

START
NETWORK

**ANTI-RACIST
AND DECOLONIAL
FRAMEWORK**



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01 INTRODUCTION

This framework has been developed to help Start Network, our members and teams understand and address the many ways in which racism and colonialism can affect our work.

Start Network is a global network of non-governmental organisations, made up of more than 50 national and international aid agencies from five continents. Our mission is to create a new era of humanitarian action that will save even more lives through innovation, fast funding, and early and locally led action.

As part of our efforts to transform the global humanitarian system, we are transitioning to a “network of networks”, with a dispersed network of autonomous and interdependent hubs around the world. These locally led hubs will bring in many more local and national organisations based in their own countries. Through this structure our aim is for the network to be locally led and through this framework we aim to challenge the influence of racism and colonialism.

WE HAVE PRODUCED THIS FRAMEWORK BECAUSE WE RECOGNISE THAT:

- 01** The humanitarian system which Start Network came from – and is still a part of – has its roots in colonial systems and structures. These systems, structures, approaches and ways of working retain a strong legacy of colonialism and still have far-reaching effects within the humanitarian system today.
- 02** Systemic racism continues to prevail in many societies. In addition, many humanitarian organisations are not racially or ethnically diverse. This has led to organisational systems and structures that, in many cases, are still dominated by white perspectives, particularly at senior level. This means they may fail to acknowledge, and in some cases may entrench, colonial and racist structures.
- 03** This has led to a situation where racism is embedded in the ways that the humanitarian sector is built and acts.

We are responding to these issues by working to understand the complex and far-reaching ways in which racism and colonialism can influence our work. This framework is intended to equip our members and teams (as well as other organisations) with the tools to identify and address these influences.

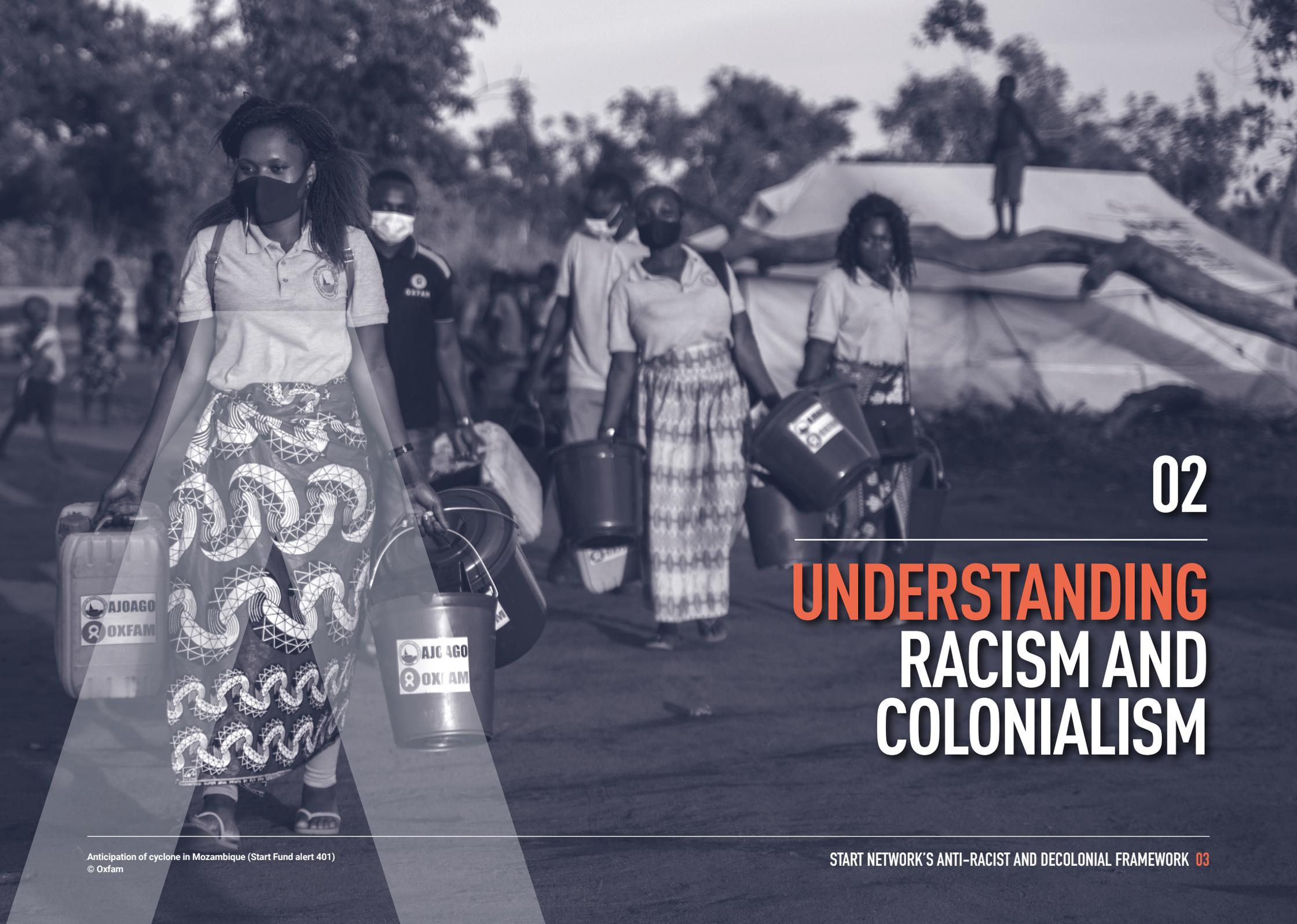
THE FRAMEWORK AND THIS REPORT
HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED WITH
ARBIE BAGUIOS, FOUNDER, AID RE-IMAGINED.

METHODOLOGY

From November 2020 to March 2021, a consultant, Arbie Baguios, led a process that involved:

- Desk research and literature review;
- Review of Start Network’s internal and external documents;
- 13 stakeholder interviews (3 or 23% BIPOC/Global South participants; 9 or 69% women);
- 14 focus group discussions (FGD) with 75 participants (37 or 49% BIPOC/Global South participants; 46 or 61% women)
- Participant observation;
- Start Network stakeholder survey with 43 respondents (at least 24 or 55% BIPOC/Global South respondents; 15 or 36% women)
- And pilot of an ethical reflection session.

The consultant also worked closely with an advisory working group composed of six people, including four or 67% BIPOC/Global South representatives, and four or 67% women.



02

UNDERSTANDING RACISM AND COLONIALISM

DEFINING RACISM AND COLONIALISM

Racism and colonialism are concepts that have a range of meanings. In its literal sense, racism means prejudice or discrimination based on race. According to contemporary theorists¹ whose ideas have found their way into popular discourse, racism should be understood to account for power imbalances between groups. This means racism must be understood as the structural/systemic oppression of groups that do not have (social, political, economic and cultural) power. Oppression is apparent in many ways, including inequality in freedoms and rights (e.g., being treated like second class citizens, segregation, electoral disenfranchisement) as well as outcomes (including economic outcomes, health, wellbeing, education, etc). In the context of the Global North, this means the structural/systemic oppression of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC). This is known as structural/systemic racism.

