



The
Locally Led
Series

START
NETWORK

LOCALISATION ISN'T A BUZZWORD; IT'S AN ACTION WORD.



**ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER
THAN WORDS**

This locally led series aims to share with our global community evidence-based stories from our local partners through our programmes and funding streams. In this series, you will find inspiration, data, and concrete ways local actors are transforming the humanitarian system!

PURPOSE

**DRIVE SYSTEM-LEVEL SHIFTS
TO BUILD A LOCALLY LED
HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM**



01 THE BEST PEOPLE FOR THE JOB: WHAT LOCAL ORGANISATIONS DO DIFFERENTLY

The humanitarian system is often criticised for being dominated by international actors at the expense of local organisations. But how do local organisations add value over and above international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) – especially in anticipation of a crisis? What are they doing differently? This blog outlines the evidence of how a local organization is able, by virtue of being local, to provide more relevant solutions to assist communities affected by crises.

A recent literature review highlighted a lack of evidence regarding the effects of localisation, both on the impact and quality of humanitarian responses. Even in this enlightened piece of research, however, the focus was on comprehensive value-for-money exercises or impact evaluations, rather than gathering evidence and lessons around what local organizations can do differently.

To address this, Start Network, in collaboration with GLOW Consultants, undertook an evaluation in Pakistan to reflect on the ways in which local organizations add value, especially in advance of a crisis.

This added value operates at two levels. Local organisations better understand when to act, as they are in the area and aware of possible impeding crises through, for example, changes in weather patterns. They also better understand how to act, as they can offer services that are more aligned to community needs, contextually relevant to cultural norms, and better coordinated with local government and other stakeholders.

THE COOLING FACILITY ON ALLAH ABAD ROAD. THIS WAS PROVIDED FOR THE PUBLIC BY THE BRIGHT STAR DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY BALOCHISTAN, IN RESPONSE TO THE HEAT WAVE IN SIBI, BALOCHISTAN, PAKISTAN.

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ANTICIPATING HEAT WAVES IN PAKISTAN

In response to an anticipated heat wave in Sibi, Balochistan, one of the Start Network's local members, the Bright Star Development Society Balochistan (known as Bright Star) set up cooling facilities, comprising a shaded area with seating and a supply of clean cold water. The idea came from previous learning and consultation with stakeholders, and they were set up in addition to the standard heat wave messages that many organizations provide.

|| We, Bright Star, were keeping a close eye on the evolving heat wave situation in Sibi. When the situation deteriorated, leading to unprecedented heat in the area, building upon our partnership with Start Network we conceived this project. Activities under this project were based on our previous learning, as well as consultation with the key stakeholders. The offering of water or milk to the general public on certain religious occasions is part of our cultural and religious values... It was this sense of civic service which became the source of this idea. We were able to maximize outreach to the affected population at minimal cost and without any time delay. The timely response from the Start Network helped to save lives and reduce the suffering for the people of Sibi as a result of [the] heat wave.

NASEER AHMED CHANNA CEO, Bright Star

As part of the evaluation, we spoke to a range of stakeholders involved with the implementation and use of these cooling facilities. It was clear from the interviews that these facilities were only possible because of Bright Star's presence in the area, their local staff, and the trust they have built up – with the community and the local administration – through inclusion and meeting needs.



BRIGHT STAR COORDINATED WITH...



THE GOVERNMENT

Two government officials recounted how Bright Star established strong coordination with the local administration and is well known to them. They spoke about how this is different from INGOs, which often just come in for their activities and then leave without engaging with the government. The officials noted how important this engagement is to ensure they have the required support and protection for planned activities.

|| The staff of Bright Star in Sibi [have] established strong coordination with the local administration. It helps Bright Star to know the needs and include the recommendations of the public in its project delivery... It is important for organizations like Bright Star to consult with the community, and us as government, to ensure they have all the required support and protection for their activities.

