

# PROLOGUE

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## *How to Fight against a Snake*

Once upon a time, a visitor from another world saw a wonderful place with purple flowers right in the middle of a sorrowful village. The beautiful and peaceful place was surrounded by a high fence, inaccessible to everyone. The visitor lingered for a while in front of the garden without entering it. A woman stopped next to her and, with fear in her voice, she whispered: “Do not try to go there. Dangerous snakes live in this place.” The visitor was surprised. There were no snakes to be seen, only wonderful blooming and fragrant flowers. While the visitor was still deep in thought about the invisible snakes, other persons paused for a while next to her and told her stories about people who had seen snakes on this land. Now, the visitor became scared because, if so many other people were convinced of the existence of snakes, then they most probably had to be there.

Weeks passed and the visitor could not forget that wonderful place in the middle of hopelessness. She returned and found children cleaning up the ground that was dry and unsightly now, filled with rotting flowers. This time the visitor asked the children: “What are you doing here, isn’t it dangerous? You might get bitten by a snake.” And the children answered: “No, not anymore.” And then they carried on cleaning the field and turning it into their own playground.

By Mary Lindner

We can be assured that as children grow up and become a new adult generation, they will discover not only approved areas but also taboo areas in their environment and in life itself. In this time frame they will be most in need of advice and supervision to prevent them from inadvertently placing themselves in risky situations. We, as adults, have to decide whether we accept our responsibility to advise and instruct children in their process of discovering and conquering new spaces and ways of life and, by doing this, ensure some kind of safety. The primary preventive approach to a life skills programme on HIV/AIDS and sex education, as outlined, can be seen as such an initiative. It is presented in this thesis with all its hurdles and surprising outcomes.