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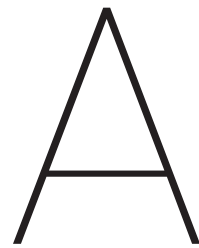
Digital Transformation in Moldova
The Refugee crisis

Introduction

A s the philanthropic initiative of monday.com, Digital Lift offers eligible nonprofits the technological tools they need to make a greater impact in the world, such as discounted software, training, grants, and more. Digital Lift also deploys to emergency situations around the world to help optimize crisis management through technology. They are currently working with 15K nonprofits globally in over 135 countries.
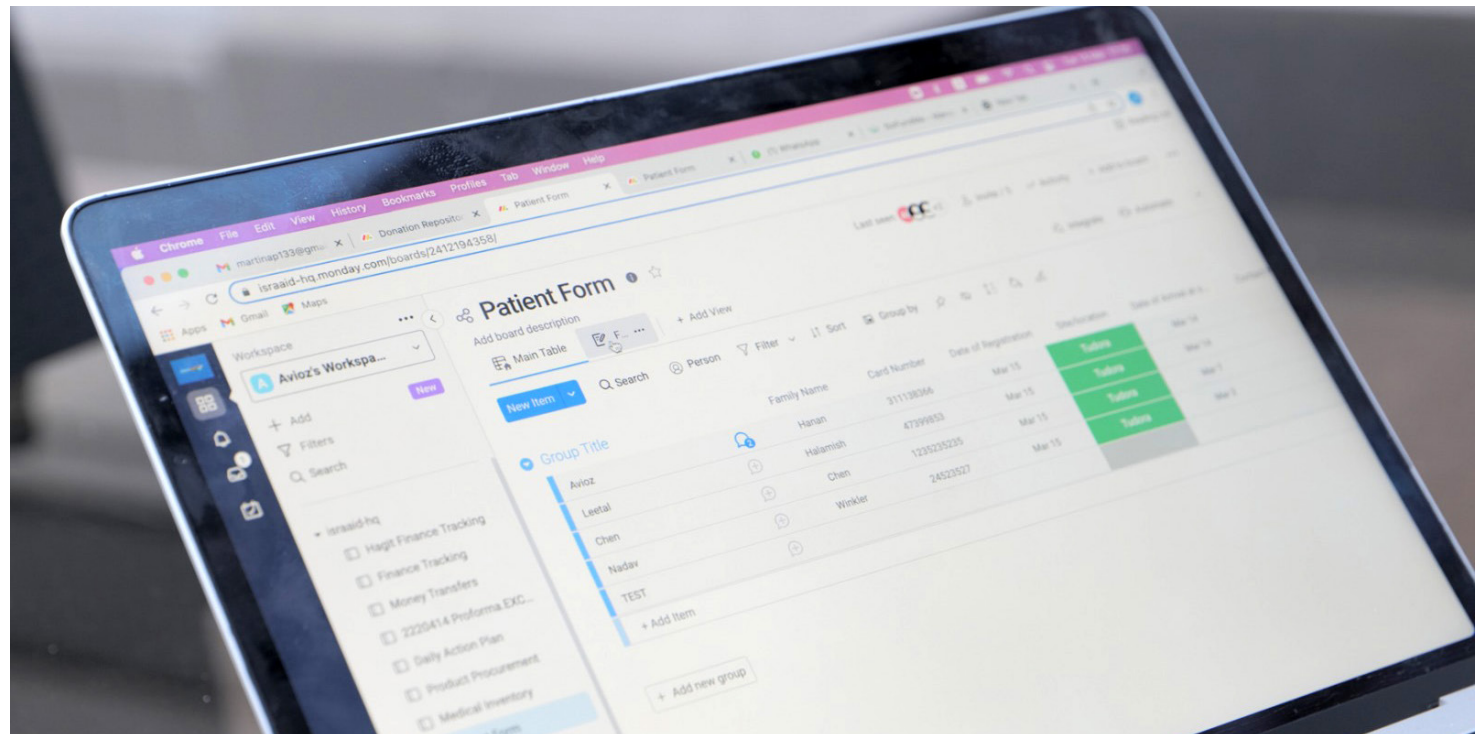
At the onset of the war in Ukraine, Digital Lift received requests for help and deployed to Moldova. There were approximately 80,000 refugees in the country by the end of February, a number which increased rapidly, reaching over 387,000 by the end of March, the equivalent of almost 15% of the population of Moldova. This massive and sudden influx of refugees created tremendous pressure on the government, particularly border police services , which had to effectively and rapidly process a high number of people entering Moldova from Ukraine.

