

APPENDIX G | Interventions for Highly Mobile Populations

Service provision for highly mobile populations is challenging in any context, as is disseminating crucial information about rights and services. While the Central and North American displacement context is certainly unique, service providers may find examples of interventions in other contexts useful to reference and possibly adapt. The tables below illustrate examples of two types of interventions used with highly mobile populations in other contexts: (1) service provision initiatives, and (2) communication campaigns.

Service Provision Initiatives

Lessons from Healthcare: HIV Care in South Africa

In South Africa, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has developed a seven-step model of care for patients migrating across the South African-Zimbabwean border to ensure continuity of care for HIV. To help guide migrants, the model included providing migrants with a hand-held patient passport documenting current treatments and lab results, offering referral letters to patients who may choose to seek further care along their journey, and providing an “HIV road map” detailing where migrants can access treatment at their destination. On the service provision end, health workers asked about migrants’ travel plans in adherence counselling sessions and provided patients with a three-month stock of drugs if they were planning on travelling for more than two weeks. Clinics also employed a questionnaire for new and returning patients that asked about continuity of treatment, utilizing a “transfer out” classification to avoid double-counting patients they had already seen.¹

In addition, MSF has adopted several other outreach techniques, including offering health services in clinics that are near offices for asylum application, organizing primary healthcare mobile clinics to rural areas, and gathering information on patients’ travel plans and coping mechanisms to help with creating an appropriate treatment regime and providing relevant referrals.² MSF has also noted that engaging private sector actors, such as companies that may employ irregular migrants, is important for improving access to health services.³

Lessons from Healthcare: mHealth Solutions

Health practitioners in Africa have used mobile health (mHealth) tools to promote health interventions such as HIV testing and pregnancy support to migrant populations.⁴ MHealth solutions can also be applied in the mental health context to provide psychological support to at-risk populations.⁵ For example, mobile phones have been used to provide services to mobile populations in South Africa, where the Department of Health built mHealth service MomConnect to educate and provide services to pregnant migrants. A similar South African program, Help@Hand, aims to inform refugees of access to legal and counselling services along the migratory route.⁶ A study of mobile phone usage in Trans-Saharan migration notes that mobile phones often serve as crucial tools for African migrants and refugees to obtain information from their migratory “helpers” or access emergency financing along the route. However, the study also notes that mobile phone data can in turn be used by authorities to detect migrants.⁷

¹ Médecins San Frontières, *Providing Antiretroviral Therapy for Mobile Populations: Lessons Learnt from a Cross Border ARV Programme in Musina, South Africa*, Cape Town, July 2012, http://www.msfacecess.org/sites/default/files/MSF_assets/HIV_AIDS/Docs/AIDS_report_ARTformobilepops_ENG_2012.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Aurélie Ponthieu and Andrea Incerti, “Continuity of Care for Migrant Populations in Southern Africa,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 35 (2016): 113.

⁴ Catrin Evans, K. Turner, L. S. Suggs, A. Occa, A. Juma, and H. Blake, “Developing a mHealth intervention to promote uptake of HIV testing among African communities in the conditions: a qualitative study,” *BMC Public Health* 16, no. 1 (2016): 1–16.

⁵ Matthew Price, Erica K. Yuen, Elizabeth M. Goetter, James D. Herbert, Evan M. Forman, Ron Acierno, and Kenneth J. Ruggiero, “mHealth: A Mechanism to Deliver More Accessible, More Effective Mental Health Care,” *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy* 21, no. 5 (2014): 8.

⁶ Ka Yan Leung and Wai Sze Leung, “Empowering Refugees and Migrants in South Africa through ICT4D,” published in IST-Africa 2016 Conference Proceedings, 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ISTAFRICA.2016.7530696>.

⁷ Max Leonard Schaub, “Lines across the desert: mobile phone use and mobility in the context of trans-Saharan migration,” *Information Technology for Development* 18, no. 2 (2012): 126–44.

Communication Campaigns

Featured Refugee and Migrant Communication and Translation services⁸



Textfugees⁹

A text message service provision application for refugee service providers which parallels the mHealth model.



RefuComm¹⁰

Greek organization which creates audio and visual communication for refugees and trains “cultural mediators” to brief refugees on the immigration and relocation process.



Refugee Communication Boards¹¹

One of many refugee translation services, this group uses simple icons on a gameboard-like layout to allow refugees to communicate with service providers.



ETCall¹²

A mobile app connecting refugees with volunteer translators.

Case Study: UNHCR refugee communication campaign in Macedonia¹³

In 2015, the UNHCR Emergency Lab interviewed refugees about their experiences at the border between Greece and Macedonia to determine the needs of refugees and migrants from the Middle East. The Emergency Lab then partnered with Translators Without Borders to translate responses to commonly asked questions which were then recorded and projected via existing loudspeakers at the former entry points from Greece into Macedonia. While the existing loudspeaker system required staff to manually go into the system to re-record new messages, it was soon replaced with a “smart” system that could be remotely controlled via tablet. With the help of Google, Mercy Corps, and others, the team created Translation Cards, an open source app which organizes FAQs into electronic decks that staff can access on their phones or tablets to answer questions in refugees’ native languages. In addition, the UNHCR partnered with a private company to build centrally managed informational video programming for refugees along 11 television screens at border entry and exit points. The programming included cartoons for children and procedural information for their parents. The UNHCR also worked with Telecoms Sans Frontieres to set up internet connectivity at the southern Macedonian border and at a site in Serbia, allowing refugees to connect with their families and access electronic documents.

⁸ Berkeley Refugee Resources (BRR), “Refugees - Translation, Interpretation, and Language Services,” November 12, 2016, <http://bev.berkeley.edu/refugees/translationservices.html>.

⁹ Textfugees project website no longer available; for more information on the initiative, see: Willa Frej, “Text Messaging May Solve One Major Problem In The Refugee Crisis,” *Huffington Post*, March 14, 2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/refugee-crisis-tech-techfugees_us_56dda2ffe4b0000de4052b8e.

¹⁰ “RefuComm: About Us,” 2018, <http://www.refucomm.com/about>.

¹¹ “Refugee Communication Boards,” Tobii Dynavox, <http://www2.tobiidynavox.com/refugee-communication-boards>.

¹² ETCall, “Welcome to ETCall, the Simple App to Connect People Who Need Translation with Volunteer Translators through a Phone Call. #Syria #Refugees,” Tweet, @etcalle, December 14, 2016, <https://twitter.com/etcalle/status/809061902873661440>.

¹³ UNHCR Innovation Service, “Increasing Two-Way Communication with Refugees on the Move in Europe,” *UNHCR Innovation*, September 1, 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/innovation/increasing-two-way-communication-with-refugees-on-the-move-in-europe>.