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CLA CASE COMPETITION

Self-Reliance Analysis

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

USAID is committed to partnering with countries along their Journeys to Self-Reliance, as reflected in [USAID's Policy Framework](#). Self-reliance refers to a country's capacity to plan, finance, and implement solutions to local development challenges, and a commitment to see these through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability. The [Self-Reliance Learning Agenda](#) (SRLA) contributes to a broader understanding of self-reliance and aid effectiveness, and addresses critical knowledge gaps. And the annual CLA Case Competition crowd sources, judges, and shares case studies of USAID staff and implementing partners using CLA approaches to improve organizational learning and contribute to better development outcomes.

USAID conducted the analysis that follows to support stakeholder engagement in answering the [SRLA learning questions](#). USAID analyzed submissions to the [2019 Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting \(CLA\) Case Competition](#) for examples of how a CLA approach can contribute to fostering country self-reliance. More details regarding the methodology and some of the limitations of this study can be found in the Annex to this analysis. The importance of CLA to the Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) is acknowledged in USAID's policy and strategy documents, which contain references to collaborating and partnering, continuous learning, adaptive management, and even (in the [Acquisition and Assistance Strategy](#)) CLA specifically. The focus of this analysis, therefore, is not to test or validate this, but to examine what it looks like in practice in the cases under review.

The 2019 CLA Case Competition form included the following question related to self-reliance:

Did your CLA approach contribute to self-reliance. If so, how?

This paper presents an analysis of CLA cases and the responses to this question about self-reliance for the following purposes:

- To determine how self-reliance is addressed in the 96 CLA Case Competition entries from 2019, and at what levels (individual, local community, and/or national government);
- To ascertain what types of activities respondents offered as examples of how a CLA approach can contribute to self-reliance; and
- To identify cases that can serve as examples (in self-reliance products, engagements, and platforms) of CLA's contribution to self-reliance.

FINDINGS: PATHWAYS TO SELF-RELIANCE

Overall across the submissions, more than half (58 of 96) displayed a strong or moderate relationship to the Journey to Self-Reliance by following one or more of the following pathways:

This analysis builds on OMB's suggestion to make use of existing data in addressing learning agenda questions. According to the OMB's July 2019 Memorandum, Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas Personnel, and Planning Guidance, "Agencies, to the extent practicable, may also answer questions using existing evidence, including literature reviews, meta-analyses, and research clearinghouses."

- **Capacity strengthening activities** are frequently mentioned as supporting the Journey to Self-Reliance. As the cases described here indicate, capacity strengthening can help foster self-reliance by preparing individuals, organizations, or units of local, county, or national government to tackle their own development challenges.
- **Private sector engagement** appears frequently in the cases showing the strongest relationships with the Journey to Self-Reliance. These cases involve strategic collaborations with private sector partners, resulting in systemic, sustainable changes.
- The cases in this competition that focus on **Financing Self-Reliance** demonstrate how a focus on domestic resource mobilization, one of the five financing self-reliance approaches, could generate the funds needed to support development programs in the long term.
- A key finding from this study is that one of the most important and effective pathways to self-reliance within these cases is **strategic engagement with key counterparts at one or more levels of the host country government**. Such skillful collaborations can build the political will for the government to commit to taking on the management or funding of programs once USAID's involvement ends.

