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Mozambique Challenging the Paradigm 'I am Not Leaving Here Nobody is Taking Me Away': Vulnerability, Migration and Food Insecurity

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Abstract

Over the past five decades, Mozambique has experienced an intensification of extreme weather events, including floods, droughts, and high-speed winds, resulting in the forced displacement of thousands of people. Rivers, central to livelihoods, are ambivalent: while they provide essential water, they also cause devastation by flooding communities and destroying infrastructure. At the same time, populations already vulnerable to flood cycles face prolonged droughts, which insidiously compromise the survival of people and animals and destructive winds that amplify the damage. The decision to relocate outside traditional areas of residence becomes extremely complex in contexts of socioeconomic vulnerability and food insecurity. Communities, often forced to migrate to resettlement villages, do not have enough time to maintain productive activities, such as agriculture, as they are required to be permanent residents in the new area. In this scenario, the paradigm of "I am not leaving here, no one will take me away" proves unsustainable, as people have to leave due to the devastating floods and cyclones.

In contrast, to that same extent, leaving their homeland will not promote climate resilience or guarantee food security. The central question raised by communities affected by such events is: How can resilience be maintained in the face of such events? This article analyses a robust data set from longitudinal studies and recent research on climate refugees and Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs). Additionally, we conducted interviews in the resettlement areas where IDPs

are located. The results indicate that, five years before the deadline to comply with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Mozambique is far behind in achieving key targets relate to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), while still opting for conventional approaches, known as Business as Usual (BAU). Despite being triggered by such extreme weather events, the methods used to address them should be revised, as they are insufficient to tackle the complexity and uniqueness of climate impacts. It follows that migration, often seen as a solution, fails to promote climate resilience communities and exacerbates food insecurity, which requires an urgent review of climate disaster management policies and practices.

Keywords: Migration, Climate Resilience, Food Insecurity, Vulnerability, IDPs

Introduction

Global Report on Internal Displacement (2024) points out that by the end of 2023, the number of Internally Displaced Persons in Sub-Saharan Africa due to climate events had reached a record 2.3 million, while the number of internally displaced people due to disasters had reached approximately 6 million. The World Bank (WB) also stresses that by 2050, there will be 85.7 million climate migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa, primarily in countries prone to risks inherent to climate change, sea level rise, and flooding (Clement, Rigaud, & de Sherbinin, 2021). Further, the IPCC (2022) indicates that among African countries, Mozambique is the country located in one of the regions of the globe most exposed to climate risk, due to its extensive coastline. As a result, in these last decades, Mozambique has become an increasingly relevant case in global discussions about the intersection of vulnerability, internal displacement, and food insecurity.

Recurrent climate events, armed conflicts in the northern provinces, and fragile livelihoods have placed increasing pressure on both rural and urban populations (FAO, 2022; UNHCR, 2023). Despite these adversities, many Mozambicans express a strong attachment to their territorial sense of rootedness, which challenges simplistic interpretations of migration as an automatic response to the crisis (Raimundo & Crush, 2013; Raimundo, 2017).

This article challenges the conventional view that says migration occurs primarily as a rational choice driven (one of Ravenstein's theories) by economic opportunities (Ravenstein 1885 & Lees' 1961 migration theories), found in the paper of Peixoto (2004), translated as Theories explaining migrations or security threats. We argue that in Mozambique, the decision to migrate or remain is influenced by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, political, and environmental factors (Raimundo, 2021; Artur & Hilhorst, 2012). In other studies, such as those by Bakewell (2008), Adger & O'Brien (2013), and O'Brien (2013), it is notable that forced migration, as per the concept, can occur at any time and anywhere. The decision to leave homes goes beyond the risk or the risk exposure, as people can resist leaving, moved by the thinking of "what will happen if I leave my belongings that have cost me years of work and many resources? This kind of response to disasters does not mean that people do not care about their lives or do not understand the risks; instead, it has to do with their situation of poverty.

Forced migration is linked to various factors, such us extreme weather conditions (Tevera & Raimundo, 2021), decisions made within the household structure, travel distance, as well as historical links developed over the centuries with neighbouring countries (found in Ravenstein theory of Migration), armed conflicts and in this paper, we aim to explore

the connection between food insecurity and the role it plays in forcing people to move, as in the event of unavailability, access and affordability. Crush & Frayne (2011), as well as Crush & Tawodzera (2016), highlight that food insecurity and political decisions significantly influence migration decisions. However, food insecurity, in itself, is a reflection of the political arrangements that regulate access to, rights over, and livelihood opportunities. On the other hand, FEWS NET (2024) and Militao et al. (2024) stress that food insecurity is a consequence of the effects of extreme weather events that impact livelihood. In turn, we can observe that each situation represents a cycle of cause and effect, where each one can be both the cause and the effect of another.

