

# Students develop 'miracle' stones to heal residents from snake bite, scorpion sting

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The venomous puff adder. Photo/File

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October 6, 2015

Students from Coast Girls school have developed a black stone that neutralizes effects of snakes, scorpion and insect bites.

The black stone or viper stone, which is made from the thigh bone of a cow, is placed on a cut on the bitten area, soaking up the poison and reducing the fatality of the bite.

Traditionally, the stone was prepared using any animal bone that was cleaned, dried, baked and left to cool in open air, which re-oxidized it and reduced its absorptive ability.

The students improved on its development by cooling baked bones in an air tight container, in order to preserve their absorptive power.

After use, the stone is boiled in salty water, soaked for several hours in fresh milk and then dried again to restore its absorptive property.

Previously, residents would consult local healers who charged them up to Sh2,000 for each snake bite

treatment, but the girls are empowering the communities to make the stones for themselves, as well as giving the first samples for free.

The school project, under the

Educating Girls in Science programme, was led by Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa, supported by Intel and the Aga Khan Foundation (USA).

The two-year pilot project was launched by the Academy in 2014, to increase the girls' engagement in Science and in applying their knowledge outside the classroom to benefit their community.

The project started with nine schools in Mombasa county, before extending to Kwale in August 2015, where it is now working with 15 schools.

The project was selected after students found residents faced challenges accessing treatment for bites, due to the distance from hospitals.

In 1997, the Ministry of Health conducted a survey that showed up to 30 per cent of snake bite incidences end in deaths, because patients do not get timely first aid.

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