

Better Lives Now: Self-Reliance Innovation Lab

Statement to be delivered at the High Commissioner's Protection Dialogue

Rapporteur:

Paula Reed Lynch

Director, Office of Policy and Resource Planning

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, U.S. Department of State

Dear Chair, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

In the context of unprecedented global forced displacement, enhancing refugee self-reliance is key to enabling refugees to lead lives of dignity and empowerment, support themselves and their families, and contribute to their host communities in meaningful ways. Despite broad agreement on the importance of self-reliance, current efforts have failed to move the needle for three main reasons: lack of data and evidence; limited collaboration; and restrictive host government policies. In response, the *Better Lives Now* self-reliance innovation lab, co-convened by the United States and the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI), explored best practices and emerging approaches to promote self-reliance.

Lab participants identified several areas of work to address these barriers:

- **On data and evidence:**
 - Put refugee and local voices at the center of research, such as through advisory councils comprised of refugees and host community members.
 - Create more platforms bringing together researchers, policymakers, and implementers to inform policymaking and practice.
 - Expand investment in refugee-led research, evaluations of host country policies, longitudinal impact evaluations, and experimental design approaches.
- **To foster collaboration:**
 - Facilitate innovative funding tools and programs that foster self-reliance by bridging humanitarian, development, private sector, and research practitioners working across all sectors.
 - Secure commitments from private sector actors to build business practices that support refugees' economic integration.
 - Finance efforts to de-risk private sector investment in refugee communities, including to test proof-of-concept ideas and leverage research on refugee businesses and contexts for investors seeking new markets.
- And finally, **at the policy level:**
 - Expand support to host governments at the local, provincial and national levels to develop policies that promote self-reliance and anticipatory action such as through regional platforms.
 - Establish local development plans for areas hosting large numbers of refugees.

To advance these initiatives, PRM, the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative and UNHCR will use the outcomes of the innovation lab to forge concrete action on self-reliance in advance of the GRF. We urge you to join us in this effort.