

TRACKING MIGRANT PERCEPTIONS IN ITALY



CASE STUDY: PERCEPTION SURVEYS OF MIGRANTS IN ROME TURIN, ROME AND CATANIA

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INTERNATIONAL



FEDERATION



GROUND TRUTH
SOLUTIONS



Key survey findings and course corrections

SURVEY RESULT	COURSE CORRECTIONS
<p>Limited understanding of asylum procedure.</p>	<p>In addition to the initial briefing upon arrival, asylum seekers are now provided information in smaller, linguistically homogenous groups, thus enabling them to ask questions. Procedural information is also provided in smaller doses over longer periods of time to ensure it is properly understood by all. This also contributes to managing expectations in terms of what the Italian Red Cross is able to do for new arrivals.</p>
<p>Overall lower scores in the second round of data collection reflect a deteriorating situation for people.</p>	<p>Posters and leaflets summarising findings are shared at reception centres to avoid survey fatigue and inform new arrivals of available services. These will also be shared in public spaces to inform host community members. Furthermore, surveys have been shortened and asylum seekers are informed that their responses help improve the services of the Red Cross, while giving a voice to their perceptions.</p>
<p>Respondents doubt their answers will contribute to improvements.</p>	<p>Only those visiting centres for the first time will be interviewed to avoid having to answer the same questions repeatedly within a short period of time.</p> <p>Given the transient situation of safe points, the Red Cross will keep the interview process short, focusing on people's experiences. The level of trust at safe points cannot be consolidated as quickly as in the reception centres.</p>

In general, staff members at reception centres and safe points are taking ownership of the Ground Truth Solutions approach, adapting survey instruments to more precisely gauge the perceptions of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. In addition, internal dialogue has encouraged new ideas, including a suggestion box to collect complaints and suggestions not captured by survey instruments.

Introduction

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, 181,436 recorded refugees and migrants entered Italy by sea in 2016, a primary entry point and transit country for those seeking other destinations in Northern Europe. As part of the response addressing the growing number of migrants needing humanitarian assistance, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Italian Red Cross partnered with Ground Truth Solutions to track the perceptions of these migrants through regular surveys. By the end of 2016 the Italian Red Cross was managing some 70 reception facilities across the country as well as two safe points which act as help desks providing basic assistance, health care, psychosocial support, Restoring Family Links services, and counselling to migrants who have no access to the formal reception network. The goal of this project is to better understand migrant perceptions and to support the Italian Red Cross in implementing its own regular feedback mechanism so that the National Society can continually improve its services.

Feedback was collected from migrants in two reception facilities – one in Turin and one in Rome – and a safe point in Sicily. The surveys were conducted regularly between December 2016 and March 2017. The Italian Red Cross has since expanded the approach to additional reception centres and safe points around the country.

Design

The Italian Red Cross designed the questionnaires with the IFRC community engagement and accountability focal points and Ground Truth Solutions at a November 2016 workshop at the Fenoglio reception centre in Turin. Questions were formulated to better understand the experiences of newly arrived people as well as those awaiting a ruling on their asylum request or having received refugee or other protection status. The draft questions were **tested through individual interviews** with the camp population in Italian, French, and English by community volunteers. After the testing, the Italian Red Cross and Ground Truth Solutions refined the questions to ensure they were easy to understand. Seven questions were posed covering the following topics:

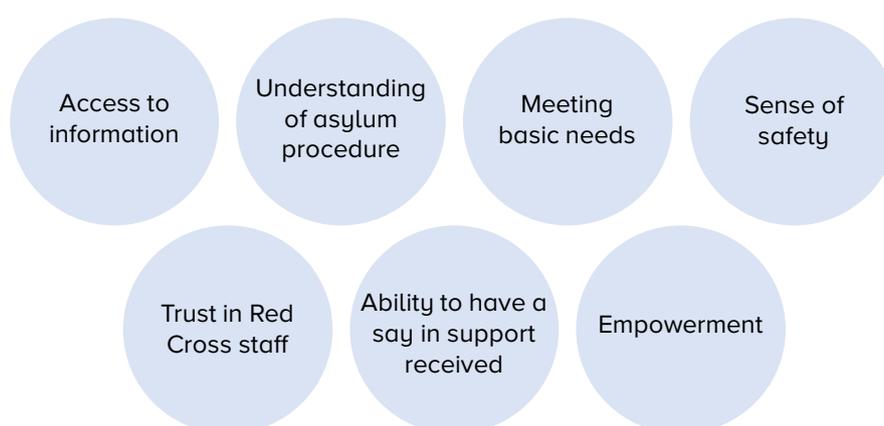


Figure 1. Key issues covered by the survey instrument

Using a five-point Likert scale, with one being the most negative and five being the most positive, allowed for the perceptual questions to be quantified. Only closed questions were included, making the data analysis process quick. Questionnaires were kept short to mitigate the effects of survey fatigue and were the same across all three locations to allow for comparability.



