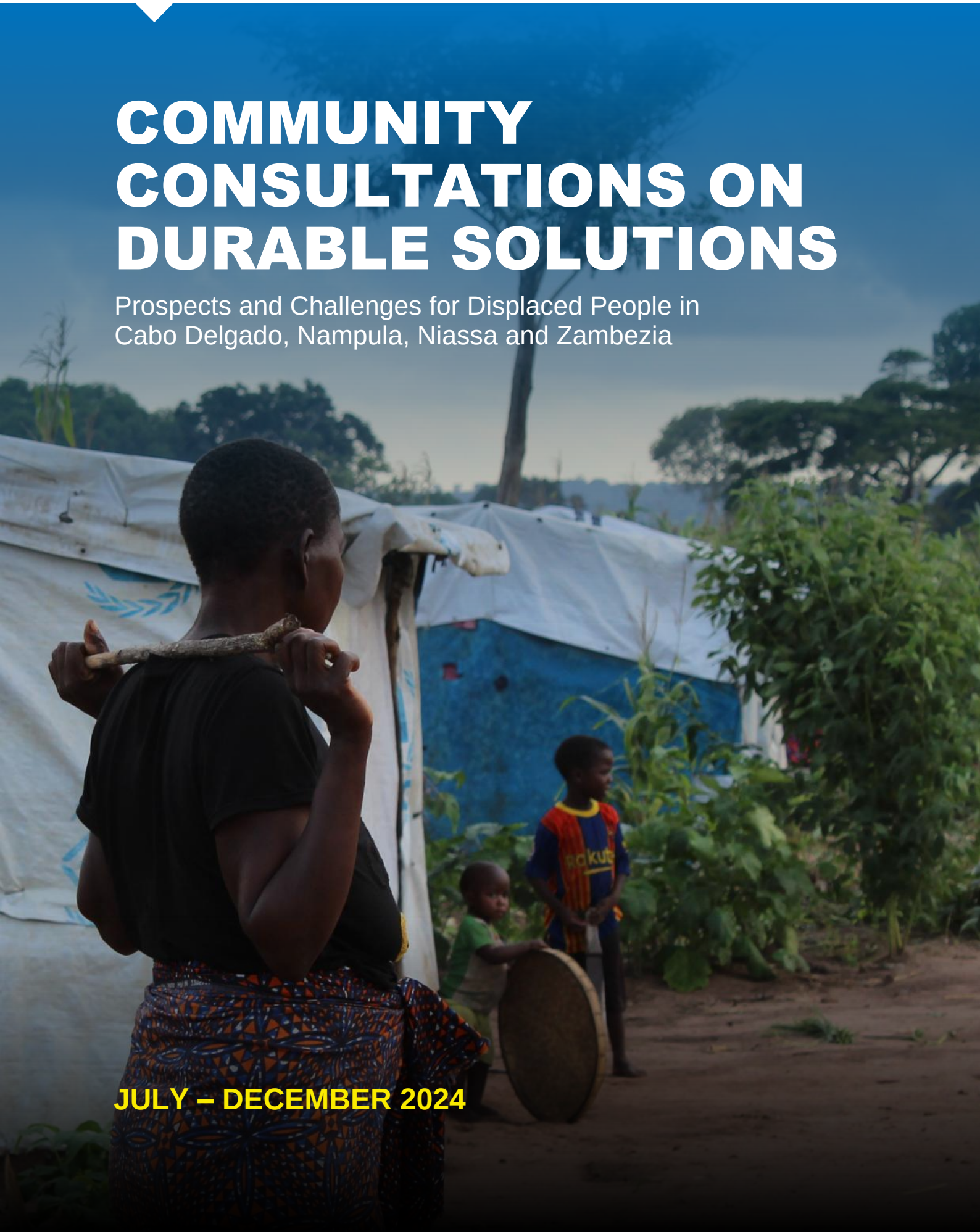
UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

MOZAMBIQUE

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS ON DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Prospects and Challenges for Displaced People in Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Niassa and Zambezia



JULY – DECEMBER 2024

Acknowledgements

The findings in this report result from community consultations with forcibly displaced people and other people affected by the conflict in northern Mozambique, led by UNHCR, in partnership with Helpcode and in close collaboration with the Government of Mozambique, specifically the National Institute of Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (INGD). We are grateful for the collaboration with and feedback from UNHCR's partners, as well as national and local authorities, and for the support of the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund and its generous donors—Switzerland, Norway and Germany.

Most importantly, we thank the affected people themselves, who were willing to share their time, expertise, opinions, hopes and plans with us. If the findings herein can help guide authorities and other relevant actors towards more effectively supporting affected people to reach durable solutions to their displacement, we have achieved our goal.

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INGD

Internal Displacement Solutions Fund

helpcode

COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Displaced woman in Mueda District, Cabo Delgado. © UNHCR/Isadora Zoni

Introduction

Background

Violent insurgency by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado has **displaced over a million people** since the conflict began in 2017, with the majority displaced in Cabo Delgado and with a significant number displaced in Nampula and Niassa. This protection crisis has been characterized by grave human rights violations, including child rights violations; gender-based violence (GBV); housing, land and property (HLP) violations; family separation; and movement restrictions; as well as challenges to access legal documentation; justice and legal aid; mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS); education, shelter, healthcare and other basic services. Women, children, older people and people with disabilities are disproportionately affected.

