Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) Convening
Amman, Jordan
28-31 October 2019

Summary Report

I. Overview

From 28-31 October 2019, partners of the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) gathered in Amman, Jordan to celebrate the Initiative’s achievements and to collectively chart its course forward. The objectives of the meeting included:

- **Achievements**: Reflect on major RSRI achievements and milestones;
- **Priority Initiatives**: Discuss high-level goals, objectives and priority areas of work for the RSRI going forward. This includes identifying specific efforts in Programming, Advocacy and Measurement to undertake as a group;
- **Learning Community**: Identify opportunities for the RSRI to facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge exchange amongst partners;
- **Coordination**: Explore ways to strengthen RSRI coordination to ensure greater inclusion and consultation among partners.

The four-day convening included three distinct but linked events:

- **Self-Reliance Index (SRI) 101**: A workshop to help participants gain an in-depth understanding of the SRI and learn from the experiences of partners testing it in various contexts;
- **RSRI Convening**: A meeting for RSRI partners to reflect on the goals and progress of the Initiative and consider how to collectively move forward;
- **Promoting Self-Reliance in Jordan – The Graduation Approach (GA)**: A session for representatives from host and donor governments, philanthropic partners and operational partners to learn from self-reliance programming in Jordan focused on the GA.

The RSRI is grateful to Mercy Corps for co-hosting the convening in Jordan, as well as to all agency representatives that were able to attend in-person or remotely. Representatives from Action Against Hunger, Asylum Access, CARE, Caritas Austria, Caritas Jordan, Caritas Switzerland, Center for Global Development, Danish Refugee Council, DARA International, Durable Solutions Platform, the Dutch Embassy, ECHO, EU Trust Fund, HIAS, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Near East Foundation, Norwegian Refugee Council, Refugees International, RefugePoint, Samuel Hall, the Swiss Embassy, UNDP, UNHCR, US State Department Bureau for Refugees, Population and Migration, Women’s Refugee Commission,
World Vision, Global Affairs Canada, DFID, IKEA Foundation, Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat, Trickle Up, Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) and other partners participated in one or more RSRI convening events and/or pre-event consultations.

This summary report outlines the discussions and collective outcomes that emerged from the convening. Highlights from the discussions are presented below:

**Programming:** Participants recognized that many refugees across all stages of displacement need some form of holistic support in addition to livelihoods support. This may include consumption support, psychosocial support and counseling and other tailored programming. At the same time, supporting refugee self-reliance must be done in conjunction with support to host community members with whom refugees live and share similar economic realities. Additionally, building evidence of what works to support self-reliance outcomes was a top priority identified by partners. This includes expanding GA programming in Jordan while also testing other existing self-reliance programs and developing new approaches across the globe.

**Measurement:** Feedback from participants indicated that the SRI fills an important gap in humanitarian programming and could help to improve accountability and transparency around programmatic outcomes. Numerous Initiative partners are ready to use the SRI to build evidence of client outcomes and measure program success in supporting refugee self-reliance. There is great interest to continue learning from the use of the SRI in multiple contexts and to build data management platforms to ensure that data collected is used for maximum impact.

**Advocacy:** Participants agreed that engaging donors and host governments in support of refugee self-reliance should include advocating for longer-term time frames for self-reliance program cycles and funding, while also advocating with host governments for an enabling environment to support successful outcomes for both refugees and host communities.

**RSRI Coordination:** Partners were excited about present and future opportunities to contribute more deeply to the shared work of the Initiative. There was strong appreciation for the RSRI’s efforts to break down barriers to achieving self-reliance by creating a positive collaborative environment to learn and share together and draw more resources to pilot opportunities and successful approaches, benefiting the entire community. Participants expressed an interest in creating working groups for both technical areas (e.g. SRI implementation, learning and data aggregations and analysis) and location specific groups to further develop and build out components of the initiative.
II. Self-Reliance Index 101

The half-day SRI workshop was an opportunity for partners, particularly those implementing humanitarian programming in Amman and MENA Regional Offices to become more familiar with the tool and to learn from the experiences of partners testing the Index in various contexts. Those participating in the session gained information on implementing the SRI and provided valuable feedback that will inform the tool’s ongoing development.

Participants shared the following feedback:

- The tool’s holistic and inclusive approach, combining quantitative as well as qualitative elements was appreciated;
- To match programming, the tool’s language should consider including mention of both refugees and host communities;
- In subsequent development of the SRI, consider differential weighting of the domains, guidance on context-specific indicator adjustments and a gendered approach to using the tool;
- Explore further how the SRI can be integrated into existing frameworks, indices and agency-specific monitoring and evaluation tools to avoid duplication.

