



CENTRO DE INTEGRIDADE PÚBLICA

Anticorrupção - Transparência - Integridade

Analysis of the security, social and economic situation of the returnees in Cabo Delgado

Maputo, August 2024

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More than 600,000 people have returned to their villages of origin in the north of Cabo Delgado, after years of living as war displaced people. In their areas of origin, the returnees are living in ruins. They face hunger and unemployment, and their security situation is precarious, provided by foreign forces and militias.

Maputo, August 2024

Índice

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Security situation.....	7
2.1 The problem of dependence on foreign forces and on the Makonde militia.....	7
2.2 Militias protect the Makonde “kingdom”.....	8
2.3 Militia accumulates roles of police, armed forces and intelligence.....	9
2.4 Integration of the militia into the Armed Forces and expansion to more districts.....	10
2.5 Rwanda helps to create “islands of security” in the region under the influence of the gas projects.....	11
2.6 Tanzanian troops in Nangade to defend their strategic interests.....	13
3. Social situation.....	14
3.1 Hundreds of thousands are living in ruins and with broken families.....	14
3.2 Challenge of reintegration of the returnees.....	17
3.3 Hundreds of orphans in Mocímboa da Praia without support.....	17
3.4 Role of ADIN in reintegration of the returnees	18
3.5 Reconstruction of public and private infrastructures.....	19
4. Economic situation.....	21
4.1 Difficult to build resilience, with hunger, high cost of living and unemployment.....	21
4.2 High costs of transport to return to the areas of origin.....	21
4.3 Shortage of basic goods in the shops.....	22
4.4 Illicit charges make goods more expensive.....	24
4.5 Economic activities affected by the insurgency.....	24
4.6 Access to basic services.....	24
4.7 Humanitarian assistance limited and subject to illicit charges.....	25
5. Government reconstruction plans without significant impact on the life of the returnees.....	26
5.1 Stabilisation Programme implemented by UNDP.....	27
5.2 The absence of the Government in the zones of return and the lack of an assistance programme for the returnees...28	
6. Conclusion.....	29
7. References.....	31

1. Introduction

The districts in the north of Cabo Delgado recorded improvements in their security situation as from the last quarter of 2023, as the direct result of the deployment of foreign troops from Rwanda and from some countries of SADC to help fight against the insurgency¹. The improvement in security, along with the precarious conditions in which the internally displaced people are living in the definitive resettlement centres opened in the districts of southern Cabo Delgado and in the neighbouring province of Nampula, ensured that more than 600,000 internally displaced people hastened to return to their areas of origin in the north of Cabo Delgado, according to data from the International Organisation of Migration (IOM)².

In response to the conflict in Cabo Delgado, the Government has adopted, in addition to measures to boost security, socio-economic initiatives, including approval of the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan for the Zones affected by Terrorism - PRCD (2021-2024)³ and the Programme of Resilience and Integrated Development of Northern Mozambique (PREDIN)⁴, both of which are being coordinated by the Agency for the Integrated Development of the North (ADIN)⁵.

The effectiveness of the Government's plans to improve the security and socio-economic conditions of the returnees in their areas of origin – devastated by insurgent attacks – has not yet been deeply studied and debated.

However, the security situation deteriorated as from December 2023 with attacks by the insurgents registered essentially in the districts of central and southern Cabo Delgado, causing a new wave of internally displaced people.

The present study was undertaken between January and May 2024, with field work between 4 and 14 March in Pemba city and in Mueda, Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts (where internally displaced people had returned), seeking to examine the security and socio-economic situation. The study mapped the main governmental and non-governmental actors who support the returnees in Cabo Delgado and analysed the security, social and economic conditions in which the war displaced people find themselves.

Methodologically, the study is the result of field research undertaken in Pemba city and in the district capitals and some villages in Mueda, Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts, using interviews with representatives of Government institutions, leaders of the main religious denominations, economic agents, members of the Defence and Security Forces, and non-participatory observation of the reality on the ground.

Government representatives interviewed included the Permanent Secretary of Mueda district, the administrator of Mocímboa da Praia district, the director of the District Planning and Infrastructure Services (SDPI) of Palma, and the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Northern Development Agency.

Members of the Local Force, agents of the Rapid Intervention Unit and of the Border Police, soldiers of the Mozambican armed forces, the Rwanda Defence Force, and the SADC Military Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), as well as leaders of mosques and of Christian churches, were interviewed anonymously. Given the sensitivity of the topics broached, the identity of the interviewees was kept secret with the exception of the Government representatives.

In terms of the sample, types of sampling by convenience were used in a combined way, particularly in the interviews with the internally displaced people who have returned to their areas of origin, by interviewing the people resident in the

1 There was also the training and stationing of various units of the defence and security forces to step up security in Cabo Delgado, and the creation and support for people's militias such as the Local Force and the Naparama.

2 The International Organisation of Migration estimates that by December 2023, a total of 632,408 people had returned to their places of origin, which is more than 60% of the 1,030,000 displaced people. The data are available at <https://dtm.iom.int/mozambique> (consulted on 13 March 2024).

3 República de Moçambique (2021). Plano de Reconstrução de Cabo Delgado das Zonas Afectadas pelo Terrorismo (2021-2024). Available at <https://adin.gov.mz/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/PRCD-Plano-de-Reconstrucao-de-Cabo-Delgado.pdf> (consulted on 13 March 2021)

4 Resolução n. 31/2022: Aprova o Programa de Resiliência e Desenvolvimento Integrado do Norte de Moçambique, abreviadamente designado PREDIN, B.R 3 August 2022, 1st Series — Number 149.

5 Republic of Mozambique (12 March 2020). Communique of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

most accessible villages (geographically and in terms of security). The study also resorted to collecting the life stories of returnees, documentary analysis, observation and bibliographical research. It also used snowball sampling, in which, starting from one interview, the interviewee suggests one or more people who, in his opinion, could also be relevant for the study.

The main limitation on the study was the difficulty in access to villages distant from the district capitals of Mueda, Mocimboa da Praia and Palma due to lack of security. A further constraint was the impossibility of undertaking field studies in the villages of Muidumbe district. They had been selected for the field work, but because of the deterioration in security between January and February 2024, they were excluded.

The report is structured into three parts, subdivided into sections. The first part is the introduction, which presents the context, the objective and the methodology of the study. The second part presents the results of the study and is subdivided into three sections. The first section presents and analyses the security situation in Cabo Delgado province, with the main focus on the districts in the north of Cabo Delgado which were the object of the field study (Mueda, Mocimboa da Praia and Palma). The analysis includes mapping the main security actors, the role which they have played in protecting the returnees, and the prevailing security challenges. The second section analyses the social situation of the displaced people and the returnees, dealing with housing conditions, access to public services such as education, health, infrastructures, and the emergency and development aid they have received. The third and last section of the second part deals with the economic situation of the returnees, from the prices of the products in the basic basket, access to food, and the main economic activities practiced. The third and last part of the study presents the main conclusions and specific recommendations to the various actors involved in responding to the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado.

Fig. 1. Thousands of young IDPs don't have the opportunity to carry out economic activities and spend most of their time playing games. Photo taken in the Maringanha neighbourhood, Pemba city.



2. Security situation

2.1 The problem of dependence on foreign forces and on the Makonde militia

This section maps the main security actors, the role they play in protecting the returnees and the prevailing security challenges.

The general security situation in Cabo Delgado remains precarious, despite the improvements in the districts north of the Messalo river (the Muidumbe highlands, Mueda, Nangade, Mocímboa da Praia and Palma) due to the presence of foreign forces from Rwanda and Tanzania and the militia of the Local Force. The insurgents who have been mounting attacks in the province since October 2017 continue to have military bases in the Cabo Delgado bush, particularly in the coastal region of Macomia and south of Mocímboa da Praia, near the mouth of the Messalo river. Between January and April 2024, the insurgents had at least one permanent base, known as Saina and at least five advanced positions and countless transit areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Active positions of insurgents in Cabo Delgado

Name of position	Likely location	Obs.
Base Saina	Located in the Namarussia forests, near the south bank of the Messalo river, 17 kms from Quiterajo	The situation may have changed slightly with the deployment of Rwandan troops to Macomia as of August 2024
Mussuru advanced position	Located in the Namarussia forests, near the south bank of the Messalo river, 17 kms from Quiterajo administrative post, in Macomia district	
Falluja advanced position	Located in the Nharide forests, 8 kms from Natugo.	
Gaza advanced position	Located near the Licualedii river, 12 kms from the Chai administrative post	
Kunamede advanced position	Located 8 kms east of Chai and 7 kms southeast of Litamanda	
Manica advanced position	Located 5 kms west of the Mucojo administrative post.	

