

Bassline

Destination Unknown **Testing New Narratives About Children & Migration: Malta**



Background & Objectives

Championing Children on the Move

Destination Unknown is a global network led by Terre des Hommes International Federation, working for better protection and respect of the rights of children on the move. DU seeks to learn from what works when it comes to developing campaign tools.

This encourages an approach that empowers those directly involved, to create positive, lasting change for them.

Communication should be child-focused, collaborative and evidence-based, and grounded in the rights of the children affected.

Hope-Based Communication

Hope-based communication is an approach to campaigning for policies and advocacy positions, based on five narrative shifts:

1. From fear to hope
2. From what you are against to what you stand for
3. From problems to solutions
4. From threats to opportunities
5. From victims to heroes

Kristin Hulaas Sunde, a communications strategist & consultant at positivecomms.co.uk, who specialises in human rights and migration, has been advising DU on this approach.

Evidence-Based Narratives

Destination Unknown engaged Bassline Strategy to conduct online opinion research into a selection of narratives, tools and attitudinal profiles.

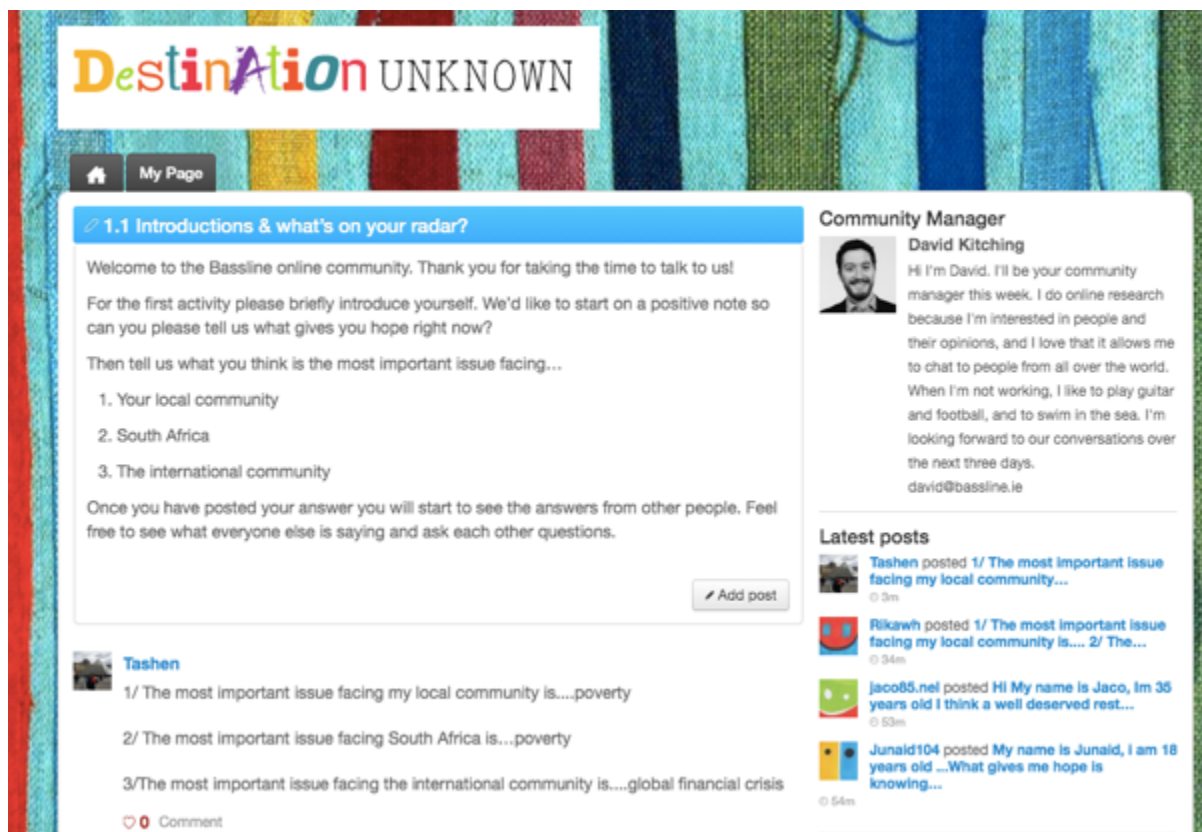
Bassline worked with a diverse set of respondents to assess the types of messages that worked best in particular contexts. Participants responded to surveys and completed a series of activities designed to gain an overall profile of messaging strategies which worked or did not.

Methodology

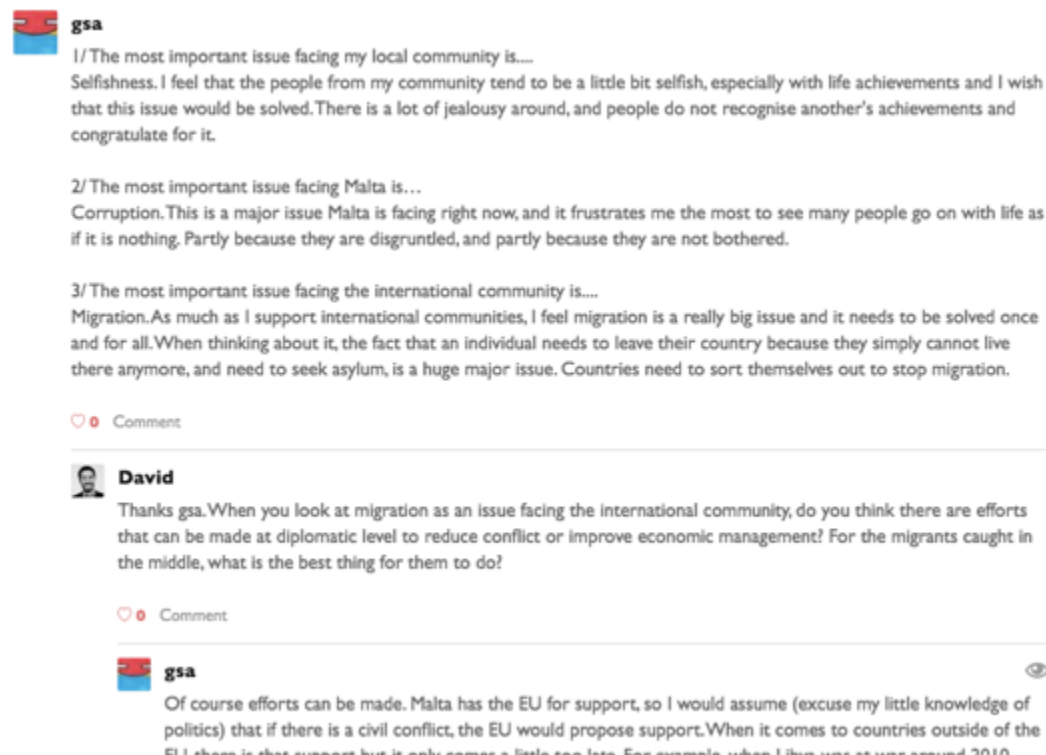
Following a collaborative process of brainstorming and workshops coordinated by Kristin Hulaas Sunde, **Destination Unknown & Bassline Strategy agreed a set of global and local narratives to be put forward for testing.**

Bassline & its partners recruited a diverse sample of 24 Maltese respondents for qualitative research. This was conducted via an online community platform, which could be accessed around the clock by participants, and was moderated by Bassline over three days.

