



# REFUGEE.INFO

## دليـل اللاجئـ

# HI, WE'RE REFUGEE.INFO



It was 4:13 p.m. in Athens, Greece, and a recently arrived refugee named Firas was in a panic. A few weeks earlier, he had messaged our Facebook page asking how to register for cash assistance, and we'd helped him figure out how to make an appointment.

But now the appointment was 17 minutes away, and Firas was lost. If he didn't report to the cash office soon, he'd have to wait another month to register. That would mean another month struggling without enough money to buy food and other essentials.

Firas pulled out his phone and messaged our page in Arabic: "I have the address for my cash appointment, but I can't find it, and it's really soon. Can you help?"

In the next 10 minutes, 6 Refugee.Info colleagues in 4 countries worked together to determine that Firas had the wrong address, then helped him find the right one. He thanked us, and we crossed our fingers.

A few hours later, we heard back from Firas. "I made it!" he told us. "I got my cash card. Thank you so much."





# RETHINKING HUMANITARIAN COMMUNICATIONS

At Refugee.Info, we chat with asylum-seekers and refugees like Firas every day, connecting them with the information they need to solve their most pressing problems, from how to escape a violent living situation to how to enroll their children in their first year of school.

When refugees enter a new country, they have a host of critical needs – medical and psychological care, food and water, legal aid and documentation, and education and employment. But in a new place and without knowledge of the local language, refugees lack the basic information they need to reach essential humanitarian services.

What's more, after suffering or witnessing traumatic events for months or years, refugees are often unprepared or unable to absorb complex information via flyers, leaflets at the border, or other traditional humanitarian information service-delivery methods.

In this environment, rumours and misinformation can take the place of credible, up-to-date news, and refugees can begin to feel a sense of disempowerment or helplessness.

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# REFUGEE.INFO TAKES A DIFFERENT APPROACH.

Designed using private sector principles to solve a humanitarian problem, Refugee.Info uses the latest tools and expertise from the tech and media sectors to empower refugees with engaging, digestible information in the formats they prefer.

And in a context where refugees often report feeling dehumanized, our Facebook moderators, all refugees themselves, talk to our users like peers — in their own languages, on their preferred platforms, and on their own schedule.

Since 2015, we've reached 800,000 people in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Serbia, including an estimated 60-70% of the refugee population in Greece.

We've worked with organizations including the Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR, the European Council, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration, Catholic Relief Services, Caritas, the Goethe Institut, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Doctors Without Borders, the European Asylum Support Office, and countless local organizations, code schools and social enterprises to increase refugee awareness of, and participation in, their programming.

Ours is a simple idea, but it's also a new one, and we think it's the future of humanitarian information services.



# WE PROVIDE INFORMATION IN 6 DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

ARABIC

FARSI

URDU

FRENCH

ENGLISH

TIGRINYA



FOR REFUGEES IN GREECE, HUNGARY,  
SERBIA, BULGARIA AND ITALY.

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# THE BIG IDEA

At the core of our project is our belief that **refugees and asylum-seekers have the right to the information they want**, and that digital tools and peer-to-peer communication can help them get it. In everything we do, we aim to help **address the power imbalance** between humanitarian services and their clients.

Refugee.Info was born in 2015 as a mobile site that provided critical information to the millions of asylum-seekers pouring onto the Greek islands. Since then, we've used **human-centered design principles** to tailor our project to the needs and preferences of refugees, asylum-seekers and people on the move. **We never stop iterating.**

Refugee.Info is the flagship program of the Signpost project, a **digital-focused innovation lab** for humanitarian communications that offers technical expertise in protection, two-way communication, social media, technical development, design and more. The project is a global partnership between the International Rescue Committee and Mercy Corps, with the support of donors like Google, Trip Advisor, Microsoft and Cisco.

In addition to Refugee.Info, Signpost has projects in **Jordan** and **El Salvador**. As the original Signpost instance, Refugee.Info is proud to serve as a **test kitchen** for the project's newest methods of pairing traditional humanitarian interventions with digital tools and peer-to-peer communication.

