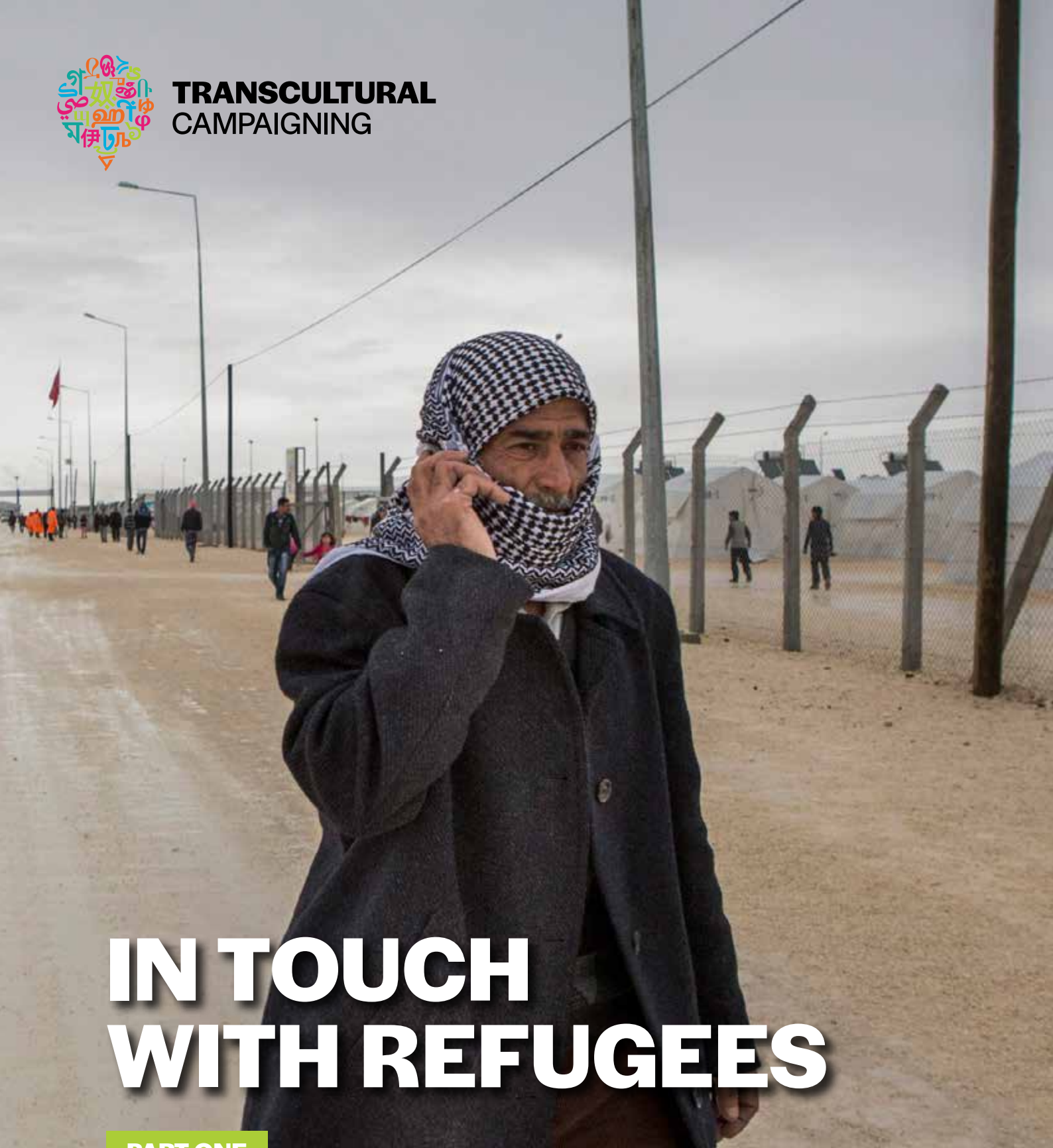




**TRANSCULTURAL  
CAMPAIGNING**



# IN TOUCH WITH REFUGEES

**PART ONE**

**The current state and way forward for  
Communication with Communities  
and Outreach in MENA**



by UNHCR MENA Protection Service  
and Transcultural Campaigning



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# IN TOUCH WITH REFUGEES

## PART ONE

### **The current state and way forward for Communication with Communities and Outreach in MENA**

#### INTRODUCTION

In UNHCR's operations, Communicating with Communities (CwC) and community outreach are key methods for ensuring the participation of persons of concern (PoC) in designing the humanitarian response. However, with sharply increasing numbers of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other PoC, and the growing complexity of the communication landscape, CwC must adapt to fast-changing circumstances.

Against this background, the UNHCR Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Protection Service commissioned a study covering CwC engagement in 10 country operations, to take stock at both ends of the CwC spectrum, from UNHCR and partners to the end users, and formulate targets for the way forward both at UNHCR and inter-agency levels.

The study is presented in three parts. The first part giving the regional CwC background and context and the findings of the research. The second part covers four UNHCR country operations, namely Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, while the third part looks at Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen in MENA, as well as Turkey as part of the Europe Bureau.

It is based on inputs from UNHCR, UN agencies, NGOs, and refugees in the Middle East and North Africa. Under normal circumstances the research would have required several field missions, but as it coincided with COVID-19 restrictions, the team had to rely on virtual encounters and phone interviews, which are more cumbersome both for the interviewers and their counterparts.

The research and drafting of the report were entrusted to Transcultural Campaigning (TC), whose researchers mapped CwC tools and practices in the region used by UNHCR and partners and evaluated their accessibility and availability.

UNHCR MENA Protection Service and TC want to thank all those who kindly agreed to dedicate several hours of their time to respond to our questions and describe their CwC activities. Our gratitude goes to UNHCR staff in the 10 country operations, as well as staff from Caritas, CESVI, DRC, IOM, IRC, NRC, PSTIC, TdH, UNICEF, UNODC, and WFP. This study would not have been possible without their patience, understanding, and collaboration. And our special thanks to the refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the survey that was done for this report.

The report was written by Ragnhild Ek and Mans Nyberg together with Melita Sunjic, TC, with the support of Ana Belén Anguita Arjona and the contribution of Annalaura Sacco and Hy Shelow at UNHCR MENA Protection Service. Special thanks go to the research team: Katie Holland, Nourhane Hussein, Nerine Massoud, Mukhtar Mahmud Osman, Muhammed Refaat, Ilaria Tranfo, and Won Jang, as well as the multilingual refugee team who assisted with the social media research and the survey in Egypt.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**The 21st century has brought CwC to completely new levels, especially in the MENA region. Since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011, there has been a massive increase of forced displacement caused by violence, conflict, and persecution, both at regional and global levels. There are currently some 16 million people displaced in MENA and over 80 million across the world.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, hundreds of thousands of people were transiting through countries in the region in mixed population movements.**

This has brought a growing need for information and communication with the forcibly displaced communities to ensure adequate protection and assistance, enabling them to make their voice heard and participate in decisions that affect their own lives.

Hence, CwC reflects the commitments of the humanitarian community to Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and to the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) policy<sup>2</sup>, so that no one is left behind. Yet, affected

communities have different information needs, come from diverse cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds, with some living in urban areas, some in camps, and some being on the move.

Meanwhile, communication technology is undergoing a digital revolution. New tools and channels are constantly emerging, with humanitarian actors keeping up with technological development while at the same time assessing which of the new tools are accessible and

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Global Appeal 2020 - 2021, MENA Chapter

<sup>2</sup> Putting People First: UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2018-2019, and UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 8 March 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bb628ea4.html>





📷 Gawilan Syrian refugee camp in Iraq.  
© UNHCR/Rasheed Hussein Rasheed

useful for all community members, women and girls, men and boys, people with disabilities, older people, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and other individuals with diverse profiles.

Moreover, while this rapid development of information tools and channels promotes a more effective dissemination of messages, it also brings new challenges, makes the spreading of rumours and misinformation easier, as shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the intended community end users, it becomes difficult to distinguish which information is accurate, trustworthy, and relevant.

**For all these reasons, UNHCR MENA Protection Service commissioned a study covering CwC engagement in 10 countries, with the aim to:**

- Take stock at both ends of the CwC spectrum - the information providers and the end users, and
- Formulate targets for the way forward at UNHCR and inter-agency level, including the option of a regional inter-agency hub.

