

# Orange-Senqu River Awareness Kit


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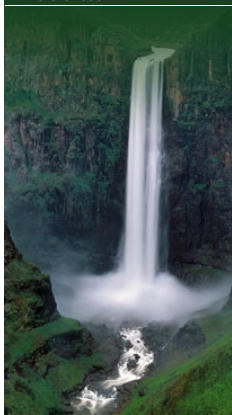
## People and the River

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### The Great Snake



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*This story from Namibia is taken from 'The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia', by Jennifer Davis (1993). It has been reproduced with kind permission from Gamsberg-MacMillan Books and New Namibia Books, Namibia.*

There was once a young boy named Katsema who had a crippled leg. He couldn't play much with the other children so they took little notice of him and he had no friends. Often he would sit at the waterhole by himself and watch the kingfishers dive for fish.

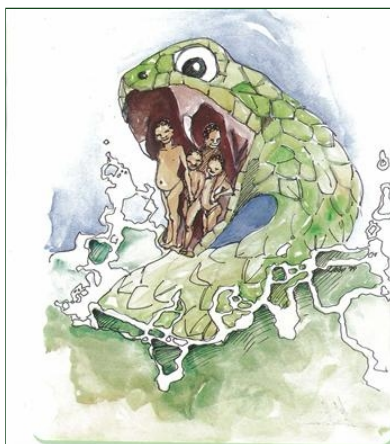
One day he saw a large creature emerge from the water. He called to it, but it disappeared. "That's strange," he thought. He went back to the village to tell the other children. They only laughed at him and told him he was making up stories. Nevertheless, they all went to the waterhole to see for themselves and, of course, to have a swim.

"See, Katsema," cried the oldest boy. "I'll dive down and find your monster." Everyone laughed. The boy dived down, but didn't come up again. The children were terrified and ran back to tell their parents. Everyone in the village was filled with sorrow. This was the fourth child to drown there.

Katsema had an idea. Deep in to the forest he walked until his weak leg ached. He was searching for Nagali. All the time he called out for this little spirit the old people talked about - the spirit who helps those in trouble.

Eventually Nagali heard the cries of Katsema and called from the branches of a great baobab tree. "What is your trouble?" Katsema sat panting in the grass under the tree and told Nagali what had happened.

"Come with me." Nagali took Katsema's hand and together they flew swiftly and silently over the treetops to the water hole. Nagali called out over the water and an enormous snake emerged from the depths.



**The Great Snake.**

Source: Libby Costandius 1993  
( click to enlarge )

Katsema fell to the ground in fear.

"There's nothing to fear," said Nagali. "This is the keeper of the watering place. Keeper, give us the children!" commanded Nagali. The great serpent obediently swam to the sandy bank and opened its mouth.

To Katsella's amazement, out stepped four children!

"Never again swim in the waterhole," Nagali scolded the children.

"The water is for drinking. Katsema did well to find me, for only I can speak to the keeper."

"We will never do that again," the children replied, holding on to Katsema.

"Katsema," cried the oldest boy, "I didn't believe you and now you have saved us. We are your friends." They all watched as the great serpent returned to the depths of the waterhole.

Katsema smiled and turned to Nagali. "Thank you, Nagali. I will return the children to their homes now. There will be great rejoicing in the village." Then Nagali flew off silently into the night.

Katsema and the children returned to the village and told their strange tale. The people were filled with joy. They prepared a feast to celebrate the safe return of their children and to honour Katsema, the hero. For many nights they danced around the cooking fires and sang songs of thanks to the boy, Nagali and the Keeper of the Waterhole.

## Interactive

**Basin Map**

Explore the sub-basins of the Orange-Senqu River

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**Video Tour**

Tour video scenes along the Orange-Senqu River related to People and the River

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View a historical timeline of Orange-Senqu countries, including water agreements & infrastructure construction

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**River Journey**

Journey along the Orange-Senqu River through images and interviews

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