

Communication Work Group -1 December 2015

Present: Internews, IFRC, MercyCorps, MSF, IRC, Save the Children, UNHCR, ActionAid.

Agenda

1. UNHCR presented the main recommendations on communication derived from the participatory assessment on protection they conducted jointly with other agencies on Lesbos. The assessment included questions about information, which is why it's interesting for this forum to read it. Information needs are – not surprising - still huge, with a clear need for:

- Maps
- Timetables (ferries, food distribution, ...)

It also revealed the need for

- Communal areas to eat, drink, relax, ...
- Seats around charging stations and elsewhere (for elderly)

And a preference for

- Verbal communication (outreach, ...)
- Online platforms (whatsapp, ...)

Other issues expressed included

- Incorrect information (or confusion due to poor communication) with Vodafone-deals

The report contains much more information and is available for everyone. There will be more focus group discussions in the North of the island.

For more information or the full report, contact Carol El Sayed – UNHCR via elsayed@unhcr.org

2. IRC will upload the IFRC Walkie Talkie Radio show on to their website.
3. IFRC is developing an information package for their staff, which will include basic information on a broad range of issues. It seems like this could be interesting for other agencies as well. For more information, contact Meena Bhandari/IFRC: popiabhandari@hotmail.com
4. UNHCR with Internews have mapped out all existing signs and messages for Moria, upon request from the local government. The government will approve (or not) all signs and they will be produced with their logo on it, since they are running the camp and increased clarity. Spelling mistakes and shaky translations (don't make fire ≠ don't shoot) have been weeded out and all signs, without logos, are available in google drive for everyone to use in other camp sites across the island and across the region: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6BADeNS9_xRR2JJSDVHMzFwYm8
5. UNHCR is also putting up billboards on different locations across the island, for announcements and other useful information from all partners.
6. IFRC raised a concern regarding the long government approval process to play their audio in Moria camp. UNHCR to address this with govt and suggest a better, faster approval process for the future.

7. IRC & MercyCorps is looking to expand the content on their app Refugeeinfo.eu. All partners are welcome to make suggestions. For more information, contact Barbara Magid/IRC: Barbara.Magid@rescue.org
8. Several agencies (Save the Children, Internews, ActionAid) are flagging that the Lesvos Situation Updates-whatsapp group seems to have died, which means information on arrivals (boats/people) is not being communicated properly from the North of the island to the South, making it hard to plan staff/activities. UNHCR is providing daily reports, but these come too late to allow planning. UNHCR to look for a solution.
9. Danish Red Cross is flagging the ongoing issues of family members being separated from each other after arriving on the island. Save The Children is developing a set of guidelines for volunteers (don't put family members in separate vans/buses,...) and will share this as soon as it's ready.
10. UNHCR has put together a two-pager on the relocation programme and other legal options for refugees arriving in Greece. The challenge is to communicate it to an audience which has other plans ("Germany!") and little time/willingness to take in new information. One suggestion is to set up regular, short sessions for outreach staff and volunteers across the island, knowing that they have the most interaction, and are the preferred channel of communication for refugees. Other channels and approaches are still being investigated as well.
11. Save the Children raises an issue with an international volunteering organisation which promises cash for refugees who are lacking resources, only to withdraw their offer once refugees are not willing to have their picture taken (for accountability reasons). This is a lack of dignity and respect and is a clear violation of the humanitarian "Do No Harm"-principle and will be taken up with camp management.
12. IFRC is requesting other partners to share their experiences with sharing audio over Bluetooth, from phone to phone, as a way of distributing their Walkie Talkie program. The name of Jeff Wishney/MercyCorps is mentioned.
13. IFRC also launches the idea to organise an event to thank the host community for their efforts in the refugee response. Some ideas include "Christmas" "walk with refugees" or a "food festival". Other agencies are invited to brainstorm with them. More information with Meena/IFRC popiabhandari@hotmail.com
14. To inform the host population, UNHCR is thinking about a regular open meeting with a limited amount of representatives from the humanitarian agencies to answer questions from the host community.
15. Internews is working with local media to inform them better on refugee-issues through the Newsthatmoves—updates in Greek and helping them navigate the humanitarian system when they have specific questions.