

MOZAMBIQUE

Deteriorating humanitarian situation in Cabo Delgado province

Short note – 08 April 2020

The escalation of insurgent activities in Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado is deteriorating the humanitarian situation of affected populations in the area. More than 11 of the 16 districts in the province have witnessed incessant attacks, about 350 since October 2017, with a significant rise in the death toll (ISS 10/01/2020).

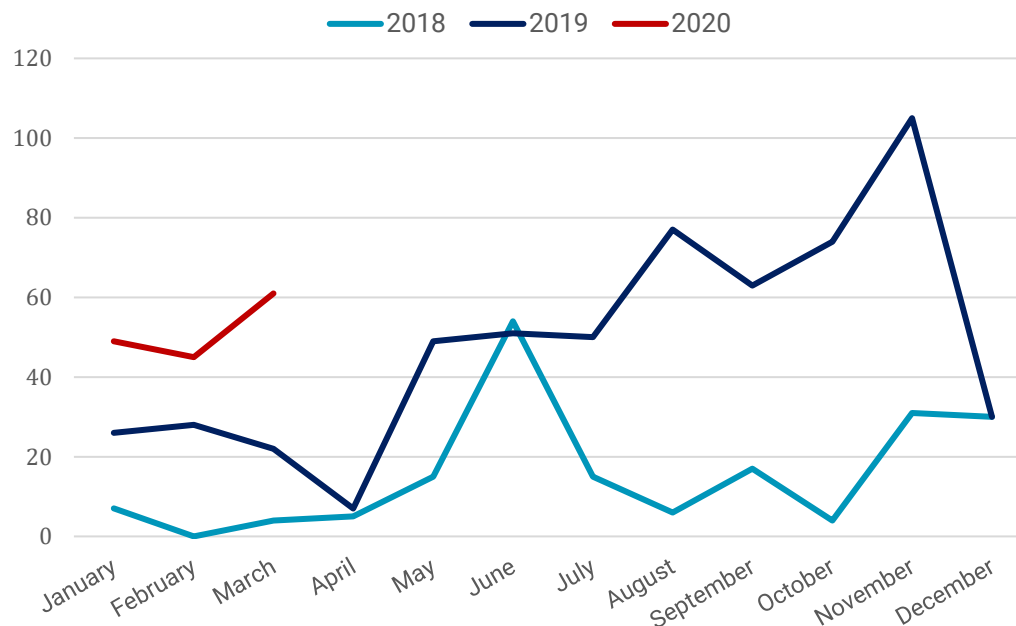
The number of displaced people has risen from around 1,000 in March 2019 to over 115,000 in March 2020. Over two million people are affected by the crisis overall (ECHO 14/02/2020).

Apart from protection concerns, livelihoods and food security, healthcare, and education have been severely impacted.



Source: Aberfoyle International Security

Number of fatalities



Source: ACLED

Humanitarian needs

Displacement

As of 25 March, over 115,000 people have been displaced (ECHO 14/02/2020). The majority of the displaced population are fleeing to the capital of Cabo Delgado, Pemba, a port city on the northeast coast (Ghanaweb 30/03/2020). Most are disembarking at the populous Pemba neighbourhood of Paquitequite (Moz24 03/04/2020). Other areas taking in displaced persons are Mocimba da Praia and Macomia. Some of the displaced, especially those living along the coastal areas, are taking refuge on Ibo Island (MSF 13/02/2020). While those in the urban centres are sheltered by host communities, the islands are ill-prepared to host displaced populations as there is no healthcare, shelter, food, or hygiene facilities for migrating populations. Local authorities in Paquitequite are refusing to recognise migrating populations as displaced persons, stating the country was not at war and the people arriving were only visiting to take a rest with their families (Moz24 03/04/2020).

Protection

Protection concerns for the over 2 million people affected by this crisis are heightened by low morale of the security forces and high-handed security responses. Insufficient security capacity finds police opting not to respond to attacks, to avoid casualties in their ranks (The East African 20/02/2020). When police do respond, affected populations have been indiscriminately arrested with blatant human rights abuses, or in some cases wrongly accused of being the perpetrators of the insurgency (HRW 04/12/2020). Both factors have reduced confidence in the ability of security agencies to protect affected populations and increased fatalities on all sides. Deaths recorded from the activities of militants, unidentified armed groups and militarised anti-insurgent responses rose from 188 in 2018 to 582 in 2019, and in 2020, some 155 deaths had been recorded by the end of March (ACLEDD October 2017- March 2020).

Livelihoods and Food Security

Mozambican livelihoods depend on natural resources such as agriculture and fishing. In 2019, 71.3% of the country's workforce was employed in the agricultural sector, which includes forestry and fishery (UNDP NAP-GSP 03-2020). Cabo Delgado is no exception with tobacco, maize, cassava, sorghum, groundnut and pea being the most cultivated crops. With the intensification of insurgent attacks, families have been too scared to plant, tend, and harvest their crops, relying on dwindled food reserves and increasing the risks of food insecurity (Southern Africa Report 27 10/2019). The disruption of livelihoods has also affected fishing, as the drilling and blasting from oil exploration has reduced tremendously both the available fishing waters, and size of the catch (Aljazeera 24/02/2020).

