START NETWORK

Save the Children

START FUND HANDBOOK

VERSION: DECEMBER 2023

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01 | FOREWORD

Since 2014, the Start Fund has been providing rapid, effective humanitarian financing to Start Network members at the forefront of small and medium-scale crises that may otherwise fall under the radar or not receive life-saving funding as quickly.

The fund is central to the work of Start Network in collectively driving system-level shifts in the way that humanitarian action is approached and delivered. As an innovative financing instrument, the Start Fund provides an opportunity for network members and partners to experiment with doing things differently while providing life-saving assistance to populations at risk of and/or affected by humanitarian crises.

The approach of the Start Fund is NGO-led, facilitating collective decision-making guided by principles of collective stewardship, accountability, transparency, impartiality, continuous improvement, and subsidiarity. The Start Fund model has proven to be replicable, and influential within the wider humanitarian system.

The Start Fund enables organisations to deliver impactful humanitarian response or anticipatory action, while maintaining transparency and accountability across the network. It is for this reason that the first stage of the Start Fund alert cycle—while relatively 'light-touch' and rapid — requires both allocation and project selection decisions to be made collectively by Start Network members. Not only does this best enable NGOs to utilise funds appropriately to meet humanitarian need but it also ensures that decisions are taken as locally as possible.

The Start Fund is collectively managed and operated by the Start Network membership, and the continued engagement and participation of member representatives is crucial to the fund's success. The mechanism requires humanitarians to take accountable decisions, and to commit time and energy to the goals of decentralising power and challenging processes. Buy-in and belief is key and Start Network members themselves play a role in upholding the quality, speed and efficiency of each decision. By taking swift decisions using a network with expertise and centring the knowledge and insight of humanitarians at the forefront of crises, the Start Fund is uniquely positioned to enable early and rapid action in overlooked and underfunded crisis settings.

> The Start Fund plays an important role as an innovative financing mechanism within the humanitarian sector, and this is largely thanks to the shared commitment and dedication of the Start Network membership and the fund's donors.

02 | HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook relates to the global Start Fund and should be read by Start Network member personnel whom are engaging with or receiving funding through the global Start Fund. This handbook also relates to grant funding disbursed through the Start Fund including the Learning Grant, the Anticipation Tool Grant, and the Analysis for Action Grant.

The Start Fund Handbook does not cover the requirements of members engaging with or receiving funding through other Start Network funds, and member personnel should refer to the relevant handbook related to other sources of funding.

This handbook sets out the most up-to-date operational processes and governance mechanisms used by the Start Fund and includes mandatory requirements by which all members are bound as signatories to a Start Network Membership Agreement. Start Network member personnel should familiarise themselves in detail with the terms of the Start Network Membership Agreement, the Start Fund Handbook and any Start Fund award letter or grant agreement before it is signed.

In this publication, "Start Network" refers to the legal entity that became independent of Save the Children UK on 1st May 2019, and with which all Start Network members have signed the Start Network Membership Agreement.

Save the Children UK (SCUK) acts as the Grant Custodian of the Start Fund on behalf of Start Network. The "Start Fund team" refers to those individuals that work on the Start Fund and are employed by SCUK.

The handbook outlines all stages of the Start Fund alert cycle, and mandatory requirements for each stage, where relevant. A summary list of all mandatory requirements can also be found at the end of this handbook. This list does not replace the more detailed legal requirements found in the Start Network Membership Agreement and any Start Fund award letter or grant agreement.

The Start Fund is designed to be flexible and to evolve over time. The processes laid out in this handbook will therefore require occasional revision, but they set out the expected processes and standards of the Start Fund as of the date of this handbook.

FOR UP-TO-DATE NEWS AND RESOURCES ON THE START FUND, PLEASE VISIT: WWW.STARTNETWORK.ORG

The contents of this handbook have been approved by the Start Fund Committee, Start Network Board of Trustees, and SCUK as the Grant Custodian.

03 | WHY THE START FUND?

The Start Fund was created as a deliberate move away from the reactive and often slow way in which humanitarian crises are commonly responded to.

Traditionally, media attention or political interest play a pivotal role in unlocking humanitarian funding, with attention often focusing on a relatively small number of crises that are large in scale and severity. This results in many small to medium-scale humanitarian crises being overlooked, opportunities for early action being missed, and populations at risk of and/or affected by humanitarian crises not being provided with life-saving assistance in times of need. The reactive, slow and centralised decision-making processes associated with many funding mechanisms further impede the critical work of humanitarian actors at the forefront of crises.

Growing humanitarian need, exacerbated by climate change and increasingly protracted conflicts, highlights the importance of innovative and impactful financing solutions.

THE START FUND PROVIDES FUNDING FOR START NETWORK MEMBERS TO RESPOND EARLY AND RAPIDLY TO:

UNDERFUNDED SMALL TO MEDIUM SCALE CRISES

ANTICIPATION OF IMPENDING CRISES

SPIKES IN CHRONIC HUMANITARIAN CRISES

START FUND FUNDING IS DISBURSED WITHIN

72 HOURS

FROM THE POINT OF A CRISIS ALERT BEING RAISED BY START NETWORK MEMBERS TO THE POINT OF START FUND FUNDING BEING AWARDED

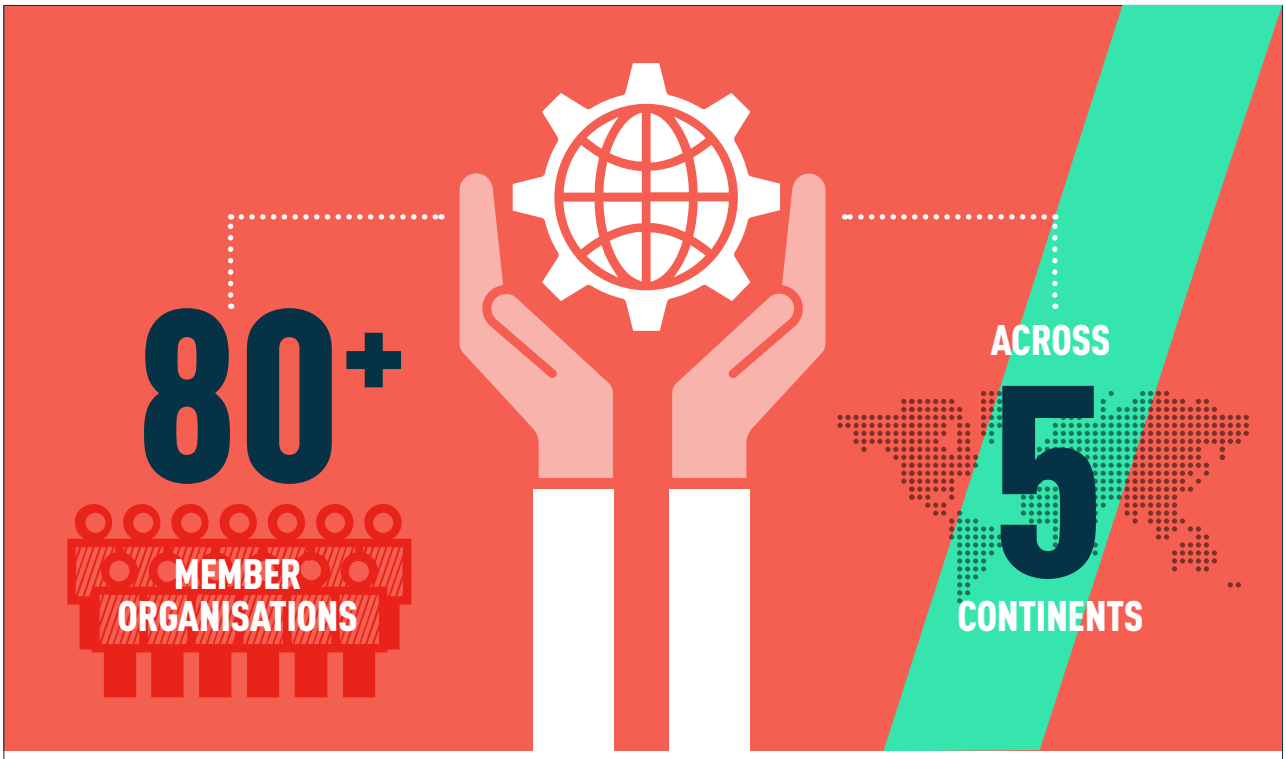
Enabling early, rapid humanitarian action to occur, often before other funding mechanisms become available

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TYPICALLY TAKES PLACE OVER

45 DAYS

THE START NETWORK

The Start Network is changing the humanitarian system – shifting control to front-line responders, and improving finance and decision making.

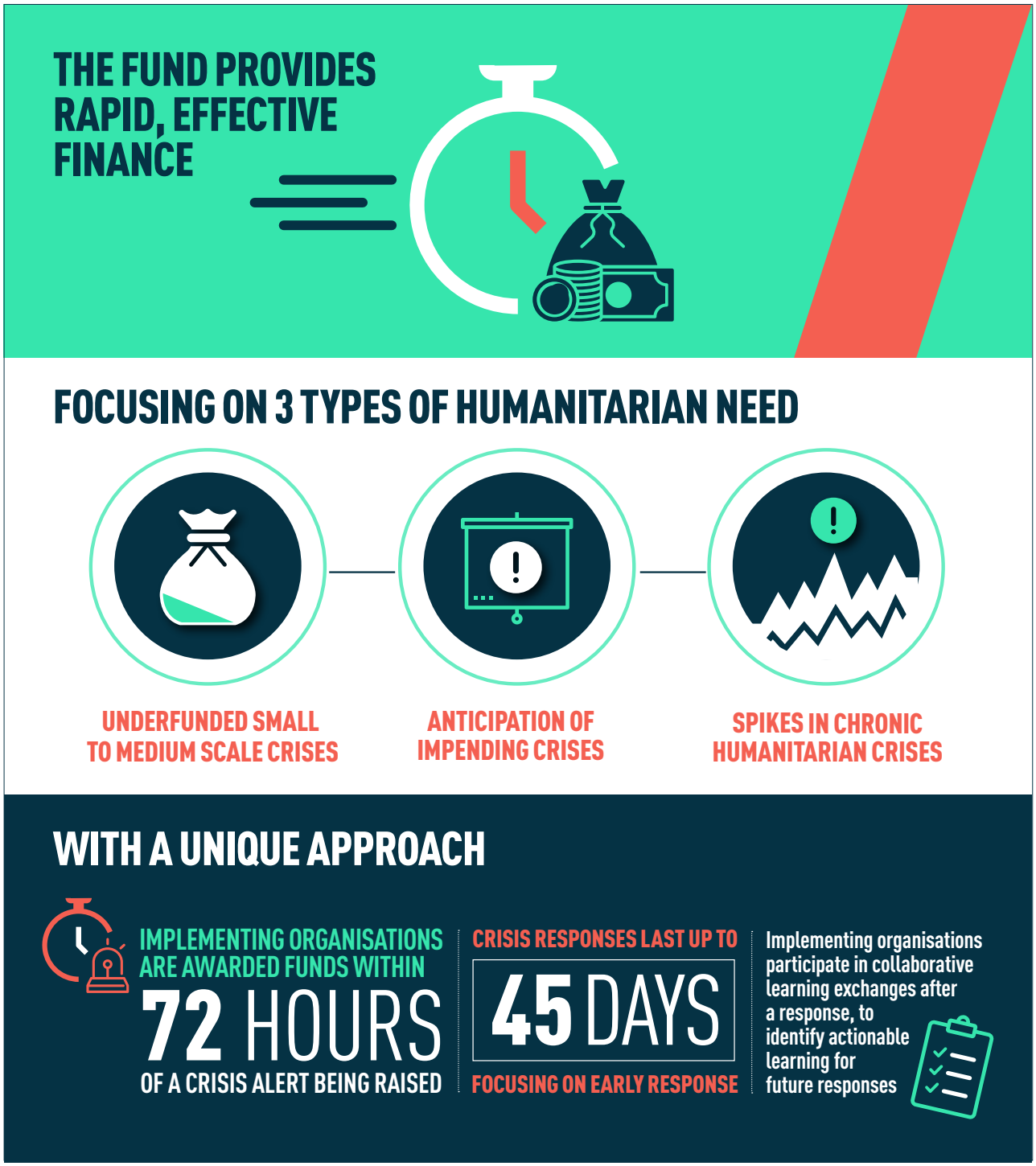


WE BELIEVE IN

- LOCALISATION
- NEW FORMS OF FINANCING
- COLLECTIVE INNOVATION

THE START FUND

The Start Fund is collectively owned and managed by our 80+ member organisations



04 | START FUND GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Start Fund is unique in that decisions are made by Start Network member NGOs, operating with the delegated authority of the fund's donors.

Decision-making is collective, strategic, and de-politicised, demonstrating how financing can promote collaboration over competition, giving rise to more impactful humanitarian action. The Start Fund's governance structure has two main functions: to oversee the Start Fund's performance and to ensure rigour and impartiality in all decisions relating to crisis alerts and project selection.

START FUND GOVERNANCE EXISTS THROUGH:

01 The **Start Network Assembly**, which represents the network membership and steering the network's strategic direction.

02 The **Start Network Board of Trustees**, which delegates the governance of the Start Fund to the Start Fund Committee and Start Network Council (see below).

03 The **Start Fund Committee**, as a sub-committee of the Start Network Board of Trustees, which is responsible for the strategic management and operations of the Start Fund within the parameters set by the Board and Start Network Council. A representative 12-member Start Fund Strategic Committee advises the Board on strategic elements of the Start Fund, such as the principles and processes for decision-making. The wider Start Fund Committee, made up of representatives from Start Network members, has delegated authority from the Board to allocate funds to crises through decision-making rotas and is responsible for providing funding authorisations to the Grant Custodian for deployment of funding.

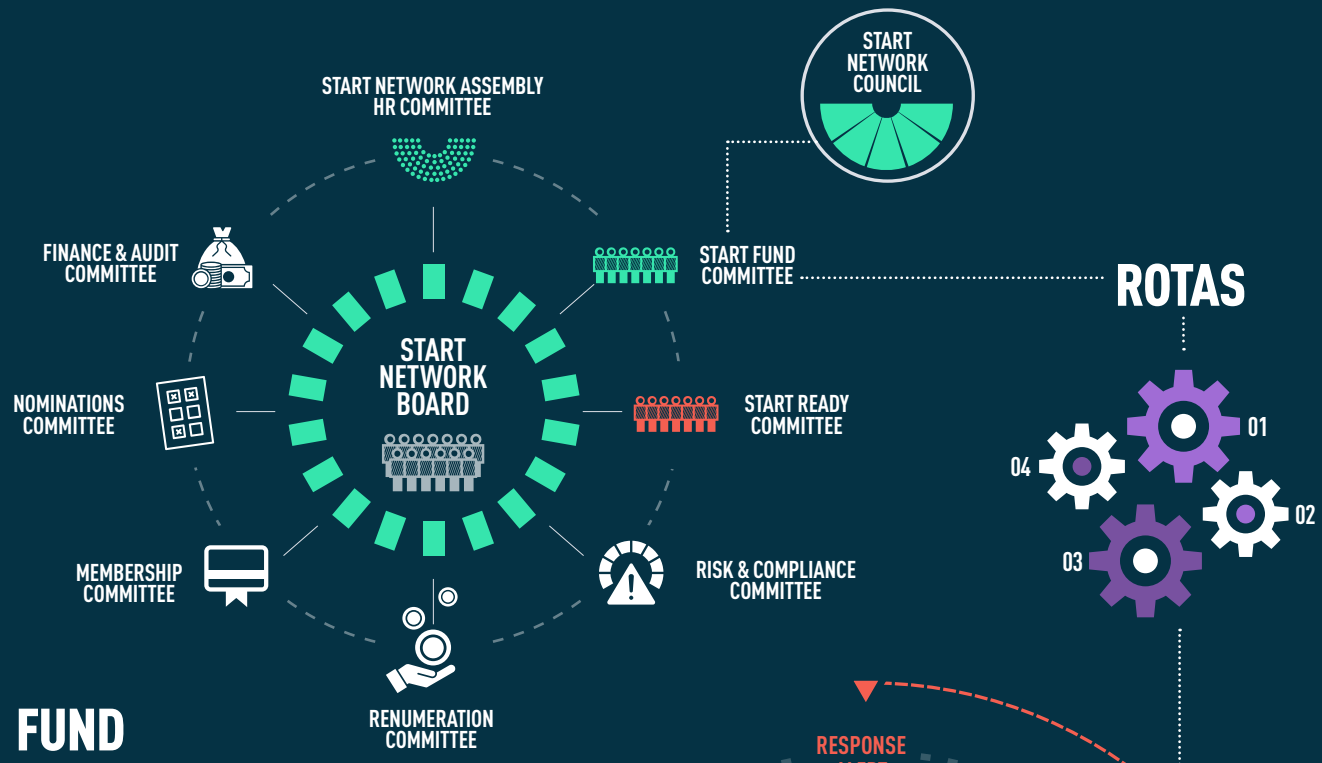
04 The **Start Network Council** comprises the donors to Start Network, including donors to the Start Fund, as well as representatives from:

