



EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

PLACES WITHOUT PEACE: CABO DELGADO, MOZAMBIQUE

Over 900,000 displaced people, a third of them children; an increasingly complex humanitarian crisis; extreme weather events; and an extremely fragile health situation. In Cabo Delgado province, the entire population is affected by conflict on a daily basis, making even basic health care very difficult to provide, impacting people's mental health and exacerbating gender-based violence.

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For the past five years, people living in northern Mozambique have been victims of the conflict raging in Cabo Delgado province, a territory that holds great "appeal" for many thanks to the gas deposits found off its coastline and the ruby fields and graphite deposits located in more inland areas. Guerrilla warfare broke out in the northernmost parts of the province in 2017, but in recent months has expanded into the southern part as well. Despite the intervention of foreign military forces – including those of the Rwandan government, the Southern African Development Community states and the European Union – in areas considered safe until a few months ago, where displaced people therefore sought refuge, the humanitarian crisis began to deteriorate further in the latter half of 2022, with an escalation of armed clashes. This spurred the local population to organize self-defense teams to carry out village patrols and set up checkpoints along the main roads.

According to the latest data, some 946,508 displaced people live in the province, including 520,579 children and 302,000 individuals in areas where armed clashes make it difficult for humanitarian aid to be delivered.¹

Climate change is also making itself felt in Mozambique, and forecasts do not bode well. After a poor rainy season, three to five cyclones² – frequent and destructive phenomena in the province – are expected to potentially develop in the December to April season. This volatile situation directly impacts food security, with shortages exacerbating the health and nutritional conditions of the population, especially women and children. People in the area are also affected by infectious diseases including cholera and measles as well as the "common killer diseases" – malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS; due to

the difficulties health facilities face in providing basic services, the health of mothers and children is also imperiled. Doctors with Africa CUAMM has been working in Mozambique since 1978 and in the Cabo Delgado province, specifically, since 2014. Over the years we have learned to adapt our interventions to the crises that impact these communities, shifting from an approach focused solely on development to one that tackles emergencies as well, but never forsaking our long-term vision.

CUAMM is present in 6 of the Cabo Delgado province's 16 districts as well as in the city of Pemba. Our program seeks to respond to the complexity of the current crisis by using a multisectoral approach aimed at indigenous and displaced populations. To ensure basic health services for the communities that live in the most remote locations, we have adopted a dual approach, setting up special field tents to provide basic health services close to IDP camps as well as mobile clinics run in partnership with health authorities.

The insecurity in the area has an enormous impact on the mental health of local populations; tragically, gender-based violence is also very widespread. Our program places special focus on both of these areas, providing dedicated services to those in need.

In the Balama and Montepuez districts, which have received hundreds of thousands of displaced people in recent years, bringing the system to collapse, CUAMM provides maternity support to the Montepuez hospital and 18 health centers. Finally, epidemic prevention plays a key role in these settings, so we run a community support project to teach good practice to avoid outbreaks of diseases like cholera and diarrhea.

NOTES

¹ OCHA, July 2022 Report.

² INAM, Monitoria Climática de Moçambique, Boletim n. 32, November 2022.