

Snake bites kill 19 people near Unity State capital

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October 7, 2012 (BENTIU) - A 300 metre man-made lake in near Unity State capital Bentiu has turned into a hazard with snakes living in the water suspected to have killed 19 people over the last three years.

The lake was created in Biemrouk village in 2004 by companies building a road from Bentiu to neighboring Rubkotna County. The lake used to be one kilometre outside Bentiu town but the state capital has expanded with the return of South Sudanese to the area after South Sudan's independence last year.

The village community has reported the problem to the County commissioner but complain that they have been ignored according to Biemrouk resident and village leader Peter Monytuel Majoak.

Majoak asked that top officials take notice of the issue and contact non-governmental organisations and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) "to find way to poison" the snake.

He also called for police to be deployed to the area to warn children from enter the lake. Many children have been killed while playing or bathing in the lake.

Such is the fear caused by the snake some residents describe it as "evil" and have even claimed it comes out at night and cries. Residents say the dangerous snake is between five to six metres long.

On Friday afternoon a snake bite killed 13-year-old Lam Gatkuoth while he was bathing in the pool. Gatkuoth Thach the boy's father told *Sudan Tribune* that the area had become a threat to the whole village and urged the government to act to save the lives of children in the area.

Despite the alarm over the deaths many women and children still use the lake to wash clothes, bathe and collect water for cooking to as there is no other water sources in the area.

Nyibol Gatkeak Jangluak who washes clothes in the pool says she risks going there because there is nowhere else to find water for washing.

The area is surrounded by 9 blocks, each with 300 homes. Community leaders from the 9 blocks reported the latest case on Saturday demanding that the government immediately fence off the area.

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