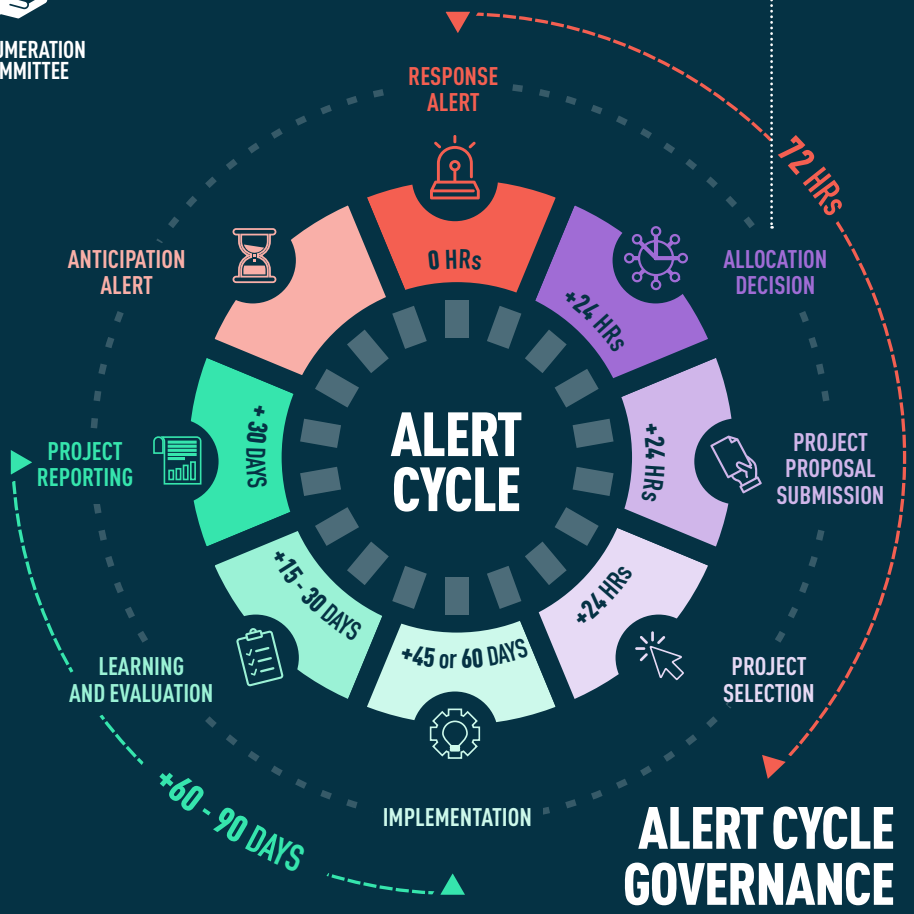
- the **Start Fund Strategic Committee;**
- the **Board;**
- the **Start Fund team**.

This body has direct oversight of the risk management and performance of the Start Fund.

The Start Fund team supports the performance of the Start Fund and facilitates the governance procedures and alert process on behalf of Start Network and the membership. The Start Fund team creates the space for members to collaborate and brokers relationships with partners to improve the performance of the Start Fund. The Start Fund team is employed by SCUK to fulfil its role as Grant Custodian to Start Network. The Start Fund uses SCUK finance systems to receive, hold and disburse Start Fund awards and grants to Start Network members. The Start Fund team is the primary point of contact for members engaging with or receiving funding through the Start Fund.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES





01 IMPARTIALITY

DECISIONS ON THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS ARE BASED ON NEED ALONE.

A. INDEPENDENT - Those involved in Start Fund decision-making and governance must act independently, setting aside any particular interests of the agencies they represent. Their sole responsibility is the effective deployment of the Start Fund.

02 PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

A. CONTINUALLY IMPROVING - Start Fund structures and processes facilitate closed feedback loops to encourage continual improvement.

B. CONSTANTLY SEEKING TO SIMPLIFY - The Start Fund will look to reduce expensive and demotivating process complexity wherever possible.

C. RISK-TAKING - The stewardship of the Start Fund is risk-taking rather than risk averse, following a no-regrets approach in decision-making.

D. FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY - Start Fund structures and processes promote flexibility and agility.

E. SPACE FOR IMAGINATION AND INNOVATION - The Start Fund's approach is to be courageous and forward-looking, providing space for imagination and innovation.

F. JUDGEMENT - The Start Fund will preserve the space for operational practitioners to make contextually-relevant decisions about how funds are used.

THESE PRINCIPLES GUIDE THE STEWARDSHIP & OPERATION OF THE START FUND.

05 | START FUND PRINCIPLES

03 SUBSIDIARITY

THE SELECTION OF PROJECTS WORKS BEST AT LOCAL LEVEL.

Where this is not possible (for example, because of a lack of presence or potential conflicts of interest) regional decision-making is the next best option. If a regional option is not available, a central approach will be taken. The Fund will be as local as possible and as international as necessary.

A. TRUST - The stewardship of the Fund and each alert and activation build and maintain trust between Start Network Members.

B. ACCOUNTABILITY - The Start Fund is a well-governed, accountable steward of taxpayer resources; it puts into place the structures and incentives to deliver impact efficiently and effectively:

I. TRANSPARENCY -The Start Fund will demonstrate full real-time transparency in its governance, management, and reporting.

II. INFLUENCE OF POPULATIONS -The Start Fund will seek to incentivise two-way communication with populations at risk of and/or affected by humanitarian crises. It will reward organisations that enable affected populations to help shape how aid is delivered.

III. STRUCTURE -There is a clear accountability structure that ensures the Start Network members influence the evolution of the Fund.

IV. GOVERNANCE - The Agreements between Start Network and its members; Start Network and the Grant Custodian; and the Grant Custodian and the Start Fund donors set out clear accountabilities and commitments for the delivery of the Start Fund.

04 COLLECTIVE STEWARDSHIP

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE START FUND IS A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING MEMBERS AND DONORS.

A. REPRESENTATIVE - The governance of the Start Fund broadly reflects the membership of the network, reflecting the balance between different types of member organisations.

B. INTERNATIONAL - As the network grows it will need to become more inclusive across a larger, and eventually more decentralised, group of members. There will be inevitable trade-offs between the trust, familiarity and quick consensus that can be achieved by a smaller number of members and the strength derived from engaging a wider range of people and perspectives in the decision-making process.

C. ADDITIONALITY - Start Network decisions are informed by a recognition of the value that is added by working together as a network rather than alone as individual members.

Start Network member access to the Start Fund enables members to anticipate and respond to small to medium-scale crises around the world. Effective collective decision-making demands an investment of time from each member, occasionally outside of working hours (e.g. at weekends and during holiday periods). It is therefore important that members inform the Start Fund team of any changes in staff contact details.

EACH START NETWORK MEMBER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE START FUND THROUGH:

01 Providing strategic input and sharing information for each alert raised to the Start Fund.

02 Participating in the Start Fund Committee – each committee representative must participate (or delegate their participation) in decision-making during the allocation and project selection stages of the Start Fund alert cycle. In addition, each member should participate in the annual Start Fund Committee meetings and endeavour to nominate representatives to the 12-person Start Fund Strategic Committee that convenes quarterly, where they can engage with the wider strategic decisions that influence the Start Fund.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

5.1 The Start Network membership has delegated authority from Start Fund donors; Start Fund decision-making is undertaken by the Start Fund Committee.

5.2 When receiving Start Fund awards and grants, members must (i) adhere to the Start Network Membership Agreement and (ii) sign and adhere to the applicable Start Fund award letter or grant agreement. They must also follow the processes and mandatory requirements outlined in this Start Fund Handbook.

5.3 Member personnel (including partner personnel, where relevant) must familiarise themselves with the terms of the Start Network Membership Agreement, the Start Fund Handbook and, if receiving awards or grants, the applicable Start Fund award letter or grant agreement.

5.4 Members must inform the Start Fund team of any changes in their contact details and ensure that a contact is available at all times, including outside of working hours and during holiday periods.

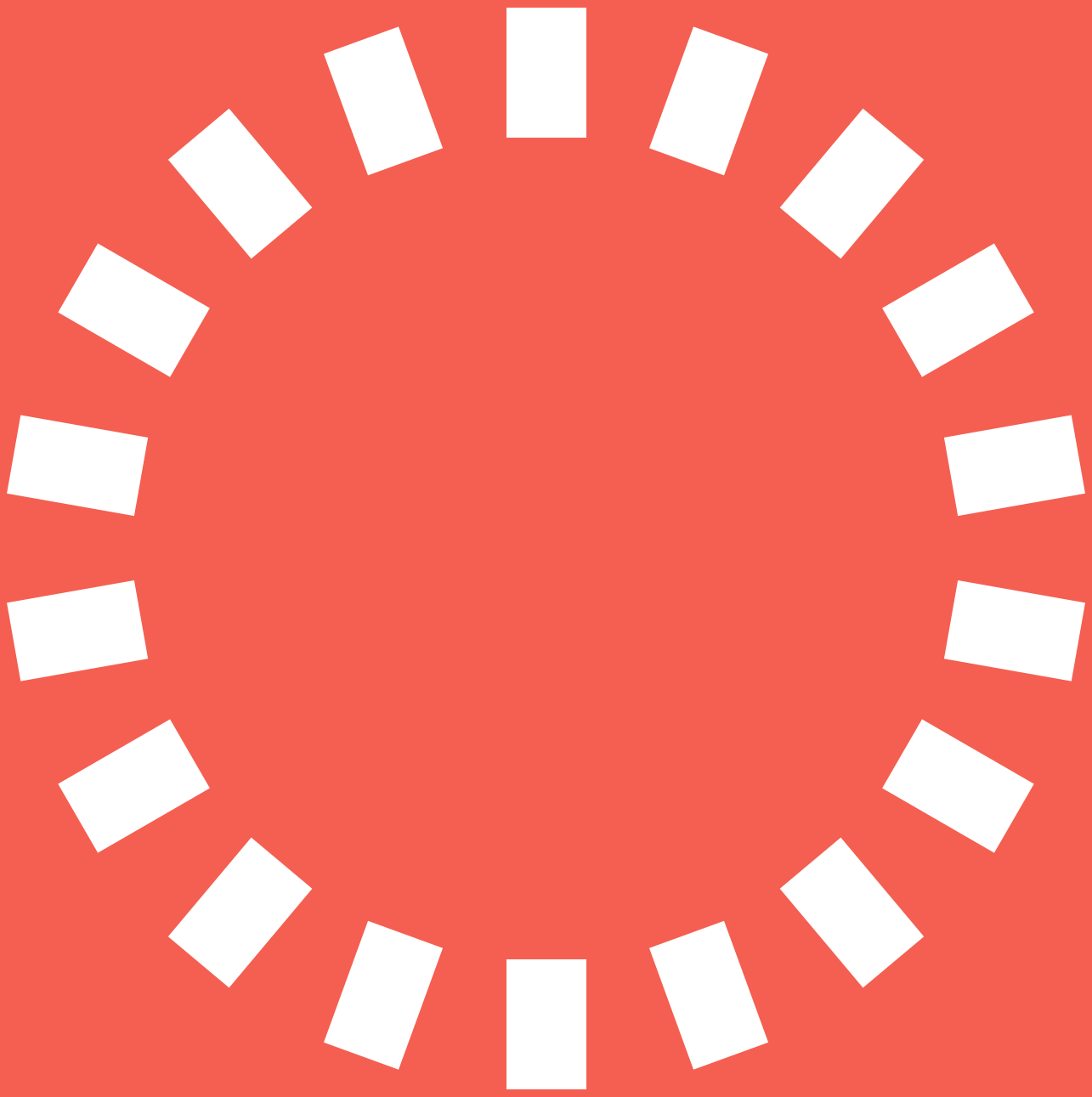
5.5 All members commit to participating in the Start Fund Committee and to abide by its terms of reference.

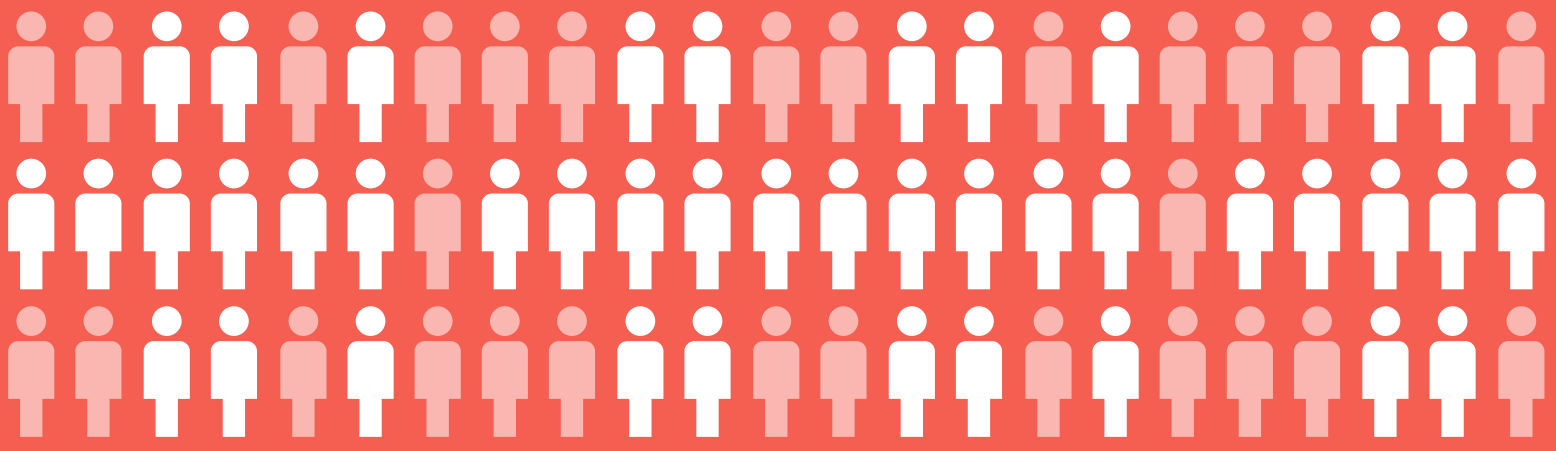
5.6 Failure to attend relevant Start Fund Committee meetings or insufficient engagement in Start Fund processes may lead to sanctions by the Board, including loss of Start Network membership.

5.7 All decisions should prioritise the needs of populations at risk of and/or affected by humanitarian crises over the priorities of individual member organisations.

The timeframe of the start fund is faster than other mechanisms, and it therefore requires start network member personnel to be knowledgeable and ready to contribute.

FOR SUPPORT IN BRIEFING MEMBER PERSONNEL, PLEASE EMAIL STARTFUND@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG





06 | THE START FUND ALERT CYCLE

Any Start Network member can identify a crisis that is felt to be suitable for the Start Fund. A Start Fund crisis alert can be raised by a single member or by several members acting together. The Start Fund can be alerted to:

UNDERFUNDED SMALL TO MEDIUM SCALE CRISES

ANTICIPATION OF IMPENDING CRISES

SPIKES IN CHRONIC HUMANITARIAN CRISES

The raising of a crisis alert initiates the Start Fund alert cycle, whereby the alert information is shared, an allocation decision taken on whether the Start Fund should be activated and funding disbursed and, if activated, members are invited to submit projects, which then go through a selection process, with funding awards being made. The cycle takes place within a 72-hour timeframe, although anticipation alerts can necessitate a different decision-making timeframe (see Section 8 - 'Anticipation', page 20).

- Once member projects have been selected for funding by a Project Selection Committee, award letters are issued to the relevant member organisation/s. Award letters must be signed and returned by the member within three days.
- Awarded projects must be initiated – with activities reaching the population at risk of and/or affected by a humanitarian crisis – within seven days of the award start date. Projects must then be completed within 45 days (unless the award letter stipulates another timeframe).
- Project reports are to be submitted by the member 30 days after the award end date.
- If a Learning Exchange is scheduled, this should take place a further seven days after submission of the project report.

The following sections of this handbook provide a step-by-step guide to the Start Fund alert cycle, with information on how Start Network members can actively participate.

ALERT CYCLE
RESPONSE ALERT
0 HRs
ALLOCATION DECISION
+24 HRs
PROJECT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION
+24 HRs
PROJECT SELECTION
+24 HRs
IMPLEMENTATION
+45 or 60 DAYS
LEARNING AND EVALUATION
+15 - 30 DAYS
PROJECT REPORTING
+ 30 DAYS
ANTICIPATION ALERT
72 HRS
+60 - 90 DAYS

07 | HOW THE ALERT CYCLE WORKS

RESPONSE ALERT

Member organisations raise crisis alerts to the Start Fund team, using the relevant alert note template. Once the alert note has been completed by the alerting organisation/s, it should be shared via email to **startfund@startprogrammes.org**.

