

Staff Spotlight: Sabrina Hennecke

✘ What do you get when you combine curiosity, diligence, ambition and intellect? That's easy—our Assistant Project Officer for Snakebite, Sabrina Hennecke.

In this edition of Health Action International's 'Staff Spotlight', we talk to Sabrina over her typical ramen-noodle lunch about living the #HAILife and making change in the world of snakebite.

What is your role at Health Action International (HAI)?

As the Assistant Project Officer for HAI's Snakebite Programme, I work alongside the rest of HAI's snakebite team to implement our project goals, with a particular focus on in-country work and fundraising. My work ranges from drafting new study guidelines for an upcoming trip to Uganda, to implementing a fundraising campaign. All of my efforts go to support a cause that I'm passionate about, which is alleviating the death, disability, debt and suffering caused by this hugely neglected tropical disease: Snakebite envenoming.

What are three words to describe HAI?

Passionate, focused, and transformative.

What is the most interesting aspect of your field of expertise?

My formal education consists of a B.Sc. in biology with a specialisation in neuroscience. The most interesting aspect of this is the versatility to which this field of education applies. The skills I bring from my degree are very applicable at HAI, allowing me to play my part in everything from researching the scientific specifications of the treatment of envenoming symptoms, to leveraging my understanding of psychology in advocating for and getting a message across to a diverse range of people.

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How do you make people interested in your topic?

Really, when it comes to a cause as critical as snakebite, it's not that difficult to get people's attention. Throw in the imagery of a drone delivering emergency antivenom to a rural African outpost inside of an hour, and you're in pretty good shape conversationally. The challenge comes in explaining the breadth and surprising complexity of the issue. Here, I find a nice mix of poignant statistics and anecdotes on the issue come in handy to retain interest.

What do you wish people would be more aware of?

The positive impact one person can have. It's easy to fall into the role of the helpless bystander. 'Why is the world in so much turmoil? Oh well... If only there were something I could do about it.' There is! You don't have to take on poverty, global warming or snakebite

alone. Just pick something to be passionate about and take *one* first step. You may be surprised where it leads! The rewards are many and you may find they go well beyond the cause itself, including new like-minded friends and a shared sense of purpose and impact.

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What do you like most about working at HAI, and what have you gained from working here?

I love the HAI team as a whole, and the stimulating range of work I've been able to engage in. Most of all, I truly appreciate this opportunity to learn the intricacies and complexities of a solvable global health care issue. I've been involved at some level in every aspect of the snakebite problem, from in-country data collection and local-level education, to advocating with governments in low- and middle-income countries.

If you could choose one policy recommendation to be accepted and turned into undisputed policy tomorrow, what would it be?

Easy! The Paris Climate Agreement. Although I'm so tempted to pick a policy in the global health field, in reality this IS a global health matter. This is not something we can put on the back burner. We need to take drastic, unified global measures of prevention and reversal. The point of no return is rapidly approaching. The Dutch understand this; they've fought back the water their entire history. My hometown of Tampa, Florida, is among the top 10 on the world list of cities most likely to be affected by rising waters. We need to get on board. The scientific community is in agreement about this, and by the time it becomes truly undeniable, it'll be too late.

Want to find out more about Sabrina? Read her [staff page](#)!