TÉLÉCOMS
SANS FRONTIÈRES

2020
ANNUAL REPORT

communications for life

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Message from the President

In 2020 the world faced an unprecedented global challenge, which didn't spare anyone, across countries and sectors. If the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions severely limited travels, put a strain on healthcare systems and slowed down economic activities, there is one element that was not hampered, but actually fostered: the difficulties faced by the most vulnerable populations.

In this completely transformed world, technologies played a key role in all aspects of our lives: to work, be informed, remain in contact with our loved ones or continue our education. If they have been important in our lives, they have been essential in continuing the assistance to isolated populations when deployments and physical proximity had to be limited. 2020 demonstrated to the world what TSF has been advocating for since its foundation: that technologies and telecommunications can have a tremendous impact on humanitarian response.
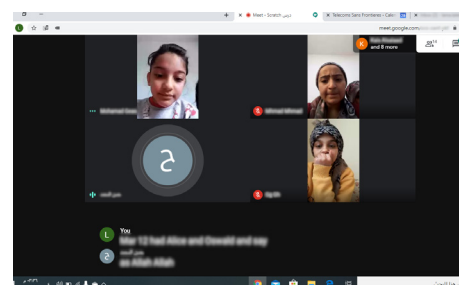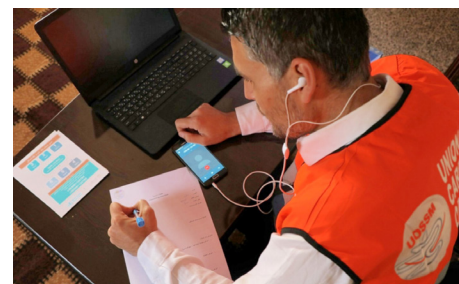
Thanks to remotely managed solutions, our teams could continue the assistance to migrants and refugees across Mexico and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who were able to have access to relevant information and remain in contact with their loved ones. Refugee children in Turkey could receive distant education, even those who wouldn't have the means to access digital technologies. In Syria, TSF's connections continued to help medical teams on the ground in their daily operations. Mozambican authorities could receive satellite devices and be trained to be able to use them in their fight against the spread of COVID-19.

However, TSF didn't stop to remote assistance. Whenever deployments were possible, our teams were on the ground to support the victims of the major sudden disasters of the year. After the explosions at the port of Beirut, TSF set up a call centre with its local partner Live Love Lebanon, to help the victims express their needs and put them in contact with the relevant NGOs that could assist them. We deployed to the Greek island of Lesbos, after the fire that destroyed the biggest refugee camp in Europe, where we installed a satellite connection to allow the asylum seekers to remain in contact with their families and be informed about their situation. Finally, in the aftermaths of hurricane Eta, we deployed to Honduras, where we provided connections to the people evacuated and to the humanitarian organisations assisting them.

A very challenging year is behind us, but another difficult one lays ahead. We are all aware that the consequences of the pandemic will last for several more months. Restrictions and protection measures will still have a significant impact on humanitarian response. However, at TSF this is not a reason to stand still. On the contrary, it's one reason more to work relentlessly to harness the potential of technologies and telecommunications to remain close to and protect those who need it most, even more in this moment.

Humanitarian Aid during the COVID-19 pandemic

"[TSF] communications are very useful in our daily work, and especially in the last period... Indeed, we had to find ways to avoid overcrowded waiting rooms, and to offer remote services. For example, we decided to set up help-line activities which provide online psycho-social consultations"

Alaa Ali, field agent for mental and psycho-social health, UOSSM, Syria

"Thanks to you, to Live Love Lebanon and TSF. Because you called me two, three times, asking how you could help. I finally found someone who listens to me. I need someone who listens to me."

Carla, victim of the Beirut port explosion

"The connection has been quite useful. The signal and the quality are good. I could use it to talk to my relatives … I hope the connection can be useful to others as well. Thanks a lot!"

Victim of Tropical storm Eta, Honduras

"It's good that we have TSF providing or sharing information through the screens in these moments"

Elias, manager of the Arriaga migrant shelter in Mexico

"TSF had a primary role in meeting the educational needs of students and giving hope in the hearts of their families"

Rawda, Syrian refugee in Gaziantep and parent of a beneficiary of the lab4future programme

"The students are more active on social media and use it to continue their remote learning"

Irinah, IT Cup Centre coordinator in Miarinarivo, Madagascar

TSF AROUND THE WORLD

in 2020

Four continents

10 countries

350,000+ beneficiaries

"It's really useful for every migrant and refugee. I had not seen anything like this at other shelter I've been to. It it would be great if it was displayed in every shelter."

