

STEP 4:

THINK LOCAL

Find innovative ways to showcase specific local and personal encounters that promote solidarity with migrants, show their boundedness in communities, and underline the power of shared values in connecting people.



Building Stories of Us

Building “stories of us” and bringing our narrative to life are key to making social change a reality. The stories we share should therefore build upon our common experiences and local connections and include the perspectives and experiences of both migrants and members of local communities. These “stories of us” help us focus the narrative towards a more human rights-based approach to migration and migrants.

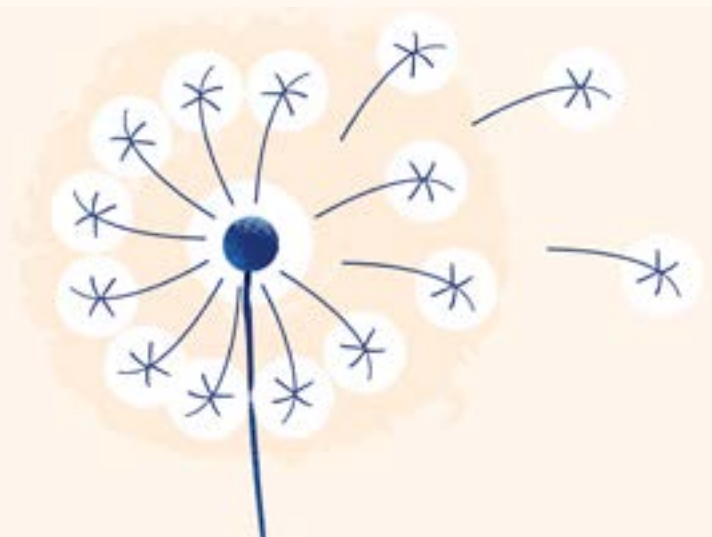
The local level provides some of the most powerful potential to bring our vision of the world to life. It is where life happens, where neighbors help each other out, where parents meet other parents at the playground while watching their children and where young people form friendships when playing sports together. Through these personal connections, we may be able to shift attitudes towards migration at the individual or even community level. While it may not be possible to create a perfectly cohesive community, we can create opportunities for people to come together.

In addition, if we are able to amplify one story of migrants and the local community coming together in our own area then we are providing inspiration for others to join and replicate this in their own actions across other communities.

Think Local: Starting with the Audience

Thinking local starts with understanding our local audience: Whom are we addressing? In [Step 2: Promote Values Based Narratives](#) we outlined basic information about our audience. This included a geographic area, age range, and shared values.

Next, let us understand how to adapt our messaging specifically to our audience’s local context and cultural touch points.



Adapting to Local Languages

Local audiences often speak more than one language. Consider which language is most effective to connect with your audience on an emotional level. Audiences are more receptive to messaging that is delivered in the language that is most friendly and accessible to them.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the [UN Human Rights Regional Office for Europe](#) produced videos in different countries showcasing unique stories of local communities coming together to support one another during the pandemic. The first video features local volunteers, including Chechen twin boys and their mother, who visit elderly women at a nursing home to bring them comfort and joy. While the volunteers had to stay outside of the nursing home to respect physical distancing rules, they were able to sing, dance and perform for residents from outside. Coming together provided a new sense of family and community boundedness. The video was produced in Polish to adapt to local language requirements. Watch the [video](#).



What languages does your audience speak? What language might be the most effective for connecting with them on an emotional level?

Avoid Jargon

Make sure to use terms that your audience understands and avoid jargon, such as acronyms, legal terms or –isms. Often we imagine jargon words have an established meaning. However, your understanding of a term might have a different connotation than someone else’s understanding – or there might be a problematic interpretation of the term.

We are most receptive to hearing new messages when the content is presented in words we use every day or in the language we use at home. Consider how you would explain concepts to people in your environment, for example a friend, your grandparents, children and other loved ones.

Activity: De-Jargon Your Speech

List some of the terms you use most frequently in your work on migration and migrants. Are there terms your audience might not be familiar with?

Careful: You might not even realize some of this language can be alienating. Many of these words can be hidden in –isms and acronyms.

Jargon	Public-facing Term

Build on Local Connections

Build narratives based on what we have in common. While this is grounded in our shared values it extends to the everyday joys, hobbies, past times and experiences we share. Food, sports, music, festivals and art are all common experiences we can draw upon to create shared experiences.

An important part of moving away from negatively framed migration narratives is to not focus on someone's identity solely as a migrant. Rather, we should focus on what brings people together, and the value of our shared experiences. By blurring the lines dividing people we can create a more inclusive group of "us."

💡 [Our Better World](#), the digital storytelling platform of the Singapore International Foundation created a [video](#) profiling a Singaporean community initiative called Backalley Barbers. Backalley Barbers began as a group of volunteers providing free haircuts to migrant workers. The real value of Backalley Barbers was creating a space for migrants and local community members to meet, connect and become friends. These positive interactions next led to regular volleyball games with migrant workers.



Activity: Build on Local Connections



Consider opportunities for creating connections, friendships and boundedness in local communities. For each category below, what are the local cultural activities that provide an opportunity to build a story of shared experiences?

Sports:	
Music:	
Art:	
Festivals:	
Other Cultural Features & Traditions:	

Shared Community Spaces

Another opportunity to consider is physical and digital spaces where people can come together and share a common experience.

Many cities, faith-based organizations and community centers have found opportunities to create shared spaces that bring together diverse groups within local communities. These spaces allow people to experience connections, community and friendship. They can help facilitate a shift towards a more balanced understanding of migration and migrants.

Faith-based organizations, sports associations or local festivities can create a neutral ground for building connections between people through community dinners and services. Local libraries and public spaces can be an environment to host community gatherings where people can build connections on the individual level. Cities and municipalities have the opportunity to focus on building community connections through projects that bring together migrants and members of the local community.

💡 The city of Utrecht set up a shared living space for both migrants and local young people called [Plan Einstein](#). Plan Einstein also offered courses the local community wanted, including English, entrepreneurship and computer classes. By creating a physical space that responded to a local community need and benefitted both migrants and the local community, Plan Einstein helped shift the public attitude towards migrants and migration and create greater inclusion. Watch the city of Utrecht's Plan Einstein [video](#).

💡 The government of Canada runs [#ImmigrationMatters](#), a storytelling initiative, which features [stories](#) of migrants enriching communities as a way to promote positive engagement between newcomers and Canadians.



Activity: Identify Shared Community Spaces



Consider physical spaces in your community. Are there physical spaces that could serve as a welcoming point for everyone? Consider schools, faith-based organizations, community centers, public parks, libraries and other spaces. How could they be used to respond to a common interest or need of migrants and the local community?

Consider the above ideas when planning your outreach strategies.

Summary

- The local level provides powerful potential to bring our vision of the world to life and build connections between migrants and members of local communities.
- When reaching out to local audiences, be sure to adapt your messaging to local considerations.
- Look for opportunities for people to create connections, friendships and boundedness in local communities by building on local culture and activities, such as festivals, music, art, sports and cuisine.
- Shared community spaces, such as schools, local theaters, libraries, or public parks, also provide a venue for people to come together to experience a larger group of us.
- Think of ways to showcase these stories and inspire others to join you in creating more welcoming and inclusive communities.



Take action

- Find places and opportunities for members of the community and migrants to come together where you live. How can you contribute to increasing local connections?
- Share your local “stories of us” using the ideas you’ve developed in this section’s activities.

→ Let us continue to build on these ideas as we move forward to the next step: [Find Common Ground](#).