Meanwhile, colonialism in its literal sense means the “control by one power over a dependent area or people”.² Ideologically speaking, colonialism can be understood as the use of control of one group over another, which leads to (social, cultural, economic and political) dominance and oppression. This understanding is derived from critical theories on colonialism, including: settler-colonialism, which has resulted in large scale displacement and replacement of the native population, often associated in the contexts of the US, Canada and Australia; neocolonialism,³ which means the economic, political, and cultural control of the West in the Global South; coloniality, seen in Western “hegemony over the new model of global power...especially knowledge and the production of knowledge,”⁴ and cultural imperialism, which means the imposition of ideas that reproduces and maintains unequal relations between societies.⁵

Racism and colonialism are understood to be linked because in the context of the Global North they are seen to stem from the colonisation by white Europeans/Westerners of BIPOC populations in indigenous lands and in the Global South.⁶ Racism and colonialism are constitutive of white supremacy, defined by the legal scholar Frances Ansley as: “a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.”⁷ Racism and white supremacy has led to the belief that BIPOC populations are inferior, and so must be colonised (and “civilised”⁸); and colonialism has introduced and perpetuated racial hierarchies across the globe.⁹

1 Some of these theorists include Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, Camara Phyllis Jones and Ibram X. Kendi, whose work takes on a critical lens and focuses on structural and institutional forms of racism, as well as racism’s intersections with other structural forces such as patriarchy and neoliberalism.

2 “Colonialism.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colonialism>. Accessed 24 Feb. 2021.

3 Sartre, J. P. (2005). *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. Abingdon, UK: Taylor and Francis.

4 Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America. *International Sociology*, 15(2).

5 Key theorists of cultural imperialism include Edward Said best known for his work *Orientalism* (1978), as well as Gayatri Spivak, who wrote the seminal essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988).

6 Lawrence, B. & Dua, E. (2005). Decolonizing Anti-racism. *Social Justice*, 32(4).

7 Ansley, F. (1989). *Stirring the Ashes: Race Class and the Future of Civil Rights Scholarship*. *Cornell Law Review*, 6(74)

8 Fischer-Tine, H. & Mann, M. (eds.) (2004). *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India*. London: Anthem Press.

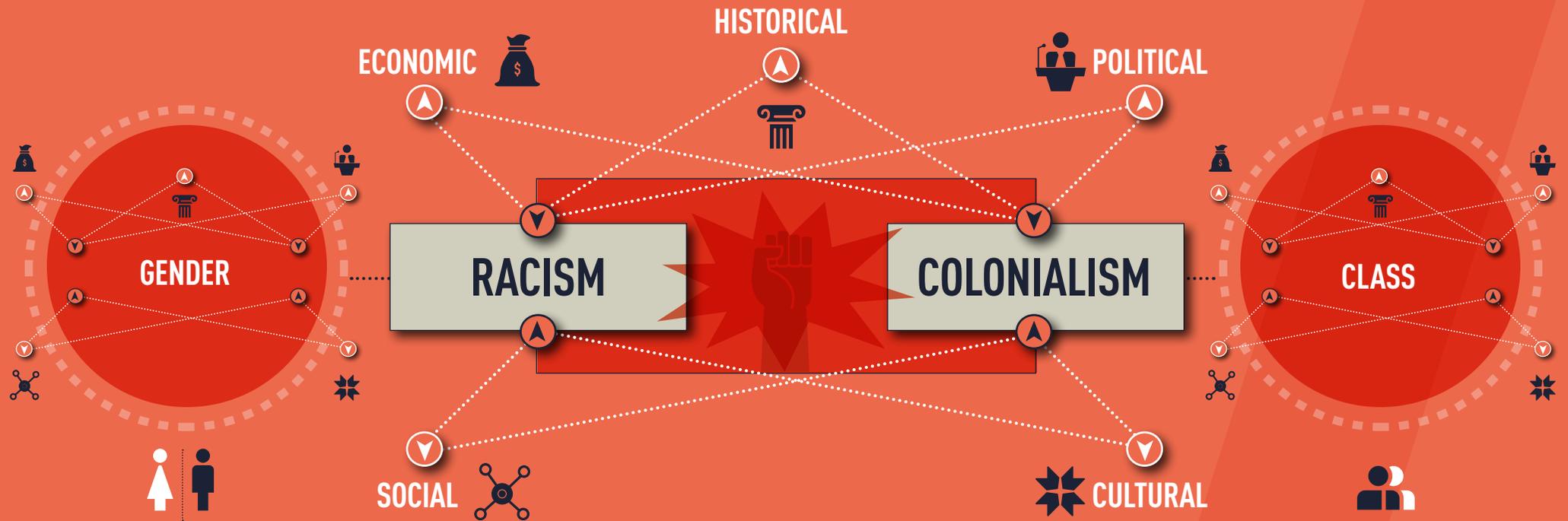
9 Grosfoguel, R. (2007). The Epistemic Decolonial Turn. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), pp. 211-223.

DEFINING RACISM AND COLONIALISM (CONT.)

It can be said that racism and colonialism are emergent products of the dynamic interactions among historical, social, political, economic and cultural factors; and such factors are, in turn, shaped by racism and colonialism. Such an interaction leads to vicious cycles of negative outcomes. At the same time, racism and colonialism also dynamically interact with other social categories such as sex, gender, sexual orientation and class. This is captured in the term intersectionality,¹⁰ which shows that oppression can be experienced differently depending upon the intersection of identities one might find oneself as. For example, the oppression faced by a middle-class white woman (who might be disadvantaged because of her gender) is different from the oppression faced by a working-class Black woman (who is disadvantaged by her race and class, as well as her gender).

¹⁰ Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Anti-racist Politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1(8).

INTERSECTIONS OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM WITH OTHER CATEGORIES OF OPPRESSION



RACISM AND COLONIALISM IN THE AID SECTOR

Racism and colonialism are, of course, also issues within the so-called “aid sector,” understood as the ecosystem of local, national, international and multinational actors (such as governments, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations or NGOs, multilateral organisations such as the UN, private actors, etc) working on tackling societal problems mainly in the Global South, and predominantly using charitable and institutional¹¹ donor funding. Two main areas of the aid sector are development and humanitarian work.

Within the aid sector, colonialism in particular is often regarded as a cause for many of the problems the sector is trying to address: as political scientist Michael Parenti said, poor countries “are not ‘under-developed,’ they are ‘over-exploited.’”¹² Racism and colonialism are also issues internally within the aid sector: from predominantly white leadership and lack of BIPOC staff in offices in the Global North; to the inequities that exist between white “international” staff versus Black and brown national and local staff; to the dynamics between aid workers and community members, which often lead to exploitation and abuse; to the uneven relations between organisations in the Global North and the Global South, including disparities in access to funding; and so much more.

¹¹ By institutional, we mean Official Development Assistance (ODA) as defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

¹² Quote from Michael Parenti’s 1986 lecture. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xP8CzIFhc14&feature=emb_logo

Innovators test a flood warning and monitoring system; DEPP Innovation Labs, TUKLAS Lab, Philippines. © TUKLAS Lab





03

RACISM AND COLONIALISM IN START NETWORK

But what does racism and colonialism mean for stakeholders of the Start Network, with its diverse membership and unique organisational context? Based on discussions, interviews and survey responses, Start Network stakeholders understand racism and colonialism as: structural/systemic superiority – by white people over BIPOC, and by Global North organisations over Global South actors – stemming from power imbalances within society.

