



Stakeholder engagement and risk communication during a zoonotic animal health emergency

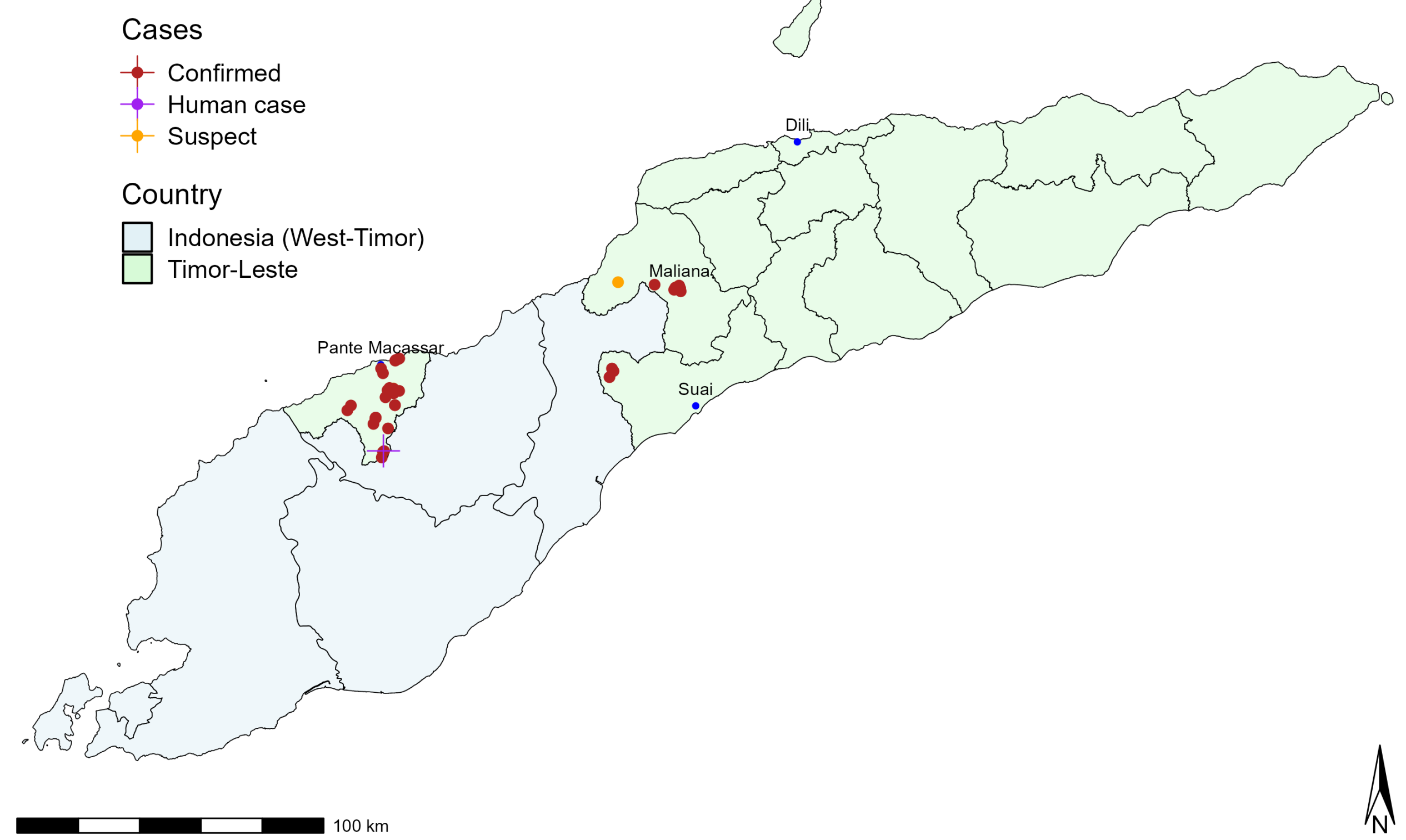
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Background

