INTEGRATING THE JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE INTO PROJECT DESIGN

What is a USAID project?

At USAID, a project is defined as a set of complementary activities that, together, can achieve a development result. A Mission's suite of projects provides its operational plan for achieving the objectives of its Country Development Cooperation Strategy.

How is USAID changing project design to incorporate the Journey to Self-reliance (J2SR)?

Project design will look and feel different when done from a J2SR angle. What is unique about the self-reliance vision is that it changes the nature of our partnerships by identifying the strategic partners best positioned to advance self-reliance and share accountability for results. The J2SR lens also gives a heightened emphasis to in-country resourcing, with enterprise-driven growth as a key driver. Finally, it places local systems at the heart of achieving sustainable, resilient results.

USAID projects that strengthen self-reliance will:
- **Strengthen commitment and capacity at all levels of society.** Our projects should seek ways to strengthen government capacity and utilize partner country systems, where possible, to empower governments to own and manage their own development. At the same time, we should engage local actors as co-designers, co-implementers, and co-owners of their country's development outcomes, while strengthening their capacity and holding them and ourselves accountable for achieving and sustaining results.
- **Empower countries to resource their own development in an efficient, accountable and transparent way.** Our projects should help increase the capacity of countries to generate greater public revenue and harness domestic and international private investment that can fund development needs across all sectors.
- **Catalyze enterprise-driven development by engaging strategically with the private sector.** Enterprise-driven development is a key catalyst of self-reliance and sustainable growth. USAID should partner more strategically and effectively with the private sector to ensure that the market-based solutions they offer are integrated across our work.

The Project Purpose is the key result to be achieved by a USAID project. When developing a "J2SR Project Purpose", USAID missions will consider questions such as:
- What does capacity and commitment look like in a particular sector?
- What are the priorities of the national or subnational government, civil society, and other stakeholders in this sector?

- Does the Project Purpose tangibly support the partner country's efforts to plan, finance and implement solutions to their own development challenges?
- For the partner government, are the right policies in place to support the Project Purpose? If so, are they implementing them?
- Does the Project Purpose leverage or strengthen the partner country's commitment?

How will we learn from J2SR-aware projects?

A J2SR-aware project will specifically need to consider monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approaches that support learning about what works and doesn't work in advancing self-reliance. MEL approaches themselves can be undertaken in ways to advance self-reliance, including taking into account local priorities, harmonizing with local MEL efforts, and building local capacity in MEL.

A J2SR-aware project MEL plan should consider factors including:
- Do the learning questions elicit information about how to best advance local ownership, shared priorities, capacity and commitment, and sustainable change?
- If the project includes interventions designed to increase the capacity of country actors and incentivize their commitment, how will the results of these efforts be measured? Measures may include:
  - The extent to which development outcomes are jointly prioritized
  - The level of non-donor resources mobilized toward creating and sustaining the desired outcomes
  - The change in local human, organizational, and/or institutional capacity

Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) approaches are ideally suited to meaningful and sustained engagement with local actors. USAID missions can:
- Engage local actors in data collection, analysis and reporting
- Jointly identify indicators that reflect on local development priorities and definitions of success
- Validate findings with local actors