

**Mozambican Brief 3 | by Athenkosi Thoba, SALO | May 2022**

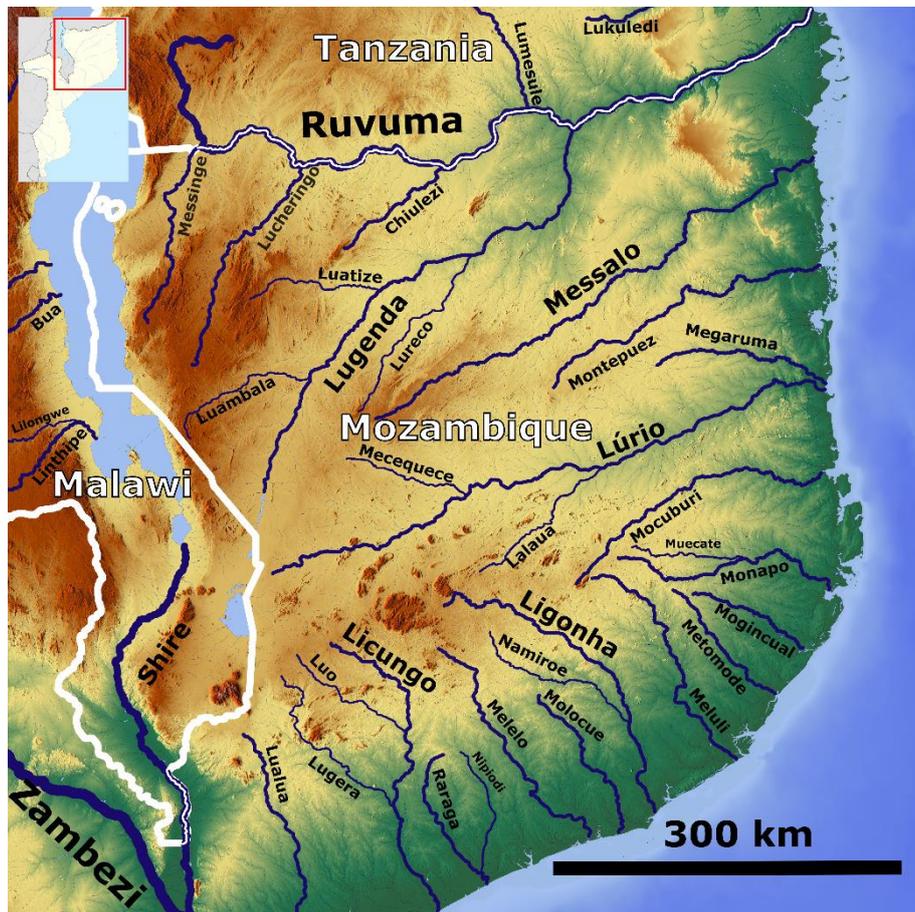


Image: [File:Rivers of northern Mozambique OSM.png](#) by Hans Braxmeier & Peter in s is marked with [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

## **Background**

Towards the end of 2017, Mozambique experienced several violent attacks by insurgents seeking to establish a breakaway regime. Since then, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region has had its hands full. The escalation of violence in the province of Cabo Delgado has prompted several countries – including Angola, Botswana, member states of the European Union, Rwanda, South Africa, the United States, and others – to send soldiers, equipment, and military advisers to the country to help government forces fight the insurgency.<sup>1</sup> Forces from these countries have remained present in Mozambique alongside the Mozambican Defense Force.

The deployment of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) has improved the security situation in the country. The eight SADC troop-contributing countries comprising SAMIM are South Africa, Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia.<sup>2</sup> Between October 2021 to January 2022, it is reported that SAMIM concluded two major operations.<sup>3</sup> These operations have led to advancements in capturing and destroying several Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ) bases in the area east of Chai settlement and the Messalo River in Macomia district in Cabo Delgado Province.

This progress was echoed during the SADC Troika ministerial meeting in April 2022, when it reflected on the situation in Mozambique. Emphasising the need to restore peace in Cabo Delgado, South Africa's International Relations Minister, Naledi Pandor, indicated that the SADC mission has made progress in repelling insurgent attacks.<sup>4</sup> Key areas of progress include that the SADC mission has been able to not only kill several insurgents but also rescue 16 women, eight children, and two elderly males believed to have been abducted by the insurgents.<sup>5</sup> The mission has also confiscated weapons that include RPG-7 launchers, PKM machine guns, a large quantity of AK-47 assault rifle grenades, and other equipment.

