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Famine alert in Cabo Delgado: Government must find alternative ways to guarantee food for displaced families

- The Famine Early Warning Network (Fews Network) has just issued a high risk of famine alert in northern Mozambique if additional funding is not channeled soon to the World Food Program (WFP). Due to food shortages, the UN agency supporting hundreds of thousands of displaced people in Cabo Delgado is considering providing selective humanitarian assistance, targeting the most vulnerable populations, including IDPs and host communities. The vulnerability-based selection process should be finalized by the last quarter of 2022¹.



¹ https://fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/MOZAMBIQUE_FSOU_April_2022_PT.pdf



Credits: Eskinder Debebe

At this time, selective humanitarian assistance is being carried out in areas affected by Cyclone Gombe and associated flooding, with WFP providing support for about 99,000 people in Zambezia and Nampula provinces. The Famine Early Warning Network notes that humanitarian needs may remain high in areas affected by conflict, floods and drought, even after the harvest begins in April and May.

Last March, WFP and humanitarian partners provided assistance with full rations to about one million beneficiaries in Cabo Delgado and Nampula, about 137,000 more beneficiaries than in February. A highlight note is that the UN agency provided assistance to about 25,000 beneficiaries in Nangade district for the first time since 2019, and resumed food assistance distribution in Macomia district in April². Nangade and Macomia are part of the districts in Cabo Delgado most affected by violent extremism, a situation that has made humanitarian assistance unviable for a long time.

About 61% of the humanitarian food assistance was provided in-kind, 38% through food stamps and 1% through Immediate Reaction Rations - distributed to populations on the move

or in hard to reach areas. Resource constraints in April and May led WFP to distribute half rations - equivalent to 39% of a 2,100 kilocalorie diet - to about 850,000 people in Cabo Delgado and 74,000 in Nampula and Niassa³.

In Cabo Delgado, acute food insecurity persists due to violent extremism, as insurgents continue to carry out small-scale attacks and killings, mainly in the districts of Mueda, Nangade, and Meluco. In addition to sporadic attacks, insurgents seek to loot food and supplies in unprotected locations. According to the Famine Early Warning Network, some IDPs are returning to government-authorized areas, but most remain reticent due to security concerns.

Difficulties in accessing land for food production that IDPs face in their host areas also contribute to limiting their productive capacity. The result: the level of need remains high, with the majority of IDPs likely to remain dependent on emergency humanitarian assistance to cover their food consumption deficits.

In addition to humanitarian food assistance, most IDPs remain dependent on gift/support sales and limited opportunities for skilled and casual labor. "When families do earn some income,

² https://fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/MOZAMBIQUE_FSOU_April_2022_PT.pdf

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most spend it on food purchases. As the security situation gradually improves, humanitarian assistance is increasingly reaching new locations that were previously not accessible, such as Nangade and Macomia districts”⁴.

The International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix recorded some 12,192 people on the move between March 30 and April 19, 2022, an increase of nearly 62 percent over the same period previously. The main reasons for movement include the intention to return to places of origin (71%) and attacks (19%).

This is not the first time that humanitarian agencies have reported a shortage of food products

to assist internally displaced people in Cabo Delgado. In August 2021, WFP drew attention to the possibility of food aid being suspended if there was no “urgent international support.” Lack of support limited humanitarian food aid to IDPs in the final months of last year ⁵.

In light of the famine alert in northern Mozambique, particularly in Cabo Delgado, the government must find alternatives to guarantee food assistance to the more than 850,000 displaced people. The high hunger risk alert should serve as a warning for the Mozambican authorities to define a strategy for food assistance to the displaced, in a context where humanitarian agencies are under financial constraints.

⁴ https://fewns.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/MOZAMBIQUE_FSOU_April_2022_PT.pdf

⁵ <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/cabo-delgado-falta-de-apoios-limita-ajuda-alimentar-humanit%C3%A1ria-a-deslocados/a-59986971>



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