The study *In touch with refugees* is divided into three parts. Part 1 provides the terms of reference, gives

an overview of CwC in MENA, including existing tools and channels for communication with affected communities, and presents the main findings and recommendations. Part 2 assesses the operational contexts in four MENA countries: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon, while Part 3 looks at six more countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and Turkey. All these UNHCR country operations are under the UNHCR MENA Bureau, except Turkey, which is under the Europe Bureau and has been included in the study after consultations with the operation.

These 10 countries present a wide range of different displacement situations. In the countries affected by the Syria crisis, the presence of large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers dates from 2011, when the conflict broke out. In contrast, Algeria and Yemen have protracted refugee situations going back to the 1970s and 1980s. The conflicts in Iraq, Libya, and Yemen have produced large IDP populations, with host communities also affected. The countries along the migration routes from East and Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia towards the Mediterranean are also affected by mixed population movements which include persons of concern to UNHCR (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen).

# MAIN FINDINGS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The recommendations coming out of this study aim to inform a CwC action plan providing efficient and effective services for forcibly displaced communities and a regional solution for inter-agency collaboration, facilitating knowledge-sharing and streamlining of communication activities. Hence, this study assesses the feasibility of a regional CwC network, which would include referrals and the possibility to link the network to existing UNHCR and inter-agency tools, including call centres, hotlines, and helplines that provide services to affected communities.

## A NEW INTEGRATED CWC APPROACH

The role of CwC in UNHCR MENA's operations has over recent years developed considerably, also among partners, and in increased inter-agency collaboration.

This has resulted in diverse CwC and Protection outreach activities. Humanitarian actors now have process in place for creating and disseminating messages and materials through various communication channels and deploying multiple feedback mechanisms to ensure that communities participate in decisions that directly impact on the lives of forcibly displaced persons and other PoC.

Communication and transparency are key elements of AAP.<sup>3</sup> CwC is developing into one of the main instruments in meeting AAP requirements. Over the years, know-how has grown, and time and resources are increasingly being invested in further developing CwC, its tools and channels.

Innovative ways are being devised to adapt face-to-face, traditional, and digital communication tools for CwC and community outreach to respond to the increasing demand for information coming out of expanded and improved feedback mechanisms. Yet, the digital divide among the communities is a concern.

As more information is reaching community end users and it often comes from different sources and through various channels, this could lead to confusion. Messages need to be clear and consistent and address users' needs.

A key recommendation of this study is the need for a new, integrated CwC approach to allow for an integrated process, collaboration at all stages of the process. This could be coupled with an audio-visual platform carrying video, podcast, regular news relevant to the end users, and disseminated in different languages.

A new communication-management system should take into account the information needs and communication habits of end users in the communities, ensure collaboration in messaging and production of materials, in addition to the current coordinating meetings, and streamline the information output in close collaboration with all actors, ultimately ensuring that efficient two-way communication is in place.

## CWC IN THE REGION

CwC is a key activity for UNHCR and partners in all 10 country operations under review, but structural and technical levels differ widely. The operational challenges also differ considerably from country to country.

Available communication tools and channels, ranging from face-to-face and traditional to digital tools are being used to varying degrees and are being further developed. A change process is underway, new call centres have been established and social media is in the process of being expanded overall.

Many organisations in the region are engaged in CwC and the importance of coordination of activities is increasingly being recognised. While all UNHCR country operations are collaborating with partners on projects, usually on project-to-project basis, in four of them, Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, and Yemen, humanitarian agencies have attempted to establish formal inter-agency mechanisms.

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<sup>3</sup> [UNHCR Operational Guidance](#)



📷 Sahrawi refugee family, Algeria.  
© UNHCR/Markel Redondo

The COVID-19 crisis has intensified the focus on CwC and outreach in all countries, bringing enhanced use of both traditional and digital tools and emphasizing the need for a more coordinated interagency approach. Against this background, WHO, UNICEF, and IFRC launched a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) working group in MENA, in order to guide the communication activities related to the COVID-19 response across the region. This joint initiative is open to all stakeholders and technical experts.

CwC with people in mixed population movements is still a developing domain. Compared to communicating with forcibly displaced and host communities, communicating with people in mixed movements is a much greater challenge, both technically and in the

context of messaging. People in mixed population movements are mobile and their access to information channels varies along the way depending on internet connectivity and other factors. Moreover, the target audiences, when messaging about the dangers of smuggling, should also include communities in the countries of origin and in the diaspora.

In a survey conducted for this report, key informants hoped for deeper engagement in CwC by UNHCR and partners and expressed support for the concept of a regional inter-agency CwC network. It would simplify the dissemination of information, avoid duplication of messages, enhance access to complete and up-to-date information on services, provide an interactive platform for two-way communication, and facilitate inter-agency cooperation.

# KEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

## WITHIN UNHCR

### FINDINGS

- UNHCR is widely respected and CwC messages are trusted among communities.
- There has been a steady increase in CwC efforts, including use of innovative tools.
- CwC and outreach are at different technical levels of development in different countries.
- There is a need for increased streamlining of CwC within and across operations and offices in MENA, while taking into account each specific context.
- The rapid increase in the number of call centres in MENA and Turkey and the use of WhatsApp has raised expectations among end users.

### CHALLENGES

- Limited human resources for CwC and partial development or implementation of CwC policies in some field operations.
- CwC is not fully mainstreamed across the sectors, with unclarity on coordination structures.
- Lack of standardised clearing procedures of messages.
- Lack of systematic evaluations of the needs and information habits of different target audiences.
- Tailoring CwC tools and practices to the needs and information habits of different target audiences.
- Not differentiating between target audiences when using social media.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support operations to develop and implement a dedicated CwC strategy in line with each country context, and in accordance with the UNHCR AGD Policy and AAP Operational Guidance.
- Increase dedicated CwC and outreach resources and make them available to UNHCR and partners.
- Provide a technical interface for CwC between UNHCR and other UN agencies, non-governmental-organisations (NGOs) and other key actors working with communities.
- Streamline information and content disseminated across diverse platforms, reducing redundancies and errors.
- Create standard information materials on common topics that can be shared between operations and with partners on services in localised versions.
- Give priority to user experience and get feedback before improving existing tools or introducing new ones.
- Enhance internal communication on CwC issues across sectors and with partners.
- Carry out comprehensive information and communication needs assessments across the countries.
- Establish a regional inter-agency CwC network for coordination and guidance to country operations.
- Provide CwC training for UNHCR staff, partners, and communities.

# INTER-AGENCY

## FINDINGS

- CwC inter-agency activities have increased across MENA, especially during COVID-19.
- Collaboration with partners is taking place on a project-to-project basis.
- Limited information sharing in real time between agencies.
- In many cases, decisions made at inter-agency level may not always cascade down to the frontline workers.
- Communities have trust in the information disseminated by international organisations.
- Consistent branding of UNHCR's and partners' information products increases the trustworthiness of the message.

## CHALLENGES

- Most agencies lack staff with specific CwC expertise or training.
- Information sharing in real time between agencies.
- Uncoordinated messages and information reaching community end users.
- Synchronisation in dissemination and consistency of information across all actors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve information flow and consistency of messaging to communities across agencies through a CwC regional network, enabling stakeholders to consolidate information in one location.
- Provide a technical interface for communication on CwC between UNHCR partners and actors advising and working with communities.
- Conduct comprehensive information and communication needs assessments across the countries in a harmonised and systematic manner, in coordination with relevant actors.
- Provide CwC training for UNHCR partners.

# WITH PERSONS OF CONCERN

## FINDINGS

- Information channels and tools used are not always adapted to the intended audiences.
- Face-to-face communication remains the preferred way of communication and is supplemented with virtual meetings.
- Communities are rapidly adapting to digital tools.
- Communication with community-based organisations and community leaders through WhatsApp and virtual meetings is increasing.
- There is still a digital divide among the community members, amplified by lack of financial means, technical, and language barriers.
- People with specific needs and diverse profiles face challenges in accessing information.
- There is a confusing number of information sources and materials, giving space for misinformation and rumours circulating in communities and social media.