Photo caption comes here

As the UN lead on the socio-economic response, in close coordination with humanitarian sister agencies and partners such as UNHCR, UNDP is a key actor in coordinating the response efforts to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. A few of the key priorities identified were a strong need for support in essential service provision including providing psychological counseling and legal aid, as well as strengthening the capacities of local civil society organizations (CSOs) and government's institutions that would be receiving aid.

As many of the region's tech talents from Ukraine and Belarus are moving to Moldova, UNDP Moldova is ideally situated to lead these efforts in the region, closely collaborating with the humanitarian response in Moldova and Ukraine and local CSOs such as #TechforUkraine. Building on UNDP's strong local digital portfolio in Moldova, the country office aims to surface, implement, support and develop different digital solutions for socioeconomic recovery that meet the emerging needs of local actors, including governments and civil society organizations. This includes solutions in areas such as crisis communication, information pollution, movement tracking, open data and labor market integration. UNDP Moldova, in collaboration with monday.com, developed a service for the Ministry of Internal Affairs/Bureau of Migration and Asylum that plays a critical role in surfacing the needs of governments and refugees to local developers, private sector, and international community.

Context

Without a centralized needs assessment process, the Moldova Government had no time to prepare for a sudden and massive influx of refugees. With more and more people entering the country, systems that had been built on an ad-hoc basis by local suppliers were at risk for data security breaches. As the government did not have a full view of the situation or information on refugees, it was unable to plan with proper resources and react effectively. The border police, dealing with thousands of documents written in Cyrillic, had no choice but to register them in Latin letters – a process which left refugees waiting for long periods of time during what was already an exacting journey.

There was no data alignment for the about 60 shelters in operation during the first wave of refugee influx. Each shelter created and worked with a proprietary software which did not communicate with the border police system or with other systems collecting refugee data. Due to this knowledge gap, shelters could not know how many people would arrive from the border or adequately prepare. They also sent daily summaries via Telegram to the mayor – a manual process riddled with human error, made even less clear by the stress of the emergency at hand.

Ласкаво просимо до Молдови

Звертаємо Вашу увагу, що ця інформація збирається для того, щоб проінформувати Вас як Ви можете отримати допомогу в цей час.

Вам потрібно заповнити цю форму лише один раз

**1. Ваше ім'я та прізвище// *
Имя и фамилия (Name)**

[   ]

2. Ви шукаєте притулку в Молдові? (Asylum) *

[Select your answer   ⌄]

3. Кількість дітей (Number of Children) *

[Select your answer   ⌄]

4. Ваша адреса електронної пошти? (Email)

Так, в разі Вашої потреби ми зможемо надати Вам допомогу та необхідну інформацію.

[   ]

5. Який у вас український номер телефону? (Ukraine Phone) *

[   ]

6. Який у вас номер телефону в Молдові? (Moldovan Phone)

[   ]

7. Які послуги вам потрібні? (Services)

[Select your answer | ⌄]

[Submit]

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The full story

To remedy this situation, Digital Lift and UNDP forged a partnership in cooperation with the Government – more specifically the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Bureau for Immigration and Asylum – to combine resources and provide a clear visualization of the situation through a needs assessment.

Digital Lift implemented a 72-hour pilot program at the Palanca Border Crossing, the main border between Moldova and Ukraine, with the aim to gather voluntary data from 30% of the people crossing the border. A new platform was created to consolidate the intake process and capture reliable information on refugees entering the country.

Once the intake form was created, Digital Lift worked on sharing the information efficiently to those waiting to cross the border, in an effort to maximize time and ensure that proper resources were provided by the time refugees crossed the border. Part of this process was to create a QR code providing a link to the form in Ukrainian, Russian, and Romanian, so refugees could begin filling out the form themselves.