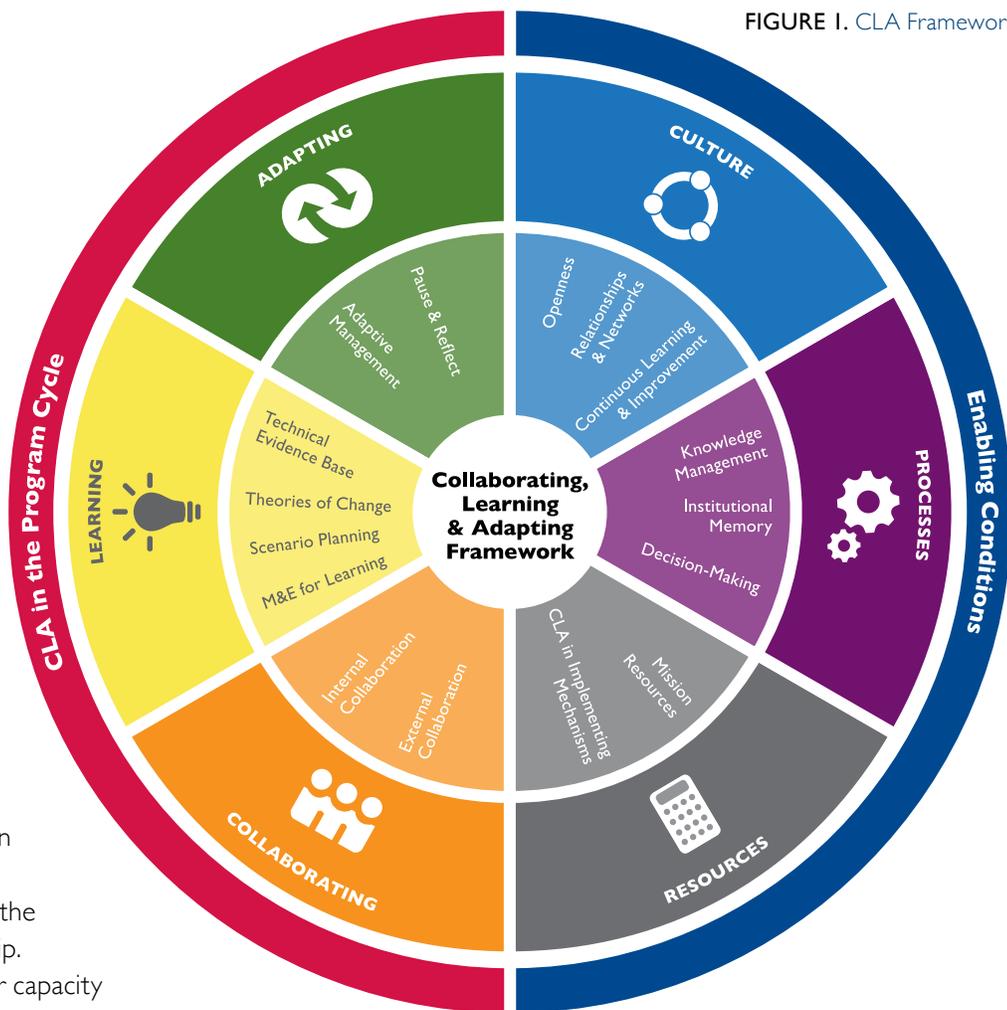
A final insight that emerges from this analysis concerns the various ways in which collaborating, learning, and adapting can foster self-reliance. None of the pathways described here would have been possible without effective collaboration with key individuals in the government, private sector, or local communities. Openness to continuous learning was also evident in many of the submissions, often resulting in agile adaptations. In all of these cases, CLA facilitated self-reliance.

In the remainder of this section, the 12 strongest Journey to Self-Reliance entries are summarized and categorized according to which of the four pathways they most clearly display — (1) capacity strengthening activities; (2) Private Sector Engagement; (3) Financing Self-Reliance; or (4) engagement with host country governments. In all of the descriptions that follow, it will be obvious that many draw on several of these approaches.

In addition to elucidating some of the pathways to self-reliance, this analysis illustrates some of the ways in which CLA can support the Journey to Self-Reliance. The 12 strongest self-reliance cases contain multiple examples of collaborating, learning, and adapting, and the CLA Framework's six components — Collaborating, Learning, Adapting, Culture, Processes, and Resources — and the 16 subcomponents (see Figure 1) appear many times in the case summaries below in actions that make it clear how they supported self-reliance.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES. The most common pathway to fostering self-reliance, both in the 12 strongest Journey to Self-Reliance cases as well as overall in the rest of the entries, was capacity strengthening, resulting in transfer of the initiative to local or national ownership. Overall, the most frequent targets for capacity

FIGURE I. CLA Framework



strengthening were local organizations or individuals. The submissions also described strengthening the capacity of units of the host country’s national government and the submitting organizations themselves, although less often (see Figure 2.)