The online community evolved from light-touch attitudinal profiling on day 1 to explicit feedback on messaging strategies by day 3. Moderation was deliberately non-judgemental, to provide a safe environment in which respondents could offer an honest opinion, and to be respectful of their participation.



Introductions / What's on your radar?



This opening activity presented participants with an opportunity to introduce themselves and to get a sense of what preoccupies them currently.

They were asked to outline what they thought were the main issues in their local communities, Malta and internationally.

While obvious issues such as COVID-19 arose regularly, there were numerous themes specific to Malta. Many respondents were concerned at the amount of construction taking place, the heavy traffic and their environmental impact. It was bound up with a feeling that Malta is overcrowded, and this has impacted negatively on views towards immigration in some cases. On the flipside, several respondents are also uncomfortable with levels of racism domestically and internationally.

In addition, corruption and lack of trust in public institutions came up in several responses.

Introductions / What's on your radar?

“The most important issue facing my local community is the environment. Overcrowding and unnecessary construction is destroying our environment. Gone are the days of long walks in the countryside or enjoying the outdoors as such spaces are becoming more and more rare.”

Male, aged 41-50

“Our main issue is illegal Immigration and probably too much construction. We are a small island and can only handle so much and unfortunately the influx of illegal immigrants is high. It feels like construction is taking over the little nature space that we have left.”

Male, aged 31-40

“The most important issue facing Malta is the hatred, political hatred, racism, intolerance. It pains me to see how the country is split by a corrupt government, some members of which are actively involved in the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia.

Malta is pretty much a reflection of what is happening on an international level. Trump's tantrums, Johnson's jockeying around with the truth and the conscious decisions by country leaders to divide and rule. People must start using critical thinking skills rather than partisan beliefs.”

Female, aged 41-50

“The most important issue facing Malta is apathy towards government institutions and instructions. The most important issue facing the international community is racism. Whether it is on a societal level, government level or international level, various countries around the world are constantly in the limelight for the wrong reasons.

This past year has shown that this has become an inherently severe issue to the point that millions of people have gone out to protest these injustices.”

Female, aged 18-30

Childhood - Overview

While covering an enormously broad topic, the objective of this activity was quite specific: to ask respondents to approach discourse around children on the move as a fundamental issue of what one should expect from childhood.

We asked them for their opinions on the basic expectations that should be met in childhood before examining further how Malta should treat children who were displaced, to make their childhood more fulfilling.

Respondents generally expressed empathy for displaced children, acknowledging the upheaval having to move must have on a young life. They felt Malta does some things right but that more could be done, in particular to educate the public and to address prejudiced opinion in media, social media, and transmitted in the home.



Photo courtesy of Terre des Hommes

Childhood – Quotes

“I came to Malta at the age of 6, not knowing a word of the language. Kids aren’t burdened with grown up responsibilities, such as a social life, work, bills, the future. It’s about today, possibly tomorrow, and things like Christmas and birthdays.

I was very fortunate in having a grandfather who every Saturday would take me on an adventure to learn more about Malta, and given our multicultural history, other countries. For many years I felt torn, not knowing whether I was British or Maltese, but then it suddenly dawned on me that I was both.

Trying to integrate into a new culture might prove to be challenging if there are things directly conflicting with your beliefs - it is important to tell kids that it’s ok to be different, to be proud of where they came from, and that they’re happy to be in the new place. It’s up to the grown ups to show kids how to avail themselves of the best of all worlds”

Female, aged 41-50

“For children moving to different countries, I think there are good and bad impacts, a child’s brain is like a sponge and I believe being exposed to different culture, different languages will enrich a child’s education and knowledge. As for the negative part, I believe having to leave friends behind is hard on a child, then having to start fresh, I believe it is especially hard if the family is constantly moving from one place to another and the child would not have a stable group of friends. Then again, I believe children can adapt better than adults can. Maybe schools can offer further after school programs to help integrate children with their classmates more easily, I also believe that lessons in English and Maltese should be provided, as clear communication is key for a seamless integration into a community.”

Male, aged 31-40

Childhood – Quotes

“Moving from one country to another can be unsettling to any individual, let alone children. I believe that language barrier can be one of the biggest issues for a child to fit in the society. In Malta, racism is on the increase, so dark coloured persons are usually frowned upon, children included. It is usually not the Maltese children themselves who choose to be racists, it is more due to pressure from parents and other adults. I think this topic is frequently touched upon in schools and children are more accommodating than adults where it comes to migrants and / or refugees.

Female, aged 51-60

“The basic things a child should have are love from their parents, a safe and comfortable place to live. A good education is also important. The movement can leave a big impact on the child. The change affects each person differently and if the people around them do not make them feel welcome, I am sure it effects them badly. I think in Malta, there are different type of people who agrees and do not agree with migration, however Malta does help them with a lot things and support them best it can.”

Male, aged 31-40

“In terms of creating a sense of belonging, I think Malta can do more, especially by educating locals into thinking that the country is not something they possess. I often hear phrases like “go back to your country” on social media. I think that behaviour should be discouraged and frowned upon by authorities. I also believe that the media plays an important role here, and that article or news feature titles such as “Man from (country) involved in (crime)” continue to add fuel to an already very racist fire in Malta.”

Female, aged 31-40



Sport – Overview

Sticking with the more abstract approach to day 1, this activity called upon respondents to be creative and constructive in their approach to helping displaced children integrate in their community.

Respondents were given a scenario in which they were coaching a sports team. We challenged them to outline how they would manage the arrival of new players from another country.

While the activity was conducted through a particular prism, it generated valuable insights. There was a general view that children are more welcoming and better at cross-cultural socialising than adults. At the same time, respondents saw value in adding structures & tools to aid collaboration, such as buddy systems or language assistance. (Inset: screenshot from TV Malta video)

Sport – Quotes

“Kids do not bother what colour, race or language the other kids speak. Kids just want to be kids and play, have fun and feel good winning. Such issues are usually brought up by the parents.

In this case I would prepare the parents to avoid conditioning their children in a way that would affect the relationship with the other team members. If any issues do arise, an open discussion with all the kids would be best. I would also highlight the benefits of having more players, more skills and the strengths that they may bring to the team.

I would inform the local kids of the newcomers ahead of time, let them know how the new players are needed for the team to be successful. On the arrival of the new team members, I would get them to introduce themselves. For the first few weeks, I would pair a local and a new kid together to get accustomed to the training program to make it easier for them to integrate.”

Male, aged 31-40

“Particularly among children, team spirit can be learnt through play. Different games which require teamwork could help children get to know each other better and understand the effectiveness of working together. Having already developed a close knit friendship can make it harder for the children to accept new members, however considering that the team could really use new members, the children should consider the new members as a vital addition, without whom success is not possible.

In order to make sure the students accept the new members, the need for new additions should be highlighted and stressed in the weeks leading to the addition of new team mates. This could help current members to perceive new one as a necessity other than an addition.”

Female, aged 18-30

Sport – Quotes

“In terms of coaching, especially when it comes to kids, I would first try to allow the kids to integrate with each other because I believe that the problem with racism is adults not kids. I think if we allow kids to do their own thing, they manage to see beyond race and colour, unlike some adults.