While attacks, mass displacements, and severe humanitarian and protection needs persist, some areas have undergone relative stabilization, allowing for the spontaneous return of large portions of the population. Additionally, after more than half a decade of displacement, many displaced people decide to remain in the place of displacement to locally integrate instead of returning home. Others might prefer to relocate to other areas of Mozambique, seeing no prospects for restarting their lives in the place of displacement or place of origin, and instead seek integration in a new location. As displaced people seek to restart their lives, the Government, as the primary duty bearer, as well as humanitarian, development and peace actors, must **support them on their pathways towards durable solutions.**

Purpose and Scope

This report presents the findings of UNHCR's community consultations on durable solutions during Semester Two (Jul-Dec), 2024. It represents a central component of UNHCR's larger Community Engagement on Durable Solutions project being implemented in 2024-2025. UNHCR and partner Helpcode, in collaboration with and support to the Government of Mozambique's National Institute of Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (INGD), jointly conducted community consultations with displaced people and returnees concerning:

- their intentions on durable solutions;
- challenges to local integration in displacement areas and reintegration in return areas; and
- information and communication needs around durable solutions.

Host community members were also consulted on the relevant topics above.

Objectives

The objectives of the report and UNHCR's wider Community Engagement on Durable Solutions project are to ensure that:

1. affected people are at the center of the UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and
2. their voices inform durable solutions programming and initiatives.

> ***"Going back is not an option for me. I want to stay, study and become a nurse so I can help others."***
> — Eunice, displaced woman in Pemba, Cabo Delgado

> ***"We would like to hear that the war has ended, so we can live at peace on our land and in our homes."***
> — Returnee girls, Incularino, Palma, Cabo Delgado

Methodology

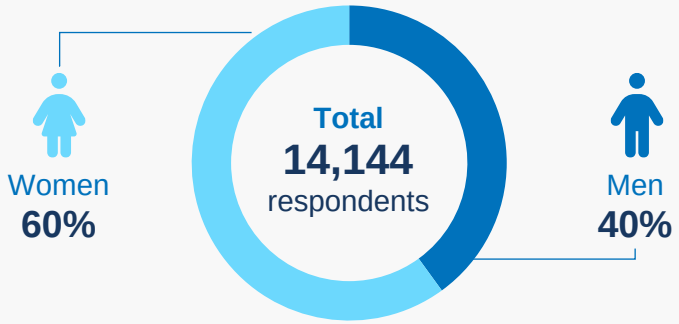
This report is based on quantitative and qualitative community consultations carried out between July to December 2024 in Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Niassa and Zambezia provinces of Mozambique. The quantitative component employed the KoBo data collection tool and interviews were conducted at the household level. Sample sizes in all four provinces were statistically representative. The qualitative component relied on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with community leaders and other influential community figures, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with different Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) groups and individuals across displaced, returned and host community populations.

Quantitative component

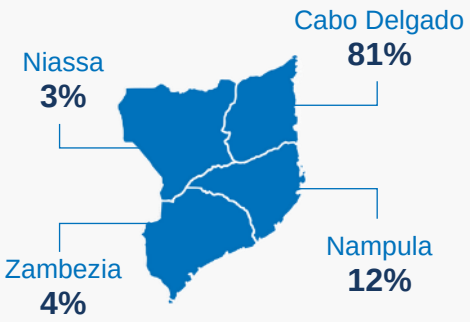
Overall, 14,144 household consultations were conducted, of which 7,990 were displaced households and 6,154 were returnee households. The data was collected from displaced people living in sites and host communities and from returnees in the places of origin. 60 per cent of respondents were women and 40 per cent were men. 88 per cent were 18 to 59 years old and 12 per cent were 60+ years old. The average household size was almost 4.9 people. 42 per cent of respondents were displaced people in IDP sites, 15 per cent were displaced people in host communities, and 44 per cent were returnees in the place of origin. 67 per cent of the interviewed households had at least one person with at least one specific need, with the most prominent being people with specific legal and physical protection needs (usually related to a lack of legal documentation); people with a disability; and people with a serious medical condition.

DEMOGRAPHY

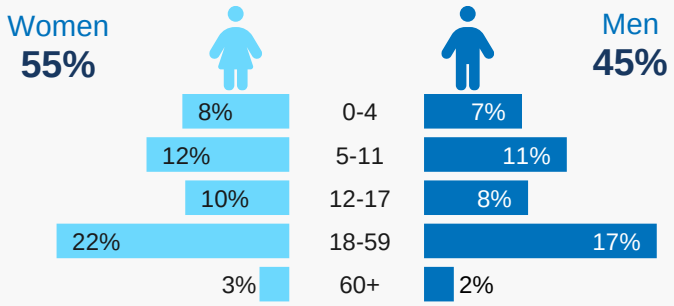
Respondent composition



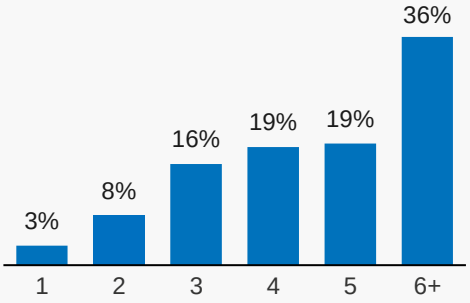
Household distribution



Household composition



Household size distribution



Province	Households consulted	% of women household respondents	Average household size
Cabo Delgado	11,489	60%	4.9
Nampula	1,653	57%	5.4
Niassa	399	57%	4.5
Zambezia	603	53%	4.3
Total	**14,144**	**60%**	**4.9**