Source: Compilation by the authors based on interviews with military sources

Faced with continued insurgent activities, the security of the communities living in the districts in the north of Cabo Delgado is guaranteed by foreign forces from Rwanda and Tanzania and by local militias, mostly drawn from the Maconde ethnic group. The presence of the government forces (police and military) in these districts is marginal and limited to protecting strategic undertakings (such as the port of Mocímboa da Praia and Mueda aerodrome) and high ranking figures such as the district administrators and the premises of the local governments.

At the entrances and exits of the district capitals there are fixed positions of the Government forces, with the presence of members of the protection police, of special units of the Rapid Intervention Police, namely the Rapid Intervention Force (UIR) and the Frontier Police (formerly the Frontier Guard), but these rarely undertake patrols, due to the history of ill-treatment, physical violence and looting of property by the police inside the communities. The population regards Mozambican soldiers as violent, with reports of murders, sexual abuse of women and physical assaults, among others.⁶

Patrolling the Mocímboa da Praia and Palma district capitals is guaranteed by the Rwandan forces, while in the town of Mueda, patrolling is done by the militias of the Local Force. In particular, in the Mocímboa da Praia district capital, the Mozambican police and military forces have been forbidden to patrol at night. This is a measure imposed by the

⁶ Information obtained from interviews with local leaders and other members of the community in Mocímboa da Praia town and Palma.

Government, in coordination with the Rwandan troops in early 2023⁷, after repeated cases of torture and murder of civilians by government forces.⁸

In general, it can be said that the relative security in the districts north of the Messalo River is thanks to the presence of foreign forces and militias of the Local Force, with the State playing a secondary role in guaranteeing security in its territory. This is making the security situation unsustainable in that the foreign forces may be withdrawn from Cabo Delgado by a decision of their respective governments, beyond the control of the Mozambican state. And, on the other hand, these forces are operating in areas limited to their own interests.

The TPDF (Tanzania People's Defense Force) are concentrated in the border area, along the Rovuma River, to prevent insurgents from crossing the border to carry out attacks in Tanzania. The troops of the Rwanda Defence Force are concentrated in the towns of Mocimboa da Praia and Palma and in the area of Afungi, to protect the gas projects of TotalEnergies (operator of Mozambique LNG). Finally, the Local Force is concentrated in the district capital and in the villages of Mueda and operates in the neighbouring districts, particularly villages inhabited mostly by people of the Makonde ethnic group, as detailed below.

2.2 Militias protect the Makonde "kingdom"

Mueda district, located in the highlands of the northwest of Cabo Delgado is the only district in the northern part of the province (north of the Messalo river) which has not suffered large scale attacks by the insurgents during the 7 years the conflict has lasted. Some villages in the east (bordering Muidumbe) and the south (bordering Montepuez) have been attacked, but they are a long way from the district capital. About 40 kilometres away, the towns of Namacande (the Muidumbe district capital) and Awase (in Mocimboa da Praia district) were attacked and temporarily occupied by the insurgents in 2020. But the heart of Mueda remains free of the insurgents.

Security in Mueda has a name. It is called the Local Force. This is a force of militias formed mostly by veterans of the National Liberation Struggle and their sons, almost all from the Makonde ethnic group. This is a popular militia that arose spontaneously from the veterans, resulting from the need to protect their homeland, Mueda.

The Local Force is a militia formed by an elite ethnic group, since the Makonde are the backbone of the Defence and Security Forces and also hold political and economic power. Since Mozambican independence, Makonde generals have held positions of command in various units of the Defence and Security Forces. This includes at least three Ministers of National Defence, Alberto Chipande, Filipe Nyusi and Atanasio Mtumuke; two general directors of the State Information and Security Service (SISE), Lagos Lidimo and Bernardo Lidimba; a general commander of the police, Bernardino Rafael; and a chief of staff of the Mozambican Armed Forces, Lagos Lidimo.

Hence one can understand why the Local Force benefits from support from the Government which has authorised it to use weapons of war, and has mobilised military support, including weaponry, uniforms, vehicles and other resources for use by the militia.

Government support for the Local Force can be understood in various ways, but the simplest is that Mueda has very important political and historical value for the ruling Frelimo Party, and so it is in the government's interest that it not be attacked. Just to have an idea of this importance, top ranking figures in the leadership of Frelimo and of the State, and who have been directly involved in fighting the insurgency, such as President Filipe Nyusi, the General Commander of the Police, Bernardino Rafael, former defence minister Atanásio M'tumuke, and the former director of the State Information and Security Service (SISE) Lagos Lidimo, were born in Mueda and have homes in the small town of Mueda.

⁷ Information obtained from interviews with local leaders in interviews held in Mocimboa da Praia town between 9 and 12 March 2023

⁸ Integrity Magazine (2023, 12 June) Agentes da UIR acusados de matar res civis em Mocimboa da Praia. Available at: <https://integritymagazine.co.mz/arquivos/12656> (consulted on 21 March 2024).

The protection of Mueda was in the interests of the State, of the Frelimo Party and of important figures in the State with the power to decide on the allocation of human, material and financial resources to respond to the conflict. Thus, given the weakness of the armed forces and the police stationed to fight the insurgency, but also the lack of trust in the government's forces from the local population, the Government has channeled some of the State's resources, including weaponry and money, into supporting the Local Force, and has also mobilised foreign support, notably from Uganda⁹ and eventually from Algeria¹⁰, to equip this militia .

The Ugandan government supported the Local Force with equipment, including uniforms and boots. The first uniforms worn by members of the Local Force, dark grey in colour, were offered by the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni. There is information that Uganda offered various other types of support which, due to their security nature, were not made public¹¹. As for the support from Algeria for the Local Force, this was announced during a presidential visit by Filipe Nyusi to Algeria, and there are no details about what has effectively been made available.

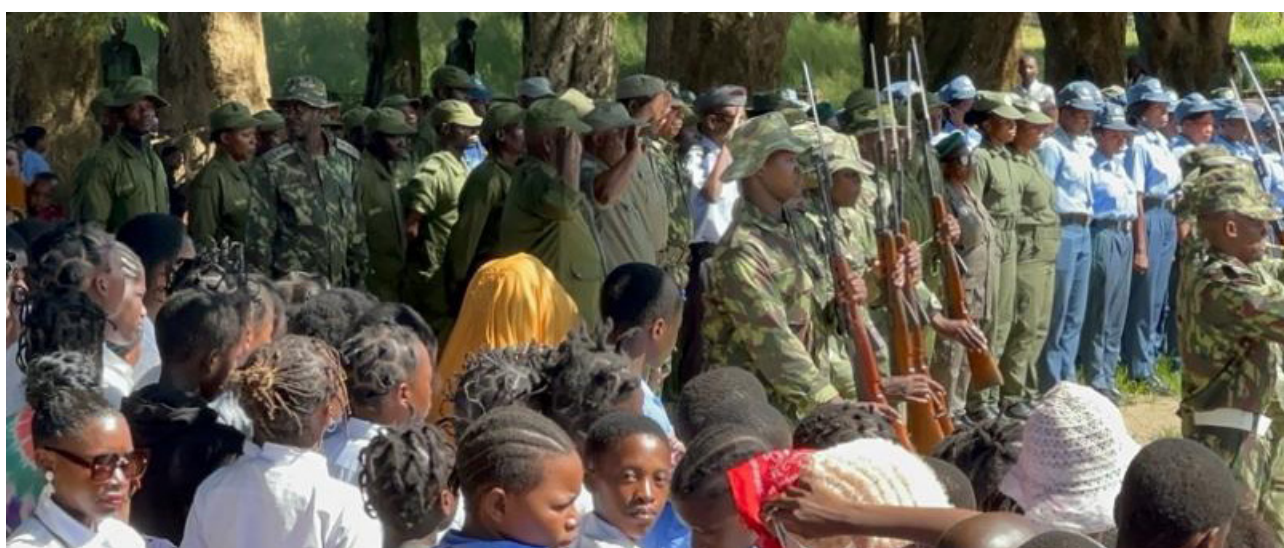
In addition to the figures indicated who are, or were active, during the Cabo Delgado military conflict, other figures with great influence in the State, such as former President Joaquim Chissano (whose wife Marcelina is a native of Mueda), former Defence Minister Alberto Chipande, deputy and former governor Raimundo Diomba, and the former member of the Frelimo Political Commission, Raimundo Pachinuapa, among others, have property in the town of Mueda.

Located on a plateau, the Mueda district capital has few entrances and exits (just four) and around it there are slopes of very difficult access. The geographical situation is indicated as one of the main factors that benefitted the work of the Local Force, to block the entry of insurgents into Mueda.

This does not mean that the Local Force is a well equipped militia – however, it is recognised by the State and benefits from government logistical support which the other militia, that arose in the south of Cabo Delgado in response to the insurgency, the Naparama, formed by members of the Makuwa ethnic group, does not have.