## **Humanitarian Implications of the Insurgency**

The continued violence between ASWJ and the Mozambican forces has led to a spike in abductions and has destroyed many homes. This is deepening the humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado. More than 700,000 people have fled their homes and been

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<sup>1</sup> *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*. 2021. "The Islamist insurgency in Mozambique", August 2021. Accessed on 10 May 2022 from <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2021/the-islamist-insurgency-in-mozambique>

<sup>2</sup> Sam Basch. 2022. "SANDF gives an update on Mozambique deployment", 14 April 2022, *Defence Web*. Accessed on 10 May 2022 from <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/sandf-gives-an-update-on-mozambique-deployment/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Enitan Thompson. 2022. "SADC commits to engage international partners to support Mozambique mission", 5 April 2022, *TDPel Media*. Accessed on 10 May 2022 from <https://tdpelmedia.com/sadc-commits-to-engage-international-partners-to-support-mozambique-mission>

<sup>5</sup> Sam Basch. 2022. "SANDF gives an update on Mozambique deployment", 14 April 2022, *Defence Web*. Accessed on 10 May 2022 from <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/sandf-gives-an-update-on-mozambique-deployment/>

displaced since ASWJ's insurgency began four years ago.<sup>6</sup> According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the armed conflict has exacerbated already severe food shortages in the province.<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Refugee Agency has reported that the violence continues to blight the lives of around 783,000 people.<sup>8</sup> As such, the violence has harmed the work of many UN agencies and other humanitarian partners in terms of accessing vulnerable people.

The country has already experienced severe periods of climate-related hazards such as droughts, floods, and cyclones, causing displacements and disruption of livelihoods. Mozambique is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate disasters and ranks 154 out of 181 countries in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (2016) that measures vulnerability to climate change.<sup>9</sup> On the ground, this, combined with the ongoing violence between ASWJ and government forces, has made things worse for ordinary people. According to Madhumita Paul (*Down to Earth*), "from the beginning of 2022, Mozambique has been battered by tropical storms and cyclones along with its northern coastal areas. These have affected thousands of families, including refugees and people internally displaced by the ongoing violence."<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that in terms of the impact that the violence has had, Mozambique faces many challenges at a time when humanitarian operations are restricted by chronic underfunding and blockages by the fighting forces. Indeed, the UNHCR echoed the same sentiment when it stated that the needs in Mozambique continue to grow.<sup>11</sup> According to the agency, resources to tackle these challenges are not enough, and to continue and scale up its operations in Mozambique, it needs around US\$36.7 million in 2022 alone.

As of September 2021, the Mozambican government and the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, estimated that over 800,000 people had been internally displaced.<sup>12</sup> According to the 2022 *World Report* by Human Rights Watch (HRW), "the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) increased considerably in March 2022, when more than 88,000 people fled Palma town, following a major attack by ASWJ."<sup>13</sup> Many of the fleeing civilians sought refuge in Quitunda village, about five kilometres from

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<sup>6</sup> Judite Adriano. 2022. "Violence Increases in Northern Mozambique", 17 March 2022, *Relief Web*. Accessed on 10 May 2022 from <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/violence-increases-northern-mozambique>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. 2022. "Northern Mozambique Response overview – January 2022. Accessed on 10 May 2022 from <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/1471125/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Madhumita Paul. 2022. "Climate shocks, conflicts worsen displacement in Mozambique: UNHCR", 12 May 2022, *Down to Earth*. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/africa/climate-shocks-conflicts-worsen-displacement-in-mozambique-unhcr-82824>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). 2022. "UNHCR raises alarm over Mozambique's "invisible" crisis as climate shocks worsen displacement", 10 May 2022. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/5/627a6c404/unhcr-raises-alarm-mozambiques-invisible-crisis-climate-shocks-worsen-displacement.html>

<sup>12</sup> *Human Rights Watch*. 2022. "World Report 2022". Accessed on 01 June 2022 from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/mozambique>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

Palma, where they lacked water, food, and other basic services.<sup>14</sup> The continued attack on villages and the killing of civilians, mostly women and children, have posed a great humanitarian threat in these provinces.

It is increasingly visible that, while the SADC mission continues to neutralise the threat posed by ASWJ, humanitarian conditions are also affected. Indeed, the World Food Programme (WFP) had suspended food distribution to Palma district in some instances due to security risks.<sup>15</sup> This signifies the fact that, while Mozambique is faced with climate change issues, the conflict poses further issues concerning food support and distribution in these provinces.