STRUCTURAL/SYSTEMIC SUPERIORITY

That they are “systemic/structural” and are a form of “superiority” are the strongest themes to come out of the stakeholders’ own understanding of racism and colonialism. By structural/systemic, stakeholders mean racism and colonialism “excludes the input of people that are non-white or from the local context and marginalizes them through systems;”¹³ and that these structures/systems are “not overt but systems in processes that we all work around.”¹⁴

Superiority has been expressed as “Global North treating the South as inferior to them...the white race sees South as inferior.”¹⁵ It is perceived to be motivated by a belief that “whoever you think acts or behaves differently in your way, is inferior to you; you think you’re the ones doing it right.”¹⁶ It is also seen as a “way of thinking that one race is infinitely better than other races, and that the representatives of the ‘better race’ are entitled to advantages, privileges, special attitude etc.”¹⁷

Stakeholders see racism and colonialism as linked. Stakeholders think “colonialism reinforces the ideologies of racism; in a way colonialism fuels racist ideology.”¹⁸ One participant explained: “In order for colonialism to exist, there has to be a culture that is superior over anyone. And most of the time colonialism also has to do with the colour of your skin. Generally, it’s the white who colonises the non-white, with the idea of being the superior culture.”¹⁹

¹³ Survey response

¹⁴ Start Network members #1 focus group discussion

¹⁵ Start Network members #3 focus group discussion

¹⁶ Hubs contacts focus group discussion

¹⁷ Survey response

¹⁸ Start Network members #2 focus group discussion

¹⁹ Hubs stakeholder focus group discussion

HOW POWER IMBALANCES WITHIN START NETWORK ARE INFLUENCED BY WIDER SOCIETY

Racism and colonialism, for most Start Network stakeholders, arise from power imbalances. In this context, power is understood as one's "power over"²⁰ another – that is, the "ability to influence and coerce" through social, political and economic resources. According to stakeholders, racism and colonialism is understood in terms of "position of power with respect to others."²¹ That means "discrimination of people from a different race done by people in positions of power relative to those being discriminated against."²²

Stakeholders see these power differentials as a result of social, political, and economic inequalities in wider society. That is, "Power and privileges afforded to people and their priorities, ideas, actions based on historical, structural, and interpersonal racial power dynamics."²³ Many of these inequalities are understood as historical: "Coloniality/colonialism represents the manifestation of power dynamics which evolved during the colonial era. It shows up everywhere."²⁴

These historical power imbalances continue to have an effect in societies: "The colonisers are probably not here; they are not here but they left a lot of mechanism and different ways like the media and religion and economic structure that makes us feel we are colonised."²⁵ Another stakeholder said: "Maintenance of power imbalances that were established in the colonial era and continue to this day."²⁶

20 Rowlands, J. (1997). Questioning Empowerment. Oxford, UK: Oxfam

21 Survey response

22 Survey response

23 Survey response

24 Survey response

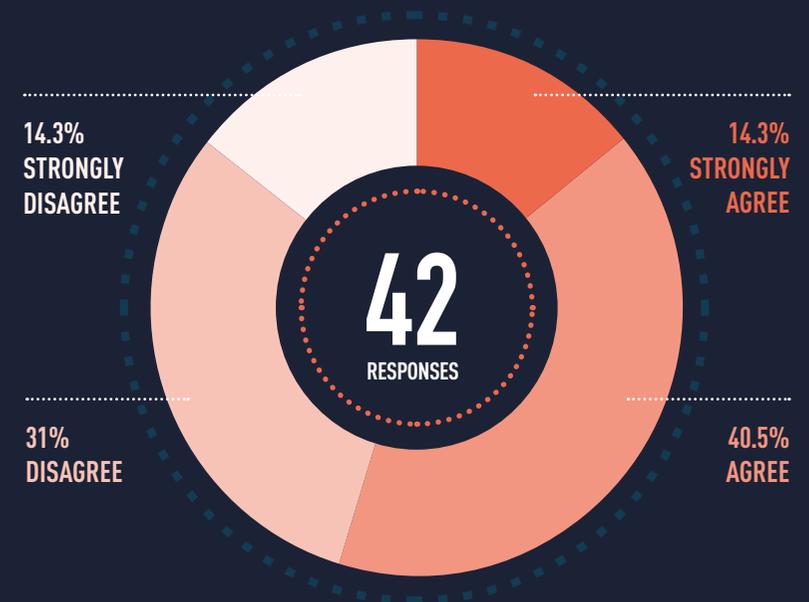
25 Hubs contacts focus group discussion

26 Survey response

MANIFESTATIONS OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM

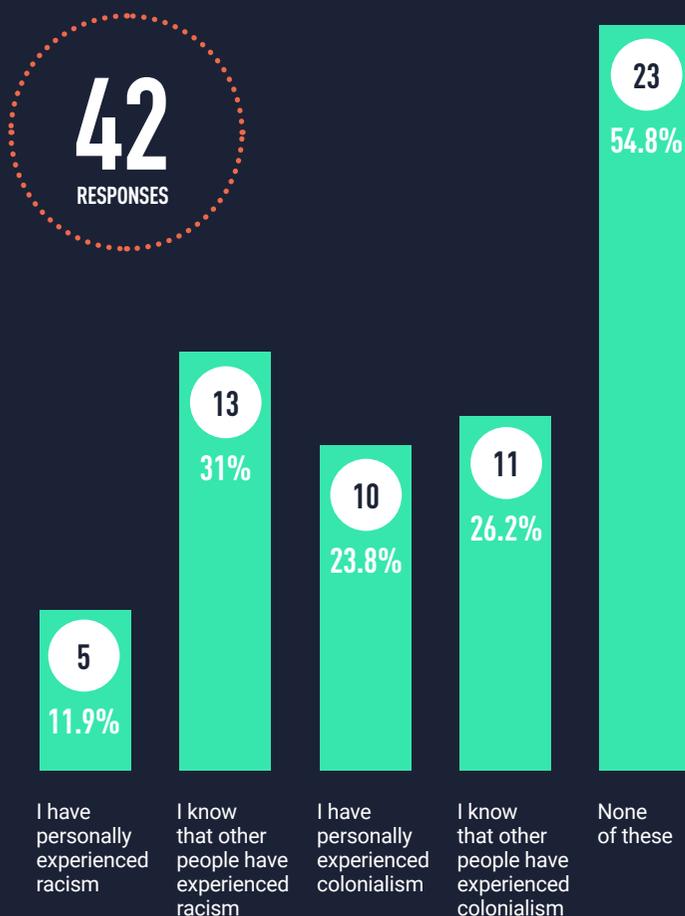
This understanding of racism and colonialism – that is, structural/systemic superiority from power imbalances in society – is consistent with the wider literature. But how do racism and colonialism actually manifest within the Start Network's programmes and structures? In other words, how does structural/systemic superiority translate into the day-to-day experience of Start Network's stakeholders?

DO YOU AGREE THAT THE START NETWORK HAS A RACISM AND/OR COLONIALISM PROBLEM?



Source: Start Network anti-racism/decolonial framework survey

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE ENGAGING WITH START NETWORK, PLEASE TICK ANY AND ALL THAT APPLY



MANIFESTATIONS OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM (CONT.)

This study has found that racism and colonialism is manifest in Start Network’s programmes and structures in a particular way. Heuristics, or decision-making shortcuts, are often influenced by racial and colonial power dynamics, which then lead to negative consequences such as imposition, exclusion, devaluation and alienation. This manifestation can be understood as ‘microdominance’ – the kind of oppressive actions that we see everyday in organisational contexts. And it can pave the way for further undesirable outcomes like unequal treatment of people; dehumanisation, exploitation and abuse; and programme ineffectiveness.