PRE-ALERT

Start Network members identify a crisis that is felt to be suitable for the Start Fund. Member collaboration is encouraged using the relevant Start Fund Skype group for the alerting country, or other coordination platforms. The Start Fund team can set up or signpost members to relevant Start Fund Skype groups or other coordination platforms, where relevant. Members are asked to notify others of crisis alert discussions during the pre-alert stage, using the main Start Fund Skype group.

REPORTING

The member designated Project Lead submits a Start Fund project report no later than 30 days after the end of implementation (i.e. the end date stipulated in the award letter). The Start Fund team reviews the project report and if necessary, issues invoices to the awarded member to recoup unspent funds.

LEARNING & EVALUATION

Following the completion of Start Fund projects that meet the Learning Exchange criteria (see section 20 - 'Learning and Evaluation, page 43), the designated Project Lead and other stakeholders, where relevant, are invited to participate in a Learning Exchange. The Start Fund team convenes the Learning Exchanges, capturing actionable learning.

IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the project implementation period, a Project Lead that has been designated by the awarded member must inform the Start Fund team of any changes. Project changes are subject to Start Fund team approval. The Project Lead is also responsible for raising issues of concern, if relevant. The Start Fund team responds to requests and queries in a timely manner.

MEMBER SURVEY

The Start Fund team informs the wider Start Network membership of the crisis alert and requests that all members provide a strategic steer on the alert for allocation decision-making. Members complete the online member survey.

THIRD PARTY INFORMATION VERIFICATION

The Start Fund team may request a third-party briefing note to help inform the allocation decision-making. For anticipation alerts, the Start Fund team also requests forecasting information analysis from the Forecast-based Warning and Response Network (FOREWARN) to help inform the allocation decision-making

ALLOCATION DECISION

Depending upon the strategic steer provided by the member survey on the alert, which includes information such as member support for Start Fund activation, either a subset of Start Fund Committee representatives (the rota) or the Start Fund team make an allocation decision on whether the Start Fund should be activated and funding disbursed. The Start Fund team provides the alert information, such as the alert note, member survey findings and a third-party briefing note, before convening an allocation decision-making meeting. The Start Fund team subsequently notifies the Start Network membership of the allocation decision, i.e. if the alert was activated or not, the amount of funding allocated for the crisis and the deadline for member project submission.

PROPOSAL

If Start Network members decide to submit Start Fund project proposals in response to the activated alert, these must be sent to the Start Fund team via email to **startfund@startprogrammes.org** by the submission deadline.

PROJECT SELECTION

Start Fund Committee representatives nominate in-country personnel, which can include partner personnel, to sit on a project selection committee following alert activation. Start Network members that have submitted project proposals cannot sit on the project selection committee. The Start Fund team convenes project selection committee meetings virtually with participants that are based in the alerting country, and it supports the project selection decision-making process to determine which projects will be awarded the funding allocated for the crisis.

FUNDS TRANSFER

The Start Fund team issues an award letter to awarded members. Awarded members must sign and return the award letter within one business day. The Start Fund team initiates the fund (award) transfer.

08 | ANTICIPATING CRISES

The Start Fund enables Start Network members to act in anticipation of a forecasted crisis. Members can use forecasts of humanitarian events and their predicted impacts to alert the Start Fund, and if the alert is activated, anticipatory action can commence.

The Start Fund can be alerted in anticipation of impending crises. This enables members to implement advanced preparedness work and/or early response actions, enabling members to prepare for and reduce the likelihood of harm or loss to populations at risk of and/or affected by crises.

While members are encouraged to use the Start Fund to manage humanitarian risks proactively, there can be ambiguity around when to trigger an anticipation alert and what activities might be appropriate within the Start Fund implementation timeframes. While there may not be one 'right answer', Start Network's hazard-specific guidance notes can serve as a guide for members considering whether to raise an anticipation alert and can support members to develop relevant alert notes and project proposals (see Appendix 2.1). Clarifications and technical advice can be sought from the Forecast-based Warning and Response Network (FOREWARN).

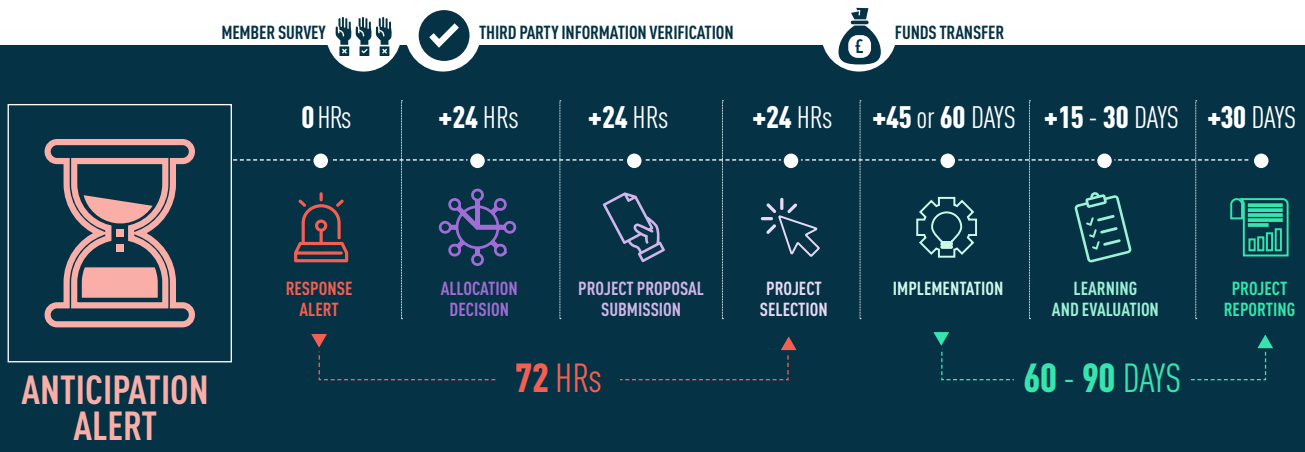
FOREWARN comprises Start Network members and scientific/forecasting partners.

FOREWARN is organised into specialist sub-groups with a specific technical advisory role (such as for flooding, disease outbreak, etc).

EXAMPLES OF ADVANCED PREPAREDNESS OR EARLY RESPONSE ACTIONS INCLUDE:

- **Avoiding losses**
  e.g. vaccinating livestock, digging trenches and/or moving, securing or de-stocking assets.
- **Augmenting capacity to act**
  e.g. providing rapid training, mapping vulnerabilities and/or identifying capacity gaps for surge deployment.
- **Initiating coordination activities**
  e.g. supporting forecast-informed prioritisation and/or preparing joint procurement plans.
- **Supporting market continuity**
  e.g. through market assessment, advanced preparedness for cash programming and/or key goods pipeline analysis).
- **Analysing risks**
  e.g. spatial/temporal analysis

TO REQUEST EXPERT ADVICE OR TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR ANTICIPATORY ACTION, CONTACT FOREWARN@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG



There can be uncertainty when developing an anticipation alert. To alleviate this uncertainty, Start Network offers the following small grants to support members in raising anticipation alerts:

TYPES OF SMALL GRANT	AMOUNT[1]	PURPOSE OF GRANT
Analysis for Action (AA) Grant	**Up to £10,000**	To enable two or more members to jointly conduct risk analysis in preparation for the raising of a Start Fund crisis alert.
Anticipation Tool Grant	**Up to £40,000**	To enable members to develop analysis tools to support with the anticipation of crises.

Further guidance on these grants is available in Appendix 2.11.

In the case of anticipatory alerts, the processes for alerts, proposals and reports are slightly different, although the Start Fund decision-making processes remain the same.

Refer to Section 2.1 in the appendix for additional guidance.

The timeline from crisis alert to project selection can be shortened or lengthened depending on the predicted timing of the impending crisis. For example, anticipation alerts for impending cyclones may require a shorter timeframe between raising the crisis alert and project selection. Similarly, with slow-onset anticipation alerts, a longer timeline of up to seven days from crisis alert to proposal submission may be requested to allow more time for coordination and the triangulation of forecast information. Member requests for altered timeframes must be clearly justified and requested in the alert note, and members are encouraged to consult the Start Fund team prior to making this request. Other Start Fund timeframes for project implementation apply to anticipation alerts. Start Fund project activities should begin within seven days of project selection and be fully implemented within 45 days, unless there is a clear justification for 60 days, which should be requested at the time of proposal submission.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

8.1 Any anticipation alert must be based on a credible forecast.

8.2 Anticipatory project activities need to be advanced preparedness and/or early actions to reduce the impact of an impending crisis. Anticipation alerts should not be raised based on a seasonal forecast or intended to support long-term preparedness work.

8.3 For anticipation alerts, member requests for altered crisis alert to project selection timeframes must be clearly justified in the alert note and not exceed seven days.

8.4 For anticipation projects, member requests for an extended implementation timeframe up to 60 days must be clearly justified at the time of proposal submission.

8.5 Applications for Analysis for Action (AA) Grants must be made by at least two Start Network members working in partnership. The grant is for a maximum of £10,000 (in total) to conduct inter-agency risk analysis in preparation for the raising of a Start Fund crisis alert.

8.6 Applications for the Anticipation Tool Grant can request a maximum of £40,000 to enable members to develop analysis tools to support with the anticipation of crises.

1 The amount for small grants may be subject to change based on the availability of funding, refer to the guidance in the appendix for the latest information.

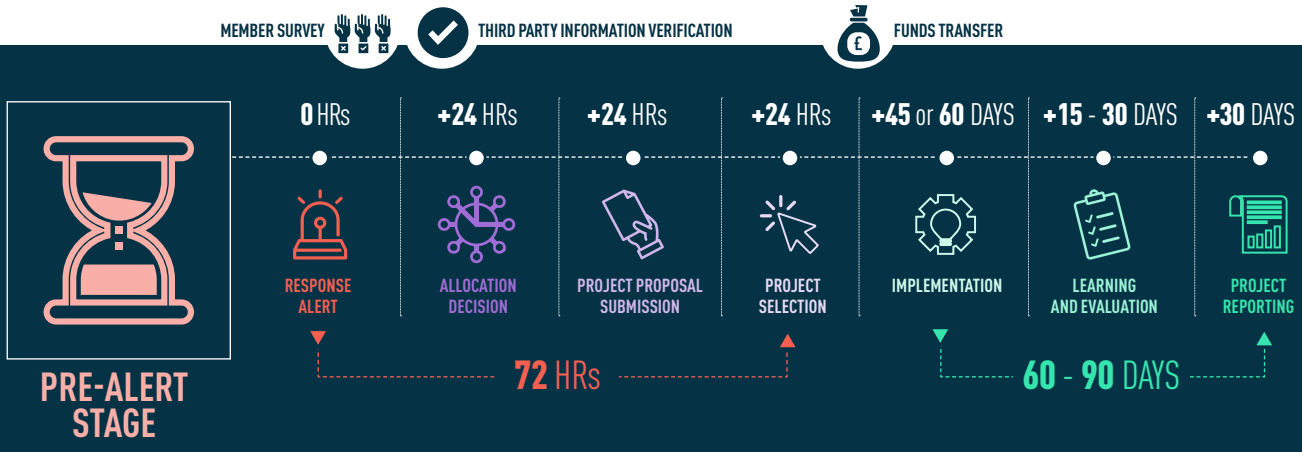
09 | PRE-ALERT INFORMATION

Before alerting the Start Fund to a crisis, members are encouraged to coordinate and share information using the Start Fund's online platforms (currently Start Fund Skype groups). This generally takes place in the early stages of a crisis, when members can exchange information to gain a greater understand of the crisis and the humanitarian needs.

Members are encouraged to notify the Start Fund team of the intent to raise an alert prior to the development of an alert note, via **startfund@startprogrammes.org**. To support members in the development of an *anticipation alert note* and subsequent decision-making, the Start Fund team may refer alerting members to relevant technical partners such as FOREWARN that are able to support during pre-alert, allocation and project selection alert cycle stages.

Start Network members need to balance pre-alert coordination with timeliness in raising the crisis alert. There is no requirement that all alerts should be coordinated; however, all members are strongly encouraged to utilise the collective knowledge and insights of the network as much as possible. Please note that all members also have an opportunity to input further information on the crisis alert through the member survey. At the allocation stage, decision-makers may also be provided with third-party briefing notes or forecasting information analysis from FOREWARN.

TO ACCESS THE START FUND ONLINE PLATFORMS (SKYPE GROUPS), MEMBER PERSONNEL SHOULD CONTACT THEIR START FUND COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE OR THE START FUND TEAM AT STARTFUND@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG



10 | RAISING A CRISIS ALERT

In the event of a crisis, any Start Network member can submit an alert note to the Start Fund. This will trigger a decision regarding the activation of the Start Fund and allocation of funding to the alerted crisis ("an allocation decision").

To raise an alert, Start Network members complete the relevant Start Fund alert note template (i.e. anticipation or response template), and share it with the Start Fund team for review. Once the alert note is final, the Start Fund team officially raises the crisis alert and communicates this to all Start Network members. This communication includes a request for all members to respond to a member survey on the crisis alert, with a deadline for responses within 24 hours of the alert being raised.

The main purpose of the alert note is to provide an overview of the crisis and the added value of a Start Fund activation and allocation of funding. The alert note is not a project proposal.

The Start Fund can be alerted seven days a week between 09:00 and 17:00 (UK time). It is important that members carefully consider when the alert is raised. If Start Fund is alerted any later than Wednesday morning (UK time), the proposal submission and project selection stages of the alert cycle risk coinciding with the weekend because of the timeframes. This would oblige member personnel to work outside standard working hours and could result in difficulty securing quorum for project selection decision-making. Wherever possible, act quickly when raising alerts so that this situation is avoided. The Start Fund alert note templates and guidance are included in the appendix. For information on how to raise an anticipation alert, please see section 8 - 'Anticipating crises' on page 20 of this handbook.

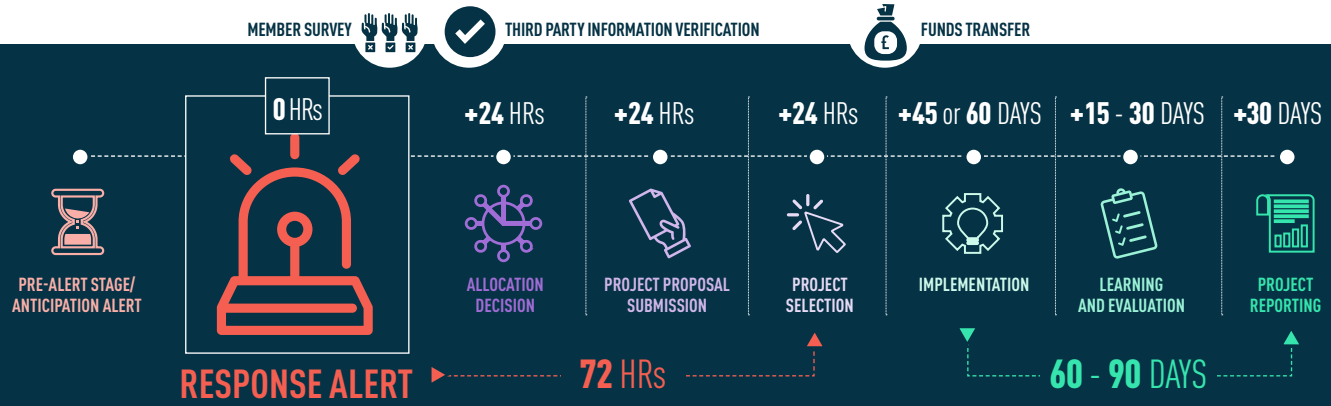
START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

10.1 Only Start Network members can alert the Start Fund in anticipation of or response to a crisis. Start Network members can alert the Start Fund on behalf of partners.

10.2 Members should be proactive in alerting the Start Fund to ensure timely humanitarian action.

10.3 Where possible, members should raise crisis alerts to the Start Fund between 09:00 and 17:00 (UK time). Members should aim to r aise alerts by Wednesday morning (UK time) or provide clear justification for raising an alert later in the week.

Members should always aim to raise an alert as early as possible. One of the Start Fund's strengths is its ability to enable early, rapid humanitarian action, often before other funding mechanisms become available.



11 | MEMBER SURVEY

Once the crisis alert has been raised and communicated to Start Network members, all members are requested to respond to a member survey on the alert.

All Start Network members should respond to the survey, irrespective of whether they are present in the country or have further information on the crisis. This is the only point in the Start Fund alert cycle when all members contribute to the strategic allocation decision. It is therefore important that all views are collected and recorded.

