

Baseline

Destination Unknown Testing New Narratives About Children & Migration: South Africa



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 Baseline Strategy to conduct online opinion research into a selection of narratives, tools and attitudinal profiles.

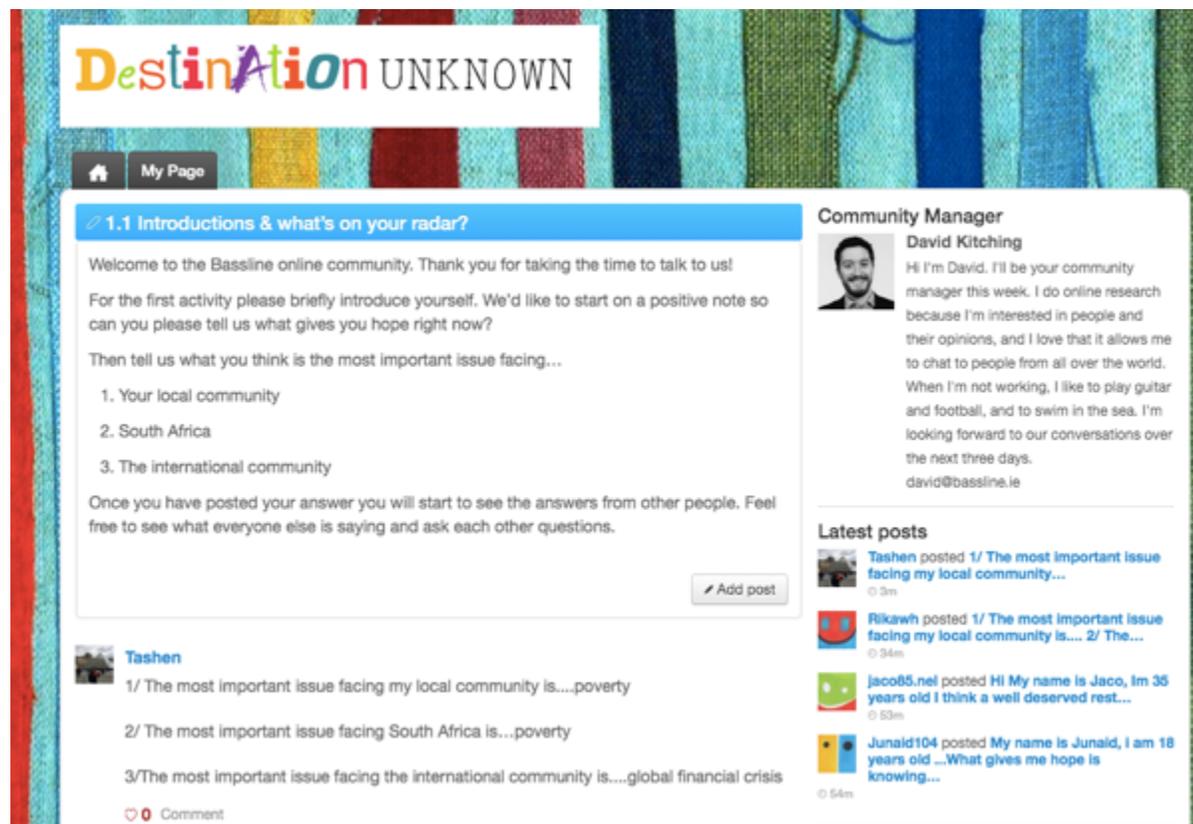
Baseline worked with a diverse set of respondents to assess the types of messages that worked best in particular contexts. Participants responded to surveys and completed a series of activities designed to gain an overall profile of messaging strategies which worked or did not.

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 South African 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?

“The most important issue facing my local community is crime. Crime has reached a peak of all times. Gender based violence and murders being the leading criminal offences amongst other offences.

The most important issue facing South Africa is corruption. Corruption has hindered our beautiful country from being at a better position economically. The most important issue facing the international community is the corona virus.”

Female, aged 18-30

“The most important issue facing my local community is abuse of alcohol and drugs and this leads to high level of crime and violence that [South Africa Police Service] is struggling to deal with on their own.”

Male, aged 51-60

“People generally are so gullible to mis-information and with social media being so rampant some struggle to know what is truth or not and also totally over-react to everything. They have lost their power of common sense and reason.”

Female, aged 61-70

“The most important issue facing my local community is youth unemployment, drugs and alcohol abuse. The most important issue facing South Africa is unemployment, crime and corruption from our leaders. For the international community it is Covid, terrible politics and failing economies as a result of Covid.”

Female, aged 31-40

“What gives me hope is the fact that I have this day to make a small change to improve my life as well as my family's life.”

Male, 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 South Africa should treat children who were displaced, to make their childhood more fulfilling.

Overall, the child-centred approach evoked empathy, although some respondents made reference to existing failings that negatively affect South African children.



Photo courtesy of Terre des Hommes

Childhood – Quotes

“Children have a right to healthy food, a home, a safe environment, protection from abuse and sanitation. They need a proper education and should have access to it. Education is of utmost importance so that a child can grow skills later on in life to contribute toward growing the economy. Losing skilled children causes a negative impact in SA. Other countries are benefitting from the skills of our own children.

South Africa should readjust its infrastructure to make sure that our skills are not lost. Our children who have graduated and qualified should be given opportunities for a good, well-paying job so that they remain in SA. Children arriving here should not be treated any differently from SA children in so far as being given opportunities are concerned, as long as they are all treated fairly.”

Female, aged 61-70

“I think that some communities in South Africa have been tolerant and compassionate towards newly arrived children. The more tolerant would be the upper and middle class. The less privileged South Africans are less tolerant and compassionate towards newly arrived children.