## CHALLENGES

- Limited adaptation of CwC tools to meet different needs of all communities.
- Multitude of languages among communities in the MENA region.
- Problems accessing feedback mechanisms.
- Maintaining confidence and trust of communities through ensuring tailored responses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Information channels should be technically and financially accessible to all end users.
- CwC tools and practices should be tailored to reach people with diverse profiles and specific needs including those in transit and remote or hard-to-reach areas.
- Increase the involvement of communities as end users in the production of tools and content and timeline of information.
- Consistent branding of information materials should be used to increase the credibility of the content.

# MOVING TOWARDS A REGIONAL CWC NETWORK

While the number of information channels and communication tools are on the increase, the study indicates that messages are not always communicated clearly and consistently by humanitarian and development actors, nor are they always reaching the intended target audiences.

In addition, the spread of misinformation and rumours are on the rise, especially during crises such as COVID-19. Against the backdrop of the fast expansion of the use of social media, the need to encourage synergies between agencies in CwC and coordinate dissemination of information is even greater than before.

**The research shows the opportunity for a unified approach among humanitarian actors. This would ensure consistency in messaging, address fake news, and increase in efficiency, with information from all agencies being available in one place, as underlined in the comments by key informants interviewed for this study:**

- *“A common CwC platform would improve partners’ reach to their PoC by enhancing the collective outreach and the synergy of the partners. Also, it would decrease the time lost in dealing with inquiries that are not related to their operation.”*
- *“If partners can access information added by other partners, then this should help them provide better service to persons of concern in terms of who to refer them to or who to advise them to contact and also provide answers for questions that are not necessarily pertinent to the work of their organisation but of others.”*

- *“There is a need for a common hub, not least to address fraudulent messages, fraudulent contacts, but also because there are no unified messages coming out.”*
- *“If designed as a “one-stop-shop” this platform will bring information closer to persons of concern. It should also help cut costs by reducing the need to call different partners seeking information.”*

This highlights the need for a common platform bringing the channels and tools and materials together, in a dynamic CwC forum for stakeholders (UNHCR and UN agencies, partners, and other key actors), enabling them to access CwC information, share agreed and accurate messages and information, communication materials and tools, and ultimately deliver effectively.

This would enable structured CwC lines and combined FAQs and information materials as well as branding all communication to ensure it is perceived as coming from a trusted source. Conflicting messages would be avoided and feedback from communities incorporated, tailoring the communication to their needs, thus leaving no one behind. It would also provide frontline workers with updated messages and information on how to manage expectations.

## AIM

- Make information accessible to all stakeholders in real time
- Streamline CwC messages and information tools between agencies
- Facilitate and simplify two-way communication

## ROLE

- Coordinate messaging countering rumours and false information
- Advise and promote best practice in CwC

## RESULTS

- Messages and information tools reach intended audiences
- Simplified access to services for persons of concern by consolidating existing tools
- CwC tools and practices tailored to the needs of different target audiences

## NEXT STEPS

1

### **Establish CwC specialist team within UNHCR, tasked to**

- Develop a regional handbook and toolkit.
- Provide CwC training for UNHCR staff and partners, particularly those who work with people with specific needs and diverse profiles, including those in transit and remote or hard-to-reach areas.
- Oversee the establishment of a regional network (steps 2 - 5).

2

### **Set up a system for monitoring regular feedback from end users, ensuring the inclusion of people with specific needs and diverse profiles.**

3

### **Establish a regional network with an audio-visual platform enabling information to be shared over video and podcast, with regular news broadcast facilities in different languages.**

4

### **Update the Refugee Knowledgebase digital platform, ensuring**

- Technical adaptation.
- Language versioning.
- Updating and uploading of new content.
- A test run of Refugee Knowledgebase within UNHCR followed by a test run with partners.
- Updating of the Refugee Knowledgebase smartphone app for refugees in collaboration with end users.

5

### **Establish a regional inter-agency CwC advisory board. Meetings should, according to the key informants, alternate between Amman and Cairo to reflect the locations of the various agencies' regional headquarters.**



## **A PILOT WITH POTENTIAL: THE REFUGEE KNOWLEDGEBASE DIGITAL PLATFORM**

The Refugee Knowledgebase is a new multilingual pilot tool developed by UNHCR in MENA to share accurate and current refugee-related information, with a range of functionalities, including:

- Linking frequently asked questions with directory information for service providers and related media materials.
- Providing tiered access rights to UNHCR, partners, and the public, which presents up-to-date cleared content internally and with partners within an operation.
- Offering dashboard for monitoring and reporting CwC queries.
- Possibility for automatic updating of content on different platforms, including help.unhcr.org, smartphones, and social media.
- Dynamic tool for real-time information sharing among agencies.

Once fully developed, the Refugee Knowledgebase will enable the streamlining of information for UNHCR and partners and serve as an innovative digital inter-agency tool.

# Research overview and methodology

The rapidly changing humanitarian environment in MENA brings with it a growing need to enhance and expand protection outreach, and CwC, a field gaining increasing recognition in the region.

A range of organisations are using a mix of practices, methods, tools, and channels, from sharing messages and information about services and opportunities to proactively ensuring the engagement of the persons of concern to UNHCR and facilitate their feedback on issues that affect their lives, be they refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless persons, returnees, people in mixed movements, or host communities.

Against this background, the UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau conducted a study on outreach and CwC activities currently applied in the region by UNHCR and partners, with a focus on considering how communication tools are accessible to and used by women, men, boys, girls, persons with disabilities, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The mapping of the tools considered needs and preferred channels of communication of end users and identified means to further develop and enhance two-way communication.

The report would also explore the usefulness of a regional inter-agency one-stop-shop for CwC activities, which can be used for referrals and can be linked to existing UNHCR and inter-agency tools that provide services to affected communities.

A broad range of CwC-related data from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon (see part 2), Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen (see part 3) was reviewed, collected, and processed. For each country covered, the research team conducted a detailed stocktaking of three categories of tools and practices that can facilitate two way-communication: face-to-face communication, traditional, and digital tools, and assessed their usefulness for different categories of persons of concern to UNHCR.



Service Brochure by UNHCR Egypt.  
© UNHCR/ Rehab El Dalil

The findings are seen from three perspectives, that of UNHCR, other agencies, and the community end users.

The findings from this report will hopefully inform the design of a CwC action plan that would provide useful and relevant services for displaced and host communities efficiently and consistently. It proposes a regional solution for inter-agency coordination to serve the needs of communities better and facilitate inter-agency knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Hence this study assesses the feasibility of a regional CwC hub, which would include referrals and the possibility to link such a hub to existing UNHCR and inter-agency tools, including call centres, hotlines, and helpines that provide services to affected communities.



## 1.1 METHODOLOGY

This study relied on a mix of data collection methods which complemented each other and helped triangulate and validate qualitative and quantitative data.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	SCOPE AND ANALYTICAL VALUE
<p><b>Desk review</b></p>	<p>The desk review analysed CwC reports and policy and practice documents as well as materials and social media available to end users.</p> <p>It assessed the quantity and quality of information available to UNHCR's persons of concern on websites and social media in Arabic, English, Tigrinya, Amharic, Oromo, Somali and French across the 10 countries.</p>
<p><b>Online survey and follow-up interviews</b></p>	<p>An online survey was carried out among CwC practitioners within UNHCR operations in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen and followed up in several cases with interviews for clarification or completion of data obtained.</p> <p>It helped map the tools and practices used by offices for reaching different target audiences.</p>
<p><b>Semi-structured interviews with key informants</b></p>	<p>Key informant interviews were conducted with country and regional staff of the following agencies: UNHCR, Caritas, CESVI, DRC, IOM, IRC, NRC, PSTIC, UNICEF, UNODC, TdH, and WFP.</p> <p>They were asked both about their agencies' own CwC policy and the potential for closer inter-agency collaboration.</p>
<p><b>Qualitative semi-structured interviews (in person and by telephone) combined with a survey</b></p>	<p>91 interviews with end users were carried out with eight different communities of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt (Eritreans, Ethiopians, Nigerians, Somalis, South Sudanese, Sudanese, Syrians, and Yemenis). The PoC were asked how they personally access information, what their preferred channels are, how they communicate with UNHCR, its partners, and other agencies, and overall whether they feel well-informed.</p> <p>The interviews were complemented by a questionnaire for obtaining more detailed and comparable data.</p>
<p><b>Semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants</b></p>	<p>12 in-depth interviews were conducted in person or over the phone with community leaders, who were asked about their strategies for obtaining and disseminating information in the communities and about their community members' communication levels and habits.</p>



📷 Syrian refugee at UNHCR reception centre in 6th October, Cairo, Egypt. © UNHCR/Asmaa Waguih

## 1.2 TERMINOLOGY

Although all humanitarian organisations aim to have efficient two-way communication with the people they serve and their activities are similar, the terminology in use differs between organisations.

