



Health Action International Asia Pacific (HAIAP)
(in collaboration with USM TWN DMDC IIUM)



<https://www.haiasiapacific.org>
Haiasiapacific@gmail.com

HAIAP News Bulletin, 1 January 2024

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1. News from HAIAP

1.1 Message from Anwar Fazal

2023 has seen a triple tragedy:

- The 'Climate Emergency' and Mother Earth is crying
- The Pharma conglomerates are continuing their wave of benefiting from 'Health Emergencies' -- the sicker the people are the more money they can make, AND
- The unleashing by the Israeli Zionists of the horrific genocide on the Palestinian People (the majority killed being women and children) and the destruction of hospitals, the mass killing of refugees and the horrendous blocking of humanitarian aid so blatantly is unconscionable like never before.

The challenge for us in 2024 has been laid out for us and for the global health and justice movement.

Let us keep fighting for health and justice, peace and harmony and a world of happiness.

Let us never forget that little people doing little things working together can change the world.

Yes we can. Yes we must like never before.

Anwar Fazal - Co-founder of Health Action International (HAI) and recipient of the Right Livelihood Award popularly known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'.

1.2 Education for sustainable development - Tan Sri Dzukifli Abdul Razak

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) emerged as a concept through the Global Regional Centre on Expertise (RCE) of ESD way back in the early 2000s. Driven by ecological awareness, it has raised a number of issues ranging from food security to water conservation, from social harmony and economic inequity that led to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources leading to a threat to livelihoods of billions of people around the world. As a result, there is an urgent demand for a shift towards a sustainable future with the transformation of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes both at the personal and communal levels in the global efforts towards ESD, framed as part of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 4 in Quality Education. It seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Target 4.7 emphasises promoting ESD and global citizenship to provide all learners with knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development by 2030 (United Nations, 2016).

The ESD-Net 2030 Global Meeting, 18 – 20 December 2023, at the United Nations University in Tokyo with the theme Transforming Education Together highlighted many examples of progress on ESD via initiatives, trends, and innovations for Agenda 2030.

Over the last few decades, ESD has been the global platform to interconnect environmental, ecological, social and economic challenges facing the planet, and has increasingly coalesced into a driving paradigm in policy, governance. It calls for a transdisciplinary education which empowers lifelong learners with the relevant knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, to not only make informed decisions but also to bring about the individual and collective changes required to positively impact our societies, particularly in face of the climate crisis. The sharing on the implementation and progress during the meeting pointed to the viable initiatives, trends and innovation in the context of Agenda 2030.

**"...'guts' is a commodity that is scarce nowadays in the country."
- Mahathir Mohamad, 7th Prime Minister (10 May 2018)**

1.3 HAIAP website

Plans are in place to make the website (<https://www.haiasiapacific.org>) easier and more attractive to use; and to publicise its value. Please look at it and give us your ideas - please check under the pulldown menus in the black bar on the front page - your ideas are very welcome.

The website is a repository for HAIAP publications and records of all HAIAP activities as well as being a complete resource centre covering topics relevant to equity of access to essential medicines, health care and human rights.

We encourage everyone to make use of this website and to share it with others.

1.4 HAIAP News December 2023

In the December issue of HAIAP News we note eight special days that occur in December.

We remember Amit Sengupta who we lost at the end of November in 2018. We remember his warm comradeship along with his enormous courage and skills. He remains an inspiration. We also remember David Sanders who we lost in 2019. He wrote *The Struggle for Health* in 1985 and a second edition was finished and published this year.

World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) was celebrated November 18 - 24 and Dr B Ekbal keeps us informed about the implementation of the AMR Strategic Plan in Kerala while Niyada Angsulee has shared information about the wide range of AMR related activities in Thailand as well as the challenging work on Thailand borders with neighbouring countries.

The battle to control the sale of nicotine vapes in Malaysia continues while New Zealand fears their huge achievements in the control of tobacco products could be reversed following the election of a new government.

HAIAP News December 2023

Special Days in December

Remembering Amit Sengupta

David Sanders 2nd ed Struggle for Health

Third World Resurgence - Justice is non-negotiable

WAAW

Feature: Kerala AMR Plan & Strategy

Feature: Thailand: AMR initiatives

Thailand: Responding to challenges at national borders

Australian PM apologises for thalidomide

Malaysia and NZ fight to control vapes

Regional Centres of Expertise aims for sustainable development.