South Africa is a land with many opportunities and possibilities, so it is indeed a good place for a child from abroad to achieve his or her potential. More economic security for the lower income households will most definitely foster greater tolerance to migrants. The lower income groups tend to misdirect their frustrations so helping them economically will definitely yield greater tolerance.”

Female, aged 18-30

Childhood – Quotes

“As South Africans we can be more tolerant given the current situation we currently face as the whole world is going through the same situation. And shift away from being xenophobic, which sadly most south Africans are. In my honest opinion, [efforts to address xenophobia] need to start from a grassroots level. Unfortunately, children learn these traits from their parents. So, the community should be reinforcing this from grassroots level. Bear in mind these are also cultural misconceptions and vary throughout race groups in South Africa.”

Male, aged 31-40

“Every child has the right to be safe, to be raised in a loving home and to education. Those in my opinion are the cornerstone to a successful childhood. The impact on a child moving to another country could be a culture change if his new country is very different to his home country. I think South Africa as a country has alot on its agenda, it is the duty of that child’s parents to make sure that that child is put at ease with their change in environment.”

Female, aged 31-40

“The impact of a child having to move to another country can vary from child to child. However, it could have a negative impact as the child will be faced with a whole new life , everything will be different , from the people to the systems in the country. South Africa could possibly make it easier by providing extra support to children coming from other countries.”

Male, aged 18-30



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 (or teaching another craft). 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 in terms of positive messaging and broader community application of the team ethos and communication necessary to function in sport.

Photo courtesy of Terre des Hommes

Sport – Quotes

“I am currently coaching boxing in the community of Khayelitsha. We were once joined by a team from Germany. At first it was a bit difficult to get the team to 'gel', since one team comes from a first world country and has to integrate with a team from an African township.

I would tell the local kids that all of them are working towards perfecting they're craft, it is easier to become better at something working together with others. My team learnt a lot from the visitors and vice-versa. I would tell the new kids, South Africa is a great boxing nation. Boxing is renowned in the townships and especially in Khayelitsha. I need to deal with is competitiveness [and] aggressiveness, so I need to monitor and supervise how the kids are training. We would do everything as a collective, when we go running we make sure no one lags behind.”

Male, aged 18-30

“As I'm not very geared toward sport, I would rather focus on something like an Arts & Crafts Club. Pictures and sculptures speak volumes without any words. Children express themselves on a whole "other" level through art and creative endeavour. They can also work in collaboration with other children, thus communicate in a world wide language through their hands and eyes.

It has been proven over and over that special needs children or those who have suffered major trauma, can slowly learn to communicate in this way. Music and dance is another medium which must be included to bring children out of their shells and assist them to learn and understand the world around them.”

Female, aged 61-70

Sport – Quotes

“Sporting activity has unity in diversity because people are gifted in different ways. However, they must learn to have the same attitude to achieve a united goal. Sports teaches us to achieve goals and embrace the essence of a unified frontier.

Even Mandela himself has had this in one of his memorable speeches that sport is enabler of unity. This was also made evident when South Africa won the first rugby world cup on African soil and further repeated this in their recent win when they were led by a black captain (Siya Kolisi).”

Male, aged 51-60

“For the locals, I would say to treat them with respect, as they may be from a different country however, we are all the same. I would welcome the new kids by giving each one a chance to be captain of the team, this will make them feel included.

I would address everyone in the team and tell them to think of it as if they are part of an international professional soccer team, where people from all around the world can be apart of the team. This will encourage them to work as a team and achieve the best of results.

Male, aged 18-30

“There is a problem because when kids interact with those people from abroad that they have been taught negative stereotypes about they will treat them bad.

Yes, it does become a problem at school and in sports, as you find the kids from abroad being bullied, excluded from activities, not having friends and just not being treated well in school by their peers.

Yes, sports is a good place to teach inclusivity and instil positive morals and lessons in children.”

Female, 18-30



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 #JerusalemaDanceChallenge video)

Unity & Resilience



These young people in Johannesburg decided to do the #JerusalemDanceChallenge together. “Our Jerusalem is a place where we are all free to study and achieve our dreams,” they said. “Some of us are refugees, some are South African, but around here we all face the same challenges – no money for school or university... Our message to the government is to unlock the door to good schooling for all children, now. That is our shining city on the hill.”

Item 1: Video of the #JerusalemDanceChallenge

The response to this item was varied. The positives were mostly derived from the feelgood factor generated by the video, while others enjoyed a level of pride from a South African phenomenon spreading so widely internationally.

The most noteworthy negative comments pointed to the apparent lack of diversity *within* dancing troupes, despite wide representation in the video at large. One comment made reference to the possibility that the video reflects stereotypes of poverty.

For some, it was merely a matter of taste, and their responses were informed by whether they liked the song or artist.

#JerusalemaDanceChallenge

Positive Quotes

“It makes me happy that everyone can dance to this song whether the moves are mastered or not.”

“I love the fact that even my country is involved. I can tell by the dance move.”

“I like the fact even white people are dancing to the song.”

“I feel it empowers woman.”

“Beauty & fitness. United feelings that are not distorted from rhythmic beat.”

“It makes me feel good about Master KG because I love his music. I like all the songs and people dancing.”

“This makes me feel good about my country.”

“I don’t dislike anything about this video.”

Negative Quotes

“Don’t like the song or video. The song irritates me.”

“It’s sad that there are no men in this video. it makes it seem like they let woman face challenges alone”

“There is nothing i dislike on all the videos”

“It makes me feel uneasy as it makes it seem as if you either black or white.”

“I dislike that they are not dressed. makes us seem like we live in poverty.”

“Children’s party turning into an adult occasion.”