Cabo Delgado is one of the many Mozambican provinces still recovering from food insecurity caused by climatic shocks including droughts, floods, and cyclones (Idai in March 2019 and Kenneth in April 2019). More than 260,000 people were projected to experience Emergency (IPC-4) food security outcomes from October 2019 to February 2020 countrywide, with 23,600 in Cabo Delgado (IPC 25/07/2019). An intensification of the insurgency crisis will slow down recovery processes and push affected populations into more severe need.

Healthcare

In Cabo Delgado, there are 104 health centres for about 560,000 households and only 8 hospital beds per 10,000 people (WHO 24/11/2017; Knoema Atlas 2020). The area also has an intra-hospital maternal mortality ratio of 105 per 100,000 live births and a child mortality ratio of 85 per 1,000 live births, rates among the highest in the world (Swiss Government Health Promotion Program in Cabo Delgado 01/04/2017 – 31/12/2020, accessed 01/04/2020). Insurgent activities are causing many medical staff to flee the region, leaving existing healthcare centres deserted and without adequate staff. Most healthcare facilities lack electricity, water, and sanitation facilities, making them inadequate to respond to disease outbreaks such as cholera, malaria and malnutrition (MSF 13/02/2020). A cholera outbreak was reported in Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia, and Ibo provinces on 3 April with 313 cases and 13 deaths (Crisis24 05/04/2020). This is likely to spread to displaced populations.

Education

Attacks by insurgents have also focused on primary, secondary and tertiary institutions as witnessed in the districts of Bilibiza, Namaluco, Macomia, Nancaramo and Mocimboa da Praia. The Agricultural Institute and Teacher Training College in Bilibiza for instance were damaged (AllAfrica 11/01/2020). All of these have culminated in teachers abandoning the districts, parents keeping their children out of school and a general halt in educational activities. For a province that already has the highest rate of children out of school (35.1%), an intensification of the crisis is likely to increase these numbers and increase illiteracy levels in the area higher than the current 55.9% (Southern Africa Report 27 10/2019).

Humanitarian Constraints

The government of Mozambique has continued to deny the existence of an active insurgency in Cabo Delgado, presenting the attacks as mere criminality (ISS 10/01/2020). This coupled with the refusal to allow researchers, journalists, and humanitarian workers into the area is preventing relevant stakeholders from accessing pragmatic information needed to make informed decisions on the humanitarian situation in the area.

The refusal to allow humanitarian workers into the area and the inability of security forces to provide adequate security intelligence on the safety or otherwise of humanitarian actors is hampering aid from getting to affected populations in Cabo Delgado. INGOs already working with victims of the cyclones in Mozambique did not get access to Cabo Delgado where the insurgency is deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

Context

Armed groups

Ahl Sunnah wa Jammah (ASWJ) or Al-Shabaab as they are locally referred to, have constantly changed their tactics, oscillating between attacks on civilians, the military, port facilities, police stations, government buildings, educational institutions, churches, mosques, banks, waterborne assaults, prison breaks, and food raids. More recent attacks in Macimboa da Praia and Quissanga districts appear to be a mission to win the support of the population, with attackers handing out money looted from the banks to the local population, freeing prisoners from jail, and openly calling for the population to join in their cause (Daily Maverick 24/03/2020). This constant change in tactics has concealed the underlying principles governing the insurgency, as well the overriding aim of ASWJ. The clear result of the crisis, however, is an increasing death toll.

Criminal activities

Cabo Delgado's location along the coastal headland bordering Mozambique and Tanzania, with a large plateau stretching into the interior has placed it in a pivotal position for narco-trafficking, specifically in heroin, which has become one of the country's biggest exports along with gemstone smuggling and wildlife poaching (The New Humanitarian 12/02/2020). This adds to the security situation in the province, providing new insecurity fronts to be addressed and increasing criminal opportunities that can be exploited by the insurgents.

Natural gas exploration

What was termed as the world's largest gas find has been discovered in Cabo Delgado in 2011, drawing some of the world's biggest exploration firms to the area, including ExxonMobil, Total, and Eni. The discovery of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) was expected to usher in economic and social development in the area, which was known for ranking very low in poverty and development indexes. Although oil exploration was offshore, about 550 households were evicted to make way for support facilities of the oil companies onshore. In this process also, more than 952 households lost access to cultivated

farmlands, with an additional 3,000 people losing access to fishing grounds (Aljazeera 24/02/2020). The resettlement plans for affected communities proved inadequate as some farmers were given farmlands belonging to other people or farmlands that were over 10km far away from their homes (Aljazeera 24/02/2020). All of these coupled with high unemployment rates, even as LNG exploration continues, have been attributed as constituting potent grievances for the emergence and continued existence of insurgent activities in the area.