Child Protection Risks and Needs in Mozambique
Secondary Data Review - April 2019
Compiled by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility

This document has been compiled by the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) using the Child Protection Minimum Standards as an analysis framework. All data points are based on secondary data, which have been compared and interpreted, but not triangulated and verified.

This document covers the period prior to the cyclone Idai up to early March 2019 and includes information about child protection risks and needs in Mozambique to give first responders a brief overview of the pre-disaster child protection issues that may have been exacerbated by the emergency.

The document also provides a section on information gaps, an overview of the legal framework and references, as essential for the return planning and early recovery.
## Contents

Overall Protection .................................................................................................................. 4
Overall Child Protection ......................................................................................................... 5
Child Labour .......................................................................................................................... 6
Child Marriage ....................................................................................................................... 7
Child Trafficking .................................................................................................................... 7
Discrimination ........................................................................................................................ 8
Physical Violence and other Harmful Practices ..................................................................... 9
Sexual Violence and Gender Based Violence ......................................................................... 9
Psychosocial Distress and Mental Disorder .......................................................................... 9
Unaccompanied and Separated Children .............................................................................. 10
Information gaps ................................................................................................................... 10
Legal framework ................................................................................................................... 11

All data are citations from secondary sources.
CHILD PROTECTION
RISK AND NEEDS
IN MOZAMBIQUE

48% of girls in Mozambique are married before the age of 18, and 14% before the age of 15.

In 2017, 23% (1,526,560) of children between 5 and 14 were part of the work force.

During 2017/2018, at least 30,000 people with albinism were marginalized and at least 13 killed. Since 2014, more than 100 attacks were reported, and many of the victims were children.

Over 54% of women endure some form of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives.

52% of children had not been registered, of which 20% have not been issued a birth certificate, compromising their access to basic services such as health or education.

Source: All data is based on the Mozambique Secondary Data Review done by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. April 2019
As of 2019, Mozambique has a population of approximately 30 million; 32% lives in urban areas and median age of the total population is between 17 and 18. According to the 2017 census, Mozambique’s population is growing at an average rate of 3.5 percent per annum. Fertility rates, particularly adolescent fertility rates, are very high while life expectancy remains among the lowest in the world (55 years). This means a growing proportion of the population is made up of children (51 per cent under 18 and 64 per cent under 25). Estimates exposed in a UNICEF report from 2018, show that 1.7 million people were affected by disabilities and that 26% “of households include at least one member with a functional limitation”.

In 2019, the UN estimated that approximately 815,000 people were in need of protection services and 80,000 were targeted by the protection response, which aimed at reducing exposure to protection risks. Pre-cyclone Idai, the response included strategies to prevent and respond to the loss of life, sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, physical violence, socio-economic deprivation, and harmful traditional practices including child marriage.

Known protection concerns relate to sexual violence, armed groups as well as the mining industry. Regarding sexual violence, figures are alarming and reported attacks against girls and women have enhanced the deployment of specific counter measures. See page 9 for more information on sexual violence against girls and boys.
Serious protection concerns point to the attacks that occurred in the Northern region of the country between 2017 to 2019. Extremists armed groups Ansar al-Sunna overran the town of Mocimboa da Praia and beheaded four people as a retaliation against western culture and foreign exploitation of fossil fuel in the region. Ever since the outbreak, more than hundreds of homes have been destroyed and approximately hundred people have been either killed or injured.

The mining industry in Mozambique can bring risks to civilians. Working conditions are oftentimes harsh and not in line with international regulations. For example, in July 2018, videos published on social media showed officers in uniform assaulting miners in the Cabo Delgado province. Other reports denounced beatings, extortion, rape and torture perpetrated by security forces against miners in the northern region over the past years. Human rights observers reported that “the footage showed uniformed officers beating the miners and ordering some of them to beat others who were tied to trees or had their heads buried in the sand.”

Mozambique ranks 42nd in the World Risk Index, with a very high level of vulnerability (71%) and susceptibility (65%), together with an alarming lack of coping mechanisms, rated at 86%. The index describes susceptibility as the likelihood that a society would have of suffering from harm in the case of an extreme natural event. Coping mechanisms indicates the lack of resources that the same society would have to minimize the impact of natural hazards.

Overall Child Protection

The country’s capacities to address child protection issues remains limited as poverty significantly contributes to violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse of children. An alarming one quarter of Mozambicans under 18 are deprived in four or more of the eight key deprivation dimensions (family, nutrition, education, labour, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), participation and housing). Almost a third of the country’s child population is income poor and deprived at the same time.