Unity & Resilience



Item 2: Picture & Statement

This item corresponds well to our earlier activity on childhood and the rights one should be able to expect. Participants were responsive to the message of this item and there was little or no ambiguity about what was being conveyed.

The “positive” quotes in the next slide mainly point to a notion that problems of access to education are being addressed in this picture. However, some still saw hope in the picture, through the ideas of ambition and unity. Negative comments were more clearcut, addressing the deficiencies in a system that deprive children of a decent education and expressing anger about this.

“Together, we can climb the mountain of challenges that so many children and people in South Africa today face. No matter who we are or where we come from, we are all ambitious Africans who are in this together. Education is a human right so we’re challenging our government to provide it, now.”

(Illustration by Peter Shrank)

Picture & Statement – Ladder to School

Positive Quotes

“I like that it is acknowledged that education is a right from birth not because you are South African”

“Rights of people are violated and depriving them access to education.”

“Painting a picture of neglected sector. System collapsing”

“No matter how hard it is education is key, this resembles the ladder of success.”

“I like that this statement believes that Africans can solve their challenges,, they just need to unite. Africans need to work together to build a better future for their children.”

“Africans must unite to save it’s problems.”

Negative Quotes

“School for children seems unattainable because of lack of a good school structure with teachers and sanitation. this has been a challenge for years and it is extremely upsetting.”

“The ladder does not reach the school which is a shame. It makes me feel as though the right for every child to be educated is far fetched.”

“I dislike the fact that children must suffer in order to go to school.”

“Deprivation of infrastructure that create jobs and living. Dangerous buildings.”

“I don’t like that the school is falling apart. our children deserve the best schools”

Unity & Resilience

Item 3: Statement

“Why blame each other for problems that none of us created? Most South Africans still face hardships created through decades of racist and corrupt governments. People often come here because they have no other choice.

The last thing this country needs is more xenophobia. Instead of fighting each other, we can push our leaders to use our ample resources to end poverty, create jobs and build a society that benefits everyone – not just the lucky few.”

The objective of this statement is to draw on South Africa’s history with apartheid to engender empathy towards the challenges faced by people on the move today.

While some accepted the premise that divisiveness and xenophobia are self-defeating, the statement did receive some negative pushback. This ranged from those who are tired of hearing references to apartheid and accusations that it becomes an excuse, to those who recognise the flaws of divisiveness but think there should be limits to South Africa’s openness. Among the latter group, some are broadly sympathetic to migrants but view the decision to move as an active choice.

Statement referencing apartheid regime

Positive Quotes

“It’s important that everyone benefits not just the few that are lucky. This makes me happy that the same thought process is being applied by everyone.”

“Yes I like the fact that this also involves the government because we cannot blame foreigners for all our problems. Poverty in our country is created because of all the money that is taken by government officials to benefit them only.”

“We need to push our leaders to do right by all Africans.”

Black South Africans continue face hardships and strife due to apartheid and the current government. This statement carries a lot of truth. South Africans need to fight racism and the corrupt government.”

Negative Quotes

“Makes me feel angry that south Africans still play the race card and use it as an excuse. SA will move forward once everyone stops feeling sorry for themselves and crying about something that was stopped 25 years ago.”

“Fighting each other and chasing immigrants away is not a solution but we need to strengthen our borders to control high level of immigration.”

“They do have a choice to stay where they are and fix their countries issues. We are overcrowded.”

“I don’t like this at all, it makes me angry.”

“People come here because they want a better life and we are one of the richest countries, not that they have no choice.”

“It makes me feel as though the world expects South Africa to carry Africa’s problems. I feel that this is an unfair expectation.”

Unity & Resilience

Item 4: Statement

“People come here from other countries, often to escape terrible trauma and abuse. Their ambition, resilience and energy inspires me. And racism belongs to the history books. We have learned the hard way that fighting and hating each other solves nothing.

As a proud South African I stand with refugees and migrants, because we’re looking in the same direction towards a stronger, healthier, wiser and more generous country where there’s room for everyone to build a better future.”

This statement draws on themes of empathy for those who have been through trauma; admiration of resilience; a rejection of xenophobia and an appeal to an open and tolerant South African identity.

The greater positivity in this statement yielded a slightly more positive response, with some respondents taking pride in instances where South Africa has demonstrated generosity, and others expressing empathy for the trauma faced by displaced people.

Negative commentary mostly referred to broader issues around conflict and resources, although some questioned the extent of the trauma and difficulties faced by migrants and refugees.

Statement – Build a better future

Positive Quotes

“This is better, much more positive feeling. by not crying over spilled milk and focusing the message on how to build a stronger country makes you want to be part, as long as its controlled.”

“I think there is really bad situations such as war and brutal killings by government that result in people leaving”

“We are willing to help. it makes me proud”

“I truly detest xenophobia therefore I stand with refugees and migrants. Africa should not have any borders”

“The ambition and resilience to go into another country and thrive against all odds is remarkable. Africans are incredibly agile and strong.”

Negative Quotes

“Feeling annoyed. There is a looming war that is ignited by these refugees who are now dominating some businesses at the expense of SA citizens.”

“These immigrants have now begun acts of racism and occupy streets that they dominate with drugs and violence against SA citizens who are the rightful owners of their land.”

“Not all people come here because of trauma and abuse, most are here for criminal activities and corruption.”

“Other African countries should aid South Africa with resources to sustain the economy. Every African country must lend a hand and make some sort of provision for refugees.”

“The fighting in our country due to migrants and refugees taking people’s jobs is disturbing because they get offered a job and accept in order to build a future whereas South Africans take them and complain.”

