

Information and Communication Technologies in Support of Transit Migrants in Mexico

Executive Summary - 2020 Annual Report

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Background

Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF) is active in the Central American migratory context since 2012. Due to the political context, high rates of violence and increasingly frequent natural disasters, TSF strengthened its activities in the region by starting a new project in October 2017 to improve migrants' access to essential information. A large majority of them travel without a telephone and many use television as their primary source of information in their home countries. They arrive in a new country with limited to no information about their rights, safety measures, and administrative procedures. In this context, the diffusion of relevant, reliable information in key locations along the migratory route is essential to meet the needs of migrants and contribute to their protection.

The project consists in the installation of a digital information system that allows remote diffusion of key information in migrant shelters, building a bridge between migrants and other relevant organisations producing information materials. This project now enters in its fourth year and continues to demonstrate its importance, even during the global pandemic that hit the world in 2020.

The system

The system that TSF uses allows low bandwidth consumption and internet connection is only required for content updates, allowing the service to remain active even if there are connectivity issues. Along with the capability of displaying fixed graphic content, managed remotely through a central server by a content admin, the solution can manage locally storage video content. As a result, there is the possibility for rapid updates on the displayed information (especially useful for alerts, such as sanitary concerns, sudden changes on migratory legislation and politics, Covid-19 pandemic changing context, etc.).

The information is transmitted to the devices in real time and comes from trusted sources (including the UNHCR, the ICRC, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Save the Children, among others. Each device is located in a strategic place in the shelter, according to the operational process of each institution, in order to reach as many people as possible. The information displayed covers topics relevant to them such as: migrants' rights, information for asylum seekers, self-care advice, health concerns, contact information of consulates, embassies and organisations supporting migrants, security, news and alerts.

Locations



Key figures and results

- 18 000 beneficiaries per month until March and since March, around 700 beneficiaries per month.
- Between 2019 and 2020, there was a 34% increase of migrants reading the information on the screens.
- The information on the screens has had a positive impact for 96.5% of the beneficiaries who consulted them, a slight increase from the previous year (95%).
- For 75% of those interviewed, the information shared was new. 95% of the migrants and 100% of the centre managers recommend installing the information system in other centres.
- Thanks to the information received, some can make important decisions such as applying for asylum in Mexico (59%), or applying for a humanitarian visa (18%).

COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the mission, in particular due to shelter closures and travel restrictions. Right after the COVID-19 outbreak, TSF started diffusing reliable information on the pandemic: its characteristics, symptoms, prevention measures, where to seek for help, etc...

- Even if information about COVID-19 is widely communicated on public and private media, 17% of interviewees learned about it for the first time through the screens.
- 95% of people were able to inform themselves about COVID-19 through the informative screens.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of the evaluation carried out by our team in 2020, show that the mission is essential for migrants, and that it contributes to the work of the organisations in charge of the centres. Moreover, the work done in previous years has allowed TSF to have a more specific approach. For example, now there is more information directed to vulnerable groups (children, women, LGBTI, etc.). The information has been adapted and personalised for each centre. The people in charge of the centres stress that *"the system is very useful. It is like having several professionals who transmit relevant information"* and that *"the system is a good way of sharing with the migrants the information they need"*.

Building on the success of the mission, TSF is expanding it in 2021. Two collaboration agreements have been finalised with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Help.ngo. The system, currently installed in 10 centres in Mexico, will now be present in 32 new centres. In total, the expansion of the TSF project to these 42 centres will provide thousands of migrants with access to reliable, targeted and regularly updated information that is essential for their safety and future.

Testimonies

"Information about COVID-19 is very interesting to get to know how is the situation in the whole country. 'Your rights' section is really important. It should be included how to talk to the authorities and include some information and news about Cuba. There are many Cubans seeking for asylum". Cuban male traveling alone, interviewed at FM4 shelter, Jalisco.

"It's really useful for every immigrant and refugee. I had not seen anything like this at other shelter I've been to. 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. It would be even better if you could include more information about LGTB community and its rights". 18 years old transgender girl from Honduras traveling alone, interviewed at the FM4 shelter, Jalisco.

"It is an easy way for them to understand the situation and make decisions about seeking refuge". Casa del Caminante's Manager, Palenque.

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