Under these circumstances, whether it is food insecurity, climate threats, and with several studies conceptualising migration as a rational choice, it is still not clearly known why some choose not to move out, though faced with an impending risk of death, malnutrition and so on. This contradiction suggests that migration is not simply a structural response but is mediated by identity, cultural values, land rights, and collective memories (Adger et al., 2011; Sithole & Dinbabo, 2016). Taking the examples of military insecurity that have shaped one of Mozambique's northern provinces since 2017, where conflict has already displaced more than a million people, many resist resettlements for fear of losing their sense of belonging and the spiritual value of their land (UNHCR, 2023).

These dynamics highlight the need for a more nuanced, intersectional, and interdisciplinary approach to the phenomena of displacement and permanence. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the scientific debate on internal displacement in Mozambique by analysing the factors that condition mobility (or its absence), with special attention to the food dimension, social resilience, and local adaptation dynamics.

Aim, Objectives, Materials and Methods

This research aimed to:

- Analyse the socioeconomic and environmental factors that influence internal displacement caused by extreme weather events in Mozambique,
- Understand the reasons why part of the population remains in at-risk areas, even in the face of constant threats; and
- Linkages between Food Insecurity and Internal Displacement.

To achieve these objectives, we conducted an in-depth literature review that encompassed books, academic articles, and grey literature, including institutional reports and documents from national and international organisations, on vulnerability, climate change, internal displacement, and food insecurity in Mozambique. Priority was given to publications from institutions such as the INGD, IOM, the UNHCR, and the World Food Programme (WFP). We also utilised the data from several publications by AFSUN (African Food Security Network), HCP (Hungry Cities Partnership), and the MiFood (South-South Migration and Migrant Food Insecurity: Interactions, Impacts and Remedies) project. While our paper primarily examines displacements based on Food insecurity data collected in Maputo and Xai-Xai cities under the MiFood project, we present these realities as examples of the current situation in the country. Lastly, but not least, we also utilised primary data collected through interviews.

This review was essential for contextualising the phenomenon of internal displacement in the country, identifying relevant variables for analysis, and ascertaining the process by which food insecurity can drive displacement in Mozambique, correlating it with extreme climate events. The second stage involved analysing secondary data from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) through the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) from 2019 to 2025 (first quarter). These sources provided disaggregated information by province on the number of IDPs related exclusively to climate-related events such as cyclones, floods, droughts, and other natural disasters during this period. To characterise the provinces, socioeconomic indicators were analysed, such as the percentage of illiterate household heads, the provincial poverty rate, the average household income, the percentage of the rural population, the percentage of female-headed households, access to drinking water, and the food insecurity rate. These indicators were selected for their theoretical and practical relevance in explaining communities' levels of vulnerability and resilience to climate disasters.

Mozambique and Extreme Weather Events

The Republic of Mozambique (Figure 1), located in Southern Africa, is a country affected by three major extreme weather events: cyclones, floods, and harvest failures (Republic of Mozambique 2017; UNEP, 2016).

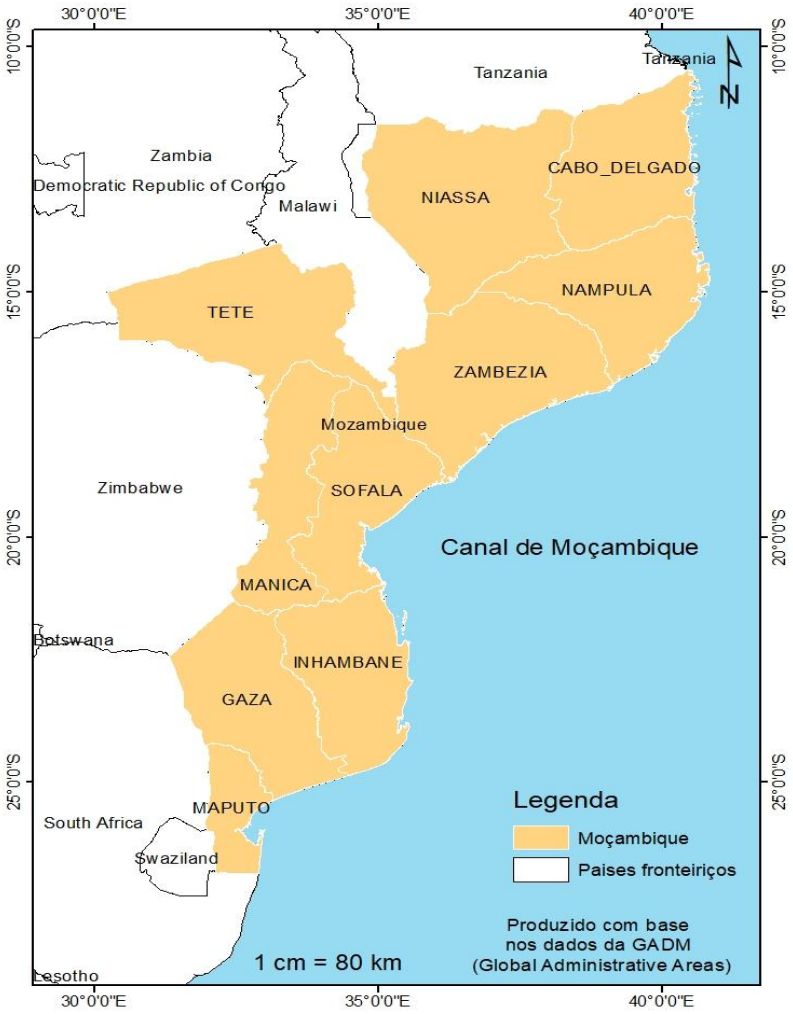

Figure 1. Geographic Location of Mozambique. Source: The map was created by the authors based on GADM (Global Administrative Areas) data.