2.3 Militia accumulates roles of police, armed forces and intelligence

Fig.2: In this photo of a military parade in the town of Mueda, members of the Local Forces can be seen (dark green uniform without spots) integrating the various units of the Defence and Security Forces



9 The President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni made support available in the shape of military uniform for members of the Local Force, according to information obtained from interviews with members of the Local Force on 8 March 2024, in Mueda

10 RTP (2024, 3 March). Argélia vai prestar “apoio imediato” à força local – PR. Available at https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/argelia-vai-prestar-apoio-imediato-a-forca-local-pr_n1554860#google_vignette (consulted on 24 April 2024)

11 Nhamirre, B. (2022, 18 May). Ugandan soldiers in Cabo Delgado could add fuel to the fire. *ISS Today*. Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/ugandan-soldiers-in-cabo-delgado-could-add-fuel-to-the-fire> (consulted on 24 April 2024)

The Local Force accumulates the roles which should be performed by the military and police forces. In the town of Mueda, agents of the Local Force undertake regular controls day and night, they search persons and private premises, they detain suspects and hold them for as long as they deem necessary, before channelling them to the police authorities¹².

The Local Force puts checkpoints along the main roads, and their entrances and exits, as well as the villages of Mueda, where it orders vehicles and people to stop and searches them. It is not only at the entrance and exits of the towns, but also in the centre of Mueda town, and in the area of the main market along the EN381 road that the Local Force places checkpoints as from a particular time, orders vehicles to stop and inspects them. Traditionally, this is work for the Protection Police and the Traffic Police, but in Mueda it is being done by the militias of the Local Force.

The Local Force also plays a role traditionally allocated to soldiers, such as – organising and conducting military operations pursuing and fighting against the insurgents in the bush of Mueda district and the neighbouring districts where the population consists mostly of Macondes, namely Nangade, Muidumbe and Macomia. These are not merely defensive actions but also offensive operations such as identifying, pursuing and attacking the insurgents in their bases – at least in their forward and transit bases.

Sometimes, the operations of the Local Force are held jointly with the armed forces, but they can also be made by the militias on their own. The militias also gather information of operational importance and share it with the FADM and with the Rwandan forces, an activity which is done traditionally by the intelligence services.

Relations between the Local Force and the other Defence and Security Forces (particularly the FADM) are not always good. The members of the Local Force accuse the soldiers of lack of discipline, and even of stealing from the citizens and local traders of Mueda. Among the members of the Local Force, there is a belief that the soldiers organise robberies against the traders of Mueda town. That is why the soldiers are banned from patrolling in Mueda town. The soldiers are reacting with dissatisfaction to this situation, but given the political power of the leadership of the Local Force, there is not much the soldiers can do about this.

2.4 Integration of the militia into the Armed Forces and expansion to more districts

In late 2022, the Assembly of the Republic passed an amendment to the National Defence and Security Policy, under which the Local Force is included as part of the Defence and Security Forces¹³. This means that, in terms of command, the Local Force responds hierarchically to the Head of the General Staff of the FADM and, in the final instance, to the President of the Republic, as commander-in-chief of the FADM.

With integration into the Armed Forces, the State became legally responsible for the activity of the Local Force. That is, the State could be called on to answer for acts practised by the Local Force which harm the interests of private bodies. The Government also came to hold the legal power to mobilise and demobilise the members of the Local Force, as deemed relevant¹⁴.

The legalisation of the Local Force also allowed the group to benefit from remuneration of its members to the tune of 6,786.22 meticais a month, for each of its members. By mid-March 2024, the members of the Local Force had received remuneration corresponding to one month - December 2023 (paid in January 2024). By mid-March, they were still

¹² Information obtained from commanders of the Local Force interviewed in Mueda town on 8 March 2024.

¹³ A Voz de Cabo Delgado (16 December 2022), Parlamento legaliza Força Local, Available at <https://avoz.org/parlamento-legaliza-forca-local/> (consulted on 20 March 2024)

¹⁴ Gould, T. Queface, T. e Lima, F (20 February 2024). The Islamic State in Mozambique: The Cabo Delgado Conflict since 2021. Hudson Institute. Available at <https://www.hudson.org/islamic-state-mozambique-cabo-delgado-conflict-2021-tom-gould-tomas-queface-fernando-lima> (consulted on 20 March 2024)

waiting for the remuneration for January and February 2024¹⁵. There are no precise numbers on how many people are members of the Local Force, but they are estimated at between 1,500 and 2,000 people in the entire province, with the majority concentrated in the town and villages of Mueda.

The Local Force has also expanded to villages in the neighbouring districts, concentrated in villages where most of the residents are from the Makonde ethnic group. For example, in Mocímboa da Praia district, the Local Force takes responsibility for the security of the Mbau and Diaca administrative posts and other villages of the interior, where most of the inhabitants are Makondes. The same is happening in Macomia and the highlands of Muidumbe.

2.5 Rwanda helps to create “islands of security” in the region under the influence of the gas projects

While in Mueda and in the villages mostly inhabited by Makondes, security is primarily provided by the militia of the Local Force, in the neighbouring district of Mocímboa da Praia and in Palma district, the main providers of security are the *Rwanda Defence Force* and the *Rwanda National Police*, which have been stationed in the region since July 2021 to help combat terrorism and violent extremism.

The Rwandan forces have been praised, both locally and internationally, for their efficiency in fighting terrorism. In addition to having dislodged the insurgents from their bases, including the town of Mocímboa da Praia which was occupied for about a year, the Rwandans guarantee that in the areas where they are stationed attacks do not happen. This means that the population of the town of Mocímboa da Praia, for example, are saying that, if the Rwandan troops leave this town, they too (the population) will leave Mocímboa da Praia.

Thus people in Maputo or some other place far from Cabo Delgado, may have the impression that the Rwandan troops have brought security to Cabo Delgado. Indeed, the Government has said several times that the Rwandan troops have helped re-establish security in Cabo Delgado by more than 90%¹⁶.

The reality on the ground, however, shows that the security situation in the districts where the Rwandan troops have been stationed does not correspond to the Government’s description. The Rwandan troops provide more of what seems to be static security, in which its soldiers and police are stationed at strategic points to watch the access to the towns of Mocímboa da Praia and Palma and to the Afungi Peninsula, to guarantee that these places of great strategic importance for the gas companies are not attacked by the insurgents.

The term “static security” implies that the operator should stay at one point, and that one of its main functions is to carry out frequent patrols of the area it is watching to see whether there are any suspicious activities. That is what the Rwandan troops are doing in Palma and Mocímboa da Praia districts. They patrol the towns and the surrounding villages to seek any intrusive insurgents. But this work is limited to the towns of Palma and Mocímboa da Praia and the Afungi Peninsula because of their strategic value to the liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects (GNL). In Palma there are banks and public services of great value, and the town is located just 10 km from the site of the LNG operations. Mocímboa da Praia is located about 80 kilometres south of Afungi, but it has a port and airport of great importance for the gas projects. Its occupation by the insurgents in 2020-2021 showed how important and vital this town is to ensure the protection of Palma.

The immediate reflex of this type of static security, provided by the Rwandan forces and focused on the gas projects, is that the rural villages in the same districts where the Rwandan troops were stationed, are targets of frequent insurgent attacks so that in the classification of risk level in the first quarter of 2024, Mocímboa da Praia was considered as a high risk district, with the exception of Mocímboa da Praia town (see figure 2).

15 Members of the Local Force interviewed on 8 March 2024, in Mueda

16 LUSA (2023, 20 December). Segurança restabelecida em 90% de Cabo Delgado. *DW*. Available at <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/seguranca-restabelecida-em-90-de-cabo-delgado/a-67774170> (consulted on 12 April 2024)

Fig. 3. *Distribution of the various military forces and the level of security in the districts of Cabo Delgado, May 2024*



Source: SAMIM, May 2024

In the last quarter of 2023 and in the first quarter of 2024, the insurgents attacked many villages in the south of Mocímboa da Praia district. The Rwandan troops, who are stationed in the district capital, were not able to prevent or to repel in good time the attacks in the area allocated to them. The most prominent attacks took place in Naquitengue village, in September 2023, in which at least 11 people were killed. The Islamic State claimed the attack and alleged that the victims were Christians¹⁷. In January 2024, the village of Ntotwe, along the main road from Awasse to Mocímboa da Praia¹⁸ and about 20 km from Mocímboa da Praia town, and the village of Chimbanga¹⁹ were attacked. In both cases, some citizens were killed, houses burnt and property looted.

This situation showed the security provided by the Rwandan forces is not very effective, at least outside Mocímboa da Praia town. As a result the people resident in Mocímboa da Praia town cannot go for more than 10 kms outside the town to farm in the so-called production zones (low-lying areas along the Mwela and Messalo rivers, villages of Mbau, and Merere), because they do not feel safe. The insurgents are also active on the islands near Mocímboa da Praia, which prevents the local population from leaving to fish on the islands²⁰.