Qualitative component

The quantitative household consultations were complemented by FGDs and KIIs with displaced people, returnees and host community members in Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Zambezia.[1] 107 FGDs and 30 KIIs were conducted with displaced people. 65 FGDs and 13 KIIs were conducted with returnees. 69 FGDs and 21 KIIs were conducted with host community members. The qualitative data is integrated into the narratives that accompany each visualization in this report, when relevant. An AGD approach was applied to the FGDs, which were broken down into groups of boys (12 to 17 yrs old), girls (12 to 17 yrs old), men (18 to 59 yrs old), women (18 to 59 yrs old), older people (60+ yrs old) and people with disabilities.

Province	Focus group discussions	Key informant interviews
Cabo Delgado	124	27
Nampula	69	20
Zambezia	48	17
Total	**241**	**64**

[1] *Qualitative data was not collected in Niassa due to capacity and logistical limitations.*

Focus group discussion with displaced women at Corrane site, Meconta, Nampula.

© Helpcode

Findings

1. Overview: Intentions on Durable Solutions[2]

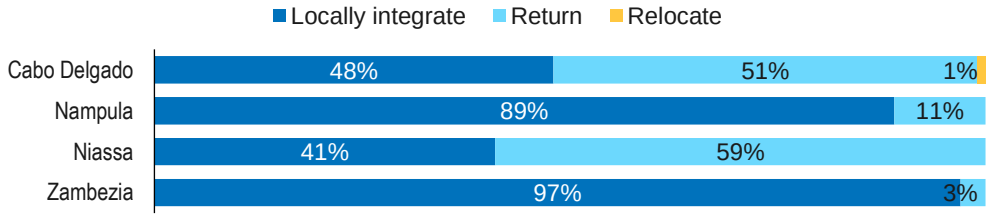
60% Locally integrate

39% Return

0.4% Relocate

1.1. As displacement becomes more protracted, a larger proportion of displaced people intend to stay and locally integrate.

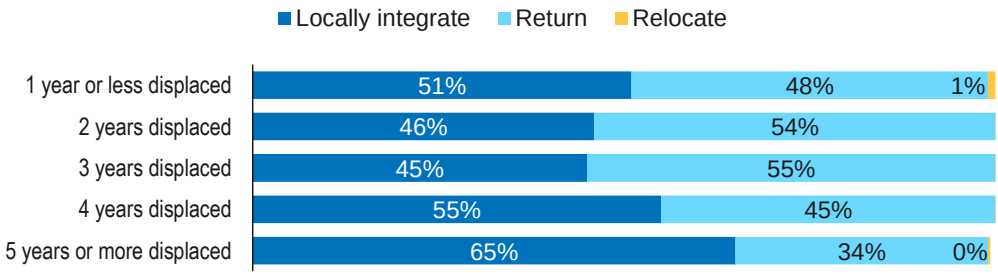
Chart 1. Intentions by province



- There was a **significant increase in the intention to locally integrate** from all previous UNHCR community consultations, signalling that the longer displacement lasts, the more likely people are to decide to locally integrate. It further suggests that many of those who wanted to return already have.
- Virtually all respondents in **Zambezia** and most in **Nampula** intend to locally integrate.
- A significantly higher proportion of displaced respondents in host communities, 70 per cent, intend to locally integrate compared to 57 per cent of displaced respondents in sites (disaggregation not visualized here).

1.2. Number of years displaced positively correlates with intention to locally integrate.

Chart 2. Intentions, by length of displacement



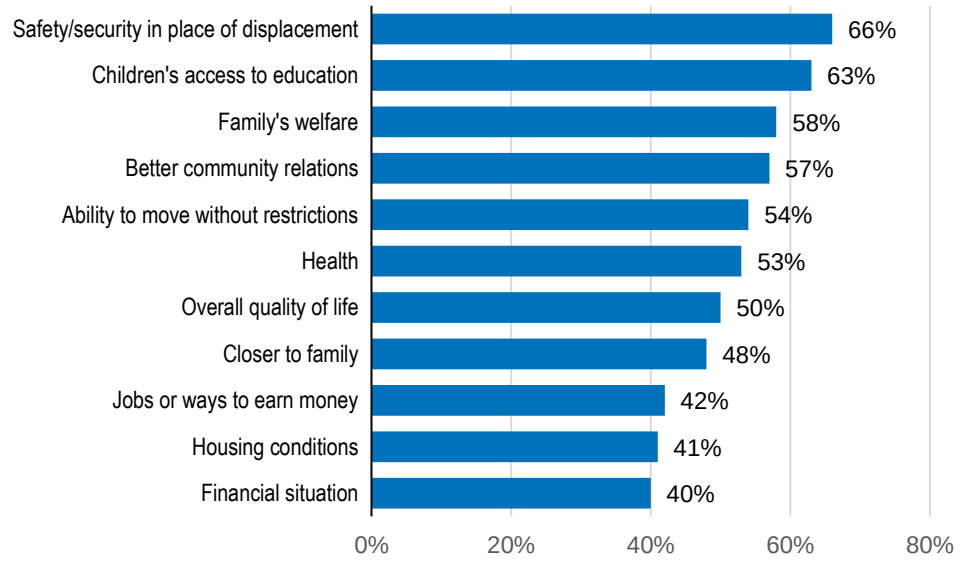
The longer one is displaced, the higher the likelihood of choosing local integration. People displaced for one to three years show the lowest intention to locally integrate, with a sharp increase at four and five years.