Spanish Flu 'remedies'

Unfair Pandemic Treaty discussions

It can be accessed here:

<https://www.haiasiapacific.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/HAIAPNewsDec2023.pdf>

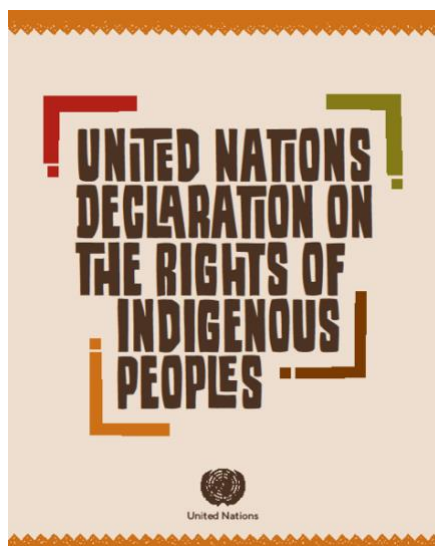
1.4. Rights of Indigenous Peoples - Anwar Fazal

On December 17, Dato Seri AnwarFazal gave a keynote address and declared open a Tribal Art Exhibition at the Wawasan Open University in Penang, Malaysia.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=758086353005807&set=pcb.758086523005790>

Dato' Seri Anwar drew the attention of the audience to the mostly unknown UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf



Anwar Fazal: 'The Declaration provided the world with a framework for reconciliation, healing and peace as well as harmony and cooperation based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith!

It was finally adopted on 23 September 2007, 16 years ago, after two decades, I repeat, two long decades of negotiations.

Not well known is the shocking fact that four countries (in alphabetical order)- AUSTRALIA, CANADA, NEW ZEALAND and the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - opposed the Declaration.

Shockingly also, a dozen other countries of mostly ex colonial powers even abstained. HYPOCRISY AT ITS WORST!

Over the next few years, however, feeling the shame and the pressure of people with conscience, most of them acceded to the Declaration.

SADLY AND UNCONSCIONABLY, HYPOCRISY AT IT WORST

CONTINUES WITH THE MASSACRE AND GENOCIDE OF PALESTINIANS

We have to keep on fighting these evil forces.

We must never give up.'

1.4 Dr Mira Shiva shares some challenges for India and the region

Air pollution and smog worsens in many cities in the region. In Delhi 68 flights were delayed or diverted at one time in November. On December 27 In New Delhi, Reuters reported an index reading of 378, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, and more than 100 flights were delayed and rail services disrupted by an enveloping fog amid temperatures of 11 degrees Celsius.

There are worsening respiratory problems associated with the air pollution and smog and affordable respiratory- related medicines are often not available. There is expected to be increasing Interstitial Lung Disease in young and elderly.

Mira proposed that we give some priority to promotion of affordable access to respiratory-related medicines as air pollution in many settings is bound to increase the respiratory problems. The cost of inhalers, nebulisers and other medicines is prohibitive for children with asthma.

Mira also noted that cases of Covid JN.1 are being reported - in India as in other countries. While there are ICU admissions for JN1, the good news is that there's currently nothing to suggest that it is any more aggressive than other variants in circulation. According to the US CDC, the sudden rise of JN.1 suggests that it is either more transmissible or better at evading our immune systems. However, the CDC notes: 'It's important to know that existing vaccines, tests, and treatments still work well against JN.1, so this variant does not affect CDC's recommendations'.

2. Information sharing

2.1 Australian 'vape' legislation effective from January 1 2024.

From today, you will no longer be able to import or buy disposable vapes in Australia, and from March, this rule will extend to refillable vapes. Later in the year, sale of vapes won't be allowed in retail outlets at all.

Patients will still be able to access vapes to manage nicotine dependence or to quit smoking, with a prescription from a doctor or authorised nurse practitioner. But these prescriptions will have limits on the amount of nicotine and the flavours permitted, and the products will have medical-style packaging.