The Government, from local to central level, is aware of the situation of insecurity in Mocímboa da Praia, to the point of excluding a priori certain coastal villages of Mocímboa da Praia from the voter registration for the elections of October 2024, due to the lack of security. These villages, according to the map of voter registration posts of the Electoral Administration Technical Secretariat (STAE), include Mocímboa da Praia coastal villages, such as Ulo, Naquitengue, Calungo, Marere, Lucheti, Nkituque, and Makulo.

It can thus be concluded that what we have in the area under the influence of the gas projects are “islands of security”, in which stability has been created in particular territories, such as Palma and Mocimboa da Praia towns, and the Afungi Peninsula, while in the rest of the province, including Mocímboa da Praia district, the attacks are continuing to affect the local population.

The existence of “islands of security” is dangerous because it projects a false image of security in an entire area when, in

17 Catureira, A. (2023). Estado Islamico reivindica o massacre de 11 cristaos em Mocimboa da Praia. *Voz de America*. Available at <https://www.voaportugues.com/a/estado-islamico-reivindica-o-massacre-de-11-cristaos-em-mocimboa-da-praia/772063.html> (consulted on 11 April 2024).

18 Lusa (2024, 4 January). Cabo Delgado: Insurgentes voltam a atacar Mocimboa da Praia. *DW*. Available at <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/cabo-delgado-insurgentes-voltam-a-atacar-mocimboa-da-praia/a-67892955> (consulted on 12 April 2024)

19 Lusa (2024, 6 January). Cabo Delgado: Três mortos em ataque em Mocimboa da Praia. *DW*. Available at <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/cabo-delgado-três-mortos-em-novo-ataque-terrorista-próximo-de-mocimboa-da-praia/a-67906962> (consulted on 12 April 2024)

20 Sérgio Cipriano, Administrator of Mocímboa da Praia district, interviewed on 10 March 2024, in Mocímboa da Praia town.

fact, some zones are excluded. The people living in zones outside the ‘islands of security’ may feel discriminated against and become vulnerable to radicalisation and eventually to recruitment by the extremist groups.

However, one cannot expect that the Rwandan troops, with the main interest of protecting the gas projects, can guarantee security in the entire territory of Cabo Delgado. This should be the primary task of the Mozambican state, through the Mozambican Armed Forces (FADM) and other units of the security forces (police and intelligence services).

2.6 Tanzanian troops in Nangade to defend their strategic interests

The SAMIM troops stationed in Cabo Delgado in August 2021, were distributed in three districts, namely:

- **Macomia**, here a mechanised infantry battalion of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) was stationed;
- **Mueda**, here a mechanised infantry battalion of the Botswana Defense Force (BDF) was stationed;
- **Nangade**, here a light infantry battalion of the Tanzanian People’s Defence Force (TPDF) and a light infantry company of the Lesotho Defence Force were stationed.

In the case of the TPDF, their geographical distribution in Nangade district seeks to meet the strategic interests of Tanzania, of preventing the insurgents from crossing the Rovuma river to attack villages and towns in southern Tanzania. In October 2020, the insurgents who operate in Cabo Delgado attacked southern Tanzania, during the campaign for the presidential elections, causing death and destruction²¹.

By stationing troops in Nangade, the Tanzanian government intended to fight the insurgents in Mozambique before they again attacked Tanzanian soil.

A further motive justifying the presence of Tanzanian troops in Nangade is the presence of Rwandan troops in the neighbouring district of Palma. The two districts border Tanzania along the Rovuma River, and the Tanzanian Government, which does not have good relations with the government of Paul Kagamé in Ruanda, felt the need to strengthen the presence of its troops in Nangade to watch the operations of the Rwandans. That is how Tanzania justifies the presence of a bilateral mission in Cabo Delgado while it also has troops that are part of the multilateral mission of SAMIM²².

The Tanzanian troops have managed to create stability in Nangade, such that this is one of the districts with the lowest number of attacks in northern Cabo Delgado. However, this is another district that is secure thanks to the intervention of foreign troops.

A possible withdrawal of the Tanzanian troops from Nangade means opening a security vacuum which will need to be filled. It is the duty of the Mozambican government to fill this vacuum, but it is not known whether it has the capacity to do this.

For the time being, the Tanzanian troops will remain in Nangade even after the withdrawal of the SAMIM troops²³ and this is justified by Tanzania’s interest in protecting its frontier with Cabo Delgado against invasion by the insurgents, but also in monitoring the activities of the Rwandan troops. But Mozambique has no guarantees of how long the TPDF troops will stay in Nangade, since this depends on Tanzania’s national interest.

21 AA News (2020, 22 October). 20 dead as terrorists storm Tanzania border region. Available at <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/20-dead-as-terrorists-storm-tanzania-border-region/2015299> (consulted on 15 April 2024)

22 Cabo Ligado (2024, 20 January). Cabo Ligado Update: 8-21 January 2024. Available at <https://www.cabologado.com/reports/cabo-ligado-update-8-21-january-2024> consulted on 15 April 2024)

23 The Citizen (2024, 6 May). Why Tanzanian troops will remain in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado. Available at <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/why-tanzanian-troops-will-remain-in-mozambique-s-cabo-delgado-4613836#> (consulted on 9 May 2024)

In short, it can be said that the FADM and various units of the PRM, as well as the forces of SAMIM (excluding Tanzania), are those who in fact are in Cabo Delgado to protect the population in general. The Rwandan forces are stationed to protect the large gas companies in Palma and the mining companies in Ancuabe and Montepuez. The Local Force is more aimed at protecting the Makonde population in Mueda and the surrounding districts. The Tanzanian forces are stationed to block the expansion of the insurgency into Tanzanian territory, by crossing the Rovuma river, and also to watch the Rwandan forces stationed in Palma. Hence it is problematic for Mozambique to depend on foreign forces and militias to guarantee the security of the population in Cabo Delgado.

3. Social situation

3.1 Hundreds of thousands are living in ruins and with broken families

This section deals with the social situation in which the returnees are living, including access to housing, the quality of the public infrastructures, access to public services and attendance to the needs of the vulnerable groups, particularly orphans whose parents have died or disappeared during the conflict.

According to United Nations data, by August 2023 about 120,000 displaced households had returned to their zones of origin. These households returned because of difficulties in economic and social integration in the definitive resettlement centres, plus the relative stability in the areas they had come from. Without livelihoods, many returnees depended almost exclusively on food aid provided by humanitarian organisations. With the reduction in food aid in mid-2022 – when it became increasingly irregular – access to food became one of the main difficulties of the displaced people. This scenario, together with disputes with the host communities over access to resources such as land and water, forced the return of many households. But many of the returnee households are incomplete. There are many orphans and widows, generating another social problem which needs the attention of the authorities.

Even without knowing the conditions they would find in their zones of origin, many households decided to leave behind the little they had in the resettlement centres, including their houses and fields, and return to their districts. Mocímboa da Praia was the district which accommodated the largest number of returnee households. By August 2023, it had received about 180,000 displaced people who have returned. Palma district was the second destination of the returnees. In the same period, it had accommodated about 117,000 returnees, followed by Muidumbe district where about 60,000 had returned²⁴.

The challenges that the returnees found in these districts are very similar. In general, despite the relative stability in these districts, the returnees are facing a lack of means of livelihood and decent shelter, as well as limited access to essential public services such as health and water supply, resulting from the destruction of public infrastructures by the war.

²⁴ OCHA (2023). Mozambique: Cabo Delgado, Nampula & Niassa Humanitarian Snapshot - August 2023. Available at: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/mozambique/mozambique-cabo-delgado-nampula-niassa-humanitarian-snapshot-august-2023-enpt>. [consulted on 17 March 2024]

Better to die in one's homeland

The narrative of the executive is that the return of households to their zones of origin was due to improved security conditions in their districts. However, this is not the only factor that explains the decision of displaced people to return to their zones of origin. Precarious living conditions, lack of means of livelihood and of income-generating initiatives, and conflicts with the local communities are some of the main reasons dictating the return of households to their original districts.

36 year old António²⁵ is an example of a displaced person who preferred to return, rather than the uncertainty of staying in the resettlement centres. He returned to Mocimboa da Praia in February 2023, after staying with his wife and 3 children for about 2 years in the Corrane definitive resettlement centre, in Nampula province. He says that he was living reasonably well in Corrane: he built a house and even benefitted from training in the management of cooperatives. As a result of this initiative, he and a further 20 displaced people set up a cooperative, but it did not work for lack of funds.

Without means of livelihood and without any income-generating activity, António found himself obliged to return to his area of origin, as soon as the security situation improved. “Many people came back because of the suffering in the centres”, he explains.

Returning to Mocimboa da Praia did not mean the end of difficulties. On the contrary, after his return António found that his house had been largely destroyed and the neighbourhood where he lived was almost depopulated. Today, he is trying, bit by bit, to rebuild his house, wall by wall, while his neighbours are timidly returning to the neighbourhood. But the marks of destruction are still visible. Sitting in front of his house, António says that despite the challenges he is passing through, in Mocimboa he is managing to meet his needs, since he does small jobs which earn him some money. With this he supports his family. “At least here, when I need something, I can do some odd jobs to feed my family”. But António regrets he had no financing to start up the cooperative he founded in Corrane, since he thinks that, with the knowledge he has acquired, he could earn some money and minimise his difficulties.