UNHCR and other organisations use the term Communication with Communities (CwC), which has replaced the earlier name for the same communication activity, Mass Information (MI), to emphasise the two-way communication aspect. However, in some UNHCR country operations, the title of Mass Information Officer is still in use.

The equivalent term at UNICEF would be Community Engagement (CE). The organisation also has other communication strategies for more specialised purposes, such as Communication for Development (C4D).

During crises such as COVID-19, agencies apply Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) in their response. RCCE is a method to handle communication with communities and provide accurate information to affected populations during a crisis, particularly deployed in public health crises such as SARS, MERS, Ebola, and now COVID-19 to give life-saving information. It involves a detailed action plan outlining objectives, strategy, implementation, and monitoring. In other words, RCCE is not the same as

CwC or CE, but a practical application of them under exceptional circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

The term frontline workers, as used in this report, refers to all staff and volunteers directly interacting with the end users as part of their daily work. They may, for instance, be community-based protection or outreach staff in urban settings or camps, making home visits, conducting community meetings, working in reception centres and at helpdesks, or in call centres as call attendants or other staff handling helplines and hotlines, etc.

Note also that the term partners is used in this document in a wide sense, not distinguishing between operational or implementing partners.

<sup>4</sup> [Practical Guidance For Risk Communication And Community Engagement \(RCCE\) \(2020\)](#)

# Communication with Communities in the Middle East and North Africa Region

## 2.1 UNHCR POLICIES

The UN Refugee Agency has a long-standing tradition of sharing information with refugees, asylum seekers, displaced, and host communities. Decades before the concept of CwC was developed in the humanitarian sphere, UNHCR used community workers, printed tools, and radio for disseminating vital information and receiving feedback from communities under the label of mass information.

At the institutional level, UNHCR has introduced a community-based and rights-based approach towards persons of concern, which obliges all UNHCR offices to make available relevant information to all forcibly displaced and stateless persons through accessible and inclusive communication mechanisms.<sup>5</sup>

“Communication with refugees and affected communities is a key element of UNHCR’s protection and operational response in the MENA region, and an issue in which there is a growing level of interest within the organization and among external stakeholders.”<sup>6</sup>

In MENA, the current CwC concept goes back to 2013, when UNHCR developed the first Regional CwC toolkit and trainings for the Syria Regional Refugee Response with the critical support of a temporary regional CwC team. During this period, regular meetings were taking place between the UNHCR country operations coordinated by the MENA External Relations and Community-based Protection (CBP) units, and efforts undertaken to share content and coordinate between UNHCR offices within the Syria response. UNHCR Egypt and UNHCR Lebanon hired dedicated international staff to support CwC.

In 2017, a first UNHCR MENA Regional CwC Strategy was presented, building on effective and innovative activities undertaken by the country offices, and emphasising the need to step up two-way communication with communities affected by the Syria and Iraq situations, and the importance of accountability.

“The principle of accountability requires that humanitarian actors involve persons of concern meaningfully in key decisions and processes that impact them and ensure transparency by continuous communication. These principles of accountability are achieved through the meaningful participation of persons of concern in all phases of the programme cycle.”<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, a number of related policy guides were introduced in MENA, also as part of the roll out in 2018 of UNHCR’s AGD Policy and the Regional CBP Guidance Note 2019.<sup>8</sup> CwC activities were integrated as an important component of the AAP policy, underlining the importance of effective AAP/CBP interventions for refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, stateless persons, returnees, people in mixed movements, and host communities. This is also linked to the increasing responsibility of CBP staff on Outreach and CwC becoming main actors of this study project and the implementation of daily related activities.

In 2019, self-assessments of AAP systems and strategies in UNHCR country operations were carried out in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Operations identified strengths and challenges as well as enablers and barriers to achieving the Core Actions of the AGD Policy. In 2020, a mapping of digital feedback and complaint mechanisms brought additional good practices and opportunities.

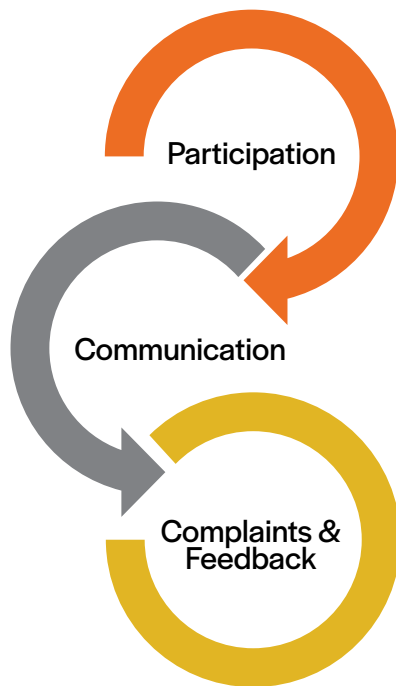
<sup>5</sup> [UNHCR MENA Regional Guidance note on Community-Based Protection 2019](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Communication with Communities in the Syria and Iraq Situations](#), UNHCR, December 2016

<sup>7</sup> [Regional Communication with Communities Strategy MENA 2017](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Putting People First: UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2018-2019](#), and UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity, 8 March 2018

The study *Power of Inclusion*,<sup>9</sup> mapping the protection responses for persons with disabilities, also shows that efforts are ongoing to further strengthen the community-based and rights-based approach, to empower communities and increase the participation of people with specific needs, including persons with disabilities.<sup>10</sup> In 2020, an internal multifunctional task force was established in the MENA Bureau to ensure appropriate inputs and engagement of different technical and topical areas of responsibility.



Applying the CBP approach, all operations regularly carry out identification of information needs and information gaps through focus-group discussions (FGDs), participatory assessments, and multifunctional community meetings as well as partner coordination meetings.

New innovative ways of using communication tools supporting community-based initiatives and referrals addressing the needs of all PoC, including those with specific needs, are being piloted across MENA operations.

Efforts are made to ensure communities participate in decisions that affect their lives, receive the information they need to make informed decisions, and to complain if they feel that the services they receive are not adequate or have unwelcome consequences.

Yet there is still much work to be done to ensure CwC becomes an essential and integral part of UNHCR programming, providing needs-based information, and empowering communities through fully functional two-way communication which reflects consistency on an inter-agency level.

This is particularly relevant when addressing the information needs of vulnerable persons, persons with specific needs, persons with disabilities, and people on the move. The ways the operations deliver regular information to communities differ, whether it is via social media, traditional media, mobile, and any other tools available, and so does the extent to which community members are able to provide feedback, which should be integrated into the development and dissemination of information and communication products.

## 2.2 CRISES ILLUSTRATE THE NEED FOR EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

While CwC has always played an essential role in identifying and addressing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, it is especially during emergencies that the need for well-functioning CwC is most urgently felt, and it is during emergencies that the development of CwC has taken the biggest steps forward. In the MENA context, this has particularly been the case during the most recent emergencies: the Syria crisis, the Mediterranean refugee crisis, and the COVID-19 emergency.

“We always say, ‘information is protection.’ And there is nothing more important than protection in any emergency. You can have all the good systems, ideas, mandates and policies in the world, but if you do not communicate them to those you are supposed to protect, there is no point in having them in the first place. CwC specialists only have one job; to get information where it is needed, and that makes them utterly essential.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Power of Inclusion* (2019) Mapping the Protection Responses for Persons with Disabilities in Refugee Populations within the Middle East and North Africa Region, UNHCR MENA 2019

<sup>10</sup> Regional Communication with Communities Strategy MENA 2017

<sup>11</sup> Quote: “Communicating in a crisis” by Ida Sem Fossvik (2016)



📷 Syrian families refugees crossing the Syrian/ Jordanian border at Tal Shihab. © UNHCR/Sebastian Rich

## 2.2.1 THE SYRIA CRISIS

The beginning of the Syria crisis was the impetus for increased regional collaboration between UNHCR country operations. A toolbox for an effective CwC response was developed and materials were made available across offices.