As per data from 2013, almost one in five (18 per cent) of children are not living with either of their biological parents even though in most cases one or both of their parents are alive.

Main concerns include sexual exploitation and abuse and child labour. Given the high number of child protection issues, a Child Helpline was created by UNICEF in 2016. It received approximately 50,000 phone calls since its start, with over 7,000 cases of violence against children registered by the Police. The Child Helpline is instrumental for the monitoring of and response to child protection issues throughout the country.

Birth registration is also a central issue. According to the DHS 2011 report, almost 52% of children under 5 years had not been registered, of which 28% had not been issued a birth certificate. As a result, and to respond to these needs, Mozambique launched a program to address the civil registration deficits and vital statistics (CRVS). Access to basic services such as health or education is highly facilitated by strong birth registration mechanisms. UNICEF highlights that linking registration with maternal and child health services will strengthen equal opportunities for children: “birth registration is a child’s passport to protection and critical services”. Since 2012, more than 13 million children were officially registered.

In terms of pre-Cyclone Idai programming, several child protection organisations worked together under the framework of Ending Violence Against Children, and the Child Marriage program.

A third of children report experiencing corporal punishment in the home and current legislation offers insufficient protection due to a provision for “justifiable discipline” in childrearing. Reported cases of domestic violence are on the rise and disproportionately involve girls. Sexual and gender-based violence is met with an inadequate response due to a lack of qualified protection professionals, ill-defined procedures and other institutional weaknesses. A third of children report experiencing corporal punishment at school.
too. Furthermore, sexual and gender-based violence in schools is often attributable to teachers but enforcement of zero tolerance provisions is weak.

Mozambique has some two million orphans, marginalised and vulnerable children of whom 800,000 have been orphaned due to AIDS and another 700,000 are at risk of abandonment.

Coordinating the provision of care and support to this number of children is an enormous challenge. It is made more difficult by the limited number of trained front-line social welfare staff, underfunding at the district level and the absence of gate-keeping systems. One of the consequences of this situation is the growing number of children found in residential care institutions. Less than half of these institutions are registered and most provide long-term boarding, making little effort to apply family reintegration measures. Many children arrive at a young age and remain until they reach 18 years of age.

### Child Labour

In 2017, 23% (1,526,560) of children between 5 and 14 were part of the work force. 22% of children between 7 and 14 combined work and school. According to UNICEF, primary school completion is less than 50%, more than 1.2 million children are out of school and only 70% of children from 5 and 14 years are attending school. Following a 2019 report published by USAID, 94% of girls are enrolled in primary school. However, by the 5th grade, more than half drop out of school and only 11% continue up to secondary level whereas only 1% goes to college. It is also reported that 75% of children who finish primary school “leave the system without basic reading, writing, and math skills.”

As of 2018, the minimum working age without restrictions in Mozambique is 18, although permits can be issued to children as young as 12, which entitles them to work under special circumstances. It has been reported that children under 15 are frequently employed or exploited in “agriculture, mining, and fishing sectors, where they often work long hours and do not attend school.” Other sectors, which see child labour and exploitation include prostitution, informal business, mining, and heavy item transportation.

However, due to lack of resources, the labour law protecting children is not adequately enforced. Reports highlight that corruption makes it hard to address child labour. The Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security, acknowledged that one million children (aged between 7 and 17), are actively employed. Demographics show that Tete, Manica, Maputo (province and city), were recognised as the areas with the most reported cases of child labour and overall, children in the rural sector remain the most vulnerable to harmful child labour.

Reports show the widespread practice of Mozambican men and boys migrating to South Africa to seek employment opportunities; there are cases reported cases of some being retained and forced to work until they are eventually turned over to police as illegal migrants. It also happens that children are subjected to forced labour, often impelled by their own families. Official data shows that 14% of children work as a mean of supporting their family.

A 2017 study concluded that the principal causes for child labour included economic, socio-cultural, low educational levels, bureaucratic-legal and political aspects; and it is also closely linked to natural disasters, showing a record of escalation when these events take place. Notably, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “after natural disasters, children are more vulnerable to sale, illegal adoption, forced labour or sexual exploitation. Children may be removed from their communities by people illegally taking advantage of the chaotic situation.”
**Child Marriage**

According to Girls Not Brides, 48% of girls in Mozambique are married before the age of 18, and 14% before the age of 15. UNICEF ranked Mozambique as the 9th country with highest child marriage prevalence rate (percentage of women aged 20-24 old who were married or in union before they were 18 as defined by UNICEF State of the World’s Children, 2017), and the 15th highest in absolute number of child brides, with 649,000. Child marriage is prevalent in all the country, but rates are somewhat lower in the regions of Cabo Delgado and Manica.