According to the UNHCR, in areas that it can access, the agency and other humanitarian partners continue to scale up protection and assistance activity and emphasise how vital it is that they can continue to do so.<sup>16</sup> In terms of humanitarian assistance, the *“UNHCR has provided legal assistance to 21,500 people from both displaced and host communities in Cabo Delgado and reached some 55,000 people with gender-based violence prevention and response awareness campaigns.”*<sup>17</sup> There is an increasing need to address the ever-growing humanitarian challenges. While SADC has focused on halting the spread of the ASWJ insurgency, much attention is needed to tackle the humanitarian threats posed by the violence.

### ***The Current State of the Violence***

The *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)* has indicated that as of February 2022, insecurity persisted in Cabo Delgado province.<sup>18</sup> It pointed out that, *“this is due to sporadic attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), particularly in the districts of Meluco and Nangade, resulting in the displacement of 10,209 people.”*<sup>19</sup> Out of these, 49 per cent were children, 28 per cent were women, and 5 per cent were people with vulnerabilities, including unaccompanied or separated children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and the elderly. The safety of women, children, and vulnerable people remain threatened by the continuing violence and requires necessary intervention. The indications so far are pointing to a bleak future in terms of addressing humanitarian needs, given the standoff between warring parties.

Several incidents of civilian killings have been recorded since the conflict started. According to Human Rights Watch, during the first week of March, the insurgents

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<sup>14</sup> *Human Rights Watch*. 2022. “World Report 2022”. Accessed on 01 June 2022 from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/mozambique>

<sup>15</sup> Africa News. 2021. “WFP halts suspend flights in northern Mozambique”, 4 March 2021. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from <https://www.africanews.com/2021/04/04/wfp-halts-suspends-flights-in-northern-mozambique/>

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Refugee Agency (*UNHCR*). 2022. “UNHCR raises alarm over Mozambique’s “invisible” crisis as climate shocks worsen displacement”, 10 May 2022. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/5/627a6c404/unhcr-raises-alarm-mozambiques-invisible-crisis-climate-shocks-worsen-displacement.html>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2022. “Mozambique: Cabo Delgado, Nampula & Niassa Humanitarian Snapshot”, *OCHA*, 21 March 2022. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA%20Mozambique\\_20220321\\_MOZ\\_Snaps\\_hot\\_February\\_FINAL.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA%20Mozambique_20220321_MOZ_Snaps_hot_February_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

reportedly killed at least 15 civilians in the villages of Mbuidi, Malamba, and Nangõmba.<sup>20</sup> The human rights organisation pointed out that in February, insurgents attacked at least eight villages across Cabo Delgado, completely burning down five of them.

### **SADC's New Strategy**

SADC recently reported on the progress of its mission in Mozambique. The regional body pointed to several achievements that the mission has attained so far in its quest to put an end to insurgent attacks. SAMIM is inflicting “*massive losses*” on insurgents in northern Mozambique, enabling locals to start returning to their normal lives, according to South African Defence Force Chief General Rudzani Maphwanya.<sup>21</sup> These achievements have resulted in ASWJ's capability decreasing and the insurgency group conducting fewer offensives.

The regional body has proposed a new strategy moving forward. The SADC Troika approved the transition from the current scenario six, which requires rapid deployment capacity, to scenario five, which is the use of a multidimensional force with a robust mandate.<sup>22</sup> It is important to understand what the current approach entails. SADC's approach to intervention is drawn from the African Union's Peace Support Operations (AU PSO). The AU PSO's doctrine is based on six mission scenarios, according to an AU document.<sup>23</sup>

*“The first scenario is the deployment of AU/regional military advice to a political mission. The second is an AU/regional observer mission co-deployed with a United Nations mission. The third is the deployment of a standalone AU/regional observer mission. The fourth is the deployment of an AU/peacekeeping force for chapter VI and preventive deployment missions (and peacebuilding).”<sup>24</sup>*

The 5<sup>th</sup> scenario, the current one adopted by the SADC mission in the conflict in Mozambique, articulates the use of the AU peacekeeping force for complex, multidimensional peacekeeping missions, including those involving low-level spoilers. This has been the basis of the SAMIM operation in the country since it was deployed and before the SADC summit that took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2022. The scenario “*comprises AU intervention where the international community does not act promptly*”

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<sup>20</sup> Judite Adriano. 2022. “Violence Increases in Northern Mozambique”, *Human Rights Watch*, 17 March 2022. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/17/violence-increases-northern-mozambique>

<sup>21</sup> Peter Fabricius. 2022. “SANDF chief says regional force in Mozambique is winning”, *Mail & Guardian*, 13 April 2022. Accessed on 13 May 2022 from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-04-13-sandf-chief-says-regional-force-in-mozambique-is-winning/>