US REPRESENTATIVE

MEXICO

REGIONAL BASE
SOUTH AMERICA &
CARABBEAN
(Guadalajara)

HONDURAS

PACIFIC
OCEAN

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

UK REPRESENTATIVE

INTERNATIONAL HQ

BOSNIA

TURKEY

GREECE

SYRIA

LEBANON

BURKINA FASO

"Even people who were not affected directly by the explosion have been left traumatized, and everyone deserves to be cared for and listened to"

REGIONAL BASE
ASIA PACIFIC
(Bangkok)

INDIAN
OCEAN

PACIFIC
OCEAN

MOZAMBIQUE

MADAGASCAR

DISASTER RESPONSE

While this year was marked by a global pandemic and its related travel restrictions, when there was a need in telecommunications, TSF was able to mobilise and deploy, namely to Lebanon, Greece and Honduras. We also maintained our responses in the Balkans and in Syria.

Beirut Port Explosion

On 4 August 2020, two massive explosions took place at the port of Beirut, in Lebanon. The accident caused at least 180 deaths, and over 6,500 casualties, forcing another 300,000 people out of their homes. The number of sudden casualties requiring urgent assistance overwhelmed the national healthcare system, which was already struggling to treat COVID-19 patients. On 7 August, TSF deployed a team to Beirut in collaboration with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) to provide reliable communications in the area of the disaster.

22
NGOs

2,500
VOLUNTEERS

Since 14 August, in parallel to its work with UNDAC, TSF has actively worked with local organisations like Live Love Lebanon and the consortium of NGOs Beirut Relief Coalition (22 NGOs and 2,500 volunteers) to support concrete and immediate actions providing emergency aid to affected populations. As a result of this collaboration, TSF set up a call centre to allow disaster victims to **report their needs regardless of the field: medical, psychological distress, financial aid, etc.** These requests were done through Live Love Lebanon's website, and TSF put in place an automated system for collecting needs via an Instant Messaging app in order to diversify the communication channels.

"Through one phone call I am able to connect with another person who might have lost all hope and just need someone to talk to."

A volunteer from BeBrave

11,185
CALLS

5H
OF CALLS PER DAY

86%
OF BENEFICIARIES RECEIVED PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP

In November, a new psychological unit managed by the local organisation BeBrave was added to the call centre, this helped the population of Beirut get through a very difficult moment, not only by reconstructing their material life, but also their emotional one.

Tropical Storm Eta

On 3 November 2020, hurricane Eta hit the coast of Nicaragua in category 5 with winds up to 150 mph. Eta then continued moving North and caused extensive flooding in Honduras. Two weeks later, the same area was hit by hurricane Iota which was as powerful as Eta. The associated intense rains and their consequences affected more than 1.6 million people in Honduras, including 50 000 people evacuated in emergency shelters. A team from our Americas and the Caribbean base was deployed, in collaboration with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC).

To respond efficiently to the needs in emergency communications of the affected populations, but also to facilitate evacuation operations, TSF organised a training session to the Honduran Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on how to use satellite lines. **4 lines** were supplied by TSF to reinforce their programme "Restoring Family Links" and **2 lines** were dedicated to the **evacuation operations in remote areas.**

Then TSF's team focused on helping people in shelters by installing Wi-Fi access points. This internet access was essential for them to contact their relatives, and follow hurricane Iota's path, while staying updated on the latest official information.

Moria Fire Emergency

Between 8 and 10 September several fires broke out in the Moria Reception and Identification Centre on the island of Lesvos, Greece. The camp was completely destroyed and around 12,000 asylum seekers, after living for several days on the street, were relocated to a new camp, constructed right after the accident, near the port of Mitilini.

Strong of its knowledge of the context and the contacts maintained since its latest mission on the island in 2015, TSF deployed on the ground soon after the fire. Our team installed the first Internet connection to cover the quarantine area of the Kara Tepe camp, where asylum seekers who tested positive to COVID-19 were placed. The Wi-Fi connection has been positively welcomed by the asylum seekers. After water, food and sanitation, it is considered the most important need, because it helps them remain in contact with their families and find important information about their situation.

CONNECTIVITY FOR REFUGEES IN LESVOS

START : SEPTEMBER 2020
ONGOING MISSION

TSF went to the field immediately after the fires to set up the first internet connection to cover the quarantine area in the new Kara Tepe camp, where COVID-19 positive asylum seekers are being placed. Today the access point is located in a common area and the refugees can use messaging applications, calls and social networks that allow them to be in touch with their loved ones.

