

UKRAINE CRISIS RESPONSE

28 February 2022 – ongoing

Interim report December 2022

Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) was founded in 1998 as the world's first NGO focusing on emergency-response technologies. During humanitarian crises TSF gives affected people the possibility to contact their loved ones and begin to regain control of their lives. In parallel, TSF builds rapid-response communications centers for local and international relief workers. From its early days, these activities have been the core of TSF identity, but throughout the years, TSF has evolved to adapt its solutions to support vulnerable groups in a wide range of rapid-onset disasters and complex humanitarian crises.

Context

On February 24th 2022, the Russian army invaded Ukraine. Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 6 million people have been internally displaced and more than 6 million refugees have sought refuge in Poland, Moldova, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. As men between the ages of 18 and 60 are not allowed to leave the territory of Ukraine, refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced People) are mainly women, children and elderly people.

Once they cross the border with one of Ukraine's neighboring countries, the refugees look either for a specific destination or just for a safe place to temporarily seek refuge. This unstable situation is unfortunately conducive to the development of illegal networks that can put refugees, especially women and children, in danger.

TSF deployed a first team on the ground on February, 28th. In close coordination with different United Nations agencies, the local authorities and the other humanitarian organizations active in Ukraine and the neighboring countries, it has implemented different actions within Ukraine and in neighboring countries to provide telecom support and access to information for the refugees, internally displaced people and humanitarian organizations.

KEY FIGURES

GLOBAL

+33,000 beneficiaries
72% beneficiaries are women

UKRAINE

+19.5TB of data transferred

Beneficiaries used the connection to:
contact loved ones (50%), study
(22%) and stay informed (22%)

+1,100 unique devices connected

ROMANIA

+10,000 devices connected

Most important use: Contact families
and friends (42%)

POLAND

92% have discovered new
information through the informative
screens

60% have taken important decisions
after consulting the screens

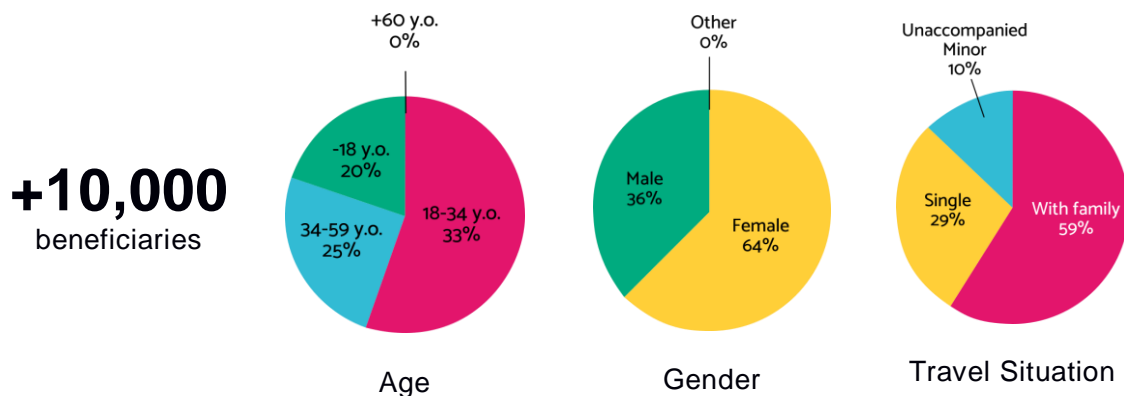
For 96%, access to information had a
positive impact on their lives

Map of the mission



Description of the project

Connectivity for refugees in Moldova and Romania



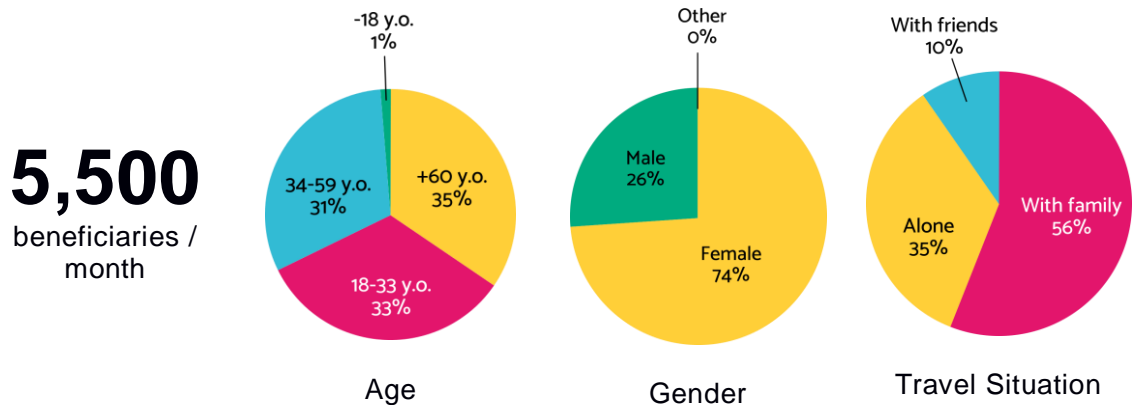
In Palanca, in the south of Moldova, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN agency for refugees (UNHCR), in partnership with the Moldovan and Romanian civil protection, set up a daily bus convoy in order to safely bring refugees to Romania. This trip lasted between 10 and 16 hours. For people who have left their home and family members in Ukraine, it was a long waiting period after stressful and trying days. During the trip, the concern about their loved ones in Ukraine and the anxiety for the next steps of their forced and difficult journey could overwhelm them.