The crisis was also a boost to increased inter-agency collaboration within CwC. Inter-agency cooperation on CwC within the Syria response started in 2014, when UNHCR MENA Bureau convened a regional workshop in Amman, Jordan, with UN agencies, international NGOs, and media development agencies working in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt. *Communicating with Persons of Concern in the Syrian Refugee Response* was the first of a series of dedicated annual CwC regional meetings, but it was not at the time taken forward at an inter-agency level, even if that was discussed.<sup>12</sup>

🗨️ *“One issue that received a lot of attention at the Amman workshop was the urgent need to improve inter-agency coordination. The idea of establishing country-level Communicating with Communities working groups in Jordan and Lebanon was discussed.”<sup>13</sup>*

The crisis generated an increase in communication and community-engagement initiatives implemented

by UNHCR and partners, many of them involving innovative use of communication tools. The usefulness of WhatsApp as a promising CwC tool was highlighted in a UNDP survey among Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon: *“WhatsApp clearly emerged from this study as a suitable tool for creating two-way communication between people on the ground and international organizations.”<sup>14</sup>*

The use of video both to bring awareness of the plight of the Syrian refugees as well as a powerful communication tool started early during the Syria crisis. For instance, in 2013, BBC Media Action produced some of the first short films to disseminate information on various subjects, from how to help people cope with life as a refugee to how to address tensions between refugee and host communities in Lebanon.<sup>15</sup>

A joint NGO accountability initiative to develop systematic feedback, The Listen Learn Act project,<sup>16</sup> worked with communities displaced from Syria to Lebanon to gather *“feedback on the aid that they receive and the organisations delivering it to them... in essence [to] listen, learn and act in a timely manner to the feedback from the affected populations.”<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>12</sup> Blog: [Communicating with Persons of Concern in the Syrian Refugee Response \(CDAC Network\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> [“Speak up via WhatsApp: understanding the life worlds of Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon”](#) page 47

<sup>15</sup> [Supporting Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan - BBC Media Action](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Placing accountability at the heart of humanitarian assistance \(2017\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> [The listen learn act project](#), Red Barnet (2016)



📷 Refugees arrive on the Island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean Sea. © UNHCR/Ivor Prickett

## 2.2.2 THE MEDITERRANEAN CRISIS

“If you look inside the bag of any refugee on a life-threatening boat trip to Europe, you see a few possessions that vary from one refugee to another. However, there is one thing they all carry with them: a smartphone.”<sup>18</sup>

The emergency in the Mediterranean involving mixed population movements triggered the enhancement of social media into a primary CwC tool. People on the move towards Europe are using mobile phones extensively, accessing social media to get information and to communicate with those involved in the smuggling industry and with friends and family. Recognising the growing importance of this communication tool, agencies increased their social media activities in order to reach communities, giving information and countering the lies of smugglers and traffickers as well as the misinformation people from the diaspora in Europe might be posting.

The crisis also acted as a further catalyst for increased inter-agency collaboration within CwC. In 2016 the CwC Working Group in Greece produced a CwC Handbook which outlines the collaboration between agencies within the framework of the refugee/migrant response in Greece and keeping in mind the need for accountability to affected populations.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 4 smartphone tools Syrian refugees use to arrive in Europe safely - World Bank Blog (2016)

<sup>19</sup> Communicating With Communities - Handbook for Greece (2016)

## 2.2.3 MIXED POPULATION MOVEMENTS BEYOND THE MED

In 2020, the need to reach people on the move towards the Mediterranean remained as urgent as before. 94,950 people arrived in Europe having crossed the sea along some of the world’s most dangerous and deadly routes.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond the Central Mediterranean, large mixed population movements are affecting a large area in MENA, including the Western Mediterranean, the Atlantic route to Spain, and the route from the Horn of Africa through Yemen. In 2020 the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) overtook the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) as the main route for mixed population movements to Europe, with 41,094 arrivals compared to 36,394 for the CMR, while 16,557 came through the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR)<sup>21</sup>. The WMR and CMR are used by refugees and migrants coming from a wide array of countries of origin in Africa. Refugees and migrants on the CMR tend to be young men (80%), aged 22 on average and travelling alone (72%)<sup>22</sup>. In 2020, Libya was overtaken by Tunisia as the main transit country to Italy<sup>23</sup>. The EMR is mainly used by people fleeing war and political instability, including refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Refugees and migrants on the EMR tend to be older, on average 28 years old, and usually

<sup>20</sup> Mixed Migration Centre: Quarterly Mixed Migration Update North Africa (2020)

<sup>21</sup> Situation Mediterranean Situation

<sup>22</sup> Mixed Migration Trends in Libya - Executive Summary

<sup>23</sup> Uptick in irregular migration from Tunisia worries Rome – POLITICO

travel as a family with women and children. Only 22% travel alone.<sup>24</sup>

These movements pose a new challenge to community-based protection, outreach and CwC activities. It has become necessary to adapt CwC tools that were being used to communicate with sedentary refugees, asylum seekers, and other affected people to a new profile of mobile populations. Target groups have been broadened to include those travelling irregularly, alongside those still in their countries of origin or first countries of asylum planning to travel, as well as their family and friends at home and in the diaspora. As the people in mixed population movements communicated with smartphones, agencies increased their social media activities in order to reach them.

## 2.2.4 THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges for CwC, speeding up the need for innovative solutions for two-way communication with communities. Even during more “normal circumstances”, refugees and IDPs face numerous barriers complicating their access to trusted information and services, which in addition to known socio-economic vulnerabilities, limited social support networks, and implications of different languages and literacy levels, among others, were exacerbated during COVID-19 and the implications of lockdowns.<sup>25</sup>

For instance, as physical distancing and restrictions of movement made face-to-face communication difficult or even impossible, the use of virtual and remote tools within UNHCR’s operations was expanded. The crisis increased the use of bulk SMS, WhatsApp, and mobile helpdesks, as well as a virtual alternative to face-to-face communications that emerged with Zoom meetings. New helplines have been established, call centres adapted to better respond to the increased needs of PoC, and regular contacts with community leaders and community-based organisations (CBOs) maintained in the form of virtual meetings.

“We were surprised to see how quickly the community adapted to these new virtual tools.”  
UNHCR Egypt staff

Overall, the importance of working with communities was highlighted in UNHCR’s overview of its approach to engaging communities in the prevention and response to COVID-19, drawing on examples from the field, where displaced communities are partnering with

humanitarian actors to protect those at heightened risk.<sup>26</sup> The declaration of a pandemic by WHO triggered the implementation of RCCE as part of the public health emergency response. Strategic Priority 3.2 in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, clearly sets out the need to:

“Prevent, anticipate and address risks of violence, discrimination, marginalization and xenophobia towards refugees, migrants, IDPs and persons of concern by enhancing awareness and understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic at community level.”<sup>27</sup>

As a result, WHO, UNICEF, and IFRC released a guidance tool on how to reach out with information on prevention measures and how the needs of beneficiaries are being met during the pandemic. It particularly addresses the “infodemic” aspect of the COVID-19 outbreak and response: i.e., that it has been accompanied by an overabundance of information from various sources — some accurate and some not — that makes it hard for people to decide which is a trustworthy source of information.<sup>28</sup>

Communication packages include videos, posters, animations for children, social media messages and visuals, etc. Campaign messages focus on preparedness and prevention, countering misinformation and fake news, preventing stigma, coping with stress, and other related topics.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> [Mixed Migration Trends in Libya - Executive Summary](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Practical Guidance For Risk Communication And Community Engagement \(RCCE\) \(2020\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Communities Getting Involved: Supporting Community Leadership in the Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic \(2020\)](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Global Humanitarian Response Plan Covid-19 United Nations Coordinated Appeal April – December 2020](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Guidance for RCCE country plans - IFRC, UNICEF, WHO \(2020\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> [COVID-19 Global Response Risk Communication & Community Engagement \(RCCE\) Strategy, May 2020](#)

# Communication tools and channels in MENA

The rapid technical developments in communication technologies has opened many new avenues and possibilities in reaching out to the communities, but also brought new challenges and increased needs of a better understanding of information media and information practices, both in CwC and community outreach. And, ultimately, the choice of tools, channels, and approaches vary depending on the profile and location of the end users as well as the purpose of the communication.