The next step would be to buddy-up the new kids with ones who have been in the team for a while so they learn from each other and establish their own ways of communication. As a coach, I would only interfere when and if I see a problem.”

Female, aged 31-40

“Children tend to integrate more easily than grown-ups. They do not have stereotypes. Furthermore children do not see people as rich or famous, blue or red. It is us grown ups and society that discriminates. If you look at a playground children mingle and play together irrespective of culture.

Male, aged 31-40

“On the first day the newcomers join the team, I will do an icebreaker session, thus the children get to know each other. If the team is training in groups, I will add a newcomer with each group. I will give attention to the language as this might be a barrier.”

Female, aged 51-60

“Most of the time it is us adults that tend to treat others differently. If we let the children just be themselves, they will respond to other children, irrespective of origin, race or language. I love and practice sports myself and having diversity is always welcome. I would suggest to them that new members are joining the team and to be as welcoming as they can. New people can bring fresh ideas and provide a challenge to the rest.”

Male, aged 41-50



Unity & Resilience

This activity was a mark-up exercise which directly tested messages at an emotional level, and subsequently asked for further elaboration.

Participants were invited to physically mark a series of videos, pictures and statements, and to recount concisely any positive or negative feelings they had in relation to each item. The combination of visceral and explanatory responses served to indicate which messages and tools worked well and which did not. (Inset: screenshot from “1RunMalta” video)

Unity & Resilience



This story and video are from TV Malta. The football club Syria-Gżira FC was set up by a Syrian refugee and gives people the chance to play together in local leagues. Coach Omar Rababah said activities such as football could help with integration.

Item 1: Video about Syria-Gżira FC

Similar to the previous activity, responses to this item drew significantly on the capacity for sport to help people look beyond differences towards a common interest. As a social outlet, it forms a useful forum for people to get to know one another. Respondents also appreciated the extent to which the players had learnt to speak Maltese.

Several respondents expressed annoyance at the reports of players facing racism, and there was a degree of empathy expressed for other traumas they had been through. Some reacted negatively to the immigration status of the players, saying that they should have been citizenship by now. One respondent contrasted this with the passport purchase scheme which affords wealthy people tax residency in Malta despite not living there.

Video of Syria-Gzira FC

Positive Quotes

“This mentality should not only work in sports but even during our work. The more we have time together outside work the better so that you can get to know your colleagues even more.”

“It’s very motivational to see people who are trying to make something out of their lives and who don’t give up in the face of hardship.”

“I am surprised at how well he masters our language. Most of the people who end up in Malta have their heart in the right place and want to integrate and make a decent life here.”

“Wonderful!!!! Tragedy and love for a common sport has united people from a different background.”

“Great to see how football eliminates racism. once all participants concentrate on the team spirit and the football this would eliminate all barriers.”

Negative Quotes

“Every time I hear of loss of life it makes me sad and angry.”

“There’s nothing wrong that he is still Syrian and not Maltese. I can’t understand why he want to be called Maltese.”

“He should be Maltese by now and so should the other one who has been living in Malta for 12 years. Then a rich guy can come along and buy a passport without being interested in anything Maltese. Shame.”

“The fact that they are called Syria-Gzira already sets them apart from the local community and it makes it more difficult for them to integrate.”

“The fact that these boys still encounter racism after all they have been through...”

Unity & Resilience



Pope Francis greeting migrants and refugees during a General Audience.

Image courtesy of Vatican News.

Item 2: Picture

Given the strong position of the Catholic Church in Malta, we sought to see whether the words and actions of Pope Francis had any resonance when it came to people's attitudes towards displaced persons.

The positive reactions to this photo came with a strong degree of appreciation for Pope Francis, wherein he was described as humble. People responded well to the warmth and genuine smiles exhibited in the photo as well as the display of affection between people from different cultures.

However, there were some criticisms too. Several respondents asked why the Church does not use its considerable wealth to help refugees, when it is asking for generosity from ordinary people. In addition, one respondent thought the photo could be perceived as patronising, while another questioned the apparent lack of security.

Picture & Statement – Pope’s General Audience

Positive Quotes

“There is nothing which I don’t like about this photo. It is such a positive photo of the Pope who is the Head of the Catholic Church and the bride of Jesus welcoming migrants.”

“Multiculturalism in one photo.”

“It’s nice to see the genuine smile.”

“Just love the smile and happiness for these refugees.”

“People like Pope Francis are an inspiration as he knows how to be humble.”

“The embrace, welcoming someone as family.”

“The Pope has always been behind helping all migrants.”

“The Catholic Church is always there to try and help out in this situation.”

Negative Quotes

“The Vatican and religious orders do not do enough to help refugees. They preach for the common people to help them and take them in, but they have whole buildings & convents which are empty because nuns and priests are few in number and they do not house the immigrants themselves.”

“The wealth of the church can do so much good in the world (especially if they follow the teachings of the Church itself on material possessions).”

“I feel a bit worried. From the image there seems to be no security present. Treats in this day and age may be present for different motifs.”

“Unhappy that seeing coloured people need to be treated differently to be accepted by whites. Could be perceived as patronising...”

Unity & Resilience

Item 3: Statement

Pope Francis on the commandment of God to love our neighbour and his concern about the lack of empathy towards people seeking refuge:

“We too risk becoming like that rich man in the Gospel who is unconcerned for the poor man Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table.

Too intent on buying elegant clothes and organizing lavish banquets, the rich man in the parable is blind to Lazarus’s suffering. Overly concerned with preserving our own well-being, we too risk being blind to our brothers and sisters in difficulty.”

Similar to the last photo, we sought to examine the impact the Pope’s words have in Malta, in particular with reference to scripture.

Positive responses tended to be from those who were already well disposed towards the Pope or well versed in the message, and disillusioned with the overarching materialism of the modern world.

However, there was something of a backlash in some quarters. Some respondents felt it was hypocritical of the Catholic Church to speak in such terms about wealth, while it was also criticised as a judgemental message. This did not appear to be grounded in hostility towards Catholicism per se, rather it was directed towards the institution of the Church.

Statement from the Pope referencing the rich man & Lazarus

Positive Quotes

“The Pope is giving us a very strong message here. A message for humanity to wake up and help each other..”

“A parable that is still valid today shows awareness even so many years ago.”

“Although we still have situations like this I would say that humanity has improved over the ages and that such situations are very rare. People nowadays are concerned about other people’s predicament.”

“Humanity today is more concerned about vanity and selfies and getting the best life. Each and every one of us should do his part in helping these people and to be sensitive to the many Lazaruses of our time.”

“A lot of people are self absorbed and are not involved with what is happening around them, while others simply choose to ignore.”

Negative Quotes

“Irritated. Saying that the ”rich” man is blind is once again very judgemental, when the church itself owns so many riches but seems to be forgetting about that when telling people to not be blind towards those around them.”

“I think the church is an extremely rich institution and whilst trying to teach people that they should be concerned about those in need, it doesn’t give up on any of the riches that it possesses to help those in need. It feels like saying these things is a bit judgemental towards those who have more than others when the church is in that position exactly.”

