Q & A Document

Is app only available on smartphones? What percentage of the refugees in camps are using the app monthly?

Currently, the app is only available on Android devices. This is due mostly to the fact that a majority of our users have Android (as opposed to Apple) devices. However, we are exploring other platforms (such as SMS/IVR/etc.) for new geographies so people without smartphones can have access to information. As to the percentage of users from the camps, since we don't register users, we can't speak specifically to that. However, we can say that right now, 12% of the traffic from our WiFi hotspots in Europe goes to Facebook and 9% to the website. That being said, a large portion of our users are people who are out of the camps and beginning to integrate into their host societies, so are accessing the tools from other sources. One of the reasons we continue to push for WiFi provision in camps and community centers is not just for access to our sites, but also to provide a higher quality of life, empowerment and choice to the communities we serve. This can be expressed in a multitude of ways - having access to news sources, communication with family and friends at home and abroad, continuing education, employment, etc. So, while we do direct people to our pages when they log on, that is definitely not the exclusive reason we provide connectivity services.

How is cyber safety and security addressed especially in context such as what you have described (i.e. gang violence)

Something we're starting to work on, particularly in El Salvador, are private Facebook pages/groups. We have partnered with service providers on the ground, who verify the identity of users who want to be part of the groups. We are also offering the website and and "external"/public-facing Facebook page with basic information for those who are not accessing the private Facebook groups, but limiting it only to information that will not inadvertently endanger people. For example, there may be services we do not share on the public-facing page and/or we may only share contact information, not location, to protect users of those services. For our WiFi provision, we are using Cisco Meraki systems. Signpost WiFi networks provide all connecting users with the same quality of service, cutting edge network security features supported by Cisco Meraki networking equipment and Cisco Umbrella web filtering for additional layers of protection. In the past two years, there have been several recorded cases of data theft prevention as well as numerous, unwanted malicious sites blocked. Additionally, in our general content provision, we also work with our users to build their digital literacy and security awareness about being online. For example, when we started the Facebook page, many users posted pictures of their passport and shared personal information on the public-facing page. We responded with messaging to discourage that and also wrote a bot that pulls phone numbers/passport photos/etc. from the public-facing page. We also want to ensure that our community is a safe space, free from hate or negative speech. We are very careful about what comments we do/do not allow to remain on our pages.
How does this program benefit adolescents and youth, meeting both their urgent and ongoing needs?

While we are not explicitly targeting youth and adolescents, on average, 34% of our users are between the ages of 13-24. And, we estimate even more, as we know anecdotally that many users exaggerate their age on their Facebook profiles (which is where we get our primary demographic data). As a result, many of the questions we get are around continuing education, capacity/skill building, how to get a job as a young person, etc., so much of the content we provide centers around those topics, as well as providing information about youth-specific services in the areas we work.

Regarding working with organizations, what are the requirements local organizations like us in Eastern DRCongo can observe?

We generally approach this on a case by case basis and have a tiered set of options for how we can work with you - starting at the basic level of advising. Please feel free to reach out to me (mrhynardgeil@mercycorps.org) for more information so we can discuss your ideas specifically!