This situation has forced populations to abandon their usual areas of residence for cities (Raimundo, 2021; Tevera & Raimundo, 2021) or resettlement centres. According to a report by the Government of the Republic of Mozambique (Republic of Mozambique, 2017), Mozambique is classified by the United Nations as one of ten countries vulnerable to disaster risk. The impact of these events, in addition to displacement, is fuelling insecurity and the urgent need for food assistance.

To mitigate climate impacts, the Government of Mozambique adopted Law No. 15/2014, which establishes the principles and legal mechanisms for preventing and reducing disaster risk, as well as its economic and community impacts. It also developed the Disaster Risk Reduction Master Plan 2017-2030 in alignment with the 2015-2023 SDGs and the Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

The Government of Mozambique recognises that food insecurity is a serious issue in Mozambique and, therefore, constitutes a central governance challenge for the country. Through Resolution No. 60/2024 of the Council of Ministers (National Press - BR - 2024), the Government of Mozambique approved the Food Insecurity Reduction Plan, focusing on the Food and Nutrition Security Framework (FSAN), which integrates pillars such as availability, access, and nutrition, using multisectoral approaches to increase agricultural and fisheries production, improve diet quality, strengthen health and nutrition practices, and implement programs and cash transfers.

Results and Discussions

Internal Displacement Trends in Mozambique (2017–2025)

Although the frequency of extreme climate events, such as cyclones (Figure 1), that drive displacement is evident, there remains a significant need to strengthen data collection and analysis on internally displaced persons (IDPs) better to understand the scale and dynamics of displacement in Mozambique. The country lives under the constant threat of displacement, either due to armed conflict or climate events. Migration is predominantly shaped by the combination of these factors, with a lesser influence from economic or social drivers (Raimundo, 2021; 2010). Data on internally displaced persons (IDPs) are reported through a combination of governmental and international sources, resulting in overlapping and sometimes fragmented disclosures. Much of it is made available by donor agencies, including the IOM and UNHCR. Meanwhile, Food insecurity has a significant impact on displacing people, as we will explain later.

The lack of data availability results from the chronic disease of classified and unclassified data. Even worse is data on IDPs resulting from military attacks, as access to them is limited to a specific number of people. We desired to extend our period to include 2017, the year in which armed attacks began in northern Mozambique. Recognising the Mozambican government's sensitivity to these data, we focused our study on the period from 2019 onward. We also recognise their variability, as the number of displacements increases due to climatic or military events, but also decreases with resettlement program initiatives.

Internal displacement in Mozambique, driven exclusively by climate events such as cyclones, floods, and droughts between 2019 and 2025, reveals a heterogeneous and cyclical dynamic. According to data from the World Organisation for Migration (WMO)

and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2019), displacement peaked in 2019, nearly 35%, due to Cyclones Idai and Kenneth.

Next, 2021 saw a further 19% increase due to Cyclone Eloise. In contrast, 2022 saw the lowest levels of 2%. During the period between 2023 and 2025, it is notable that significant displacements again occurred, caused by cyclones such as Freddy that hit southern Mozambique, where Maputo and Xai-Xai are located, Jude impacted northern Mozambique, and most recently, Cyclone Chido in December 2024 and Dekeledi in January 2025, northern Mozambique, as affected by another extreme climate event. However, the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) decreased to around 150,000 compared with 478,000 in 2019. This significant reduction reflects not only the irregular frequency of extreme weather events but also the gradual strengthening of institutional response capacity and the growing level of preparedness among affected populations (Figure 2).