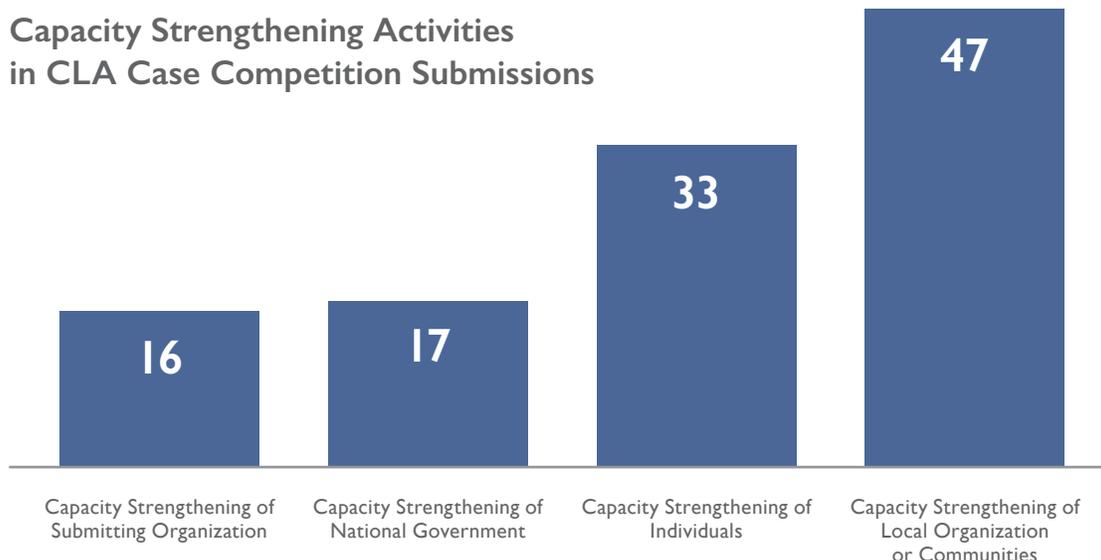


FIGURE 2. Focus of the capacity strengthening efforts described in CLA Case Competition submissions (n=92). Many cases portrayed activities designed to foster capacity strengthening and encourage sustainability at multiple levels, so the total number of cases depicted in the chart equals more than 92.

Capacity strengthening appeared especially frequently in the submissions with the strongest relationships to the Journey to Self-Reliance, as illustrated by the following five cases:

1. [“Strengthening Kenya’s Technical Vocational Education and Training \(TVET\) Capacity through Learning and Adaptation,”](#) submitted by RTI International and USAID K-YES (Sector: Education; CLA Case Competition Winner) — The K-YES program supports 27 Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), successfully collaborating with local private sector and government entities to ensure strong training and employment placements for young Kenyans. K-YES conducted a “whole system in a room” workshop to bring key stakeholders together as they planned their program. Private sector companies agreed to provide support for curriculum development as well as provision of internships and jobs to VTC graduates, and county governments committed to providing financial resources to support infrastructure development and employment of instructors. K-YES strengthened the capacity of the VTCs to improve their service delivery and partnerships with local governments, which led to sustainability and local ownership through increased allocation of government funds for VTC activities. The K-YES program’s CLA in the form of strategic collaborations with private sector and government entities led to successful job placements and long-term sustainability for these programs.
2. [“Promoting Sustainability and Self-Reliance: Use of Group Capacity Assessment Data in Nepal,”](#) submitted by Save the Children (Sector: Agriculture and Food Security; CLA Case Competition Winner) — USAID/Nepal’s Sabal program (Sustainable Action for Resilience and Food Security) was designed to improve food security and resilience in select districts in Central Nepal. When Nepal was hit with two devastating earthquakes in 2015, Sabal expanded its activities to five additional earthquake-affected districts. Just two years later, however, funding cuts forced Sabal to discontinue its programs in these districts. At that point, Sabal used a tool to assess the capacity of Farmers’ Groups, Village Savings and Loan Associations, Community Disaster Management Committees, and other local groups. After pausing and reflecting on the results of the assessments, Sabal used adaptive management approaches to decide jointly with each group the most appropriate interventions and capacity development strategies, with a goal of graduating as many groups as possible to independent relationships with local governments. For the low-capacity groups, Sabal worked to build their capacity until they, too, became self-sustaining. “This challenge turned into an opportunity for Sabal to identify sustainability strategies to transition Sabal community groups out of assistance and link them to local governments,” Save the Children writes in its submission.