[2] *Findings in the Intentions on Durable Solutions section are based on 7,990 IDP household interviews, 107 IDP FGDs and 30 IDP KIIs.*

2. Local integration intention

2.1. Security and children's access to education are among the main motivations for choosing local integration.

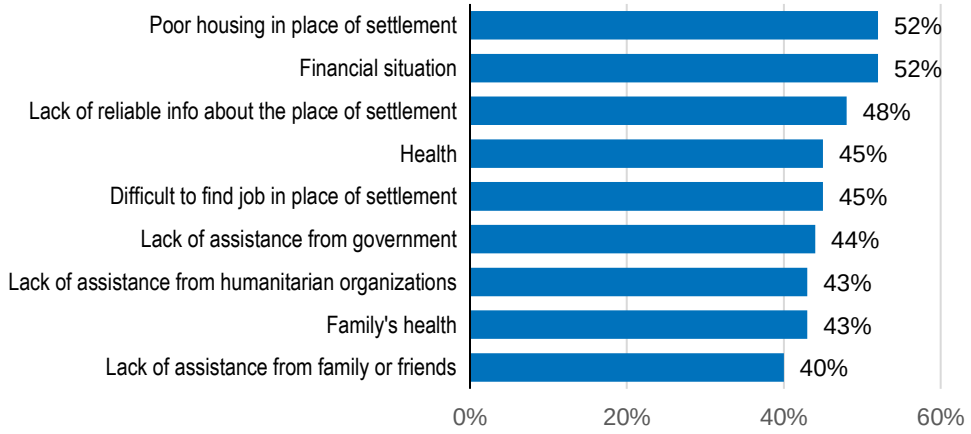
Chart 3. Major reasons for intending to locally integrate



FGDs and KIIs confirm that displaced people see their current locations as safer and with increased opportunities, while others pointed to trauma in the place of origin as the main reason for staying.

2.2. Inadequate housing, lack of livelihoods opportunities, and lack of information pose the greatest challenges for local integration.

Chart 4. Obstacles likely to prevent local integration



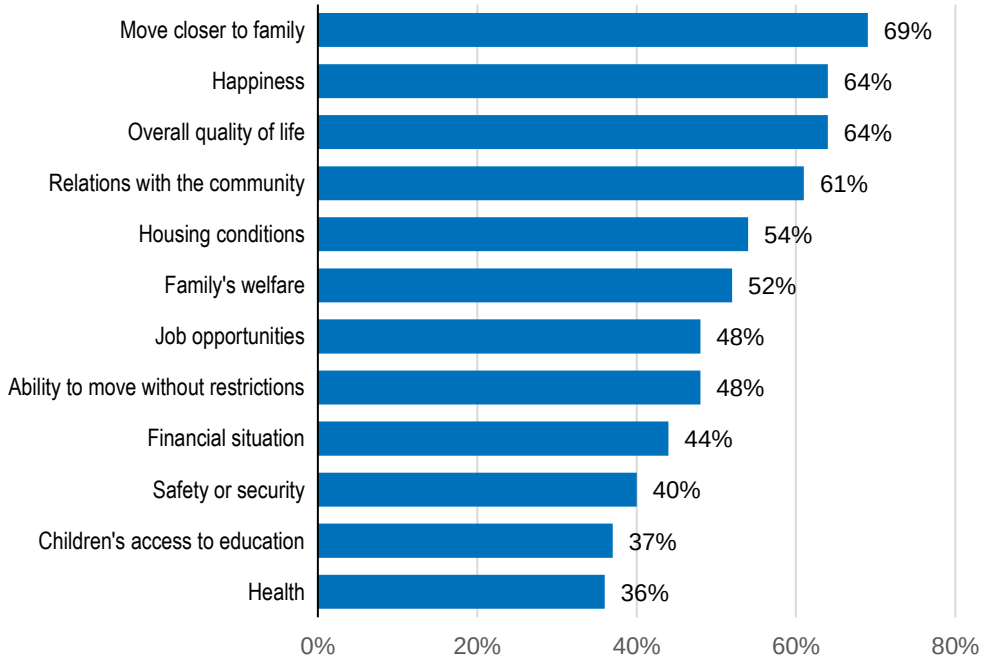
Lack of adequate housing, livelihoods opportunities and lack of information pose the greatest challenges for local integration. Furthermore (not visualized in a graph):

- Among those who intend to locally integrate, **70 per cent need assistance** to do so. Among this cohort, significantly **more women—75 per cent—need assistance** to locally integrate than men—64 per cent.
- The types of assistance needed to locally integrate are:
  - 90 per cent support in finding housing,
  - 82 per cent need support in looking for a school,
  - 81 per cent need livelihoods opportunities,
  - 58 per cent need support getting documentation, and
  - 43 per cent need money (inextricably tied to livelihoods).