The below chart illustrates the classification of community outreach methods in MENA from the perspective of Community-based Protection.<sup>30</sup>

## TYPES OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH METHODS

PHYSICAL	Targeted visits	Infolines/Hotlines	VIRTUAL
	Outreach volunteers	Call centres	
	Community spaces and centres	WhatsApp and SMS	
	Community-led structures	Facebook & other social media platforms	
	Community-led initiatives	Dedicated websites	

From a communication perspective, however, this report is using a three-tiered CwC categorisation system that has been developed from the perspective of the end user.

### Face-to-face communication

may require a physical encounter between humanitarian workers and affected communities. Nowadays, and in light of existing mobility restrictions, virtual communication means can also be used for this type of communication. It is in itself a form of two-way communication and does not require any skills or tools for the recipient of information beyond oral language capacities or other forms of direct communication, such as sign language.

### Traditional CwC tools

which may be physical or virtual, describe information which has been mediated by the sender for distribution (printed, recorded, broadcasted, sent by phone). For the recipient, such messages usually involve reading, watching, or listening. It may require access to a radio or a telephone. These media predominantly allow one-way communication.

### Digital CwC tools

are efficient two-way virtual communication tools across distances, but they require community members to have access to a computer or smartphone and be able to handle it.

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR Community Outreach Update, Syrian and Iraqi Situations, May 2018





📷 A Syrian refugee applying to UNHCR cash-based intervention for education at Catholic Relief Service (CRS) in Cairo, Egypt © UNHCR/ Pedro Costa Gomes

The use of different tools and channels for communication with communities among agencies has increased rapidly over the last few years with numerous helplines, WhatsApp trees and groups, Facebook pages, and the production of different types of awareness and information materials, frequently related to specific sectors and target groups such as Education, Child Protection, Gender-based Violence (GBV), Health, Cash-based Interventions (CBI) or specific campaigns related for instance to vulnerability assessments or winterisation.

Yet, partners interviewed for this report emphasised that face-to-face interaction by frontline staff who go to the field on a daily basis remains unchallenged as the primary communication tool. They particularly highlighted the importance of community empowerment, focusing on community leaders and youth leaders as the most effective way to amplify the information being shared.

🗨️ *“No matter how much you keep developing the quality of tools and messages, when it comes to dissemination and outreach, people in the communities rely on each other. They usually ask each other, community leaders, or youth leaders. This is what I pay attention to - I rely on people from the community to disseminate messages. This ensures a more effective response.”*

Key informant

The various tools and channels are combined and deployed for different campaigns both by individual organisations and in an inter-agency context.


### 3.1 FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

Meeting face-to-face is the preferred way of communication for most communities. When meeting with a frontline worker, whether community outreach workers or field staff in person, any question can be addressed immediately on the spot. Confusion and misunderstandings are easier to resolve and messages easier to understand as the level of communication is heightened by the use of nonverbal gestures and facial expressions.

All operations have developed extensive networks of community outreach workers, consisting of both national staff and refugees. Community outreach volunteers, particularly refugee outreach volunteers (ROVs) are another key link in the communication chain between organisations and PoC, especially in urban settings. In 2020, there were over 24,000 community outreach volunteers across the MENA region, giving information about services, raising awareness, and listening to the concerns of PoC. They also identify and refer people in need of protection and assistance to specific services. Some operations (including UNHCR Iraq) have Accountability Officers, who are overseeing the work of outreach volunteers.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR Community Outreach Update Syrian and Iraqi Situations, May 2018



 Sudanese refugee, Libya.  
© UNHCR/Mohamed Alalem

## 3.2 TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND CHANNELS

Traditionally, CwC has relied on printed materials, multimedia, and the use of telephone to reach out to communities. In MENA and Turkey, all these traditional tools are being used.

### 3.2.1 PRINTED MATERIALS

All 10 country operations use a variety of printed materials for CwC and Outreach: brochures, flyers, posters, billboards. These products are increasingly being made available online, although traditional dissemination through outreach activities is still the most important distribution channel. In fact, the study shows that end users rarely access such information material from websites.

### 3.2.2 MULTIMEDIA TOOLS: VIDEOS & AUDIO

Radio is particularly useful for two-way communication, such as when listeners are calling in with questions or to give their views on the issue under discussion. Radio is sometimes perceived as “old” technology but is seen by refugees as a source for trusted information, and its potential importance is often overlooked. Especially in camp situations, local radio stations play an important role as information providers and communication channels.

Meanwhile, video is increasingly gaining ground as an effective information and communication tool. It extends beyond verbal and nonverbal communication by using visual aids like images and footage, can bridge language barriers, and technology and cameras are becoming more accessible to the point that phones can be used to film professional videos.

### 3.2.3 TELEPHONE-BASED COMMUNICATION

Telephone-based communications - call centres, helplines, hotlines, and SMS are among the most important communication tools for PoC in the 10 countries. A large majority of refugees, asylum seekers and other PoC in MENA and Turkey use mobile phones.

#### 3.2.3.1 Call centres

The call centres are important components of two-way communication with affected communities, answering questions, providing information, referring callers for further follow-up, and recording concerns and complaints. In some of the operations, call attendants are trained to respond to refugees in distress and can also provide basic counselling.

#### 3.2.3.2 Helplines and hotlines

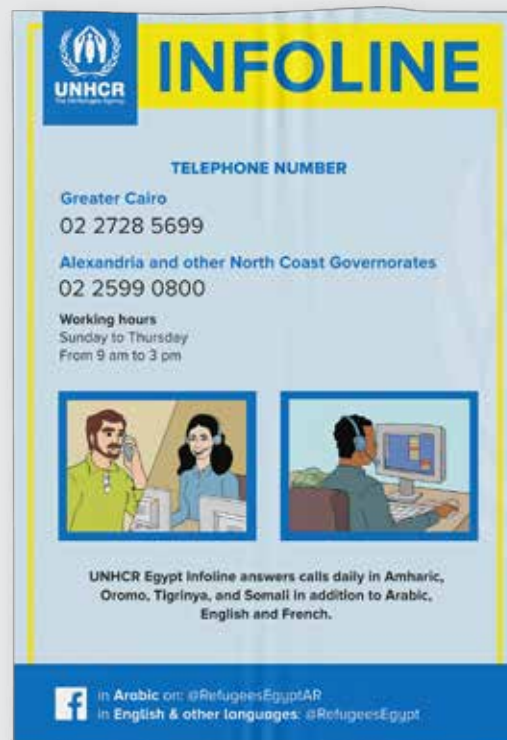
In addition to the call centres, UNHCR and partners run helplines, some employing both general informational lines as well as hotlines. A hotline is primarily used to imply a line that is available 24/7 and is frequently a mobile phone carried by the staff able to give immediate assistance, and sometimes referred to as an emergency line. A helpline is used here as a telephone service which offers help and information, but only open during office hours.

#### 3.2.3.3 Bulk SMS

As mobile ownership and use are common among communities in MENA and Turkey, SMS is one of the most efficient channels for short messages. Reports indicate that SMS is the primary and most effective channel for disseminating core information to communities and that SMS messages are generally well understood by the target groups.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Cash Assistance In Lebanon - Accountability To Affected Populations (AAP)*, by Cameleon (2019), page 2

## CwC posters in Lebanon and Egypt



The cost of a phone handset is the most significant barrier to mobile ownership as refugees have relatively limited livelihood opportunities, which makes it difficult to afford the upfront cost of purchasing a phone. However, it has also been shown that refugees manage to access mobile services in creative ways depending on their context: sharing or borrowing handsets and changing SIMs for the best deal – when their legal status and regulations allow. In addition, interviews with key informers indicate that families living together may share phones and internet. The cost of mobile data is yet another barrier, and some agencies increasingly include the transfer of data packages as part of assistance provided to communities.

