

Profile
at a glance

Central African Republic Markounda

“After 3 profiling exercises you can’t underestimate the importance of communicating your findings clearly to authorities, to break the process.”

Crepin Konzabi, Profiling Project Manager, Echelle



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Two decades of internal conflict in Central African Republic (CAR) have forced families from their homes to locations in and outside the country. With increased stability in the country, many who fled to Chad have returned.

Starting in 2011, a series of profiling exercises are being undertaken in order to understand the situation of conflict-induced displacement in CAR. The process started in Bamingui-Bangoran and in 2012 was extended to the Kabo and Markounda sub-prefectures, where humanitarian and development actors decided to work together to learn more about the lives and needs of a previously inaccessible and underserved community experiencing a mass of returnees.

With financial support from the Central Early Recovery Fund (CERF) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), technical support from the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), the profiling process in Markounda was lead by the Danish Refugee Council and implemented by local NGO Echelle.



Which methods were used?

To produce accurate estimates and representative findings, quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection were used. A representative sample of villages was selected using maps provided by OCHA, and after enumerating all housing units in the sample areas, households were randomly selected for further interview.

This quantitative data was complimented by qualitative data collected through focus groups discussions. These thematic discussions with different groups of the population were designed to collect more in-depth information than was feasible through the survey structure.

16 villages selected

250 household interviews conducted

48 focus group discussions

“The area has been reclassified by ECHO and other humanitarian organizations as an area requiring continued surveillance.”

Patrice Efebi, Emergency Protection,
Head of Project, Danish Refugee Council

What was the impact?

- Humanitarian donor agencies such as ECHO (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission) has re-categorized Markounda as requiring on-going monitoring, surveillance and response based on this profiling exercise.
- As a result of the preliminary findings, a coordination mechanism is being established in order to effectively respond to the multiple challenges relating to protection and quality of life that the majority of refugee returnees in Markounda face.
- Since the first profiling exercise in CAR, Echelle has been continuously taking on more survey adaptation, design and tools development. Echelle has become more comfortable with the technical tasks, such as sampling and canvassing, previously completed by the statistical agency.
- Even though this is a community of refugee returnees, with their own unique experience and needs, they are often classified as IDPs. The findings are prompting stakeholders to expand on the concept of displacement in CAR to include other populations such as refugee returnees.
- This profiling exercise highlights the importance of considering readiness of return areas in all resettlement programming, in order to enable them to absorb such population influxes.

What were the findings?

Overall, the profiling activity found that this homogeneous community of refugee returnees initially fled their homes because of attacks by armed groups between 2005 and 2007.

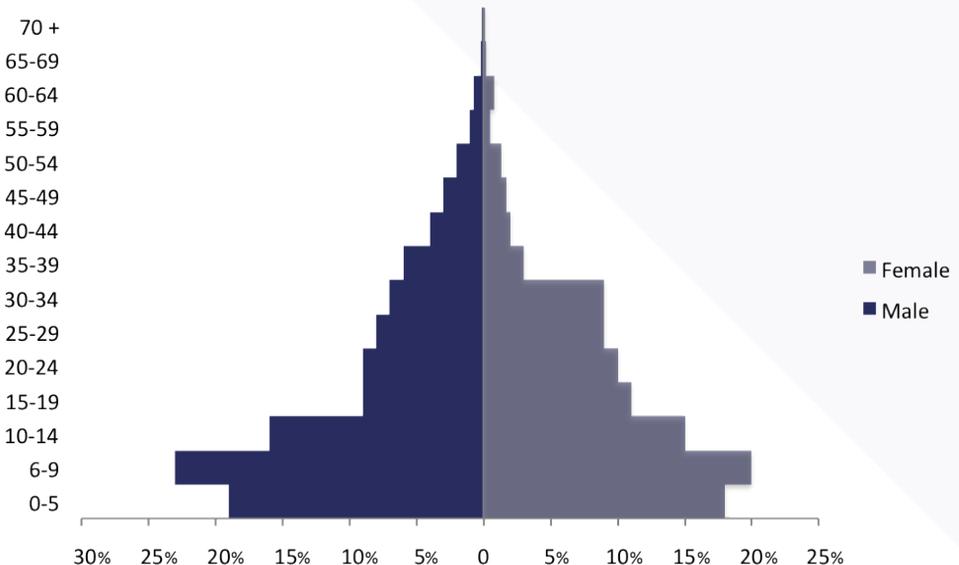
The return period started in 2006, but half of all returns happened between 2010 and 2012, with the largest influx occurring in 2011. These refugee returnees came home to precarious conditions. Housing, food security, water and sanitation are worse in comparison to the other locations surveyed in CAR (see Bamingui-Bangoran and Kabo profiling reports). At the same time, this group is reported to have received the most limited humanitarian assistance.