- **May 2023:** First rabies cases reported in West Timor (Indonesia).
- **June 2023:** Timor-Leste commenced rabies preparedness & response activities
- These included: Developed an emergency response & vaccination plan, training in animal handling & vaccination, vaccine importation & community awareness.
- **January 2024:** Pre-emptive animal vaccination program commenced in RAOEA (Oe-cusse), Bobonaro, Covalima, Atauro Island (all bordering Indonesia) & Dili Municipalities.
- Vaccination program targeted dogs, cats & Monkeys.
- **March 2024:** First reported dog detection & $n=1$ human fatality reported in RAOEA Municipality (notified to WOAH & WHO, respectively).
- **March-June 2024:** Dog-mediated rabies spread across several sub-districts in Oe-cusse, including Pante Macassar urban centre.
- **March-Jul 2024:** Detection of $n=30$ dog rabies case in oecusse enclave
- **June 2024:** Detection of $n=7$ dog rabies cases in Bobonaro Municipality. First ever incursion of dog-mediated rabies into the main part of Timor-Leste. First suspected detection in livestock ($n=1$, goat); no reported wildlife cases.
- **July 2024:** First detection of $n=3$ dog rabies cases in Covalima Municipality.
- **As at 13 Jan- 31 Jul 2024,** $n=40$ positive dog cases & 1 goat, $n=1$ human case fatality.

Outbreak Situation Report

Distribution of reported animal rabies cases and rabies-associated human deaths
Timor-Leste (2024 YTD)