35 year old Ibrahim is another displaced person who decided to return to his home area after living in the Mapupulo definitive resettlement centre, in Montepuez district, for almost 3 years. He left Mocimboa da Praia town because of the insurgent attacks, leaving behind the little he had built over the years. Difficult adaptation in the centre, the lack of means of livelihood, and the days spent without eating, motivated him to return as soon as security conditions in the town improved.

But in his home area, Ibrahim is experiencing the same difficulties as in the resettlement centre. While in the resettlement centre he was unable to obtain land for farming, at home he cannot travel to the production zones because of lack of security. Without means of livelihood, he went without a little of everything. But even so, he thinks he is relatively better off than in the Nkakula centre: “dying in one's homeland is worthwhile”, he says.

Life in the districts in the north of Cabo Delgado province, where more than 600,000 displaced people have returned, is far from returning to normality. Just as in the accommodation centres, in their zones of origin they are lacking almost everything, from decent shelter, to food and access to health care, among others. In Mocimboa, most of the returnees face the same challenges as in the accommodation/resettlement centres. With houses destroyed or damaged by the insurgents, many returnees still do not have any decent shelter. Some are trying to repair their houses with the use of local material. The lack of means of livelihood and the limited access to essential public services such as health, due to the destruction of infrastructures, are the challenges that the returnees face.

²⁵ Fictitious name. The names of the interviewees in this research will be kept anonymous, with the exception of Government representatives.

With the start of the rainy season, many of the challenges facing the returnee families have worsened. The rains that have fallen since the start of this year have made it difficult to move goods along the main road that links the region to Nampula province, and from southern Cabo Delgado to the north of the province, due to the insurgents' destruction of the bridge over the Messalo river. This scenario is compromising food aid for the returnees, since the shops are not receiving any supplies. With the commercial establishments empty, the humanitarian organisations have interrupted the distribution of food aid "cheques" for the returnee families until the shops are resupplied. Furthermore, the rains pose serious challenges for the returnee families whose houses have not yet been duly rehabilitated.

Since the main cultivated areas, namely Marere, Messalo and Mbau, are not yet fully secure, the returnee families are afraid of travelling to their farms which compromises their subsistence. As an alternative, the families are producing in small fields, in their back yards.

Lasting solutions would make possible income-generation activities so that returnees can rebuild their lives and reduce their dependence on humanitarian assistance. This implies that aid programmes for the returnees should not be concentrated only on their needs, but should seek to empower their knowledge and capacities so that they can re-establish their livelihoods themselves²⁶.

However, support from the Government and the humanitarian organisations for the returnee families is still limited. In Mocimboa da Praia, the main destination of the returnee families, the few organisations present in the district have been helping the returnee communities in various areas, be they providing food aid or health care, or providing vocational training for young people and rehabilitating infrastructures, among others. However, the support is not reaching everyone. Furthermore, there are frequent reports of exclusion of some households from access to humanitarian aid and income-generating projects, with aid diverted to benefit the families of local chiefs. The problem of the diversion of humanitarian aid is not new. Previous studies have already shown that some of the aid intended for displaced people in the host communities was diverted to benefit the local authorities²⁷. Despite various denunciations and increased inspection of aid distribution, the problem has not been fully solved and still persists, now in the communities where the displaced people have returned.

The diversion of humanitarian aid is in part due to the fact that the Government allows this activity to be undertaken exclusively by the local authorities (neighbourhood secretaries and chiefs), and not by government agencies such as the National Disaster Management Institute. The local authorities, who have no paid work, are drawing benefits for themselves from the humanitarian aid.

According to the local Government, some returnees are benefitting from kits of inputs for agricultural production, and fishing kits which include nets and boats. The Mocimboa district administrator, Sérgio Cipriano, interviewed during this research, believes that support in creating means of livelihood is fundamental for reducing dependence and promoting cohesion among the population of the district.

26 IDMC (2023) Internal Displacement and Food Security. Available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2023/>. [consulted on 19 March 2024]

27 CIP (2020). Número de deslocados internos em Moçambique Cresceu em cerca de 2700% em dois anos. Available at <https://www.cipmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Gestão-dos-deslocados-de-guerra-de-Cabo-Delgado-Governo-falhou-no-apoio-às-vítimas-do-conflito.pdf> [consulted on 19 March 2024]

3.2 Challenge of reintegration of the returnees

The feeling of exclusion among the returnees, particularly the younger ones, is very common, particularly in Mocímboa da Praia district. The youths complain that they are not covered by various initiatives undertaken, by the government or by the humanitarian organisations. The feeling of exclusion and marginalisation among the youths predates the conflict and was crucial for recruiting young people into the insurgency. This feeling still prevails among the returnees. The perception among the youths of Mocímboa da Praia is that exclusion from job opportunities in projects related to the gas industry is due to lack of technical training. For this reason, one of their main concerns is access to opportunities/initiatives of technical training and/or income generation so that they can enter the labour market.

Several young returnees in Mocímboa da Praia district have expressed concern at the lack of vocational training projects and of income generation initiatives. They regard this as one of the main challenges that the group faces after returning to its zone of origin. According to data collected in interviews, the few vocational training and youth support initiatives not only are not comprehensive but the beneficiary groups are not duly informed of them. The youths believe that the lack of technical training is one of the factors which explains why they are excluded from job opportunities in projects associated with the Cabo Delgado gas industry.

Furthermore, some young returnees who benefitted from vocational training initiatives during their stay in the resettlement centres allege that there is no follow-up to develop their projects. Being in Mocímboa, many of them cannot continue their activities for lack of funds.

In addition to exclusion from the professional training initiatives, there is discrimination in support for income generating initiatives. Some interviewees believe that the main beneficiaries of fishing kits were community leaders, locality chiefs, and the police as well as other local authorities. Likewise, the people resident along the coast/in the cement area allege there is discrimination in support for rehabilitating their homes.

The district Government considers technical and professional training as one of the main pillars for integration of the young returnees, avoiding feelings of exclusion. A project has been designed aimed at the technical and professional training of the youths of Mocímboa. But the lack of finance for this and other income-generating projects is a challenge for the socio-economic integration of the young returnees.

3.3 Hundreds of orphans in Mocímboa da Praia without support

One of the serious problems found during the research is the lack of specific support for orphans. In Mocímboa da Praia town, there are hundreds of children whose parents died during the incursions of the insurgents. They are now living a drama of reintegration after returning to their zones of origin.

During the attacks, many of these children managed to escape with relatives and acquaintances to safe areas and were later taken to resettlement centres or to homes of people of good will. In the resettlement camps, many children became heads of household. They had to build their own houses and look after their younger siblings²⁸. In some cases, they were subjected to various types of abuse, in order to survive, including sexual exploitation, in the case of girls²⁹.

28 CIP (2023). Management of those displaced by the war in Cabo Delgado: the Government has failed in supporting the victims of the conflict. Available at: <https://www.cipmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Management-of-those-displaced-by-the-war-in-Cabo-Delgado-the-Government-has-failed-in-supporting-the-victims-of-the-conflicts.pdf>. [consulted on 17 March 2024]

29 CIP (2023). O Outro Lado da Guerra: Prostituição e Exploração Sexual de Mulheres Deslocadas em Cabo Delgado. Available at <https://www.cipmoz.org/pt/2023/05/29/o-outro-lado-da-guerra-prostituicao-e-exploracao-sexual-de-mulheres-deslocadas-em-cabo-delgado/> [consulted on 17 March 2024]

With relative stability in the north of Cabo Delgado, many of these children have returned to their zones of origin and are once again passing through the same challenge of reintegration. Various religious groups interviewed during the research believe that assisting the orphans who have returned to their zones of origin is a priority and should deserve special attention, both from government bodies and from humanitarian organisations.

UNICEF has been doing notable work on child protection, including the reintegration of child soldiers who had been captured, radicalised and trained by the insurgents, but it's a lot of work and requires support from the Government which has been insignificant or non-existent.

3.4 Role of ADIN in reintegration of the returnees

As for the integration of the returnees, the Agency for the Integrated Development of the North (ADIN), set up by the Government to coordinate development initiatives in the north of the country, has a rather different approach. Unlike the idea of promoting centres of professional and technical training and certification for young returnees, ADIN has been prioritising the construction of model villages which offer the population various livelihoods, without formal employment in the gas industry being necessary.

Based on this perspective, ADIN is developing a project named Otheka, to build 360 houses for the communities affected by the conflict. The project covers the district of Quissanga, one of those severely affected by the attacks, and also Macomia and Mocimboa da Praia districts. The houses will be built in villages, with basic public services, fields for farming and markets for selling goods – a replica of the Marokani resettlement centre. With these initiatives, ADIN hopes to create resilience within the communities in order to avoid youths being enticed into terrorism.

