malawi

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UK-based charity, Mission Rabies, has recently been working with international street artist, Louis Masai, in Malawi to promote the message of rabies education via street art.

Rabies is the world's deadliest zoonotic disease. Once symptoms develop there is no treatment, and it is 100% fatal. It's a disease that is responsible for the death of a child every nine minutes somewhere in the world and 99% of all cases are transmitted by dog bites.

Blantyre in Malawi is one of the high-risk areas for rabies in Africa, with the Queen Elizabeth hospital previously reporting the highest incidence of child rabies deaths from any single institution in the whole of Africa (Source: The Lancet)

In total, the team of local staff and international volunteers has vaccinated a staggering 35,600 dogs against rabies in just 20 days. This equates to around 80% of the dog population – significantly more than the World Health Organization-recommended 70%. Mission Rabies founder, Luke Gamble, says, "Vaccination of dogs is the key – it stops the disease in its tracks and is totally achievable in any environment"

Education is also essential and Mission Rabies has educated almost 100,000 children in Blantyre about the dangers of this disease. Mission Rabies ran an intensive education programme in conjunction with the vaccination drive which targeted local schools, educating children about how to interact with dogs and what to do if they are bitten.

Internationally-acclaimed street artist, Louis Masai, has lent his support to the campaign, by creating three incredible dog-focused murals to raise awareness of this vital vaccination drive.

The three murals were created using acrylics and brushes, and were inspired by the local dogs that Louis had met that were treated by the Mission Rabies team. They feature happy and healthy looking dogs with colourful painted ears (the painted ears indicating the dog has been vaccinated against rabies). The paintings also contain the phrase, 'Tithetse chiwewe' which translates as, 'Let's end rabies.'

Louis' work is known for its strong focus on animals whilst striving to incorporate a 'human reference to juxtapose an element that might not be previously obvious.'

Creating permanent positive images of dogs with key rabies risk reduction messages in schools and communities will certainly help reinforce the lifesaving messages that Mission Rabies has been delivering in Blantyre.

The concept is that, with the murals in situ, the teachers and children can discuss the educational messages passed on to them by Mission Rabies.

For further information, please visit: www.missionrabies.com

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