Beat: News

UNHCR Protection Update: Concerning Displacement Developments

Situation in Mocímboa da Praia

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In a startling revelation by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 6,000 people have been displaced from Mocímboa da Praia District, Mozambique, in less than a month following attacks by non-state armed groups (NSAG). This recent displacement has given rise to numerous protection incidents, from family separations and gender-based violence to abductions and civilian casualties.

Following attacks in Naquitengue village on September 14th, NSAG infiltrated Narere on September 26th, leading to a mass exodus of the local population to Mocímboa da Praia Sede. Insurgents reportedly fired shots in the air and warned villagers against any collaboration with military forces, sparking panic and an urgent flight to safety.

While families from affected areas like Narere, Calugu, Luxete, and Nazimoja found refuge in the Ntende neighborhood of Moçimboa da Praia Sede, the situation remains critical. The presence of electoral activities and high-level visits from Maputo have compounded the challenges faced by protection partners in adequately addressing the needs of the displaced populations.

Key Protection Concerns Highlighted in the UNHCR Update Include:

1. Protection Threats: Civilians face consistent threats from NSAGs, with reports of residents in Ulo village being beaten. There have also been cases of child abductions and confirmed usage of improvised explosive devices by NSAGs in the vicinity of Mbau and Limala villages. This volatile situation endangers the returning population in Mocímboa da Praia District, making them vulnerable to further security threats and displacement.

2. Early Return Concerns: Authorities have encouraged internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Naquitengue to return home. However, fearing insecurity, these IDPs have requested escorts by the Rwandan Contingent, potentially placing them at greater risk during the return process.

3. Child Protection and GBV: Approximately 60 children, mostly cared for by female-headed households, have lost a parent due to conflict. Adolescent pregnancies, some reportedly resulting from military personnel, have also emerged as a severe concern. Furthermore, women have reported violations and abuses by local leaders during displacement, highlighting an urgent need to spread awareness on gender-based violence.

4. Access to Justice: A glaring gap exists in accessing justice, especially for GBV survivors. With many essential service providers, including the prosecutor's office and legal aid, having not yet resumed their functions, victims claim to be without avenues to report violations or abuses.

5. Civil Documentation: Numerous displaced families have reportedly lost essential civil documents during their flight. Lack of proper documentation subjects these individuals to risks like movement restrictions, extortion, arbitrary detentions, and discrimination, underlining an urgent need for documentation access.

6. Mental Health and Special Needs: The trauma from the attacks, coupled with anxiety about their uncertain future, has led to a surge in mental health issues among the IDPs. Additionally, the vulnerable, such as those with disabilities, the elderly, and children, especially suffer in the absence of specialized support services.

7. Community-Based Protection: The displacement has disrupted community structures, hindering the community's ability to receive information about available services.

(Protection Update #2: Forced Displacement in Mocímboa Da Praia (Oct 17th 2023) - Mozambique | ReliefWeb, 2023)

In light of these revelations, there is an imminent call to action for the international community and stakeholders. With limited protection partners presently supporting displaced families in the Ntende neighborhood, and only one organization, Save the Children, addressing their needs, there is a dire necessity for increased involvement and support.

The situation in Mocímboa da Praia underscores the ongoing challenges faced by displaced populations worldwide and the urgent need for coordinated and effective international intervention.

For the full situation report and details, please visit the original article on ReliefWeb.

Source:

Protection Update #2: Forced Displacement in Mocímboa da Praia (Oct 17th 2023) - Mozambique | ReliefWeb. (2023, October 17). Reliefweb.int. https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/protection-update-2-forced-displacement-mocimboa-da-praia-oct-17th-2023

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