THE RIGHT TO HEALTH
TACKLING SNAKEBITE ENVENOMING
IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Papua New Guinea (PNG) has one of the highest localised snakebite rates in the world. In some parts of PNG, snakebite mortality rates can be three times higher than those from other diseases such as malaria or tuberculosis. In Southern PNG, Papuan taipan snakes cause more than 90% of all cases of envenoming admitted to Port Moresby General Hospital. Up to 63% of snakebite victims are under 25 years and nearly half of all fatalities involve children. Despite these dire statistics, snakebite envenoming is a treatable disease and early administration of effective antivenom can be life-saving.

DELIVERING LIFE-SAVING ANTIVENOMS ACROSS PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In 2018, the Australian Venom Research Unit launched the PNG Snakebite Partnership. A three-year collaborative partnership with the National Department of Health (PNG) the Australian Government, Seqirus Pty Ltd, and the Charles Campbell Toxinology Centre at the University of PNG. The PNG Snakebite Partnership will distribute over 600 vials of antivenom (donated by Seqirus) to health centres across PNG. This is more than triple the amount of antivenom currently available across the country. The Partnership will also collect data on snakebite incidence to assess the true scale of snakebite in PNG. This data will also provide information on each patient’s clinical presentation and treatment plan. As of September 2018, more than 250 vials of antivenom have been delivered to 25 health centres across PNG.

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