KEY FIGURES
+5000 CONNECTED DEVICES
+2.5 TB TRANSFERRED

Balkan Migration Crisis

Five years after the beginning of the migration crisis in the European Union, namely in the Balkans, the situation is still complicated, and a great number of refugees are still living in difficult conditions.

Therefore TSF is pursuing its mission, in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) by offering a free internet connection with Wi-Fi access, and allowed **more than 6,000 migrants and refugees** hosted in the 20,000m² factory of Bira, in Bihac, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to maintain frequent contacts with their relatives.

While the situation for refugees at the border with Croatia remains challenging and uncertain, including transfers and closures of some shelters taking place at the end of the year, TSF remains active in the area to ensure its assistance to the refugees blocked at the border as well as the support to IOM operations.

Syrian Crisis

TSF has been present in Syria since 2012. We provide lifesaving connections for medical teams in the country in collaboration with the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisations' (UOSSM).

This year, in parallel to the COVID-19 pandemic which hit an extremely fragile country, the North-West of Syria experienced several episodes of bombing and intense fighting. During this period TSF increased the number of connections to ensure as much support as possible to the teams on the ground. TSF connections are paramount to face the virus on which new information is shared every day. They allow UOSSM to maintain remote healthcare assistance while respecting protection measures and also helped them maintain vital services such as psychological support: many Syrians suffer from psychological disorders, consequences of the traumas suffered during the conflict which has been ongoing for almost 10 years. This assistance is therefore essential for their health.
In 2020, the centres connected by TSF provided medical care for **more than 260,000 patients.**

PROTECTION & ASSISTANCE

Some emergencies can lead to different needs and therefore different responses from TSF. We work to alleviate the suffering of victims and work on innovative solutions to improve the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, adapted to the needs on the field.

Central American Migratory Movement

The migration crisis in Central America remains a humanitarian crisis, although 2020 has seen a decrease in the number of migrants crossing borders, which can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently the United States' border closed, creating a massive concentration of migrants.
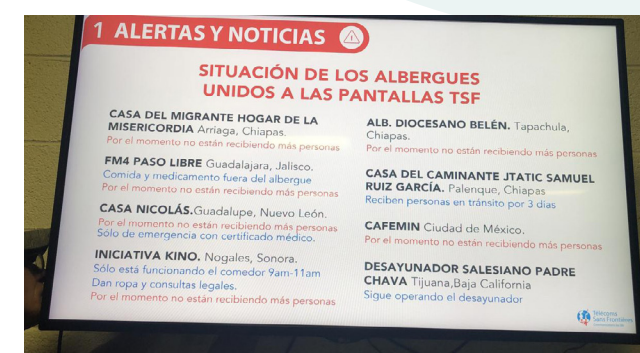
Since 2017, TSF has been providing assistance to asylum seekers in Mexico, allowing them to access key information, namely regarding their rights as refugees or important information about administrative procedures. To adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, a dedicated section was added, with the latest information produced by expert institutions in the field. All the presentations were adapted to the regional and local situations and updated twice a week, to have the most accurate and relevant information possible.

This supposed a close follow-up of the situation of every centre that was realised by TSF's project team based in Guadalajara.

Finally, in order to expand the project and reach more asylum-seekers, TSF collaborated with two more centres in Mexico, one in Juárez city in Chihuaha, and the other in Villahermosa, Tabasco, bringing the total number of centres up to 10.

"It's really useful for every immigrant and refugee (the screen). I had not seen anything like this at other shelters I've been at. I'm not a person that reads too much and I don't spend too much time watching the screen, but it would be great if it was displayed in every shelter."