<https://www.tga.gov.au/news/media-releases/new-regulations-place-stronger-controls-importation-manufacture-and-supply-vapes>

2.2 DNDi (Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative) 2023 roundup

https://mailchi.mp/dndi.org/enews_december-2023?e=223f48c08a

From DNDi: 'As we close out a year of exciting progress at DNDi, I am thrilled to share that patients with a rare but deadly form of sleeping sickness will also now benefit from fexinidazole. Last week, [the European Medicines Agency \(EMA\) adopted a positive scientific opinion](#) for the use of the simple oral treatment against *T.b. rhodesiense* sleeping sickness – at last replacing a painful and toxic arsenic-based medication that has long stood as the only treatment option. This progress is a testament to the enduring success of our collaborative model of not-for-profit R&D, and comes thanks to DNDi's longstanding collaboration with Sanofi, the World Health Organization, and partners in the [HAT-r-ACC consortium](#) – and the support of our donors.

'We have come a long way together, but neglect is not a thing of the past. And as the impact of the climate crisis on health becomes ever clearer, we know that already vulnerable and marginalised communities will bear the heaviest toll. We worked this year to solidify bold commitments to cut our climate footprint in half by 2030, as reflected in our Climate and Environmental Roadmap launched early this month.'
Read more: https://mailchi.mp/dndi.org/enews_december-2023?e=223f48c08a

2.3 TB A ray of hope for TB Patients?

From TWN Info Service on Health Issues 27 March 2023

A Ray of Hope for TB Patients: Indian Patent Office Rejects a Secondary Patent on TB drug bedaquiline

By Prathibha Sivasubramanian (Legal Researcher, Third World Network)

<https://www.twn.my/title2/health.info/2023/hi230305.htm>

On 23 March 2023, in a landmark victory to tuberculosis (TB) patients all over the developing world, the Indian Patent Office (Mumbai) rejected a patent application relating to fumarate salt of Bedaquiline

Then in October 2023 new barriers were noted:

New briefing paper on secondary patents on TB medicines

A new Third World Network Briefing Paper, '*Secondary patents threaten access to new TB medicines*' by TWN researcher Prathibha Sivasubramanian, highlights the presence of secondary patents on new TB medicines and discusses their potential impact on access to TB treatment. The paper is now available [here](#) on the TWN website.

https://www.twn.my/title2/briefing_papers/twn/Secondary%20patents%20TB%20TWNBP%20Oct%202023%20Sivasubramanian.pdf

Introduction: On 29 September, Johnson and Johnson (J&J) announced its intent not to enforce the patents it owns and controls for the tuberculosis (TB) medicine bedaquiline in 134 low- and middle-income countries. J&J said this move is to allow generic manufacturers to produce and supply good-quality, medically acceptable bedaquiline in the 134 countries. (The list of countries is not publicly available.) The company made this announcement following pressure from various quarters.

Since the original patent on bedaquiline has expired, the announcement is in relation to the secondary patents. (Presently there are seven patents for bedaquiline.) **However, secondary patents (also known as ‘evergreening’ patents) continue to threaten access** to many other new TB medicines that have enabled all-oral regimens for TB treatment - thus improving the success of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) treatment.

Prior to the introduction of these new medicines, the treatment for DR-TB used injectables which caused serious side-effects including irreversible hearing loss.

Despite the introduction of new medicines, scaling up of the treatment is lagging, due to several reasons including treatment being complex, onerous, expensive and in some countries beyond the reach of many patients who need it. Access to new TB medicines thus still remains at sub-optimal level due to high prices and restrictive licensing arrangements between pharmaceutical companies and other drug developers. Patents are one of the important reasons for the high prices and restrictive licences.

New briefing on the secondary patents <https://www.twn.my/title2/health.info/2023/hi231007.htm>

2.3 WHO prequalifies a second Malaria Vaccine, a significant milestone in prevention of the disease

<https://www.who.int/news/item/21-12-2023-who-prequalifies-a-second-malaria-vaccine-a-significant-milestone-in-prevention-of-the-disease>

The World Health Organization (WHO) has added the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine to the list of prequalified vaccines for the prevention of malaria in children following the advice of the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunisation and the Malaria Policy Advisory Group.

The prequalification means larger access to vaccines as a key tool to prevent malaria in children with it being a prerequisite for vaccine procurement by UNICEF and funding support for deployment by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

The R21 vaccine is the second malaria vaccine prequalified by WHO, following the RTS,S/AS01 vaccine which obtained prequalification status in July 2022. Both vaccines are shown to be safe and effective in clinical trials, for preventing malaria in children.