TSF installed a free Wi-Fi connection on all the buses of the convoy. This connection allowed the passengers to contact their relatives remained in Ukraine through instant messaging apps or social media, to find the strength to continue their journey (83%). It also allowed them to check the news on their home country and to look for essential information for the next steps of their journey, thus reducing their level of stress (44%).

The evaluation conducted confirmed that the connection was particularly important for the refugees. 94% of those interviewed stated that the possibility to use the free Wi-Fi had a positive impact on their lives. The type of positive impact was in line with the uses made of the connection, with 89% reporting psychological improvement upon having access to internet connection and the same percentage stating that they could take an important decision for their lives thanks to the connection. Finally, 72% stated they could find information they didn't know before through TSF's free Wi-Fi.



Providing essential information to refugees in Poland



Poland is the European country receiving the highest number of refugees from Ukraine (over 1,4M according to the United Nations estimates). Refugees arriving in a new country, after leaving their homes and families often on short notice, often lack the necessary information, either to start a new life in the new country, or to move to their final destinations.

To meet this need, TSF started an information diffusion project to provide them with essential, tailored information to help them stay safe and make the most informed decisions for their future. In collaboration with the United Nations Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), TSF is installing informative screens in different reception sites for refugees in Poland. The information displayed is gathered from trustful sources and covers different topics relevant to refugees, including self-care advice, international protection, legal advice, support provided by institutions, among others. In each center, the information displayed will be adapted to the location and the needs of the assisted populations.

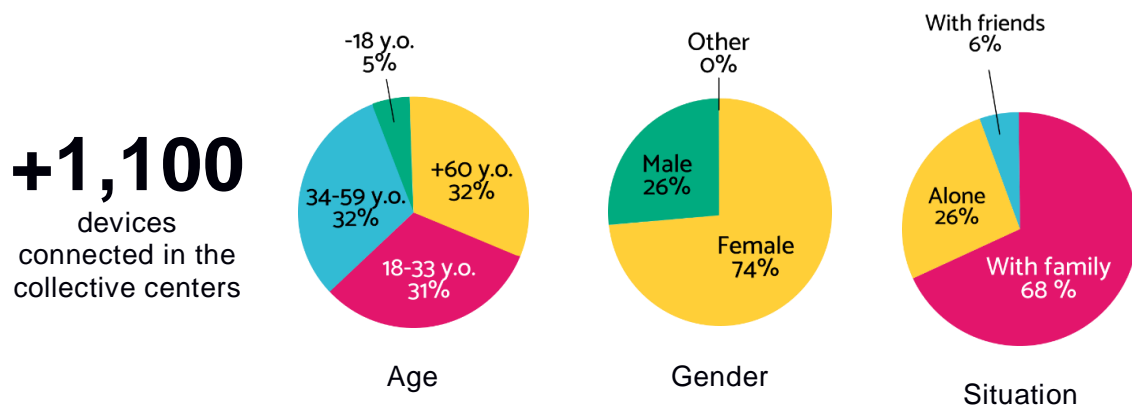
9 screens have already been installed in Protection centers in Rzeszów, Pzremysl, Krakow, Wroclaw and Warsaw.



Connectivity support to humanitarian organizations in Ukraine

Within Ukraine, TSF started its support by providing emergency telecom equipment to the organizations contributing to the humanitarian response. As the shelling on power infrastructures intensified in the last month of 2022, power outages were more frequent, broader and longer. Therefore, the communication networks were down more often. Consequently, a number of organizations asked for advice to TSF on emergency connectivity in this context. Depending on the needs of the organization, TSF provided satellite lines and / or satellite connectivity to different NGOs such as Alima, HALO Trust, Moto Help, AICM. Training sessions on the use of satellite equipment to MSF-France in Mykolaiv were also conducted.

Connectivity for IDPs in Ukraine



In addition, TSF provides Wi-Fi coverage in collective centers for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Vinnytsia. Although some centers are connected to the internet, they generally do not have the means to distribute this connectivity to the dozens of people who are being housed for an undetermined period. Our local team has chosen the 3 most critical shelters in terms of Internet availability among all the temporary accommodation centers for IDPs in Vinnytsia. Network equipment and access points are installed on every floor of each center. This connection allows between 150 and 250 IDPs in each center to remain in contact with their families and look for relevant information online. Moreover, in this kind of humanitarian crises, access to education for children and youth is often interrupted and precarious. The connectivity provided by TSF also allows children to continue their education remotely.



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