“I find that when the church speaks about people’s riches and lack of concern towards others, it’s being very hypocritical. The church has so many riches that it could ease a lot of people’s hardships, but it doesn’t let go of those comforts and live in the way that Jesus, the example they should be following, lived.”

Unity & Resilience

Item 4: Statement

Former Prime Minister Joseph Muscat on Malta's need for migrant workers:

“Like every country which becomes wealthy, we need to attract people who do certain kinds of work, and these people are themselves creating wealth – they are paying National Insurance, and since many will leave within six or seven years, they will not even receive any pension.”

While debate surrounding issues of asylum and migration sometimes draws on themes of economics, taxation and welfare, it is not always clear to what extent people respond to arguments in either direction. This quote from Joseph Muscat makes the economic case for openness.

The comment was not very well received, save for the respondents who could see some short-term economic benefit, or who see work as a means to smoother integration.

There was significant backlash from a number of angles: the idea that this represents an exploitative mentality; that there was a classist undertone; and that it will lead to neglect of the training needs of the Maltese workforce. There was also one reference to the idea that Muscat may be wrong about the duration migrant workers would stay.

Statement – Joseph Muscat

Positive Quotes

“Positive that when people are working, they will automatically generate more money in the country.”

“It’s always good to have a wealthy country. That will lead to economy growth, attracts investments which will result in more work, tourists, better standard of living.”

“I totally agree that they pay NI as they are entitled to use public hospitals and the government help them by receiving monthly beneficences/allowances.”

“We all stand to benefit if these people are put to work properly and without abuse.”

“Guiding the country into accepting foreigners as fellow workers is a step toward acceptance.”

Negative Quotes

“That’s not the way the government should think or plan. We all work hard to achieve our goals thus we get paid. What if a Maltese citizen after spending more than 35years working here in Malta and leaves the country as he can’t cope anymore here, does he lose his pension?”

“Sometimes this can lead to neglecting the local human resource in terms of not funding education and focusing on importing what talent is needed. looking for short term results and neglecting long-term sustainability.”

“Somewhat angry. We should not distinguish people according to skills. Does this mean that someone coming in who is not skilful in any way is then turned away? If one is skilful then good but if not and still willing to learn we should give them a chance to learn.”

“This is the exact example of divide and conquer. Subtly referring to migrants as lower class. Short sighted, because it is reasonable to think that people from other countries will want to marry and settle here.”

Unity & Resilience



Inset: screenshot from “1RunMalta” video

1RunMalta saw runners Patrick and Claudio cover an epic 190km around Malta and Gozo in 35 hours in July 2020, and smashing their fundraising target by raising over €50,000 to help young refugees on the island get an education.

“Thanks to the Educational Support Programme, migrants and refugees are given a chance at an education that was taken from them. This is why we undertook this challenge and raised €50,000 for this great cause.”

Item 5: Video of 1RunMalta

This video provided an instructive example of an awareness and fundraising initiative carried out in Malta. With money directed towards a refugee education programme, it afforded us an opportunity to test the messaging around such campaigns.

On the positive end of the scale, respondents focused on the run as an emphatic display of solidarity and the programme as a source of empowerment. Some also took a degree of national pride in fellow Maltese people engaging in such initiatives.

Negative responses questioned the relevance of a long run to education funding, which should be a right. In terms of optics, some got the impression that either the run was not open to others to participate, or that no one else was interested. In addition, one respondent expressed disappointment that Maltese was not spoken in the video.

Video – 1RunMalta

Positive Quotes

“With a little bit of solidarity from each and every one of us, will be beneficial to refugees and migrants. Raising money to provide quality education for these people, is an incentive that should be encouraged, hence being able to simply offer some of your man hours to contribute in any way possible, is always appreciated.”

“Empowerment is essential to continue thriving for the best results. I only hope she gets empowered by people around her and that she gets the support she deserves.”

“It took great commitment to finish the run.”

“Proud and happy. I am happy that there are still people out there who care for others.”

“Feeling proud. It’s nice to see that the Maltese population care about others and that they are aware of what is going on in terms of the language barrier.”

Negative Quotes

“I am not sure running has anything to do with this campaign. Perhaps another activity could have been carried out.”

“Why does someone have to run 190Km to get funding for a basic human right? Considering that we have been going through this situation for such a long time, shouldn’t there already be a good enough fund for such a basic human right?”

“I think the run should have been made available to more runners in order to raise more awareness.”

“It’s sad to see that only 2 people took the initiative to organize and participate in this project. We have a lot of athletes in Malta, why not involve them more?”

“Sad. No Maltese is used.”

Unity & Resilience



Pope Francis kisses the foot of a refugee during Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper at the Centre for Asylum Seekers in Castelnuovo di Porto. The pope washed and kissed the feet of refugees, including Muslims, Hindus and Copts.

Item 6: Picture

This picture was an opportunity to test the power of deliberate symbolism when presented through Pope Francis's actions.

The display of humility by the Pope evoked a very positive response from some of the respondents, who commented in terms of compassion and the Church's power to influence followers not to discriminate towards other religions. One respondent saw the picture as a source of pride as a Catholic.

There were negative responses of a chauvinistic orientation, which felt it should be reserved for Christians. Others viewed the picture as a source of guilt, chastising themselves and the world that an elderly man had to make such a gesture. One saw the picture as symbolic and benign, but futile.

Picture & Statement – We are all human

Positive Quotes

“Impressed. It is so important that the church practices love and compassion towards everyone. The church has the power to influence many and should really make good use of it.”

“The fact that the Pope is the Servant of God, regardless of his titles, he still knelt down to kiss and wash their feet, although the refugees have different beliefs. Everyone lives under the same sun, therefore no one has the right to discriminate or disrespect others’ opinions and beliefs.”

“Hopeful. We must accept and respect other religions.”

“Someone so ‘big’ shows you how one can be so humble.”

“A sign of respect and that everyone should be accepted.”

“Proud of being Catholic.”

Negative Quotes

“Sorry that an elderly man had to make such an effort in order to send such a powerful message to the world.”

“Ashamed. I would have never dreamt of doing what the Pope did that day.”

“Sorry. Some cultures force women to wear headgear / burkas as if they want women to be invisible.”

“The kissing of feet is a Christian’s tradition. Not sure how this fits in Muslims, Hindus and Copts religion...”

“The tradition itself is a bit outdated.”

“Such Catholic practices, like kissing the feet, are symbolic. However, they do not make the issue go away.”

Unity & Resilience



Language is a huge barrier for young people arriving in Malta – especially young people seeking refuge in Europe. Several projects, including some run by volunteers, are helping them to learn English and other languages. As the volunteer teachers say:

“We believe in a world where communication doesn’t feel like a limitation, and together we are going to grow to new heights”

Note: the image above is taken from a language school in Malta. It has been pixelated prior to circulation to protect the identities of those involved.

Item 7: Picture & Statement

The volunteers and students in the language classes provide a wonderful example of solidarity and volunteerism. We sought to test this from the perspective of hope-based communications.

Many of our respondents were hugely appreciative of the volunteers’ efforts, and of the happy, smiling and positive impression of the photo. They were particularly taken with the importance of addressing language barriers in order to aid integration.

