

# THE NEED FOR GLOBAL ACTION TO REDUCE **SNAKEBITE** DEATH AND DISABILITY

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## **THE SNAKEBITE BURDEN**

Snakebite envenoming kills 81,000–138,000 people every year and permanently disables 400,000 more. Rural workers in impoverished communities in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia are at greatest risk.

The majority of snakebite victims have poor access to basic health services. Because antivenom is frequently unavailable at healthcare facilities, its price so high, and its quality often dubious, many snakebite victims seek alternative—typically ineffective—treatment from traditional healers. Snakebite patients who do receive proper medical treatment are often forced further into poverty, even destitution. The costs to individuals and their families, communities and their countries are staggering.

## **KEYS TO REDUCING THE SUFFERING**

Reducing the global burden of snakebite envenoming is possible with concerted global action.

The greatest needs in low- to middle-income countries (LMICs) are to:

1. **Gather evidence** on snakebite incidence rates, which are believed to be massively under-reported, along with data on the price, availability and affordability of snakebite treatment, including antivenom.
2. **Improve health-seeking behaviours, prevention and first-aid treatment** by educating communities and normalising the use of snakebite prevention tools, like bed nets and footwear.
3. **Improve treatment and strengthen health systems** by ensuring consistent access to safe, effective, affordable, appropriate and quality-assured antivenom and other medical treatment, as well as training healthcare workers on effective snakebite management.

## **GLOBAL ACTION ON SNAKEBITE**

The World Health Organization (WHO) added snakebite envenoming to its 'Category A' list of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in 2017.

Since then, the WHO has responded by developing its first-ever comprehensive global strategy—known as the snakebite roadmap—in consultation with snakebite experts. The strategy, *Snakebite envenoming: a strategy for prevention and control*, will be launched at this year's World Health Assembly (WHA). It aims to reduce deaths and disabilities by 50% by 2030, particularly in LMICs. The programme targets affected communities and their health systems, and aims to ensure access to safe, effective treatment through increased cooperation, collaboration and partnership at all levels.

Health Action International (HAI) encourages Member States to support the WHO snakebite roadmap because it:

1. Supports countries in turning commitments made in the WHA resolution on snakebite into action. It provides clear guidance on how to effectively prevent and control the disease to significantly reduce national and global death and disability.
2. Coordinates action between the WHO, Member States and the international community, linked with current work streams, to effectively control snakebite envenoming and mobilises action at national, regional and global levels.
3. Acts as a catalyst for global health donors to allocate resources to all elements of the WHO's snakebite roadmap and to programmes—including those for civil society—to scale up snakebite envenoming research, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

## WHAT WHO MEMBER STATES CAN DO

We encourage Member State delegations to take action on snakebite envenoming by:

1. Attending the launch of the WHO Snakebite Roadmap at this year's WHA.
2. Advocating for a centrally-coordinated national snakebite control programme and commit to supporting the implementation of the WHO Snakebite Roadmap.

## HAI'S ROLE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SNAKEBITE

HAI's Snakebite Project is mobilising global, national and local action on snakebite envenoming. We successfully campaigned for the inclusion of snakebite envenoming on the WHO's 'Category A' list of NTDs in 2017, and for the adoption of the resolution on snakebite in 2018.

We provide technical and advocacy support to the WHO's NTD Department, as well as Member States, around the development and implementation of the WHO roadmap. In sub-Saharan Africa, our Project is developing a much-needed evidence base on snakebite incidence rates and the price, availability and affordability of antivenom. Through the formation of multi-stakeholder groups, comprised of snakebite experts and civil society representatives, this research provides health authorities with recommendations for effective snakebite management. Furthermore, we equip civil society with advocacy tools to press for greater action on snakebite. We are also raising awareness and knowledge about snakebite prevention, first-aid and treatment in snakebite-affected communities and among healthcare workers.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Read our action plan on snakebite at [bit.ly/hai-snakebite](https://bit.ly/hai-snakebite).

Find the Snakebite Resolution at [bit.ly/snakebite-resolution](https://bit.ly/snakebite-resolution).

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