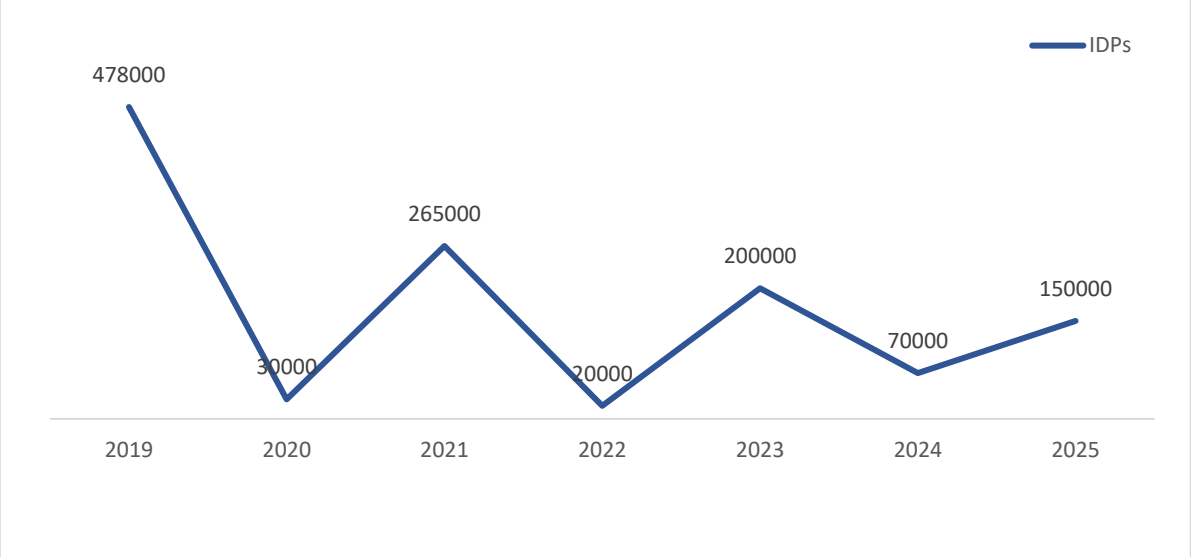

Figure 2: Internal Displacement in Mozambique Caused by Climate Events (2019–2025). Source: Prepared with the authors based on WMO - World Meteorological Organisation data (2019 – 2025)

Therefore, Eriksen et al. (2005) and Adger (2006) highlight that the variation in the number of IDPs due to climate events in Mozambique drives all decision-makers to adopt an intersectoral policy perspective that combines climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and social protection. In the meantime, Nhatumbo (2010) advances in his article that cyclical analyses of trends at the provincial level should also be conducted to spatially assess which province has experienced the highest number of internally displaced people. Thus, according to Figure 1, there is a shift in the pattern of internal displacement in Mozambique due to extreme climate events. From 2019 to 2024, the Central region (Zambezia, Tete, Manica, and Sofala) remained the most affected, with Sofala standing out, which continued to register more than 70,000 displaced people in both periods.

In northern Mozambique, the situation worsened, particularly in Cabo Delgado, which has moved into the highest displacement category since 2017. The Cabo Delgado not only creates displacements, but also contributes to faster urbanisation. Government reports indicate that the city of Pemba, in the Province of Cabo Delgado, has witnessed a threefold increase in population since the outbreak of the war (Raimundo, 2024). Those increases represent the highest witnessed after the so-called civil war between 1976 and 1992.

Nampula and Niassa maintained average levels, demonstrating some stability. However, when we examine data from other provinces that have been affected by these climate effects, such as those in the South, there has been a significant reduction. Gaza Province, which has been affected by cyclones and the floods of the Limpopo River (Christie & Hanlon, 2001), previously had high numbers; now it records fewer than 10,000 displaced people. Inhambane also experienced a reduction, while Maputo maintained low incidences (Figure 3).