THE ONLINE MEMBER SURVEY HAS THREE FUNCTIONS:

01 **to provide a strategic steer from the membership on whether the Start Fund should be activated for the crisis alert;**

02 **to advise on the allocation amount for the alerted crisis;**

03 **to capture additional information on the crisis and member intention to respond.**

Refer to Appendix 2.2 for the member survey template. Members that are present in the country or region of the crisis, are also asked to nominate locally-situated personnel for the project selection meeting should the Start Fund be activated. Start Network members (and any partners) that submit project proposals to the Start Fund for the crisis cannot participate in project selection.

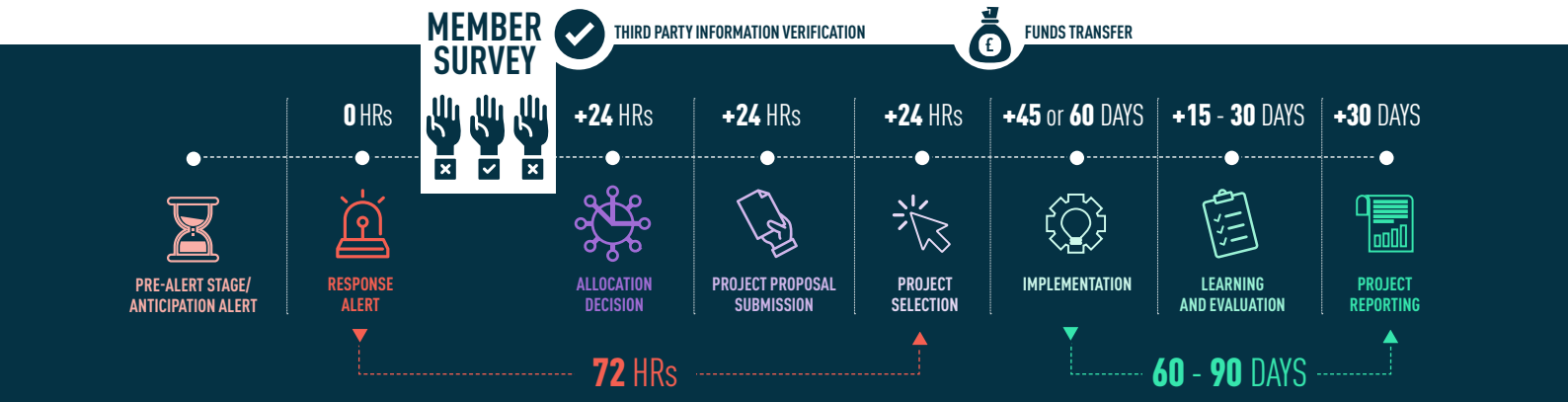
For a Start Fund allocation to be considered, at least one Start Network member must be able to implement a response.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

11.1 For each crisis alert, **all Start Network members** should provide a strategic steer by completing the online member survey, irrespective of whether they have an operational presence in the affected area or have further information on the crisis.

11.2 For the crisis alert to progress to the allocation stage, the member survey must indicate that at least one Start Network member (or member's partner) is able to respond to the crisis.

11.3 In the member survey, Start Network members should nominate their own personnel in the country or region of the crisis for the project selection meeting should the Start Fund be activated. Nominees should be experienced member or partner personnel. Start Network members (and any partners) that submit project proposals cannot participate in project selection.



12 | ALLOCATION DECISION

Within 24 hours of a crisis alert being raised, a Start Fund allocation decision determines whether the crisis alert fits the aims of the Start Fund and if so, how much funding should be allocated to the crisis.

The allocation decision is informed by the crisis alert note, the member survey findings and available third-party briefing notes; briefing notes provide an overview of the crisis and provide a third-party verification of the information in the alert note, allowing for more triangulation of information and increased rigour in allocation decisions.

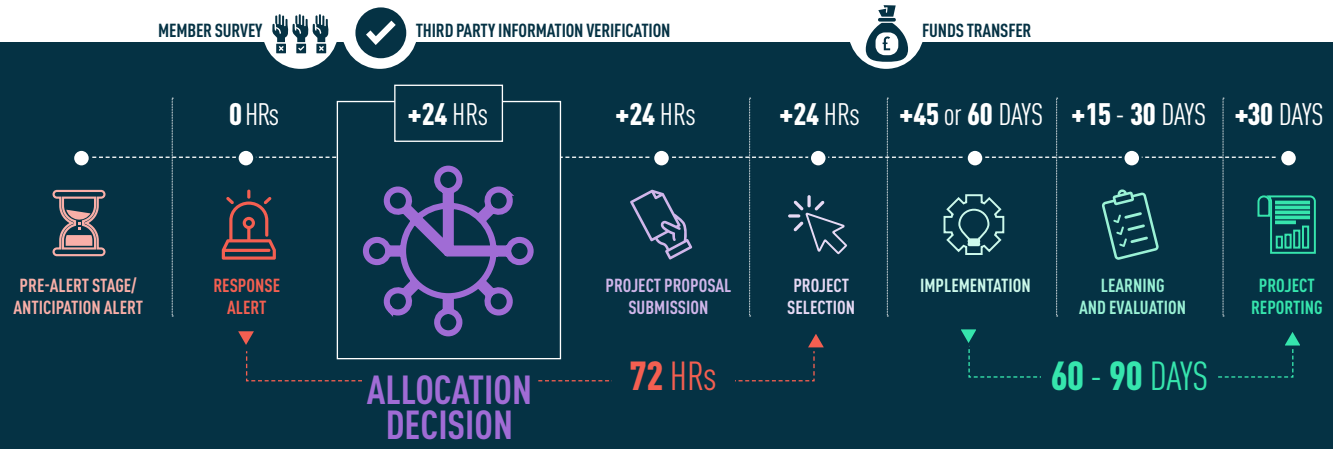
Generally, allocation decisions are made by the Start Fund Committee (using a rota of members that are on duty for a set period of time, i.e. eight weeks at a time), which all members must participate on. There are instances when allocation decisions can be delegated to the Start Fund team, e.g. when the member survey has given a strong steer for or against activation and/or where lower amounts of Start Fund funding are being requested in the alert note.

Allocation decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis, using available information about the crisis, the context and the needs, as well as the strategic aims of the Start Fund and the learning from past Start Fund experience. On principle, decisions are not made according to a strict checklist of criteria. Instead, they are guided by the experience and judgement of the member decision-makers and their ability to reach a consensus (or majority) decision on the crisis alert based on available information. All allocation decisions should prioritise the needs of the Start Fund over individual member priorities.

To help decision-makers, the Start Fund Committee has provided guidance on the critical questions to be considered for anticipation and response crisis alerts. Recognising that Start Fund decision-makers are often faced with uncertainty, particularly with anticipation alerts or when acting in the early stages of a crisis, the Start Fund team has produced a guidance note on navigating uncertainty.

The allocation decision to activate or not activate the Start Fund, as well as the amount of funding to be allocated if it is activated, is communicated by the Start Fund team in the form of emails to Start Network members, Start Fund donors and supporters. A notification is also made on the main Start Fund Skype group.

Additional details on the crisis alert and allocation decision are also available on the **Member Portal** and in the Start Fund **Crisis Response Summaries**.



START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

12.1 All decisions should prioritise the needs of the Start Fund over individual member priorities.

12.2 With the exception of anticipation alerts, all allocation decisions should be made within 24 hours of the Start Fund being alerted.

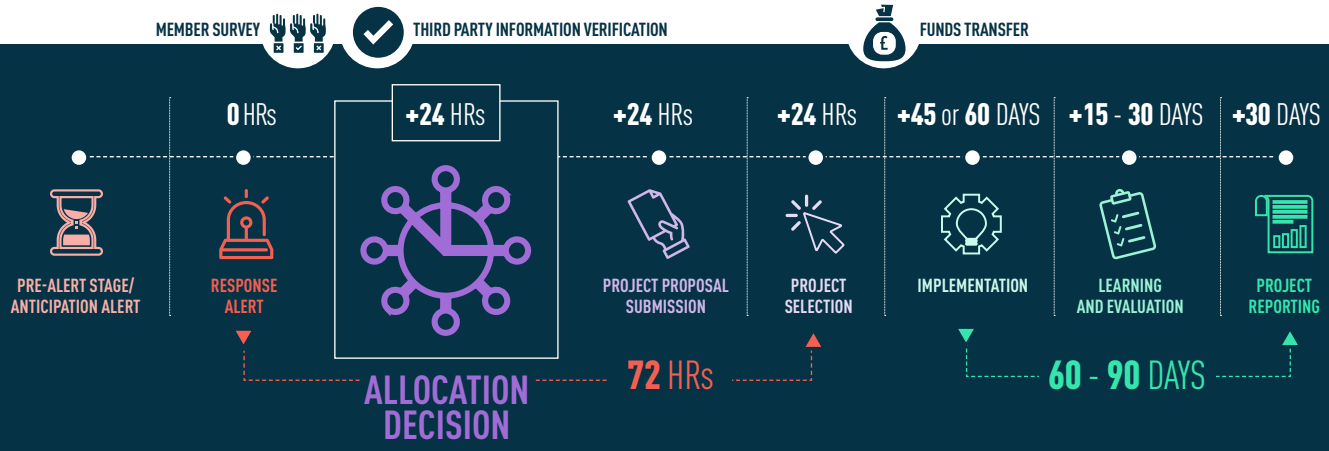
12.3 All Start Network members are required to participate in allocation decisions in line with the Start Fund Committee rota system. Allocation decision-making meetings will follow the process set out in the Start Fund Committee Terms of Reference.

12.4 The Start Fund will not be activated if:

12.4.1 Member representatives as part of the allocation decision-making conclude, through available analysis and situation reports, that the local government or other existing indigenous actors can adequately respond to the situation, and do not require additional support or funding.

12.4.2 The crisis occurs in a country or territory which is not listed on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of official development assistance (ODA) recipients. This requirement can only be waived by the Start Fund's donors in exceptional circumstances when the country or territory has circumstances that mean the country or territory is unable to respond to the humanitarian crisis.

12.5 As a guide, not more than £1 million will be allocated to any single Start Fund crisis alert.



13 | PROPOSALS

If a Start Fund crisis alert is activated, Start Network members may submit project proposals that are up to 45 days[2] in length.

Short proposals are submitted to the Start Fund within 24 hours of an allocation decision.Projects are then selected by a locally convened project selection committee (refer to Section 14 on 'Project selection' for more information). Proposals should concentrate activities on providing life-sustaining services and support for affected populations, should be based on needs and involve affected populations in decision-making and project implementation processes. This includes putting appropriate complaint and feedback mechanisms in place that populations can access confidentially.

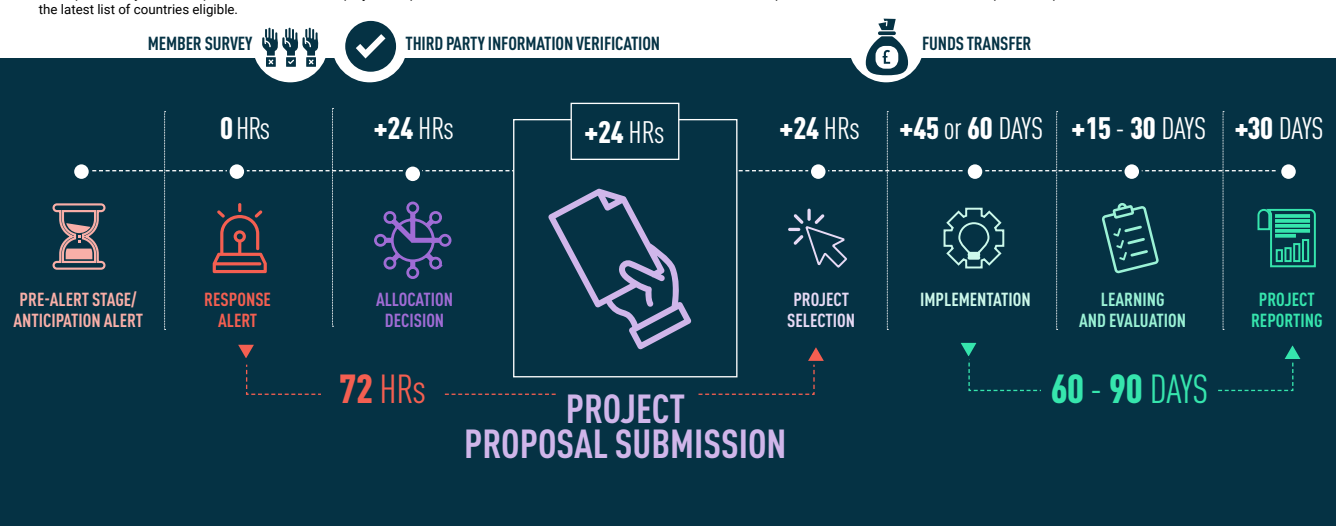
TO BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE FUNDS, A START NETWORK MEMBER MUST:

- have existing programmes (or a local partner with a presence and with whom they have a previous programmatic relationship) within the affected country and close to the area of crisis identified in the Start Fund alert;
- have the experience and capacity to respond immediately to affected populations or have (or have partners who have) the ability to mount a surge operation providing specialist expertise. Surge should only be used to meet urgent needs which cannot be met locally;
- have access to the affected population;
- be able to commence the project within seven days of the funding decision and complete it within 45 days;[2]
- operate in line with Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and other relevant standards, as well as applicable local laws and regulations;
- coordinate with and support the network of other response actors, including the local authorities, the United Nations, and other relevant disaster management bodies.

Only Start Network members can apply for funding from the Start Fund. However, this funding can be used for work with partners. It is each member's responsibility to conduct due diligence on partners, and this due diligence can be requested by Start Network, the Start Fund team, or Start Fund donors at any time. Due diligence should be conducted before any proposal is submitted.

Audits can be requested by Start Network, the Start Fund team, or the Start Fund's donors. Start Network reserves the right to request a refresh of due diligence or additional/specific due diligence assessments at other times if required (for example, if triggered by a specific incident or if required by any of the Start Fund donors).

2 Up to 60 days for anticipation alerts and/or for projects implemented in countries with Local and National NGO member presence. Refer to the Start Fund Proposal template for the latest list of countries eligible.



START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

13.1 Only Start Network members can apply for funding from the Start Fund, but this funding can be used for partner activities through partnership agreements. In signing the partnership agreement, the partner agrees to comply with the requirements stipulated in the Start Fund award letter and the Start Fund Handbook.

13.2 Start Network members and partners must meet the criteria outlined in this section in order to be eligible to receive Start Fund funding.

13.3 Project proposals for the Start Fund will only be accepted when an allocation decision has been made to activate the Start Fund for a particular crisis alert.

13.4 Project proposals must be sent to the Start Fund team within 24 hours of the allocation decision or by the deadline set out in the allocation email.

13.5 Start Network's **Due Diligence Framework** informs the amount of funding that individual members can access.

The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 3 of the Due Diligence Framework is £300,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000). If the proposal is for a consortium project, this amount can be applied to each member; for non-members in a consortium project, they would be sharing the maximum amount of the awarded (convening) member (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000).

The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 2 of the Due Diligence Framework is £100,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £100,000).

Members assessed on Tier 1 of the Due Diligence Framework are not currently eligible to be awarded from the Start Fund. Please refer to Appendix 2.9 for more information on funding access for members assessed on the Due Diligence Framework tiers.

N.B. Members should pay attention to Section 17 'Start Fund Assurance and Accountability' on page 36 of this Handbook for further detail on due diligence.

13.6 Members should submit project proposals using the standard Start Fund proposal forms. The proposal will only be accepted in the correct format. Please refer to Appendix 2.4 for current project proposal templates.

13.7 Project proposals should concentrate activities on providing life-sustaining services and support to affected populations.

13.8 Project proposals should be based on needs and involve affected populations in decision-making and project implementation processes. This includes putting appropriate complaint and feedback mechanisms in place that populations can access confidentially.

13.9 The maximum amount that can be requested in a proposal for Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR) is 10% of the total implementation and operations costs. If the total implementation and operations costs at the time of project reporting are lower than those originally budgeted at the time of project selection, the ICR amount should be a maximum of 10% of the actual cost. 13.10 Capital item costs cannot be used as part of programme set-up costs (e.g. vehicles, laptops, etc). Members would need to specify any individual items costing more than £500 in the budget. As part of project reporting, awarded members are required to compile an inventory form and submit it to the Start Fund with a proposal for the future use of each asset following the end of the project. Please refer to Appendix 2.7 for the inventory report form.

3 For information on the maximum amount that can be requested by any member assessed on Tier 2 of Start Network's Due Diligence Framework, contact the Start Fund team via email to *startfund@startprogrammes.org*

14 | PROJECT SELECTION

Once the Start Fund is activated, the selection of projects is delegated, wherever possible, to member (and their partner) personnel closest to the location of the crisis.

