



Snakebite Envenoming

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WHO has presented a strategy aimed at cutting snakebite-related deaths and disabilities in half by 2030, as snake bite can soon become a major **Global Public Health Emergency** if not dealt properly.

Facts

- Each year, nearly **three million** people are bitten by poisonous snakes, with an estimated **81,000-138,000 deaths**.
- Another **400,000 survivors suffer permanent disabilities** and other after-effects, according to the WHO figures.
- **Snake venom** can cause **paralysis that stops breathing, bleeding disorders that can lead to fatal haemorrhage, irreversible kidney failure and tissue damage** that can cause permanent disability and limb loss.
- From very long time snake bite has been neglected and dangerously under-estimated to the extent that in 2017 **WHO, categorised "snakebite envenoming" as a Neglected Tropical disease**.

Snakebite envenoming is a potentially life-threatening disease that typically **results from the injection of a mixture of different toxins (venom)** following the bite of a venomous snake and can also be **caused by having venom sprayed into the eyes** by certain species of snakes that have the ability to spit venom as a defence measure.

- Snakebite envenoming is a particularly important **public health problem in rural areas of tropical and sub-tropical countries situated in Africa, the Middle-East, Asia, Oceania and Latin America**.
- In these regions the risk of snakebite is a daily concern, especially for **rural and peri-urban communities where hundreds of millions of people depend on agriculture** or subsistence hunting and gathering in order to survive.
- **Children often suffer more severe effects** than adults because of their smaller body mass.
- **Lack of footwear** contributes significantly to the risk of snakebite for both adults and

children.

Concerns

- Many snakebites **go unreported**, often because victims seek treatment from **non-medical sources or do not have access to health care**.
- **Snake antivenoms** are effective treatments to prevent or reverse most of the harmful effects of snakebite envenoming and are included in the **WHO Essential Medicines list but because of inaccessibility and unaffordability of drugs**, many families are either not able to access the anti venoms or go into debt in order to pay for antivenom.

WHO's Roadmap for Snake Envenoming

- To make antivenoms accessible and affordable WHO's plan is to **increase production of quality antivenoms**.
- In order to create the **sustainable market for antivenoms** there is a need for a **25% increase in the number of competent manufacturers by 2030**.
- WHO planned a pilot project to create a **global antivenom stockpile**.
- **Integrating snakebite treatment and response into national health plans** in affected countries, including better training of health personnel and educating communities.