



Lightning Strikes 4 Dead

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Ndola

THREE women and a six-month-old baby in Ndola died instantly on Thursday when lightning struck them as they were returning from their fields in Kaniki area.

One woman who survived suffered injuries on her legs and was rushed to Ndola Central Hospital (NCH) where she was admitted.

According to the survivor, Selita Mudila, lightning claimed the lives of her three colleagues and a six-month-old baby on Thursday evening after they sought refuge in a maize field shelter around 15:30 hours when it suddenly began to rain.

Mrs Mudila, 51, of Kawama township who sustained burns and a deep cut on her left thigh, was only discharged yesterday from NCH female surgical ward where she was admitted on Thursday night.

She named her three deceased colleagues as Regina Ngweyi, Agness Kotakota-Lubelenga, Rhoda Kapaya, all housewives, and a baby girl, Chola.

An eyewitness, Beauty Ilunga who rushed to the burning shelter after lightning struck, said that she found the charred bodies in the shelter.

"Regina died in a sleeping position, Agness died while kneeling and holding her baby as if she was praying and Rhoda also died kneeling as if she was also praying to God," Mrs Ilunga said at the Evangelical Church in Kawama Township where funeral gathering was being held.

The three women were members of the same church who had maize fields in Kaniki area.

The bodies of the three housewives and the baby are lying the NCH mortuary awaiting burial.

Mrs Mudila explained that the women used to own their own separate maize fields in Kaniki area near Sakania.

They had started off from the fields around 15:00 hours for their homes in Kawama township when the

tragedy happened.

It was after they had walked for less than 30 minutes when it started raining, forcing them to seek refuge in a grass-thatched shelter in one of the fields near the road.

"It was while we were in the shelter that lightning struck. Up to now, I do not know how I found myself outside the shelter where my three friends and the baby died instantly.

"I was found by a friend who also has a field in the same area who happened to have been left behind because she cycles to and from her field," Mrs Mudila narrated from her Kawama home.

Mrs Ilunga, who carried the lightning survivor home on her bicycle after quenching the fire with the help of a 'Good Samaritan' said she was surprised to see heavy smoke and fire coming from a grass-thatched shelter on the roadside.

"I knew that something was wrong and my fears were confirmed by the conduct of Mrs Mudila who was behaving as if she was a demon-possessed person," Mrs Ilunga said.

Mrs Ilunga, who is also a Kawama resident, said that at this point Mrs Mudila lifted her dress and started asking her about the burns on her legs.

She said that after taking the survivor to her home she reported the deaths to Chifubu police station.

Police later picked up the bodies and took them to NCH mortuary.

Kawama Evangelical Church elder, Willard Mpanga, said the church was shocked at the sudden death of its members.

"We have decided to hold the funeral in the church because we cannot manage to split ourselves between three funeral houses. We are now making burial arrangement with the help of the family members who are still learning about this tragedy," Mr Mpanga said.

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