Within 24 hours of an allocation decision to activate the Start Fund, a project selection committee is convened in the country or region of the crisis alert, to review and award project proposals.

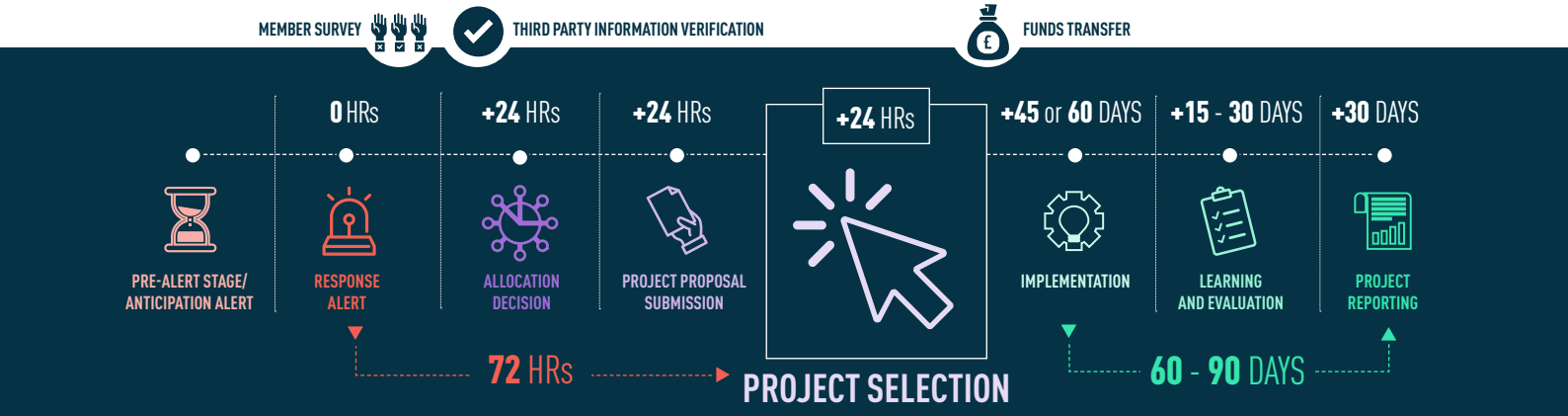
Members that are present in the country or region of the crisis are asked to nominate locally situated personnel as project selection decision-makers. Start Network members (and any partners) that submit project proposals to the Start Fund for a crisis, cannot participate in the project selection.

Nominations can be put forward via the member survey, email to the Start Fund team (**startfund@startprogrammes.org**), or on a Start Fund country Skype group.

Start Network members are expected to keep relevant personnel within their organisations well briefed on the Start Fund. The Start Fund team also offers member personnel regular virtual briefings and training, in addition to resources that members can use for internal briefings. Nominated representatives for project selection will be provided with a virtual joining link to a decision-making meeting and will be expected to attend. Non-attendance can result in project selection being delayed, which can affect the timeliness of humanitarian action.

All participants of the project selection meeting will be asked to review the submitted Start Fund project proposals 90 minutes to two hours prior to the meeting start time and are expected to uphold the Start Fund principles in making their decisions (please refer to Section 5 – 'Start Fund principles', page 12 for more information). Project selection decision makers will be responsible for providing independent humanitarian expertise and contextual insight and are not expected to act as "representatives" of their organisation in making decisions.

One participant is required to take on the role of Chairperson for the project selection meeting, to be chosen from amongst the participants at the start of the meeting. The chairperson is responsible for facilitating the meeting, with the support of a Start Fund team representative in attendance, ensuring that the selection process is guided by the needs on the ground. To aid transparency, a second participant is required to take minutes during the meeting, transcribing the review process and the justification for



selection decisions. The minutes and an audio recording of the meeting will later be shared with the Start Network membership.

If the project selection decision makers agree to award a project proposal, but only with certain revisions, a conditional award offer can be made. The awarded Start Network member would then have 24 hours to respond to the conditional award offer and submit a revised project proposal. In such circumstances, the project selection decision makers can agree to delegate authority to the Start Fund team to review and approve the revised proposal. For additional information on project selection, refer to Appendix 2.5 for the Guide to Project Selection.

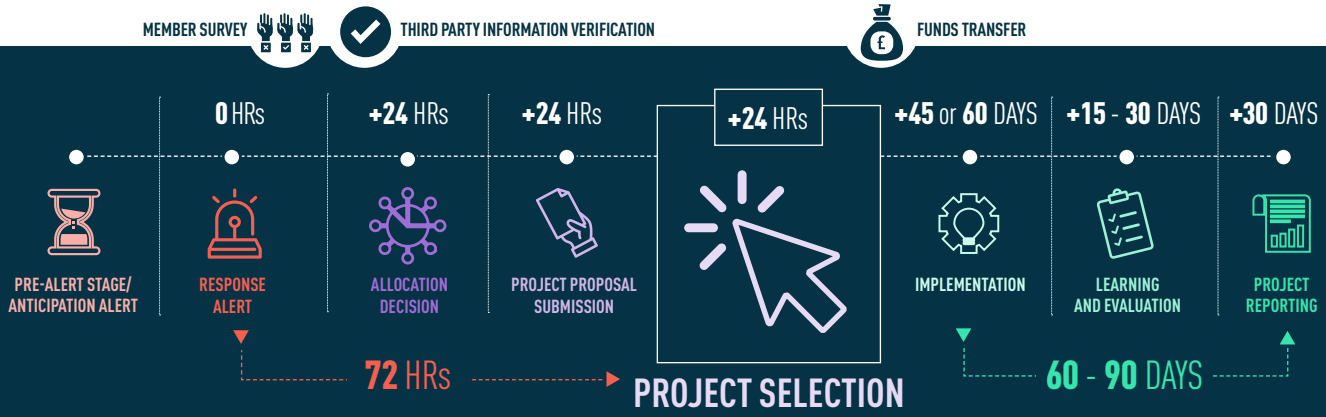
START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

14.1 A project selection committee will comprise between four and seven participants; note that Start Network members and any partners that submit project proposals to the Start Fund for the crisis cannot participate in project selection. If there are not enough members present in the country of the crisis alert, member representatives from the region can participate in the meeting. Those with contextual insight will be given preference at the discretion of the Start Fund team.

14.2 Project selection decision makers must peer review project proposals prior to the project selection meeting, typically 90 minutes to 2 hours in advance of the meeting start time – but potentially up to 24 hours prior.

14.3 There is no guarantee that all qualifying project proposals will be awarded funding. The project selection decision makers have the discretion to not award funding should they consider all humanitarian needs as having already been met.

14.4 The decision of the project selection committee is final. In rare circumstances, such as when a member appeals a decision, this will be reviewed by the Start Fund Committee Chairperson and further steps will be determined as necessary.



15 | FUND TRANSFER

Start Network's Grant Custodian (SCUK) will initiate the transfer of funds (the grant) to the bank account of the awarded Start Network member **within 24 hours** of receiving the fund transfer request from the Start Fund team following project selection. This transfer request will be provided in the form of a funding authorisation.

However, if that 24-hour period includes a non-business day (such as a weekend or public holiday), the remainder of the period will be carried into the next UK business day.

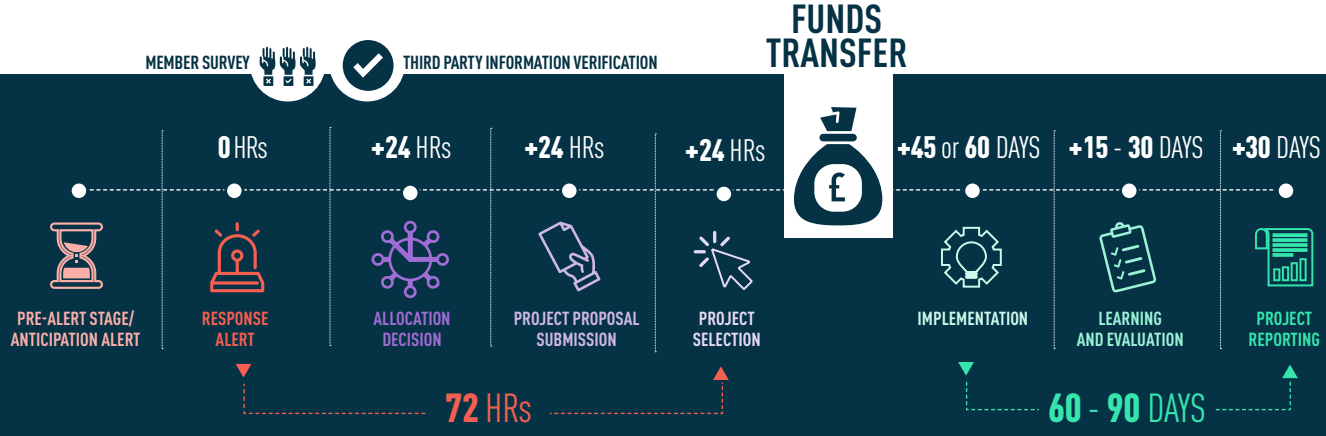
Awarded members will be issued with a Start Fund award letter confirming the funding amount (in GBP) as well as the start and end dates of the project implementation period. The award letter must be signed and returned by the receiving member within three working days, before funding can be released by the Grant Custodian. The award letter is a legally binding agreement between the awarded member and SCUK as Grant Custodian to Start Network. Once the award letter is signed by both parties, the Grant Custodian will transfer the funding amount.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

15.1 Start Network's Grant Custodian (SCUK) will initiate the transfer of the awarded funds within 24 hours of receiving the fund transfer request from the Start Fund team, following project selection and the receipt of the signed Start Fund award letter from the awarded member. However, if the 24-hour period includes a weekend or UK public holiday, the remainder of the period will be carried into the next UK business day. Awarded members can spend against the award from its start date (as outlined in the award letter).

15.2 The transfer will be made based on the Start Fund project selection committee's decision, and the return of the signed Start Fund award letter will be done within one business day, or the awarded member will be required to return the funds to the Grant Custodian (SCUK).

15.3 The Start Fund award letter sets out the intention for the member to receive the amount of f unding allocated, as decided by project selection decision makers.



16 | IMPLEMENTATION

As the aim of the Start Fund is to fill a critical gap in early, rapid humanitarian action, it is crucial that the projects awarded funding commence **as soon as possible**.

The start date of an awarded project is clearly noted in the award letter. There is an expectation that project activities must reach affected populations **within seven days** of the start date.[4] The awarded member would need to provide strong justification should this not have been possible, in the project report.

Awarded members commit to implementing each project in accordance with the aims, objectives, methods, activities, monitoring and evaluation and budget specified in the Start Fund project proposal approved by project selection decision makers.

The project is to be completed within 45 days,[5] or the end-date as noted in the award letter if different. All funds must be spent during the Start Fund project implementation period, i.e., between the start and end-date as noted in the award letter. Monitoring activities, should be conducted during project implementation. It is possible to conduct monitoring activities after the project end date, e.g., post-distribution monitoring, but any such activities must be completed prior to the date that the project report is due. Any costs related to such activities must be incurred and charged within the project implementation period.

Due to the short implementation time-frames, any amendments to the Start Fund project end-date, including no-cost extensions, will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Start Fund team.

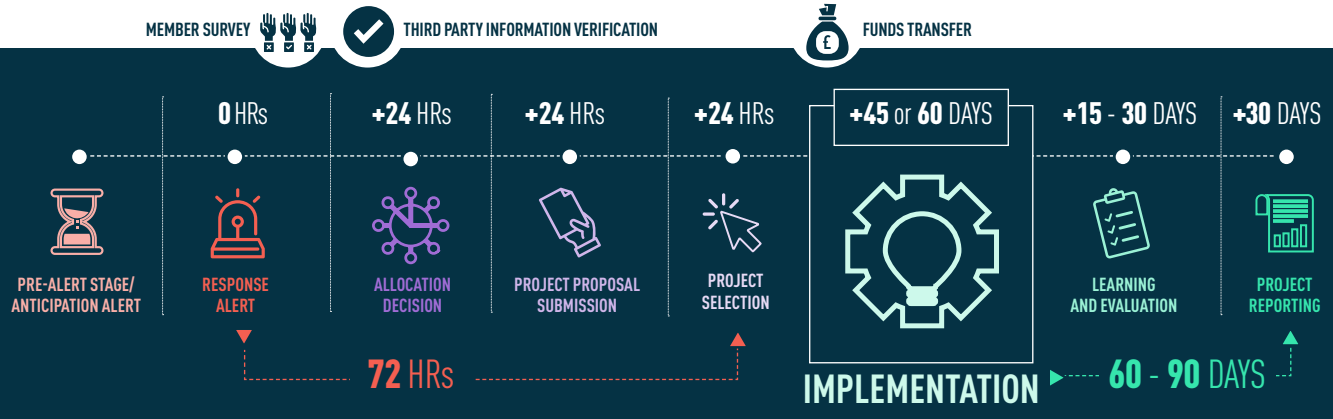
START FUND PROJECT FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY

Start Network members are accountable to populations at risk of and/or affected by humanitarian crises, with mechanisms in place for complaints and feedback. At times, complaints and feedback from affected populations, local authorities and/or the local coordination platform may result in changes to project design. Changes may also be required which arise from the dynamic nature of humanitarian crises and the evolving situation on the ground.

Members that have been awarded funding to

4 Date of an action that is directly associated with implementation of an activity that directly benefits/assists affected populations (includes mass communication, distribution, capacity building, face-to-face communication/sensitisation etc.; this does not include selection of populations at risk of and/or affected by crises, assessments, etc).

5 Up to 60 days for anticipation alerts and/or for projects implemented in countries with Local and National NGO member presence. Refer to the Start Fund Proposal template for the latest list of countries eligible.



implement Start Fund projects are encouraged to be flexible and agile, while remaining accountable to affected populations and the Start Network membership (as represented in the crisis alert allocation and project selection decision-making processes).

Members are required to inform the Start Fund team immediately of changes to project activities. If changes are significantly different from the awarded project proposal, the member organisation must request advance approval from the Start Fund team and not implement changes without written approval from the Start Fund team. The Start Fund team will respond to such requests in a timely manner.

Significant changes include but are not limited to:

- change in locations, target population and reach;
- change in project design (e.g. sector, activity, etc.), and/or
- more than 20% change across budget lines and/or budget sections.

All significant changes need to be clearly justified in a Start Fund Project Change Request Form (see Appendix 2.7) and if approved, changes then need to be reflected in a revised project proposal. All members are encouraged to contact the Start Fund team if there are questions as to what constitutes a 'significant change' via email to **startfund@startprogrammes.org**.

COMMUNICATIONS

Humanitarian action can be communicated to generate powerful messages about the Start Fund and the wider Start Network.

All members should provide Start Network with the contact details of the member's communications focal person. It is important that these contact details are kept up to date, via email to **communications@startnetwork.org**.

When a Start Fund project proposal is selected for funding, the awarded member/s will be prompted to confirm the contact details of the communications focal person for the specific project. The communications focal person should be familiar with the project and able to liaise with Start Network on communications as needed. Opportunities to jointly communicate may include publicising project implementation and utilising communications content on Start Network's website, social media channels and publications, such as the annual report. In some situations, communications may need to be modified or restricted.

DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

Start Network takes data protection and privacy very seriously. Members must secure informed consent for any communications materials they collect and pass this on to Start Network. Any external communication is subject to data protection requirements, which are set out in **Start Network's privacy policy**.

Members that receive Start Fund awards and grants should also refer to the detailed requirements on data protection in the Start Fund award letters and grant agreements.

