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### **Developing Mozambique's IDP Policy to Better Address Climate Change-Related Displacement**

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#### About the author

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## Developing Mozambique's IDP Policy to Better Address Climate Change-Related Displacement

*This policy and strategy seek essentially to improve the coordination of the support and assistance for the displaced ... Central coordination will always be led by the government authorities. Nevertheless, there will also be the intervention of other humanitarian bodies... there is always a need to improve coordination mechanisms"*

Deputy Justice Minister Filimao Suaze,  
spokesperson for the Government of  
Mozambique

### BACKGROUND

Internal displacement in the context of climate change, including both sudden and slow-onset climate change impacts, is increasing around the world, mainly in countries prone to disaster. In Mozambique, heavy precipitation and destructions associated with floods, tropical cyclones, drought, and famine, sea level rise and land degradation are increasing the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The threats posed by climate change impacts (and violent conflict) in Mozambique, and the spill-over effects of forced displacement, occupy the foreground of political and social debates and have recently forced the government to change its approach. To respond to these changes and challenges, the government has worked to pursue legal reform, with new laws and policies to deal with disaster risk management and internal displacement.

Over the past five years, Mozambique has adopted a new Disaster Management Law, *Lei n.º 10/2020 de 24 de Agosto*, alongside a new national 'Policy and Strategy for Internal Displacement Management' (PSIDM).<sup>1</sup> While these instruments have improved the governance of displacement in Mozambique, neither the Disaster Management Law nor the PSIDM distinguish between the needs of those displaced in the context of conflict and those displaced in the context of climate change and disasters.

This policy brief examines the effectiveness of the PSIDM in particular, focusing on provisions and principles that underpin protection and solutions for IDPs. It notes some of the insufficiencies of the PSIDM and makes recommendations for the Mozambique government for further development of law and policy in this area.

### ISSUES

#### CLIMATE CHANGE AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Climate change is causing alarming effects on internal and cross-border migration and displacement, transforming the landscape of human mobility in Africa. At the end of 2023, around

<sup>1</sup> 'Política e Estratégia de Gestão de Deslocados Internos (PEGDi)', adopted via *Resolution 41/2021*.

34.8 million people were internally displaced in sub-Saharan Africa (corresponding 46% share of the global total, an increase of 17 percent compared with the previous year), of which 2.3 million people were displaced by disasters.<sup>2</sup> The number of *internal* displacements in sub-Saharan Africa reached a record 19.5 million in 2023, up from the 16.5 million reported in 2022 and 42 per cent of the global total. Disasters alone triggered six million displacements across the region.<sup>3</sup> These numbers are projected to increase as the adverse effects of climate change worsen. The World Bank predicts that, by 2050, there could be up to 85.7 million climate migrants in sub-Saharan Africa, in countries predisposed to weather-related hazards such as storm surges, sea-level rise and floods.<sup>4</sup>

Mozambique is among the countries most susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change. It has already suffered the devastating consequences of recurring hazards and disasters, including drought, intense storms and cyclones. The World Bank estimates that Mozambique's average annual temperature increased by 0.6°C between 1960 and 2009. Sea-level rise along Mozambique's coastline is predicted to exceed half a metre by the 2090s, with significant consequences for inhabitants living in low-lying areas. Official data from Mozambique's National Institute for Disaster Risk Management and Reduction estimates that, in 2019 alone, intense cyclones displaced 163,927 people. While there are no official data records for drought-related displacement, in 2015-16, the country suffered from the worst drought it had seen in 35 years, decimating crops and livestock, and causing 1.5 million people to become food insecure.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to climate-related displacement, displacement also frequently occurs in the context of conflict. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), by the end of 2023, conflict and violence triggered 13.5 million internal displacements over 32.5 million total displacements in sub-Saharan Africa. Mozambique is no exception. Low-intensity conflict between the ruling government and the Mozambican National Resistance forces in the central region forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee between 2012 and 2016. The intensification of this conflict resulted in widespread displacement in affected areas, including thousands of people being displaced across borders to Malawi and Zimbabwe.<sup>6</sup> Over the past seven years, conflict perpetrated by non-state armed groups in the north has driven more than 1.4 million people out of their homes, of which 571,468 are returnees.<sup>7</sup> In January 2024, new attacks forced around 1,811 people to flee.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> IDMC & NRC, Global Report on Internal Displacement (2024).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> V. Clement et al, *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration* (2021).

<sup>5</sup> World Food Programme, 'Building systems to anticipate drought in Mozambique: an impact assessment of WFP's capacity strengthening interventions on national systems' (September 2023).

<sup>6</sup> See ACCORD, 'Suppressing the Revival of Conflict in Mozambique through Inclusive National Dialogue' (April 2021).

<sup>7</sup> [Mozambique | Displacement Tracking Matrix \(iom.int\)](#).

<sup>8</sup> See OCHA, 'Mozambique – Displacement in northern Cabo Delgado' Flash Update No. 1 (January 2024).

## **SPECIFIC NEEDS OF PEOPLE DISPLACED IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

IDPs share the same basic civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all people are entitled to, as guaranteed in a range of international treaties, declarations and guidelines. The more specific rights of IDPs are set out in the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Guiding Principles) and the 2009 Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). These instruments provide important guidance to governments regarding preventing internal displacement and protecting and assisting IDPs. While the Guiding Principles is not a binding legal instrument, the Kampala Convention is binding on African states parties to it and is significant as the world's only binding instrument on internal displacement.

