



The following document, prepared by UNRCO, provides guidance on the suggested language to use in reporting on the humanitarian impact of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, as well as the overall humanitarian response to in Mozambique. The proposed language, based on

best practices, is compatible with both International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL), and recognizes sensitivities to publicly speak about armed conflicts.

## CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Use neutral and factual language to describe incidents and parties to the conflict.** Value-laden and controversial terms, or words with political and military connotation, should always be avoided. For example, armed groups should not be labelled as ‘extremist’, ‘terrorist’, ‘insurgent’, ‘islamists’ or ‘militants’ as this may imply a value or political statement and sometimes may have legal connotations, even if unintended. The use of “non-state armed group”<sup>1</sup> (NSAG) or simply armed group is preferable as it is apolitical/neutral.
- **Use of the word conflict or armed conflict<sup>2</sup>, alongside violence and insecurity in public documents referring to Cabo Delgado.** This follows the classification by ICRC of the situation in Cabo Delgado as a non-international armed conflict and follows IHL and IHRL language. If the document is sensitive, we can combine conflict with violence or insecurity without downplaying the consequences of the situation. In addition, it positions the UN by the use of a correct and neutral language if compared with other actors, including Government and media, that is publicly using terms as war, terror, islamists, amongst others.
- **Respect the dignity of people who have been impacted.** This includes avoiding ‘victimising’ language like ‘pathetic’ to describe people and avoiding reducing people to a category, for example referring to people as IDPs. Where possible, use humanizing terms - families, communities, girls, boys, women and men – displaced - as they have specific protections/guarantees that need to be respected and need to be identified as such a group. Avoid dehumanizing ones, like ‘populations’.
- **Avoid humanitarian jargon.** When using humanitarian terminology, use examples to help provide clarity. Instead of using terms such as ‘non-food items’, use household items or explain what these items are. Help the audience distinguish key humanitarian terms such as ‘displaced people’ and ‘refugees’ to ensure that these are not used interchangeably.
- **Avoid stigmatization of survivors of sexual and gender base violence and / or conflict related sexual violence.** Avoid the use of the word victims as much as possible. Use the wording survivor/survivors and survivor-centered approach when necessary. Avoid words as “survival sex”, “sex of survival” and / or “sexual work” and other related way to refer to male dominance driven sex. We should avoid the use of wording that puts the responsibility of the situation in the victim’s shoulders.
- **Use inclusive language.** It is recommended the constant use of an inclusive language: we can use “women and girls, men and boys” but a more inclusive way to refer to all population groups can be: “female and male of different age groups and abilities”.

<sup>1</sup> NSAG are generally defined as groups that have the potential to employ arms or the use of force to achieve political, ideological, or economic objectives and are not within the formal military structures of States. It is important to note that humanitarian actors’ engagement with NSAG for humanitarian purposes does not alter their legal status or give them any political legitimacy. From an IHL perspective, in a non-international armed conflict, at least one party to the conflict is an organized NSAG.

<sup>2</sup> The existence of an armed group does not automatically entail that there is an armed conflict and that IHL applies. there could also be armed groups that are not party to an armed conflict (because they are not sufficiently organized and/or the intensity of fighting is not high enough).

Issue	Appropriate	Inappropriate
Violence and conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Increased) Violence</li> <li>• Situation of violence</li> <li>• Escalation of violence</li> <li>• Hostilities</li> <li>• Attacks</li> <li>• Fighting</li> <li>• Armed attacks</li> <li>• Armed conflict</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Insecurity</li> <li>• Clashes</li> <li>• Conflict related sexual violence<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Forced prostitution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sectarian conflict</li> <li>• Religious conflict</li> <li>• Rebellion</li> <li>• Fight against terror</li> <li>• Liberation</li> <li>• Insurgency</li> <li>• Counter insurgency</li> <li>• Terrorism</li> <li>• Terror</li> <li>• Islamist extremism</li> <li>• Survival sex</li> <li>• Prostitution</li> <li>• Prostitutes</li> <li>• Sexual work</li> </ul>
Non-state armed groups (NSAGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attackers</li> <li>• Non-state armed groups</li> <li>• Armed groups</li> <li>• Unidentified armed groups (UAGs)</li> <li>• Fighters</li> <li>• Perpetrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurgents</li> <li>• Islamists</li> <li>• Jihadists</li> <li>• Terrorists</li> <li>• Rebels</li> <li>• Killers</li> <li>• Assassins</li> </ul>
People affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals</li> <li>• Persons</li> <li>• People</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Populations</li> </ul>
Population movements	Depending on the context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal displacement</li> <li>• Forced displacement</li> <li>• Forced returns</li> <li>• Evacuation<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocation</li> <li>• Expulsions</li> </ul>
Referring to casualties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casualties incorporate both those killed and injured</li> <li>• When referring to only those killed then use fatalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Killed</li> <li>• Fatality</li> <li>• Dead</li> <li>• Injured</li> <li>• Casualties</li> <li>• Wounded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massacred</li> <li>• Slaughtered</li> </ul>
Inclusive language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female and male of different age groups and abilities;</li> <li>• Women and girls, men and boys;</li> <li>• Use other criteria of diversity beyond gender, age and ability if adequate to the context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid generic wording, be specific and inclusive as population groups are diverse</li> <li>• Avoid sexist language</li> <li>• Avoid racist language</li> </ul>
Human rights violations vs human rights abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We use human rights abuse when actions are committed by third parties/ non-state actors</li> <li>• We refer to human rights violations when actions are committed by state agents (whether security officials or other type of public official)</li> </ul>	
Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - PSEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEA occurs when a position of power is used for sexual purposes against a beneficiary or vulnerable member of the community.</li> <li>• Sexual harassment occurs when differences in power between staff members, are abused (verbally, through touch, use of inappropriate images, etc.).</li> </ul>	

3 “CRSV refer to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict”.

4 Evacuation: An actual evacuation supported by humanitarian actors can take place. Also, under IHL, parties to an armed conflict may lawfully evacuate civilians for security reasons.



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## Guidance on UN language relating to conflict and humanitarian response

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Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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