

# SELF-RELIANCE LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIVE SUB-QUESTIONS

The following list of questions and illustrative sub-questions was compiled during consultations with stakeholders in Missions and Washington Bureaus and Offices. The Self-Reliance Learning Agenda Coordination Group, consisting of Agency staff working on learning agendas that will contribute evidence toward the self-reliance learning questions, also suggested additional sub-questions. As we continue to engage with internal and external stakeholders, **we will review and revise the list of sub-questions every six months.** Learn more about the Self-Reliance Learning Agenda at <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1870/self-reliance-learning-agenda-fact-sheet>.

QUESTIONS	Link to the Policy Framework	Role of PPL and the Lab
<p><b>I</b> <b>What are the change pathways around how capacity and commitment come together to build self-reliance, and what are the implications for USAID programs? How can we foster the capacity and commitment of all actors at different levels of the system (local, sub-national, national, and regional)?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the relationship between capacity and commitment in supporting self-reliance?</li> <li>• How can programming designed to foster self-reliance at the local level encourage national-level self-reliance?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between local partner engagement and local partner commitment? Has successful local engagement led to increased commitment? Why/how so?</li> <li>• What have we learned about the nature of capacity in local organizations and how best to strengthen and/or leverage it?</li> <li>• What do capacity and commitment look like at different levels of the system?</li> <li>• What have we learned from our past experiences with strengthening capacity and commitment at different levels of the system?</li> <li>• How do gender norms and women’s economic empowerment affect country capacity and commitment? How can USAID and its partners support transformation of gender norms and empowerment of women to strengthen country capacity and commitment at all levels?</li> </ul>	<p>The Journey to Self-Reliance</p>	<p>Leader</p>

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2	<p><b>What is the spectrum of trajectories countries follow toward self-reliance? What determines these trajectories? What are the implications for how we best support countries following a given trajectory toward self-reliance?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the operational, strategic, and programmatic shifts Missions are making as the countries they are working in advance along the Journey to Self-Reliance?</li> <li>• What programmatic changes can be put in place now to contribute to more consistent progress?</li> <li>• How can we best support countries that are further along the Journey to Self-Reliance? When a strategic transition of the relationship appears appropriate, what are the characteristics of a successful transition approach?</li> <li>• Since each country's trajectory will be unique and non-linear, how can USAID remain adaptive and open to learning?</li> <li>• Are the approaches to fostering self-reliance that are hypothesized in the Policy Framework being implemented, and, if so, how well are they working?</li> </ul>	The Journey to Self-Reliance	Leader
3	<p><b>How are countries, Missions, donors, implementing partners, and local actors using metrics and data to understand progress toward self-reliance? How are they applying this understanding?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can we learn about how Missions, partners, local actors, other donors, and partner governments are using the self-reliance metrics and other data?</li> <li>• What reactions are we getting from host country counterparts, and how are our partnerships being affected?</li> <li>• What can USAID do about data gaps, and how can the secondary metrics be used to address these gaps? What are Missions doing to fill these gaps, and what can we learn overall from their efforts?</li> <li>• Are the metrics and data that Missions and their partners are gathering appropriately disaggregated by sex, as required? Are these data disaggregated by other demographic characteristics that would allow Missions and countries to determine whether members of one or more marginalized groups are being left behind on the Journey to Self-Reliance?</li> </ul>	Advancing Country Progress	Leader

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4	<p><b>How can private sector engagement (PSE) support countries in advancing on the Journey to Self-Reliance?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How and to what extent does private sector engagement improve development and humanitarian outcomes?</li> <li>• What context-specific factors drive effective engagement with the private sector?</li> <li>• What PSE relationship qualities influence results?</li> <li>• What are the most useful ways to understand the local private sector—considering issues such as how local market systems work, priorities and incentives of local firms, and the potential for market distortion—and the implications for donor engagement?</li> <li>• How and to what extent do gender considerations and women’s empowerment influence PSE approaches and results?</li> <li>• How and to what extent can PSE approaches and results influence gender considerations and women’s empowerment?</li> </ul>	Investing for Impact	Convener
5	<p><b>How can we apply evolving approaches to Financing Self-Reliance (FSR) in different contexts?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of programming and interventions contribute most to a country’s ability to finance its own development?</li> <li>• How does understanding the political economy dynamics in a country enhance the impact of FSR programming and interventions?</li> <li>• In what ways can linking FSR with other Journey to Self-Reliance imperatives, such as PSE and Redefining the Relationship, be mutually reinforcing?</li> <li>• What types of interventions have strengthened FSR in the technical sectors in which USAID works?</li> </ul>	Investing for Impact	Convener
6	<p><b>In what ways can humanitarian assistance approaches and funds contribute to country progress toward self-reliance, while also meeting urgent needs?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways can humanitarian assistance funds used for relief, recovery, and disaster risk reduction build capacity and commitment, thereby building a foundation for greater self-reliance?</li> <li>• How can the needs of women and girls be prioritized when responding to humanitarian emergencies in ways that strengthen their and their country’s self-reliance?</li> </ul>	Investing for Impact	Convener