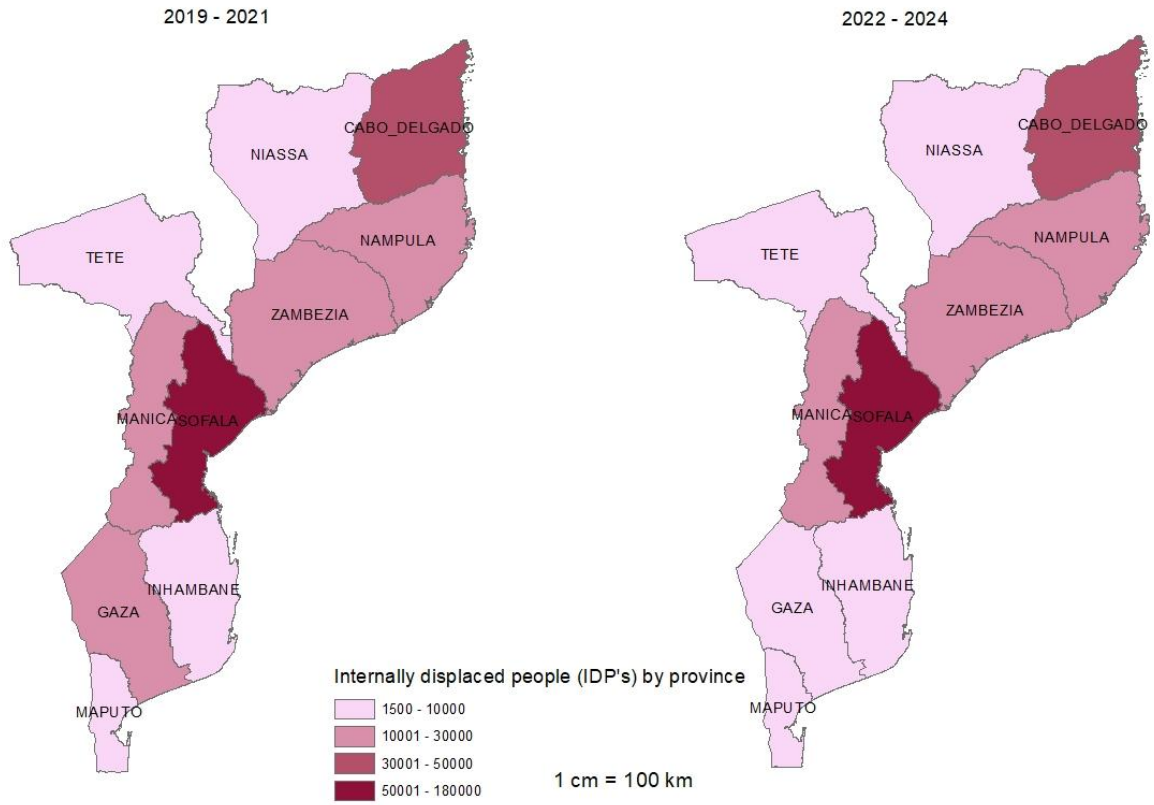

Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Displaced Persons by Province and Gender. Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the WMO (World Meteorological Organisation) data (2019 – 2025).

Main factors influencing Internal Displacement in Mozambique

- ***Person's Correlation Coefficients***

Analysis of Pearson's correlation coefficients reveals statistically significant relationships between the number of internally displaced persons per province and various socioeconomic and environmental determinants in Mozambique. The frequency of extreme weather events exhibits a high correlation ($r = 0.79$; $R^2 = 0.62$), demonstrating that provinces more exposed to cyclones, floods, or droughts have higher levels of displacement. Even more significantly, the provincial poverty index reveals the strongest correlation ($r = 0.81$; $R^2 = 0.66$), indicating that poverty increases populations' vulnerability to environmental shocks.

Other factors, such as the percentage of the rural population ($r = 0.75$) and a food insecurity index at stage 3 or higher ($r = 0.69$), also reinforce the idea that precarious structural conditions increase the risk of displacement. On the other hand, indicators such as average household income ($r = -0.64$) and access to drinking water ($r = -0.59$) have

negative correlations, suggesting that better economic and infrastructural conditions can mitigate the need for forced migration. These results highlight the importance of integrated policies that combine climate risk mitigation with poverty reduction, food security, and territorial inclusion strategies to prevent internal displacement.

Table 1: Factors that influence internal displacement in Mozambique. Source: The Authors' calculation based on Pearson's correlation coefficient model.

Indicators	Pearson Coef. (r)	R^2
Frequency of extreme weather events	0.79**	0.62
Provincial poverty index (Niassa, Nampula, Zambézia 60%)	0.81**	0.66
Median household income (USD)	-0.64*	0.41
% of households headed by women	0.54*	0.29
% of illiterate population (>15 years)	0.52*	0.27
% of rural population	0.75**	0.56
Access to drinking water (% households)	-0.59*	0.35
Food Insecurity Index (Phase 3+)	0.69*	0.48
Gaza	**0.61***	**0.37**
Maputo Province	**0.33**	**0.11**

(*) Indicates the correlation is statistically significant at the 5% level; (**) indicates significance at the 1% level.

The provinces of Gaza and Maputo City, home to the cities of Xai-Xai and Maputo, respectively, yield contrasting results compared to those of Zambézia, Nampula, and Niassa. Although Gaza Province suffers from the Limpopo River floods (Christie & Hanlon, 2001) and has two large post-flood resettlement centres: Chihaquelane and Chinhancanine (Raimundo, 2020), it is still in a better position than the aforementioned provinces. The aforementioned war or armed attacks in northern Mozambique, which have contributed to an influx of IDPs and the increase in resettlement or accommodation centres due to the war, are added to the IDPs of these provinces.

The results presented above indicate that, in Mozambique, exposure to environmental risks tends to coincide with areas characterised by limited access to basic social services and fragile housing infrastructure, particularly in vulnerable coastal regions. Although structural poverty was not directly measured in this study, previous research has consistently demonstrated that poverty amplifies vulnerability to climate-related disasters by constraining households' capacity to adapt and recover (Adger, 1999; Cutter et al., 2003; INGD, 2023). These findings align with the literature, suggesting that social and economic inequalities continue to shape patterns of exposure and resilience in the country.

Qualitative evidence from post-disaster field reports further supports these correlations. As shown in Table 2, a considerable proportion of affected populations chose to remain in high-risk areas after extreme weather events, despite facing significant hazards. In Sofala, 30% of residents stayed after Cyclone Idai (2019), citing *attachment to ancestral land* and *lack of confidence in resettlement programmes*. In Gaza, 40% of households affected by the 2020 floods refused to relocate due to *fear of losing arable land* and *dependence on agriculture*. Similarly, in Nampula, 25% of those impacted by Cyclone Gombe (2022) remained due to limited transportation and access to information. These qualitative findings illustrate that decisions to migrate or to remain are not solely determined by economic deprivation or exposure levels, but also by cultural, logistical, and emotional factors deeply embedded in local contexts.

Therefore, the combination of quantitative (Table 1) and qualitative (Table 2) evidence underscores that both structural inequalities and sociocultural constraints shape vulnerability to internal displacement in Mozambique. As Raimundo (2014) and Funke et al. (2020) argue, this intersection of environmental and social fragility intensifies the impacts of natural disasters and reveals institutional weaknesses in providing safe, sustainable, and socially acceptable resettlement mechanisms. This relationship between social vulnerability and environmental exposure is further reinforced by the Disaster Risk Reduction Master Plan 2017–2030 (REPÚBLICA DE MOÇAMBIQUE - CONSELHO DE MINISTROS 2017).

