

10. MOZAMBIQUE

Humanitarian needs rise rapidly as insurgency intensifies



KEY FACTS

Population: **31.3 million**

1.3 million people in need of humanitarian aid (in Cabo Delgado)

900,000 facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

43% of children face chronic malnutrition

500,000 people internally displaced

153rd (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

110th (of 167 countries) for women's equality

154th (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

2/5 score for severity of access constraints

100% of funding received for 2020 Cabo Delgado Rapid Response Plan

PROBABILITY

6 HUMAN THREAT

6 NATURAL THREAT

IMPACT

7 CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

8 EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

Rapidly escalating conflict in northern Mozambique is the key factor that has pushed the country not just onto Watchlist for the first time, but straight into the list's top ten countries of most concern.

An insurgency broke out in the northern Cabo Delgado province in late 2018 and has intensified markedly in 2020, triggering a rapid increase in violence, civilian harm and internal displacements. The number of people in need has nearly doubled for 2021 compared to early 2020. This poorly understood violence will certainly persist into 2021. Moreover, the country is still struggling to recover from two cyclones that struck the country in 2019 and damaged critical infrastructure such as health facilities. Conflict, natural disasters, and COVID-19 are all likely to continue to harm livelihoods and exacerbate food insecurity in 2021.

"Violence that emerged in northern Mozambique in 2017 has become bolder and more violent in the ensuing years. What started as hit and run looting with bladed weapons has turned into the organization of complex, coordinated assaults with the use of guns and mortars. 2020 has seen significant population centers in Cabo Delgado taken and held for a period of months, and the violence is growing and spreading across the north of the country leading to increased displacement. Following a sharp escalation in violence in early 2020, the IRC has been closely watching the situation."

- Edmond Suluku

Director of People and Operations in Emergencies,
IRC Emergencies and Humanitarian Action Unit



Above: Makhuwa family in Nampula, Mozambique [WikiCommons](#)

HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Displacements and attacks on civilians will continue to rise as the insurgency grows in Cabo Delgado.** Since March 2020 in particular, violence has intensified and armed groups' are increasingly able to occupy population centers for extended periods of time. The situation in Cabo Delgado is still opaque and reflects decades of perceived marginalization and under-investment in the region, which remains Mozambique's poorest despite hosting massive energy resources. At the same time, at least one armed group operating in Cabo Delgado claims to be part of Islamic State's Central Africa Province. The crisis has forced over 500,000 people to leave their homes and the number of IDPs has more than quadrupled during 2020 ([OCHA](#)). The conflict is affecting an area that has historically been under-developed relative to the rest of Mozambique, and where Cyclone Kenneth caused major damage to road, medical and other infrastructure and created significant humanitarian needs. 36% of health facilities in Cabo Delgado are damaged or destroyed, while several of the most affected districts do not have a single functional facility ([OCHA](#)). The conflict has exposed women and children to greater risks of exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence and forced recruitment ([OCHA](#)). Displacements are likely to continue growing in 2021 given repeated attacks on civilians by armed groups and deportations of those fleeing by neighbors like Tanzania.
- ▶ **Conflict and restrictions imposed by the security forces are limiting efforts to reach people in need.** Many humanitarian actors have pulled out of smaller towns in Cabo Delgado due to the rising insecurity. They are instead focusing their activities in major population centers that are receiving growing numbers of IDPs. Meanwhile, humanitarians' ability to reach vulnerable populations is constrained by both poor road infrastructure and the Mozambique authorities' restrictions on movement along some routes ([ACAPS](#)).
- ▶ **Climate change is compounding the risks facing Mozambique.** When Cyclones Idai and Kenneth struck Mozambique in March and April 2019, they caused massive damage. Dozens of medical facilities were damaged and hundreds of thousands of people were left homeless, many for extended periods ([ACAPS](#)). Kenneth was the strongest cyclone to hit the continent of Africa and, highly unusually, it was the second to affect Mozambique within a single cyclone season. It was also the first to make landfall in the country's far north. The cyclones of 2019 suggest that climate change is increasing the risk of Mozambique experiencing a major natural shock.
- ▶ **Food insecurity will likely emerge as a growing concern in 2021 due both to the conflict and the impact of COVID-19.** Limited data makes it difficult to assess the spread of COVID-19 in Mozambique but the pandemic is presumably affecting livelihood activities as it has in other countries. Moreover, armed group attacks are disrupting farming, fishing and other key activities in Cabo Delgado, making it even harder for families to afford enough food. Over 900,000 people in Cabo Delgado and its two neighboring provinces, Niassa and Nampula, are experiencing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity ([OCHA](#)).

THE IRC IN MOZAMBIQUE

The IRC is not currently present in Mozambique but we monitor and classify ongoing emergencies to inform decisions about if and when to enter a new location. As part of the IRC's Strategy 100 we commit to entering places where there is conflict and organized violence driving humanitarian need; there is unmet humanitarian need and we can add value; and there is funding forecasted to deliver programs and ensure financial stability. To read more about the IRC and our Strategy 100, visit [Rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org).

