

At Least 15 Mozambicans Killed By Crocodiles

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At least 15 people were killed in Mozambique over the past three months while searching for food after heavy summer rains washed away their crops, television reports said Tuesday.

TVM public broadcaster reported that the victims fell foul of crocodiles while searching for food in the Shire river in Morrumbala district, Zambezia province. The Shire is a tributary of the mighty Zambezi river.

Their deaths were linked to growing hunger in some resettlement areas, where the victims of the annual flooding along the Zambezi had been relocated.

Food tends to be scarce in the relocation areas that are situated on higher ground. The displaced rely on handouts from the authorities.

While wait for the floodwaters to recede from their land so that they can resume cultivating crops, some people slip back to the crocodile-infested rivers to scavenge for underwater plants Zambezia provincial agriculture director Mahomed Vala was quoted as saying that the crocodile population in the area was growing and that the authorities were unable to prevent the attacks on humans.

"Currently. the authorities are doing everything possible to reduce the number of crocodiles by giving firearms and training to local people to deal with the situation. We've given three firearms in Morrumbala alone," Vala said.

The hunger is not exclusive to Morrumbala, a district of more than 300,000 inhabitants.

Pockets of hunger have been reported across the central and north regions.

In Nampula province, more than 50,000 people are reported to be short of food in the wake of the floods and to be relying on roots and fruits found in rivers for nourishment.

Floods caused by heavy rains cause widespread destruction and loss of life each year in southern Africa.

Mozambique is particularly hard hit. Apart from the lives lost in swirling floodwaters and cholera outbreaks related to flooding, each year people are killed in crocodiles attacks, though rarely in such high numbers.

Source : Sapa-dpa /rm/ks

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