Wider historical, social, political and economic power imbalances, mentioned earlier are reproduced within an organisational context. This is to do with many INGOs’ – Start Network’s included – organisational identities: i.e., predominantly white organisations based in the Global North working with – and for – BIPOC in the Global South.

INGOs – and humanitarianism itself – are historically linked with colonial endeavours.²⁷ As one stakeholder points out, “There’s a lot of thinking to be done about the roots of the INGO system, which go back to the way colonial powers operate.”²⁸ Remnants of INGOs’ historic links with racism and colonialism still show up today – for instance, how Start Network are “sitting in England, distributing money to countries that we used to rule over,”²⁹ and where such money comes from “the FCDO [which] is a tool of the government.”³⁰ This also shows up internally within organisations, including in “the way responsibilities are divided - especially between ‘head offices’ and ‘country offices.’”³¹

Start Network’s identity as a predominantly white organisation based in the Global North determines its – and its staff’s – actions. To borrow an idea from anti-racist and decolonial thinker Frantz Fanon,³² Start Network is “locked in” its identity as a Global North organisation. For this reason, despite Start Network’s best intentions, its programmes and structures are often experienced by BIPOC and Global South stakeholders through a racial and colonial lens.

²⁷ Barnett, M. (2011). *Empire of Humanity*. Ithaca, NY, USA: Cornell University Press.

²⁸ Board Member FGD

²⁹ Start Network team focus group discussion

³⁰ Start Network team focus group discussion

³¹ Survey response

³² Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Mask*. New York, NY, USA: Grove Press.

DECISION MAKING SHORTCUTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

The identity of individuals in Start Network means that decision making shortcuts can be influenced by racial and colonial power dynamics. This explains, for example, unconscious bias, where harmless stereotypes become racist assumptions.

There are many such decision-making shortcuts at play within Start Network's programmes and structures, but based on stakeholders' responses, they broadly fall under three categories:



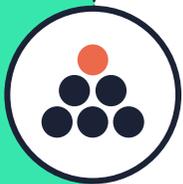
01 JUDGING

includes making assumptions and having pre-existing perceptions about someone's ability or capacity based on their ethnicity, or where in the world they are from. It also covers making biased judgements when, for example, designing a programme or measuring success.



02 UNIVERSALISING

is where someone with "structural power" over another group (for example white people over BIPOC people, or people from the global north or head office over the Global South or local staff members, local/national organisations) uses this power to treat or regard everyone in the group as the same, without regard to individual differences. It also means imposing a particular standard/criterion over a group, with the assumption that this will have the same outcome for all members of the group.



03 CONTROLLING

is when someone with "structural power" over a group uses this power to set conditions and limits that are not necessarily mutually agreed, or even for the benefit of the second group. It's also about influencing outcomes in favour of the more powerful group, either by direct control or by using "carrots and sticks" (incentives and punishments).

Many organisations and the staff within them use judgement, universalisations and controls as part of their organisational systems, processes and policies. In many cases, such decision-making shortcuts are harmless and are done to keep bureaucratic work efficient. But many are inescapably entangled with racial and colonial power dynamics that then lead to unintended harmful consequences.

While there are varying consequences arising from such decision-making shortcuts, most stakeholders' responses can be described as either one or more of the following:

- 01 Imposition.** A top-down approach; to set or establish something onto stakeholders with little input from them or giving them little choice on the matter; to make an individual or organisation do something without their consultation, or even if that is not what they prefer.
- 02 Exclusion.** To directly or indirectly prevent an individual or organisation from participating in or accessing something, such as decision-making, funding, or information.
- 03 Devaluation.** To see an individual or organisation as "lesser than" in terms of importance and capacity, and which translates into people's (and organisation's) financial value.
- 04 Alienation.** To sever, not recognise, or not value an individual's or an organisation's ties to their own context or community. It is seen through a "fly-in-fly-out" approach, and in doing something that is removed from the context.

Imposition, exclusion, devaluation and alienation can further lead to negative outcomes. For stakeholders, at the very least, they result in unequal treatment: for example, one white participant said that when she was travelling in country, she was provided better accommodation and support than her local counterparts.³³ At worst, these enable dehumanisation, exploitation, and abuse. A participant shared: "When I was working for INGO, a white person we we're working with never shook hands with us; when you stretch your hand, she never accepted."³⁴ Another said: "partners are often a source of cheap labour, willing to take risks by operating in insecure areas, and reliant on INGO largesse as they can't access money themselves."³⁵

These consequences can also lead to programme ineffectiveness. Racist and colonial attitudes that have an impact on people's wellbeing can negatively affect workplace performance.³⁶ At the same time, evidence shows that humanitarian programmes are more effective if they are not alienated from their local realities, and benefit from the tacit knowledge of local/national actors.³⁷

³³ Start Network team focus group discussion

³⁴ Start Network members #3 focus group discussion

³⁵ Survey response

³⁶ Yardley, E. (2020, September 22). How racism, wellbeing and performance are connected. Personnel Today. Retrieved from: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/how-racism-wellbeing-and-performance-are-all-connected/> [Accessed 5 March 2021]

³⁷ Honig, D. (2018). Navigation by Judgement. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

ONE STAKEHOLDER SAID:



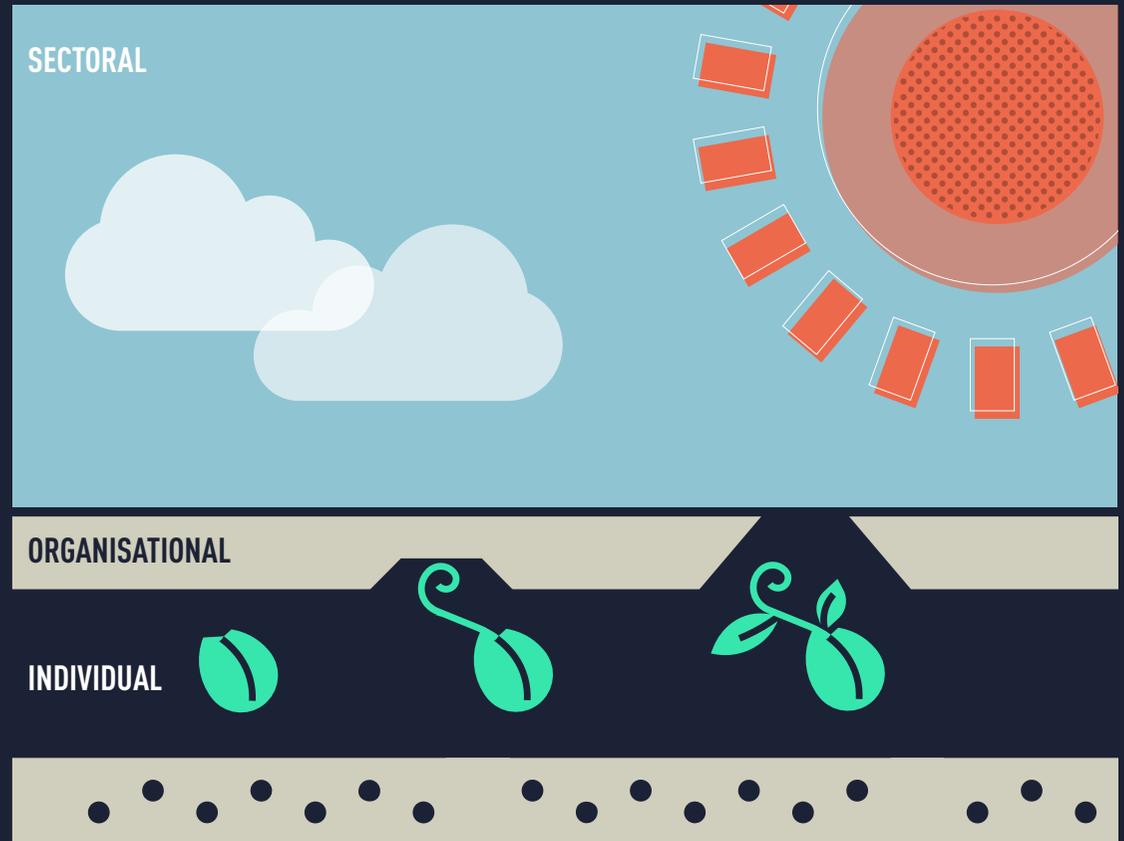
Colonialism is what we continue to do when we send inexperienced young aid workers and development workers into areas where they have no experience. Where projects are written by a bunch of people at desks rather than by those who have lived experience and an understanding of the local context, not from a few reports but from living in it. It is the forcing of broken projects over and over again on to local people who have no choice but to absorb the failures over and over. Multiple farmer field schools set up over and over again, different donors, different organisations. No impact.

