

#1

Unlocking potential: a story to be shared

Our migrant destitution narrative boils down to this: a story we need to keep sharing about communities where everyone participates, and no one's potential is wasted.

Name it – the town, city, region or country your audiences care about

Let's shake their confidence in how far they're really meeting their community commitments

We're not 'othering' people using labels like 'migrants' or 'refugees' – just talking about people who have come here to build a life

Naming the issue

Using 'we' shows we're on the same side of our audiences – we share their goals and challenges, and can help

Working together to unlock potential

Our community is supposed to be a place where everyone is welcome and no one is left on the margins.

But we can't say we welcome everyone when people who have come here to build a life **can't access the basics: food to eat or a place to stay.**

We can only **build a thriving, inclusive community** if we do something about **migrant destitution.**

We can extend a hand to people facing destitution, including those barred by their immigration status from the support available to everyone else.

We can offer them a way back into community life, and unlock the full potential in our communities.

Most community leaders share this vision. Inclusion is a big theme from our audience research.

Spelling out the reality of destitution

Here's some reassurance: an inclusive community is possible. But it needs our audiences to act.

We need them to recognise their hands aren't tied by immigration policy. There is something they can do. This is a good place to add your specific call to action.

This calls back to the opening idea of inclusive communities where everyone participates



This guide is part of the Unlocking Potential resources toolkit from IMIX to help communicators changing attitudes on migrant destitution.

For the full report and toolkit, go to imix.org.uk/unlockingpotential

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Dos and don'ts

Planning to communicate with your stakeholders on migrant destitution? Start here.

Do...

Use the migrant destitution messaging framework:

it's been developed through research with target audiences, and with the support of people with lived experience.

Localise: focus on the community, town, city, region or country that your target audiences care most about.

Say that migrant destitution is preventing the development of inclusive communities where everyone benefits.

Describe: highlight the physical and emotional features of destitution, and the consequences for individuals and communities. Use stories and images to help bring this to life, and provide platforms for people to share their own experiences.

Humanise: counter xenophobic or racist narratives by showing that people facing destitution linked to their immigration status have the same value as anyone else. Show their concerns and troubles are those anyone in their situation would have.

Include a call to action: be as specific as you can be about what your audiences can do, and how you can help them.

Don't...

Talk only about rights:

our research showed that rights-based narratives are less effective compared with narratives that focus on humanising people in destitution, or that highlight the benefits from inclusive communities where everyone can participate.

Focus on legalities: the specific legal mechanisms behind people being forced into destitution can feel overly complicated and technical. There's a risk that audiences simply put the problem into the 'too difficult' box, or assume their hands are tied. Focus on the impacts and solutions, rather than the legal mechanisms.

Evoke sympathy: people with lived experience who contributed to this narrative strongly reject narratives that remove their agency or portray

them as passive victims, defined only by their poverty. Aim for deeper empathy, and empower people to share their own stories.

Use 'othering' language: for example, when you're talking about individuals disadvantaged by the migration system, call them 'people' not 'migrants'.



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#3

Supporting people to share their lived experience

People with experience of destitution contributed to the development of our narrative about migrant destitution.

They bring compelling stories and unique perspectives that spark a new understanding of the issue based on empathy. These stories and perspectives can't be easily discounted or ignored by those we want to persuade.

If you're providing a platform for people to share their own stories, here are five things to bear in mind.

01

When you're asking people to talk about their experiences publicly, check very carefully with them that they fully understand who will get to see it and if they are happy to be named/pictured, or if they would rather stay anonymous.

02

People can often feel like they 'should' share their story as a favour to you to thank them for the support you may have given them, but then they may not be ready to talk about things that bring up trauma for them. Be super clear that **they don't have to talk about things that make them feel upset or uncomfortable.**

03

Set clear boundaries and ask what they DON'T want to discuss, and what they DO feel happy talking about.

When IMIX talks to people about sharing their stories with the media, we always run through a safeguarding checklist which you can find on our website here: imix.org.uk/imixs-safeguarding-checklist-for-media-interviews

04

In order to get the best out of people when you interview them, you need to make them feel **comfortable and create trust.**

- Choose a quiet space where you won't be interrupted
- Will the interviewee need an interpreter or perhaps a case worker who they trust and feel comfortable with?
- Will you make notes or record the interview on your phone so you can write it up afterwards? If you are recording it just for note taking be very clear about your intentions.
- Share the questions you will be asking them in advance to give them time to prepare.
- Let them know they can stop at any time and they have the right to change their mind.

05

Remember it's still possible to tell a powerful story, even if the subject doesn't want to be named or featured. **A strong story should speak for itself.**

- Think about creative angles – take a picture of the person from behind, pull focus on the camera so their face is blurred and the background is in focus, or just take a picture of their hands or their shoes.
- Get photos of the relevant project that still illustrates the story.
- Use stock photos from places like Unsplash which express the theme of the story.
- Be clear in the piece that you are using an alternative name as that person did not wish to be identified.



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#4

Planning your own communications

Keeping things simple can help achieve maximum impact. Use the following principles when planning communications, to keep you on the right track.

Audience/s

Understanding your audience/s is crucial. You can't show how taking action helps them meet their goals if you don't know what their goals are. Have they committed to welcoming refugees, ending homelessness, addressing labour shortages, or creating an inclusive community? How much do they know about their powers to act? What else is on their agenda?

Channel(s)

An event, a press release to local media, social media content, photo exhibition, or a briefing meeting? Choosing your channel depends on your audience and objective, and also what opportunities are available for you to get in front of stakeholders. Budget is a consideration too.

Messaging

Look at the migrant destitution messaging framework, and work out which key takeouts from the narrative you most want your audiences to remember. Understanding this will help you highlight them across your content. As a general rule, we need to see a message many times before it sinks in. So stick with the same messaging each time you communicate on this topic.

Content

This is the 'stuff' of your communication – the bit that people will see or read. Think about what story you want to tell, and focus on the putting the voices of lived experience at the front and centre of your communications. You want people to connect with these stories at a human level, so they're open to what you want them to do.

Call to action

If you want your communication to evoke change, you must be explicit about what you want your audience to do next. Then, make sure your content includes this.



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Resources checklist

Looking for more information and advice on how to communicate about migrant destitution, or just want to see what other sector organisations are doing? Start here:



Media tips

- Safeguarding checklist for media interviews: imix.org.uk/imixs-safeguarding-checklist-for-media-interviews
- A guide to taking anonymous photos with creative impact: imix.org.uk/tips-taking-anonymous-photos
- How to create strong news stories: imix.org.uk/creating-strong-news-stories
- Working effectively with journalists: imix.org.uk/how-you-can-work-effectively-with-journalists



Sector organisations

- IMIX imix.org.uk
- NACCOM - the No Accommodation Network nacom.org.uk
- Praxis, for migrants and refugees praxis.org.uk



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