After 2 days gathering data, 446 people were registered, amounting to 41% of the refugees who crossed the border in this time frame.

The data is presented on a live dashboard and updated every time a new person fills out the form.

Digital Lift also developed an application for border patrols to create temporary refugee IDs on the spot, ensuring proper services were provided to eligible persons. This sped up the registration process, helping refugees cross the border more swiftly and border patrol manage the intake of refugees more effectively, directing them to the needed services .

# Orange Moldova partnership

Though Digital Lift and UNDP had begun collecting data from refugees entering Moldova from the border, the system was missing information from refugees already in the country when the pilot program started. To fill this gap, UNDP launched a partnership with Orange Moldova, a telecommunications company which had begun donating free SIM cards to refugees entering Moldova.

Through Orange's services, an SMS was sent out to every refugee who was already in the country with a link to the intake form for them to fill out. This SMS was sent with an incentive: the first round of messages offered free minutes for calls, and the second offered free Internet. The SMS was sent in June, which provided an overview of the changing needs of the refugee population in Moldova.

In total, 836 people filled out the form.
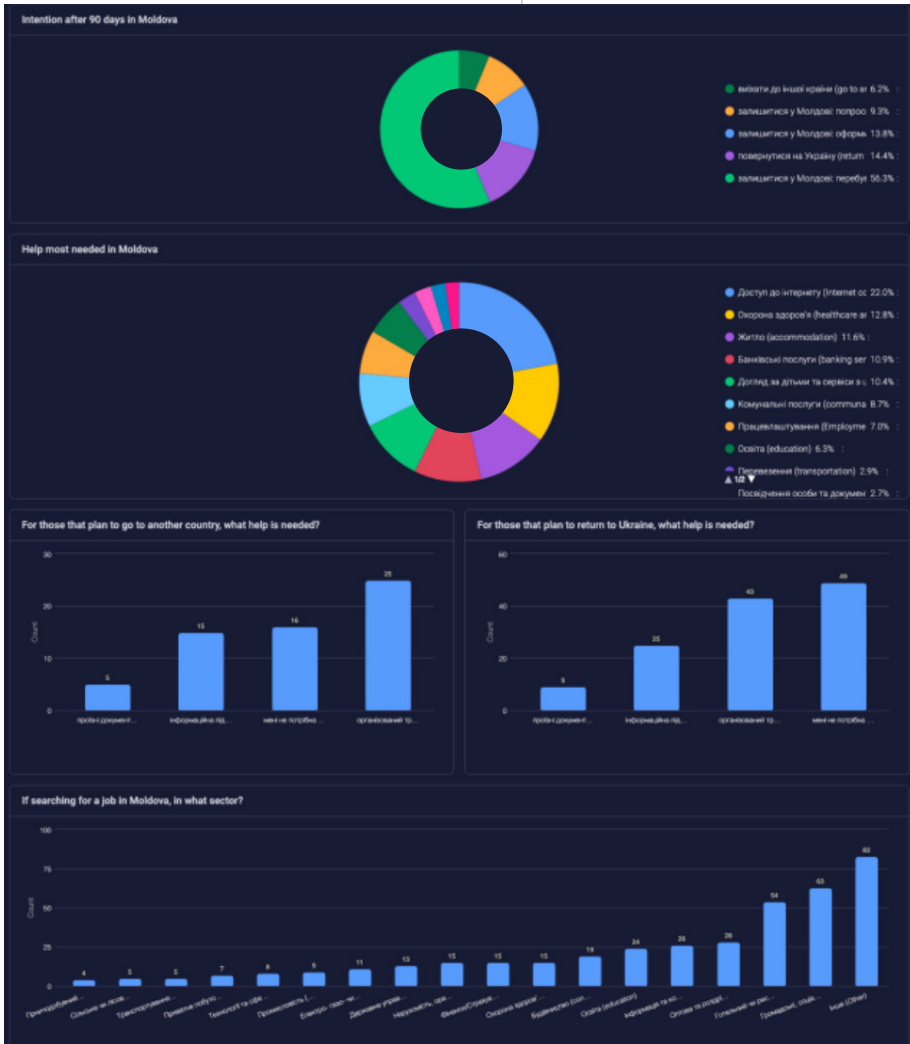
Results

The successful working model included a collaboration between the private, social and public sectors, with Digital Lift providing the software, hardware, and technical support, the Government delivering on necessary public services based on the insights of the software, and UNDP serving as a connector, linking stakeholders and additional partners to ensure the success of the project.