Child marriage is driven by gender inequality and exacerbated by poverty, traditional gender norms and adolescent pregnancy. There is a direct relation between poverty and marriage, with girls coming from the poorest households being more prone to marry at a younger age. Families who cannot afford to provide proper care for their children may choose to marry their daughters and benefit from dowries. The sale of “girls’ virginity” has also been reported.

Early pregnancy is closely associated with child marriage. According to the Demographic and Health Survey, in 2011, 38% of girls from 15 to 19 years old were already mothers or pregnant. Cultural beliefs highly value fertility, so parents tend to encourage early marriage and pregnancy. Reports highlight that such practices are often motivated by the belief that “these births are a guarantee that they'll be looked after when they get old.” Communities have many superstitions and there is need for sexual education. As an example, a 13-year-old mother in Murrupelane declared: “I didn’t know you could get pregnant by making love.”

Among other prevention methods, there is a need to improve the access to contraception to reduce child pregnancy. Child marriage and early pregnancy also contribute to the fast population growth, which at the current rate is set to double the population in Mozambique by 2025.

In 2018, the Government announced its willingness to adjust the legal framework to only allow marriage at 18, as opposed to the current limit of 16 requiring parental consent. In line with the SDGs, Mozambique has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030.

**Child Trafficking**

For five consecutive years, the US Department of State has reported Mozambique to be “a source, transit and destination for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking”, with the southern transport corridor linking Maputo with Eswatini (former Swaziland) and South Africa. Girls, boys, women, and persons with albinism have been identified as the most vulnerable population groups.

There are reports of girls and women from rural areas being persuaded to move to bigger cities, for education and employment opportunities, but where they find themselves subjected to trafficking networks. The areas of greatest concern are Maputo, Beira, Chimoio, Tete, and Nacala, while Tete and Cabo Delgado are showing an increase of this practice. Since 2012, sources have raised concerns regarding the rise of human trafficking.

Girls and women from rural areas are also subjected to sex trafficking and domestic servitude. NGOs have reported that girls are sent to urban areas as domestic help for relatives as a form to settle debts; a work which increases their vulnerability to sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

Persons with albinism are extremely stigmatized in Mozambique and it is a common belief that the possession of a part of their body will bring good luck to the owner. This superstition has turned persons with albinism into a target for traffickers and, according to data from 2017, the value of a person with albinism can reach from $4,000 to $75,000. The NY times reported dozens of persons with albinism to have been kidnapped or murdered since 2014, and children are the most frequent victims. It is common to find that the perpetrators of these crimes are family members.
Although there is no data available on persons with albinism in Mozambique, an OHCHR report estimates that 20,000-30,000 persons with albinism live in the country. In 2014, 65 cases of attacks were reported by the Supreme Court, whereas the lack of adequate monitoring and reporting mechanisms suggest that the number is even higher.

### Discrimination

Stigmatization and discrimination of children with disabilities remain widespread in communities and within families, particularly in rural areas. Husbands often divorce the mothers of children with disabilities. These negative attitudes have their roots in superstitious beliefs about disability. As a result, the child with a disability is often kept in the house, denied education and normal social interaction. Children with disabilities who are isolated at home are especially vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse committed by family members. In the worst of cases, these children can be abandoned or institutionalized. It is estimated that some 70 per cent of disabled children live in rural areas where access to basic services is more difficult and where stigmatization and discrimination remain widespread in communities and families.

As described in the above section on trafficking in Mozambique as well as in some neighbouring countries, myths and superstitions have generated the common belief that persons with albinism have magical aptitudes, and accordingly, their body parts have become instruments for witchcraft practices. According to Amnesty International, during the 2017/2018 period, at least 30,000 people with albinism were marginalized in the country and at least 13 were reported to have been killed. Although most of the killings took place in the poorest regions – Central and Northern provinces – the entire albino population is a target for violence and marginalization, and persons with albinism report living ostracized and in constant fear for their lives. An UN independent expert calculated that more than 100 attacks had taken place against persons with albinism since 2014, and specified in her report that many of the victims were children. The attacks described by various reports and the media for 2017 include a 7-year-old boy with albinism abducted and murdered in Niassa province; a 3-year-old boy abducted in Tete; a 17-year-old boy killed for his body parts and organs: the attackers removed his brain, hair, and arm bones. Also, in 2017, the police had uncovered an attempt by two parents to sell their child with albinism in the same province. One 17-year-old girl with albinism residing in Tete recalls being called “money” by her classmates because of the value of her body parts. Amnesty International reported in 2018 that none of the perpetrators of the crimes had been arrested nor prosecuted, that the government has not responded adequately, and that the efforts to stop the violence were poorly implemented due to lack of resources.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people are also largely marginalized. In 2015, homosexuality was decriminalized, which represented a landmark decision. Nevertheless, years after the resolution, the government has been accused of not fully promote this law. One example, which illustrates this, is that the country’s largest LGBTI group, Lambda, has not been officially recognised to date. In December 2018, an independent expert described the legal framework in Mozambique as exemplary in terms of physical violence, yet reality is that marginalization is still ongoing. The expert illustrated the situation as a “tacit pact” in which sexual diversity is permitted as long as it is not publicly displayed. One member of the LGBTI community said: “There is no widespread violence against us, but we are subjected to exclusion, poverty and psychological violence.”
Physical Violence and other Harmful Practices