III. RSRI Convening

The two-day meeting explored the value of the RSRI to partners and like-minded agencies and generated ideas for expanding the impact of the Initiative. Highlights from the discussions included:

**RSRI:** The Initiative is widely celebrated by partner agencies and external stakeholders, and there is considerable enthusiasm for its future evolution. Partners highlighted the value of the convening space offered by the RSRI as well as the consultative, flexible and dynamic way of working towards accomplishing the three pillars of the RSRI’s work. RSRI partners had the following recommendations:

- Explore creation of thematic or country-level working groups on self-reliance programming, measurement, and advocacy to enable more fluid information exchange;
- Further encourage open dialogue and knowledge exchange between humanitarians and donors;
- Engage refugees and refugee-led organizations to ensure self-reliance approaches accurately reflect their needs, realities, and capacities;
- Ensure intentional inclusion of local civil society voices;
- Use RSRI Community of Practice calls to profile partner agencies’ self-reliance programming and emerging best practices.
SRI: Partners are excited about the potential of the SRI, making specific reference to its holistic yet simple design. Partners discussed how the tool can be implemented in the contexts in which they work and eventually applied at scale. As a first step this includes receiving guidance on how the SRI can be integrated into/inform existing programming. Discussions also focused on developing a platform to share and analyze SRI data across contexts and creating working groups to enable peer support and learning.

Programming: Partners noted the need to build an evidence base for effective self-reliance programming, highlighting the role this plays in effective advocacy with host governments and donors. Partners added that the RSRI could serve as a research hub to open opportunities for collaboration, demonstrate best practices, and facilitate learning and knowledge exchange. The RSRI Research Matrix was cited as a useful tool to track ongoing research and contribute to systematic evidence-building on self-reliance. Further, partners discussed core elements of self-reliance programming including holistic support and providing support to refugees and host communities.

Advocacy: Partners discussed that coordination of advocacy messaging on self-reliance is important at the global level. At the national level, it is favorable to localize messaging to each context and engage local civil society organizations. Additionally, despite areas of positive development in some refugee contexts on legal rights and economic policy changes, partners identified a continuing need to highlight refugees as productive members of society. The idea of creating an advocacy working group within the RSRI was suggested for further exploration.

Partners brainstormed potential strategic partners and supporters of the RSRI and partner agencies. Envisioned outcomes for strategic engagement with donors include:

- Longer-duration project cycles and multi-year funding to support effective self-reliance programming;
- Increased funding for pilot projects to support building an evidence base for effective self-reliance programming;
- Increased donor attention to self-reliance outcomes in donor funding portfolios, including through the use of the SRI or self-reliance indicators to measure progress.

Identified strategies for increased donor engagement included:

- Connect the RSRI and partners with donor networks;
- Encourage donor visits to gain practical examples of self-reliance programming;
- Identify champions within each RSRI partner agency to speak to about benefits of membership and participation in the RSRI, including use of the SRI;
- Establish SRI working groups to provide support to organizations piloting the SRI and support sharing of experiences with donor communities;
- Include self-reliance language into proposals to ensure that the lexicon of self-reliance becomes more widely known and understood.
IV. Promoting Self-Reliance in Jordan – The Graduation Approach (GA)

The final event of the 2019 Convening provided participants and members of the philanthropic and donor communities and opportunity to learn about self-reliance programming in Jordan, with a focus on the GA. The session enabled participants to better understand the intricacies of GA programming and emerging best practices for applying GA effectively. The session featured comments from Caritas Switzerland, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Mercy Corps and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which as members of the Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC) are implementing the GA in Jordan. Highlights from the discussion included:

- In Jordan, the DRC has piloted a decreased duration version of the GA since 2017. On key success was the provision of home-based business grants. DRC highlighted that the counseling / mentoring component of the GA is considered particularly crucial in achieving self-reliance.
- Mercy Corps saw psycho-social and mental health as a key factor in becoming self-reliant. In Jordan, there is a trend to incorporate development programming into humanitarian response models. The Market Systems Development approach and intentional thinking on industries to be supported to the benefit of refugees and the host community are at the forefront of efforts. However, as Caritas mentioned, while this approach can benefit many people, the most destitute households often struggle to access those benefits, thus underscoring the importance of targeting at program onset.
- NRC added that while their focus is on decent work opportunities for refugees, they still predominantly achieve employment in the informal sector. It is work conditions and social security that need to improve. The formation of social safety nets should thus be considered in the SRI and programming.
- Despite its cost, the GA was welcomed as a way to scale self-reliance response, with the SRI serving as a tool to ensure the strategic use of resources in terms of scaling and resource maximization. Great value is seen in collaborating with the GA and generating shared learning by becoming a member of PAC. Programming evidence can then feed into the RSRI’s advocacy strategy.
- Again, government buy-in on self-reliance is necessary for programming. Programming therefore also needs to think of how both refugees and members of the host community can be targeted.
- The SRI could not only be used as a tool for measurement in programming, but for vulnerability assessments and targeting, building community profiles. It is also seen as a platform for collaboration that can create synergies and cross-sectoral conversations about households.