QUESTIONS	Link to the Policy Framework	Role of PPL and the Lab
<p><b>7</b>    <b>How can USAID and its partners foster self-reliance in fragile contexts?</b></p> <p>Sub-question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can USAID and our partners apply locally-led development principles in our work in environments characterized by active or recent conflict, instability, and low or nascent consensus (commitment)?</li> <li>• How and to what extent do gender considerations (including issues related to gender-based violence) and women’s participation in efforts to prevent, resolve, and rebuild in active and recent conflict settings foster self-reliance in fragile contexts?</li> </ul>	Investing for Impact	Convener
<p><b>8</b>    <b>How can different approaches to the design, procurement, and management of programs foster self-reliance? What promising partner engagement practices emerge from these approaches?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can diversifying USAID’s partner base—particularly with local and locally-established partners—support countries’ Journey to Self-Reliance?</li> <li>• How can increased monitoring and use of sub-awards to local and locally-established partners enhance local engagement and support self-reliance?</li> <li>• How are the approaches outlined in USAID’s Acquisition and Assistance Strategy being used to support self-reliance?</li> <li>• What are the most effective ways to fund programming to support self-reliance (co-creation, payment for results, objectives-based agreements, refine and implement, etc.)?</li> <li>• How can the use of design thinking help refine problem statements or assumptions in the design of procurements to ensure USAID is programming where the need is the greatest?</li> <li>• How can activity design, delivery, and procurement approaches (including through diversifying USAID’s partner base) most effectively integrate considerations of gender and women’s empowerment and youth, faith, and other often marginalized groups, and to what extent does that support self-reliance?</li> </ul>	Sustaining Results	Convener

QUESTIONS	Link to the Policy Framework	Role of PPL and the Lab
<p><b>9</b> <b>In fostering self-reliance, how can we use influence, knowledge, and convening power to complement projectized support?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What currently works to effectively complement projectized support? In what contexts, and how could it be scaled or replicated?</li> <li>• What methods/approaches can we use to ensure that we are the facilitators, not the leaders or glue in the system?</li> <li>• How can USAID and other donors identify, reach, and support existing processes of collaboration among local actors without distorting them?</li> </ul>	Sustaining Results	Leader
<p><b>10</b> <b>How can local, sub-national, national, and regional voices, priorities, and contributions be integrated into how USAID fosters self-reliance?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can civil society, the private sector, government, and other actors' needs and priorities shape how USAID fosters self-reliance?</li> <li>• How can the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups (e.g., women, youth, LGBTQ, etc.) shape how USAID fosters self-reliance? What are the most effective models of stakeholder engagement?</li> <li>• How can USAID work with regional and transnational organizations to strengthen an individual country's self-reliance?</li> <li>• How can USAID best leverage the unique capacities of new and under-utilized partners for more locally-led and sustainable development?</li> <li>• How can USAID engage with local actors and communities who are not partnering with USAID but share our goals?</li> <li>• How can donors meaningfully address the power dynamics (including those related to gender) and ethical issues inherent in decisions about how, when, and with whom we engage?</li> </ul>	Sustaining Results	Convener
<p><b>11</b> <b>How can we engage local and other relevant systems such that they become more self-reliant and sustain results?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have particular programmatic or sectoral approaches to systems strengthening been designed and implemented to foster self-reliance, and which are most effective?</li> <li>• What are the unintended consequences of our programming and partnerships on local systems, communities, and marginalized or vulnerable groups (e.g., women, LGBTQ people, youth, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, etc.)?</li> </ul>	Sustaining Results	Leader

QUESTIONS		Link to the Policy Framework	Role of PPL and the Lab
12	<p><b>How can we best measure USAID’s specific contribution to countries’ progress on the Journey to Self-Reliance at the local, sub-national, national, and regional levels?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might we measure and understand the contributions of USAID programs toward fostering self reliance?</li> <li>• How might we measure and understand USAID contributions toward fostering self reliance beyond programmatic results?</li> <li>• What precisely do we mean when we say “measure contribution”? What are the spectrum of approaches that are appropriate for measuring or identifying USAID contribution to fostering self reliance?</li> </ul>	Sustaining Results	Leader
13	<p><b>How can USAID’s organizational structures and staffing, policies, guidance, technical assistance, and capacity building enable us to foster self-reliance? In what ways can USAID/Washington provide effective field services to operationalize the Journey to Self-Reliance?</b></p> <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can integrated strategies and programming support country self-reliance? What are the challenges and opportunities for USAID in managing integrated strategies and programming? What evidence is there that an integrated approach is more effective than a sectoral approach?</li> <li>• Does the program cycle allow us to plan and manage interventions in a way that best fits the dynamics and support the progress of a country’s journey to self-reliance?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between what has been stated in the Policy Framework and the uptake of that policy in strategies, programs, and operations?</li> <li>• How are the revised CDCS guidance and the resulting strategies and programs contributing to country self-reliance?</li> <li>• How can USAID support internal culture change that aligns mindsets and behaviors to foster self-reliance?</li> <li>• What do we know about how staff competencies are changing to enable Mission teams to work effectively with partner countries to increase their self-reliance?</li> </ul>	Strengthening USAID Today and for Tomorrow	Leader

LEADER: PPL and the Lab aim to generate evidence toward the learning questions ourselves and through engagement with the Agency, partners, and the broader development community.

CONVENER: PPL and the Lab will convene stakeholders that are generating evidence through evaluation, research, and learning activities and will contribute to synthesizing and sharing the evidence.