

This quarterly learning brief (QLB) summarises some of Start Network's key learning from the last quarter (Q4) of 2021. It completes the learning shared across the year and provided in Q1, Q2 and Q3 ([read Q1LB here](#)) ([read Q2LB here](#)) ([read Q3LB here](#)).

WAYS OF WORKING: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR E&L?

Success from a community perspective



In Q2 the E&L team set a challenge to understand programme success from a community perspective ([read the blog here](#)). We have now listened to communities from Pakistan ([read the report here](#)) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([read the report here](#)), on what and how we should be evaluating humanitarian responses ([see the infographic here](#)). We explored further ideas on how to decolonise programme evaluations at the 2021 General Assembly ([read the brief here](#)) ([watch the recording here](#)).

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Promoting collaboration, flexibility and unlearning to help us become a more agile and careful organisation

In 2021, Start Network innovation team tested initiatives aimed at supporting staff, members and hubs to change the way they work, and to better respond to the complex humanitarian challenges our sector is facing.

- (1) The **Working Differently Challenge (WDC)** taught us that prototyping, experimenting to validate ideas, and being effective at adapting are key to see teams take advantage of unplanned outcomes, quickly repurpose ideas and grow ([read the learning brief here](#)).
- (2) The **Crisis Response Resilience Lab (CRRL)** taught us that leaving linear, traditional planning and learning projects in favour of experimentation, collaboration and action-learning is painful but essential in response to the dynamic, complex nature of crises ([read the blog here](#)) ([watch the CRRL Assembly session here](#)).

PROGRAMMES: WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMMES?

Gender and other vulnerabilities in DRF and early action

A study commissioned by Start Network in the Philippines and Bangladesh found that all elements of Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) including risk modelling, contingency planning and financing are influenced by gender and intersecting vulnerabilities ([read the report here](#)). Missing Voices approaches can gather the voices of groups who are often excluded, and working with local partners, who are trusted members of the community, enable these voices to be heard and feed into early action programming.

Recovering costs more equitably

Start Fund Bangladesh has been looking at ways of recovering costs more equitably with local partners. During discussion at the 2021 Start Network General Assembly five calls for action were raised ([read the brief here](#)) ([watch the recording here](#)). The most pertinent for those implementing programmes is to treat all implementing partners the same. **If you share your Indirect Cost Recovery with an INGO implementing partner you should also share with local and national NGOs.**

Budgets need to be flexible



Christian Aid responded to the Haiti earthquake ([see Alert 542 here](#)) using community-led micro-grants. In the Start Fund learning exchange they shared that community solidarity resulted in more households being selected than originally planned -

“The number of households that wanted to share the assistance came to us as a surprise: this number was an estimate as it's impossible to know in advance how many households will apply for a grant – it was necessary to keep some flexibility”.

HUMANITARIAN ACTION: WHAT ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS TELLING US?

What can Start Network and members do to achieve more equitable local partnerships? In 2020, local organisations reflected on their partnerships with Start Network ([read the report here](#)). The findings emphasise the value of working with local organisations and the importance of trust, flexibility and transparency. A session during Start Network's 2021 General Assembly provided an opportunity to hear the experiences of three local partners ([read the brief here](#)) ([watch the recording here](#)).

How can Start Fund Bangladesh do more to ensure: effective responses, shared learning and power shifts? Two of the local members of Start Fund Bangladesh shared some very honest feedback on what could be done to facilitate the system change that the Start Network hopes to achieve. Three lessons were (1) be more inclusive to be more effective; (2) upskill to empower; and (3) champion for change ([read the report here](#)).

WHAT WE WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT?

Why is organisational learning difficult?

The E&L and Innovation teams came together to begin unpacking how we can better embed learning into our work to ensure that our practice and projects continually change and develop as a result of learning and feedback. Our first brainstorm on the barriers to learning will be built on in 2022 ([read the paper here](#)).

Hub Learning

The five founding Hubs are now preparing for transition into the network as independent entities. In 2022, we want to intentionally explore the change and impact that has occurred and how hubs can drive systemic change in each of their local contexts.