MEER SHAHBAZ SAR BULAND KHAN BAROZAI
Station house officer, Risaldar Force,
and government focal point for the project

LOCAL SHOPKEEPERS & TRADERS

The cooling facilities were located at three bus stations. The focus was to provide support for travellers, who face a particularly high risk from heat waves as they are away from home with nowhere to rest. Bus stations are busy places, though, and plots have high premium value. A bus driver and a local fruit cart owner recalled that Bright Star first consulted with traders and shopkeepers at the bus station to secure these spots.

|| I know they consulted shopkeepers at the bus stand and this [is] how they got this place; otherwise, they would not have given them this spot in such a busy and expensive place. It is important to engage the local community and officials in such initiatives, as they have a better knowledge of the regional dynamics and may help in enhancing the effectiveness of the work done.

BUS DRIVER ON THE IRRI MITHRI ROUTE
Translated from Sindhi



Poster on a wall close to the Allah Abad Road cooling facility.



BRIGHT STAR HAS BUILT A REPUTATION & UNDERSTANDING WITH COMMUNITIES

As mentioned, consultation with the community is essential for building trust and ensuring the effectiveness of an initiative. A stakeholder working in the humanitarian sector, and based in Balochistan, explained how Bright Star really works to understand community needs. This makes its work more effective than, for instance, INGOs which do not understand “local dynamics and ground realities”.

Bright Star’s working [mode] is to understand local communities and, as a result, they are accepted by communities. I am satisfied with their response, and it is for everyone without any discrimination... Bright Star is more aware of the local dynamics and ground realities, which [are] unknown to INGOs, and this makes its work more effective.

KAMRAN AHMED Government and media reporter

BRIGHT STAR COULD ACCESS RELEVANT RISK INFORMATION



Bright Star’s office is in Quetta, the largest city in Balochistan, and it also has a field presence in Sibi and the surrounding districts. This not only builds trust with the community, but also puts it in the unique position of being able to access relevant contextual information. Without Bright Star being able to source local meteorological data, the heat wave response would not have happened at all. The Sibi region is too mountainous for the heat wave forecasting model to work, so the trigger (or ‘activator’) for an early action response is instead based on observations. In this instance, the observations came from Bright Star, which could access current weather information and then alert the Start Network of an imminent heat wave.



THE ADDED VALUE OF LOCAL ACTORS

[YOU CAN READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

These are just some examples of how local actors can do things differently when acting in anticipation of a crisis, providing alternatives to the traditional ‘cash or kits’ approach often adopted by INGOs. The main message is that being present and taking time to build relationships provides local organizations with an edge over those that just ‘drop in’ when there is an emergency. The Start Network will continue to collect and share stories and examples as we work alongside our local members. We advocate for others to do this same, so that together we can build the evidence and learning base around how local can be better, for anticipatory action and other humanitarian activities.

02 CLOSING THE LEARNING LOOP

THE ADDED VALUE OF COMMUNITY LED LEARNING AND ADAPTING ASSISTANCE TO BETTER ADDRESS COMMUNITIES' NEEDS



In June 2021, Bright Star Development Society Balochistan (BSDSB), were funded through Start Network’s Disaster Risk Financing programme in Pakistan to assist in mitigating an anticipated heatwave in Sibi (Pakistan). Bright Star provided behavioural messaging in addition to ‘cooling facilities’ that provided cold water and a place to rest. The Start Network Evidence and Learning team worked with GLOW Consultants (a private research company based in Pakistan) to conduct interviews with communities who received the assistance, and government officials who helped facilitate the project, to understand the impact of the response and how it could be improved in the future.

Our report from this research provides concrete evidence on ways in which communities benefited in terms of improved health and wellbeing, improved knowledge and positive behaviour change to mitigate against the effects of heatwave. Communities were also able to reflect and share ways that the assistance could be improved if it were to be provided again. These recommendations have already been built into Bright Star’s contingency planning for 2022 so that that if a heatwave response is triggered, they will be ready to act in accordance with community needs.

