

STEP 1:

CREATE A VISION OF THE WORLD YOU WANT TO SEE

Bring to life a vision of society, which is respectful of the rights and dignity of everyone who lives in it regardless of how and why they came to be there.



Making the Narrative Shift from Fear to Hope

Narratives shape the way people see the world and how they act and respond to migrants and migration. This can have a positive or negative impact on the rights of migrants and broader society. To successfully shift narratives from fear and division to human rights-based narratives on migrants and migration, one key step is to recognise the values, policies and behaviours we want to promote to achieve societal transformation. By taking a step back and creating a hopeful vision of what we want the world to be, look and feel like, we can build new narratives and messages that shift us towards achieving this vision and which are more likely to inspire others towards positive action.

In human rights work, we are trained to report on all the human rights violations and abuses we monitor. When we communicate publicly, we are thus inclined to explain what we are against and need to prevent.

Understanding and pointing out problems is central to our work, but we also need to make the case for the change we want to see. One that envisions a better future for everyone, encourages us to work together to overcome the challenges and does not risk reinforcing harmful narratives against migrants.

We also have a role in helping people realise and believe that a different world is possible. What solutions are available? How can we get there together? What are the ways in which everyone can take part and contribute?

If we think bigger, we can open the space for broader participation of all people and parts of society. By shifting from the negative (what we do not want) to the positive (the world we want to create) we can also map out more clearly the stories that can illustrate this vision, the activities and spaces that can bring people together, how we can find common ground in defiance of our differences, and join with the many individuals and organizations that share our broader vision and values.



Watch: UN Human Rights created its own vision of the world based on hope, kindness and solidarity.

Defining the Positive

Imagine you are directing a person to create a painting. You tell them all the things they should not include in the painting: I do not want detention centers. I do not want inhumane border security controls. I do not want exclusion and discrimination based on gender, race, migration status or ethnicity.

Now, imagine you shift to telling the artist what you want in the painting: I want to see a world where children are able to go to school no matter where they are from and families are able to stay together. I want people to be safe and have the right to move freely and safely in the world. I want to see a world in which everyone is treated fairly and as equals, and where the spirit of welcoming and kindness is the defining feature of our societies.

Now that is a much more inspiring painting that shows your audience a vision of the world you want to create.

Individuals are motivated by the opportunity to become part of a solution. Research demonstrates people are more likely to act if shown positive images and given the opportunity for rewards over negativity or threats. Your vision will serve as your reference point from which all messaging will stem. By clearly articulating this you can best inspire others to follow you toward action.

💡 See what human rights experts say about why it is important to have a hopeful vision of the world [here](#).





Stories of hope amidst COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic brought into stark relief how many systems were unable to offer equal protection to everyone, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups, including migrants. There was also a real risk that fear and isolation would take hold. However, despite the numerous challenges, there was a surge of community engagement and solidarity.

Examples range from countless crowdfunding initiatives to ensure undocumented migrants could get medical treatment and social protection to cover basic needs, to governments making sure migrants would not become undocumented due to the impact of COVID-19.

The pandemic offered an opportunity to shift away from narratives of division and towards a positively defined story of “us.” Many realized that we can only achieve positive health outcomes if no one is left behind and we look out for each other.

 #ChooseHopeStory illustrates this vision of compassion and unity. It was created by 250 filmmakers from more than 50 countries during the first few months of the pandemic. You can view it [here](#).

 In another example, The Leap created “[A Message from the Future](#)” painting a vivid picture for a hopeful yet possible future, if actions are taken today. In the video, we see how people came together to overcome systemic challenges and, step by step, they brought about positive change.



Activity:

UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE SHIFTS

Let's start mapping a vision of the world you want to see, by following the Five Shifts¹ below. This can be for your local community, your country or the world. Each shift represents a move away from negative framing towards a more positive human-rights based narrative on migration. While this vision includes migration it should also speak more broadly to the larger society you want to create.

¹ See <https://www.hope-based.com>



Fear to Hope

Fear drives many anti-migrant narratives and can result in xenophobic hate speech, negative media reporting, political debates and harmful policies. An example of this is the commonly used fear: "migrants will take our jobs" or "migrants will burden our social services." This narrative exploits a fear of scarcity of opportunity and resources, a fear of lack of control and misuses migrants as scapegoats.

Inclusive narratives and social change are propelled by hope. Hope is a powerful force for progress and can motivate people through positive emotions like excitement, joy, enthusiasm and empathy. For this reason, hope is also more effective than fear, dread or sadness in inspiring people to take positive action.



Fear

Populism driving hate speech; discrimination and racism, which lead to inhumane migration policies and marginalization; migrants' rights defenders are targeted and criminalised for helping migrants.

Hope

People around the world stand up for equality and human rights and mobilize others to follow their lead.

In your vision of the world you want to see, what is a key narrative of fear around migration you want to move away from? What is the social transformation you can mobilise for?



Fear

Hope

Against to For

We can easily identify what we are against. We are against discriminatory policies that exclude individuals on the move; we are against dehumanising and “othering” of people; we are against dividing our communities. The danger is that our narratives can at times be constructed purely based on what we are against.

So what are we for?

We need to be as good at celebrating the things we want to see in the world as we are criticizing the human rights violations we want to stop. Indeed, many human rights are already framed positively and can be useful for informing your vision of what you stand for. For example, if we are against immigration detention we are for the rights to liberty, health, housing and life. We want everyone to be safe and their dignity upheld.