Unity & Resilience



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: Olympic Channel)

Item 5: Video of Ode Fulutudilu

This video was remarkably well received. Respondents expressed admiration for Ode's talent and determination, and they wished her well in her success. Some viewed her as a positive role model, while others saw her story as a source of pride for South Africa.

Interestingly, any negativity towards the video was not directed at the content or at Ode herself. Instead, it was grounded more in empathy at the sad situation she had faced in DRC, and frustration at the bureaucratic failings which delayed her advance as a professional athlete.

Overall, the response indicated that a hope-based message works well when based around an impressive and sympathetic protagonist.

Video – Ode Fulutudilu

Positive Quotes

“What a wonderful, positive story. There are many other successes that should be shared with the world. It shows what resilience and determination can do. Awesome.”

“One thing I liked about this video is the fact that this girl is brave, she doesn’t let any circumstances stand in her way and she’s very positive about life. I am sad about the fact that refugees have limited opportunities but I am happy for this girl because she is a hard worker and she doesn’t let any circumstances stand in her way.”

“I also like the fact that she never forgot her past. with that mentality she’ll always find ways to give back to the community of refugees in whichever way possible.”

“It makes me feel so proud to be South African.”

“She is really talented. Perhaps she may influence other females in South Africa.”

Negative Quotes

“Feel bad about her situation that caused her to leave her home country.”

“It was sad that her she struggled growing up, and her family where in positions where they were almost homeless, and she could not go to school.”

“I feel frustrated. Surely our policies in Govt need to be relooked - immigration documents were not in order so she could not do what she does best.”

Unity & Resilience



“We are all human, and we are all proud, talented, ambitious Africans. It doesn't matter if you are a refugee or not – we all face the same challenges. By learning from each other's struggles and finding common ground, we can hold our government to account.”

Image courtesy of Development Cartoons

Item 6: Picture & Statement

This item also draws on our earlier activity on childhood. Some of the participants responded strongly and positively to the idea of African unity and striving together.

The concept of holding the government accountable evoked a mixed response, sometimes very positive, while others felt we should all be accountable.

Responses to this item went into surprising levels of detail on the specifics of the picture and the expressions of the children involved. There was some ambiguity surrounding their facial expressions and the sense that one of the children was excluded. This may have weakened the message somewhat.

Picture & Statement – We are all human

Positive Quotes

“This image has a very powerful message to everyone, meaning if we can work together we can do more. After all we are all Africans we must not judge people because they are coming from certain countries because at the end of the day we are one.”

“I like the message in the picture. I like how it highlights that we are all human and African, and instead of fighting one another all the time, we should fight the government that is responsible for the livelihood of people.”

“This is what we need to strive for, holding the government accountable.”

“I like the fact that they have a book/newspaper in front of them. Books and newspapers are peer reviewed and share valid and true information.”

Negative Quotes

“I feel that our government in SA under our current economic status is doing the best that they can. We should all be held accountable. We all can come up with ways in which we can help one another and to also help the current initiatives that the government has out in place.”

“Sad that there is so much discrimination in the world, and xenophobia here in South Africa as well. It is currently in the news right now and causes so much unhappiness on both sides of the fence.”

“I dislike that he is the only one not talking or smiling. Either he is concerned/ excluded and disregarding by the rest.”

“The boy on the right seems to be excluded.”

“This person seems to be sad and upset - perhaps sharing about his bad experiences.”

Unity & Resilience



“Ubuntu is more than a word. Ubuntu is a philosophy of life. The direct translation of the word from Zulu and Xhosa would be “humanity” or “charity”, but that falls short. Ubuntu means “I am because you are”. Ubuntu - together for a better world.”

Photo courtesy of Ubuntu Pathways

Item 7: Picture & Statement

In this picture and statement, we sought to examine the resonance of a local concept when it comes to fostering solidarity in communications strategies.

Ubuntu resonates very strongly with South African respondents, although with differing results. At the positive end of the scale, people leapt upon the photo and the concept as things of beauty and praised the smiles of the young children in the picture too.

Negative responses still held up the concept of ubuntu as a great virtue, but one which is not practiced sufficiently nowadays. Some expressed cynicism about it as an unrealistic aspiration, while others felt some generations are better than others at exhibiting ubuntu.

One helpful respondent informed us that we were using the term incorrectly with this photo, as there should be more than two people.

Picture & Statement – Ubuntu

Positive Quotes

“Those smiles in the picture are so uplifting. Yes, humanity it what we all need. Empathy for and toward each other is all that is required. We can all start in small ways, on the ground, in our own communities, just one smile, one act of kindness at a time.”

“Ubuntu has very powerful meaning because it means that we must be able to assist, help, embrace one another. It has such important values such as respect, human dignity and be able to assist one another.”

“Ubuntu symbolizes values and humanity. It is one of the most common words used for people to show respect towards one another.”

“I like that they are smiling. A smile goes a long way. You can tell they come from different backgrounds. They seem to be friendly towards each other despite that.”

“Humbled. Ubuntu to me, means love.”

“Ubuntu is a way of life.”

Negative Quotes

“When referring to ubuntu , more people could be included in the photo.”

“It’s sad that many in our days have forsaken this principle. This spirit of Ubuntu in our days is something that many no longer practice. They’d rather laugh at one another when the one is at their lowest instead of helping one another.”

“Ubuntu only exists in an ideal world. Currently values and humanity is very difficult for us to practice.”

“This picture is hard to achieve with older people. The older we become, the more sensitive we are to differences.”

“The younger generation today don’t know how to think with an ”ubuntu” mindset. Social media feeds them so much rubbish and slants their viewpoints in all the wrong directions.”

Unity & Resilience

Item 8: Statement

“Many South Africans know the pain and hardship of feeling like strangers in their own country. We also know hating and fearing each other is not the answer.

