**Mozambique: Lightning strikes kill seven in Sofala**

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At least seven people have died in the central Mozambican province of Sofala as a result of lightning strikes during the current rainy season, which started last October.

According to the administrator of Nhamatanda district, Adamo Ossumane, cited by Radio Mozambique, in addition to the deaths, the lightning strikes burnt down ten houses in the villages of Metuchira, Bebedo and Chirassicua.

“The situation is worrying and lightning strikes have become a constant threat in recent days”, he said.

On the other hand, according to a report unveiled by the Mozambican relief agency, the National Disaster Management Institute (INGD), assessing the period from 1 October to 8 January, at least 44 people have died during the current rainy season.

Nineteen of these deaths took place in the central province of Zambezia.

“Lightning strikes are the main cause of death killing 28 people, followed by the collapse of walls which caused 13 deaths. Three deaths were recorded as a result of drowning”, reads the report.

The rains and heavy winds, across the country, have affected an estimated 19,000 people.

49 people were injured during the storms, while 718 houses were destroyed and over 1,600 houses were damaged.

The INGD document added that 139 classrooms were destroyed. This affected 3,900 pupils and 42 teachers. The storms also affected eight health units and destroyed 88 kilometres of road.