3. [“Reshaping Watershed Restoration in Jordan,”](#) submitted by the U.S. Forest Service’s Africa and Middle East Team (Sector: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment) — The U.S. Forest Service worked closely with local women’s groups in Jordan, strengthening their skills and encouraging them to manage the watershed adaptively as they planted over 350,000 native seedlings. The program also established strategic partnerships with government ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations. Taking a value chain approach to native seedling production and planting, the program implemented robust monitoring and evaluation activities to generate data for learning purposes, constantly monitoring the germination rates in the nursery, for example, as well as the survival rates in the field, to determine how to adjust the U.S. or Lebanese technical approaches for the semi-arid conditions of Jordan. The team also carefully tracked the progress of various local organizations, and the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and other partners. The team brought this data, along with information gleaned from conversations with local residents, into their annual planning sessions and regularly used it to inform frequent program adaptations. The program eventually evolved into a spin-off local NGO that will carry these initiatives forward with its strong and growing network of partners.
4. [“Co-creating Organizational Development Interventions with CSOs for Systemic Change,”](#) submitted by USAID/Mexico and Social Impact (Sector: Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance) — USAID/Mexico’s Civil Society Activity at first set out to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in a rather standard way by working with these organizations on their internal functioning. After pausing and reflecting, however, USAID/Mexico and Social Impact realized that the CSOs would be more effectively and durably strengthened if more attention were given to their relationships to other organizations within the larger system. USAID/Mexico and Social Impact then implemented a wide range of organizational assessment and performance improvement tools to generate data that could inform the shifts their program was making to a more systems-based approach for longer-term, more sustainable change.
5. [“The SWFF TA Facility: Efficiently Delivering Technical Acceleration Services to Innovators,”](#) submitted by the Securing Water for Food Technical Assistance Facility and The Kaizen Company (Sector: Other; CLA Case Competition Finalist) — The Securing Water for Food program helps farmers grow more food using less water. This case describes a facility to provide custom, demand-driven technical assistance to innovators and organizations in more than 30 countries to enable them to manage adaptively and generate sustainable results in their businesses. The SWFF TA Facility is set up like a lean business, with industry-standard operational milestones and metrics to gauge progress in achieving objectives. The eight-phase acceleration process for developing new businesses and innovations underwent several iterations as evidence was gathered on the needs of innovators. The facility continues to feature ongoing learning and strategic adaptation.

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT. At the local, sub-national, or national level, PSE provided another pathway to self-reliance for individuals, organizations, and communities. Across the Agency there are several examples of how CLA has been used in PSE programming. The Case Competition identified the following cases as examples of PSE furthering self-reliance:

6. [“Using CLA Towards an Innovative Approach Preventing Diagnostic Delay for Tuberculosis \(TB\) Patients,”](#) submitted by Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) India (Sector: Global Health; CLA Case Competition Winner) — This case describes a sustainable, private sector solution developed in India for transporting specimens to laboratories for timely TB testing. “Through collaboration with the government and private sector,” the submission reads, “KHPT demonstrated a way to bridge the gaps in the system through sustainable innovation.” KHPT India continuously documented the learning that emerged from its efforts to design an efficient transportation system for time-sensitive TB specimens. This information, along with other technical data, was compiled into a technical brief, which state health officials released as an example of a patient-centered innovation at an event marking World TB Day 2019. Both the government’s health system and the private sector’s transportation system were strengthened in enduring ways, and after eight months the replicable and scalable program was transitioned over to the Joint Effort for the Elimination of Tuberculosis (JEET), funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM).
7. [“Rethinking Private Sector Engagement in North Macedonia,”](#) submitted by the Palladium Group (Sector: Other; CLA Case Competition Finalist) — The Business Ecosystem Project (BEP) originally planned to try to convince large multinational companies to invest in North Macedonia through the companies’ corporate social responsibility

efforts. Palladium soon realized, however, that these companies had no incentive to invest long term in the country, so they made a strategic shift to focus on small- and medium-sized local companies, strengthening domestic supply chains and developing the workforce's capacities. BEP's willingness to manage adaptively strengthened the North Macedonian economy and fostered self-reliance.