## SOME OF OUR TOOLS:



An online information portal



Highly responsive Facebook pages



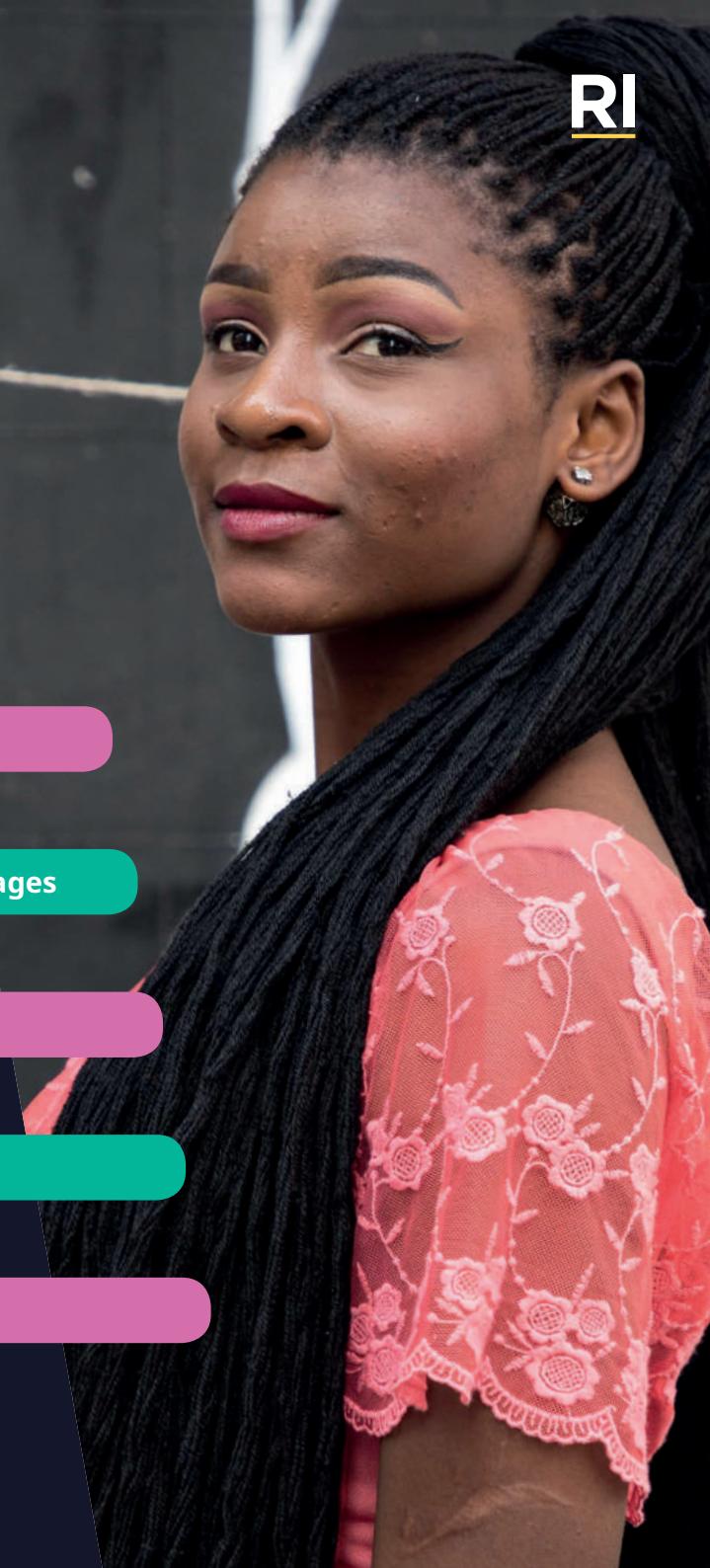
An interactive service map



An app for Android phones



Wifi access points





# WE ANSWER ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS

We provide life and death information and life-living information.

No question is too big or small. Here are a few we answered recently.

Do you know any organizations in Bulgaria that can help me get a job?