The only way we can heal the wounds of the past is by coming together to build something new, a different society. A place where all people stand side by side in mutual respect and collaboration, no matter where we are, where we come from, or the colour of our skin.”

This statement appeals to the knowledge that many South Africans have of hardship and struggles, in order to evoke empathy and collaboration among people of different backgrounds.

The responses appear to reflect a degree of confirmation bias. Those who are supportive of the statement agree quite emphatically, and respond positively to its message. There are, however, those who are more sceptical and have formed a view that the statement is perhaps a little utopian.

Others, while not at all hostile to the statement, expressed disappointment at attitudes displayed by some South Africans towards other Africans as well as their more disadvantaged compatriots.

Statement – Strangers in their own country

Positive Quotes

“I love this statement and it carries so much power. Many South Africans know the struggle of being oppressed in your own country, and during apartheid some people involved in the struggle had to seek asylum in other countries. Hence, we should be able to afford that opportunity to our fellow Africans in their time of need.”

“This statement is awesome and hits the nail on the head and if we all applied ourselves to its sentiments it would make the world of difference. We need to make it happen.”

“The sound of last sentence makes me happy if we didn’t have all these racial issues ins South Africa. In an ideal world, where mutual respect and collaboration was possible 100% then this idea would be what humanity needs exactly.”

Negative Quotes

“Mildly sceptical because if I were to verbalise this to many of my co-workers they would say I was living in a fantasy. For so many it appears unrealistic and unachievable.”

“I agree with what is said. What makes me sad is the thought that South Africans are afrophobic if anything, because we are mostly discriminatory towards migrants and refugees from African countries. There is a stereotype that all African migrants are here illegally and do crime, even though you find majority of them are legal and contribute towards the economy, however, they never discriminate against non-African immigrants.”

“It saddens me that the majority of South Africans are from the disadvantaged community and in addition to that would feel like strangers in their own country. The economic gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged is growing bitter by the day.”

Education, Work & Ambition – Overview



Video about the Three2Six Education Project in Johannesburg, which provides an afternoon programme for hundreds of refugee children

“This project gives refugee children back their childhoods, after the trauma and the violence they have seen.”

Video courtesy of Three2Six Education Project

In assessing respondents’ reaction to this video, we wanted to see how they related to stories of children trying to make their way in life, and of adults trying to help them get ahead through education

The overall response to this piece was very positive and appeared to latch onto a sense of hope. Respondents were very impressed by the efforts and generosity of the teachers. Any negative feedback appeared to arise from a lack of clarity. Some wondered why displaced children would be segregated from or given special treatment over South Africans, while others could not get an effective grasp of the ethos of Three2Six from the short video. The next slide provides an interesting sample of the response when additional information or clarifications were provided.

Education, Work & Ambition – Quotes with clarifications

“I can’t see the logic in separating them from South Africans. This I think could cause problems in the community as to why do they get this special treatment. We need to build more schools to accommodate them and at the same time provide jobs for those teachers sitting at home. Will a child’s life be any different learning in a normal school environment or the Three2Six? Not sure!”

Male, aged 51-60

Following clarification from the moderator that the programme aims to prepare children for mainstream school system, the respondent replied:

“I think it could be clearer as it looks like a private affair just for refugees.”

“It gives me a feeling of hope. It makes me proud that people are making an effort to make changes. I would applaud them for their hard work and dedication. Yes it does affect my perception but I think it could add a bit more details on what their lives were like before.”

Female, aged 51-60

The respondent was shown the original 7 minute video and then replied as follows:

“Hi David, yes that video is much more informative, tells us more about the children’s plight. I do feel it is a bit too long. Perhaps something in between...”

Education, Work & Ambition – Quotes

“I think it’s a great idea I won’t lie. I would actually shake [the teachers’] hands and tell them how much I appreciate them for helping our youth which is an amazing thing to do. It’s really touched my heart knowing that there are people who are willing to help kids to have a better future. I mean, it takes a village to raise a child.”

Male, aged 41-50

“This program makes me more thoughtful about the challenges that immigrants go through when they get to a foreign country.”

Male, aged 18-30

“I knew that we needed to help refugees where we can and all but often, we focus on helping the family as a whole and forget that there are children that have been deprived of their childhood and their right to education.

These educators and volunteers are doing a great job and they should continue with this project. They should also maybe look into expanding the program to other provinces as well. Refugee children are innocent souls just like our children.”

Female 18-30

“It was a very heart-warming video. Makes me feel hopeful for these children. It is only when we see videos like this do we really realise the hardships refugees face.

I would like to learn more about their circumstances and what programmes similar to this offers refugee children. I would like my own children to get involved in programmes like this.”

Female, aged 61-70



Safety & Belonging – Overview

This activity looked at a very specific dynamic in which people who have made their home in South Africa worked to give something back to the community that accepted them.

Respondents were shown a video in which Somali volunteers helped provide food to South Africans who were struggling during COVID-19. It also touched on earlier themes of immigrants who had shown drive and ambition to find success in South Africa, but with the addition of an altruistic nature.

Comments were varied and sometimes reflected contradictory feelings. While the good deed was appreciated by respondents, there was a degree of cynicism, borne of negative stereotypes of Somalis and others. Clearly, certain prejudices were heavily engrained in the mindset of some of the participants. Others found the selfless acts of the volunteers both moving and commendable, with numerous unprompted references to “Ubuntu”.

(Inset: screenshot from UNHCR video)

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“There are 2 sides of the view about what the Somalians do to South Africans. Firstly, this is more of a trade-off for allowing them to open businesses in South Africa. Further, they buy their stock from elsewhere without actually stimulating local trade of goods and services. They are not using their proceeds in South African but instead, they take it back to their country.