The prequalification of the world’s second malaria vaccine, **developed by Oxford University and manufactured by Serum Institute of India**, is poised to expand access to malaria prevention through vaccination. Demand for malaria vaccines is high but the supply has thus far been limited. The availability of two WHO recommended and prequalified malaria vaccines is expected to increase supply and result in sufficient vaccine doses to benefit all children living in areas where malaria is a significant public health risk. **[There are no details about price and how the vaccine will be distributed]**

2.4 Public citizen - 50 years

Robert Weissman, President of Public Citizen USA is a friend of HAIAP. Some of you will remember him at a HAIAP regional meeting organised by Dr Bala around the theme Compulsory Licensing. At the time he was working with what was then called CPTech (now KEI - Knowledge Ecology International) - Jamie Love and Thiru Balasubramaniam from that organisation were also there.

Public Citizen celebrates 50 years during 2023-2024

<https://www.citizen.org/news/celebrating-50-years-of-public-citizen/>

By Robert Weissman

This article appeared in the May/June 2023 edition of Public Citizen News. Download the full edition [here](#).

We are thrilled to celebrate our 50th anniversary throughout 2023 and into 2024, including with a major gala celebration in Washington, D.C. in June 2023.

At a time when so many are having doubts about the future, the celebration of Public Citizen's 50th anniversary should help ground us. We've taken on great challenges in the past—in fact we seek them out—and time and again we've made a difference and prevailed.

Anniversaries are a great time to appreciate our achievements and take stock for longer term planning.

As I look back at our first 50 years, I couldn't be prouder. And, as a supporter and partner in our work, you should be, too.

We could write a whole book on Public Citizen's history. (We have, actually!) Consider just a few of our accomplishments: Getting air bags in cars. Removing deadly and dangerous drugs from the market. Helping pass Wall Street reform and creating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Winning the first fuel economy standards. Suing for release of the Nixon White House tapes, Trump administration White House visitor logs, Reagan administration records, and more.

It's an amazing record across so many fields, using many advocacy tools and prevailing over powerful interests.

How did we do it? We started by demanding what was right, not what people told us was realistic. Then we campaigned, advocated, educated, organised and litigated to get there. We changed the terms of the debate. We marshalled the facts. We protected our independence and took no corporate money. We built power. We innovated creative strategies and built broad coalitions. We never cowered in the face of corporate goliaths. And we stayed on the case until we prevailed.

Looking forward, we're animated by that same commitment to justice, passion, fearlessness and persistence. We face great challenges—and great opportunities—in the following important areas.

Democracy – Against a rising proto-fascist movement, racist voter suppression and Big Money dominance of elections, we are building a powerful movement for democratic reform.

Health Care for All – Our USA national health care system is designed by and benefits health insurers, hospital chains and Big Pharma. But it is failing the American people. Here's the Rx: We're campaigning to improve and expand Medicare to cover more conditions and more people—and we won't stop until everyone is covered. Our cutting-edge studies are generating support to overcome Big Pharma's patent monopolies and lower prices. We continue to monitor drug safety and fight to keep dangerous drugs off the market. And we litigate and advocate for lifesaving health and safety protections.

Climate Justice – Humanity faces an existential crisis as fossil fuel corporations race us toward climate chaos. We are identifying key levers to spur the fundamental changes needed in our energy systems and global economy to avert the worst consequences of climate change.

Taking on Corporate Power – Connecting our work is a recognition of the fundamental challenge corporate power poses to a functional democracy, a fair economy, our health, safety, a just society and a liveable planet.

Let me be clear. This is an outrageously ambitious agenda, and it's only part of our plans. We know we're not going to achieve it right away.

Yet here's what else we know: being outrageously ambitious has fueled our success in the past. If we don't aspire to make the world just, we'll never get there. If we embrace the challenges—yes, we'll fall short; there's no end to the work—but we'll make greater progress than if we lower expectations.

Let's do great things together.

See also <https://www.worstpills.org/>

- A Public Citizen project founded in 1971 by renowned patient advocate Dr Sidney Wolfe for information about harmful or ineffective medications, dangerous drug interactions and side effects, and pharmaceutical industry influence over the FDA.