Alika and Jabari were walking near their home when suddenly they heard a sound.

Do you hear the crying, Jabari?

Hello? Is anyone there?

Hey, we hear you. Show yourself. We know you are there. Come out!

I don't dare because I'm sure you won't like me. You will probably hit me when you see me.

Why would we hit you? We promise not to. Come out and show yourself!
Yes, I know. We snakes have such a bad reputation. That's a shame because we're not that bad.

You see?! I scared you. You probably want to hurt me now. But I won't attack you, really, I promise.

Don't worry I'll stay here and keep my distance to make you feel safer. It also makes me feel safer because people always chase me away or want to hurt me.

If I'm being honest, you aren't one of our favourite animals. Just stay where you are!
I'm Alika and this is my brother Jabari. What's your name?

I am Safiya.

The name fits. You seem pretty calm for a snake.

Why are you crying so bitterly? What happened?

Oh, I feel so terribly alone. All my friends have run away or are dead.

I'm sorry about that. What happened to them?
They were so afraid of us. They hit us, threw stones, injured us, and killed us. Now, I'm the only snake that lives here.

Where we used to live is now a settlement. We didn't know where to go. It was difficult to find hiding places away from people.

Oh, dear! We're sorry to hear that. But you snakes are pretty dangerous. I know someone who was bitten by a snake and didn't feel well afterwards. What should we do other than chase you away or kill you?

Mmmm, there is a way without using violence and chasing us away...
If you really want to know and promise to follow them, I'll tell you the Eight Secrets of how humans and snakes can live safely alongside each other.

But first, you have to promise me that you will follow the eight secrets and tell your parents, siblings, neighbours and friends about it.

Yes, we promise you.

OK, then come with me.

Do you see that woman over there, the one with the pot on her head?

Yes, what about her? It's just a woman with a pot on her head.

Look at her feet. She's not wearing shoes.
SECRET 1: WHEN OUT IN THE BUSH OR FIELD, YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR FEET OR WEAR SHOES. SHOES CAN PROTECT YOU FROM SNAKEBITES!

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE AND STEP ON A SNAKE, IT WILL FIGHT BACK AND BITE YOU. MOST OF THE TIME IT BITES YOUR FOOT OR YOUR ANKLE.

IF YOU’RE WEARING SHOES, IT’S HARDER FOR THE SNAKE TO BITE YOUR FEET.

AH, THAT MAKES SENSE. WE PROTECT OUR FEET FROM SNAKEBITES WITH SHOES.

EXACTLY. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? THAT’S JUST THE FIRST STEP TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SNAKES IN THE BUSH, NOW I WILL TELL YOU THE OTHERS.
SECRET 2: When walking in the bush, carry a stick and tap the ground ahead of you. Snakes like me feel the vibration long before your steps reach us, giving us time to flee.

Because—believe me—It's not exactly nice when you step on us...

If you do not bother us, we will not bother you—keep at bay.
Alika, Jabari and their unlikely new friend proceed home.

We snakes don't like being out in the open. We prefer to hide in tall grass or in bushes. We feel much safer there.

**SECRET 3:** Does that mean that if we cut down the grass and bushes, we'll take your hiding places away?

It is exactly like that. If there is no hiding place around your house, we will look for another cosy place further away.

So, Jabari, what are we waiting for? Let's get started!

Now that we've learnt three secrets, what's next?

Maybe you can guess. Let's take a look at your house.
But why would you want to come into our home?

Because I'm looking for a hiding place or food. And mice and other rodents are my favourite food!

SECRET 4: You mean if we close the holes, no more mice and snakes will come into our house?

You see that small hole? That hole allows not only mice, but also snakes to enter your home.

You got it!

Well, let's make our house snake-proof, then!
Uh-oh. I have a problem now...

What is it?

For the **fifth secret**, I wanted to show you something in your house, but you did such a good job at closing all the holes for me to access that I can’t get in anymore.

The children laughed and opened the door for Safiya.