18 years old girl from Honduras traveling alone. Interviewed in FM4 shelter, Guadalajara, Jalisco.
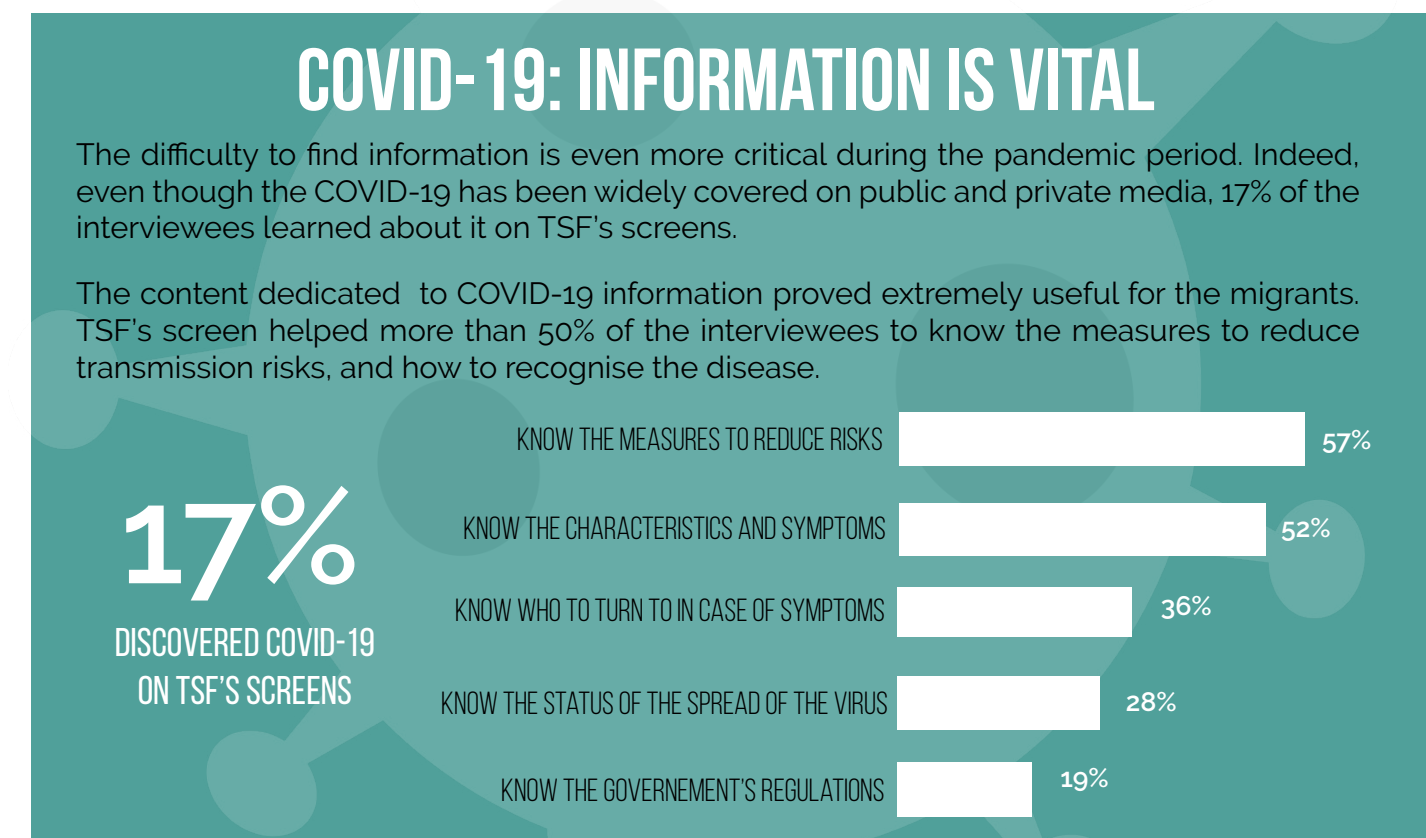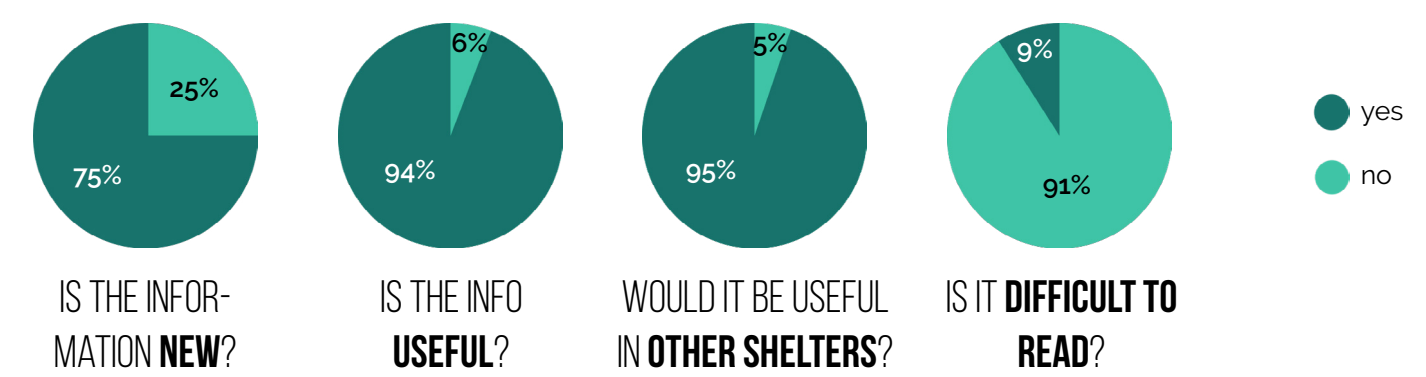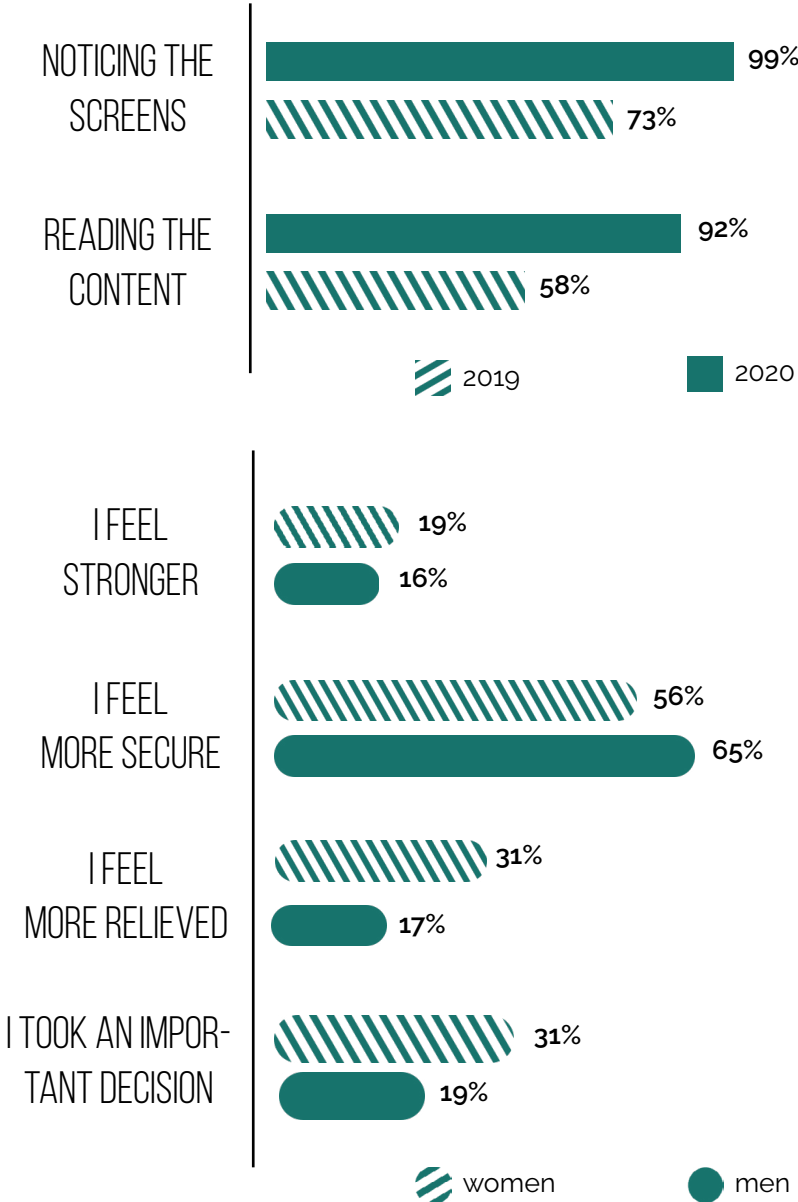
FOCUS ON... THE INFORMATION DIFFUSION FOR MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions, TSF's project team, in collaboration with the managers of the different shelters involved, have been able to conduct assessments to evaluate the impact of the project. The results confirmed the positive impact already showed by the evaluations conducted in previous years, and even some improvements on certain aspects.