WHY RACISM AND COLONIALISM HAPPEN

Structural/systemic racism and colonialism within Start Network manifest through instances of ‘microdominance’ or bias and prejudice. But as discussed, Start Network as an organisation is not purposefully racist/colonial, and few – if any – individuals within it are actually or overtly racist/colonialist. Why, then, does racism and colonialism occur?

This can be explained through another analogy: within organisations, racism and colonialism can inadvertently thrive on fertile ground. Structural/systemic racism and colonialism – manifested through bias and prejudice – grow because of a number of factors. Individuals’ background, actions and beliefs are like seeds that can, under certain circumstances, yield racist and colonial consequences. Organisational settings are like the soil – that is, the immediate environment that determines whether racism and colonialism can perpetuate. The wider humanitarian sector is like the weather – it has an effect, but harder to control or change.

In fulfilling its objective of developing a framework for programmes and structures, this report is focused on the organisational and sectoral factors. Individuals’ behaviours and beliefs, while inherently intertwined with organisational and sectoral factors, are areas best addressed separately – and indeed Start Network is doing so through another strand of their wider EDI work. Meanwhile, this report is focused on organisational and sectoral conditions that primarily affect Start Network’s programmes and structures. That said, suppressing racism and colonialism is a holistic endeavour: it will achieve limited success if it is not addressed through all angles.



The ‘soil’ and the ‘weather’ that affects Start Network are subject to conditions that make it likely for racism and colonialism to thrive. Such conditions can be understood as organisational pressures and sectoral pressures. When Start Network – including its staff – acts and makes decisions under such pressures on top of the inherent complexity and uncertainty of humanitarian contexts, then Start Network are more likely to default to decision making shortcuts that lead to racist and colonial consequences. Even when Start Network act with the best intentions under these pressures, racism and colonialism could still emerge.

Beyond trying to change the ‘seed’ of individuals and their personal views and beliefs (which is no easy feat, and may sometimes be beyond an organisation’s remit), racism and colonialism within organisational settings can be addressed by balancing and counteracting these pressures.

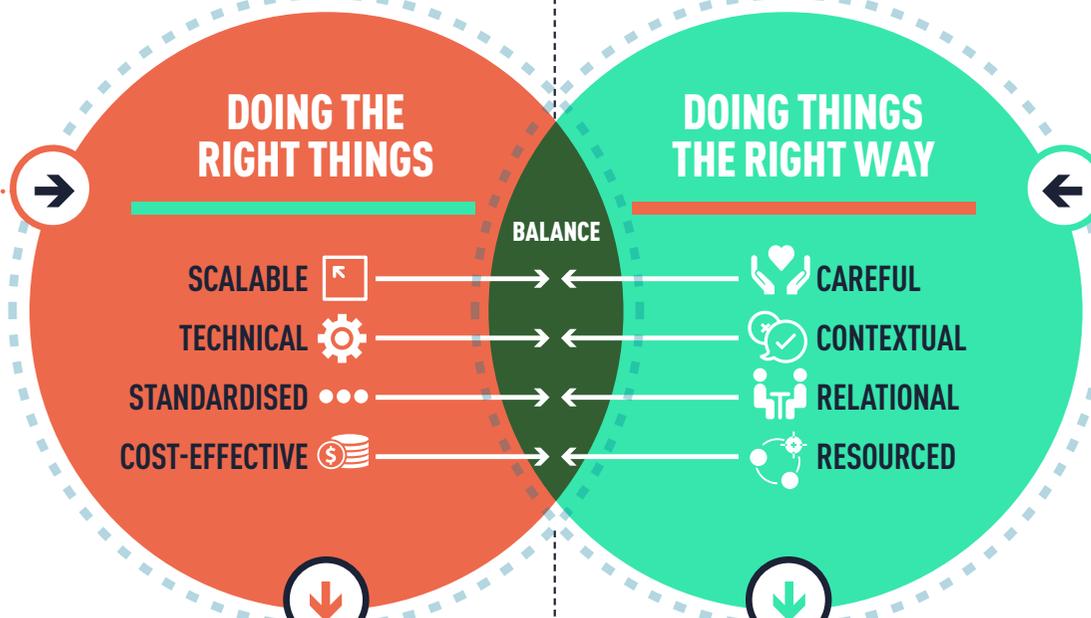
04 THE ANTI-RACIST AND DECOLONIAL FRAMEWORK

RACISM & COLONIALISM

ANTI-RACISM & DECOLONIALISM

SECTORAL & ORGANISATIONAL PRESSURES

BIAS
PREDJUDICE



ETHICAL ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

TRUST
BRAVERY
DEEP DEMOCRACY

INEQUALITY & INJUSTICE

OPPRESSIVE ACTIONS

REPARATIVE ACTIONS

EQUALITY & JUSTICE

Based on research by Arbie Baguios, Aid Re-imagined

THE FRAMEWORK SHOWS THAT:

- Sectoral and organisational pressures are influenced by racial and colonial power dynamics from wider society.
- When these pressures are the dominant driver of decisions and behaviours within organisations, they can influence the use of decision-making shortcuts which are biased and/or prejudiced against Black, indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC) and Global South actors.
- This leads to oppressive actions, inequality and injustice.