**HA HA HA**
I see you store your pots of grain in the house.

And? What is so bad about it? Everyone does that!

It's true, a lot of people do that. But where there is grain, there are rats. And do you remember who has rats on their menu?

Snakes!

Exactly. Secret 5: If you store your supplies outside the house, we have one less reason to come into your home.
But if we store the food outside, it will be eaten up immediately.

Not if you keep it in closed containers. The same also applies to water. We’re thirsty, too—and that’s another reason we come into houses.

Let’s get to work, Jabari! Let’s take everything outside.

Wait! While we’re here, I can tell you the sixth secret. Do you remember about the grass and the bushes? We really like to hide in firewood like this one, too.

SECRET 6: So, if we don’t want a snake making itself comfortable, then don’t stack the wood near the house?

I’ll take the wood, Alika, and you take care of the supplies?
Phew, it’s getting late now, and I must go back to my hiding place soon.

But you haven’t told us about the last two secrets yet, Safiya!

You’re right, and I wouldn’t have left without telling you first. Let’s go back to your house again.

This way, Safiya!

Congratulations, you did everything right here!
SECRET 7: DID YOU KNOW THAT MOSQUITO NETS NOT ONLY PROTECT AGAINST MOSQUITO BITES? THEY ALSO PROTECT AGAINST SNAKES! IF THE BED IS RAISED AND PROTECTED WITH A MOSQUITO NET, WE HAVE NO CHANCE OF SLIPPING INTO BED WITH YOU IN SEARCH OF FOOD, WARMTH OR A HIDING PLACE.

YAAAWWN.
NOW I’M REALLY TIRED. I NEED TO FIND A COSY HIDDING PLACE.

WAIT SAFIYA, WE’LL ACCOMPANY YOU A BIT. DO YOU HAVE THE STICK, ALIKA?

NOW I THINK IT’S TIME TO TELL YOU THE EIGHTH SECRET.
SECRET 8: Whenever you are out in the dark, you should take a flashlight with you. That way you can see if a snake crosses your path.

Maybe one like me who's on its way home.

All right, let me get a flashlight!

And with that, the children walked with Safiya back to her hiding place and away from their home.

Now it's time to say goodbye. It was nice to meet you, Jabari and Alika!

Likewise. Thank you for sharing the eight secrets.

You are welcome! I hope you will spread the word and help both snakes and humans live together safely.

Goodbye, Safiya!

Goodbye, Alika and Jabari!

And you dear reader, please help spread the 8 secrets of snakebite prevention.
1. Which of the following shows how we should cover our feet while walking to avoid snakebites?

2. Which picture shows how we should walk in the dark so as to see if there is a snake in our path?

3. What should we do to prevent snakes from entering the house?

4. How should food and livestock be kept in the homestead to deter snakes?

5. How should firewood be stored in the homestead?

6. Which photo shows the correct way for the bed settings?

7. Which photo shows the correct grass layout to avoid snake hiding places?
The snakebite project was piloted in Kenya by Health Action International (HAI). This project is implemented in collaboration with the Global Snakebite Initiative (GSI), Access to Medicines Platform/MeTA Kenya, The Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Division of the Ministry of Health Kenya and the NTD Departments across our counties of focus.

Over the last 4 years we have:

- Undertaken 4 different researches on availability, affordability and stock of snakebite commodities, snakebite incidences, healthcare provider perspectives and the socio-economic consequences of snakebites in Kajiado, Kilifi, Kwale and Taita Taveta counties.
- Developed Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials for first aid and prevention and supported community education and sensitization.
- Supported the training of over 49 health care workers in care, management and treatment of snakebites from Kajiado, Kilifi, Taita Taveta, Kwale, West Pokot, Baringo and Kakamega counties.
- Undertaken a photo essay and documentation of snakebite victim stories in Kajiado county culminating into the first ever snakebite experience photo gallery.
- Piloted a school programme that saw the development and printing of this illustrated booklet for school children on snakebite prevention as part of the government school health policy.