But, despite the initiatives under way, ADIN faces a lack of resources to make its mandate operational. The lack of funds is one of the main challenges that this body faces in assisting the victims of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, both the internally displaced people and the returnees. However, the Chairperson of the Executive Council (CE) of ADIN, Professor Armindo Ngunga, interviewed during this research, considered that the body has been recording success in promoting economic development and job creation programmes and in involvement with the partners in socio-economic development initiatives in the north of the country. ADIN benefits from various small scale financings for implementation of these projects, including grants of building materials such as cement, zinc sheets for roofing, and poles, among others.

Fig. 4. *Believers attend outdoor mass on Sunday morning in the village of Mocimboa da Praia. Its chapel was destroyed by the insurgents and has yet to be rebuilt.*



The displaced who preferred the resettlement centres to returning to the ruins

Even with relative stability in their districts of origin, some households preferred to stay in the resettlement centres. They are displaced people who, despite the adverse conditions they found in the resettlement centres, managed to rebuild their lives from nothing. Some are from Mocímboa da Praia and Muidumbe districts, and decided to stay in resettlement centres in Mueda district, despite the relative improvement in the security situation in their areas of origin.

34 year old Tomás is one of several displaced people who prefer to stay in the resettlement centre rather than return to Mocímboa. In 2021, he arrived at the centre empty-handed, but with his head full of images that he prefers to forget. They are the ghosts of a war whose end is still uncertain. This young man lost his father, and other close relatives and friends during the incursions of the insurgents. He saw his house destroyed, and all the efforts of a life reduced to ashes. And like the majority of the displaced, he had difficulties in adapting to the new environment. But today Tomás is an entrepreneur and an example of overcoming difficulties.

Tomás is one of a list of 70 displaced people who benefitted from an income-generating initiative financed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). He received 15,000 meticaís to undertake income-generating activity. With this sum, he built a modest bakery, made out of local material, equipped with a clay oven. It earns him a little more than 3,000 meticaís a day. Alongside the bakery, he built a stall to sell tea: and 500 metres from there he grows maize, potatoes, cassava and groundnuts on an area of 2 hectares. Tomás does not hide his satisfaction with the project. The fruits are visible: he has built a house with zinc roofing for his family.

With his life relatively stable in the resettlement centre, Tomás does not intend to return to Mocímboa da Praia, which he left because of attacks by the insurgents.

Like Tomás, Julieta Rosário and Afonso Matuto, youths who came from Mocímboa district, have developed small businesses under the income generating project financed by the NRC, with financing of 15,000 meticaís each. The displaced youths have opened a small shop where they sell basic goods and various other items. Despite the improved security situation, Afonso Mutoto has decided to stay in the Mueda district resettlement centre.

Mueda district accommodates about 17,000 displaced households from Mocímboa da Praia, Muidumbe and Nangade, living in 8 resettlement centres. According to the District Permanent Secretary, Assam Omar, the attacks in December in Mocímboa district obliged part of the population who had returned, mainly those who are outside the urban centres, to return once more to the resettlement centres. He says that what motivated the displaced to return was the improvement in security conditions in their zones of origin, which seems more of a political speech that does not chime with the reality on the ground.

3.5 Reconstruction of public and private infrastructures

What many found when they returned to their zones of origin was a scenario of total destruction and terror, typical of a war context. Homes and public and private infrastructures were completely destroyed and, in some cases, reduced to ashes; bodies of dead people abandoned on the public highway, explosive devices placed in wells, inside homes and on farms; burnt-out vehicles, guns abandoned in public places ... These are some of the images that the returnees faced as soon as they reached their home areas.

In Mocimboa da Praia and Palma, for example, about a year after the return, the scenario of the destruction of public infrastructures is still very visible.

In Mocimboa da Praia, most public and private buildings, targets of the insurgent attacks, remain destroyed. The Government building, which had been isolated during the attack of 21 August that culminated in the occupation of the town, is one of the few exceptions. It was one of those that benefitted from some intervention. To replace the old building, new premises were built and for some departments tents and containers were provisionally allocated.

These interventions were made under the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan (*North Crisis Recovery*), which is being coordinated by UNOPS.

Another infrastructure which benefitted from some rehabilitation was the headquarters of the Frelimo Party. Here two provisional tents were allocated, under the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan. But there is still no sign of any return to activities. On the 3 occasions that CIP passed by the Party premises, no members were meeting.

Fig. 5. Tents made available by UNOPS were installed at the headquarters of the Frelimo Party in Mocimboa da Praia



The Mocimboa port and aerodrome, two crucial infrastructures affected by the attacks, also benefitted from some rehabilitation and are now working normally.

However, a series of other infrastructures are still waiting for their rehabilitation. This is the case with the secondary school, which was partially destroyed, but has still seen no rehabilitation. Public hospitals, commercial banks and petrol stations have not yet been rehabilitated, which obliges the public to travel to Mueda and Palma for access to health services and banks.

The homes are also destroyed. In many villages, the returnees only found ruins. Some returnees were advised to abandon their old houses and build in other areas because of the danger of mines or other explosives. Few families have been receiving support from humanitarian organisations in the form of shelter. People who live along the coast of Mocimboa da Praia feel excluded from these initiatives.

In Palma, some infrastructures destroyed by the insurgents are benefitting from rehabilitation under the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan, such as the Palma Secondary School. The district secretariat, the registry and notarial offices, and the residence of the district Permanent Secretary have also benefitted from rehabilitation under an initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The health post and the doctor's residence were also rehabilitated with the support of TotalEnergies in partnership with the Alberto Cassimo Professional Training Institute (IFPLAC).

However, several other destroyed infrastructures are waiting for rehabilitation. These include the District Court, the Tax Authority, and the residences of the commander and of the director of the District Planning and Infrastructure Services (SPDI). Rehabilitation of these infrastructures is part of a package of support for reconstruction financed by UNDP.

4. Economic situation

4.1 Difficult to build resilience, with hunger, high cost of living and unemployment

This section analyses the economic situation of the displaced people who have returned to their places of origin. It discusses how unemployment and the difficulties of livelihood activities (agriculture and fishing), together with the high prices of food and other essential goods, form a barrier to the resilience of the communities of returnees, making them vulnerable to radicalisation by violent extremist groups.

The returnees in Palma and Mocimboa da Praia districts face socio-economic problems related to the high cost of living, difficult access to zones of agricultural and fishing production and limited humanitarian aid.

For the population to re-establish itself in its zones of origin and to create resilience to radicalisation and recruitment by violent extremist groups, the presence of foreign and national troops is not sufficient. It is necessary that the Government set up conditions for access to essential basic services and to material and equipment for developing income generating activities so that the returnees can undertake their activities independent of foreign aid.

4.2 High costs of transport to return to the areas of origin

Despite the support announced by TotalEnergies for those returning to Palma and Mocimboa da Praia districts, the real support has not been enough, and so several returnees have used their own means to return to their areas of origin.

The high costs of transport to return to their zones of origin in Cabo Delgado are a significant challenge for the returnees, displaced people who were living in resettlement centres in Nampula province and some districts of Cabo Delgado, including the city of Pemba.

Fig. 6. *Motorbike taxis are the main means of transport in northern Cabo Delgado. Photo taken in the town of Mueda*



The high costs are explained partly by the shortage of transport to these zones due to lack of security along the route. The transport operators are not willing to provide these services and so they increase the prices. Without many options for travel, the returnees are subjected to the high costs.

The returnees of Mocímboa da Praia district who came from the Corrane resettlement centre in Nampula province say it costs more than 5,000 meticaís to return to Mocímboa da Praia, which is three times more than they used to pay in a situation of peace. The returnees say they received no support from the government. They had to separate from their families and travel in phases due to financial difficulties.³⁰

For their part, the transport operators say that the high prices of transport are related not only to the additional costs from the illicit charges demanded by agents of the Local Force and the Police and the costs of fuel (twice as high), but also to the risk of travelling to an area which is still not regarded as safe.

4.3 Shortage of basic goods in the shops

The returnees in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts found their homes in ruins, and they had no access to basic foods and to humanitarian aid for rebuilding their homes. One of the main challenges faced by these people was rebuilding their houses on their own.

There are shortages of everything in Mocímboa da Praia town. Building material is scarce and expensive, which has made it still more difficult to rebuild their homes. The rebuilding difficulties become more evident due to the lack of income-generating activities which could stimulate the economy and allow the returnees access to products.

Fig. 7. Shopkeepers are facing a shortage of basic products. Photo taken in Mocímboa da Praia



Mueda, Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts depend on supplies of foodstuffs from Nampula province. In these districts, there is a notable shortage of food in the main warehouses

While the field study was being held, the high prices of goods, such as vegetable oil, rice, maize flour and soap, among others, were worsened by the torrential rains. The Messalo river burst its banks, blocked the road along N380 and destroyed agricultural fields, particularly in Mueda and Mocímboa da Praia districts.