CONSENT

For Start Network to be able to share communications material gathered by a member, the member must supply a copy (or confirmation) of relevant consent for use of any personal data captured in the material. This could include images (photography or video) of individuals, names of individuals within a case study or quotes attributed to individuals. You can use Start Network consent form (see Appendix - Section 2.7) if one is not already available. Members will also need to refer to the specific data protection obligations set out in the Network Membership Agreement, and any award letter.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, MEMBERS CAN REFER TO START FUND COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY REQUIREMENTS IN APPENDIX - SECTION 2.7.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

16.1 Each member that is awarded funding from the Start Fund must:

16.1.1 Reach affected populations with activities within seven days of the project start date noted in the Start Fund award letter;[6]

16.1.2 Respond based on needs and involve affected populations in decision-making and project implementation processes. This includes putting appropriate complaint and feedback mechanisms in place that populations can access confidentially;

16.1.3 Concentrate activities on providing life-sustaining services and support to affected populations;

16.1.4 Actively participate in relevant clusters and/or other local coordination mechanisms;

16.1.5 Complete an accountable project within 45 days[7] or the end date noted in the award letter, if different; All funds must be spent during the Start Fund project implementation period, i.e. between the start and end date noted in the award letter. Monitoring activities, should be conducted during project implementation. It is possible to conduct monitoring activities after the project end date e.g., post-distribution monitoring, but must be prior to the project report deadline. However, any costs related to such activities must be incurred and charged within the project implementation period. Due to the short implementation timeframes, amendments to the Start Fund end-date, including no-cost extensions, will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Start Fund team;

16.1.6 Not use Start Fund funding to set up a new operation in a country where the member or their affiliates/ partners are not present, unless approval to do so is given and noted in the minutes of the allocation decision or project selection meeting;

16.1.7 Not use Start Fund funding to purchase any items of operational equipment according to the definition set out in the Start Network Membership Agreement – i.e. any single, non-consumable item of equipment purchased for or in relation to a project which is not of a direct benefit to the intended beneficiaries of that project;

16.1.8 Ensure partners meet the criteria and obligations specified;

16.2 Start Fund funding is limited per member organisation for any given crisis regardless of the number of partners to whom the member organisation sub grants funds;

16.2.1 The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 3 of the Due Diligence Framework is £300,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000). If the proposal is for a consortium project, this amount can be applied to each member; for non-members in a consortium project, they would be sharing the maximum amount of the awarded (convening) member (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000);

16.2.2 The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 2[8] of the Due Diligence Framework is £100,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £100,000).

16.2.3 Members assessed on Tier 1 of the Due Diligence Framework are not currently eligible to be awarded from the Start Fund. Refer to Appendix 2.9 for more information on funding access for members assessed on the Due Diligence Framework tiers.

6 Date of an action that is directly associated with implementation of an activity that directly benefits/assists affected populations (includes mass communication, distribution, capacity building, face-to-face communication/sensitisation etc.; this does not include selection of populations at risk of and/or affected by crises, assessments etc).
7 Up to 60 days for anticipation alerts and/or for projects implemented in countries with Local and National NGO member presence. Refer to the Start Fund Proposal template for the latest list of countries eligible.
8 For information on the maximum amount that can be requested by any member assessed on Tier 2 of Start Network's Due Diligence Framework contact the Start Fund team via email to *startfund@startprogrammes.org*

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

16.3 Amendments can be made to planned Start Fund project activities. However, changes can only be made if based on needs, complaints or feedback of or from the affected population or based on coordinating work with other actors. Members must request and receive written approval from the Start Fund team prior to making changes. Proposed changes need to be justified in the Start Fund Project Change Request Form and if approved, reflected in a revised project proposal.

16.4 In the case of an overspend, implementing members will use their own funding sources to cover this amount. Neither the Grant Custodian (SCUK) nor any other Start Network member has any obligation to transfer an amount higher than the Start Fund grant awarded or;

16.5 If a proposed project is no longer required (e.g. due to the work being undertaken by others or because needs have changed) or if unforeseen developments have affected the project's viability, agencies should propose alternative appropriate actions or return the money plus any interest gained to the Grant Custodian (SCUK);

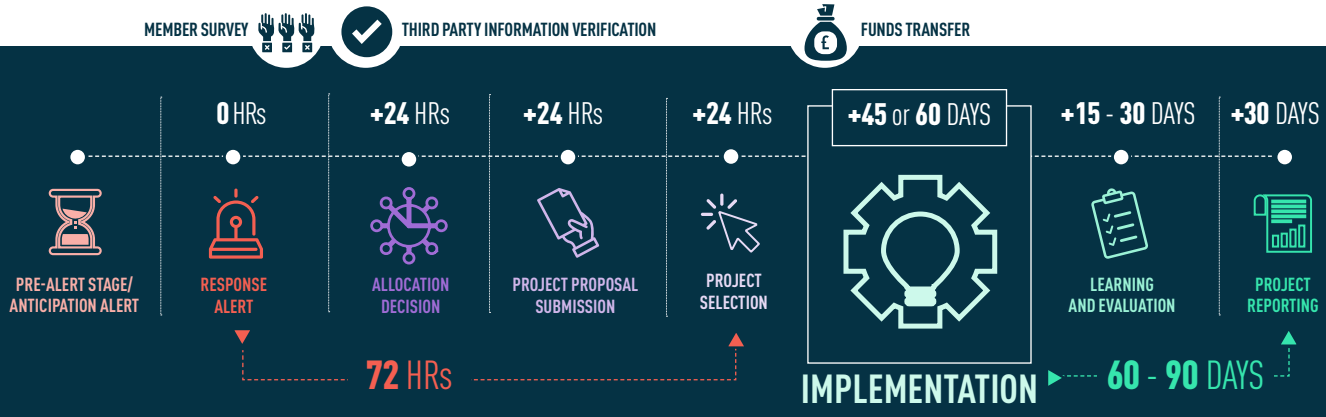
16.6 All members receiving funding through the Start Fund will comply with standard procurement guidelines of the fund's donors as outlined in the Start Network Membership Agreement. As a guide, please refer to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) procurement guidelines as a minimum. In addition:

16.6.1 Evidence of compliance with these guidelines should be retained by the implementing agency and made available for inspection by the Start Fund team and/or donors when required;

16.7 Each member organisation must clearly state in their project proposal any single items with a purchase value over £500; Any non-consumable items of programme equipment purchased under the grant with an initial value of more than £500 and a useful life of more than one year may remain the property of the donor/s and must not be disposed of except as the Start Fund directs. Members must compile an inventory of such assets and submit it to the Start Fund team together with a proposal for the future use of each asset for after the end of the project (please see Appendix - Section 2.7 for the Inventory Reporting Form);

16.8 Start Fund awards may be used for expenses incurred from the start date of a response, as detailed on the award letter;

16.9 Members must ensure there is informed consent for any communication content collected and shared with Start Network. The member must provide a copy (or confirmation) of relevant consent for use of any personal data.



17 | START FUND ASSURANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Start Fund is committed to ensuring the highest standards of transparency, accountability and competent management of Start Fund awards and associated projects implemented by members and partners. The Start Fund has a set of checks and balances to provide assurance that members maintain compliance with the Start Network Membership Agreement, the Start Fund Handbook and Start Fund awards, and that members appropriately manage fraud, safeguarding and critical incident risks.

DUE DILIGENCE

All Start Network members undergo Start Network **due diligence assessment** in line with the Start Network Membership Agreement. The assessment by a third-party audit firm commissioned by Start Network places individual Members onto Tiers 1, 2 or 3 of the Due Diligence Framework, which determines the level of funding available to them as Members. To note, the Start Fund is currently only accessible to Start Network members assessed on Tiers 2 and 3.[9] Refer to Appendix - Section 2.9 for more information on funding eligibility.

SANCTIONS COMPLIANCE AND HIGH-RISK COUNTRIES

Several countries are high risk for sanctions compliance, as sanctions apply to the country as a whole, to regions within the country, to governments or de facto governing bodies of the country or to individuals. Start Network members can find out which countries are considered high risk for sanctions compliance by emailing the Start Fund team at **startfund@startprogrammes.org**.

The Start Fund team will communicate

9 While Start Network members assessed on Tier 1 of the Due Diligence Framework have met the minimum compliance requirements for membership of Start Network, they do not currently have access to Start Fund awards and the grants covered by this Handbook.

proactively on sanctions compliance in the early stages of a crisis alert being raised for the country concerned. Start Network member organisations that are planning to submit a project proposal under a Start Fund crisis alert in a country that is high risk for sanctions compliance will be expected to complete the Start Fund Sanctions and Terrorism Financing Compliance Certification form (see Appendix – Section 2.9). This form requests information from the member on whether the activities would be permitted under UK, US, EU and UN sanctions. The form is reviewed and approved by the Start Fund team and the Grant Custodian legal team before any transfer of funding to the member.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND ASSURANCE CHECK-IN

The Financial Management and Assurance Check-in can be administered on Start Network Member organisations that have been awarded Start Fund funding. This would primarily be where there have been unresolved concerns related to accountability to affected populations, relations with partners or Start Fund project reports. The check-ins aim to support member organisation growth and development and enhance accountability within and across the network. The check-ins are administered by Start Network's Assurance team and the Start Fund team, with the participation of relevant member personnel (including senior management), and take approximately 10 working days over several weeks to complete. The check-in may be conducted during or after a project, depending on the level of concern.

For more information on the Finance Management and Assurance Check-in, refer to Appendix - Section 2.9.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

17.1 All Members are responsible for their own internal procedures, including reporting, risk assessments and due diligence on implementing partners (sub-grantees) to prevent the risk that Start Fund funding is misappropriated or inappropriately used by the organisation and/or its personnel or partners. All internal procedures must be in line with the Start Network Membership Agreement.

17.2 For crisis alerts activated in countries that are at a higher risk for sanctions compliance and terrorism financing, members are required to submit the Start Fund Sanctions and Terrorism Financing Compliance Certification form (see Appendix – Section 2.9) together with their proposal.

17.3 If requested by Start Network (following notice from donors, audit officers or anyone reasonably nominated by the Start Fund team or donors), the members will allow their projects to be audited.

FOR UP-TO-DATE NEWS AND RESOURCES ON THE START FUND, PLEASE VISIT: WWW.STARTNETWORK.ORG

18 | INCIDENT REPORTING

All member organisations are responsible for their own internal compliance procedures, including reporting, risk assessments and due diligence on implementing partners (sub-grantees) to mitigate the risk that Start Fund funding is misappropriated or inappropriately used by the organisations and/or its personnel or partners. All internal procedures must be in line with the Start Network Membership Agreement.

In addition to member personnel following their own internal reporting and investigation policies, **members are required to report incidents or concerns related to the funding covered by this handbook (Start Fund awards, Learning Grants, Anticipation Tool Grants, Analysis for Action grants) as soon as reasonably practicable to the Start Fund team and in any event within 48 hours to reporting@startprogrammes.org.**

Additionally, members are required to report incidents regardless of when they took place, including historical or non-recent cases. Further detail on some of the incident types which are reportable and how to make reports is set out below.

Any incidents that include more than one Start Network member should be reported by all members, even if they know or assume that another member is reporting on the same or a related incident.

All incidents reported will be shared confidentially with Start Network, with SCUK as Grant Custodian, and with the Start Fund's donors (as they have provided funding relevant to the incident). Reports are handled by designated personnel and will only be disclosed to third parties, including regulators, where there is an obligation to do so. Reporting member organisations will be kept informed of wider reporting regarding the incident.

A decision to pause funding to any member organisation or request that Start Fund funding be returned by the awarded member can be determined by Start Network and SCUK as Grant Custodian. Such action is taken on a case-by-case basis, depending on the severity of the incident and the findings of any relevant investigation or audit.

IF YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT OVER WHETHER A MATTER IS REPORTABLE, EMAIL REPORTING@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG

FOR UP-TO-DATE NEWS AND RESOURCES ON THE START FUND, PLEASE VISIT: WWW.STARTNETWORK.ORG

SAFEGUARDING

For disclosures, incidents and reports related to safeguarding, including historical abuse cases, relating to Start Fund funded activities, Member organisations are required to report to as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event within 48 hours to **safeguarding@startprogrammes.org** In responding to and managing safeguarding concerns, members must make all efforts to ensure that action taken does not further harm survivors, witnesses and the subject of concern (the subject of concern is the person/people against whom a complaint has been made or against whom a concern is raised). This may include conducting a risk assessment and enacting a risk management plan, adopting a survivor-centred approach, developing safety plans, only gathering relevant information necessary to properly carry out an investigation and storing all documents in a secure manner.

As per the Grant Custodian policy, this covers incidents or concerns of harm/abuse of a child (anyone under the age of 18) or an adult in the implementation of a Start Fund-funded programme related to:

01 Abuse, including emotional and psychological, financial, physical and sexual abuse; exploitation, including sexual exploitation; sexual harassment; domestic violence; neglect of a child; unsafe programming or activities;
02 Death of a child or adult connected to a Start programme-related activity due to malpractice, unexpected or unexplained deaths in a medical setting, accident, abuse or misconduct; and
03 Start Fund/Start Network staff breaches of the code of conduct.

For further details, refer to Appendix - Section 2.9 for (i) the Start Network's Safeguarding Policy and (ii) the Grant Custodian's Safeguarding Policy and see the terms that are defined in the glossary of this handbook.

FRAUD, BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION

What is Fraud?
Fraud means an act of deception intended for personal gain or to cause loss to another party, which can include (but is not restricted to) money or other financial gain or loss. Frauds can be committed even if there is no actual gain or loss.

Fraud can also include **theft**, which means dishonestly taking property that belongs to another.

What is Bribery and Corruption?
This means offering, promising, giving, receiving or requesting a financial or other advantage to either:

- induce the recipient or any other person to act improperly or;
- reward them for acting improperly.

This can include:

01 'facilitation payments' (e.g. small unofficial payments to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action);
02 improperly seeking to influence a public official to gain an advantage, either directly or through a third party;
03 'kickbacks' (e.g. improperly receiving a share of funds or commission as a result of involvement in a bid, tender or other procurement process);
04 improperly colluding with others to circumvent, undermine or ignore rules, policies or guidance with which they should otherwise comply;
05 the giving and receiving of gifts and hospitality if used as a reward, inducement or encouragement for preferential treatment;
06 conflicts of interest which are not appropriately declared and managed. A 'conflict of interest' is where a person has a private or personal

interest which may or could be perceived to compromise their ability to do their job; and/or

07 improperly using employment to favour or benefit friends and relatives (e.g. awarding contracts, jobs or other material benefits).

TERRORISM FINANCING AND SANCTIONS

What is Terrorism Financing?
Terrorism financing is the provision of money, property, assets or other resources:

- to any Proscribed Organisation (as defined below); or
- to any individual or organisation where there is a suspicion that the money, property, assets or resources will be used for the purposes of terrorism.

Proscribed Organisations are organisations which are named on the lists of terrorists maintained by governments and inter-governmental organisations, including the UK and US governments, the EU and the UN.

What are Sanctions?
There are two types of sanctions: financial sanctions and trade sanctions. Financial sanctions restrict the financial activity of a Sanctioned Entity or Individual (e.g. by freezing their assets or by prohibiting any person from providing funds or other economic resources to that Sanctioned Entity or Individual).
Trade sanctions impose restrictions on the supply, import or export of certain goods or services. They can also restrict certain industries (e.g. banning the import or export of military equipment or petroleum products).

A ***Sanctioned Entity or Individual*** means those named on any list issued under financial sanctions by the UK or US governments, the EU or the UN and any individual or organisation owned or controlled by the foregoing.

DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SECURITY

Data protection and information security incidents may include:

01 unauthorised access to personal data or other information by a third party which should be kept confidential (including by staff or by third parties);

02 loss or destruction of personal data or other confidential information (e.g. the loss of a mobile or laptop);

03 misuse of personal data (e.g. collection or use of personal data in breach of any applicable data protection law); and/ or

03 viruses, phishing emails and abnormal or unusual activity or communications on desktops, laptops or mobile devices, emails or voicemails, which have occurred in connection with funding provided through the Start Fund and which either:

- need to be notified by the member to its data protection regulator (e.g. the Information Commissioner's Office in the UK) or to the individuals affected by the incident or;
- could negatively impact or compromise Start Network or SCUK as Grant Custodian or;
- could affect Start Network or SCUK as Grant Custodian's own compliance with data protection laws.

Members are also required to report if an investigation is brought against them by any data protection regulator.Further obligations on data protection are included in the Start Network Membership Agreement.

MONEY LAUNDERING

What is Money laundering?
Money laundering refers to a financial transaction (or a series of transactions) which aims to conceal the identity, source and destination of illegally obtained funds. Members should be

vigilant towards the risk of third parties seeking to launder funds through their organisation by means of a novel, complex or unexpected request to provide funds to the Member.

SERIOUS INCIDENTS

Start Network Members are asked to promptly notify the Start Fund team of serious incidents relating to their Start-funded activities. A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant:

- harm to families, children and people that we work with, including staff, volunteers and others who come into contact with us;
- loss of money or assets;
- damage to property;
- harm to our work or reputation.

This can include serious incidents resulting in risks to staff security, reputation and other areas that could impact Start Network, the Grant Custodian or donors funding the programmes.

Members are asked to report serious incidents **as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 48 hours** via email to **reporting@startprogrammes.org**.

HOW TO SUBMIT AN INCIDENT REPORT

If any of the above incidents occur in relation to Start Fund-funded activities, members are required to report to **reporting@startprogrammes.org as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event within 48 hours.** If in doubt, report.

- Where incidents involve a financial loss (such as fraud, terrorism financing and sanction incidents), there is no minimum amount for an incident to be reportable. All incidents should be reported, even if there is no loss.

Members should respond promptly to any questions raised on incident reports and continue to provide regular updates on each incident.