Criticisms were quite specific and offered several instructive lessons for any publicity campaigns on similar initiatives. It was asked whether Maltese was also taught and one questioned whether such a programme should be run voluntarily. Some respondents got the impression of gender segregation and that women could not avail of the classes. Finally, in a COVID-19 context, the lack of adherence to guidelines around masks and social distancing was a cause for complaint.

Picture & Statement – Language Classes

Positive Quotes

“Grateful. Maltese citizens are accepting refugees and dedicating their time to educate them.”

“Being able to communicate effectively is very essential for refugees and migrants as they progress and rebuild their life in another country. Recognising the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers will build trust, as this is most challenging barrier they face.”

“United. The word ‘Together’ means a lot here as despite race and religion, they are working as one to achieve the same goal”

“It’s nice to see that others care to break the language barrier. This shows how discrimination can be tackled bit by bit.”

“A smile is not just a muscle movement but a language that connects.”

“The way we communicate with each other , ultimately describes the quality of our lives.”

Negative Quotes

“I hope Maltese is also taught. For many not speaking Maltese is a huge disadvantage. Many locals believe that as long as you live here you should know Maltese. Although I do not agree I think this could help them better integrate.”

“I do not feel that such projects should be run voluntarily, especially when shouldering such responsibility. When dedicating such time and effort towards this migration issue, it should be considered as a paid working job.”

“Sad. All refugees are male. Females are to be given the same opportunity.”

“Were there any women taking the class?”

“No social distancing.”

“The mask is not on properly.”

Unity & Resilience

Item 8: Statement

Pope Francis on the commandment of God to love our neighbour and his concern about the lack of empathy towards people seeking refuge:

“Loving our neighbour means feeling compassion for the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, drawing close to them, touching their sores and sharing their stories, and thus manifesting concretely God’s tender love for them.

This means being a neighbour to all those who are mistreated and abandoned on the streets of our world, soothing their wounds and bringing them to the nearest shelter, where their needs can be met.”

This statement is used as a further examination of the resonance of Catholic teaching in Malta, in particular associated with the present Pope.

There were several positive responses from participants who seemed to take pleasure in “loving thy neighbour” being applied in a 21st century context. It seemed to give hope, and drew feelings of solidarity, empathy and the idea that charity is an ongoing process, not just a singular act.

Negative responses were by no means hostile to the message. Rather, they expressed disappointment at society’s failure to act in this manner. This included frustration with people who are publicly Catholic but selective in the application of Catholic moral teachings. Another criticism pointed to the need for action rather than self-chastisement.

Statement – Loving our neighbour

Positive Quotes

“This is portraying the sympathy we should show others, especially during times of need. Your contribution to those who need assistance of any kind; be it financial or emotional assistance, means a lot to the person being on the receiving end. One might never know when they might end up in similar situations. Charity is not a coat you wear once or twice a year.”

“Commandments are something ‘traditionally known’ in the Catholic religion. It is good that we take that lesson of the commandment and place it into context of today’s world.”

“I totally agree 100%. We have to be in everyone’s shoes in order to understand them and help them.”

“We should love our neighbour as we want others to love us.”

“Love this figure of speech.”

Negative Quotes

“Let down. I think many only follow Jesus in some of his preachings and fail to comprehend that loving other regardless of race is also one of Jesus’ lessons”

“Disappointed. Taking this literally, we do not need to create a ‘pity party’ over this by ‘touching their sores’, but rather facing the issue and doing something about it.”

“Frustrated. It is very sad to realize that this is only possible in very rare circumstances. Egoism, selfishness, greed, anger are much more common.”

“Unfortunately shelters are lacking in Malta because our government prefers to build taller buildings and wider roads than invest in shelters for people who need them most.”

Education, Work & Ambition – Overview



Profile article about the Jobsplus scheme and the individual example of Timo, from Somalia, who went to work & P. Cutajar & Co Ltd.

Photo courtesy of UNHCR

Here, we sought to test perceptions of a story grounded in a professional context, where conscious efforts were made by both employer and employee to work well together

Overall, Timo and P. Cutajar & Co left a good impression on our respondents. They admired his strong work ethic, desire to learn and friendly relations with his colleagues. Similarly, the company came in for praise as an employer that had built a welcoming atmosphere. Some respondents had heard of the scheme previously, and appreciated a positive example like this. Some indicated that it would be good to disseminate stories like this as they had heard negative accounts of workplace relations.

One comment made reference to the respondent's own difficulties finding a job and questioned whether this was a benefit open to migrants which was not available to her. It will be important to communicate clearly that such schemes are not to the detriment of Maltese people.

Education, Work & Ambition – Quotes

“As a Human resources manager in a local manufacturing company, I am very familiar with the array of services offered to job seekers, employees and employers by JobsPlus. The Bridging the Gap and A2E (Access to employment) are designed to help disadvantaged unemployed individuals find and retain employment. Both parties must do their part for such a relationship to be successful.

We have a multicultural working environment and in general local employees have no problem in accepting foreigners, asylum seekers or refugees as colleagues. Some refugees and asylum seekers have no problems in sticking with the company’s rules and regulations but some others do. Some find it hard to trust, others cannot accept that their leader is female and thus must take orders from a woman.”

Female, aged 51-60

“This is a clear example of how things should work. Kudos to P. Cutajar. Unfortunately we tend to stereotype a person based on his origin, colour, religious or political belief. Everyone has something to offer. Clearly Timo is ambitious and interested in learning more.

I myself work in a multicultural company with people from various nationalities and beliefs. We all work towards the same goal and support each other. As Jonathan said, we should not distinguish between a Muslim wanting to go pray and someone else needing time off to go see his kids in a play. Everyone’s needs are equally important when within reason and we should tolerate each other.”

Male, aged 41-50

Education, Work & Ambition – Quotes

“Schemes like this are positive as they help identify candidates suited for these jobs. Many refugees come over to Malta with nothing to show for their education and they end up doing low income jobs which no one wants to do. These schemes identify their abilities and suit them up with good jobs. Employers should take the example of this company. Instances like these should be more advertised to show the success stories and not the odd discriminatory issues which pop up and end up hogging the news and especially social media.”

Male, aged 31-40

“I think that the relationship between Timo and his colleagues is very positive and there is work done by the company to ensure that integration was facilitated. The lessons one can learn from this story is that it is only human to resist change and so the change process should be facilitated.”

Female, aged 31-40

“I think many people have the wrong idea about hiring migrants. I think there are many successful stories similar to Timo’s which should really be broadcasted with the aim to influence other employers to do the same.”

Female, aged 18-30

“Like it took me months to find my job, same rules should apply to all. What do I think of schemes like Jobsplus? Not required.

Working in a multicultural team - this is the future of all companies. Here is Malta, we still struggle to understand the difference between multicultural and intercultural and for me that is an issue.”

Female, aged 31-40

Looking at the photo in article you can easily say that the relationship is good, they are all smiling and looking happy.

Male, aged 31-40

Safety & Belonging – Overview

We further investigated the relationship between Maltese society and Catholicism, to see whether messages from Church leaders can mobilise greater empathy towards displaced persons.

The first item was a video of the Pope in which he linked the 'Our Father' prayer to the duty to help others, while accompanied by several refugee children. The second item is from Archbishop of Malta drawing a link between the shipwreck that brought St Paul to Malta and the plight of those arriving there today.