³⁰ Data collected from interviews with returnees in Mocímboa da praia district.

In the three districts visited there was a notable shortage of fuel, except for Palma district where one petrol station is operating and has fuel. In Mueda, the price of diesel has risen to 250 meticais a litre, more than twice the price charged in the southern districts of Cabo Delgado.

Mocimboa da Praia is the most critical district. In this district, there are no banks and no petrol stations. Access to this district is full of road blocks and intensive police searches. These facts raise still further the prices of basic goods in this district.

The lack of banks and of fuel pumps in Mocimboa da Praia cause many constraints for traders who say they are in living in an environment of terror. They stress that they are afraid of insurgents, soldiers and highwaymen. Because of their professional activity, the traders carry cash and are in danger of being robbed. Public administration staff, pensioners and others travel long distances (about 100 km) to Mueda district for access to a bank and an ATM to pick up their wages. This fact means that the banks in Mueda district face crowds for practically 24 hours. The public are obliged to stay in long queues, often staying overnight at the banks with all the costs and discomfort that this involves.

In addition to the constraints mentioned above, due to the instability in these districts, foodstuffs from other provinces take longer to reach the district, increasing the scarcity of basic goods in the warehouses.

The owners of the warehouses speak of delays of more than 30 days to receive the merchandise, so that they are unable to make basic foods available³¹.

Delays in receiving merchandise directly affect the returnees and the institutions that want to support the public with cheques for food³², for the wholesalers are unable to accept the cheques distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) so that the returnees can pick up products in selected shops. This means that the WFP suspended the distribution of food cheques to the returnees between January and March 2024.

Transport costs are also a constraint for traders who argue that their prices are high because of the transport costs. The transport operators increase their prices due to lack of security on the roads and the costs associated with the various control posts set up by the police and the Local Force. Thus the costs of transport from Nampula to Mocimboa da Praia have increased by about 90%, from an initial price of 115,000 MT before the attacks in these districts to 200,000 MT³³.

Trade is also affected by disinformation about the attacks, because when information about insecurity arises, the people in the villages do not go into the town to acquire foodstuffs. This means that trade stagnates for a period, leading to losses for traders.

In addition to high transport costs, illicit charges along the Nampula-Mocimboa da Praia route and charges in internal posts in the towns oblige the traders of Mueda district to contribute money to support the Local Force. In the case of Mocimboa da Praia district, the traders are increasing their costs because they are obliged to pay some police for the security of their shops and homes. Such illegal payments make the goods still more expensive and the situation of the population still more precarious.

31 Interview with traders in Mocimboa da Praia district and Palma.

32 Cheque granted normally for 4,000 MT to acquire foodstuffs at shops in the town of Mocimboa.

33 Interview with a trader in Mocimboa da Praia district.

4.4 Illicit charges make goods more expensive

In the three districts visited it was clear that the traders were unhappy at the high costs of transport. The continual presence of armed groups in some areas increases the risks for transport operators who charge more to compensate for the additional danger. In addition, verification points and extortion by armed groups or even by the security forces constitute additional costs for travel.

In addition to the high transport cost, the traders are obliged to pay money throughout the journey to the town. Along the route from Mueda to Mocímboa da Praia there are several check points set up by the Local Force and/or by agents of the Mozambican police (PRM). At each entrance and exit from the villages, there is always a check point and if the traders are to move through them, they must pay, regardless of the legality of their documentation .

The Mueda District Permanent Secretary, Assamo Omar, has admitted that the Local Force charges the traders and members of the public money, and recognised that these acts are illegal. However, he justified them as a way of supporting members of the Local Force, due to their difficult conditions³⁴.

4.5 Economic activities affected by the insurgency

Economic activities in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma have been affected by the insurgency, and the returnees face difficulties. In Mocímboa the main difficulty of the returnees is access to places for farming. The population lives from small vegetable gardens and are afraid to visit the areas where they used to farm, because the insurgents are installed there. The population lack food, tools for farming and domestic utensils.

The production fields in Mocímboa district (fields of Messalo, Chanala, Quinhero) are now abandoned.

The return to farming is essential for the population of the district, who also need support in tools, seeds and training to resume this activity.

The Mocímboa da Praia administrator, Sérgio Cipriano, said that the community has received support in seeds. The Government has received some tractors and a chainsaw. But to use these tools, the population must pay 3,000 meticaís per hectare to use the tractor and 1,500 meticaís per hectare to use the chainsaw. The population cannot pay these sums, which limits access to the equipment to a small group that enjoys better financial conditions.

In Mueda district, the Permanent Secretary, Assamo Omar, explains the reason for low agricultural production by the fact that there are many former guerrillas who receive monthly pensions of more than 10,000 meticaís, and access to these sums has reduced their interest in agriculture.

The socio-economic situation of the returnees is very critical and challenging due to a combination of factors such as the prevalence of insecurity in some zones, lack of access to basic resources and the interruption of economic activities.

4.6 Access to basic services

In Mocímboa da Praia district, one of the most affected by terrorism and with a high number of returnees, basic services are not available. In this district, access to water is a dilemma and the population must walk for long distances to obtain the precious liquid.

³⁴ Assamo Omar, Permanent Secretary of the Mueda district government, interviewed on 8 March 2024, in Mueda town

The vandalism of water infrastructures, such as water pumps, domestic networks and standpipes has degraded still further the water supply situation in Mocímboa da Praia district. Water shortages affect more than 57,000 returnees in this district.³⁵

Also there are no basic health services there. The hospital is not working properly, and to access medical services, one must travel to Mueda district, about 100 kms away, with the risk of being attacked by the insurgents. The situation becomes even more complicated with the lack of transport.

In Mocímboa da Praia and in the neighbouring districts, there is no professional training or technical school and no higher education institutions. The closest higher education institution is in the provincial capital, Pemba, more than 300 kilometres away. When many young people finish their mid-level education, and are unable to leave the district, they end their studies, thus contributing to increased levels of unemployment and crime.

Reconstruction by the government is limited to State infrastructures, most of which are still being rebuilt. The slow pace of reconstruction, the reduction in the associated humanitarian aid, disastrous climatic events and the limitation in the circulation of goods is making the life of the returnees very complicated.

4.7 Humanitarian assistance limited and subject to illicit charges

The local economy was damaged by the violence, affecting the means of livelihood of the communities. Many returnees face difficulties in finding work or income generating opportunities particularly in a region where agriculture and fishing are the main sources of sustenance.

The humanitarian organisations have worked to provide assistance to the affected communities. The Mozambique Red Cross has assisted the returnees in Mocímboa da Praia district with essential articles and kits consisting of buckets, mosquito nets, tarpaulins and other material. The materials were distributed to 3,500 returnee families, or 17,500 people³⁶

Meanwhile humanitarian aid is limited by the reduction in the overall aid to the emergency in Cabo Delgado which has declined drastically. According to data from the World Food Programme (WFP), from 2023 to 2024, the amount of humanitarian aid in Cabo Delgado fell by more than 76%. The number of people assisted by the WFP fell from about 750,000 in November-December 2023 to about 460,000 in January-February 2024.

Worsening still further the situation on the ground, the selection of the beneficiaries does not obey fair and transparent criteria. In many cases, the beneficiaries are young relatives of the neighbourhood representatives and of members of the selection commission. The Renamo delegate in the district said that some returnees have been excluded from the support lists for political party questions, because the neighbourhood structure is demanding party cards for access to food³⁷.

Some have received support in cheques to acquire basic foodstuffs. But the selection of these beneficiaries is doubtful and often money has been demanded from for access to food .

Undue payment for access to humanitarian aid was also confirmed by leaders of local mosques in Mocímboa da Praia town. One of them explained that he received support in fishing kits, consisting of 5 nets, buoys, ropes and other fishing materials: however, he thinks he benefitted from the aid because he had “a godfather” there³⁸.

35 CM Mundo (2023). Escassez de água afecta 57 mil retornados a Mocímboa da praia. Available at: <https://www.cmjornal.pt/mundo/africa/detalhe/escassez-de-agua-afeta-57-mil-retornados-a-mocimboa-da-praia> (consulted on 20 May 2023)

36 International Committee of the Red Cross – CICV. (2023). O comité internacional da cruz vermelha assistiu recentemente os retornados de Mocímboa da praia, cabo delgado com artigos essenciais domésticos. Available at: <https://www.icrc.org/pt/document/mocambique-cicv-assiste-35-mil-familias-retornadas-mocimboa-da-praia>

37 Assumane Abdala Momade, Renamo delegate in Mocímboa da Praia, interviewed on 11 March 2024, in Mocimboa da Praia town

38 The mosque leaders were interviewed anonymously during the field work in Mocímboa da Praia

Some villages in the interior have received support from Solidarités International, but along the coast the support has been reduced. The few fishermen who received the fishing kits are unable to use them because they lack the main item of equipment – a fishing boat. These disparities in humanitarian aid between residents of the coast (Mwani) and of the interior (Maconde) may increase quarrels between the communities.