3. Return intention

3.1. Family reunification, overall wellbeing and positive community relations are among the main motivations for wanting to return.

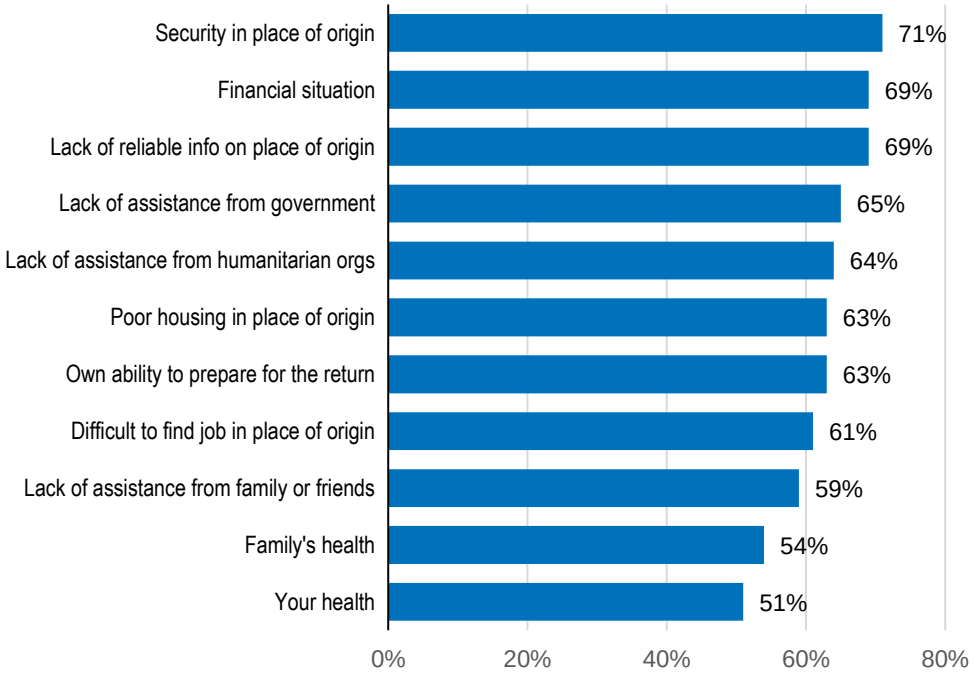
Chart 5. Major reasons for intending to return



FGDs and KIIs added to the picture, with many people citing **harsh conditions in the displacement area** as another main driving force behind their desire to return, rendering their decision to return home less about promising conditions at home and more about difficult conditions in displacement areas.

3.2. Insecurity, lack of livelihoods and lack of information on the place of origin remain the main drivers behind unwillingness to return

Chart 6. Obstacles likely to prevent return



Displaced people in FGDs and KIIs confirmed that their decision to return is contingent on **improved security conditions and the end of conflict**, as well as **increased livelihoods opportunities** and the ability to cover return-related expenses. Furthermore (not visualized in a graph):

- Among those who intend to return, an average of **58 per cent say they need assistance** to do so, with Nampula as an outlier with 94 per cent.
- The types of assistance needed to return are as follows:
    - 94 per cent need money to pay for the return;
    - 92 per cent need transportation;
    - 91 per cent need information on the situation in the place of origin;
    - 88 per cent need help finding a job in the place of origin;
    - 85 per cent need documentation;
    - 83 per cent need assistance in finding schooling for their kids in the place of origin, and
    - 82 per cent need assistance in finding housing in the place of origin.

> ***Having my own business changed my life. It's not always easy—I have to be flexible… But I keep going because I have a goal: I want to see my son go to university. Our future is in Pemba, there is nothing for us back home."***
>
> — Celia, displaced woman in Pemba, Cabo Delgado

> ***When everyone fled, I stayed behind—I had no choice. My disability kept me here, and for a long time, I felt forgotten. But now that people are returning, for the first time, I feel seen. I am not invisible anymore."***
>
> — Naima, returnee woman in Mocimboa da Praia, Cabo Delgado

UNHCR conducts focus group discussion with displaced women in Chiure Cabo Delgado to understand their short- and long-term needs.

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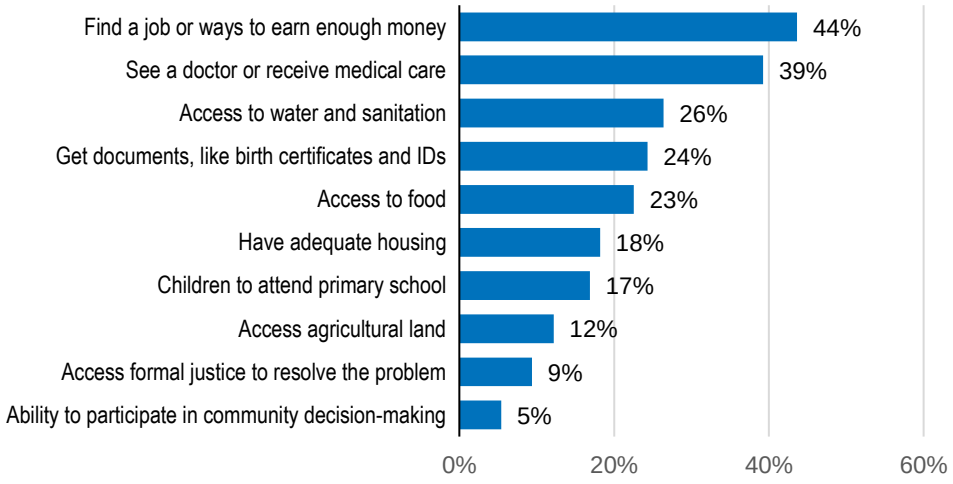
4. Returnee Perspectives[3]