- ***Food Insecurity Among Displaced People***

The dimension of Fragility, Conflict and Migration in Mozambique is marked in the context of a country severely impacted by cyclical climate events amid un-ended armed conflicts and, thus, a condition that weakens the economy and puts people in poverty status and hunger, which means they spend most of their time in searching for food instead, for instance of creating wealth (CGIAR et al.; 2025; Agy et al., 2025). Further, the situation jeopardises those who have been directly affected at both levels (migrants and host communities) and are forced to move, and those who have to host people who seek security. Constant mobility does not guarantee time, nor does it ensure a livelihood. Additionally, permanent mobility or having people living in shelters or settlements constitutes a burden for the government, resulting in high dependence on permanent aid, which does not guarantee resilience. Even more severe are the people who flourished their productive lands at the mercy of aliens.

CGIAR et al. (2025) in their report on "Contexts of climate displacement, conflict, and fragility in the Resettlement Camp of Corrane State, Northern Mozambique" state that people lack access to agricultural tools, fishing equipment, and household essentials such as pots and pans. Due to a prolonged drought that affected parts of Nampula Province, where the resettlement camps are located, widespread hunger ensued. That situation was exacerbated by a set of factors, including the military conflict in a nearby province (Cabo Delgado) and extreme climate events (Cyclone Kenneth in 2019, as well as the cyclones that hit Nampula in 2022, namely the Gombe and Annah Cyclones). As a consequence, poor market access was due to limited transport to central markets, as the roads were in bad condition.

Agy et al. (2017) note that the redistribution of the population generates territorial tensions, particularly in relation to access to arable land, shared resources, and scarce opportunities, with host communities. The issue of access to land in situations of displacement is critical, according to Agy et al. (2025), as part of emergency interventions. On the other hand, people in situations of forced displacement are forced to rent or buy land, notwithstanding that the land is state property and cannot be sold or otherwise alienated, mortgaged, or pledged (Law No. 19/97, National Press of Mozambique-BR, 1998; República de Moçambique, 2004, Article 109).

Indicators for measuring food insecurity are academically based on the FANTA (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance) project, as mentioned by Caesar & Crush (2016) and Raimundo, Crush & Pendleton (2016). This refers to the total income a family earns over a specified period of time. According to Crush & Pendleton (1916), this income is assessed by the source or sources of income, which can be social grants, wages from work, casual

labour, including family economy, remittances, gifts, sales, and formal businesses. Without access to these resources, food insecurity means being unable to access food (Crush & Tawodzera, 2020). In this case, the limitation refers to displacement and dependence on others. Moreover, unable to acquire it.

The question of the source or origin of food is also one of the indicators highlighted by Caesar & Crush (2016) and Raimundo, Crush & Pendleton (2016). The origin of these foods is varied. Among the displaced population, food comes from external aid, a situation that is quite limiting, as they depend on limited quantities of beans, flour, oil, sugar and salt, according to several interviews conducted in various parts of Mozambique. In such a situation, being dependent puts IDPs under food insecurity, and until climate conditions are reversed, or as long as the population does not adapt to food insecurity, it will increase. Adaptation measures include, according to Bekline, Mukete, and Tahle (2025), livestock diversification, income, and the adoption of agroforestry.

Women Feeding Cities and Challenges Faced in Feeding Citizens Due to Extreme Weather Events

It is no secret that Mozambique is a country prone to natural disasters, specifically those caused by climate-related phenomena. Historically, these can be mapped as shown in **Figure 4 of Mosca & Lasse (2023) and also in the Disaster Risk Reduction Master Plan 2017-2030 (REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE - COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, 2017).**

