

Global Snakebite Initiative Appoints Health Action International as Secretariat

AMSTERDAM—The [Global Snakebite Initiative](#), the international non-profit organisation that is developing a collective framework to address the neglected global tragedy of snakebite envenoming, today announced the appointment of Health Action International as its secretariat, effective immediately.

Dr David Williams, chief executive officer of the Global Snakebite Initiative, said that the appointment of Health Action International, which has ‘official relations’ status with the World Health Organization (WHO) and vast medicines campaigning experience, is an important milestone for the Initiative. “The support of Health Action International in elevating our efforts to save the lives of thousands of snakebite victims and prevent long-term suffering is a big step in the right direction,” he said. “We are determined to create an environment in which sustainable access to safe, effective and affordable antivenoms and ancillary treatments can be guaranteed.”

In the coming months, the Global Snakebite Initiative will advocate the WHO to once again recognise snakebite as a neglected tropical disease. It will also press the WHO and national governments in snakebite-affected countries to design and implement policies that improve snakebite data gathering and analysis, prevention and treatment, which are currently lacking. It has also agreed to assist the WHO with plans to include antivenoms in the Medicines Prequalification Programme.

“Snakebite is truly an abandoned neglected tropical disease that deserves directed and focussed attention from the global health community and donors,” said Tim Reed, executive director of Health Action International. “We are pleased to provide our advocacy expertise and network to the Global Snakebite Initiative with the aim of eliminating this preventable and treatable public health issue.”

A minimum of 4.5 million men, women and children—mostly in rural communities in some of the world’s poorest countries—are envenomed by snakes every year. Of these, at least 2.7 million are seriously injured and 125,000 are killed. These figures are likely vastly underestimated due to the lack of reliable in-country data on snakebite. Effective antivenoms exist in wealthy countries to treat snakebite envenoming, but the triple burden of poor availability, high prices and substandard quality of antivenoms in developing countries prevent people from getting treatment.

About the Global Snakebite Initiative

The Global Snakebite Initiative Limited (GSI) is a registered non-profit, charitable organisation, based in Australia, but with global membership. It was founded to give a voice

to the forgotten victims of snakebite in poor, mostly rural, communities around the world and develop a collaborative framework to address the neglected global tragedy of snakebite envenoming. It aims to improve the understanding, prevention and treatment of snakebite injuries in developing countries and achieve significant improvements in outcomes for snakebite patients. www.snakebiteinitiative.org

About Health Action International

Health Action International is the only non-governmental organisation entirely dedicated to strengthening pharmaceutical policy to improve public health. Our staff and global network of members have expertise in virtually all areas of medicines policy, including the price, availability and affordability of medicines, clinical data transparency, intellectual property and pharmaceutical marketing. We pursue advocacy at the patient level and up to the highest levels of government through our 'official relations' status with the World Health Organization and respected relationship with the European Medicines Agency. We are financially independent from the pharmaceutical industry. www.haiweb.org

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