4.1. Returnees face challenges to reintegration, especially in accessing livelihoods.

Chart 7. Access to services in areas of return



Findings from FGDs and KIIs reinforce this trend, with the vast majority of returnees highlighting significant **difficulties in accessing livelihoods** opportunities, citing a heavy dependence on informal labour. Regarding returnees' access to land, **available land is often distant, unsafe, or lacks necessary resources** such as seeds and fertilizers. Qualitative data further reveals returnees' **difficulties in acquiring civil documentation**. Regarding access to justice, community members confirm that they **rely almost entirely on community justice mechanisms** and rarely try to access the formal justice system.

4.2. Virtually all returnees, despite difficult conditions in the place of origin, plan to remain there in the absence of further attacks.

While the findings showed that returnees in Cabo Delgado continue to face severe challenges to reintegration, **93 per cent of returnees do not plan on leaving again**. This is corroborated by qualitative findings: no focus group discussion participant, regardless of age, gender, or other diversity factors, expressed a desire to leave unless security conditions deteriorate significantly.

The top reported reasons for having returned were **family reunification (78 per cent)** and **to have a better overall quality of life (75 per cent).** FGDs highlight a mix of factors motivating return. Women emphasized security concerns and the desire to reclaim ancestral land, while men cited the lack of support and opportunities in displacement areas, alongside a strong

[3] *Findings in the Returnee Perspectives section are based on 6,154 returnee household interviews, 65 returnee FGDs and 13 returnee KIIs. The data in this section is drawn exclusively from Cabo Delgado, given that all interviewed returnees (and the vast majority of returnees in Mozambique) are located in Cabo Delgado.*

desire to rebuild their communities. Older returnees were motivated by land ownership, better living conditions in their place of origin, and security concerns, while some also noted the challenges of life in displacement. Returnees with disabilities returned to rebuild their lives and reconnect with their roots.

5. Host Community Perspectives[4]

5.1. Host communities in displacement areas face many challenges, calling for access to basic services, livelihoods, civil documentation, and information.

Overall quality of life

Host communities describe their overall quality of life as extremely difficult, with **persistent struggles in meeting basic needs**. Communities face widespread food insecurity, lack of clean water, inadequate housing, and limited access to healthcare and education. Economic opportunities are scarce, with high unemployment and a heavy reliance on informal work and subsistence farming. The situation has been exacerbated by natural disasters, conflict-induced displacement and limited Government or humanitarian support. Vulnerable groups, including women, older persons, and people with disabilities, experience heightened challenges, often lacking access to essential services and assistance and facing social exclusion, including exclusion from humanitarian assistance schemes and MHPSS services. Across provinces, host communities express the urgent needs for **employment, better infrastructure, legal documentation, and improved access to health and education services.**

Access to livelihoods

Host communities report significant challenges in accessing sustainable livelihoods and employment opportunities. Lack of **local opportunities**, limited access to **capacity-building initiatives** and various forms of **discrimination** reinforce cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

Access to civil documentation

Access to civil documentation also remains a significant challenge for host communities due to a convergence of financial, logistical and infrastructural barriers, including **lack of civil registries** (some which were destroyed) or civil registries that are prohibitively far. Collectively, these challenges highlight a critical gap in access to civil documentation that significantly affects the livelihoods and opportunities of host communities.

Access to justice

Host communities demonstrate **strong reliance on community-based mechanisms** for accessing justice, as most of their justice needs are resolved at community level by community leaders.

[4] *This section is based on qualitative data collected from host communities in Cabo Delgado, Nampula, and Zambezia through 69 FGDs and 21 KIIs. Qualitative data was not collected in Niassa due to logistical and capacity constraints. No quantitative data was collected for host communities.*

Access to land

Access to agricultural land for host communities is mixed and heavily influenced by both **resource constraints** and **security challenges.** Some community members struggle to acquire the necessary means, often resorting to purchasing or borrowing new land. Others benefit from the support of community leaders, who help identify unoccupied plots and allocate them to those in need. While host community boys in Cabo Delgado note that there is sufficient agricultural land available, insecurity – particularly in forested areas where insurgents are frequently present – limits its full use.

Access to school

Host community children generally have access to education; however, a range of significant barriers hinder their consistent participation and academic progress. **Long distances** to schools, coupled with the **financial burden** of acquiring necessary materials, contribute to higher dropout rates, while **language barriers** in classrooms add an extra layer of difficulty for some students.

Participation in community decision-making

In host communities, decision-making is marked by a generally positive spirit of participation alongside notable disparities, including **some women and girls feeling excluded**, especially those in more rural areas.