Digital Lift's solutions – the border patrol application and the multi-needs assessment survey – answered to the need for effective solutions that would not overburden a public sector faced with unprecedented levels of demands in a crisis context. The border application also helped border patrols process the sudden influx of people crossing the border from Ukraine and respond to the needs of refugees more quickly and effectively.
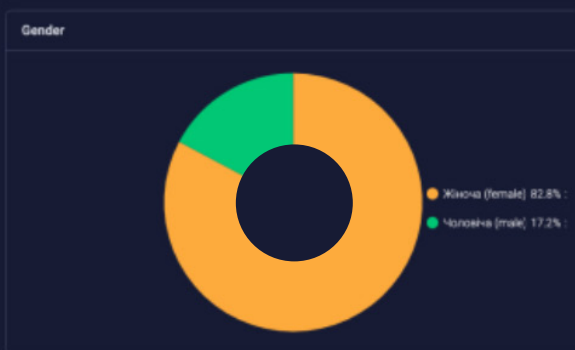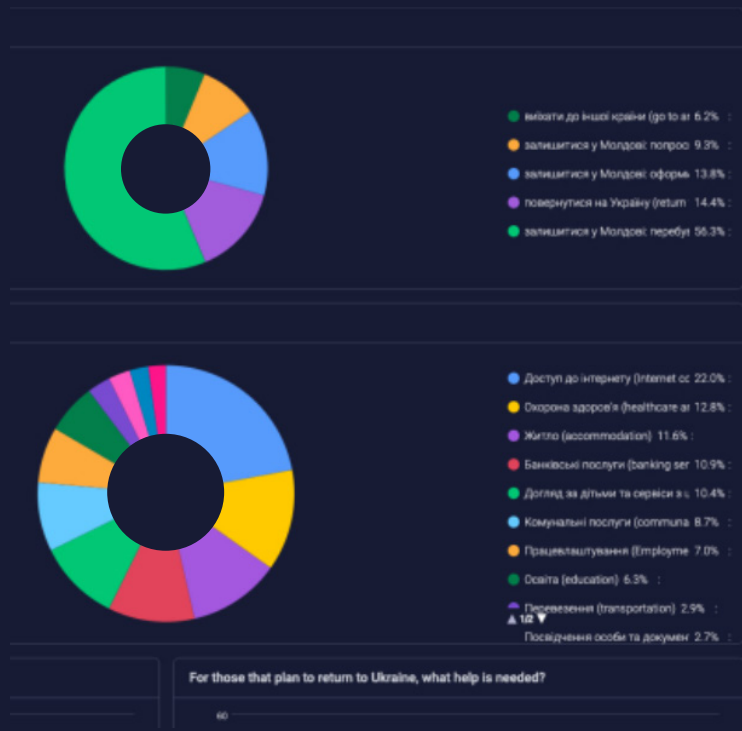
The multi-needs assessment survey provided a quick, cost-effective and efficient way to collect data on the refugees' needs, their profile and what their future plans were. Over 800 answers were collected in the span of a month, and were automatically converted and uploaded into a dashboard for the public sector to have direct access to the survey's results without data processing delays. Results were also shared with stakeholders in the development sector to support the design of projects best suited to the needs of the refugee population.

Solutions by partner

Digital Lift

- Software development and implementation
- Software licenses
- Hardware donations (ex tablets)
- Consultation for marketing & communications
- Team on the ground

UNDP

- Connection to relevant stakeholders
- Collaboration with additional partners

Government

- Platform & data owners
- Border operations
- Project management
- Data management
- Resource allocation

Civil Society Organizations

- Volunteers to operate intake