I need an eye operation. Where can I get help in Belgrade?

Our water has been cut off because we're in a lot of debt. Is there anything we can do?

I just arrived in Italy. How can I claim asylum?

I'm from Afghanistan and I live in Moria camp. My girlfriend is Greek. Are we allowed to get married?

I'm 16 years old in Greece on my own, and I don't have anywhere to sleep. I'm sleeping on the streets. Where can I find shelter?

What happens if a person dies in Greece? Do they have to be buried here? Can Muslims be buried? Is it possible to get a body sent back to someone's country?

My husband is beating me. I can't take it anymore. He says if I go to the UN he will kill me.

# FACEBOOK TARGETING FOR GOOD



For many of our users, Facebook is the Internet. Rather than searching on Google or typing in a URL to find information, many of them navigate straight to Facebook to ask their peers. So it makes sense for us to meet them there, too.

While Facebook's data collection methods have made headlines around the world, we've quietly been using Facebook targeting for good. By applying Facebook targeting by location, language and interests, we can send the right information into the newsfeeds of refugees, asylum-seekers and other people on the move in Europe.



## CHECK OUT

Our Facebook page for refugees in [Greece and the Balkans](#)  
 Our Facebook page for [English-speaking refugees in Italy](#)  
 Our Facebook page for [Tigrinya-speaking refugees in Italy](#)



Our Facebook page for Greece and the Balkans has over **110,000 page likes**, while the newly launched Refugee.Info Italy page attracted nearly **10,000 page likes** in its first 2 months.

In the first half of 2018:



**OVER 78,000**  
unique users directly interacted with us on social media



**47,800**  
private messages from refugees across Europe



**30,000**  
comments on our posts



**163,200**  
reactions



**15,800**  
post shares

# WHO ARE WE?

Refugee.Info tells it like it is — we gather our information **journalistically** and report it to our users like news, and we make sure **refugees drive our content strategy**. We stand out among humanitarian information services by providing **transparency** into what we know and what we're still investigating. We cite our sources. In the digital media landscape, strong content stands out, so we make our content as **visual and engaging** as we can. We strive to amplify the voices of **refugee content creators**, too. This approach requires an **eclectic team**.

Refugee.Info is:



**MEET THE TEAM HERE**

<https://goo.gl/c34vDS>



# 60%

of our team are refugees and asylum-seekers

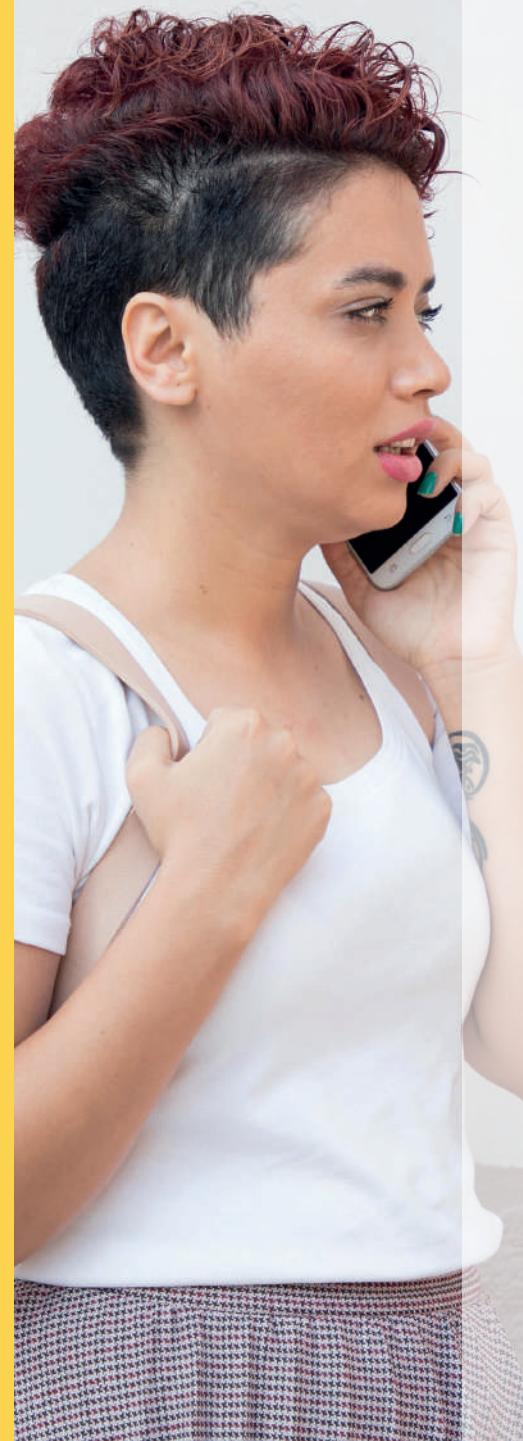
# OUR FACEBOOK MODERATORS

At the heart of our project is a team of refugee community managers who respond to comments and answer messages on Facebook. As digital cultural mediators, our Facebook moderators help refugees find the information they need and lend a sympathetic ear. They work with our partner [NaTakallam](#), a social enterprise that provides employment opportunities for refugees. All our moderators are recruited for their high emotional intelligence and exceptional communication skills.

When moderators join our team, we provide them with training in social media management, humanitarian protection principles and digital tools. They learn how to communicate in a way that empowers users to make their own choices. They also learn how to help users guard against risks they face online. They know how to spot gender-based violence, mental health crises, and other situations that require expert guidance from IRC protection professionals.

The moderation team monitors Facebook and WhatsApp groups maintained by refugees in Europe, then shares hot topics with the editorial team so our content stays relevant. When an article is ready for publication, moderators give feedback, letting the editorial team know if they've committed an intercultural faux pas. They also pitch content ideas of their own.

Through their work with Refugee.Info, our moderators build skills and gain experience they can use to continue careers in social media, digital communications, customer service, project management, social services and the humanitarian sector.



## LILI

I'm Lili from Iran. I work as a Farsi moderator for Refugee.Info and also direct and act in short information films for the page.

I love working with Refugee.Info because **I am a refugee myself**. I have seen and experienced all the problems that refugees are having. **I can never forget my first days in Greece**. For the smallest questions and information I had to search a lot.

I know that there are people who take advantage of refugees since they don't have enough information. Now, I see that **many refugees only believe in the news and information that we share**.

Every day, people thank us and wish us the best, because we are honest and patient in answering their questions. **Many times our help has changed their lives**.

One of the most memorable conversations I've had was with a woman who sent us a message saying that, because she didn't have money to rent a house, she was staying with someone who hit her and her baby. She sent pictures that showed her **scars and bruises from beating**.

When I passed this information on to the Refugee.Info team, I will never forget how **all of my co-workers tried their best to help that woman**. In less than a week, the IRC Women's Protection and Empowerment team had transferred her to a safe place, and even now after many months the team asks about her situation.

**Her first message after she moved was amazing**. She told us about how good she was feeling and said she didn't have words to thank us. Now, she asks us questions about even in the smallest thing.

Helping people gives me the best feeling. I work with my all heart and energy with the team because **I consider all refugees as my family** who need help and guidance.

**Working with Refugee.Info has changed my life**, too, because after two years of hard life in the camp, I could finally rent and move to a house, and I am able to work and study at the same time.

# WHAT OUR USERS SAY

In July 2018,  
we surveyed our  
Facebook users. Here's  
what they said about  
Refugee.Info.

**89%**

said the information  
they found on  
Refugee.Info was  
accurate.

**89%**

said they know that if they  
message Refugee.Info, they  
will get a friendly answer  
from someone who  
wants to help.

**88%**

said they trust  
the information they  
find on Refugee.Info.

**84%**

said Refugee.Info knows  
which topics and issues  
are most important to  
refugees, asylum-seekers  
and migrants.

**81%**

said Refugee.Info  
gave them a better  
understanding of  
their situation.

**79 %**

(and 92% of women) said they  
had used Refugee.Info to access  
a service they wanted or needed  
(for example, a lawyer, language  
class, job training program or  
even laundry service).