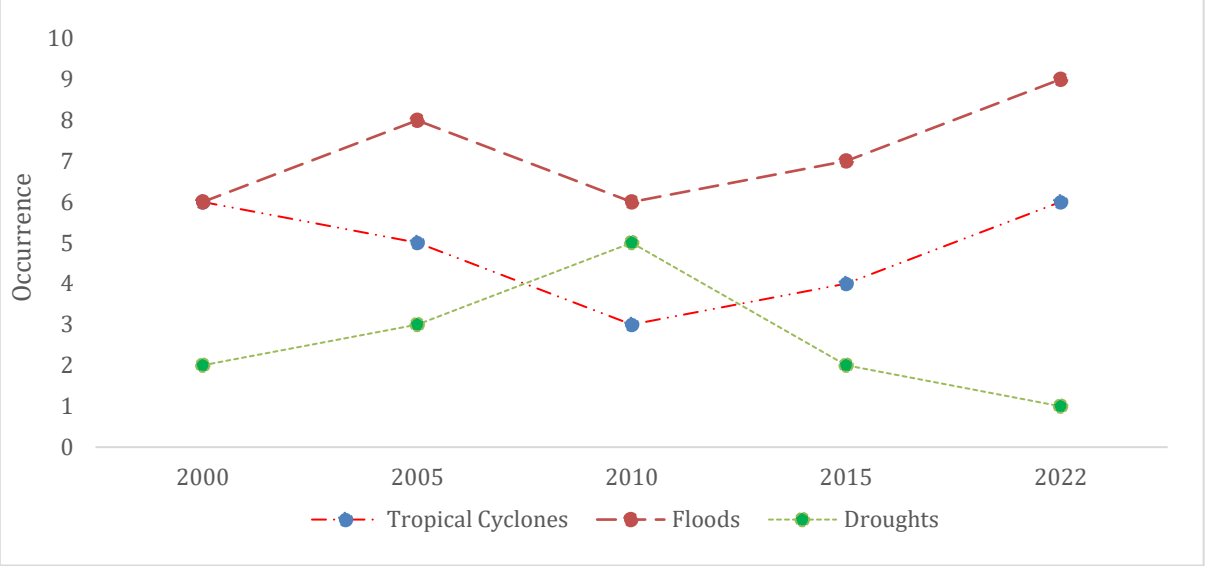

Figure 4. Historical Trend of Disasters in Mozambique.Source: MOSCA & LASSE (2023).

In terms of frequency, the country experiences a flood every 1 to 2 years, and a drought or cyclone every 2 to 3 years. This reality exposes a cyclical crisis of natural disasters, which becomes even more critical when combined with factors such as illiteracy, food insecurity, and limited governance (Ibraimo, 2018; Nhambiu, 2021; Nhantumbo & Sulemane, 2020).

Interviews within the scope of MiFood's Women Feeding Cities project (2024), as well as reports by INGC et al. (2003) and Funke et al. (2020), demonstrate that long periods of drought, cyclones, and floods destroy all productive capacity and, consequently, increase dependence on external aid. Given that many women are involved in agriculture and

other income-generating activities, such as vending, this hinders their ability to feed their families. This situation worsens in resettlement.

Determinants 'I am Not Leaving Here Nobody is Taking Me Away'

The persistence of populations in at-risk areas after extreme weather events in Mozambique is a complex phenomenon, deeply rooted in socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and political factors. Table 2 presents data on the decision to remain or move after extreme weather events in eight Mozambican provinces between 2019 and 2023. It can be observed that, despite the severity of the events (cyclones, floods, and droughts), a significant number of the population choose to remain. Inhambane Province, which was affected by prolonged droughts in 2021, had the highest percentage of people remaining (55%), possibly due to temporary mobility and local adaptation strategies. On the other hand, Cabo Delgado, severely affected by Cyclone Kenneth, had the lowest rate of people remaining (20%), indicating greater vulnerability or a higher capacity for displacement. The justifications point to factors such as attachment to ancestral land (Sofala), community resistance (Manica), and lack of access to transportation and information (Nampula), revealing that sociocultural, structural and contextual factors strongly shape decisions.

Table 2. Main reasons for staying. Source: Adapted by the authors from data and reports from (WMO, INGD, ACNUR, OCHOA, IOM, 2019 – 2023).

Province	Climate Event	Year	% Displaced	% Remained	Main Justification for Stay
Sofala	Cyclone Idai	2019	70%	30%	Attachment to ancestral land and lack of confidence in resettlement
Cabo Delgado	Cyclone Kenneth	2019	80%	20%	Distance from safe areas and local agricultural dependence
Zambezia	Cyclone Freddy	2023	65%	35%	Preference for local solutions (informal shelters)
Gaza	Floods	2020	60%	40%	Fear of forced resettlement and loss of arable land
Inhambane	Prolonged droughts	2021	45%	55%	Local adaptive strategies and temporary mobility
Manica	Cyclone Idai	2019	68%	32%	local support networks
Nampula	Cyclone Gombe	2022	75%	25%	Limited access to transportation and a lack of information
Tete	Floods	2020	55%	45%	Partial displacement within the district

The tendency of Mozambican populations to remain in high-risk areas, even in the face of recurring climate threats, becomes even more worrying when compared to socioeconomic vulnerability indicators (Hantumbo, 2020). The statistical analysis presented above revealed a strong positive correlation between the number of displaced

people and variables such as the frequency of extreme weather events (r = 0.79), the provincial poverty index (r = 0.81), and the percentage of the rural population (r = 0.75). In practical terms, this means that the poorest provinces and those most dependent on family farming are also those most vulnerable to the effects of climate disasters and, consequently, to forced migration. However, qualitative data reveal that even in highly vulnerable contexts, a significant portion of the population chooses to remain.

Raimundo (2014) emphasises that the refusal to migrate is deeply rooted in symbolic attachment to land, culture, and ancestry. This refusal is further fuelled by a lack of trust in state-sponsored resettlement programs, which, according to Nhantumbo (2020), are often characterised by forced evictions, improvised resettlements, and limited community participation. Artur (2022) reinforces this view by stating that rural Mozambican populations develop their mechanisms of resistance and adaptation based on social networks, spirituality, and historical resilience.