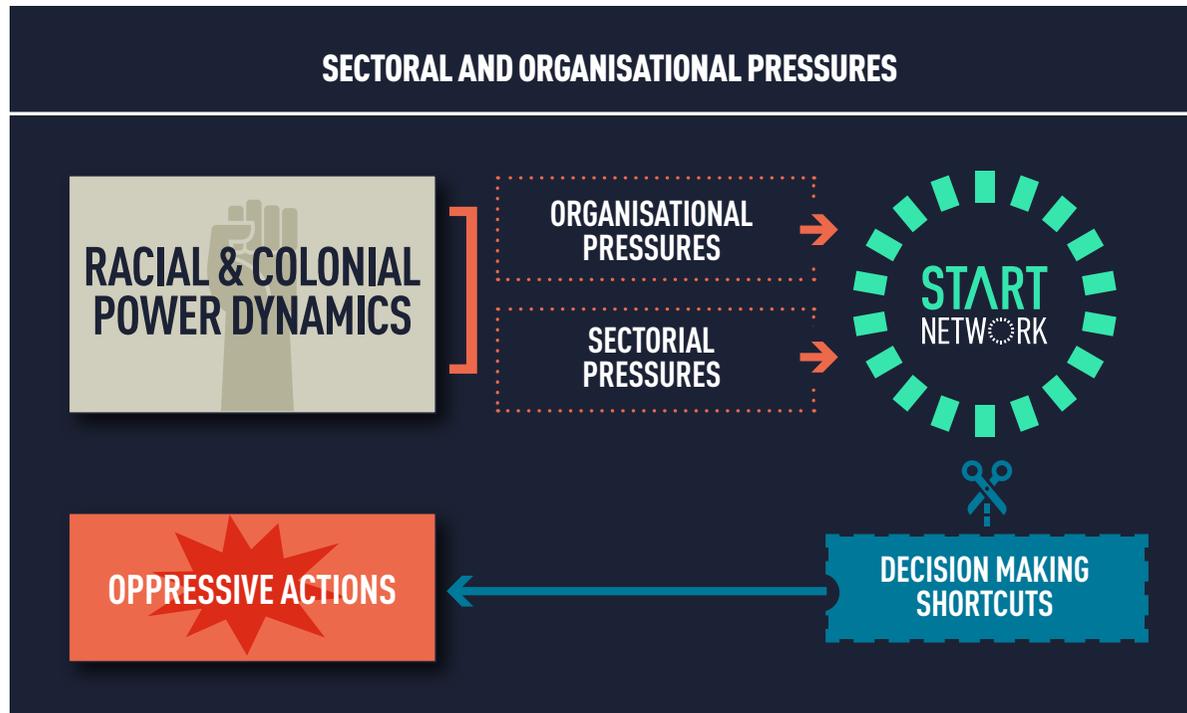
WE MUST CHALLENGE THE INFLUENCE OF RACIAL AND COLONIAL POWER DYNAMICS BY:

- Building an ethical organisational culture, encompassing trust, bravery and deep democracy.
- Balancing doing the right things with doing things in the right way.

THIS CAN LEAD TO REPARATIVE ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT EQUALITY AND JUSTICE. IN THIS WAY, ORGANISATIONS CAN BEGIN TO UNRAVEL RACISM AND COLONIALISM WITHIN ITS PROGRAMMES AND STRUCTURES.

THE CONCEPTS BEHIND THE FRAMEWORK

THE INFLUENCE OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM



SECTORAL PRESSURES

from donors and large INGO members can be financial, regulatory, and political, and can result in donor-driven decision-making. This can be seen in:

- compliance requirements that are passed on to local/national actors
- implementing donor-preferred strategies
- a governance model that gives INGO members more decision-making power.

ORGANISATIONAL PRESSURES

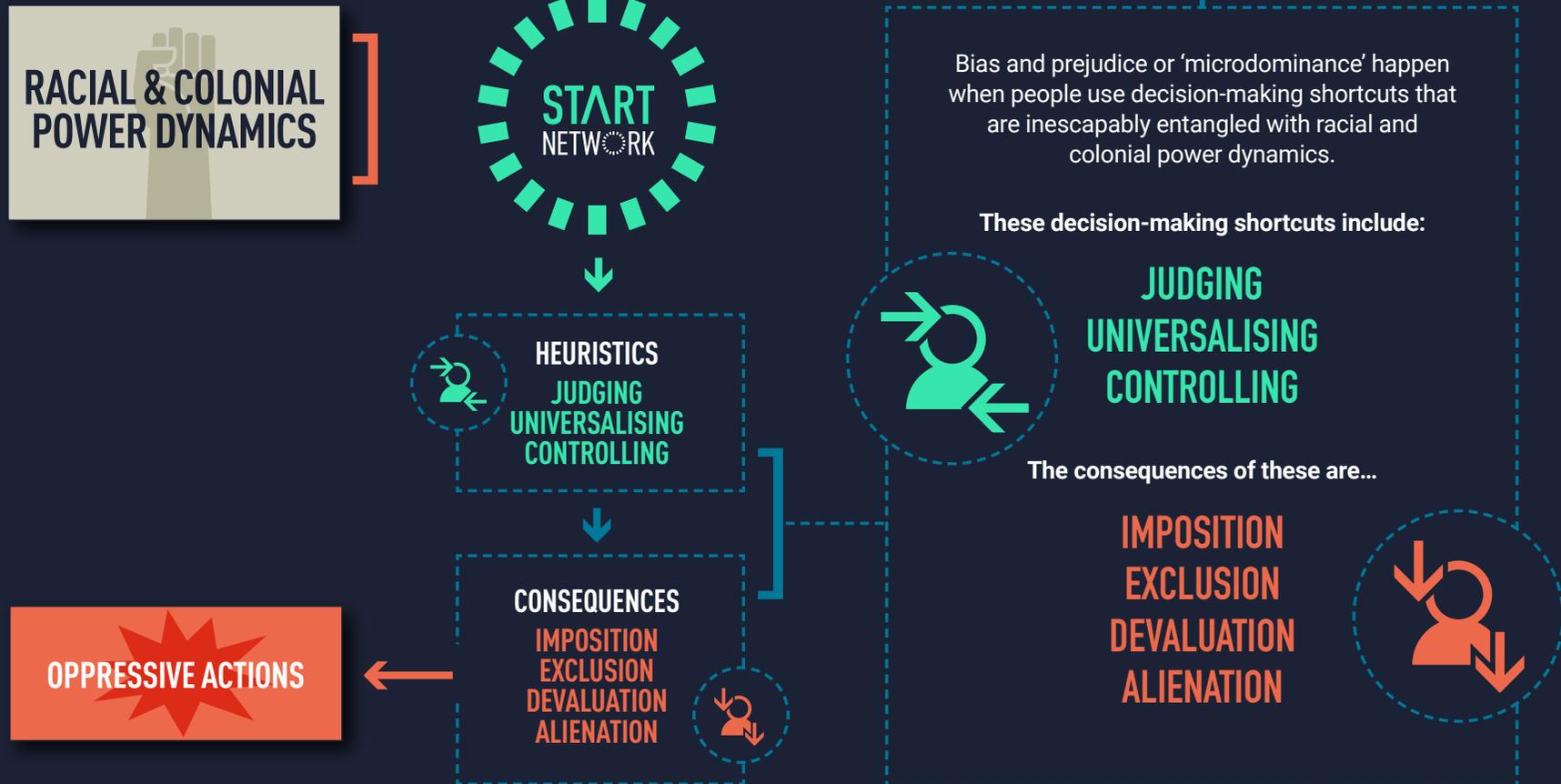
to focus on standards on excellence can mean that ethical considerations are deprioritised. For example:

- Leaning towards scale and growth over meaningful engagement
- A focus on a particular Western-centric kind of specialist knowledge or expertise over others forms of knowledge
- Valuing systematisation and standardisation over nuance
- A preference for risk-free undertakings over brave investments

THE CONCEPTS BEHIND THE FRAMEWORK (CONT.)