Humanitarian aid provided by international bodies is focused on food and health services, but this aid should be more comprehensive and include access to psychological care for the returnees, because they are facing physical and psychological traumas due to violence and forced displacement.

5. Government reconstruction plans without significant impact on the life of the returnees

In the context of implementation of the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan (PRCD), which ends in 2024, the Government received, in 2021, funding of USD 200 million approved by the World Bank. In 2023, the Government received further funding of USD 66.0 million through the Northern Stabilisation Programme, financed by multilateral partners³⁹.

With regard to implementation of the PRCD, the Government stresses that security conditions were established for the return of the displaced people to their zones of origin, and about 82% of the population had returned. But this contradicts field observation and reports from the returnees who say that security only exists in the town, and that so far the returnees cannot undertake their activities because of a lack of security in the other areas.

The balance of PESOE in the first quarter of 2023 also states that the Government has established conditions for the provision of essential social services, such as water, electricity, health and education services, communication and circulation of goods and people. But in the districts visited there is an obvious absence of basic services, such as maternity wards, water and electricity, although mobile phones function, albeit with some deficiency in the network.

In the districts visited the following activities were undertaken in the context of implementation of the PRCD:

Component 1: Build social cohesion and resilience to conflicts

The district civil registry and notarial services were re-opened, which benefitted 85,602 internally displaced and people who have returned to their zones of origin;

Component 2: Supply of means of livelihood.

In the area of vocational and professional training, 1,982 young people were trained in skills in small businesses for self-employment, 290 of them in Palma and 525 in Mocimboa da Praia.

2,000 self-employment kits were allocated for processing and marketing shellfish, agriculture, poultry and horticulture; and 56 fishing boats were acquired, 17 made of wood and 39 of fibre-glass. In addition, fishing inputs were distributed for zones of Quissanga, Macomia, Palma and Mocimboa da Praia.

The returnees confirm they received these products and training, but report cases of duplication of support to particular returnees who are influential in the town.

³⁹ MEF (2024). Balance of the 2023 Economic and Social Plan and State Budget.

Component 3: Rehabilitation, Construction and Equipping of public infrastructures, Water Supply and Sanitation

In this component, only districts in the south of Cabo Delgado province benefitted, including Metuge, Chiúre, Montepuez, Ancuabe, Namuno, Balama and Meluco, where collective bathrooms and water supply systems were built. The districts in the north of the province have not benefitted from these services. The same happened with the improvement of the health and education services, such as the construction and rehabilitation of health centres and schools. Only the resettlement centres located in the south of Cabo Delgado benefitted from these services, but the returnees in Palma and Mocímboa da Praia districts did not benefit.

Also in the Public Administration infrastructures, Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts benefitted from the installation and electrification of 6 and 9 container type modular offices. They also benefitted from the supply and assembly of 140 and 130 tents respectively.

In the field visit, it was noted that some public institutions are operating out of provisional tents, which were also allocated to the ruling party, as the photographs show.

5.1 Stabilisation Programme implemented by UNDP

In the stabilisation programme, the following activities took place:

Mocímboa da Praia: conclusion of the rehabilitation of 1 health centre, 2 primary schools and 1 public administration building.

It was possible to verify the rehabilitation of the public administration building, but the rehabilitation work on the health centre and the school is not very visible. Most of the buildings envisaged for rehabilitation in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts are only identified, with no start of any work, as the images show.

Fig 8. Infrastructures destroyed by the insurgent groups await reconstruction



5.2 The absence of the Government in the zones of return and the lack of an assistance programme for the returnees

Despite the constant appeals by the Government for a return to the zones of origin, these do not offer basic conditions for the return of the communities, apart from the apparent security and presence of foreign troops.

The return of the displaced people should be duly planned by the government so as to guarantee that the returnee population enjoys access to basic conditions, such as education, health and water, among others. This is not happening in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts.

In these districts, the reconstruction projects are limited to rebuilding public infrastructures, which is very slow. The returnees say they have had no aid for the rebuilding of their homes and to start their economic activities.

The absence of the State in the return of the population, and the lack of basic conditions such as maternity wards, hospitals, water and sanitation, means that the population feels abandoned and may be prone to engaging with the insurgent groups. The young people feel abandoned, and say there are no activities for them to develop. They have lost everything, including their fishing nets and boats, and currently they depend on aid from international organisations for their survival.

Planning for supporting the returnees should start with the preparation of infrastructures such as hospitals, schools and other basic services, the preparation of conditions for developing economic activities, and guaranteeing access to water.

The Government has not drawn up plans and strategies for the reintegration of the returnee population into these districts, and has not presented any strategy for implementing education and professional training programmes which make it possible for the returnees to acquire skills and find opportunities.

The promotion of social cohesion is also fundamental in designing this strategy. The social reintegration of the population, particularly those who were allied to the insurgents, is fundamental, mainly in Mocímboa da Praia district, where the government has encouraged the population who allied with the terrorists to return to their zones of origin. The government, in partnership with the communities, should promote dialogue so as to reduce stigma and facilitate the social reintegration of the returnees.

The lack of educational recovery programmes, in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma districts, has made it still more difficult to reintegrate the returnees, who have been treated on an equal footing as the other students, ignoring the fact that they have missed many of their classes or school years.

Many schools were closed during the periods of occupation by the insurgents and the displaced population has many difficulties in access to education. With their return to their zones of origin, it is imperative that the Government draw up educational recovery programmes, implement recovery programmes for the pupils whose education was interrupted, and implement technical and professional education programmes which make it possible for young people to acquire in a short period skills and crafts so that they can engage in profitable activities.

6. Conclusion

The security situation in Cabo Delgado has improved since the arrival of the foreign troops, but it remains volatile. In the north of the province there is more stability thanks to the stationing of the Rwandan forces in Palma and Mocímboa da Praia districts, of the Tanzanian People's Defence Force in Nangade district, and the strengthening of the militia of the Local Force in Mueda and part of Muidumbe, but there is still much to do.

Security guaranteed by foreign forces and by militias is unsustainable and does not cover all the territories of the districts. In Mocímboa da Praia, for example, the rural villages live in great instability since the presence of the foreign troops is limited to the town and the surrounding area, in a radius of 10 kilometres.

This situation is creating “islands of security” in the areas under the influence of the LNG projects which may be regarded as the centre where there is stability while on the periphery the lack of security persists. There is also the risk of an eventual withdrawal of the Rwandan and Tanzanian troops which might lead to a security vacuum and allow a growth in the threat from the insurgents.

The socio-economic situation of the returnees in Cabo Delgado remains challenging due to the continual instability and the impacts of the paralysis of economic activities. Dealing with these challenges requires a coordinated response centred not only on the immediate needs of humanitarian assistance but which also promotes sustainable development and community reconciliation to allow the returnees to rebuild their lives with dignity and security.

The precarious conditions in which the returnees find themselves put them in a situation of vulnerability. In addition to the plan to rebuild infrastructures, a clear strategy must be defined to deal with the returnees and guarantee that they enjoy access to basic activities for their livelihoods so as to avoid possible foci of violence and the availability of young people to ally with the insurgents.

Recommendations

To the Government of Mozambique

Invest in training and equipping the FADM to take the primary responsibility for fighting the insurgency and not entrusting this mission to foreign forces and militias;

Work on increasing the military discipline of the FADM, and dedicate the time and money for the due training and education of the FADM so that the population trust in the FADM and not in outside forces;

Give the FADM the role of coordinating the combat actions of the foreign forces present on the ground (Rwandans and Tanzanians) to avoid the creation of “islands of security” in Cabo Delgado;

Prepare military and police units to guarantee the gradual and effective replacement of the militia of the Local Force of Mueda and of other territories where it has the responsibility of guaranteeing security;

To the Ministry of Economy and Finance

Present the balance of the activities undertaken under the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan, with the respective financial execution by district.

Present the report on the humanitarian aid for the returnees and their socio-economic conditions.

Draw up a plan of action to support the returnees by district.

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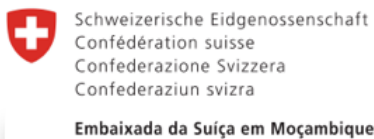
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List of interviewees

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- Celso Nhumaio, Director of the Palma District Planning and Infrastructure Services, interviewed on 12 March in the town of Palma
- Sérgio Cipriano, Administrator of the Mocímboa da Praia District, interviewed on 10 March 2024 in the town of Mocímboa da Praia.
- Vicente Miguel, head of the Eduardo Mondlane resettlement centre for displaced people, Mueda district, interviewed on 9 March 2024 in the town of Mueda.
- Assamo Omar, Permanent Secretary of the Mueda District Government, interviewed on 8th March 2024, in the village of Mueda.

Partners:



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