Domestic violence is one of the most common forms of physical violence. In 2018, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Action acknowledged that over 54% of women endure some form of physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. There is a high rate of murdered women, often showing a pattern of family ties and intimate relations between the victim and the perpetrator, which is an indicator of the overall intensity of physical violence, also against children. Offenders commonly justify their actions by accusing women of using witchcraft. The government’s capacity to combat this kind of physical violence is inadequate.

Domestic violence is pervasive and remains often unpunished by law. According to the Association of Women in Legal Careers, the government often fails to examine and prosecute cases of domestic violence. According to their reports, “family pressure and obstruction by the police caused many cases to be dropped”.

Sexual Violence and Gender Based Violence

Sexual violence and exploitation are a big concern with violence against women and children as one the most recurrent forms of violence.

Child prostitution is the most prevalent form of sexual exploitation in Mozambique, in particular in Maputo, Nampula, Beira, and border towns. Following the implementation of the Child Helpline, several cases of sexual and gender-based violence have been identified and responded to. To illustrate just one case: a 9-year-old girl was given by her alcoholic mother to older men in exchange of money. The girl’s teacher denounced the situation, and the girl was able to receive protection services.

During the festive season in January 2018, 115 cases of rape were reported; 50% of the survivors were children under the age of 14. One reverend stated that “that sexual violence, particularly against children and women, has grown significantly over the past few years, hidden in the guise of social norms and practices”.

Sexual initiation rites promote the abuse of girls by men and such harmful practices are supported traditional gendered roles. As described by a specialized media, in these rituals, “boys aged 8 to 12 learn to punish girls by forcing them into sex”.

According to the 2019 humanitarian response plan, the search for water also exposes children and women to harassment and sexual abuse. In some areas, women and children spend up to 6h to access water. This can lead to school absenteeism and protection risks.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action, are mandated to provide different services to survivors of sexual violence and other vulnerable children, including counselling and health care services.

There is early onset of sexual activity and 9 per cent of girls and 3 per cent of boys 15-19 years old reported sexual violence according to available data. Intergenerational and transactional sexual practices are prevalent throughout the country and disproportionally impact adolescent girls. It is estimated that there are 120,000 adolescents in the country living with HIV of whom 80,000 are girls.

Psychosocial Distress and Mental Disorder

Reports have shown that the natural, economic and social crises in the past years did not only increase poverty levels and social insecurity, but also the mental health of children, women and men. The poor living
conditions that can emerge from these situations are known to have impacted the mental health of children and adults.  

Since 2016, Mozambique have established public policies for free mental health treatment with specific indicators and targets. This public policy is also strategically established to reach children and adolescents throughout the country. Composed of two mental hospitals and 11 psychiatrics units in general hospitals, the national health system managed to treat 21,857 cases of severe mental disorder in 2017. Limited in numbers, the country has only 383 mental health professionals (government and non-government affiliated), which approximatively represents 1.5 mental health workers per 100,000 habitants. Finally, with a very low suicide rate of 5 per 100,000 habitants, Mozambique, as of 2019, stands on the 127th position of world rankings of suicide rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unaccompanied and Separated Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due to high levels of poverty, several survival mechanisms have been adopted by children, often unaccompanied, and adults, as for example the migratory flows that have emerged over the past years. According to the US Department of State, “Mozambican boys migrate to Eswatini (former Swaziland) to wash cars, herd livestock, and sell goods; some subsequently become victims of forced labour.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are vulnerable to abuses and different forms of exploitation. Some reports have raised concerns about young unaccompanied girls to secure a livelihood, possibly leading to abduction and trafficking: “girls are subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking in Angola, Italy, and Portugal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 2017, reports have raised concerns about missing girls and boys throughout the country. More precisely, those associated with Ansar Al-Sunna (CAAFAG).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to its geographical situation, Mozambique has become a focus for sending, transit and receiving migration. A 2017 study undertaken by IOM, describes the challenges that Unaccompanied Migrant Children face. For example, visa applications for children need to be submitted by a parent or legal representative, forcing children who travel on their own to entering the country undocumented and becoming illegal immigrants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The major information gaps are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capacities to address child protection issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical violence and harmful practices against girls and boys.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Numbers and location of unaccompanied and separated children (requires the establishment of a case management database to identify and document these children for an appropriate response).
• Community support mechanisms, including existing care options for unaccompanied and separated children.
• The number, cause and location of children injured and killed.
• Child trafficking: particularly numbers and mechanisms.
• Number and reasons of association of children with armed groups.
• Psychosocial Distress and Mental Disorder, including coping mechanisms.
• Number and level of education of affected children, disaggregated by sex and age or age groups.
• Figures on birth registration.
• Analysis of intercommunity dynamics.
• Justice for Children, including data on children as witnesses, victims, beneficiaries or when they are in conflict with the law themselves.