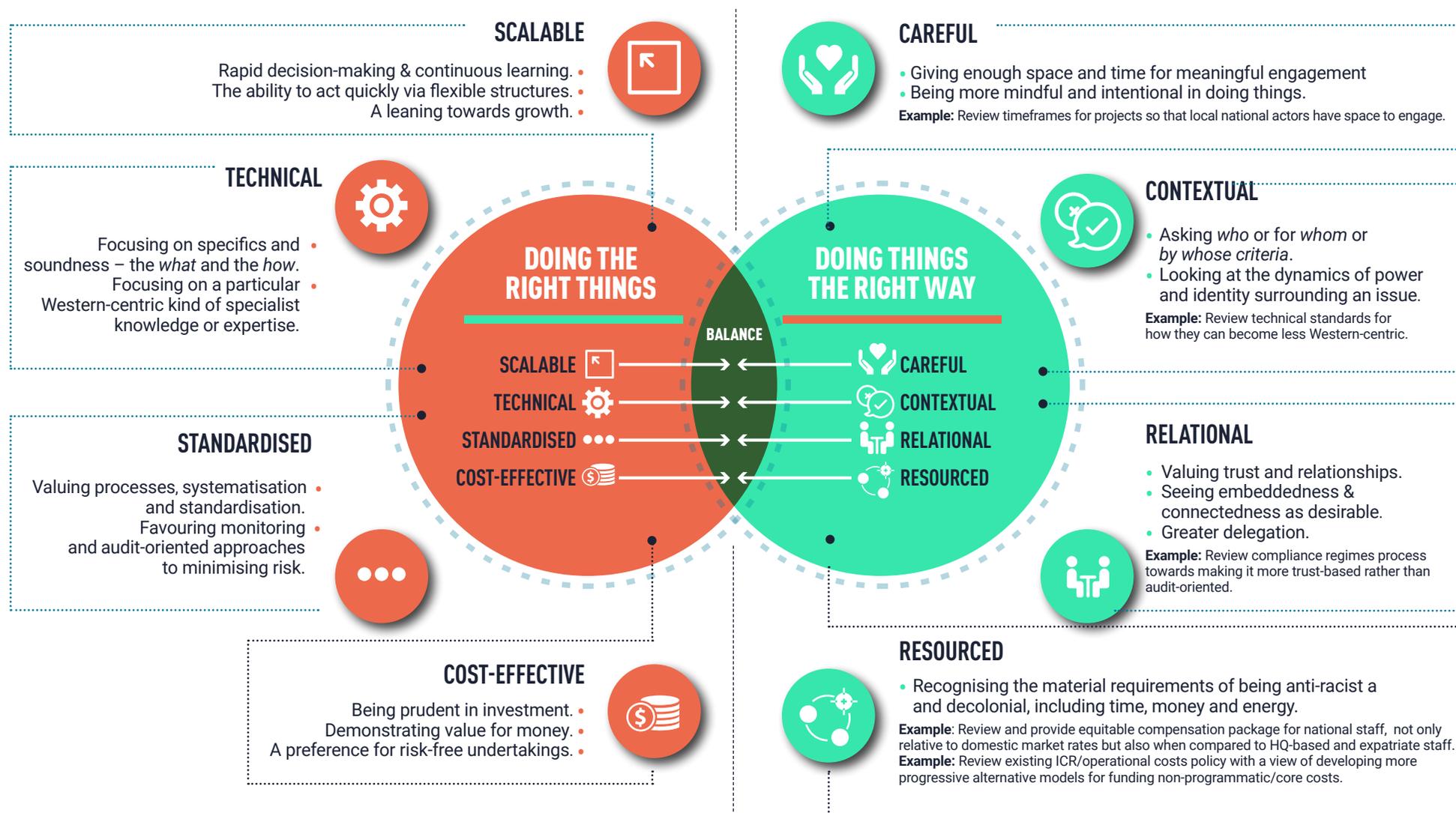
THE INFLUENCE OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM

BIAS AND PREJUDICE



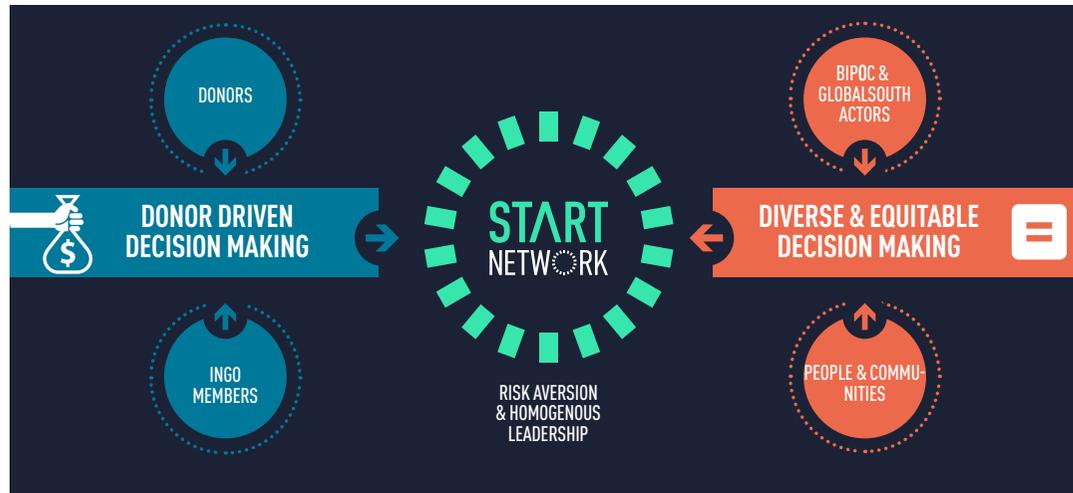
TACKLING RACISM AND COLONIALISM

BALANCING DOING THE RIGHT THINGS, WITH DOING THINGS THE RIGHT WAY - EMBEDDING ETHICAL STANDARDS



THE CONCEPTS BEHIND THE FRAMEWORK (CONT.)

COUNTERACTING DONOR-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING WITH DIVERSE AND EQUITABLE DECISION-MAKING



Sectoral pressures from donors and large INGO members can be financial, regulatory, and political, and can result in donor-driven decision-making. This can be seen in:

- **compliance requirements that are passed on to local/national actors**
- **implementing donor-preferred strategies**
- **a governance model that gives INGO members more decision-making power.**

Start Network is susceptible to falling into this trap because of its risk aversion (which means decision-making tends to “play it safe”) and homogenous leadership – predominantly white and northern – which means it is limited in its anti-racist and decolonial vision.

The way out is by fostering diverse and equitable decision-making. This means restructuring decision-making and governance so that BIPOC and global south colleagues are included at the decision-making table and have an equitable (if not greater) say than donor and INGO counterparts.

EXAMPLE ACTIONS:

- **Institutionalise practice of working with local/national staff members and consultants in all relevant areas of your organisation**
- **Establish advocacy platforms where Global South actors can directly speak and influence UK donors/policymakers, and convene Global South actors in a way that gives them more leverage.**
- **Review and where possible diversify decision-making platforms (e.g., senior leadership, Board Members, various internal committees), so that predominantly white, Northern decision-makers are brought together in equal standing with BIPOC and Global South stakeholders, where they can build personal relationships with each other.**
- **Create a BIPOC and Global South advisory group for EDI initiatives (including the longer-term anti-racism and decolonial work).**
- **Conduct organisation-wide review of donor-driven tensions (for example, in using donor-preferred indicators, or in prioritising donor response to research) towards developing ways/guidance of managing these tensions appropriately.**
- **Develop transition plan which sees majority of decision-makers in relevant decision-making fora/platforms are representatives of local/national members (or local/national actors). And where possible or appropriate, also include representatives of local communities.**

THE CONCEPTS BEHIND THE FRAMEWORK (CONT.)