The reporting member will provide further information to the Start Fund team with regular updates on each report, as well as a final report describing the actions taken to investigate or audit, the findings of the investigation or audit, any remedial steps taken, and a final assessment of the value of any associated losses.

It is imperative that even the suspicion of misuse of funds is reported to the Start Fund to ensure accountability to our stakeholders (crisis-affected people, Start Network members, and donors).

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

18.1 If any of incidents mentioned in Section 18 occur in relation to Start Fund-funded activities, members are required to report to reporting@startprogrammes.org as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event within 48 hours. If in doubt, report.

18.2 Members should respond promptly to any questions raised on incident reports and continue to provide regular updates on each incident.

18.3 If Members have any doubt over whether a matter is reportable, you should email reporting@startprogrammes.org immediately.

IF YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT OVER WHETHER A MATTER IS REPORTABLE, EMAIL REPORTING@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG IMMEDIATELY

19 | CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

Start Network Members can raise complaints relating to Start Fund activities by emailing **complaints@startprogrammes.org**.

Concerns and complaints will be assessed to determine if any further investigation is required. In all cases they will be handled by designated staff members, who will work together with relevant decision makers from the Start Network membership to formulate responses to each concern or complaint. In addition to this, the Start Fund team will summarise concerns or complaints and present them at the quarterly Start Fund Committee meetings for broader strategic and operational consideration.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

19.1 Members are expected to report incidents or concerns related to the funding covered by this handbook:

- Incidents or concerns related to fraud; terrorism financing; money laundering; bribery or corruption; data protection and information security incidents; internal misconduct; or any other losses of funds or resources to **reporting@startprogrammes.org**.
- Serious incidents to **reporting@startprogrammes.org**.
- Incidents or concerns related to safeguarding to **safeguarding@startprogrammes.org**. All concerns should be reported, and all reports should be made as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 48 hours of the member learning of the matter. Start Network, the Grant Custodian (SCUK) and relevant donors are notified of all reports.

19.2 Members can raise complaints relating to Start activities by emailing **complaints@startprogrammes.org**

20 | LEARNING AND EVALUATION

The Start Fund constantly learns and innovates to improve the Start Fund and the humanitarian action of members, and to maintain accountability to affected populations.

The Start Fund embeds learning processes in the alert cycle and proactively explores opportunities to develop and influence the humanitarian system. Analysis is targeted at system, crisis and project levels and effort is invested to ensure that our learning is systematic, continuous, decentralised and shared.

Following project implementation, the Start Fund team may identify opportunities for members to come together to share learning among members, across the network, with the Start Fund team and more widely.

LEARNING EXCHANGES

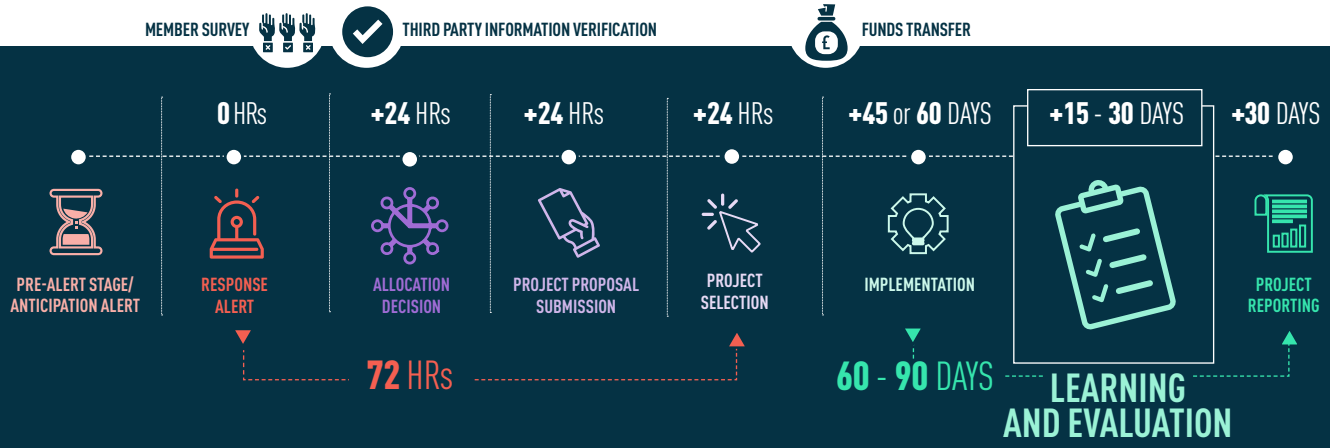
A critical part of Start Fund responses is the ability for the membership to collectively learn to improve future humanitarian action. For this reason, the Start Fund team facilitates one-hour de-brief meetings to reflect on the decisions that have been made, the learning that has been identified and any recommendations that could be taken forward to improve the work of members and the Start Fund. In addition to member-designated project focal persons (or 'leads'), personnel involved in allocation and project selection decision-making may be invited to join Learning Exchanges to ensure that links are fostered between decision-making, implementation, and outcomes.

Learning Exchanges will be prioritised for projects that meet the following criteria:

- Start Fund crisis alerts with two or more members awarded;
- Start Fund anticipation alerts;
- Start Fund alerts in Start Network Hub contexts;
- Start Fund alerts where local and/or national NGO members have been awarded;

BI-ANNUAL LEARNING EVENTS

To encourage peer-to-peer learning at a global level, the Start Fund team will be conducting bi-annual Learning Events open to all Start Network members and other stakeholders. Learning Events are focused on specific crisis types, regions or thematic areas. Participation in these Learning Events is optional, but highly encouraged.



PROJECT ASSESSMENTS

The Start Fund team conducts in-person or virtual Project Assessments with a number of awarded members to monitor compliance with legal and programmatic agreements and assess alignment with humanitarian sector standards. A scoring methodology is used to evaluate project quality, finance, logistics and procurement, and accountability to affected populations.

Assessments should be conducted during project implementation and prior to the award end date, but care is taken to provide advance notice and minimise disruption to member and partner work.

PROJECT REPORTS

Awarded members are required to submit project reports to the Start Fund team 30 days after the project end date noted in the award letter. For avoidance of doubt, the reporting date is also communicated to the awarded member via email, following the award. Start Fund reports provide assurance that projects have delivered against planned activities, targets and budgets as reflected in the project proposal and approved by project selection decision-makers. Project reports also provide an opportunity to capture the successes, challenges and lessons learned from humanitarian action enabled by the Start Fund.

For more information on reporting requirements, refer to Section 21 ‘Project reporting’ on page 45.

START FUND LEARNING GRANT

Applications for any project can be made for the Start Fund Learning Grant, a grant made up of 1% of Start Fund’s annual awards for projects which is earmarked for learning activities carried out by network members.

Members that have been awarded for a Start Fund project can apply for up to £15,000[10] from the Learning Grant for any learning-focused activity related to the project (the timeframe is flexible). Learning Grant applications are received from members and then undergo a selection process, with grants being issued every six months.

Previously funded Learning Grants focused on piloting a new technology, strengthening accountability to people affected by crisis, and implementing learning workshops with other Start Network members and local stakeholders. Start Fund Learning Grant award letters are administered in the same way as Start Fund awards.

For more information on the Start Fund Learning Grant, please see Appendix – Section 2.11.

START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

20.1 Start Fund decision-makers and awarded members may be invited to participate in Learning Exchanges and should participate to the best of their ability.

20.2 If a Start Fund project has been identified for project assessment, the member and partners responsible for the project will participate actively, including by providing additional, relevant information to the Start Fund team.

10 The amount for the small grants may be subject to change due to funding availability; refer to the guidance in the appendix for the latest information.

21 | PROJECT REPORTING

All awarded members implementing Start Fund projects must submit a final report in the correct format via the online portal. Reports are due no later than 30 days after the project end date noted in the award letter.

This allows for 30 days following the end of the project for all creditors to be paid and all accruals settled. There should be no further new expenditure during this time. Monitoring activities such as post-distribution monitoring can be conducted after the project, but before the project report is due (however, any cost related to such activities must be incurred and charged within the project implementation period). No invoice/receipt dated after the project end date will be accepted.

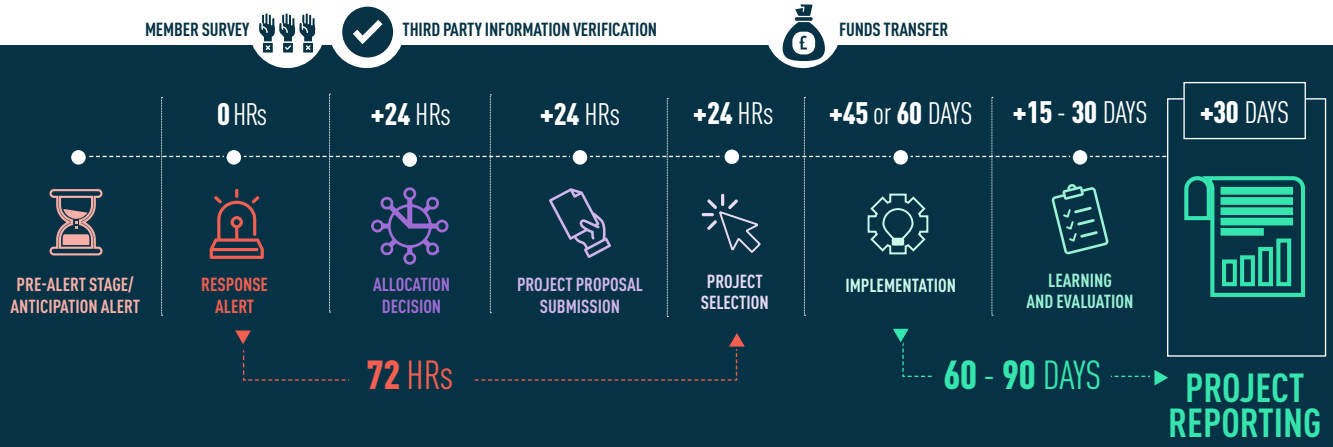
Awarded member organisations should retain evidence of compliance and relevant supporting information and make this available, as needed, for evaluation, monitoring or audits. The default standard retention period for Start Fund project records is seven years.

In line with the data protection requirements set out in the Start Network Membership Agreement, Members are required to not send personal information (such as details on individuals assisted by the Start Fund project) in the project reports.

When an awarded member reports an underspend or any disallowed costs, the Start Fund team will confirm the financial amount with the organisation and then issue an invoice. The receiving member has 30 days from the date that the invoice is issued on to make payment or query the amount. The project is regarded as closed once the payment has been made, unless there are other outstanding concerns that have been communicated with the member by the Start Fund team.

As Start Network's Grant Custodian to the Start Fund, SCUK publishes information in accordance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

The project report template can be found in Appendix – Section 2.8. Please note that this template is for reference only and the Start Fund will only accept final reports via our online portal, the link to which is sent to agencies once agreement is signed.



START FUND MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

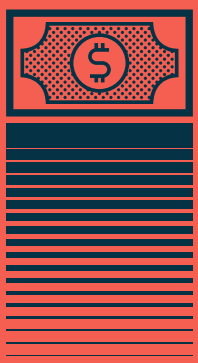
21.1 A final Start Fund project report must be submitted via the online portal within 30 days of the project end date noted in the award letter.

21.2 There should be no further new expenditure between the project end date and the report due date. Monitoring activities such as post-distribution monitoring can be conducted after the project but before the project report is due (however, any cost related to such activities must be incurred and charged within the project implementation period).

21.3 Awarded member organisations should retain evidence of compliance and relevant supporting information and make this available, as needed, for evaluation, monitoring or audits. The default standard retention period for Start Fund project records is six years plus current (i.e. + one).

21.4 Start Fund project report forms should not include personal data, in accordance with Start Network Membership Agreement data protection requirements.

21.5 Awarded Member organisations will, in the case of an under-spend or disallowed cost, transfer the balance of funds as reported in the final report to the Grant Custodian (SCUK) within 30 days of the date on which the invoice is issued.



22 | NATIONAL START FUNDS

National Start Funds in Bangladesh and Nepal are based on the same principles as the Start Fund. However, some of the processes set out in this handbook will vary for national Start Funds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NATIONAL START FUNDS PLEASE CONTACT THE START FUND TEAM VIA EMAIL STARTFUND@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG OR VISIT WWW.STARTNETWORK.ORG

23 | LIVING APPENDIX

The hyperlinks on this page are to policies, procedures and other useful documents that will be kept up to date by the Start Fund team.

01 START FUND GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- *Start Network Membership Agreement*
- *Terms of Reference: Start Fund Governance and Management Structure*

02 START FUND OPERATIONS AND GUIDANCE

2.0 Pre-Alert Stage

- *Start Fund Country Skype Groups* (EN, ES, FR)

2.1 Anticipation Alert

- *Start Fund Anticipation Guidance* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Pre-alert Guidance Notes for Anticipated Crises* (EN, ES, FR)

2.2 Alert Stage

- *Alert Note Templates - Response and Anticipation* (EN only)
- *Alert Note Guidance* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Fund Alert Member Survey – Questions* (EN, ES, FR)

2.3 Allocation Stage

- *Start Fund Allocation Decision-making Framework – Response and Anticipation* (EN only)

2.4 Proposal Stage

- *Response Project Proposal Template and Checklist* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Anticipation Project Proposal Template and Checklist* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Fund Guidance Note on Accountability and Safeguarding* (EN only)
- *Start Fund Sanctions and Terrorism Financing Compliance Certification* (EN only)
- *Guidance for Members – Start Fund and Start Ready Initiatives to Accelerate Locally-led Humanitarian Action* (EN, ES, FR)

2.5 Project Selection Stage

- *Guide to Project Selection* (EN, ES, FR)

2.6 Award Stage

- *Start Fund Award Letter template* (EN only)

2.7 Implementation Stage

- *Guidance on Procurement under the Start Fund* (FCDO PrOF guidance)
- *Start Fund Project Change Request Form* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Fund Communications and Visibility Requirements* (EN, ES, FR)

- *Inventory Report Form – for Transfer of Assets* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Network Consent Form* (EN only)

2.8 Reporting and Learning Stage

- *Start Fund Report Form Template* (EN, ES, FR) (for reference only; submission via online portal)

2.9 Start Fund Assurance and Accountability

- *Start Network Finance Management and Assurance Check-in Tool Summary* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Network Finance Management and Assurance Check-in Tool* (EN)
- *Start Network Safeguarding Policy* (*EN*, *ES*, *FR*)
- *SCUK Safeguarding Policy* (EN)
- *Start Fund Sanctions and Terrorism Financing Compliance Certification* (EN only)
- *Guidance for Members – Start Fund and Start Ready Initiatives to Accelerate Locally-led Humanitarian Action* (EN, ES, FR)

2.10 Start Fund General Guidance and Training

- *Start Fund General Overview* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Fund Frequently Asked Questions* [FAQ] (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Fund Training resources* (EN, ES, FR)

2.11 Other Start Fund-Related Small Grants

- *Analysis for Action Grant*
- *Anticipation Tool Grant*
- *Learning Grant*

03 LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE START FUND

- *Start Fund Training Page*
- *Start Fund Training Videos* (EN, ES, FR)
- *Start Fund Evaluations*
- *Start Fund Crisis Response Summaries*
- *Start Fund Case Studies*

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE START FUND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, PLEASE CONTACT STARTFUND@STARTPROGRAMMES.ORG

FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.STARTNETWORK.ORG

24 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ALERT	The process by which members inform the Start Network membership of a crisis. This is done through an alert note, which outlines the crisis and why the Start Fund is the best mechanism to respond.
ALLOCATION	An amount assigned to respond to a crisis to which the Start Fund has been alerted.
ANTICIPATION	The expectation or prediction of a specific crisis that is likely to unfold, based on forecasting information.
DELEGATED AUTHORITY	Decision-making authority of one body is relinquished to another. In the Start Fund, this often refers to donors relinquishing funding decision-making to the Start Network membership.
DECENTRALISED	The process of redistributing or dispersing functions and/or powers away from a central location or authority. In the Start Fund, this means moving decision-making closer to the population affected by crisis.
FORECAST	To estimate or predict conditions by analysis of data; for instance, the analysis of meteorological data to forecast the likelihood of specific weather conditions.
GRANT CUSTODIAN	Start Network is hosted by Save the Children UK (SCUK), which is referred to as the Grant Custodian throughout this document. The Grant Custodian is responsible for all the financial and risk management aspects of the Start Fund. The Grant Custodian ensures that all Start Fund grants are sub-granted and transferred according to the agreed procedures and timelines. As part of this Grant Custodian arrangement, the Start Network uses SCUK's infrastructure, including HR, IT and other systems. The Start Network decision-making processes are independent from SCUK, which means they do not have any more influence over Start Network than any other members.
HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM	The wide range of individuals, organisations, agencies and inter-agency networks – both private and public – that together enable international humanitarian assistance to be channelled to the places and people in need of it.
MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS	The rules that govern the Start Fund, to which all members are signatory.
MEMBER	The Start Network is made up of members (sometimes referred to as member agencies or agencies in this handbook), who govern the Start Network. Members can be national, regional and international humanitarian organisations. These members go through an application and stringent due diligence process to access the services of Start Network. To apply to be a member, please contact: membership@startnetwork.org
PEER REVIEW	An evaluation of a project, response, or decision, which is performed by a group of humanitarian experts within the Start Network membership or by a member's partners.
POOLED FUND	The mechanism used to receive contributions from multiple financial partners (donors) and allocate such resources to multiple implementing organisations.
START FUND TEAM	Start Network staff that facilitate the alert process and governance procedures on behalf of members. The Start Fund Team creates the space for members to collaborate.