FINANCING SELF-RELIANCE. The ability of a country to finance its own development is central to J2SR. Financing Self-Reliance includes programs focused on domestic resource mobilization, public finance management, fiscal transparency and accountability, enabling environment for private investment, and functioning financial markets. Two of the strongest cases illustrated this approach:

8. [“Using CLA in Resource Mobilization for Afya Elimu Fund with Devolved Governance Units,”](#) submitted by Intrahealth (Sector: Global Health) — This domestic resource mobilization (DRM) activity involved working with county-level health, education, finance, and legal departments to convince local leaders to allocate funds to create the Afya Elimu Fund — a revolving loan product that provides low-interest loans to Kenyan healthcare trainees. Intrahealth conducted pause and reflect sessions to map out key players at the county level who could influence the outcome of their resource mobilization. The fund was designed from the start to be sustainable, since graduates repay their loans one year after school completion. In addition to the original county, three additional counties are preparing to launch their own Afya Elimu Funds.
9. [“CLA Drives Breakthrough Changes in Public Procurement,”](#) submitted by Development Alternatives, Inc. in Kosovo (Sector: Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance) — The USAID Transparent, Effective, and Accountable Municipalities (TEAM) activity deployed an adaptive systems approach to improve procurement throughout Kosovo. Using a mechanism that included an award fee for successful achievement of milestones, the program has rolled out an e-procurement system across Kosovo's 38 municipalities, thereby reducing the ability to tamper with bid documents. TEAM decided after formal assessments and learning sessions to work with Kosovo's Procurement Review Board (PRB) even though it was not originally intended to be a counterpart because a new head had been appointed. TEAM's strategic collaboration, ongoing learning, and willingness to adapt resulted in much more transparent, effective, and sustainable governance in the form of live web broadcasts of the PRB's proceedings and a database of PRB decisions. The e-procurement system has improved Kosovo's ability to finance its own development in a transparent and accountable manner. ([Read more about TEAM's adaptive mechanism here.](#))

ENGAGEMENT WITH HOST COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS. A key finding from this study is that in many cases the host country government had decided to take on some or all of the responsibility for activities previously conducted by USAID's implementing partners as a result of skillful and persistent engagement with the right government counterparts. Such an approach aligns with the J2SR Project on Redefining our Relationship with Partner Governments (RDR). Engagement with host country governments occurred in several of the cases already described, as well as in the following cases, either as part of the original strategic collaborations planned for the program, or as a result of key adaptations during implementation:

10. [“Hulu Beteina: Innovation through Collaboration to Deliver RMNCH Messages into Households,”](#) submitted by Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (JHCCP) in Ethiopia (Sector: Global Health) — The Hulu Beteina app was collaboratively designed with Ethiopian healthcare workers and ordinary citizens in order to be an effective behavior change tool. JHCCP focused on continuous learning and used human-centered design to maximize learning from users of the app. The Federal Ministry of Health has taken ownership of the app and has propagated it with Regional Health Bureaus.
11. [“USAID/Honduras Reducing Homicide and Migration Rates through CLA,”](#) submitted by USAID/Honduras (Sector: Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance) — By working closely with community residents and organizations, national and local government entities, and local police forces, this program set out to reduce violence through a “Place-Based Strategy.” As part of the program, USAID/Honduras conducted Community-Based Workshops involving police, community members, local governments, and community organizations to collaboratively discuss challenges and opportunities around citizen security. Many municipalities agreed to fund the operating costs of Outreach Centers, and recently the Ministry of Security and the Honduran Social Investment Fund signed a Memorandum of Understanding that combined efforts to build police stations and contribute \$500,000 to a USAID-funded activity.

12. “Collaborating, Adapting, and Learning for Sustainable Career Centers in Morocco,” submitted by FHI 360 (Sector: Other; CLA Case Competition Finalist) — This case describes how collaboration with Moroccan youth and private sector entities resulted in effective training and job placements for the program participants. Once funding for the program ends, government partners will autonomously manage and scale the Career Centers on a national level. The program’s strategic collaborations with private sector and government entities will thus lead to long-term sustainability and greater self-reliance for these Career Center programs.

While the three cases just summarized present particularly vivid illustrations of effective collaborations with national governments to increase their self-reliance, it is quite notable that 10 of the 12 cases described in this analysis involved collaborations designed to foster self-reliance in one or more units of the national government. Moreover, every single one of these cases focused on self-reliance not just at the national level but at multiple levels.

It is also important to note that in all of these cases, CLA — strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management — provided the flexibility, tools, and approaches needed to foster self-reliance effectively.

