

A Scoping Review of Health Outcomes and Healthcare Utilisation Among Internally Displaced Persons in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique: An African Perspective

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Abstract

Background: Since 2017, conflict in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, has caused a severe internal displacement crisis. The period from 2021 saw a significant escalation of violence, creating profound public health challenges. A synthesised understanding of the health consequences for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from this recent phase is required.

Purpose and objectives: This scoping review aimed to map and synthesise evidence from 2021 to 2025 on the health outcomes and healthcare utilisation patterns of IDPs in Cabo Delgado province.

Methodology: The review followed the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology for scoping reviews. A systematic search was conducted across electronic databases (e.g., PubMed, Scopus, African Journals Online) and grey literature sources for studies published in English or Portuguese between January 2021 and December 2025.

Findings/Key insights: The evidence indicates a high burden of infectious diseases, notably malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, and widespread acute malnutrition among displaced children. A consistent finding is the low utilisation of formal healthcare services. IDPs frequently rely on traditional healers and informal drug vendors due to access barriers, security concerns, and perceived poor quality of care in health facilities.

Conclusion: The evidence points to a complex public health emergency for IDPs in Cabo Delgado, characterised by poor health outcomes and constrained access to formal healthcare. Significant gaps remain in the literature, particularly regarding mental health and non-communicable diseases.

Recommendations: Future research should employ robust, primary study designs to address evidence gaps. Programmatically, there is a need for context-specific, integrated service delivery models that are accessible, secure, and culturally acceptable to improve IDP health and healthcare engagement.

Key words: internally displaced persons, Mozambique, Cabo Delgado, health outcomes, healthcare utilisation, humanitarian crisis, scoping review.

Contribution statement: This review provides a consolidated evidence base to inform public health policy and humanitarian programming for IDPs in Cabo Delgado from an African perspective.

Keywords: *Internally displaced persons, Mozambique, Cabo Delgado, Health outcomes, Healthcare utilisation, Scoping review, Sub-Saharan Africa*