Legal framework

- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ILO Convention 138 on Elimination of the Worse Forms of Child Labour
- ILO Convention 182 on Minimum Age
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (never reported on)
- Convention against Trans-National Organized Crime
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

But NOT: Hague convention nor ICESCR

---

2 World Bank Data - Mozambique, 2017
2 Instituto Nacional de Estatisticas – Mozambique, 2017-2019  
http://www.ine.gov.mz/  
3 Instituto Nacional de Estatisticas – Mozambique, 2017-2019  
http://www.ine.gov.mz/  

4 UNICEF report on implementation of the convention of the rights of the child (CRC) in the Republique of Mozambique, 2009-2018  
6 Mozambique needs to end mystery that shrouds its Cabo Delgado extremists. Fagan, Laureen. Africa Times. February 2019  
8 World Report - Mozambique. Human Rights Watch. 2018  
https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/mozambique  
9 Ibid  
10 The World Risk Report. Prof. Dr. Hans-Joachim Heintze, IFHV et al. 2018  
https://weltrisikobericht.de/english-2/  
12 Annual Report Mozambique. UNICEF. 2016  
https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Mozambique_2016_COAR.pdf  
14 Mozambique Child and Social Protection. UNICEF. 2018  
15 UNICEF Regional Director and UNICEF Mozambique Child and Social Protection, 2018  
16 Mozambique at forefront of improving population registration. WHO. 2017  
https://afro.who.int/news/mozambique-forefront-improving-population-registration  

17 Annual Report Mozambique. UNICEF. 2016  
https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Mozambique_2016_COAR.pdf  
18 UNICEF – Education in the new country program, 2017-2020  
19 Findings on the worst forms of child labour - Mozambique. US Bureau of International Affairs. 2017  
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ila/resources/reports/child-labor/mozambique  
20 Education in Mozambique. USAID. February 2019  
https://www.usaid.gov/mozambique/education  
21 Mozambique Trafficking in persons Report. US department of State. 2018  
https://www.refworld.org/country,COI,FREEHOU,,MOZ,456d621e2,5bcdce26a,0.html  
23 Ibid  
24 Ibid  
25 Ibid  
26 Findings on the worst forms of child labour - Mozambique. US Bureau of International Affairs. 2017  
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ila/resources/reports/child-labor/mozambique  
27 Findings on the worst forms of child labour - Mozambique. US Bureau of International Affairs. 2017  
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ila/resources/reports/child-labor/mozambique  
28 OHCHR – In the aftermath of disasters children are at great risk, 2012  
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Intheaftermathofdisasterschildrenareatgreatrisk.aspx  
29 Mozambique. Girls not Brides. 2019  
https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/mozambique/  

30 Ibid
31 Child marriage and teenage births keeping girls out of school in Mozambique. The IR World. August 2018

32 ibid

33 DHS – Mozambique, 2011
https://dhsprogram.com/Where-We-Work/Country-
Main.cfm?ctry_id=61&c=Mozambique&Country=Mozambique&cn=&r=1

34 ibid
35 ibid
36 ibid

38 Mozambique Trafficking in persons Report. US department of State. 2018

https://www.refworld.org/country,COI,FREEHOU,,MOZ,456d621e2,5bcdce26a,0.html

40 Mozambique Trafficking in persons Report. 2018. US department of State


https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/05/sunday-review/albinos-in-mozambique.html


45 UNICEF (2013c): Improving equity-focused communications strategies to better reach the most deprived children and families in Mozambique; UNICEF MCO, Maputo.


50 ibid


https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/05/sunday-review/albinos-in-mozambique.html


56 ibid
All data are citations from secondary sources.