

# Vanguard

## Snakes everywhere on the Plateau!

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- Traumatising deaths of 20 bitten by mambas, cobras, vipers
- How flood washed reptiles into homes — Residents
- Survivors relieve deadly encounter

BY MARIE-THERESE NANLONG, JOS

Snakes bites, especially in the central and southern zones of Plateau State, are not new, though while some residents rever some species of snakes, others actually hunt them for meat.

The snakes, often seen on rocky areas and grasses, bite; mostly farmers have had reason to visit the Jos University Teaching Hospital, JUTH, Comprehensive Health Centre, Zamko in Langtang North local government area or traditional homes where snake bites can be treated.

These cases had not really been a cause of concern as people bitten have always accessed treatment, but the recent case where some communities in Kanke, Kanam and Langtang North local government areas have been invaded by snakes have left residents worried.

About 20 people have reportedly lost their lives as a result of snake bites while many others are currently receiving treatment in Zamko as well as traditional homes in the area.

([http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-](http://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/snake-e1443041548115.jpg)

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For instance, Lur community, in Kanke Local government area, has been invaded by snakes, mostly black mambas and carpet vipers, as a result of flooding that affected the area.

The snakes were believed to have been washed out into farmlands and residential areas and, in the last three weeks, the centre has been receiving new cases of snake bites on daily basis.



The victims include children as little as three years old, teenagers and adults who received the venom of the deadly reptiles and mostly bitten on the legs.

Survivors told *Sunday Vanguard* their stories with a call on government to come to their aid by fumigating the areas and providing drugs for treatment.

Village Head of Lur, Baba Ritda James, said, “It is alarming the manner the snakes invade the community. Snakes like vipers are discovered right in houses. We think they were washed out of their holes”.

Victor Ojia, the father of a three-year-old boy, bitten by a cobra in the village, said, “My son came back to the house from where he went to play and complained that something was wrong with his right leg. We did not take it serious until the next day when he woke up and the leg was swollen and we knew a snake bit him. We rushed him to hospital. He was bitten by a black cobra; thank God the situation is getting better.”

However, some medical personnel in the Zamko Health Centre, Sarah Joel and Peter Nanlong, lamented the situation, saying there was need for urgent action to be taken to curb the situation.

Joel noted, “This issue of snake bite is actually a very serious one. We are creating awareness so that people will know and we need all the necessary help and urgently too because the people at the grassroots are actually suffering because of this situation.”

Nanlong, a pharmacist, added, “On a bad day, we see about 20 patients; some days, 10. Only God knows where the snakes are being washed out from to wreak havoc in the communities. We are appealing to government to come to our aid and do whatever it takes to rid the communities of these reptiles.”

Meanwhile, the member representing Pankshin/Kanke/Kanam in the House of Representatives, Timothy Golu, whose constituents are affected and the Management Committee Chairman of Langtang North local government, Dan Dul, appealed to the Federal Government to come to the aid of the locals.

Golu, who confirmed the situation, said, out of the over 50 persons affected, some had died while others, in critical conditions, are on admission in hospitals and traditional snake treating homes in the state.

He added that 13 of the victims were at JUTH Comprehensive Centre, Zamko while 20 others were in traditional healers’ treatment homes, and seven in herbalists’ centres.

He said, “Some have even been treated and discharged, but a woman at my place, who has been treated and discharged, still has pus gushing from the bitten spot and we have advised her to return to hospital for fresh checks and we have the fear that something worse may result from the wound if not properly treated.”

Golu stressed that the situation was “very scary and pathetic”, adding that the snakes were washed into the communities by flood.

“As the flood pushed them from the overflowed tributaries of River Benue, some snakes climbed trees, others entered holes while some just held unto any available straw and some later entered residences and farms where they have been wreaking havoc”, the lawmaker said.

“The commonest species were the black mamba, carpet viper and cobra, and most victims usually depend on luck to survive.”

He urged the Federal and Plateau State Governments to treat the snake invasion as a national concern and give it

immediate response while urging residents to be vigilant and protect themselves from the reptiles.

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