ZIMBABWE

**Lightning kills two teenagers**

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Two teenagers were killed by lightning strike in Ulutho Village in Gwamba area of Lupane on Wednesday last week, leaving their family and community in mourning.

Sarah Sibanda (13) had reportedly ordered four young relatives out of their bedroom hut just moment before the strike that killed her, so that she and her cousin could change their clothes after being drenched by rain while waking back home.

The lightning strike also claimed the life of Bongidwe Tshuma (14), while 12-year-old girl Precious Sibanda was lucky to survived after being “Mysteriously thrown” out of the hut, according to Sarah’s mother, Mrs Mlibazisi Sibanda.

Sarah was laid to rest on Saturday, while Bongiwe will be buried in Plumtree when her parents arrive from South Africa where they are based.

A heart broke Mrs Sibanda said although the family is grieving the death of the two teenagers, they are also comforted by the fact that Sarah had ordered the other four kids out of her hut, as the lightning bolt could likely have killed them all. “The girls had come from a Women’s day event hosted by a non- governmental organization at the local shops and got from the rains that fell in the village on the day”

Mrs Sibanda told The Chronicles at the homestead, “They wanted to change clothes and Sarah then ordered the little ones out of the hut. A few minutes later, the hut was struck by lightning. We could have lost all the children.”

Precious said she was thrown out of the house before the lightning struck, all she remembers is seeing the hut on fire when lying outside. She said Precious did not sustain any injury and is back at school. The hut was razed to the ground by a raging fire after the lightning strike.

Sarah’s father, Mr. Sibanda, narrated how he and the neighbors destroyed a section of the wall to retrieve the bodies of the teenage girls to prevent them from being burnt to ashes.

“The hut where the children were struck by lightning belongs to my son, and Bongiwe is my granddaughter, while Sarah’s is my last born child. As I ran to my son’s homestead, I knew that the girls were already dead,” he said. “No one survived such a lightning strike in the hut. Precious was lying outside, screaming for help and calling Sarah and Bongiwe to get out of the hut.’

“The door was on fire, so I started destroying the wall with a pick. We managed to pull out the bodies of the children through destroyed wall. I have never seen such a horrific scene in my life. I’m so heart broken,’ said Mr. Sibanda. The family lost everything that was in the hut, including identity documents, blankets and food.

Matabeleland North Provincial police spokesman, Inspector Glory Banda, could not be drawn to comment on the incident saying his office was yet to officially get a report of what transpired.

Meanwhile, the family is appealing for assistance with clothing, food and blanket, as all they had were destroyed in the fire. They can be reached on 0775013365.