Figure 2. Discussions during the November 2016 design workshop in Turin

Collect

Surveys targeted people staying at reception centres in Turin and Rome as well as migrants passing by the Red Cross safe point in Catania, Sicily. More detail on the specific locations can be found below. Data was collected by Italian Red Cross **volunteers** through **face-to-face interviews**.



Figure 3. Facilities of the Italian Red Cross 2016-2017

Data was collected twice – **in December 2016 and in March 2017** – with a sample size of 200 individuals at the reception centre in Turin and 30-40 at the smaller centre in Rome. Data collection using a printed form was replaced in the second data collection cycle by an online tool that requested the same information in a more efficient collection and sending process. Changing the data collection and registration system to an online platform was essential for standardizing and speeding up the data collection methodology and adapting to international instruments. The platform, known as Kobo Toolbox, was developed by Harvard University and is used by a number of international organisations, including the International Rescue Committee, USAID, and the United Nations



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The advantage of Kobo Toolbox is that it uses free Open Source Software and can be used on a smartphone or tablet. In addition, data can be entered offline and users can save a partial compilation and submit complete data at a later time. It also allows simplified data management and archiving.

This novel tool has led the Italian Red Cross team to capitalise on technology to improve data accuracy. The result was significant improvement in data quality and processing times with less time required for staff and volunteers to familiarize themselves with the system.

The safe point in Catania, receiving about 25-30 migrants during its two days of operation a week did not lend itself to a similar stand-alone data collection exercise. Instead, the Red Cross built a brief survey into the everyday interactions with visitors to the safe point. Whenever someone would come to the safe point for information or to ask for clothes, and before leaving, they would be asked if they were willing to answer a few questions. This provided the team with a **constant stream of feedback** that, with additional responses over time, could be analysed and used for informing service improvements. Since then the Italian Red Cross team in Sicily also started to record response rates – the number of people willing to participate in the survey – which is a useful indicator of people’s engagement with the organisation, i.e. to what extent visitors who spend a small amount of time at the safe point see value in helping the Red Cross identify areas for improvement.

Analyse

Ground Truth Solutions analysed the feedback and prepared **simple visual reports** on the main findings for each round of data collection. Reports for the second round also provided a comparison with the results from the first round. Ground Truth Solutions also shared recommended data analysis tools and report templates with the Italian Red Cross, which were then used in subsequent rounds of data collection. The Italian Red Cross also recruited a new monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning coordinator in its migration department who became the focal point for the data analysis aspect of the feedback mechanism and for linking the analysis with other monitoring and evaluation data.



Dialogue

After each round of data collection the findings were discussed by the Italian Red Cross, IFRC, and Ground Truth Solutions. In March 2017, the Italian Red Cross and Ground Truth Solutions held a half-day face-to-face meeting in each location to discuss follow-up on the survey findings and make adjustments to the questionnaire. The goal was to explore different viewpoints, understand what was driving the scores received, and what could be improved to better meet people's expectations. The following action points were identified:

- ✔ An internal sense-making session should follow each data collection round as part of existing staff or management meetings.
- ✔ As part of the internal discussions within the Italian Red Cross, data collectors should reflect on the data-collection experience and determine if changes are needed for the next round.
- ✔ The survey findings are discussed with a group of people hosted at the reception centre to talk about what the Red Cross has learned from the feedback, ask whether they got it right, and outline how they propose to act on the findings. These meetings also provide an opportunity to manage expectations.
- ✔ The findings and proposed follow-up actions are communicated more broadly in the centres to avoid survey fatigue and promote participation. Rather than arranging dedicated meetings especially for this purpose, it was considered best to present at regular intervals in places where people usually come together for other purposes, for instance at lunch time, while people are waiting in the call centre, or at the beginning of Italian language lessons. Simple posters can also be a useful communications tool to engage migrants and external visitors who would get a quick snapshot of what they should expect to see in the Red Cross centre when they arrive.
- ✔ Programme adjustments are recorded by the Red Cross.

Course correct

The actions identified by the Italian Red Cross in response to the feedback fall in three broad categories:

- ✔ Addressing issues raised through short- or long-term **adjustments to Red Cross programming**.
- ✔ Advocating with the data to **leverage change by others**. Some of the feedback received by the Red Cross relates to issues beyond its mandate. In this case the data can be used as an advocacy tool.
- ✔ **Adjusting the feedback system**. This involves refining the questions or the way data is collected, analysed, and used.