In Mozambique, the Guiding Principles and Kampala Convention provide a framework to orient responses those displaced internally, irrespective of whether they were displaced by the impacts of climate change and disasters, or conflict and violence. For both groups, many of the concrete protection concerns are the same, namely: loss of personal documentation, family separation, increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, concerns about housing, land, and property rights, forced relocations, forced returns, and a lack of systems and conditions necessary to enable durable solutions.

However, empirical evidence suggests that the predicament faced by IDPs may also differ depending on whether displacement occurs in the context of climate change or conflict. It may also differ depending on location of displacement, duration of the crisis, and the conditions in which the IDPs live.

For example, the factors that influence decision-making in each of these two contexts may be different. The impacts of climate change, for example, may depend on people's underlying vulnerability, and exposure to shocks and stresses, which in turn are shaped by broader socioeconomic, cultural, and political conditions and processes. The impacts of disasters and climate change may also be perceived as more 'temporary' – particularly in the context of sudden-onset impacts such as extreme weather events – in contrast with the 'longer-term' impacts of conflict.

## **MOZAMBIQUE'S POLICY AND STRATEGY FOR INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**

Following her visit to the country in November 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Paula Gaviria Betancur, stated 'I am encouraged by the early warning and response policies designed to strengthen disaster management, promote reconstruction in conflict-affected areas, and improve responses to internal displacement situations' and added 'Mozambique is at an opportune junction to address existing impediments and reach durable solutions that the internally displaced people deserve'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Human Rights Council. A/HRC/56/47/Add.1: Visit to Mozambique - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Paula Gaviria (Advance unedited version), June 2024.

Mozambique has indeed made significant progress in its response to internal displacement in recent years – in particular, with the PSIDM. The groundwork for this policy was laid in the government’s previous work to strengthen responses to disaster management more generally, including mainstreaming disaster and climate resilience, and disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. However, while Mozambique’s new disaster risk management law, approved in 2020, contained important provisions relating to evacuations, it did not mention displacement at all. In this context, the need for a clearer definition roles and responsibilities with respect to displacement was clear.

By articulating a normative framework specifically tailored to internal displacement, the PSIDM addressed the pre-existing gaps and grey areas in Mozambique’s more general disaster management laws and framework. The PSIDM recognises that displacement management requires a whole-of-government approach and identifies roles and responsibilities for a wide range of authorities and ministry lines. Importantly, it confers responsibility for facilitating coordination between all the actors on an existing government body – the National Institute for Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (Instituto Nacional de Gestão do Risco de Desastres).

The PSIDM also aims to strengthen self-reliance and access to (sustainable) services for both climate and conflict-displaced persons, by identifying key rights to protection against forced displacement, and protection and assistance during displacement. It clearly defines the government as having primary responsibility for assisting displaced persons during all phases of displacement. Further, it guarantees the right to restitution of lost property.

However, the PSIDM has shortcomings when it comes to dealing with climate change-related internal displacement in particular. While the PSIDM recognises climate change and related events (eg cyclones, droughts, floods, land degradation, coastal erosion) as drivers of internal displacement, it nevertheless treats conflict as the main cause of internal displacement. For example, the word conflict appears in the policy 15 times, while climate change appears only four times.

Prioritising conflict-related internal displacement risks minimising the threats posed by climate change in a country highly exposed to climate hazards, and in doing so, could impeded the actions needed to address such challenges. It could also limit the country’s vision when it comes to tackling internal displacement. For instance, while innovative solutions to internal displacement cannot be piloted in the context of active conflict (such as that of northern Mozambique), such innovation can potentially be piloted in the context of climate hazards – for example, in the provinces of Sofala, Zambezia and Manica, Inhambane, which are recovering from the effect of cyclones and droughts.

**‘While the Government is now geared toward development initiatives for IDPs and host communities, these should complement, rather than come at the expense of protection and humanitarian assistance since the basic needs of the people still remain acute.’**

**Paula Gaviria Betancur, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons**

Lastly, there are a few areas in which the policy provides insufficient legal protection to internally displaced persons. There are no guarantees regarding relocation processes, and acts of arbitrary displacement are not prohibited nor criminalised. As stated in the policy itself, while international instruments are largely reflected in the PSIDM, they cannot be used to alter, replace, or modify the domestic frameworks. The government may also execute forced evacuations at any time, under the principle of guaranteeing the safety and security of individuals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mozambique's government agencies should cooperate in implementing PSIDM, fostering its important role in ensuring access to safety, protection, and lasting solutions for IDPs. This implementation is a key opportunity to strengthen IDP management measures and provisions in the country; and also, to assess existing protection gaps and vacuum.
2. Led by the government of Mozambique, humanitarian actors and development partners should further support the development and implementation of the PSIDM to more specifically address the needs of people displaced in the context of climate change and disasters,
3. The government of Mozambique should update the existing DRM Law or, ideally, develop a stand-alone displacement law governing internal displacement to support and be consistent with the PSIDM.