

BANDITS LEAVE THOUSANDS HOMELESS

MAPUTO.

BANDITS operating in Mozambique's central Zambezia province since 1982 have driven at least 340 000 people from their homes, wreaking havoc on the area's economy, the official AIM news agency reported on Friday.

Those displaced were unable to produce food, destitute and threatened

by famine, the agency said, adding efforts were under way to establish agricultural and other productive enterprises.

AIM said MNR bandits had destroyed 68 schools and damaged more than 600 others, forcing 135 000 children out of school in the province over the past five years.

More than half of the

280 health centres in the province, which has a population of three million, were reduced to rubble by MNR insurgency during the same period, AIM said.

The agency was quoting a spokesman for Mozambique's Emergency National Executive Committee, responsible for coordinating relief aid.

It said the bandits, who have been fighting to topple the government since independence in 1975, also destroyed a sugar mill at Luabo, on the north bank of the Zambezi River, four copra processing plants and much of Zambezia's tea industry.

The bandits destroyed three cotton plantations, slaughtered 58 000 cattle and razed 503 out of 1 700 shops in the province, where they began hit-and-run attacks in August 1982, AIM added.

Meanwhile fighting between Frelimo and MNR

bandits has forced about 7 000 Mozambican men, women and children to flee from Mandimba district in the north-western Mozambican province of Niassa into Malawi in Mangochi district.

In Mangochi (a district along Lake Malawi bordering Mozambique), the displaced Mozambicans started arriving at Chiponde on the Malawi side of the border with Mozambique on July 13. By July 17 about 7 000 people had been registered by a local relief team.

The Mozambicans report that they fled Mandimba district in Niassa Province when fighting flared up between government forces and MNR bandits on July 13.

Relief food supplies were being rushed to Chiumbangame village, in Chief Jalasi, where the displaced people have been camped. — Ziana-Reuter/Mana-Pana.

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