

Lightning kills 2 pupils

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Men install lightning arrestors at a building in Nebbi. PHOTO by Felix Warom Okello

NEBBI

Lightning has killed two pupils of Agwrok Primary School in Nyaravur Sub-county in Nebbi District after a downpour. The affected pupils met the wrath of nature as they took shelter at a nearby church from the heavy rain on their way back home on Tuesday evening. The church is about 50 metres from the school.

The afternoon downpour was characterised by hailstones, storms and lightning. The dead were identified as P3 pupils, Victor Wabedkudu and Cliff Uyirwoth. While the injured included Tholith (P3), Joel Oyungi (P2), Daroius Ogenwoth (P3), Omar Bashir (P2).

Collins Okwaimungu (P4) and Richard Odongo (P4) were the other pupils who sustained burns from the tragedy. The two died on their way to Angal Hospital, about seven kilometres away from the school. The sorry state of the road to the hospital reportedly delayed the emergency treatment.

Sombre mood

The school was yesterday in a sombre mood as parents and pupils gathered to mourn the dead children.

A teacher at the school, who declined to be named, said: "This is a great tragedy to us because we have lost children who still had a bright future."

Last year, there were several calls by government to install lightning conductors at education, health and religious institutions. But some of the institutions have failed to install reportedly on grounds of the financial constraints while others have forgotten the importance of the conductors.

The officer-in-charge Nebbi Police Station, Mr Gimton Aguta, said parents should provide their children with footwear to avoid direct contact with lightning. “Schools should install lightning arrestors so that it can prevent such scenarios and people should avoid taking refuge under big trees,” he said.

Many children attend schools bare foot as some of the parents cannot afford to buy them shoes. Last year, lightning killed at least 40 people and injured several others in a spate of strikes across the country.

Lightning struck a Runyanya Primary School in Kiryandongo District killing 20 pupils and injuring almost 100 others. With climate change increasingly altering the region’s weather patterns, meteorologists, then, warned that extreme weather conditions – from floods and droughts to lightning strikes – could become the norm in Uganda. Experts this year also warned of the same.

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