### 3.3 DIGITAL TOOLS

Digital tools are promising and rapidly expanding field for CwC and community engagement. Refugees are using social media for connecting with families and friends, reaching out to other refugees, checking security on the journey, familiarising themselves with new environments. Humanitarian agencies are increasingly getting engaged within this field, using social media and websites to convey information to persons of concern to UNHCR and other affected communities.

Digital tools can be an efficient and effective way to disseminate messages and information. However, there are considerable challenges to be overcome before social media can be used as a functional two-way communication tool. Agencies are currently using their Facebook or WhatsApp platforms to disseminate information but do rarely have the resources to open up for an online dialogue with persons of concern to UNHCR. In order to manage the expectations of end users, two-way communication must be coordinated, otherwise, it will be too much for one agency to handle. This is where a regional CwC network would be needed to which agencies could channel questions and feedback from communities.

One must also keep the digital divide in mind. Use of social media is a natural way of communication for the early adapters who have the necessary knowhow and access, while it is a different situation for many vulnerable groups. Others simply may have difficulties in accessing these tools due to costs and internet limitations in many countries.

For all these reasons, it is important to continue to explore the possibilities of developing the potential of digital tools for CwC, while keeping in mind that many persons of concern to UNHCR and other affected community members still prefer face-to-face communication.



📷 IDPs, Yemen.  
© UNHCR/Marie-Joëlle Jean-Charles

## Catering to the end users

“Not all are informed, some can’t access the internet, some don’t know how to use social media, some have just arrived and aren’t aware of services, some feel afraid to get involved in some activities or communicate with people or maybe they live far away from the places where the organizations and CBOs are.”

Yemeni community leader

The study found that UNHCR in MENA regularly gathers information about the information needs and communication preferences of PoC via community meetings, FGDs, participatory assessments, and frontline work. In all four countries under review surveys have been conducted, which to varying degrees have mapped the information needs and habits of community members. A pilot survey among refugees in Egypt (see chapter 9) revealed a pattern whereby people hear news relevant to them and then take action to verify the information. Most of the respondents said they first got the information from other community members or community leaders, and then checked the information with the agencies, through social media, outreach teams, or by calling helplines.

Surveys have been conducted on the ownership of mobile phones and access to the internet among refugees, to strengthen two-way communication via modern technology and online tools.<sup>33</sup> For example, those participants in the Egypt pilot survey who used the internet said they mainly used their smartphones to access information and seldom other means such as internet cafés.

Despite the widespread use of SMS and the rapid development of social media, for most PoC face-to-face communication remains the preferred way to access information. Information and messages are received through word-of-mouth in the community, from community leaders, community-based organisations (CBOs), ROVs, and agency field staff at help desks and offices. This also gives the possibility to engage in two-way communication, asking questions and giving feedback. An assessment of the information habits of refugees in Iraq found that their main source of information was friends and family, followed by the internet, social media, and television.<sup>34</sup> The preferred

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR Lebanon Communication Survey 2017

<sup>34</sup> *Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) in 2017*

source of information was also the one that was most trusted. This survey shows that refugees find international organisations to be the most trustworthy sources, especially if they have a strong presence in the community.

### Categories for target audience segmentation

Categories for target audience segmentation

Language

Literacy levels

Vulnerabilities

AGD

Culture

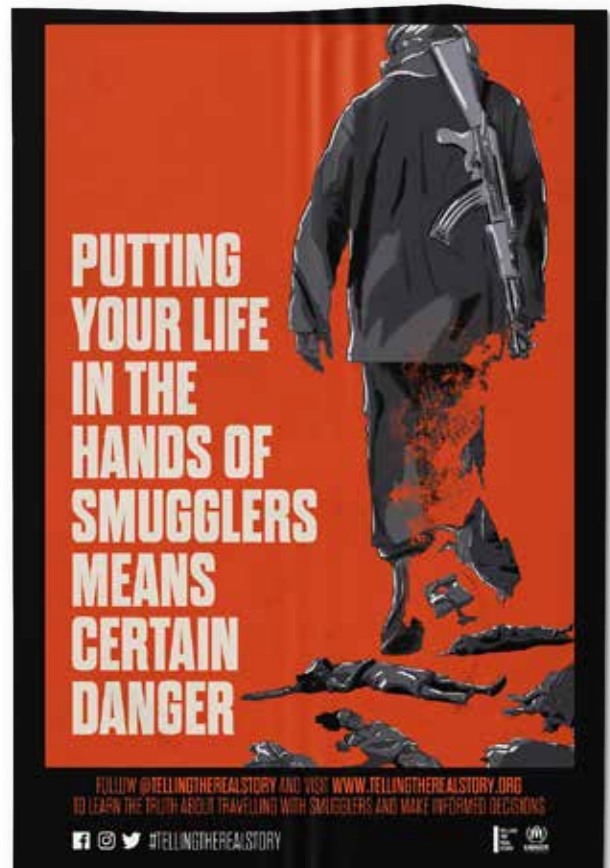
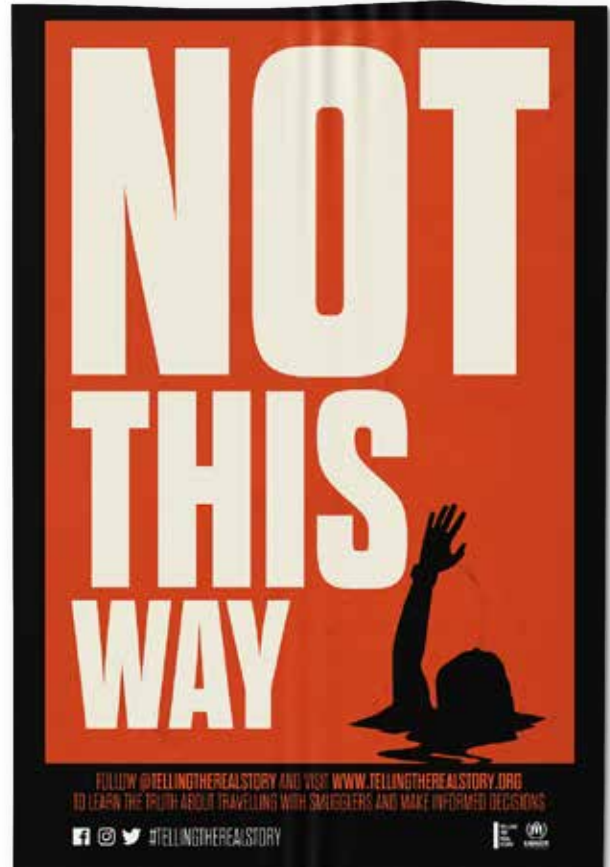
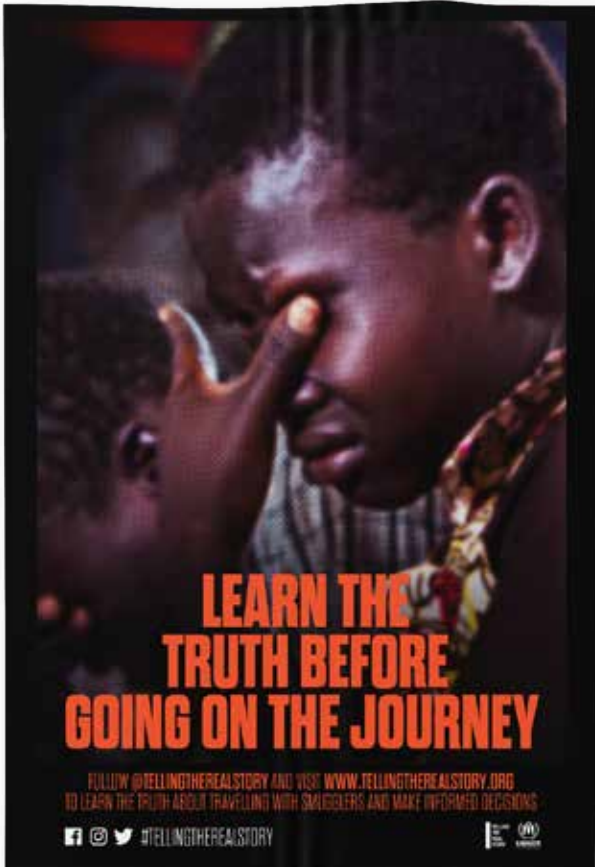
Location

In order to formulate messages and information that will not only reach community members but also be understood by them, CwC tools and practices must be further tailored to meet the needs of different target audiences. This means taking into account age, gender, diversity, vulnerabilities, literacy levels, culture and language, as well as preferred channels for communication.