Family unity

Family unity among host communities is characterized by significant challenges linked to **resource scarcity** and **inadequate living conditions**, which frequently result in family separation, with some families seeking livelihoods opportunities in other locations, while other family members stay behind.

Safety and security

Host communities exhibit a complex landscape of safety and security perceptions, with recurring concerns and some pockets of reassurance.

- In Cabo Delgado, while some feel safe, many highlight the impact of **inadequate police presence, poor living conditions** and **the looming threat of insurgent attacks**, which cultivate an atmosphere of heightened anxiety.
  In Nampula, safety is largely seen as protection against both armed conflict and everyday criminal activities, yet a pervasive fear of i**nsurgent violence** and **a lack of effective support systems** leave many feeling vulnerable.
- Meanwhile, in Zambezia, the notion of security extends to both physical and natural hazards; although community ties and local leadership offer some comfort, risks associated with **flooding, cyclones** and

insufficient infrastructure such as poor street lighting continue to undermine a sense of complete safety.

Social cohesion

Host communities report generally positive relationships with displaced populations based on mutual respect and kinship despite some challenges, including **resource strain, emotional distress** and **fears of future attacks** have also emerged with the presence of displaced persons, especially among women, girls and older community members. Conflicts in all provinces are typically resolved through direct dialogue, with community leaders and district authorities actively mediating.

Information needs

Host communities are primarily focused on receiving **timely and accurate updates on their local security situations**, which is seen as essential for peace of mind and overall community stability. They also require comprehensive information on essential services such as **healthcare, civil documentation, legal aid, education** and **employment opportunities**, with a particular emphasis on health campaigns and disease prevention measures. Host community members consistently place their **trust in local leaders and government authorities** for information provision.

> ***"Life here is extremely difficult. Many families are battling hunger, with only very limited meals. (…) The lack of jobs makes it nearly impossible for people to support their families, forcing many to rely on humanitarian aid, which is often insufficient."***
>
> — Older host community members, Muanona Neighbourhood, Erati, Nampula

UNHCR's civil documentation caravan in Chiure, Cabo Delgado, supporting the Government to provide both host community members and displaced people with birth certificates and national IDs.

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6. Information and Communication on Durable Solutions

Proportion of people who receive information

47% Yes

38% Sometimes

15% No

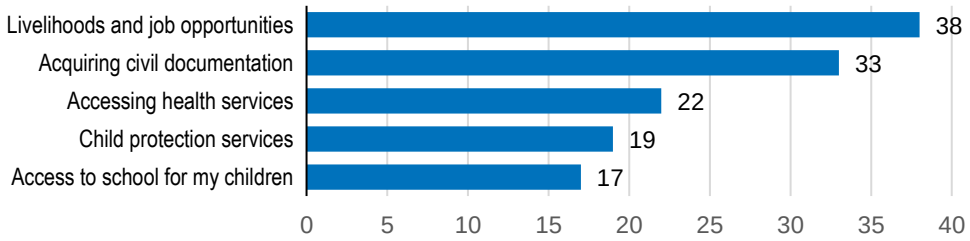
6.1. Many affected people still lack sufficient information, especially on livelihoods opportunities, documentation and security.

More than half of respondents do not receive sufficient information to be able to make an informed decision on the most appropriate durable solutions option for themselves and their families (38 per cent only receive it sometimes and 15 per cent never receive it). Regarding information on the place of origin, although many IDPs informally receive some information from friends and family who have returned, it does not give them the full picture they seek of the security situation and available services and assistance.

Chart 8. Types of information needed by IDPs

FGDs and KIIs with displaced people presents another angle, emphasizing **security updates** about the place of origin as the most urgent information needed. **Updates on the availability of services** in the area of origin, including the reopening of schools, hospitals and markets, is also highly sought after, as these factors significantly influence decisions on the feasibility of return.

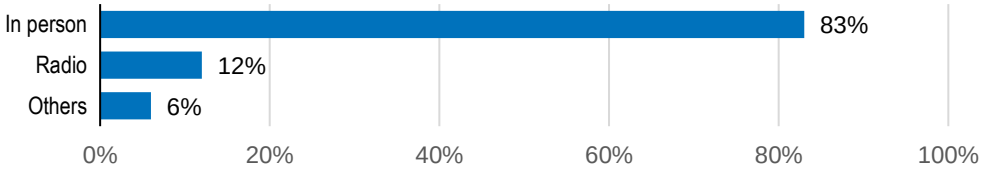
Chart 9. Types of information needed by returnees



FGDs and KIIs with returnees highlight updates on **security, available support** and **basic services** as the most critical information needed for returnees in Cabo Delgado. Returnee women prioritize information on security and available support, including infrastructure rehabilitation. Older returnees seek details on security, basic services, employment and education, while returnees with disabilities require targeted information on safety, education and accessible services.

