

# Misery of Mozambique victims of MNR

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MOATIZE

(Mozambique).

WHEN asked where he lives, Arnaldo, with a smile on his face, points to one of the nearby rail wagons.

The eight-year-old says he lives in the wagon with his mother, three brothers and seven other people.

But Arnaldo is luckier than the two-year-old daughter of Julietta Arnaldo, who shares the shade of a tree, not only with her parents and brothers, but with 10 other families.

During the day Arnaldo prepares a meal of maize (corn) and beans for the family, and at night, she lays a sack on the

ground for her husband and children to sleep.

Arnaldo and Armando are among the more than 8 000 Mozambicans displaced in the northern province of Tete by the 11-year-old bush war waged by the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR).

Many of the displaced, who first fled to neighbouring Southern African countries, returned to the province because it's their home. But accommodation in the centre established here for displaced persons is not sufficient.

The people are sheltered in 60 rail wagons, which each can accommodate 10

people, and 40 tents, which can house up to 200 people, have been donated by the Red Cross. Still, more than 1 000 people pass their days under the baobab tree.

The major centre here to house the displaced is a railway station on the outskirts of the district centre. The station stopped its normal workload, not only because it shelters the displaced, but because its Zambian and Zairean workers cannot transport the cargo to their countries due to MNR attacks.

Life for children and adults in the displaced centre is arduous and the minimal resources avail-

able have been strained by the large number of people who continue to flow into the area.

Only 60 latrines made of old tyres — are available for the more than 6 000 people and a severe water shortage in the district has worsened the situation.

Diseases like diarrhoea, malaria and conjunctivitis are a constant threat, particularly to the estimated 3 000 children in the centre.

The majority of the children who have taken refuge in the centre suffer from malnutrition, a health worker here said. They are treated with a mixture of milk, maize and cooking oil to improve their condition, she added.

The displaced persons in Moatize, who are peasants, idly spend their days sitting in the camp, while waiting for re-integration into productive activities.

Besides adapting to a new environment, "to

stay without an occupation is the most frustrating thing", said 53-year-old Antonio Faiete.

The peasants here cannot farm since the area is hard hit by drought and the land is arid. But the people said they had to leave their fertile lands to escape MNR atrocities.

"If we had not escaped, they could have burnt us alive, or they could have killed us with knives," Faiete said.

The displaced Mozambicans are anxious to return to their homes, but while they are waiting, many have sought employment in nearby areas.

Some of the men have been recruited to work for the railways and the women have chosen to work on the farms for money or even cassava leaves to enrich their diet.

Food aid has provided maize, flour, beans and fish oil for the people at the centre, but clothes and agricultural tools

continue to be a problem, one of the centre's administrators said.

The need for resources in the Moatize centre steadily increases as the number of refugees who fled to neighbouring countries return.

Government figures show that some 70 000 Mozambican refugees are in Malawi, more than 20 000 in Zambia, 25 000 in Zimbabwe's refugee camps, 20 000 in Swaziland and more than 200 000 in South Africa's eastern regions.

Mozambique's economy has been wracked by the bush war, and the government estimates that the war damage is about US\$5 billion.

The United States recently gave the country aid worth US\$50 million, and most of the funds provided by the United States and other Western donors have been used to airlift food to areas cut off by road due to MNR attacks. — Ziana-IPS.