Because Bright Star is a local organisation, working and living in the community – they are able to act on learning as they will once again be acting to support the communities facing these hazards.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED BY PROJECT PARTICIPANTS FOCUSED ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE ASSISTANCE THAT BRIGHT STAR PROVIDED. THEY INCLUDED:



IMPROVING ACCESS TO THOSE WHO CANNOT READ BY USING AUDIO MESSAGES

Even though people noted that the use of pictures as well as text was good and that literate people can read the messages and inform other people about it, they suggested that audio messages could reach more people. They suggested these to be playing at the cooling facilities or be announced through a loudspeaker. In addition to helping reach those who cannot read or interpret the pictures, this may also increase reach to those who did not look at the posters. To bolster these findings, Bright Star also suggested that religious leaders could be invited to share the messages.


I think this is a good idea to convey audio messages using loudspeakers. Religious leaders can be engaged in the project activities to use the loudspeakers to convey ICE* to public. I don’t see any challenges in engaging the religious leaders. Similarly, pretesting of the pictures is a good idea and can be helpful.

NASEER AHMED CHANNA
CEO, Bright Star

*ICE- Information, Communication and Education

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS BY CREATING FEMALE-FRIENDLY SPACES

Even though women noted that this facility fulfilled a need since it was difficult to find a place to rest outside of the home, both men and women noted that it could be made even more accessible to girls and women by creating a separate area for them and having a female staff member available to help them. To strengthen these findings, Bright Star also suggested that the space could be made bigger by removing some of the chairs.

 We are already considering the idea of deploying a female staff member next time to ensure that women coming to cooling facilities don't face any problems. The cooling facilities can be divided into two with a separator to have a separate facility for women and men. This will also ensure that women have a separate waiting area at the bus stop. Fewer chairs can be placed in both the cooling stations to make it more spacious for the people who leave after drinking water. Due to limited funding, these things were not implemented this year.

NASEER AHMED CHANNA CEO, Bright Star



The project was implemented for 20 days due to limited funding. Bright Star couldn't ask for additional funding due to funding ceiling of £30,000. The funding ceiling has been revised to £60,000 now and we hope to generate a better response next year for a longer time duration. There certainly exists a possibility of extending the project to more days with additional funding.

OPEN

NASEER AHMED CHANNA CEO, Bright Star

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR ALL BY KEEPING THE FACILITIES OPEN FOR LONGER

Though the majority of people reported on the benefits of the cooling facilities and noted that they were meeting a need, the need extended beyond the 20 days that the facilities were provided. People spoke about the heatwave continuing into July and mentioned that this access to cold clean water and a place to rest is something that should be available throughout every summer, as the heatwaves are a regular seasonal event.

This powerful example of closing the learning loop was facilitated by the honest and constructive feedback provided by participants. At Start Network, the Evidence and Learning team has been working hard to look for better ways of building trust with communities by changing what questions we ask and how we ask them. We also work with local researchers to ensure that the questions we ask and the way we ask them are culturally and contextually appropriate, allowing people to express their perspectives in their local languages with people they feel they can trust. We have asked communities how we should be measuring success and are exploring ways that we can also feedback our collaborative learning.



FOLLOWING THIS EVALUATION OF THE HEATWAVE RESPONSE IN JUNE 2021, WE ARE NOW WORKING WITH BRIGHT STAR AND GLOW CONSULTANTS ON POSTERS AND LEAFLETS THAT CAN BE SHARED WITH COMMUNITIES. THESE MATERIALS WILL INCORPORATE BOTH THE FEEDBACK THEY PROVIDED AND HOW THIS INITIATIVE HAS INFORMED THE CHANGES THAT BRIGHT STAR WILL MAKE IF THEY PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AGAIN THIS YEAR.



Keep tuned
to hear our next
locally led story



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