25 | SUMMARY OF MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Below is a list of mandatory requirements outlined in this handbook, for ease of reference.

5.1 The Start Network membership has delegated authority from Start Fund donors; Start Fund decision-making is undertaken by the Start Fund Committee.

5.2 When receiving Start Fund awards and grants, members must (i) adhere to the Start Network Membership Agreement and (ii) sign and adhere to the applicable Start Fund award letter or grant agreement. They must also follow the processes and mandatory requirements outlined in this Start Fund Handbook.

5.3 Member personnel (including partner personnel, where relevant) must familiarise themselves with the terms of the Start Network Membership Agreement, the Start Fund Handbook and, if receiving awards or grants, the applicable Start Fund award letter or grant agreement.

5.4 Members must inform the Start Fund team of any changes in their contact details and ensure that a contact is available at all times, including outside of working hours and during holiday periods.

5.5 All members commit to participating in the Start Fund Committee and to abide by its terms of reference.

5.6 Failure to attend relevant Start Fund Committee meetings or insufficient engagement in Start Fund processes may lead to sanctions by the Board, including loss of Start Network membership.

5.7 All decisions should prioritise the needs of populations at risk of and/or affected by humanitarian crises over the priorities of individual member organisations

8.1 Any anticipation alert must be based on a credible forecast.

8.2 Anticipatory project activities need to be advanced preparedness and/or early actions to reduce the impact of an impending crisis. Anticipation alerts should not be raised based on a seasonal forecast or intended to support long-term preparedness work.

8.3 For anticipation alerts, member requests for altered crisis alert to project selection timeframes must be clearly justified in the alert note and not exceed seven days.

8.4 For anticipation projects, member requests for an extended implementation timeframe up to 60 days must be clearly justified at the time of proposal submission.

8.5 Applications for Analysis for Action (AA) Grants must be made by at least two Start Network members working in partnership. The grant is for a maximum of £10,000 (in total) to conduct inter-agency risk analysis in preparation for the raising of a Start Fund crisis alert.

8.6 Applications for the Anticipation Tool Grant can request a maximum of £40,000 to enable members to develop analysis tools to support with the anticipation of crises.

10.1 Only Start Network members can alert the Start Fund in anticipation of or response to a crisis. Start Network members can alert the Start Fund on behalf of partners.

10.2 Members should be proactive in alerting the Start Fund to ensure timely humanitarian action.

10.3 Where possible, members should raise crisis alerts to the Start Fund between 09:00 and 17:00 (UK time). Members should aim to raise alerts by Wednesday morning (UK time) or provide clear justification for raising an alert later in the week.

11.1 For each crisis alert, all Start Network members should provide a strategic steer by completing the online member survey, irrespective of whether they have an operational presence in the affected area or have further information on the crisis.

11.2 For the crisis alert to progress to the allocation stage, the member survey must indicate that at least one Start Network member (or member's partner) is able to respond to the crisis.

11.3 In the member survey, Start Network members should nominate their own personnel in the country or region of the crisis for the project selection meeting should the Start Fund be activated. Nominees should be experienced member or partner personnel. Start Network members (and any partners) that submit project proposals cannot participate in project selection.

12.1 All decisions should prioritise the needs of the Start Fund over individual member priorities. 12.2 With the exception of anticipation alerts, all allocation decisions should be made within 24 hours of the Start Fund being alerted.

12.3 All Start Network members are required to participate in allocation decisions in line with the Start Fund Committee rota system. Allocation decision-making meetings will follow the process set out in the Start Fund Committee Terms of Reference.

12.4 The Start Fund will not be activated if:

12.4.1 Member representatives as part of the allocation decision-making conclude, through available analysis and situation reports, that the local government or other existing indigenous actors can adequately respond to the situation, and do not require additional support or funding.

12.4.2 The crisis occurs in a country or territory which is not listed on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of official development assistance (ODA) recipients. This requirement can only be waived by the Start Fund's donors in exceptional circumstances when the country or territory has circumstances that mean the country or territory is unable to respond to the humanitarian crisis.

12.5 As a guide, not more than £1 million will be allocated to any single Start Fund crisis alert.

13.1 Only Start Network members can apply for funding from the Start Fund, but this funding can be used for partner activities through partnership agreements. In signing the partnership agreement, the partner agrees to comply with the requirements stipulated in the Start Fund award letter and the Start Fund Handbook.

13.2 Start Network members and partners must meet the criteria outlined in this section in order to be eligible to receive Start Fund funding.

13.3 Project proposals for the Start Fund will only be accepted when an allocation decision has been made to activate the Start Fund for a particular crisis alert.

13.4 Project proposals must be sent to the Start Fund team within 24 hours of the allocation decision or by the deadline set out in the allocation email.

13.5 Start Network's Due Diligence Framework informs the amount of funding that individual members can access. The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 3 of the Due Diligence Framework is £300,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000). If the proposal is for a consortium project, this amount can be applied to each member; for non-members in a consortium project, they would be sharing the maximum amount of the awarded (convening) member (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000).

The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 2[11] of the Due Diligence Framework is £100,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £100,000). Members assessed on Tier 1 of the Due Diligence Framework are not currently eligible to be awarded from the Start

11 For information on the maximum amount that can be requested by any member assessed on Tier 2 of Start Network's Due Diligence Framework, contact the Start Fund team via email to *startfund@startprogrammes.org*

Fund. Please refer to Appendix 2.9 for more information on funding access for members assessed on the Due Diligence Framework tiers.

N.B. Members should pay attention to Section 17 'Start Fund Assurance and Accountability' on page 36 of this Handbook for further detail on due diligence.

13.6 Members should submit project proposals using the standard Start Fund proposal forms. The proposal will only be accepted in the correct format. Please refer to Appendix 2.4 for current project proposal templates.

13.7 Project proposals should concentrate activities on providing life-sustaining services and support to affected populations.

13.8 Project proposals should be based on needs and involve affected populations in decision-making and project implementation processes. This includes putting appropriate complaint and feedback mechanisms in place that populations can access confidentially.

13.9 The maximum amount that can be requested in a proposal for Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR) is 10% of the total implementation and operations costs. If the total implementation and operations costs at the time of project reporting are lower than those originally budgeted at the time of project selection, the ICR amount should be a maximum of 10% of the actual cost.

13.10 Capital item costs cannot be used as part of programme set-up costs (e.g. vehicles, laptops, etc). Members would need to specify any individual items costing more than £500 in the budget. As part of project reporting, awarded members are required to compile an inventory form and submit it to the Start Fund with a proposal for the future use of each asset following the end of the project. Please refer to Appendix 2.7 for the inventory report form.

14.1 A project selection committee will comprise between four and seven participants; note that Start Network members and any partners that submit project proposals to the Start Fund for the crisis cannot participate in project selection. If there are not enough members present in the country of the crisis alert, member representatives from the region can participate in the meeting. Those with contextual insight will be given preference at the discretion of the Start Fund team.

14.2 Project selection decision makers must peer review project proposals prior to the project selection meeting, typically 90 minutes to 2 hours in advance of the meeting start time – but potentially up to 24 hours prior.

14.3 There is no guarantee that all qualifying project proposals will be awarded funding. The project selection decision makers have the discretion to not award funding should they consider all humanitarian needs as having already been met.

14.4 The decision of the project selection committee is final. In rare circumstances, such as when a member appeals a decision, this will be reviewed by the Start Fund Committee Chairperson and further steps will be determined as necessary.

15.1 Start Network's Grant Custodian (SCUK) will initiate the transfer of the awarded funds within 24 hours of receiving the fund transfer request from the Start Fund team, following project selection and the receipt of the signed Start Fund award letter from the awarded member. However, if the 24-hour period includes a weekend or UK public holiday, the remainder of the period will be carried into the next UK business day. Awarded members can spend against the award from its start date (as outlined in the award letter).

15.2 The transfer will be made based on the Start Fund project selection committee's decision, and the return of the signed Start Fund award letter will be done within one business day, or the awarded member will be required to return the funds to the Grant Custodian (SCUK).

15.3 The Start Fund award letter sets out the intention for the member to receive the amount of funding allocated, as decided by project selection decision makers.

12 Date of an action that is directly associated with implementation of an activity that directly benefits/assists affected populations (includes mass communication, distribution, capacity building, face-to-face communication/sensitisation etc.; this does not include selection of populations at risk of and/or affected by crises, assessments etc).

16.1 Each member that is awarded funding from the Start Fund must:

16.1.1 Reach affected populations with activities within seven days of the project start date noted in the Start Fund award letter;[12]

16.1.2 Respond based on needs and involve affected populations in decision-making and project implementation processes. This includes putting appropriate complaint and feedback mechanisms in place that populations can access confidentially;

16.1.3 Concentrate activities on providing life-sustaining services and support to affected populations;

16.1.4 Actively participate in relevant clusters and/or other local coordination mechanisms;

16.1.5 Complete an accountable project within 45 days[13] or the end date noted in the award letter, if different; All funds must be spent during the Start Fund project implementation period, i.e. between the start and end date noted in the award letter. As best practice, monitoring activities, should be conducted during project implementation. It is possible to conduct monitoring activities after the project end date e.g., post-distribution monitoring, but must be prior to the project report deadline. However, any costs related to such activities must be incurred and charged within the project implementation period. Due to the short implementation timeframes, amendments to the Start Fund end-date, including no-cost extensions, will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Start Fund team;

16.1.6 Not use Start Fund funding to set up a new operation in a country where the member or their affiliates/ partners are not present, unless approval to do so is given and noted in the minutes of the allocation decision or project selection meeting;

16.1.7 Not use Start Fund funding to purchase any items of operational equipment according to the definition set out in the Start Network Membership Agreement – i.e. any single, non-consumable item of equipment purchased for or in relation to a project which is not of a direct benefit to the intended beneficiaries of that project;

16.1.8 Ensure partners meet the criteria and obligations specified;

16.2 Start Fund funding is limited per member organisation for any given crisis regardless of the number of partners to whom the member organisation sub grants funds;

16.2.1 The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 3 of the Due Diligence Framework is £300,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000). If the proposal is for a consortium project, this amount can be applied to each member; for non-members in a consortium project, they would be sharing the maximum amount of the awarded (convening) member (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £300,000);

16.2.2 The maximum amount that can be awarded from the Start Fund to members assessed on Tier 2[14] of the Due Diligence Framework is £100,000 (or the maximum amount allocated if less than £100,000).

16.2.3 Members assessed on Tier 1 of the Due Diligence Framework are not currently eligible to be awarded from the Start Fund. Refer to Appendix 2.9 for more information on funding access for members assessed on the Due Diligence Framework tiers.

16.3 Amendments can be made to planned Start Fund project activities. However, changes can only be made if based on needs, complaints or feedback of or from the affected population or based on coordinating work with other actors. Members must request and receive written approval from the Start Fund team prior to making changes. Proposed changes need to be justified in the Start Fund Project Change Request Form and if approved, reflected in a revised project proposal.

16.4 In the case of an overspend, implementing members will use their own funding sources to cover this amount. Neither the Grant Custodian (SCUK) nor any other Start Network member has any obligation to transfer an amount higher than the Start Fund grant awarded or;

13 Up to 60 days for anticipation alerts and/or for projects implemented in countries with Local and National NGO member presence. Refer to the Start Fund Proposal template for the latest list of countries eligible.

14 For information on the maximum amount that can be requested by any member assessed on Tier 2 of Start Network's Due Diligence Framework contact the Start Fund team via email to *startfund@startprogrammes.org*

16.5 If a proposed project is no longer required (e.g. due to the work being undertaken by others or because needs have changed) or if unforeseen developments have affected the project's viability, agencies should propose alternative appropriate actions or return the money plus any interest gained to the Grant Custodian (SCUK);

16.6 All members receiving funding through the Start Fund will comply with standard procurement guidelines of the fund's donors as outlined in the Start Network Membership Agreement. As a guide, please refer to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) procurement guidelines as a minimum. In addition:

16.6.1 Evidence of compliance with these guidelines should be retained by the implementing agency and made available for inspection by the Start Fund team and/or donors when required;

16.7 Each member organisation must clearly state in their project proposal any single items with a purchase value over £500; Any non-consumable items of programme equipment purchased under the grant with an initial value of more than £500 and a useful life of more than one year may remain the property of the donor/s and must not be disposed of except as the Start Fund directs. Members must compile an inventory of such assets and submit it to the Start Fund team together with a proposal for the future use of each asset for after the end of the project (please see Appendix - Section 2.7 for the Inventory Reporting Form);

16.8 Start Fund awards may be used for expenses incurred from the start date of a response, as detailed on the award letter;

16.9 Members must ensure there is informed consent for any communication content collected and shared with Start Network. The member must provide a copy (or confirmation) of relevant consent for use of any personal data.

17.1 All Members are responsible for their own internal procedures, including reporting, risk assessments and due diligence on implementing partners (sub-grantees) to prevent the risk that Start Fund funding is misappropriated or inappropriately used by the organisation and/or its personnel or partners. All internal procedures must be in line with the Start Network Membership Agreement.

17.2 For crisis alerts activated in countries that are at a higher risk for sanctions compliance and terrorism financing, members are required to submit the Start Fund Sanctions and Terrorism Financing Compliance Certification form (see Appendix – Section 2.9) together with their proposal.

17.3 If requested by Start Network (following notice from donors, audit officers or anyone reasonably nominated by the Start Fund team or donors), the members will allow their projects to be audited

18.1 If any of incidents mentioned in Section 18 occur in relation to Start Fund-funded activities, members are required to report to reporting@startprogrammes.org as soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event within 48 hours. If in doubt, report.

18.2 Members should respond promptly to any questions raised on incident reports and continue to provide regular updates on each incident.

18.3 If Members have any doubt over whether a matter is reportable, you should email reporting@startprogrammes.org immediately.

19.1 Members are expected to report incidents or concerns related to the funding covered by this handbook:

- Incidents or concerns related to fraud; terrorism financing; money laundering; bribery or corruption; data protection and information security incidents; internal misconduct; or any other losses of funds or resources to reporting@startprogrammes.org.
- Serious incidents to reporting@startprogrammes.org.
- Incidents or concerns related to safeguarding to safeguarding@startprogrammes.org. All concerns should be reported, and all reports should be made as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 48 hours of the member learning of the matter. Start Network, the Grant Custodian (SCUK) and relevant donors are notified of all reports.

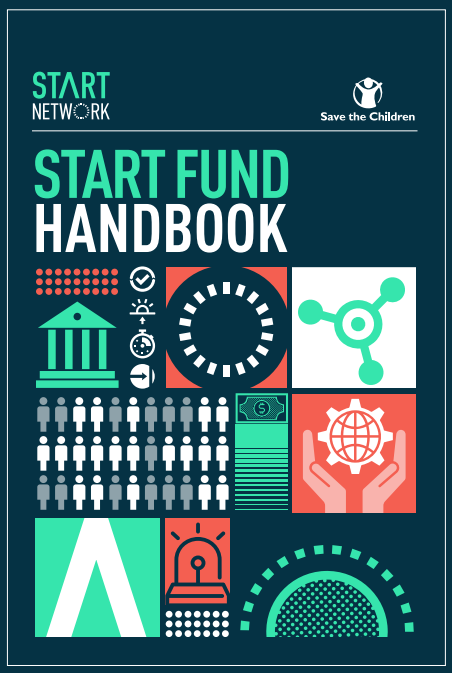
19.2 Members can raise complaints relating to Start activities by emailing complaints@startprogrammes.org

20.1 Start Fund decision-makers and awarded members may be invited to participate in Learning Exchanges and should participate to the best of their ability.

20.2 If a Start Fund project has been identified for project assessment, the member and partners responsible for the project will participate actively, including by providing additional, relevant information to the Start Fund team.

21.1 A final Start Fund project report must be submitted via the online portal within 30 days of the project end date noted in the award letter.

21.2 There should be no further new expenditure between the project end date and the report due date. Monitoring activities such as post-distribution monitoring can be conducted after the project but before the project report is due (however, any cost related to such activities must be incurred and charged within the project implementation period).



CONTACT US AT

startfund@startprogrammes.org