Respondents were divided as to whether Catholic teaching is still relevant in Malta. Comments pointed to a move away from the Church among younger people, although those who still hold Catholic values asserted their ongoing importance.

A couple of respondents raised important nuances around Catholicism and identity, which are worthy of attention when drawing on religion as part of a communications strategy around migration. First, there was a degree of criticism towards those who identify as Catholics in public but also hold racist views. Secondly, there was one comment which saw the evolution of Malta as a multicultural society as a threat to Catholic values.

(Inset: screenshot from video by Rome Reports YouTube channel)

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“The story of Paul is an old one and to which we are all accustomed to. However it is relevant. For us Catholics we owe our faith to St. Paul but as human beings it shows that deep down we Maltese are accepting of other cultures. It is the stigma which borders on racism that has brought these fears and stereotypes.

I always say that we Maltese were, and to some extent still are, migrants. A lot of Maltese left the hardships that our country faced in the 70s and 80s to seek a better life in Australia, Canada, USA and UK. We were all accepted. Not just that, but to some extent took our traditions and kept them alive in these countries. What if we were turned back. The country is Catholic but the message is not only relevant to Catholics, but to all humanity..”

Male, aged 41-50

“I think that these are messages of unity and peace. Yes I think they are relevant to Malta but also to the whole world and humanity. I think that people do listen to the words of the church authorities. The older generation more than the younger one.”

Female, aged 31-40

“Not sure if the story is still relevant today, although some villages still have the caring mentality most of the country is foreign (not only migrants) so most of the values are somehow being lost in the intercultural changes these bring with them. Only a small portion will actually hear this message from the pope and maybe apply it to their life.”

Male, aged 31-40

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“I think what the Archbishop refers to when mentioning St Paul is very outdated and not at all relevant to today’s society. Life has changed so much that there’s no point in comparing what happened to hundreds of years ago to what should be done on today’s world. I think depending on how strong people’s beliefs are they listen to Church authorities. Some follow blindly others are more sceptical.”

Male, aged 31-40

“I think both speeches are relevant, however with this fast and modern world the Maltese are disassociating themselves from Church. Statistics show

that the younger generation in Malta do not attend mass regularly but at heart they still have a place for Christianity.”

Female, aged 18-30

“Given that they are strong religious leaders, they show that no matter the race and not matter the social class, we should always reach out and lend a hand to those who need it. I think these messages are relevant to Malta today given our growing migrant population. Whilst I am sure there are those who do care and listen to these words, the rest could take inspiration from such leaders.”

Female, aged 18-30

“In my opinion, (and I am generalising here) the Maltese community tend to exclude and forget all of these Catholic notions. Yes, St Paul himself was technically a migrant and thanks to St Paul we have the Catholic religion in Malta. However, we have a big racist issue in Malta and I find that the Maltese community makes no relation. There are a lot of racists out there, and they are also the same people who go to church every Sunday.”

Male, aged 31-40

Why do people come to Malta? – Overview



“Here’s another video we’d like you to watch. It’s about Dali, a young man from Tunisia and Agnes, a young woman from Zimbabwe.”

Video by UNHCR/Lovin’ Malta

For this activity we wanted to test the assumptions that respondents had regarding the reasons people come to Malta, and how these perceptions might be influenced.

In terms of messaging strategies that worked well during this project, this video has been a star performer. Based on respondents’ reactions it had considerable success in helping them reassess their assumptions. It was informative and had a strong appeal at an emotional level too. They responded well to Agnes and Dali’s backstories, their warmth of character and the efforts they had made to adapt to Malta. The use of a well known Maltese media personality as an interviewer also helped. The only negative responses came from the perspective that Agnes and Dali are positive exemplars but that not all refugees are like this. It appeared to be mostly based on received assumption rather than experience, however. Therefore, the dissemination of media content like this is likely to be helpful in engendering greater empathy amongst some members of the public.

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“Before hearing Dali speak I used to say why are people from Tunisia coming to Malta as refugeesthere’s no war there, but now I understand that people might be fleeing to free themselves from the shackles of their culture, their religion. Agnes’ story is the same, she fled labour exploitation in Malta. At times we do not really understand why people are fleeing their countries. Theses stories shed a different perspective.

Their stories are sweet stories and success stories of refugees managing to build a life here in Malta and integrate with the Maltese community. They are of an example to all refugees.”

Male, aged 31-40

“I think this video was the one that generated most emotion in me, so I definitely think that it’s a good video. Listening to Dali, I was surprised to hear his story, but it also made a lot of sense. It wasn’t one of the reasons why I thought people would leave their country, but it makes perfect sense.

What do you think of what they had to say about Malta: its people, food and language? This was the part that created the most positive emotion of all the videos. It’s nice to see the aftermath and how they integrated.”

Female, aged 31-40

“Very, very touching. They open up realities that for us, are unthinkable. It is unthinkable for a person to be treated as a criminal because he’s gay, or for a woman to be treated like a slave. Does listening to them in any way change [my] perception of the reasons young people come here seeking refuge? Yes it does! We are fed stories on the media and sometimes we hear the same story over and over again, so much so that that story becomes the norm. It proves that when someone really wants it, integration is possible.”

Female, aged 31-40

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“I do empathise with refugees because their situations are beyond their control, and who knows maybe one day I will be in the same situation and have to flee the country too! However, these two people shown here (Dali and Agnes) are two people who respected Maltese laws and got on with their lives. There are many refugees in Hal Far at the Migration Centre that sit around all day, don’t look for work, protest because they are locked in there and expect to roam around the streets illegally - that I do not support.”

Asked for further clarification as to his perception of the amount of people arriving in Malta illegally, he responded:

“I personally have no idea. I think there are more people who arrive illegally - but I am sure that this notion of thought is influenced by the media.”

Male, aged 31-40

“Both Agnes and Dali have valid reasons for fleeing away from their country of origin. I can empathize with both and am happy that Malta proved to be their safe haven. Both refugees in this story are polite and well-behaved persons. Unfortunately the vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers are not so and this is what makes the Maltese people intolerant of their presence on the island.

Yet, I still believe that deep down the Maltese are kind hearted, warm and welcoming and never hesitate to help those in need. Also both Agnes and Dali are making an effort to embrace our culture, language and food. This is definitely a plus for their integration in the local society.”

Female, aged 51-60

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“Their stories are touching given that they had to pass through all that just for being themselves. I always knew that refugees move from their native country to escape from something, but I have never thought of Dali’s reasoning. I am glad that they feel safe here in Malta and that they are enjoying their life here.”

Female 18-30

“We hear a lot about refugees and most of what we hear is vague and intangible. Seeing these stories give a human dimension to the experiences these people go through. They seem to love our country and enjoy it. I am glad that they have felt welcome here.”

Female, aged 31-40

“It is sad to hear what they had to go through and I am sure there are so many others going through the same so I applaud their courage to make a move and leave their past situations. It is surely not an easy thing to do. My perception and knowledge was always that people coming to Malta as refugees are coming here not because they want to be here, but because they might not have any other choice.

I was actually surprised about what they said about Malta - it is very good that they feel home here. Unfortunately not everyone is welcomed in the same way but I guess it depends on each situation.”