Instead of rebutting the picture painted by harmful narratives, myths and stereotypes, create a new vision of the world you want to see and promote those ideas and goals that support it.



Against

For

Racism, exclusion, “us” vs. “them” narratives and policies that prey upon the most vulnerable, such as immigration detention of children.

Expanding the “us”; more humanity and kindness in my community; welcoming people who move; caring for everyone; making sure our children grow up in safe communities.

What are you against on the issue of migration? Now redefine that in the positive: what are you for? Remember, you are not allowed to say what it does not include.



Against

For

Problem to Solution

We often focus on documenting what is wrong when communicating about migration and human rights. While it is important to understand and recognize the problems we face, repeating messages about the problem can cause your audience to become overwhelmed, feel helpless and alienated. Repeating the problem can also tend to reinforce it. Thus, you might lose an opportunity for a valuable connection with your audience.

People need to believe there is a way to solve our present problems. Showing how your proposed solution has been successful or how social transformation can happen demands effort and creativity but brings us closer to making your vision a reality. We need to show audiences, including decision-makers, how solutions will work, make them desirable and make them inevitable.

To understand more about how the resources in this toolkit relate to public versus policy narratives see [here](#).



Problem	Solution
Governments exclude people who move, denying their human rights and scapegoat them for societies' problems.	Societies welcome people on the move and build opportunities to achieve positive social transformation together, making societies better.

Now ask yourself: what is the main problem you want to tackle related to human rights and migration? What is the solution you are presenting?



Problem	Solution

Threat to Opportunity

Negative communication that induces sentiments of fear, threat or helplessness can result in making people feel threatened. This limits their capacity for reason, empathy and balanced discussion, further entrenching opposition. Particularly when speaking about migration and migrants, we therefore need to avoid furthering such negative communication.

Instead of making people feel at risk, guilty or out of control, give them a sense of agency and opportunity to be part of something special; something that creates communities of 'we' and builds unity. People want to know how we can do better as societies and how they can be a part of this change. Language of empowerment and opportunity keeps us better positioned to absorb information, open to ideas and motivated to take action.



Threat

From a world where we are overwhelmed by division, crisis and build walls...

Opportunity

... to a world where we are becoming more connected than ever and join together to open doors and support each other.

In your context, what are the threats communities and migrants are facing? How can you instead engage people's sense of personal agency and empower them to take action? What opportunities for transformation are there?



Threat

Opportunity

Victims to Right-Holders

Portraying migrants as passive victims can cause your audience to think of migrants as inherently vulnerable and without agency. This can further exacerbate divisive 'us' versus 'them' and 'othering' narratives, including narratives that present migrants as a burden on public resources. It can also result in a paternalistic attitude towards migrants, diminishing their individuality and making them dependent on the charity and goodwill of people.

Instead, if we show the people in our stories as individuals with their own families, friends, loves, loss and success, joys and sorrows we relate to them as fellow human beings. These human experiences are as much a part of a migrant's story as they are of everyone's story. This can also serve to normalize conversation around migration and help people stand in solidarity with migrants and demand their rights, rather than evoke pity and helplessness.

💡 By strengthening narratives that show our common humanity, we are more likely to relate to migrants as equals. In acknowledging migrants as rights-holders, we reaffirm everyone's dignity and equality as recognized by the principles and values of the [United](#)

[Nations Declaration of Human Rights](#) that bind us together.

💡 Listen to an example from the National Public Radio podcast *Rough Translation*. The episode entitled [El Hilo: Walking to Venezuela](#) follows 53-year-old Orlando Pimentel on his journey to return to Venezuela from Ecuador along with fellow Venezuelans after the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The story emphasizes the individuals' humanity and avoids portraying them as victims, instead focusing on them as rights-holders.





Victims

From a world where we view migrants as lacking agency or individuals at the mercy of people's charity....

Right-Holders

...to understanding we have more in common than what divides us and everyone can contribute to making a difference.

In the stories you see on migration, who has often been portrayed as a victim and how is this victimhood framed? How can you shift this in your work to creating stories where their unique experiences celebrate everyone's common humanity?



Victims

Right-Holders



Activity: Identifying your Vision

Using what you've outlined in the Five Shifts, paint a new picture of the world you want to see.

Who and what is in your vision for the future? How are people different, how do we interact and live in this new world? How do people feel when they visit your new world? How did you get here and who joined you to make your vision a reality?

Remember: this vision cannot include what you are against. It must be a positive vision.

A Vision of the World You Want to See

This vision will serve as a constant reference point for the narrative change you want to achieve and the messages you create moving forward. The action points for how you get to this vision will be helpful for offering your audience realistic solutions and opportunities for them to join you.

Summary

- While pointing to rights violations is important in our work, we have a role in helping people believe that a different world is possible and how they can be part of making this change happen.
- By shifting from the negative (what we do not want) to the positive (the world we want to create) we are better positioned to motivate and inspire others to take action.
- Focusing on stories of hope and unity is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic when many, especially migrants may be experiencing acute discrimination.
- The Five Shifts provide a helpful framework for making the transition from a negatively defined vision to a positively defined one.
- This positive vision will help you map all subsequent communications and outreach activities.



Take Action

- Share your vision of the world you want to see with us on social media by using the hashtag #StandUp4Migrants.
 - The next time you post on social media or talk to someone about migration-related issues, think about how you can emphasize the positive change you want to see.
- In the next section, [Promote Values-Based Narratives](#), learn how values are key to connecting with your audience on migration.