Nearly the whole population participating in the assessments noticed and read the information available on the screens, and highlighted that the content is not only useful for them, but also that they could find information they hadn't found through other sources. For these reasons, 95% agrees that this system would be useful in other shelters along the migratory route. This is also confirmed by the managers of the shelters, who see the system as an excellent tool to share more easily, clearly and effectively vital information for the populations they are assisting.

During 2020, TSF continued its efforts to improve the quality of the information provided and of the technical solution used. Thanks to the participation in relevant coordination meetings with regional humanitarian actors, the information shared could be further improved. In addition to content relevant to the areas where each centre is located, the presentations have been updated to include also specific content tailored to vulnerable groups such as children, women etc.
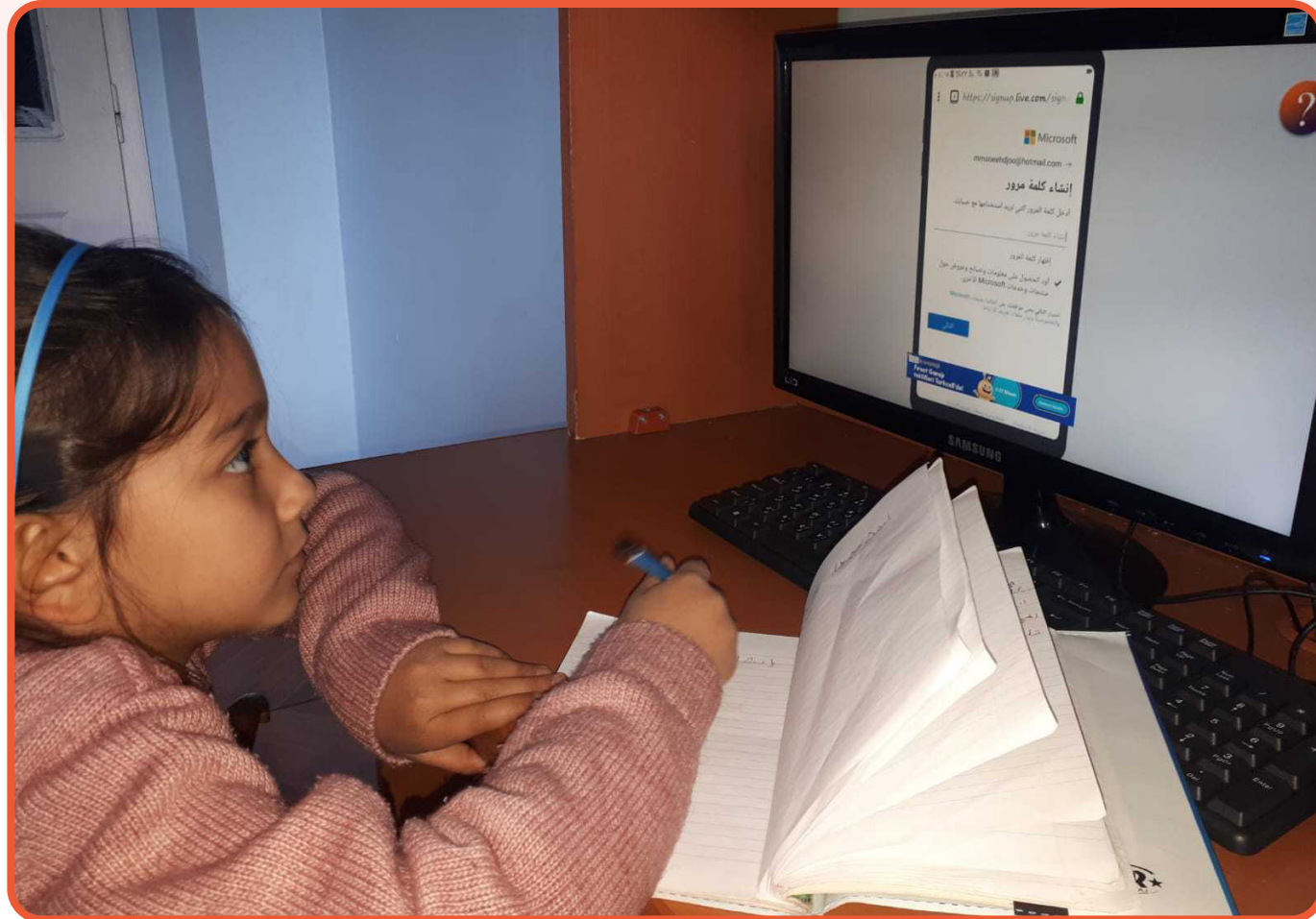
It is based on this positive feedback and results that, in 2021, TSF is expanding the project to a total of 42 new centres, in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Help.ngo, not only within Mexico, but also in Central and Latin America.