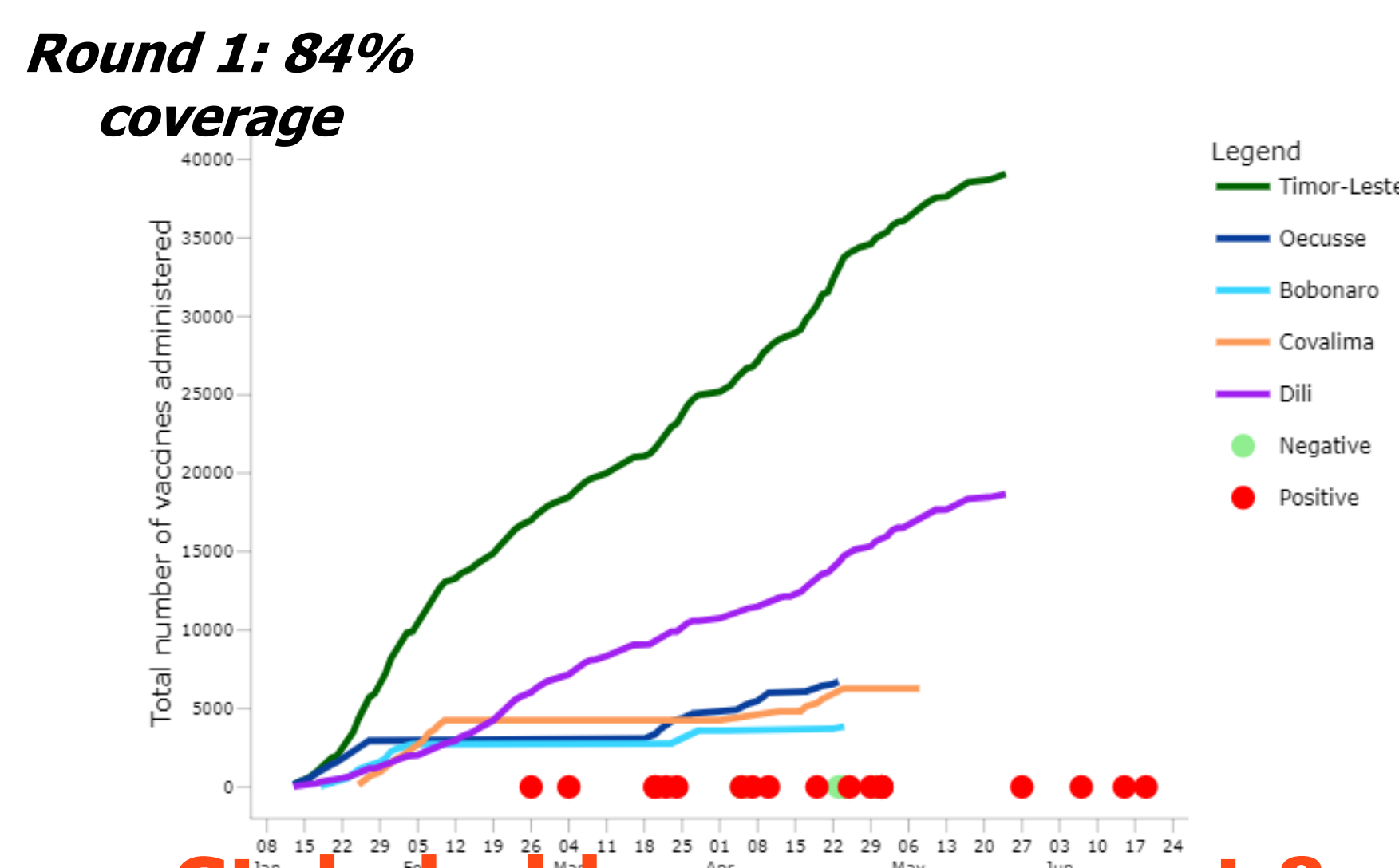


Data current, as at: Wed, 31 July 2024.
Timor-Leste has reported $n=40$ confirmed and $n=4$ suspected animal cases and $n=1$ human case fatality in Oecusse enclave.

Key Progress & Strengths

- Establishment of a National Rabies Emergency Incident Management Team (IMT).
- Dog rabies outbreak case definition developed.
- WOAH vaccine bank supplied $n=200,000$ doses of vaccine procured with Australian support.
- Vaccination program (Round 1): 49,472 animals vaccinated, incl. 43,183 dogs, 3,650 cats, and 229 monkeys between 13 Jan–31 Jul 2024.
- WHO supported procurement & distribution to health centres of $n=5,000$ doses of human rabies vaccine & $n=1,000$ doses of HRIG (immunoglobulin).
- Effective collaboration between MALFF & MOH on case investigation & integrated bite case management (IBCM).

Figure 1: Cumulative rabies vaccination & dog test results, Timor-Leste Jan-Jul 2024.



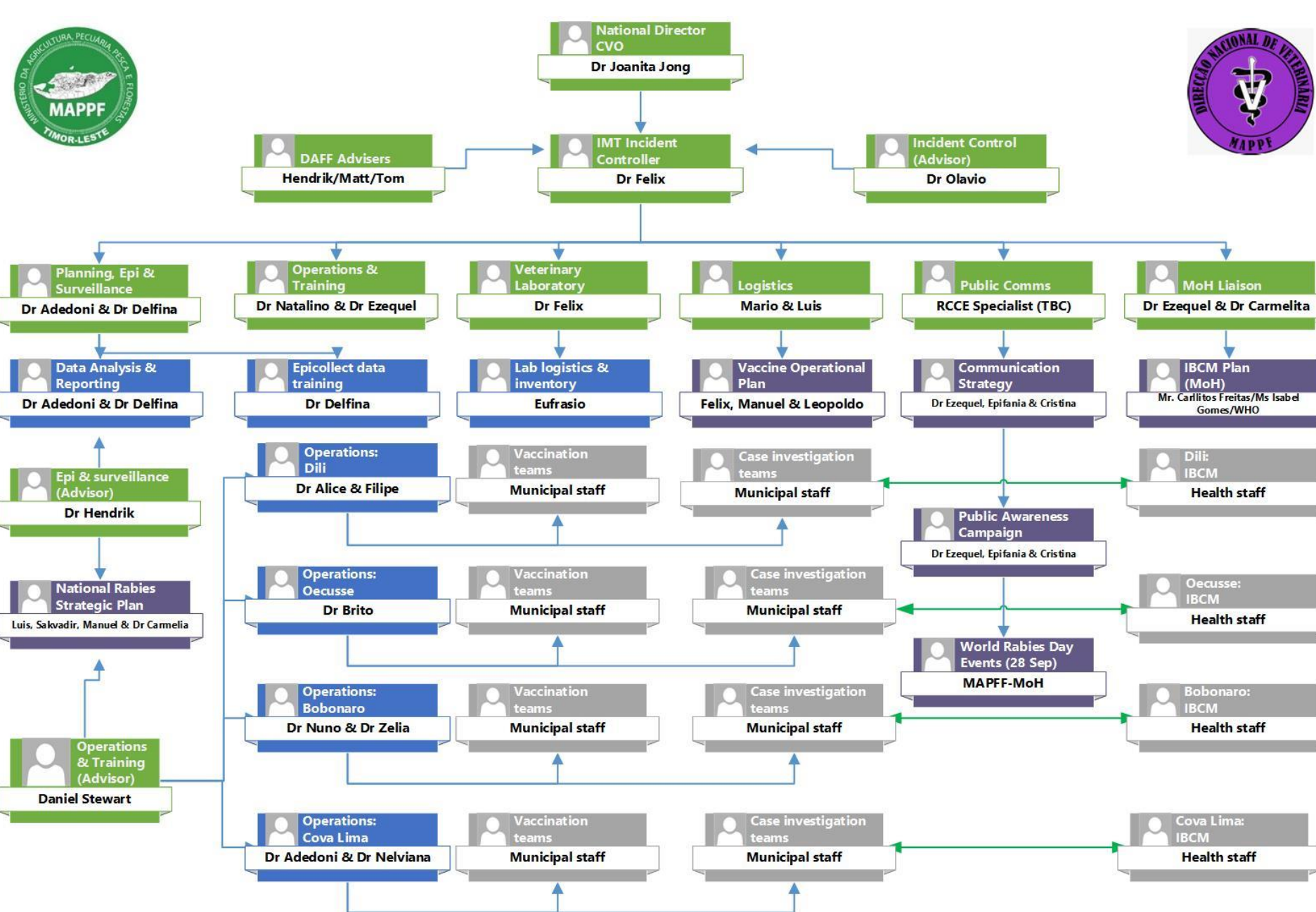
Stakeholder engagement & risk communication

