



EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

GBV AND MHPSS RESPONSE IN CABO DELGADO

In the province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, which is beset by conflict and persistent humanitarian and structural crises, a CUAMM experience combines operational research and field actions to provide psychological support (MHPSS) and integrated clinical and legal assistance to victims of gender-based violence (GBV).

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AMIDST CONFLICTS AND EMERGENCIES

For 7 years, the province of Cabo Delgado has been a conflict zone, with about 834,304 internally displaced people¹, widespread insecurity, economic crisis, and serious human rights violations. In this context of displacement and conflict, gender-based violence is among the major safety problems. This is why UNHCR and CUAMM joined other local partners to conduct a series of assessments to better understand the different forms of gender-based violence – physical, psychological, sexual, and economic – and identify the most vulnerable groups, risk factors, and response capacities according to global standards.

RISK FACTORS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The assessments made were based on the methodology described in “A Rapid Assessment of the Gender-based Violence: *Situation and Response in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique*”² and developed by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine with UNHCR. It used a qualitative analysis method based on collecting data and information obtained through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The GBV safety audits confirmed alarming levels of risk, particularly among displaced women and girls, who are the most vulnerable groups. Adolescent girls, families with single women, sex workers, and women and girls with disabilities were identified as most at-risk. Gender discrimination, cultural customs and practices, and the increased socio-economic vulnerability of women and girls during displacement exacerbate the danger. This is a complex situation worsened by the unsafe conditions of shelters, the limited participation of women in community decision-making, and the presence of armed people.

NOTES

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/0fac553a-f76a-4aac-847b-f8aaa551a243/UNHCR%20Mozambique%20%E2%80%93%20Cabo%20Delgado%20ID%20P%20Response%20July%202023%20%28English%29.pdf>

INTERVENTIONS IN THE FIELD

Based on the results obtained from assessments, CUAMM designed several interventions, from 2021 to the present, to mitigate GBV risks and improve responses for survivors, actively involving communities, raising public awareness, and addressing the urgent need to provide integrated services. This aims to ensure safe and inclusive access and psychosocial support for survivors and people at risk of GBV and SEA (*Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*). Today there are 12 supported safe spaces in Cabo Delgado that offer care, psychosocial support, and information for other services related to safety and health needs. There were 900 people supported in 2023 for GBV or MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support). The program includes legal assistance for survivors, in coordination with government legal services, implemented through a partnership with the Mozambican Muleide Association, which is committed to promoting gender equality and women's rights and providing them with legal assistance. Over 60 women have been supported and legally assisted to date. Since the beginning of 2023, more than 60,000 people have been involved in awareness-raising interventions on prevention and risk mitigation, because community stigma and discrimination are major deterrents for women in seeking support.

CRITICAL ISSUES AND FUTURE ACTIONS

There is still much to be done to ensure a comprehensive response to internally displaced peoples and host communities. Some of the priorities identified are working on MHPSS, considering that among the greatest difficulties are scarce psychological and social support services and inadequate follow-up of reported cases; legal support for survivors; enhancing the capacities and skills of government and community players to promote gender equality and prevent, mitigate, and respond to this problem.

² <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/media/56321>