CONCLUSION

The four most common pathways to self-reliance discussed in the cases are:

- Capacity strengthening activities targeted at individuals, local organizations, and/or host country government entities;
- Meaningful private sector engagement;
- Programs that focused on Financing Self-Reliance;
- Engagement with host country governments, resulting in increased commitment to development on the part of the local, county, or national government in the form of monetary or in-kind support for programs.

These are of course not the only pathways to self-reliance, nor are they necessarily the most effective. They are simply the most frequently mentioned pathways in the submissions.

While the cases submitted for this competition may not be representative of USAID’s work overall, there is still good reason to be optimistic about the fact that many programs already seek to strengthen host country capacity and/or commitment. These efforts will most likely increase with the additional emphasis that has come with the Agency’s focus on the Journey to Self-Reliance. It will be important for the Agency to track these efforts systematically and learn from them.

HOW TO STAY ENGAGED

USAID invites readers to engage with us. We welcome comments, ideas, or suggestions about this analysis, especially thoughts about how to put this analysis to use in strategic planning or programming. In addition, we invite readers to contact us at SRLA@usaid.gov with any sources of evidence or information about ongoing learning activities that address one or more of the [SRLA questions](#). We also welcome the involvement of USAID staff who might be interested in participating in the SRLA Question Teams, whether they are from USAID/Washington or USAID Missions. You can learn more about the Journey to Self-Reliance at <https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance>.

ANNEX: METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

In order to analyze the entries systematically, the 96 CLA Case Competition submissions from 2019 were entered into [Atlas.ti](#), a qualitative database management program, and coded according to the following categories:

- Type of applicant (Mission or operating unit, NGO/community-based organization, private company or contractor, or bilateral/multilateral donor). Some submissions were submitted jointly by more than one type of applicant.
- Country and geographical region;
- Sector (self-identified by applicants);

- CLA Case Competition winner or finalist status;
- Reference to Financing Self-Reliance (FSR);
- Reference to private sector engagement (PSE);
- Description in the submission of host country government's commitment to development in the form of taking on the funding or management of the program after outside funding ends;
- Partner type mentioned in the submission (local or national government; local NGOs; other donors; other implementing partners); and
- Focus of the applicant's efforts to foster self-reliance (individuals; local organizations or communities; the national government; or the submitting organization itself).

After coding the 96 entries according to these categories, four submissions were disqualified because their content was unrelated to the Journey to Self-Reliance. For the remaining 92 entries, a final code was assigned to each case as a summary assessment of the case's overall relationship to the Journey to Self-Reliance:

- **STRONG:** When a case described activities that clearly increased the capacity and/or commitment of a key system in the host country — often, the host country government, but sometimes the private sector or civil society — the case was labeled as “strong.” These cases had multiple codes referencing various types of partnerships and self-reliance efforts.
- **MODERATE:** Cases were labeled “moderate” when the activities involved efforts to strengthen capacity and foster self-reliance of individual elements of a key system but not the system as a whole.
- **TANGENTIAL:** Cases were designated as “tangential” if they described relatively few attempts to strengthen capacity and foster self-reliance of one or more of the host country's systems. Some of these cases involved organizational development efforts within the submitting organization itself (usually USAID or an implementing partner) — efforts that had the potential to foster the host country's self-reliance indirectly but not directly.

Some limitations to the study should be noted.

1. The competition asked applicants to provide details about how they collaborated, learned, and adapted in order to achieve better development outcomes. While the reported activities often contributed to the country's self-reliance, there was not always sufficient information in the submissions to determine the full extent of the efforts.
2. The applicants were told that they would not be scored on their answers to this question, so it is likely that at least some of them put less effort into answering the question than they did the other questions.
3. These cases were submitted because of their focus on collaborating, learning, and adapting, so they are not necessarily representative of USAID practice more generally.
4. Most of these cases describe programs that are either ongoing or recently finished and so have not necessarily been in place long enough for their self-reliance components to have been achieved. Furthermore, the programs that were designed more than a couple of years ago may not have been designed with self-reliance in mind.
5. Only one person coded the cases, so any judgment calls that needed to be made were decided upon by a single coder. Thus, this analysis — like most, if not all, others — is partial in both senses of the word.

Despite these limitations, this analysis provides some initial insights into USAID programs that are intended to contribute to self-reliance or the underlying themes of building local capacity and commitment.