Male, aged 31-40

“This is just amazing. I loved hearing them talk about different Maltese food and the Maltese word that are part of their vocabulary. I think this video is very important, it highlights aspects we are sometimes deaf to like modern slavery. It is crucial that people understand that this is not what anyone wanted. Leaving family behind and having to sacrifice your life travelling to a new country is not something done lightly. This video was really informative and brought light to how bad things really are in some countries.”

Female, aged 18-30

Universal Stories

This final activity took respondents outside the Maltese context, to examine stories of children on the move in other parts of the world. We sought to see what types of messaging strategies and deliveries resonated best in a more rapid-fire response style.

Their responses supported the ideas of using relatable characters with identifiable stories to convey hope-based messages. This worked in interesting ways for two stories from Greece, while respondents were angered by the injustice depicted in other stories and inspired by the drive shown by some of our protagonists.

Interestingly, we received some useful critiques of the aesthetics in some of the communications materials displayed.



Photo courtesy of Terre des Hommes

Universal Stories – Maya

REFUGEES DON'T WANT YOU TO
FEEL PITY FOR THEM, NOR DO THEY
WANT YOU TO SAVE THEM.
THEY WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO
THEM, TO TREAT THEM LIKE A
NORMAL HUMAN BEING WHO
HAPPENS TO HAVE
REFUGEE STATUS.

MAYA, 19
SYRIA/AUSTRALIA



#MORETHANMIGRANTS

“

I WANT EVERY SINGLE OTHER MIGRANT TO
KNOW THAT THEY ARE VALID, AND THEY ARE
HEARD. I WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT EVEN IF
THEY FEEL LIKE THEY DON'T FIT IN ANYWHERE,
THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A PLACE FOR THEM IN
THE WORLD, BECAUSE THEIR VOICE AND
THEIR STORY MATTERS.

MAYA, 19
SYRIA/AUSTRALIA

”

#MORETHANMIGRANTS

This is Maya and she is 19 years old. As a young migrant herself she was aware of the stereotypes migrants and refugees faced every day.

She and her sister wanted to challenge this and help them reclaim their narrative, so they created a platform for refugees to share their stories. This is how their podcast Refugees on Air was born. It allowed her to connect with people who had similar journeys to hers and empower them to share their own stories of survival, hope, and inspiration.



The materials depicting Maya's narrative came in for some criticism from the Maltese community. While they were receptive to Maya and her story, many of them provided a quite specific critique of the style and aesthetic of the campaign. They pointed to use of yellow in particular, the cluttered text and the difficulty in reading it. Some also felt the statements were pushy without a broader narrative to appeal to people's empathy. (Imagery courtesy of UN Major Group for Children and Youth)

Universal Stories – Quotes on Maya

“I don’t particularly like it not because of its message but because the colours make it hard to read the message. There’s too much going on and I feel that the message is a little bit too pushy and doesn’t focus on why it should interest me but it just says what Maya feels/thinks.”

Female, aged 31-40

“I like this image and how it is presented. The only thing I dislike is the yellow highlights. The colour can be changed. This is my opinion of course, as I am an amateur photographer. Even seeing TV or films, most of the time yellow is omitted.”

Male, aged 51-70

“Visually, not so much. The images are too ‘busy’. Ideally keeping it simpler will detract less from the message. As it is it gets lost in colour and the presentation isn’t easy to follow. Attention spans are short.

The words, too, seem to be asking for help without showing what they (refugees) can give back. I don’t need someone to give back for me to help them, but it continues to reinforce the idea of helplessness, whereas the message that should come across is that giving these people a chance will create a tangible wellbeing for all.”

Female, aged 41-50

“I like it. It is actually a nice initiative and using today’s social media platforms they are able to reach a wide audience. Very positive attitude from such a young individual... Every person has a story to tell and hearing the stories of hardships or experiences these people have might help me understand more their background and perhaps be able to help more. Similarly other people can become more aware and be more accepting towards them.”

Male, aged 41-50

Universal Stories – Rihanna



Video by UNHCR

Refugee families often make major sacrifices for one another to get on in life.

Take a look at this video about Rihanna, an Ethiopian refugee in Kenya, whose sister left school to work so Rihanna could pursue an education to benefit the whole family. “Rihanna’s medical ambitions show what a young refugee can aspire to if given the chance.”

Rihanna’s story has certainly made an impact on the Maltese community. The love and sacrifice of her sister, and Rihanna’s cognisance thereof, struck a genuine chord with respondents, as did the sense that there was hope for this family.

The video has evoked empathy and a desire to know more about Rihanna and other children in her situation. Any negativity was directed more at the idea that a child should be put in such a difficult situation. The video itself was very well received.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Rihanna

“Although it’s not a very happy story, because it shows how difficult life is for these people, I like the video because it gives hope. Yes, it makes me want to know how Rihanna is doing now.”

Male, aged 31-40

“I simply love it - she is resilient, wanting to make things better not only for her but for everyone. She is appreciating her sister’s sacrifice, taking over the role of a parent. Her older sister is showing more empathy and understanding and maturity than people who are born having everything.”

Female, aged 41-50

“I saw to real bond between siblings and family. The love between them is serving an education and a better living for all the family members. The sacrifices her sister is making in order to continue her education is something that should be admired and not taking for granted, especially from people like me who live in a country where education is not a problem, especially since it is given for free. I would love to know how her life will eventually turn out at the very end, and also, it makes me curious about other girls who were in her same situation.”

Female, aged 18-30

“Obviously there’s nothing to dislike about this story except from the fact that they had to leave their country. It is such a heroic and selfless act from the elder sister to sacrifice herself for her sisters.”

Male, aged 31-40

“I like this video very much. It’s an inspiration to others. Yes, I would like to get to know better their background, why they are separated from their parents etc.”

Female, aged 18-30

Universal Stories – Stratis



Video by Amnesty International

Video of fisherman helping refugees in Greece: “You see people in need of help, drowning. There’s nothing else you can do – it’s a human thing.”

Stratis Valamios is a fisherman on Lesbos island in Greece. He has personally helped rescue thousands of refugees, and his whole community has come together over many years to welcome people fleeing across the sea. Stratis says helping refugees comes down to one simple fact: we’re all human.

The video worked best amongst those who could relate to Stratis. For example, one respondent had been involved in a rescue of a shipwreck in his youth and could identify strongly with the impulse to save human life. (This could be instructive for coastal communities where displaced people arrive by boat.) Others were hugely impressed with the heroism of the fishermen and liked the manner in which Stratis related his story.

Any resistance came either from a lack of interest or a more cynical and jaded perspective that actions such as these were for an ideal world, an invitation to an emphatically open-doors immigration policy.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Stratis

“This video makes me want to know more about them. If I was present, I would not let a person drown. When I was younger there was a shipwreck. I did not hesitate to go with my bike to offer my help as best as I could as I lived in another village. A lot of ambulances were driving past our home.

It was the 23rd. September 1969 and it was a Greek tanker ‘Angel Gabriel’ I was only fifteen at the time. The tanker broke in two and was aground on the rocks. I was there with a lot of other persons to pull a huge rope to secure it.”

Male, aged 61-70

“I like this video but it makes me angry because people drown because other selfless human beings are exploiting them for money in the middle of the sea. Human beings like this fisherman are heroes and they deserve the respect and should be an example to us all. Saving people is instinctive.”