- One Health technical meeting MOH-MALFF (Nov 2023).
- Rabies Cross Border Technical Coordination Meeting (Indonesia-Timor Leste), Dili, 3–4 June 2024.
- MoH, MALFF reporting dog bites and compiling dog bite data.
- Collaborative bite case investigation for rapid human post-exposure treatment (PEP).
- **Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) is critical to successful rabies control.**
- Community awareness of dog bite prevention, bite management and the importance of dog vaccination to reduce rabies spread.
- poster positive engagement and community acceptance.
- Facebook, radio, TV, poster, Suco (Village) Chiefs, school visits, vehicles with megaphones.
- Collaborative public awareness campaign for World Rabies Day 2024.
- Ministries of Health and Agriculture, WHO, WOAH, Australian support partners collaborating on surveillance for IBCM, development of a NSP, RCCE, animal surveillance and reporting.
- Formal notification to WHO EIS and WOAH WAHIS systems.

Round 1 mass animal vaccination campaign, Oe-cusse Municipality, January 2024



Figure 2: National Rabies Emergency Incident Management Team (IMT), Timor-Leste Veterinary Directorate



Way Forward to 'Zero by 30': Opportunities & Risks

Opportunities:

- Collaborative development of a Timor-Leste National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Rabies Prevention and Control (MALFF, MOH, WHO, WOAH, Australian partners).
- Develop a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder Risk Communications and Community Engagement (RCCE) Strategy.
- Continued rounds of mass dog vaccination aiming for $>70\%$ coverage at national level over several years.
- Build community trust, identify and recruit 'Community Champions' to help deliver rabies awareness and public education.
- Strengthened border control to prevent unregulated movement of persons, dogs & biosecurity risk material.
- Enhanced multisectoral collaboration, technical capacity & advocacy for political support & resource mobilization.
- Generate high-quality data for evidence-based guidance to measure impact & inform policy decisions.
- Regional collaboration towards implementation of the Rabies Global Strategic Plan.
- Continued capacity building of One Health workforce.

Risks:

- Lack of sustainable financial, human and operational resources.
- Multiple concurrent public, animal health, education, economic, infrastructure and other development challenges.
- High proportion of the population reliant on subsistence agriculture with high prevalence of food insecurity. Consumption risk of potentially rabid animals.
- Lack of public trust, need for strengthened community education, awareness & countering vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.
- Need for strengthened communication & collaboration between Timor-Leste Government Ministries, Tripartite organizations (e.g. WHO, WOAH, FAO), and other international development partners.



Risk communication & cross-border technical coordination