Secondly, they are opening our eyes about what we need to do in investing in our own small business and teach us about the value of local trading in boosting our economy and living. Further, they are sending a message that local and small businesses are critical in alleviating poverty and hunger-and also creating employment opportunities. This video is more on africanicity and spirit of ubuntu as it signifies the essence of existence.”

Male, aged 51-60

“I have mixed feelings about the Somali volunteers. I’m sure the ones in this video are doing good for the community. However there are many Somalis in my province that are up to no good. I think volunteering your time and effort to help others during this extremely difficult time shows ”UBUNTU” and what gives us hope of doing good for humanity.”

Male, aged 31-40

When asked to elaborate further on negative impressions circulating in his community, the respondent said:

“At the moment there are attacks on foreign nationals that own shops in our province. As much as I would like to think these initiatives would change perception sadly it will not over the 3 to 4 years...I still have hope of change in the future though and these initiatives will win at the end.”

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“This video is really inspiring. It shows just how far Africans can go by just helping each other instead of fighting each other. I love what the Somali volunteers and their cooperation are doing with the local community. Their positive contribution to the South African economy is remarkable.

They give me so much faith in humanity. This video further reinforces the African philosophy of Ubuntu (which means humility). It basically means that no man is an island, and that we need each other in order to be prosperous.”

Female, aged 18-30

“Firstly, I felt like this is a staged video – they are doing this just to gain trust. As I continued to watch I realized that they are really doing this from heart, giving back is a way of showing love and support. But not all refugees are helpful and it’s unfortunate that I would never trust foreigners. They are always up to no good and there are so many drugs in our country because of them.”

Male, aged 61-70

“I really like this video it shows that most foreigners have a good heart. It will change people’s minds about migrants.”

Female, aged 31-40

“WOW! So heart-warming. You can just judge from the way he’s doing things that helping these families goes deeper than just helping the needy. He obviously has been in those shoes and is currently helping with the basic needs as per his past experiences. Additionally, he doesn’t only help other Somalians, but he helps anyone that’s in need.”

Female, aged 18-30

“Although Covid affects us all, including the Somali businesses and the volunteers, they still find it in them to offer help to the community. This is very commendable.”

Male, aged 18-30

Why do people come to South Africa? – Overview



Photos courtesy of Sophiatown Community Psychological Services

For this activity we wanted to test the assumptions that respondents had regarding the reasons people come to South Africa. We split them into two groups and provided the stories of two young people, Ayom and Joseph

While both stories provided a sense of perspective to respondents and some indicated that they had changed their minds, there were subtle divergences. People expressed sympathy for Ayom but her story was traumatic to the extent that some perhaps switched off from engaging with it meaningfully.

Joseph's story was more hopeful in tone and, even though it contained adversity, the response to the message was more sympathetic overall. Given that gender-based violence was central to Ayom's story, and not to Joseph's, it may reflect a gender bias in terms of how respondents consume narratives surrounding young people on the move.

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“Before I read about this story I used to feel like there’s no need for refugees to come to south Africa because us as South Africans we have our own problems as well and we used to blame them for taking our jobs and crime all together. I feel really bad since I couldn’t understand why some of the refugees ran away but now I really understand the reasons behind them coming to South Africa.”

Male 41-50 (Speaking about Ayom)

“While I understand many refugees and asylum seekers are here legitimately we also have to understand that South Africa is overburdened. Her story is very very sad but if she gets arrested she will still be deported as she is not here legally.”

Female 31-40 (Speaking about Ayom)

“Reading Joseph’s story has not changed my perception of why migrants/refugees come to South Africa but instead it has validated my belief that they too are looking for ways to improve their lives. Their reason for migrating is for survival not to invade or destruct.

Like many other migrants/refugees that I’ve met and read about, Joseph has displayed a high level of discipline and dedication. This makes me proud, as a black African man, to see such a young man positively affect society and show so much resilience. This story made me feel good.”

Male 18-30 (Speaking about Joseph)

Safety & Belonging – Quotes

“It does change my mind. But not all refugees are like this. Not all of them have the same ambition and drive. There are others that have bad intentions like crime murdering stealing all sorts.”

Male, aged 18-30 (Joseph)

“I feel really sad and hurt to read such stories, but my question is how many girls out there are going through the same thing as her? We cannot give shelter to every girl that has been abused when we have problems of our own in terms of women and child abuse. All I’m saying is we cannot help the whole of Africa.”

Male, aged 61-70 (Ayom)

“It does change my perception because as much as we know that’s a lot that happen in other countries that result in refugees leaving but leaving due to abuse I definitely support. It makes me sad how men think a woman should be dominated so much and controlled.”

Female, aged 41-50 (Ayom)

No, it does not change my perception of their reasons for seeking asylum. My heart goes out to them and I think its a great thing that we have opened our borders to them. Joseph is an inspiration. Having come from hardship and adversity, he has accomplished so much!

Female, aged 51-60 (Joseph)

It does change my perception. It shows how they only come here in hope for a better life. Majority of the refugees are genuinely hard working people and want to achieve the best in life. I think they should be given an equal opportunity.

Male, aged 18-30 (Joseph)

“Yes it does change my perception in that refugees need help desperately. It makes feel very sad that human beings are so cruel to one another. But I also feel hopeful that God will rescue these people”

Female, aged 51-60 (Ayom)

Universal Stories

This final activity took respondents outside the South African 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.

It was notable that some themes re-emerged from earlier activities, such as Ubuntu in a story taken from Greece. In addition, discourse around family appeared to resonate, such as the love and support between sisters in Rihanna's story, or the grandmother figure as represented by Aimilia. At the same time, some show a level of fatigue towards stories of suffering and trauma, and this is worth bearing in mind when preparing communications strategies.