<sup>22</sup> Fredson Guilengue. 2022. “What does SADC's new military approach in Mozambique mean?”, *Mail & Guardian*, 27 April 2022. Accessed on 15 May 2022 from <https://mg.co.za/opinion/2022-04-27-what-does-sadcs-new-military-approach-in-mozambique-mean/>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Africa Union Peace and Security. 2003. “Policy Framework for The Establishment of The African Standby Force and The Military Staff Committee (Part I)”, *African Union Doctrine on Peace Support Operations*, 16 May 2003. Accessed on 15 May 2022 from <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/asf-policy-framework-en.pdf>

or where it requires the AU to act on its behalf, such as in genocide or humanitarian crises for example. This scenario requires rapid deployment of robust military forces in a period of 14 days."<sup>25</sup>

According to the AU's doctrine, the organisation establishes 30 days as the deployment time for each of these scenarios. For Mozambique, "SADC deployed its mission months after the crisis had begun because Mozambique was reluctant to have SADC troops fighting on its soil, favouring private military companies such as the Russian Wagner Group and the South African Dyck Advisory Group — and later on the Rwandan forces, based on a bilateral agreement."<sup>26</sup>

It is important to understand that SADC's new approach is informed by the achievements and advances it has made so far in fighting the insurgents and taking back some territories. The regional body has seen the need to enhance and consolidate the achievements made by SAMIM on the ground. Indeed, SADC's new approach seems to embody a mission that is more focused on consolidating the territorial gains obtained so far, "coupled with more involvement in humanitarian actions, although still capable of conducting robust military operations when required or under attack."<sup>27</sup> SADC's commitment to what it calls a "robust" military presence could be made possible after securing financial support from the European Union, channelled through AU mechanisms.

## **Conclusion**

The violence in Mozambique continues to have a significant impact on the lives of ordinary Mozambicans. The country is taking all important measures to curb the spread of the insurgent movement. Recently, Mozambique's parliament passed a tough anti-terror bill that seeks to impose stiff prison sentences for convicted insurgents, but also for anyone spreading misinformation about the country's insurgency.<sup>28</sup> While these may be viewed as presenting opportunities for the government to deal with insurgents, there are concerns that the media may be targeted by the government and media freedom may be curbed. One of the more pressing issues for the Mozambique government, SADC, and international partners is to push for the reconstruction drive and to continue providing humanitarian aid. Termed *Resilience and Development Strategy for the North*, this reconstruction project is expected to be funded by donors. Its document is written by the Mozambique government with input from donors. The strategy is the first official document to recognise the role of internal factors in contributing to the conflict.<sup>29</sup> According to Borges Nhamirre (*ISS*), the document "cites socio-economic inequalities, frustration related to the exploitation of natural resources, especially among youth in the north,

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<sup>25</sup> Fredson Guilengue. 2022. "What does SADC's new military approach in Mozambique mean?", *Mail & Guardian*, 27 April 2022. Accessed on 15 May 2022 from <https://mg.co.za/opinion/2022-04-27-what-does-sadcs-new-military-approach-in-mozambique-mean/>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> *East Coast Radio*. 2021. "Mozambique approves tough anti-terror bill", 20 May 2022. Accessed on 20 May 2022 from <https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/mozambique-approves-tough-anti-terror-bill/>

<sup>29</sup> Borges Nhamirre. 2022. "Mozambique shifts gear with its new strategy for the north", *ISS*, 8 February 2022. Accessed on 26 May 2022 from <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/mozambique-shifts-gear-with-its-new-strategy-for-the-north>

*political and economic exclusion, and perceived marginalisation by the local population.*"<sup>30</sup> The reconstruction plan is the brainchild of the Mozambican government and was announced in September 2021 and was sold to SADC and the international community. Many analysts and civil society groups have emphasised that this economic reconstruction should focus on local communities where many people have suffered due to the conflict and climate-related hazards in the past few years.

*The Dialogue Online*, is an online extension of SALO's national, regional and international consensus-building dialogues (typically workshops, seminars and small meetings) on Peace and Security, Development, SA Foreign Policy, Gender (including LGBTI rights), Natural Resource Governance, Human Rights and the rights of migrant communities through *weekly written articles and/or commentary*. It is a channel through which critical issues raised during dialogue events are synthesised and shared with wider audiences. By taking the dialogue 'online', the conversation is enabled to continue beyond the limits of space and time and to a wider audience.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid

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