NOTICING THE SCREENS
- 99% (2020)
- 73% (2019)

READING THE CONTENT
- 92% (2020)
- 58% (2019)

2019 / 2020

I FEEL STRONGER
- 19% (women)
- 16% (men)

I FEEL MORE SECURE
- 56% (women)
- 65% (men)

I FEEL MORE RELIEVED
- 31% (women)
- 17% (men)

I TOOK AN IMPORTANT DECISION
- 31% (women)
- 19% (men)

women / men

IS THE INFORMATION NEW?
- 75% yes / 25% no

IS THE INFO USEFUL?
- 94% yes / 6% no

WOULD IT BE USEFUL IN OTHER SHELTERS?
- 95% yes / 5% no

IS IT DIFFICULT TO READ?
- 9% yes / 91% no

yes / no

COVID-19: INFORMATION IS VITAL

The difficulty to find information is even more critical during the pandemic period. Indeed, even though the COVID-19 has been widely covered on public and private media, 17% of the interviewees learned about it on TSF's screens.

The content dedicated to COVID-19 information proved extremely useful for the migrants. TSF's screen helped more than 50% of the interviewees to know the measures to reduce transmission risks, and how to recognise the disease.

17%
DISCOVERED COVID-19 ON TSF'S SCREENS

- KNOW THE MEASURES TO REDUCE RISKS — 57%
- KNOW THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SYMPTOMS — 52%
- KNOW WHO TO TURN TO IN CASE OF SYMPTOMS — 36%
- KNOW THE STATUS OF THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS — 28%
- KNOW THE GOVERNEMENT'S REGULATIONS — 19%

EDUCATION

This year has showed us more than ever the importance of education especially for migrant or refugee children, who are often deprived of scolarity during several years. TSF implements educational programmes, in order to assist vulnerable children who are or were affected by crises that hindered their education. Technology is paramount to enable children to access education, a fundamental right everyone should have access to.

Lab4Future

Active in Gaziantep, Turkey, since 2013, TSF launched the Lab4Future project in 2020 in two centres, Alanwar #1 and Alanwar #2, which are managed by its local partner Minber Alsham.

The aim of the project is to offer children aged 6-17 an opportunity to learn basic digital and soft skills in a safe and welcoming environment that encourages their independence, critical thinking and problem solving skills. It is based on the concept of learning by doing and promotes peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Through an innovative educational approach, which fosters teamwork and peer-to-peer collaboration, the Lab4Future covers different aspects of the technical world and allows students to learn digital skills while progressing in other subjects like Arabic or Mathematics. It is composed of 4 workshops: computing and Internet, programming and robotics, electricity, and fabrication.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the population in Gaziantep, including children, had to remain at home as much as possible. Albeit not designed for this situation, the Lab4Future allowed TSF to provide children remote digital and technical activities by using an online platform. This offered access to different activities and tutorials that children could complete from home, as well as educational monitoring by videoconference with their teachers.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The COVID-19 pandemic has showed the crucial role technologies have in our lives. They made teleworking possible and allowed students to continue their education despite the restrictions in many parts of the world. However, technologies are still not accessible to everyone. We contribute to a more equal access and training to digital technologies, for isolated communities and vulnerable groups.

IT Cup Centres

IT Cup Centre, Miarinarivo, Madagsacar

The year 2020 has been intense for the IT Cup Centre of Miarinarivo: before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in March, the team organised an awareness event for the youth of Miarinarivo: the **Safer Internet Day**, in partnership with Alabri Centre. This international day aims to raise the youth's awareness on what is internet, its best usages and its dangers. On 11 February 2020, around **500 teenagers** went with their teachers to learn about internet, on Miarinarivo's Place Be. There were six workshops presenting different aspects of internet, in order to give the young Malagasy a better idea ; the covered questions included for example "how to use the internet" or "does internet tell the truth ?". This is all the more important in Madagascar, where internet knowledge is often limited to facebook - which is only used by 15% of the people over 14 years old.

After being closed during the general confinement in Madagascar, the centre gradually reopened and started to organise remote activities in collaboration with the local radio. This radio programme was aimed to youth and proposed them to create small crafts or drawings with a given subject, that would then be published online (as a photo) on the facebook page of the IT Cup Centre. Facebook was also used to give remote training sessions in partnership with Openstreetmap.

From June, as the COVID-19 situation had stabilised, more activities could be started back with the sanitary mesures. The cybercafé has been reorganised as well as the computer literacy sessions, in order to continue the centre's committment towards the pupils of Miarinarivo. Activities and training session about free cartography and programmation could also take place.