A report presented by the IOM (2020) presents an account of a woman living in Buzi, Sofala, after Cyclone Idai (2019), clearly illustrating the logic of permanence:

> "I would rather die here than go to a place where I do not know anyone and where I cannot farm. "

This statement, similar to that cited in studies by Awojobi and Tetteh (2017), shows that displacement is not only a matter of physical survival, but also of emotional, food and symbolic security.

Agriculture-based subsistence is one of the main pillars of permanence. In provinces such as Gaza and Cabo Delgado, where family farming represents more than 70% of economic activity, 40% and 20% of the population, respectively, refused to abandon their lands after extreme events. Following the same idea, Machel (2019) argues that resettlement without viable agricultural alternatives is perceived as a rupture with traditional livelihoods and a threat to food sovereignty.

Another crucial factor is the precariousness of transportation and communication systems. In Nampula, for example, where 25% of the population exposed to floods and landslides chose to stay, the lack of passable roads and information about safe areas was a determining factor. Studies by McNamara and Buggy (2017) demonstrate that risk perception is often distorted by a lack of access to clear and timely information, and that distrust in institutional warning sources compromises the effectiveness of evacuation plans.

The relationships between access to drinking water (r = -0.59), the food insecurity index (r = 0.69), and the number of displaced people reinforce the notion that the collapse of essential services is often a trigger for forced migration. However, when these services still exist, even if precariously, populations tend to cling to them. Data from Crush et al. (2021) suggest that local food resilience is a key reason for permanence, even in contexts of high environmental risk.

Therefore, internal displacement in Mozambique is the result of a complex interaction between structural vulnerabilities and cultural resistance. As Adger et al. (2009) note, adaptation to climate change cannot be understood solely as a matter of technical or financial capacity, but as a social process profoundly influenced by identity, history, and risk perception.

Given this scenario, intervention strategies must go beyond emergency assistance. The State and cooperation partners must invest in promoting sustainable resettlement,

strengthening local adaptive capacities, and valuing traditional knowledge. As Oliveira and Sitoe (2023) suggest, only with an integrated and participatory approach will it be possible to promote safe, voluntary, and dignified mobility in a context increasingly marked by the climate and socioeconomic crisis.

Conclusion

Narratives of climate extreme events are well-documented and have been widely reported in southern Africa, particularly in Mozambique, which has experienced the most devastating weather events annually. Immediate impacts include the displacement of populations, who, in addition to facing the drama of starting their lives, suffer from food insecurity measured by limited access, low income, food unavailability, and dependence on external aid.

The intensification of climate shocks in Mozambique has compelled communities to develop localised strategies to mitigate displacement, food insecurity, and socioeconomic vulnerability.

The results presented demonstrate that Mozambique faces a complex situation regarding socioeconomic vulnerability, food insecurity, and internal displacement caused by extreme weather events. Analysis of the last five decades confirms that the increased frequency and intensity of cyclones, floods, and droughts have significantly compromised food security, destroyed vital infrastructure, and disrupted entire communities. The cultural paradigm of "I am not leaving here, no one will take me away" proves unsustainable in the face of constant threats; however, forced mobility has not promoted climate resilience or food security, as revealed throughout this research.

The data also indicate that socioeconomic vulnerability is intrinsically linked to remaining in high-risk areas, as poor, rural populations dependent on subsistence agriculture tend to remain in dangerous locations due to the lack of safe and dignified alternatives. This situation highlights the need to rethink conventional (business-as-usual) approaches to climate disaster management, as they have been unable to address the complexity of local realities. It is essential to advance intersectoral public policies that promote culturally sensitive resettlement, create adequate livelihood conditions, and value the traditional knowledge of affected communities. Only then will it be possible to transform forced displacement into processes of planned adaptation and strengthening community resilience.

Furthermore, the analysis reinforces the need for intervention strategies to combine climate risk reduction, social inclusion, food security, and institutional strengthening. The adoption of effective communication mechanisms, access to information, and community participation in decision-making processes is essential to ensure that at-risk populations feel part of the solutions and can rebuild their lives with dignity. As national and international authors point out, addressing climate challenges in Mozambique requires integrating adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable development policies, recognising the cultural and socioeconomic specificities of each region.

Finally, five years before the deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is clear that maintaining fragmented strategies compromises not only the future of displaced populations but also the country's overall resilience. An urgent review of climate disaster management policies, combined with the strengthening of local networks

and consistent international support, is crucial for Mozambique to effectively address the challenges posed by climate change and food insecurity.

Declarations

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Ethical clearance:
To date, for the content on MIFood (South-South Migration and Migrant Food Insecurity: Interactions, Impacts, and Remedies), we have used the ethics statement from the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (REB #7249), through which we received funding for the study.

Regarding the data from the FCM study: Fragility, Conflict, and Migration in Nampula Province, Corrane and Maratane, Mozambique, we used the CGIAR Research Ethics Policy, as outlined in the Lumpsum Funding Agreement C23PAL247 between CGIAR (Alliance Bioversity & CIAT) and Eduardo Mondlane University.

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