GENERATING REPARATIVE ACTION



An anti-racist and decolonial framework combines a balance of ethical and excellence standards with diverse and equitable decision-making. This framework can be used to generate reparative actions that could unravel racism and colonialism within Start Network. It will be most effective if certain preconditions are present: bravery, trust and deep democracy.

- Bravery can be achieved by fostering psychological safety within organisations, so that all stakeholders – particularly BIPOC and those from the global south – are able to hold honest discussions that can reveal the issues that need addressing.
- Trust means stakeholders see themselves as “citizens” of one organisation, in which they can collectively work together to address the problems revealed through this process.
- Deep democracy is collective decision-making that considers all viewpoints from all people, including unconscious and subconscious feelings. This enables deliberation that harnesses the collective intelligence, creativity and moral compass of all stakeholders – particularly of BIPOC and global south colleagues.

05 APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

These five steps will help you apply the framework within your organisation.



FOSTER THE PRECONDITIONS OF BRAVERY, TRUST, AND DEEP DEMOCRACY

Applying the framework will be effective if these preconditions are present, but don't delay applying the framework until all the preconditions are perfectly met: you can start establishing the preconditions and generating reparative actions at the same time.

Apply the framework in an ethical way that is not rushed or top-down, but where everyone is involved. Fostering an organisation that is brave, has trust among stakeholders and is deeply democratic will help you to do this. You are likely to need support from a facilitator with the requisite knowledge and skills to support an organisation through this process.



CREATE THE SPACE TO IDENTIFY ISSUES

You will need a safe and brave environment for participants to identify instances of bias and prejudice and structures/systems of racism and colonialism within your programmes and organisational structures. This must be done in a way that prioritises and uplifts the perspectives of BIPOC and global south colleagues. There are many ways to do this, such as an "ethical reflection" session (see below). The freedom to be completely honest is key, so participants feel able to air uncomfortable truths without fear and with a sense of "shared citizenship" (rather than division) among participants. This may also need support from a skilled facilitator.



DELIBERATE TOWARDS GENERATING REPARATIVE ACTION

Once you have identified the key issues, you can generate ideas for reparative actions (per team, per area of work or for the organisation as a whole). This will need mindful deliberation, enabled by deep democracy. Again, this can also be done in various ways, including the suggested ethical reflection session.



GUARANTEE ADEQUATE RESOURCES

Addressing racism and colonialism within programmes and structures requires material investment. Even before applying the framework, your organisation should begin to consider and plan for the resources you will need. It will be difficult, and its effects will be diluted, if this becomes a voluntary task added on to people's already busy workloads without resource or personnel support. Recognise the financial requirements, ensure dedicated paid staff and external expertise.



HOLD THE ORGANISATION ACCOUNTABLE FOR IMPLEMENTING REPARATIVE ACTIONS

When you generate ideas for reparative actions, these must include the resources required to implement them, along with the timeframe and person or team responsible. Your organisation must also agree on how to measure whether the actions have been implemented successfully. For example, using indicators proposed by the Equity Index, the Racial Equity Index or the Dignity Project will allow you to hold your organisation to account in implementing reparative actions.



HOW TO HOLD AN ETHICAL REFLECTION SESSION

This means listening to the perspectives of all stakeholders, but also probing angles that may otherwise go unexplored. For example, if done in a small meeting within a team, each participant could be assigned a “hat” based on the framework, such as “agile hat” or “careful hat”. When discussing an issue, each participant will contribute the perspective based on the hat they are wearing. For example, the agile hat-wearer will talk about how an action enables or prevents being agile; the careful hat-wearer will talk about how an action enables or prevents being careful. In this way, there will be no unexamined norms and practices that could continue perpetuating racist and colonial structures/systems.



05

OUR WORK SO FAR AND NEXT STEPS

Start Network, with the support of Arbie Baguios, completed this report and framework in April 2021. We spent time engaging the team on the implications of the findings and reflecting on how we may use the framework to change our mindsets and our ways of working. Some examples of the changes we have begun to make are below.

Later in 2021, we began to discuss the framework with members, including as part of our Assembly in November 2021. Start Network is now working with anti-racism consultants to further analyse and understand how the framework can help us to decolonise our work. We are committed to identifying clear actions to address racism and colonialism across the network and reporting publicly on our progress against these commitments.

RE-EXAMINING HOW WE MANAGE RISK

Start Network has begun to re-examine how risk is currently managed and perceived in the humanitarian sector, due to its values being rooted in Western standards. Our Hubs and members have challenged us to look at how we manage risk in recent years. They noted how many risk instruments, such as due diligence, have led to increased barriers to entry and funding for smaller, local and grassroots organisations.

The decolonisation report (and the recent discourse in the sector on decolonising the humanitarian sector) also highlighted the perception of how risk is currently managed as a way of imposing Western standards, contributing to the current power distribution status quo with the sector. This has resulted in a focus on Western defined organisational deficits and not what can be important strengths. Additionally, although the question of how to make humanitarian support more accountable to crisis-affected communities is gaining prominence, it is 'upwards accountability' to donors that is afforded an unbalanced level of resource and consideration.

Thus, through following the values in the decolonisation report, we are *exploring new approaches and tools for assessing and managing risk, that puts accountability to crisis-affected communities at the centre*. We are inviting a wide variety of participants to take part in this process, including from various sectors in the Global South and Global North and donors, while ensuring facilitation actively mitigates the power imbalances. We hope this initiative will support in paving the way for local actors and crisis-affected communities to positively disrupt traditional risk and accountability structures.



1

BUILDING MORE ETHICAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

In our communications we have begun to look at the language we use. In addition to providing more interpretation at events and sharing content in more languages, we are also looking at the terminology we use. For example, we are trying to limit terms such as ‘beneficiaries’, which removes agency and power from communities, who are often the first and most active responders to crises, as well as ‘aid’ which infers humanitarian action and funding is purely charity, and does not recognise the historical exploitation by the Global North over the Global South, which has enabled northern economies to become financially richer, this some argue, means that aid should be reconsidered as reparations.

We have intentionally prioritised local and national voices in our advocacy work, and we have acted as enablers for them to be represented at international and global levels. Working to shift our approach from purely advocating ‘for’, to also advocating ‘with’ actors from the Global South.



2

THE JOURNEY TO DECOLONISING EVIDENCE AND LEARNING

In our evidence and learning we are re-examining what success looks like from a community perspective rather than a Western lens built on log-frames and risk and accountability checklists. We have heard from communities that it is how we ask, as well as what we ask, that is important, and have been building this learning into our evidence and learning approach. For example, in community surveys we have built in questions around how people feel they were treated by staff, and where possible conduct in person interviews that focus on storytelling. In complement, we work closely with local researchers in all data collection 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.



3

- 1 Conduct of psychological first aid. Tree of life developed trainee package and trained the other local partner and trained community-based orgs to implement the trauma healing intervention which was also rolled out to the communities who were affected by the violence. © Lynn Walker, Director, Tree of Life, Zimbabwe
- 2 Innovators test a flood warning and monitoring system; DEPP Innovation Labs, TUKLAS Lab, Philippines. © TUKLAS Lab
- 3 DEPP Innovation Labs, TUKLAS Lab, Philippines. © TUKLAS Lab

START NETWORK

FIND OUT MORE AT

www.startnetwork.org/anti-racism-decolonisation

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