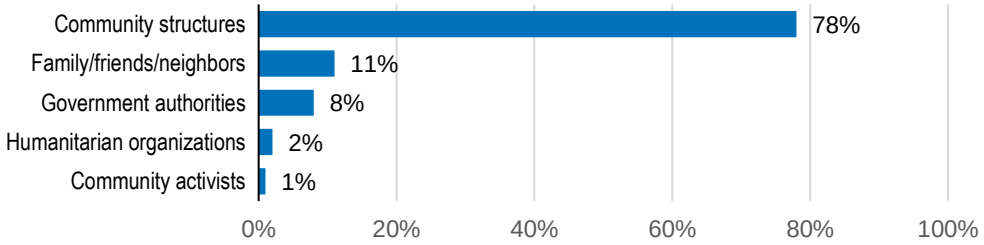
6.2. Affected people prefer to receive information in-person from community leaders, followed by radio

Chart 10. Preferred channels for receiving information



Both displaced people and returnees prefer to receive information on durable solutions **in-person**—81 per cent of IDPs, 85 per cent of returnees)—followed by **radio** (12 per cent of IDPs, 11 per cent of returnees). FGDs and KIIs also show that there is a notable preference for receiving information in person, especially among women and older returnees, as they are less likely to trust external channels.

Chart 11. Preferred source of information



FGDs and KIIs corroborate that both displaced people and returnees prefer **community leaders** as their source of information on durable solutions. Though not visualized in a graph, when disaggregated by displaced population type, IDPs in sites rely more on community leaders for information (82 per cent) than IDPs in host communities (69 per cent), who have a higher reliance on Government, family/friends/neighbors and humanitarians than IDPs in sites.

Women and girls meet at the Pemba safe space as part of UNHCR's MHPSS support to survivors, equipping them with the tools to overcome their trauma and integrate.

© UNHCR/Isadora Zoni

Recommendations

1 Effective durable solutions planning must continue to be informed by where displaced populations will be in the medium- and long-term, and focus equally on all durable solutions pathways.

- To know where displaced people will be in the medium- and long-term, to understand their changing plans over time, and to ensure their movements are voluntary, it is **recommended that solutions actors continue to consult communities on their intentions on durable solutions**. At the same time, these exercises must continue to **distinguish between aspirational and actionable intentions**. Both those who intend to stay and locally integrate and those who intend to return cite significant barriers to translating these intentions into reality, including assistance needed and a lack of preparatory actions taken.

- With such a large and seemingly growing proportion of the displaced population intending to stay and locally integrate, it is **recommended that solutions actors continue to focus as much on improving conditions in places of local integration (including continuing to support the out-of-site approach) as in places of return**, ensuring safety and security; an adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; access to effective remedies and justice; and social cohesion and peacebuilding between communities.

- As the vast majority of displaced people in Zambezia and Nampula intend to stay and locally integrate, **it is recommended that solutions actors in Zambezia and Nampula fully focus on supporting displaced people's local integration,** knowing they will remain in the long-term.

2 Solutions actors can contribute to the sustainability of local integration/reintegration by ensuring access to rights, services and information in places of displacement, return and relocation.

- It is **recommended that solutions actors continue to support displaced people and returnees to meet their long-term needs** for them to be able to locally integrate or reintegrate, respectively.

- With the top challenges to local integration being inadequate housing, lack of livelihoods opportunities and lack of information on available services in the place of local integration, it is recommended that **development actors** make large-scale investments in **increasing livelihoods opportunities and access to adequate housing in the place of local integration.** It is further recommended that **humanitarian and Government actors systematically provide detailed information on available services in the place of local integration** through regularly updated referral pathways and awareness-raising campaigns.

- With insecurity, lack of livelihoods opportunities and lack of information on available services in the place of origin being the top obstacles keeping those IDPs who intend to return from doing so, it is recommended that **development actors make large-scale investments in increasing livelihoods opportunities in the**

place of origin. It is further recommended that **humanitarian and Government actors systematically provide detailed information on available services in the place of origin** through regularly updated referral pathways and awareness-raising campaigns.

- It is recommended that solutions actors proactively support **host communities** improve their living conditions, specifically with increased livelihoods opportunities, better infrastructure, civil documentation and access to healthcare, as a hedge against future conflict with displaced communities, which could ultimately threaten their local integration.

3 It is recommended that solutions actors continue increasing information-sharing with affected people in order to help them reach durable solutions.

- With around half of affected people lacking sufficient information on durable solutions, and lack of information on the place of origin as one of the top two obstacles for acting on a return intention, it is **recommended that solutions actors proactively disseminate information to affected people, allowing them to make an informed decision on solutions pathways.** In doing so, it is also important to ensure that women, older people, people with disabilities and others with specific needs have the same access to information as others. Information provision should include updated information on the security situation in the place of origin, access to livelihoods and access to civil documentation.

- It is **recommended to disseminate information on durable solutions in-person, complemented by radio spots and text messages**. In-person remains the preferred modality for receiving information, followed by radio. Mass text messages could represent a practical complement in Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa, given that most people have phones (in Zambezia, most people do not have phones). Given that significantly less women have phones, it is **recommended to identify women without phones and provide them to increase community engagement with and accountability to this group.**

- It is **recommended that information dissemination continue to be supported by existing durable solutions and community engagement coordination mechanisms**, including the national and sub-national Solutions Working Groups (SWGs) and the Community Engagement / Accountability to Affected People Working Group (CE/AAP WG).

Community consultation with a displaced woman with a disability at the Mussaia resettlement center, Maganja da Costa, Zambezia.

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COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS ON DURABLE SOLUTIONS

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