Photo courtesy of Terre des Hommes

Universal Stories – Bashar

I STILL DREAM TO ENTER
UNIVERSITY SOMEDAY.
I WON'T LOSE HOPE.
I BELIEVE GOD WILL HELP ME
AND I BELIEVE THAT
TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER.



BASHAR, 23
SYRIA/JORDAN

#MORETHANMIGRANTS

“

I LEFT EVERYTHING IN MY HOUSE
- MY CHILDHOOD AND MY MEMORIES.
WE STAYED UNTIL SUNSET, AND THEN LEFT.
MY FAMILY'S EYES WERE FULL OF TEARS AND
SADNESS. IT'S VERY DIFFICULT FOR A MAN
TO LEAVE HIS MEMORIES. I THINK I BURIED
MY BEAUTIFUL MEMORY THERE.

BASHAR, 23
SYRIA/JORDAN

”

#MORETHANMIGRANTS

“

A FEW DAYS LATER, I CAME HOME
ALONE TO GET SOME PAPERWORK
I NEEDED FOR MY STUDIES BECAUSE I
FORGOT IT THERE. MY MOTHER DIDN'T KNOW
THAT BECAUSE IF SHE DID, SHE WOULD
HAVE STOPPED ME BECAUSE MY
VILLAGE WAS NEVER SAFE.

BASHAR, 23
SYRIA/JORDAN

”

#MORETHANMIGRANTS

“

OUR LIVES WERE VERY DIFFICULT IN
JORDAN BECAUSE WE WERE WORKING FOR
LIVING. I STOPPED STUDYING FOR TWO
YEARS BECAUSE OF THAT, BUT I DIDN'T GIVE UP.
I BOUGHT BOOKS AND I STUDIED IN MY
HOME WHEN I HAD FREE TIME AND I GOT
A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

BASHAR, 23
SYRIA/JORDAN

”

#MORETHANMIGRANTS

This is Bashar and he is 23 years old. His biggest dream was to study in college, but his dreams were shattered by war. He and his family were forced to leave everything behind.

Despite the challenges they had to face on their migration journey to Jordan - Bashar never gave up - the love for his family and his passion for education kept him going and brought him to where he is today - working hard to achieve his dream to get a university degree.

Bashar's attitude came in for some praise among respondents, who seemed particularly attracted by his fortitude when facing adversity, which could be seen as an example to others.

Negative commentary came from a more fatigued perspective, viewing it as yet another sad story among the many they have already heard. (Imagery courtesy of UN Major Group for Children and Youth)



Universal Stories – Quotes on Bashar

“Congratulation to Bashar for never giving up. His family must be very proud of him. Immigrants should not be viewed just as numbers of sausages in a sausage machine. Each soul is unique and migration is something that has been happening since the dawn of man. The problem today - is that vast numbers who are flocking and feeing across borders where they are met with so much bureaucracy and corruption. Sad state of affairs.”

Female 61-70

“I’m not interested. It’s one of many sad stories and South Africans have a lot to deal with.”

Female 31-40

“I like the picture as it has his story written in different portions as life lessons.”

Female 41-50

“I feel interested in the image. I like the image. It makes me want to know more about them. It catches my attention and keeps me interested.”

Male 18-30

“I like this image, it’s about a never-give-up spirit and could be used to influence other people who were in Bashar’s position to continue to follow their dreams despite having odds against them.”

Male 18-30

“I like it. This is the attitude to follow, never to quit, stop dreaming and push your goals. I’m sure everyone has their own issues and bad backgrounds but having a dream and going for it will apply to everyone no matter their background. I would like to read more success stories. I like to see people grow and make a positive change in their lives.”

Male 31-40

The picture gets the message across. And having a picture of him there, makes it more real and makes the audience sympathize with them.

Female 18-30

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.

Maya's story had a strong impact on those who felt that it demonstrated empowerment. It depicted a more hopeful and dynamic undertone than other stories the respondents have seen (such as Bashar's) and this appears to have made it more relatable for them, in the sense that "humanises" and individualises stories that can sometimes appear abstract.

Maya also managed to upend some of the stereotypes people have of young people on the move. (Imagery courtesy of UN Major Group for Children and Youth)



Universal Stories – Quotes on Maya

“This image changes the narrative for me. It makes me move from seeing immigrants as victims of circumstances to now seeing them as equal human beings who come to SA in pursuit of a better life. It makes me realise just how easily I can be in their shoes one day and makes me empathize a bit more with them.”

Female, aged 18-30

“This image is more motivational than anything else It makes me less interested as it seem as if refugees are the only people with problems and at this point I can't relate.”

Female, aged 41-50

“It is really gutsy of Maya too share her story on a public domain and invite others to share theirs. This may help many people understand refugees better. The best way to learn about someone's story is to hear it from them. Every so often we tend to assume that all immigrants are the same without even hearing them out.”

Male, aged 18-30

“I love the fact that these kids are trying to turn their negative into a positive and share their experiences with kids in a similar situation.”

Female, aged 51-60

“I definitely like it. This is a young woman who used her own negative circumstances to bring about a positive result. Sharing stories like hers is very empowering for others experiencing similar things.”

Female, aged 61-70

“She's so sweet and I'm glad that the stereotypes of being an immigrant does not get in her way of doing what she has to, to be the person she wants to be... It makes me feel good. I actually love to see these types of stories.”

Male, aged 18-30

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 seems to have made an impact on our respondents. Amidst narratives that “other” migrants and refugees as people who take, the generosity amongst the children in Rihanna’s young family really struck a chord. Her sister’s sacrifice combined with Rihanna’s drive and ambition greatly impressed our participants.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Rihanna

“I like this video. It’s sad that the elder sister had to sacrifice her childhood and education to ensure that her siblings at least have food on the table and education.