Guiè, Burkina Faso

TSF is present in Burkina Faso, in Guiè, with an IT Cup centre in support of the Zoramb Naagtaaba (AZN) association, which brings together 11 very isolated villages in the country. This gives locals, but especially youth, access to digital tools and connectivity. This access is critical nowadays as the country is subject to increasing insecurity .

CAPACITY BUILDING

In an emergency, information management and sharing are key to an effective humanitarian response that can provide appropriate assistance to affected populations as quickly as possible. Our technology and telecommunications experts conduct training sessions around the world for the benefit of international NGOs, government agencies and the United Nations. These sessions address the use of new technologies in crisis situations. They are also an opportunity to highlight the latest technical solutions used in responding to emergencies.
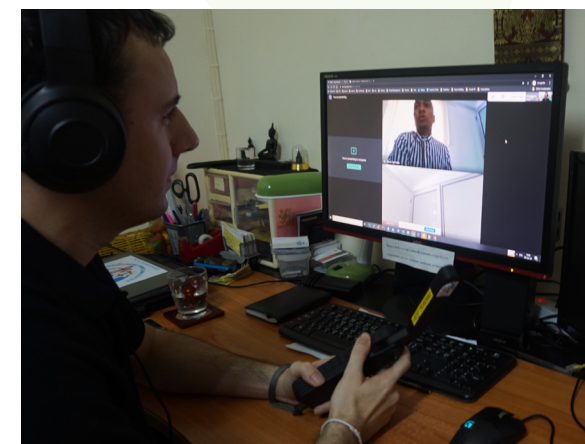

Training sessions at Asian Institute of Technology

In February 2020, our Asia and the Pacific base delivered two training sessions to students from the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand. These sessions aim at presenting TSF and its mission, training on the use of different satellite tools used in emergency missions and recruiting new volunteers from different nationalities, available to join and support TSF's missions.

Mozambique training

In Mozambique, we supported the National Institute for Disaster Management (INGC) in its response to COVID-19 by providing satellite equipment and bandwidth. These resources supported the operations of INGC field teams in remote areas with no connection.

In order to do so, Télécoms Sans Frontières provided a remote training session, to ensure that all personnel would be able to use the satellite equipment correctly.

TSF IN THE PRESS

capacity media

TSF provides remote learning to Syrian children as Covid-19 closes schools

21 April 2020 |

TSF helps Mexico refugees tackle Coronavirus pandemic

06 May 2020 | Alan Burkitt-Grav

TSF deploys aid team to Lebanon after Beirut port explosion

07 August 2020 | Alan Burkitt-Gray

capacity itw daily Wedn #KeepingTheWorldConnected

TÉLÉCOMS SANS FRONTIÈRES EXPANDS ACTIVITIES TO HELP COUNTER COVID-19 THREAT #KEEPINGTHEWORLDCONNECTED

SFI.ORG WHAT MAKES TSF?

telecoms.com

Télécoms Sans Frontières steps up to the plate in stricken Beirut

Written by Scott Bicheno |

Phone lines and lifelines: the importance of connectivity in a crisis

DEVELOPING TELECOMS

Telecoms Sans Frontieres aids Beirut relief efforts

MANNY PHAM   03 SEPTEMBER 2020   5376 views

Vanilla+

TSF communications support relief work after Beirut blast

08 September, 2020 at 2:26 PM   Posted by: Anasia D'mello

Connectivity during crisis: how the telecoms industry can support humanitarian relief efforts

16 November, 2020 at 6:31 AM   Posted by: Anasia D'mello

MOBILE EUROPE

Télécoms Sans Frontières: help in emergencies and on-going need

24 DECEMBER 2020

WITH THE SUPPORT OF

BABEL

TSF PARTNERS

COVID-19 is the first health crisis that has affected the entire world in a global way. We have had to adapt and we will keep doing so to maintain our commitment and assist the most vulnerable. Thanks to your continuous support, even during a global pandemic of this scale, we have been able to fulfil together our shared mission:
Communications for Life.

Financial Partners

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TÉLÉCOMS SANS FRONTIÈRES

Communications for life

Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) was founded 20 years ago as the world's first NGO focusing on emergency-response technologies.

We empower populations and responders in humanitarian crises by delivering reliable connectivity when and where it is needed most. We give affected people the possibility to contact their loved ones and begin to regain control of their lives, and we build rapid-response communications centres for local and international responders.

Since its creation in 1998, TSF has responded to over 140 crises in more than 70 countries, providing communication means to over 20 million people and nearly 1,000 NGOs.

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