As noted, information targeting persons of concern to UNHCR and other affected communities has increased greatly during the last years in MENA, and the channels of communication have expanded with the use of social media and other innovative tools. The number of agencies putting out information has also increased. Thus, refugees and asylum seekers have access to a wide variety of information coming from many different sources. Against this background, a lack of coordination will pose a problem. Information that is not streamlined across agencies and organisations could cause confusion and even be counterproductive. To keep the trust of community members, the humanitarian community should speak with one voice.

“We always see people posting on Facebook that they went to some organisation and waited and finally they discovered that they are at the wrong place, then they ask what should I do? Please help me!”

Syrian man



## Dedicated awareness projects for mixed population movements

**The large mixed population movements with refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants travelling across North Africa and the Mediterranean ('the Mediterranean crisis') posed a new challenge to community-based protection, outreach and CwC activities. It became necessary to adapt CwC tools that were being used to communicate with sedentary refugees, asylum seekers, and other affected people to a new profile of mobile populations and people on the move. Target groups were broadened to include those travelling irregularly, alongside those still in their countries of origin or first countries of asylum planning to travel, as well as their family and friends at home and in the diaspora. As the people in mixed population movements communicated with smartphones, agencies increased their social media activities in order to reach them.**

There is an urgent need to communicate with people in mixed population movements, not least to warn them about the dangers involved in irregular travel, where people are at the mercy of smugglers and traffickers. However, communicating with people on the move or people planning to travel irregularly is seldom a two-way communication, but takes the form of information dissemination by organisations to target populations: refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, their families and friends at home and in the diaspora. Ultimately, agencies end up using the same tools and channels to reach people in mixed population movements that are being used for sedentary populations, it is only the message that is different.

However, there are innovative efforts specifically targeting people on the move and their social contacts, family, and friends, and encouraging a dialogue among the communities about the dangers of irregular travel. These campaigns have the potential to be developed into two-way communication channels.

One type of campaigns involves testimonials by people who have been victims of smuggling and trafficking. Telling the Real Story (TRS) is a UNHCR information campaign to raise awareness about the dangers involved in using the smuggling routes. The campaign is targeting people in different countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa planning to undertake this dangerous journey, their families, friends, and communities. TRS also aims at providing information on complementary pathways as alternative and regular opportunities to irregular movement (scholarships, family reunification, labour mobility). TRS has so far produced stories in Nigerian Pidgin, Somali, and Tigrinya. In addition Arab Voices, which is linked to TRS, is targeting audiences in Arabic-speaking countries.

Another UNHCR campaign, Dangerous Crossings, is warning about the dangers of the Yemen migration route, targeting audiences in the Horn of Africa. Testimonials have been produced in Amharic, Oromo, Somali, and Tigrinya. In an innovative approach, Dangerous Crossings used music and popular artists from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Egypt appealing specifically to young people in the Horn of Africa who are particularly liable to be recruited by smugglers and traffickers.

IOM has launched Migrants as Messengers, a peer-to-peer messaging campaign with migrants sharing their experiences, and Aware Migrants, which contains both testimonials from migrants and news items. In a similar vein, IOM in 2017-2019 also ran I Am A Migrant, an online platform which aimed to provide an honest insight into the triumphs and tribulations of migrants of all backgrounds and at all phases of their migratory journeys.

Examples of news and information sites for migrants are InfoMigrants and The Migrant Project. InfoMigrants is a news and information site for migrants with the aim to counter misinformation at every point of their journey. It provides news, features, personal stories, and information about Europe and the EU in five languages: French, Arabic, English, Dari and Pashto. The website is a collaboration between three major European media sources: France Médias Monde, Deutsche Welle, and ANSA.

The Migrant Project is an information website for migrants providing news and advice about migration as well as testimonials by migrants. They also offer counselling face to face through outreach workers or over the telephone in Afghanistan, Iraq, Niger, and Nigeria. The website is in 12 languages: Arabic, Amharic, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Pashto, Pidgin (Nigeria), Somali, Tigrinya, and Yoruba.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>3RP</b>	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan	<b>FAQ</b>	Frequently asked question
<b>AAP</b>	Accountability to Affected Populations	<b>FGD</b>	Focus-Group Discussion
<b>ACTED</b>	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	<b>FOO</b>	Fondation Orient Occident
<b>ADRA</b>	Adventist Development & Relief Agency	<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>AGD</b>	Age, Gender, and Diversity	<b>GDCVAW</b>	General Directorate for Combatting Violence Against Women
<b>AIHR/IADH</b>	Arab Institute for Human Rights/Institut / Arabe des Droits de l'Homme	<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>AMAL</b>	Amal Women's Training Centre	<b>HES</b>	Hayat Eve Siğar
<b>AMAPPE</b>	Association Marocaine d'Appui à la Promotion de la Petite Entreprise	<b>HI</b>	Humanity and Inclusion
<b>ARDD</b>	Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development	<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>C4D</b>	Communication for Development	<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>CBI</b>	Cash-Based Intervention	<b>IAWG</b>	Inter-Agency Working Group
<b>CBO</b>	Community-Based Organisation	<b>ICCG</b>	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
<b>CBP</b>	Community-Based Protection	<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>CCCM</b>	Camp Coordination and Camp Management	<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>CE</b>	Community Engagement	<b>IEC</b>	Information, Education, and Communication
<b>CESVI</b>	Cooperazione e Sviluppo	<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>CEWG</b>	Community Engagement Working Group	<b>IIC</b>	Iraq Information Centre
<b>CMR</b>	Central Mediterranean Route	<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>CRA</b>	Croissant-Rouge Algerien	<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>CRC</b>	Community Resource Center	<b>ISIL</b>	The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
<b>CRM</b>	Community Response Map	<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Service	<b>IVR</b>	Interactive Voice Response
<b>CTR</b>	Conseil Tunisien pour les Réfugiés	<b>JOHUD</b>	The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
<b>CwC</b>	Communication with Communities	<b>JRF</b>	Jordan River Foundation
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council	<b>KRI</b>	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
<b>EMR</b>	Eastern Mediterranean Route	<b>LAS</b>	League of Arab States
<b>FAO</b>	Food & Agriculture Organization	<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
		<b>LRC</b>	Libyan Red Crescent
		<b>MdM</b>	Médecins du Monde
		<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa



<b>MHub</b>	North Africa Mixed Migration Hub	<b>TRC</b>	Turkish Red Crescent
<b>MI</b>	Mass Information	<b>TRS</b>	Telling the Real Story
<b>MMTF</b>	The North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force	<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
<b>MSF</b>	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)	<b>UNDP</b>	UN Development Programme
<b>NADA</b>	Réseau algérien pour la défense des droits de l'enfant	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>NHF</b>	Noor Al Hussein Foundation	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Health Fund
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council	<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	<b>UNRWA</b>	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East
<b>OHCHR</b>	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>POC</b>	Person of Concern	<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>PSEA</b>	Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	<b>WMR</b>	Western Mediterranean Route
<b>PSTIC</b>	The Psycho-Social Services and Training Institute in Cairo		
<b>QRCS</b>	Qatar Red Crescent Society		
<b>RAIS</b>	Refugee Assistance Information System		
<b>RCCE</b>	Risk Communication and Community Engagement		
<b>RCM</b>	Refugee Coordination Model		
<b>ROV</b>	Refugee Outreach Volunteer		
<b>RSD</b>	Refugee Status Determination		
<b>SCF</b>	Save the Children		
<b>SRC</b>	Sahrawi Red Crescent		
<b>StARS</b>	Saint Andrew's Refugee Services		
<b>SWEDO</b>	Swedish Development Aid Organization		
<b>TAMSS</b>	Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability		
<b>TAC</b>	Temporary Accommodation Centre		
<b>TC</b>	Transcultural Campaigning		
<b>TdH</b>	Terre des hommes		
<b>TT</b>	Terre d'Asile Tunisie		

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