Male, aged 31-40

“In principle I agree, but this can only happen in the ideal world. It does not absolutely mean that Malta should accept all refugees coming to our country on a daily basis. Nothing compares.”

Female, aged 31-40

“Video is based too much on one person’s experience and does not really intrigue me. It is less interesting than previous videos.”

Male, aged 61-70

“It is a heart-warming video. Stratis’ narration of the shipwreck is very eloquent and very descriptive. This together with the video made me feel as if I myself were drowning. I would love to know what happened to these refugees; how the Greek locals coped with such an influx of migrants and how the Greek government tackled this issue.”

Female, aged 51-60

Universal Stories – Grandma Aimilia



Video by Amnesty International

Video of grandma who was a refugee herself. Aimilia Kamvysi is a grandmother from Lesbos island in Greece. She and her friends became the embodiment of solidarity when a picture of them feeding the baby of Syrian refugees went viral in 2015.

Her village has welcomed refugees arriving by boat for many years. She says that even when they had nothing else to give, they gave people love, and courage. “We just showed some love, nothing else.”

Grandma Aimilia’s story drew several of our respondents back a question from day 1: what gives them hope? She appears to have really struck a chord, with references to compassion, solidarity and humanity recurring. They have at times held her up as an exemplar of goodness.

Interestingly, some contrasted the actions of Aimilia and her community with those of officialdom and the political world. She has embodied values that they see as absent from these other realms.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Grandma Aimilia

“It makes me feel hopeful - there are still good people left in this world.”

Female, aged 31-40

“It is an uplifting video; one that shows that there are compassionate and generous persons on earth. Though the villagers were not rich they helped in any way they could; but best of all they shared the gift of love.”

Female, aged 51-60

“Solidarity – People offer shelter and food for those in need. They had to leave their country during war, lost everything they had. Upon their arrival to another country they find others ready to help them. Fantastic, no?”

Male, aged 31-40

“One of the earlier questions was what gives me hope. This is a perfect example. Despite not being able to offer a lot she still offered love and courage. The world as we knew it is changing fast but knowing that people like her still exist gives me hope. Hope that humanity is still present, and people are able to love thy neighbour and help others who are suffering.

She gave from what she had. Like the other videos this needs to be shown everywhere. Good people exist and can help. Help comes in all forms. It costs us nothing to care and wrap an arm around someone’s shoulder.”

Male, aged 41-50

“It gives me a mixture of emotions, anger, sadness as well as hope. These refugees are fleeing from their homes for their safety, probably with no idea of where they are headed. I believe the problem is not immigration, but something bigger, governments should focus on finding the root of the problem. But what sticks most is the phrase “we’re all human”, Most especially I want to know if there are any solutions being discussed in the EU on how to tackle this situation, how to avoid people having to abandon their homes in the first place.”

Male, aged 31-40

Universal Stories – Ode Fulutudilu



This video of Ode Fulutudilu was shown in a different activity during the South African phase of research. In the Maltese context, however, we felt it had potential as a universal story taken from another part of the world.

Ode's story has a universal resonance in its own right. With a difficult backstory, she used her exceptional talent for football to get ahead, securing an education and striving to improve as an athlete, eventually playing for her adopted home of South Africa. ***

This was a popular video amongst our respondents. Ode's drive and ambition were admired but also her gratitude for the opportunities her talent has afforded her and her desire to support other refugees.

Ode's emotional response towards the end of the video caught the attention of the group and one respondent even expressed a level of regret at having held a less generous attitude towards migrants and refugees previously. There was also an indication that more frequent dissemination of videos such as this would aid people's interest in knowing more about displaced persons.

Ode Fulutudilu has beaten the odds throughout her life. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), she escaped war and became a refugee in South Africa. Fulutudilu dreamed of being a footballer and managed to secure a scholarship to a college in the USA.

Now, the first female South African to play in Spain's top league is taking part in the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France, after receiving a late call up to the national team squad.

Video by Olympic Channel.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Ode Fulutudilu

“I felt very inspired by this video because regardless of being a refugee, Ode still managed to make through University and also playing in a major football tournament. This video was very interesting and her story was very motivating. She was able to showcase her skills and was also offered a scholarship.

She is feeling very lucky that she had this opportunity given to her because she once had nothing and now she made it here when there was a big possibility that her faith could’ve taken a different turn.”

Female, aged 18-30

“I can’t take more of these videos they are making me regret every bad thought I ever had. it will make me look at things from another point of view. I do want to know more but at the same time it makes me feel sad.”

Female, aged 31-40

“Lovely video, probably the one I prefer, especially when she gets emotional explaining how she feels about refugees because it shows genuine feelings. I would be more inclined to know more about refugees and immigrants if more videos like these where shown on TV.”

Male, aged 31-40

“What’s not to like? She was a refugee as her family made the difficult choice to leave their home to escape the war. In turn, she repaid her welcoming country by pursuing not just an education but also a professional career in football. Amazing story. All these stories have a powerful message. Everyone has something to offer given the chance. Refugees are no exception.”

Male, aged 41-50

“Such stories put everything into perspective. Life would have been so different for these individuals had borders been closed.

Female, aged 31-40”

Conclusions

Widespread construction and heavy traffic have presented a perception of a Malta that is **overcrowded**. In some cases, this has impacted negatively on views on immigration. Some also felt that Maltese values were under threat because of multiculturalism. These challenges notwithstanding, several respondents felt uncomfortable about growing racism at home and abroad. They often drew a sense of hope and pride in seeing displaced people building a new life in Malta, and in efforts to show kindness towards them.

Most respondents expressed empathy towards displaced children, and mentioned the need for better **integration through education**. There is a perception that children are more welcoming and better at cross-cultural socialising than adults.

Positive engagement with Maltese culture was very well received, in particular efforts to learn the language. A video featuring two refugees, Dali & Agnes, telling the interviewer their favourite Maltese words and food, was very well received. By successfully combining many elements – including empathy, a well-known local interviewer, humour, and a positive depiction of Malta as generous host nation – the video created common ground and won respondents over.

A similar dynamic was present in views of **workplace relations**, as seen in the story a young Somali man, Timo, who found a job with a Maltese company. Survey respondents admired his strong work ethic, desire to learn and friendly relations with his colleagues, and praised his employer for creating a welcoming atmosphere.

Because Malta's population is 94% Catholic, we tested stories around **Pope Francis' statements and actions** in favour of welcoming refugees. Some of these provoked cynicism and comments on inconsistencies in the Church's position. However, several drew feelings of hope, solidarity and empathy from the commandment to 'love thy neighbour'.

In general, the most successful stories were grounded in **relatable messengers** who were doing their best to live good lives and to engage meaningfully with the host culture. In addition, there was a good deal of appreciation for those who helped displaced people, at least in abstract terms. A successful communication strategy will help join the dots between what is accepted as admirable behaviour and what informs a respondent's overall view of children on the move.

Thank you!

Audience-level research for this project was carried out on behalf of Destination Unknown by Bassline Strategy Ltd.

For enquiries, please contact:
David Kitching, Managing Director
t: +353 86 348 2791
e: david@bassline.ie
w: <https://www.bassline.ie/>

Bassline

