

## **Part 2: Lessons**

# Snakebite Awareness Training

## Part 2: Introduction - Why We Are Here

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Hello, and welcome to the beginning of our snake awareness training course. Thank you for attending today, and also thanks to the community for allowing us to do this educational program. My name is [INSERT YOUR NAME] and I am from [ORGANIZATION OR COMMUNITY]. I will be assisted by [NAME] in delivering this course to you.

At the end of this training, here is what you should know or be able to do:

1. Identify the most dangerous snakes that are found in this part of Kenya.
2. Recognize the symptoms associated with different types of snakebite
3. Remember a few simple steps to follow if you are bitten by a snake
4. Take precautions as you walk outdoors to prevent snakebite
5. Take steps to prevent snakes from entering your home or compound

Some of you might be wondering, “Why are we talking about snakes and snakebite?” We are talking about this because this is an important issue that affects the lives of a lot of people in our community, and in other communities across Kenya. Let me share three stories to help us think about why we are here.

*Conjester grew up in a village where she was warned that snakes are a great enemy, and if she was bitten she would die. So she grew up knowing that if she saw a snake she must run away or*

*hit it with a stick to kill it because if she didn't, it would kill her. Then in 2010, she lost her dear 17-year-old daughter Emily to snakebite. After school in the evening, Emily went to fetch vegetables on the farm. After she returned from looking for water, she found Emily sleeping. She inquired what was happening because that was unusual. Emily said while crying that she was bitten by a big snake while fetching vegetables. Immediately Conjester took her to the traditional healer with a swollen left leg. By then Emily was in pain and she could not talk well. As usual, the healer spit on the area where Emily was bitten, but at this time Emily could not talk and she was breathing very fast. The family was encouraged to give her uncooked eggs, but they decided to take Emily to the hospital instead. Unfortunately, they did not move more than 100 meters from the healer's home before Emily passed away.*

*Here is another story: Catherine shared that until the introduction of the snakebite awareness training, she could not listen to anything concerning snakes, or any picture of a snake. This was because her grandmother Zipporah, who is now 83 years old, was bitten by an unknown snake while assembling firewood in the late evening outside her house about 18 years ago. They discovered too late that it was a snake bite when she was really in pain. She was taken to a traditional healer because of traditional beliefs and the lack of an available medical institution. This left her right leg paralyzed and later all of her lower limbs were affected; she is now in a wheelchair. At her age, she needs constant support.*

*Finally, one more story: In the year 2020, Doricas went shopping with her friends in town late one evening when it was becoming dark. As she was walking and talking, she was in bare feet and she stepped on something. When she checked she saw a black*

*snake moving away. She shouted “SNAKE” and all of her colleagues ran away. Immediately, she felt pain on her left foot and noticed blood and realized she had been bitten by that snake. Her friends were nowhere to be found. She tried to go home, but it was so painful. She was finally assisted so she could go to the traditional healer - who was not there. By midnight, she was in a nearby hospital. After treatment, she was required to pay 21000 Kenyan shillings. It was so difficult to raise such money, and she had no option but to sell the only cow her family had for milk.*

These stories show the effects that a snakebite can have on someone’s life here in Kenya. I know that some of you can relate to these stories. There are some snakes that are so dangerous that if you don’t get help right away, you might die. If you don’t die from the bite, you might have serious injuries that affect the quality of your life, and for some people that might mean having a limb removed if the bite is serious enough. Snakebite can also have a financial impact on a family - if an adult is no longer able to work due to injuries, or the cost of medical treatment is too high, it might mean the family has less money to live on.

I am sure that many of you have similar stories, and might like to share those with the group. We are here and we are listening, and would like to know your story. I would just ask for the sake of time that you keep it brief if possible so we have enough time for others to share their stories.

***[GIVE PEOPLE SOME TIME TO SHARE WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THEM WITH REGARD TO SNAKEBITE]***

Thank you all so much for sharing your stories. It is true that something needs to be done about the issue of snakebite in our communities. The answer is not to kill all of the snakes, because

they serve important functions in nature. Despite this, we acknowledge that if a dangerous snake is endangering your family you might need to kill it. While we all might hope for better treatment facilities, or better roads to get us to the hospitals, or more antivenom to be available, much of that is out of our hands.

But there is something we **can** all do. We can all take responsibility for the things we can control. For example, we can (1) learn how to identify the snakes that are really dangerous in our community, (2) be aware of steps we can take when walking outside, living in our houses, or working and playing outside of our houses to prevent or avoid snakebite, and (3) know what to do and what not to do if you are bitten by a dangerous snake.

Here is an example from a recent training elsewhere in Kenya. A participant named Juliana who had finished the snake awareness training said, "I have kept a tree forest for years on my land. Until recently, I had not cleared my compound, so snakes appeared regularly from the forest. The snake awareness training has really changed the face of my home. The compound has been cleared and cleaned, and for the last month snakes have not visited me". She was really thankful because the snake awareness training gave her practical steps for keeping snakes away from her home and compound. This is what we hope for you after this training is completed.

This is what we are trying to accomplish in this training.

Are you ready to begin?