



## Protection Alert: Rise in Violence in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique

23 June 2025

*The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) issues this Protection Alert to highlight the situation in Cabo Delgado and neighboring provinces in Mozambique, where violent extremism and active conflict, aggravated by successive cyclones, have eroded the protection of civilians. Since 2017, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in Cabo Delgado have waged violent campaigns against civilians, committing widespread human rights abuses, causing mass displacements, and fracturing communities.*

According to OCHA's recent Access Snapshot, May 2025 saw the sharpest rise in violence in Cabo Delgado since June 2022, with over 134,000 people affected through 61 security incidents<sup>1</sup>. Over the past several weeks, more than 25,000 people have been forced to flee due to fresh attacks in different districts, including Muidumbe, Macomia, and Ancuabe.<sup>2</sup> Attacks are also occurring across an increasingly extensive geographic area, evidenced by the April 2025 attack in neighboring Niassa province, further hindering the ability of humanitarian actors to respond. In addition, road movements have become increasingly inaccessible due to rising insecurity. Humanitarian actors have faced ambushes and looting, hindering timely delivery of life-saving assistance to conflict-affected communities.

In recent months, NSAGs have doubled down on their tactic of committing spectacular violence against civilians, staging public executions (including beheadings), looting and burning villages, and abducting women, men, girls and boys, with reports indicating that children are deliberately targeted for abduction<sup>3</sup>. NSAGs also continue using improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Many families who had returned home are now forced to flee once again. During displacement, families risk separation and people lose their civil documentation, as well as their housing, land, and livelihoods. In addition, these attacks lead to acute psychological distress and trauma. People with specific needs, including older people and people with disabilities, are at heightened risk and often lack access to services and assistance. Women and girls contend with an elevated risk of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) by NSAGs, increased intimate partner violence during displacement, and sexual exploitation and abuse when trying to access humanitarian assistance. In addition, more than 60% of IDPs and returnees report lacking some or all of their documents, which were lost or left behind during flight. Without civil documentation, affected people are effectively barred from access to basic services and are at heightened risk of rights violations, including risk of limits on freedom of movement, risk of arbitrary detention, and risk of discrimination and stigmatization for being perceived as being part of the NSAG.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/mozambique/mozambique-access-snapshot-cabo-delgado-province-31-may-2025>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-new-displacement-and-funding-squeeze-intensify-mozambique-crisis>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mozambique/en/press-releases/unicef-mozambique-statement-increasing-violence-against-and-abduction-children-cabo>

Of the estimated more than 600,000 displaced people, approximately half of those affected are children, and most displaced households are headed by women, underscoring the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable. In addition, around 39% live in one of the 118 IDP sites.<sup>4</sup> Many of the sites lack basic infrastructure, resources, and protection safeguards, often leading to tension and conflict between displaced people and host communities. In many sites, women and girls have to travel long distances due to lack of water, exposing them to the risk of gender-based violence. For the above reasons, many displaced people feel driven to return to their district of origin to escape the difficult conditions in the areas of displacement. Even among the estimated more than 700,000 individuals<sup>5</sup> who have returned to their districts of origin, some remain displaced within these districts or face barriers rebuilding their lives, including accessing essential protection services, especially outside of the urban centers. The lack of secure access to land and housing is particularly acute for returnees, exacerbates protection risks, perpetuates cycles of instability, and jeopardizes the sustainability of durable solutions for IDPs.

While IDPs and returnees have *de jure* access to national protection services, in practice, these services are structurally limited and not always available in hard-to-reach areas. In addition, severe funding shortages have forced humanitarian organizations to scale back or suspend essential protection services.

Mozambique is facing a relentless “triple crisis” of conflict, cyclones, and drought. Since December 2024, three consecutive cyclones—Chido in December, Dikeledi in January, and Jude in March—have devastated shelters, washed away crucial roads, and displaced tens of thousands. It is estimated that since last December, more than 1.4 million people have been affected<sup>6</sup>. In Cabo Delgado Province, these cyclones affected nearly 300,000 people, many of whom were already displaced by the conflict. In the provinces of Nampula and Zambezia, over 80,000 homes were damaged<sup>7</sup>. Meanwhile, a prolonged drought since mid-2024, especially in central Mozambique, has destroyed subsistence harvests, pushing families into acute food insecurity and prompting them to engage in harmful coping mechanisms. As of March 2025, approximately 4.9 million people in Mozambique were experiencing acute food insecurity—a record high driven by the combined effects of global warming and ongoing conflict, reflecting severe pressures on livelihoods and escalating humanitarian needs and protection risks.<sup>8</sup>

Increased and geographically expanding NSAG violence, the cumulative impacts of successive cyclones, prolonged drought, and critical funding shortfalls have pushed civilians, especially women, children, older people, and people with disabilities, into an increasingly untenable situation of vulnerability and risk. There is an urgent need for donors and partners to restore and expand funding for life-saving protection interventions, strengthen local response capacities, and prioritize the provision of rapid assistance. With the Government having laid the groundwork for improved protection, solutions, and coordination through the adoption of a policy on the management of internal displacement and its Action Plan, immediate

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<sup>4</sup> <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/mozambique-mobility-tracking-assessment-round-22-april-2025?close=true>

<sup>5</sup> <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/mozambique-mobility-tracking-assessment-round-22-april-2025?close=true>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nrc.no/news/2025/june/mozambique-spiralling-hunger-crisis-and-violence-amid-collapsing-aid-budgets>

<sup>7</sup>

[https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data\\_Product/Main\\_media/20250325\\_ACAPS\\_Briefing\\_note\\_Mozambique\\_Tropical\\_Cyclone\\_Jude.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20250325_ACAPS_Briefing_note_Mozambique_Tropical_Cyclone_Jude.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>8</sup>

[https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ipcinfo/docs/COMBINED\\_IPC\\_Mozambique\\_Acute\\_Food\\_Insecurity\\_Oct2024\\_Mar2025\\_Snaps\\_hot\\_Portuguese.pdf](https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/COMBINED_IPC_Mozambique_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Oct2024_Mar2025_Snaps_hot_Portuguese.pdf)

action from all stakeholders is essential to prevent spiraling insecurity, increased protection risks, and diminishing prospects for durable solutions for displaced people.

In light of this protection crisis and its devastating impact on civilians, we call for the following:

- Cease all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- Unconditional humanitarian access and safe passage of civilians out of affected areas.
- Increase funding to ensure vital presence and response of protection actors and national protection services, particularly in some of the most affected and hard-to-reach areas.
- Provide civil documentation for displaced people (new and protracted) and returnees, facilitating the process through mobile caravans and simplified procedures.
- Promote equal access to all durable solutions options, including local integration, return, and relocation, ensuring that processes are voluntary, informed, safe, dignified, and sustainable.
- Provide assistance to affected children and their families, facilitate the safe return and community reintegration of children abducted by non-state armed groups, and guarantee their access to essential services.
- Adopt a “solutions from the start” approach, and accelerate the transition from displacement sites to a “villagization” sites approach, recognizing that an out-of-site environment is significantly more conducive to local integration of displaced people than in IDP sites.
- Actively engage communities to ensure their inclusion and participation in decisions and processes that affect their lives, and that their needs, views, and priorities inform humanitarian programming.

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