Results

The surveys have raised issues which are able to guide improvements in the Red Cross' work and consequently in the lives of newly arrived people, those awaiting a ruling on their asylum request, and those who have received protection status and are trying to integrate into Italian society. It also allows the Red Cross to steer specific topics toward those in charge of policy-making on migration issues.

Following the initial two rounds of data collection, the Italian Red Cross developed the capacity to continue data collection independently. In September 2017 a new round of surveys was carried out using the Ground Truth Solutions approach. Six national reception centres in Settimo Torinese (Piemonte), Bresso (Lombardia), Jesolo (Veneto), Rome (Lazio), Lecce (Puglia) and Messina (Sicily) were involved. Surveys were also conducted at the three safe points – Catania, Trapani and Cagliari. A total of 664 migrants were interviewed at these reception centres, while staff at the safe points surveyed 38 individuals.



Figure 4. Communicating findings

The findings of the surveys conducted in the six Italian Red Cross reception centres (Settimo, Bresso, Jesolo, Rome, Lecce and Messina) reveal generally positive feedback about the services provided by the Italian Red Cross. Most of the migrants interviewed feel that their basic needs are met, that they have access to the information they need, and understand the asylum procedure, as explained at the centre. They also are confident that their opinions are taken into consideration by the Red Cross staff working at the centre and believe they are learning skills which will help them in the future. Scores are particularly high when it comes to level of comfort in approaching Red Cross staff with problems, as well as issues related to personal safety in the camp.

Migrants interviewed at the safe points said information provided by Italian Red Cross volunteers was helpful, especially in learning how and where they can get further assistance. There were also high scores for the Red Cross listening to the views of migrants. However, it should be noted that migrants in transit often have little time to speak and as a result, only 38 individuals were interviewed at the safe points.

Discussing the results was an essential part of the feedback cycle for two reasons: first, it helped to understand the feedback and determined what adjustments made sense. Second, it helped to verify and deepen the analysis and demonstrate that feedback is taken seriously. Engaging openly in dialogue with communities about the feedback provided can also help increase confidence and trust with the Italian Red Cross, and raise awareness about the services it provides.

Internal dialogue came first. Staff involved in implementing the programme discussed the results of the surveys in generally, in order to identify and develop a shared understanding of the issues requiring action, and agreed on practical and realistic follow-up plans and responses. External dialogue involved going back to communities who participated in the interviews to discuss the results and to communicate and conceive of ways to address some of the issues raised. When the survey was conducted in November at one reception centre, for example, many of those who said their basic needs were not being met were in fact fairly recent arrivals from warmer countries trying to cope with Italy's particularly cold weather that fall.



Further discussion revealed that basic needs such as food and clothing were adequate, but it was impossible to avoid the cold. Later on, when migrants arrived at the centres they were given a brief introduction to Italy including what they could expect in terms of weather and other conditions. One of the positive outcomes from the discussions involved the asylum procedure itself. Initially, migrants reported a lack of understanding of the asylum procedure. Upon further discussion, it became clear that these individuals were exhausted by their journey after having crossed the Mediterranean and were overwhelmed by large amounts of information being provided immediately upon arrival at the reception centre. As a result, the reception centre staff began sharing information about the asylum process in smaller doses, spread over a number of days in order to allow the information to be absorbed and better understood. This was also to occur in smaller, more linguistically homogenous groups to ensure everyone understood fully.

One of the goals from the latest data collection round was the broader dissemination of the findings. Posters were posted in the reception centres where they were clearly visible to arriving migrants and could draw attention to the services provided by the Italian Red Cross. This has proven to build trust and relationships among beneficiaries, Red Cross staff, and volunteers. Posters are also a way to present the feedback findings to new arrivals or provide a means of staff development. Discussions with migrants took place during lunch or Italian lessons in a relaxed atmosphere.

In March 2018 the Italian Red Cross finalized a draft of new management guidelines for the reception centres that incorporated migrant feedback as part of the regular process as well as Ground Truth Solutions' suggestion that data collection be performed twice a year.

Next steps:

- Placing the informational posters in public spaces such as schools, libraries, and town halls to share and promote the results with the host community;
- Create a welcome leaflet for arriving migrants that explains how they can make their voices heard through the Ground Truth Solutions process.
- Continue collecting and acting upon perceptual data of migrants at reception centres and safe points across Italy in an iterative process of improvement.

More information on the work of the Italian Red Cross, IFRC, and Ground Truth Solutions in Italy, is available on Ground Truth Solutions' website, <http://groundtruthsolutions.org/our-work/developing-feedback-mechanisms-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/>

For more information on the IFRC's Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) initiatives and available resources, visit the the IFRC's CEA website, <http://www.ifrc.org/cea>

A collection of CEA case studies on the IFRC's operations is also available on their website, <http://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/document/2017-community-engagement-accountability-good-practices-around-world/>