**81%**

said they feel they can  
make decisions about  
their situation because of  
information they found  
on Refugee.Info.

**64%**

said they have shared  
information they found on  
Refugee.Info to someone  
without a Facebook  
account.

# PRAISE FOR REFUGEE.INFO



Refugee.Info is one of few places where persons of concern — refugees and asylum seekers — in Greece can find up to date and useful information about issues relevant to their lives, from access to basic services and legal procedures.

It's also useful to other agencies and volunteers because it provides useful information about services in urban centers, contact numbers for support, and advice and news. I provide the link to Refugee.Info in briefings and information-sharing sessions because it's a reliable source of information.

-Rachel Maher, UNHCR

I really appreciate this page because you are always letting us know our rights... Thank God for social media.

-Refugee.Info User

If you were not here, we couldn't be informed of anything. Thanks for all the work that you're doing. You're not only useful in informing but you answer every comment respectfully, whether good or bad. Thank you.

-Refugee.Info User

For refugees in Europe, one of the hardest things to find is accurate information, not just to find help, but also to stop you falling between the cracks or, through ignorance, to make life threatening bad choices. Refugee.Info has been instrumental in addressing that problem. Trusted by refugees, Refugee.Info has the technical and reputational reach to be available to as many people as possible.

-Fan-Man Tsang, Internews

Hello, I just want to thank you people for being nice to immigrants, responding to their questions and creating time for them... for your good mind, may God bless you all! ...This is a good act of humanity.

-Refugee.Info User

Refugee.info has been playing an essential part of school enrolment efforts ... It fills the communication gap between the Greek government and the refugee population, directly delivering key messages. Complicated Greek legislation and procedures, often under tight deadlines to enrol refugee children in schools, are quickly turned into texts in refugees' languages by the Refugee.Info team.

-Naoko Imoto, UNICEF

We put our hope in your useful reports.

-Refugee.Info User



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# WHAT'S NEXT?

In the coming year, Refugee.Info wants to reach more users, include more people, signal-boost refugee voices, and find new models that put more power in the hands of refugees and asylum-seekers. Here are a few things we have planned.

## BUILD OUR PRESENCE IN ITALY

Research we conducted in 2017 showed that people on the move in Italy had smartphones, but not the information they needed. In response, Refugee.Info developed website content and launched a [Facebook page in English](#) for migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees from West Africa. Check out our welcome video [here](#).

A few months later, we launched a page in Tigrinya for Eritreans in Italy. In the coming year, we want to launch in French and Arabic to better serve populations on the move in Italy, as well as hire a journalist to help us reach scale and answer the toughest questions. We also plan to network with refugee content creators to further democratize our platform.

## GROW AS AN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TOOL

As more than 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers strive to integrate into German society, Refugee.Info could make a big impact by launching a tool to connect people with job training and education resources and employment programs they need, in their own languages. We plan to scope building a friendly, social media-based platform to connect people with economic recovery and development information that will help them build their future in Europe.

## CREATE DIGITAL SAFE SPACES

Humanitarians traditionally provide physical safe spaces for vulnerable people like women and girls, LGBTQ+ groups, older people, and people with disabilities. But what about those who aren't able to access physical safe spaces? We plan to create digital spaces for sharing information relevant to specific groups — particularly those who might not feel safe seeking information in person.

## PUT MORE REFUGEES IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

At Refugee.Info, we want refugees and asylum-seekers to take our jobs. We plan to create training programs to empower refugee journalists and social media managers to run much of our platform — or build one of their own, with Signpost advisors' expert advice. We plan to partner with organizations that can train refugees to maintain and install our wifi services, too. As we expand, we also plan to hire more refugees in manager-level positions.



WANT TO KNOW MORE? CHECK OUT OUR CHANNELS 

 Refugee.Info  Instagram

 Refugee.Info Greece & Balkans | Refugee.Info Italy in English | Refugee.Info Italy in Tigrinya

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OR DROP OUR TEAM A LINE

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