Disaggregated numbers

This exercise estimated the total population of Markounda to be over 20,000 with an average household size of five members. This is very similar to a population estimate from 2003, which projected the 2012 population to be 21,000. As the population pyramid shows, it is a predominately young population (figure 1). It is interesting to note that there are less under-fives, than 6-9 year olds in this community. This is not the usual trend for this region. The trend could be attributed to a slightly low numbers of births often found after periods of conflict and migration.

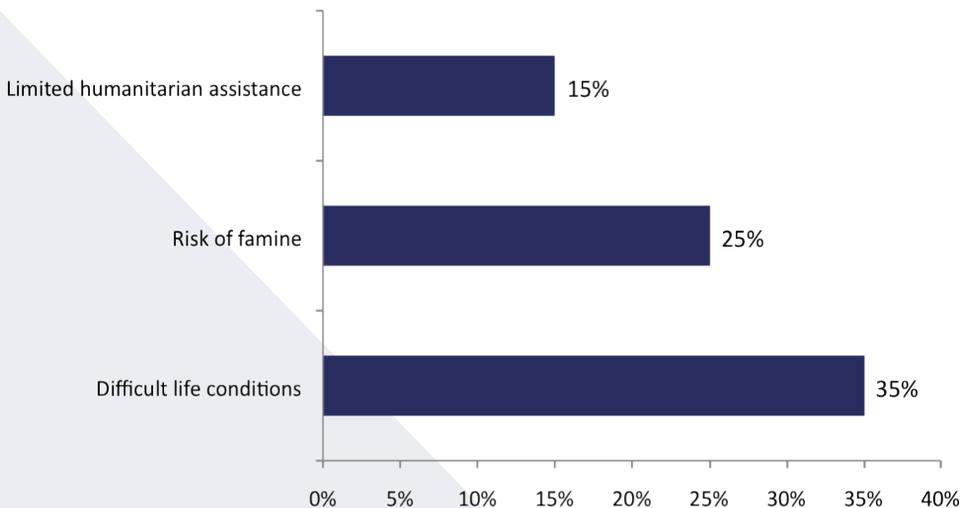
Figure 1: Markounda population pyramid



Reasons for return

As we see from figure 2, respondents cited several reasons for the return to their place of origin. Focus groups indicated that promises of humanitarian services and the demobilization process prompted their return. Many surveyed also indicated disappointment that some organizations stopped having the capacity to provide health services, at the same time many were returning.

Figure 2: Reasons for return



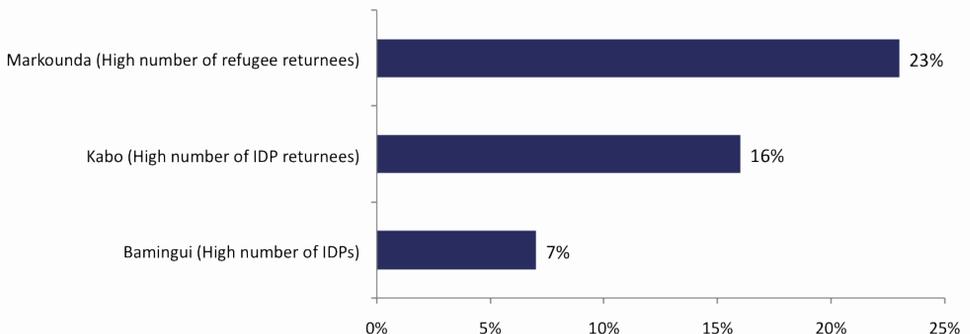
Livelihoods

Before the crisis and subsequent displacement, 86% of the population was active in the agricultural sector, with some working in the commercial sector. Today, there has been a drastic (57%) drop in activity in the agricultural sector and only 29% work in the sector. These days, many more are active in hunting, fishing and commerce.