The video makes me want to know more about the daily lives of refugees and how they managed to get by and getting to learn more of these sacrifices that they make. With more knowledge, we too will be in a better position help them.”

Female 18-30

“It’s a very sad but inspiring story. Don’t let the hardships of life stop you from achieving your goals.”

Female 31-40

“It’s brilliant thinking, standing with each other and knowing that the outcome will be that they will have better life even if it means that one will suffer for the short term.”

Male 31-40

I dislike this video in such a way that Rihanna’s sister is very young but she looks after her sisters because she doesn’t have a choice. She needs to provide for her sisters. Every child should have a right to education. It makes me want to learn more about their life, how they live and how are they surviving.

Male 18-30

“What a sad yet amazing story. A child raising her siblings. There are far too many tales like this all over Africa and the world. They and all refugees deserve all the help they can receive. Wonderful that despite the hardship there is determination to gain an education and succeed to make the world a better place.

This survey has opened a window one does not connect with every day. Hopefully it will serve to bring about positive change. I would be very interested to learn the outcome.”

Female 61-70

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.

Participants in the online community expressed admiration for Stratis and his efforts to rescue refugees. It was interesting to note the use of the term “Ubuntu” by some to describe the values behind Stratis’s actions, indicating the ongoing resonance of that term for a South African audience.

While the reaction was generally positive and the story gave respondents a hopeful feeling, there was one negative comment grounded in a restrictive conception of migration law. The person’s legalistic approach seemed to be something of an impediment to their ability to respond with empathy.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Stratis

“I like this video, this man is a true definition of a real life superhero. He upholds values of Ubuntu and compassion. This definitely makes me want to learn more about them, what happens to the refugees after he rescues them? What is their livelihood like in Greece.”

Male, aged 18-30

“It makes me realise just how I’ve been living in a bubble and haven’t really taken the time to simply be Human where migrants and refugees are concerned.”

Female, aged 18-30

“Nice to see they have good hearts and

try and help others, but this only adds to the problem as it’s not controlled. People died because of no procedures being followed, it helps in the short term but only adds to the long-term problem.

I’m someone who plays my part in life. I help where I can, and I like to see structure in everything; rules should be followed. Seeing this makes me disappointed. If the rules was followed, then none would have died. Having a life in a bad country is still better than being dead and never reaching your destination.”

Male, aged 31-40

“I like the video and what Stratis and the people in his village have done. I like that he says that “we are all human”, which is what it comes down to, humanity.”

Female, aged 18-30

“It makes me feel Inspired. It is so true, often we don’t see the human behind the situation. Wonderful job they are doing...just being Human :)”

Female, aged 51-60

“I like the video and the fishermen have Ubuntu.”

Female, aged 31-40

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.”

This video appealed to respondents at an emotional level. The idea of expressing love as a form of communication in lieu of a common language was especially resonant. The fact that Aimilia is a grandmother was noted, and her kind nature possibly helped open people up to the story.

In once case, a respondent who said that she herself was a grandmother seemed to identify very strongly with Aimilia. As such, it may be an effective story to meaningfully engage with certain sectors of the population.

Universal Stories – Quotes on Grandma Aimilia

“Such a touching video. Despite language, age and other barriers, that little town did everything they could. Humanity at its finest. As the old lady says, they gave love which is a universal language.

We need more villages like this everywhere with kind-hearted people who care. Once again, this video has awakened an interest to become more involved and I would like to know more about them. I’m a born empath, so feel deeply about these matters. My fault lies in taking on more than I can sometimes cope with.”

Female 41-50

“This is such an encouraging and emotional story to watch. I want to learn more. I am also a grandmother so this story speaks to me. When you have nothing else to give, love is all it takes to make a difference. Love is free to give and we should all be encouraged by following in her footsteps.”

Female 61-70

“This video has a very positive message because even when they have nothing to give, they gave people love, courage and hope.”

Male 18-30

“I’m still against them going over without any sort of control in place, but nice to see that there is someone on the other side willing just to comfort them.”

Male 31-40

“Love it. It’s always nice to hear of past experiences from the elderly. She drew the picture as clear as possible to show us how the refugees used to arrive at her village.”

Male 18-30

“Their kindness is heart-warming.”

Female, aged 31-40

Conclusions

Our respondents in South Africa had an array of concerns in life depending on their own circumstances and experiences. Fundamentally, there was a sense that **childhood is universal** and that this is a basis upon which we can advocate for children on the move.

Universality best succeeds when underlined by equity and fairness. Some simultaneously feel for children on the move, but see potential competition with needy South African children. In a situation where there is a perceived pressure to compete for scarce resources, demonstrating **fairness between host communities and newcomers** was important.

The levels of awareness of the challenges faced by children on the move varied. Some were well aware but viewed it as part of a broader landscape where everyone has their troubles.

Therefore, the manner in which we communicate about this is hugely important. At times, **audiences tend to switch off from content that is overly harrowing** and respond more positively to hopeful narratives.

Stories around team sports as a form of integration were very well received as an allegory of how to help newcomers find their place in host communities.

The South African concept of “**Ubuntu**” also resonated strongly with this

audience. Watching a video about an education project for refugee children in their own city, Johannesburg, also led some participants to express pride in their local community.

Overall, **strong messengers** who evoked empathy, pride, hope or sparked further interest had the greatest success as protagonists. In South Africa also, there was a great deal of resonance for stories of **family love**, as depicted by Ethiopian sisters in a Kenyan refugee camp, or strangers displaying familial tenderness towards people on the move, such as the Greek grandmother welcoming displaced people to her island.

Thank you!

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

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