The conflict caused decreased availability of agricultural inputs and limited access to land during critical growing periods. Overall the activity in the agricultural sector decreased. The population surveyed indicated there was very little meat/fish in the marketplace, which had resorted in people hunting and fishing themselves.

There is limited availability of food during the growing season, and food prices are high during the harvest periods. The majority of respondents indicated not having seeds available. As we can see from figure 3, Markounda's IDP refugee returnee population has 23% of the workforce made up of children.

Figure 3: Percentage of children in the workforce



Education

About 15% of boys and 23% of girls aged 5-15 did not attend school during the 2011-2012 school year. The majority of parents indicate that this drop out is due to lack of interest.

These findings differ significantly from areas such as Bamingui-Bangoran that has a higher number of children (50%) not attending school, with lack of interest being cited less often as an explanation. These differences might be attributed to the different type of learning activities experienced by refugees and IDPs.

Many returnees to Markounda have experienced the destruction and loss of their possessions and homes, and some have been unable to re-enter their homes at all. Most live on host plots.

Whether it was personal possessions, livestock or loss of family members, the vast majority has experienced some kind of significant loss.

80%
of those
surveyed
experienced
significant
loss

Protection

In spite of survey respondents feeling more secure than in the past, some areas of Markounda sees 60% of the population feeling unsafe because of the presence of armed groups, the previous loss of their possessions, increased violence during the pastoral grazing periods and limited protection available from the authorities. In spite of the decrease in criminality reported, 65% of respondents indicated being victims of violence.

48% of
respondents
felt
unsafe

Six sanitation outlets for over 20,000 refugee returnees

Water and sanitation

Water and sanitation indicators for Markounda indicate that the situation is worse than in Kabo and Bamingui-Bangoran. In Markounda, 94% use the outdoors for human waste disposal and less than 40% of the population has access to boreholes.

This is a critical reminder that humanitarian organizations need to help host communities identify local waste-management solutions.

Social cohesion and psychosocial profile

Community participation in Markounda is higher than other areas surveyed, with 81% of those surveyed participating in community agricultural and religious activities. In spite of the high level of community involvement, there seems to be a limited number of households who interact or support each other. Profiling researchers hypothesize that this limited “sharing” is likely to be due to limited resources.

The relationship with the authorities seems positive, with the strongest community tension being identified between returnees and nomadic groups. In this area, many report to have witnessed skirmishes due to grazing rights.

In comparison to IDP returnees from Kobo, a relatively low percentage (22%) of the refugee returnee respondents in Markouba indicated experiencing some level of post-trauma stress associated with tragic events they have witnessed.

Refugee returnees report less post-trauma stress than IDP returnees

What were the profiling lessons?

- This profiling activity re-iterated the importance of profiling the displacement situation rather than a single identified group. Designing a methodology that considers the range of population groups and varied consequences of conflict-induced displacement provides a more in-depth picture for targeted advocacy and response.
- It is important for profiling managers to remain flexible in their research and operational planning. This allows for flexibility to be able to adapt, for example to address previously unidentified populations of concern. In the case of Markounda, researchers were not expecting this high number of refugee returnees, but were able to alter their work methods to capture information in an effective way.
- As in Kabo, the profiling exercise in Markounda demonstrates the benefits of thorough capacity-building initiatives relating to profiling activities. Local NGO Echelle, who has now conducted three profiling exercises in CAR, have consolidated their expertise as a displacement profiling resource for the humanitarian/development community in the country.

The full report, containing further analysis, and the profiling tools can be found at:
www.idp-profiling.org

The profiling data is also available upon request.

This summary provides a glimpse into a collaborative IDP profiling process. Governmental and non-governmental actors contributed to the process, worked together to outline its objectives, to develop and modify its tools, and to collect and analyse the required data.

JIPS supported this profiling process by building the technical and management capacity of a local NGO to expand and adapt the scope and methods, as required for the local displacement context.

This glance into the profile of displaced persons in the Central African Republic hopes to spark interest in both the specific findings of this exercise, and profiling of IDP situations in general.



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