

GLOBAL COALITION LAUNCHES FIRST-EVER GLOBAL TOOL TO MEASURE REFUGEE SELF-RELIANCE

NEW YORK, NY – During a global online event today, the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) launched the first-ever global tool to measure progress of refugee households on their paths to self-reliance. The landmark tool — the Self-Reliance Index (SRI) — is designed to help humanitarian organizations enhance the social and economic ability of refugees both to meet their needs in a sustainable manner and to withstand environmental shocks such as an economic crisis or global pandemic.

The SRI was developed through a three-year multi-stakeholder process involving more than 25 contributing partners, including non-governmental organizations, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), research entities, foundations, and government agencies.

“Now more than ever, helping refugees to have the resources to be resilient needs to be a top priority across humanitarian programming,” said Kellie Leeson, lead consultant of the RSRI. “Getting to know refugee clients through the Self-Reliance Index sheds light on their challenges and opportunities for support to help them to reach their desired outcome of resuming their lives and standing on their own two feet.”

Today’s event brought together leaders in the humanitarian community — Jacob Bonyo, Kenya country director, RefugePoint; Sasha Chanoff, founder and executive director, RefugePoint; Dale Buscher, vice president, programs, Women’s Refugee Commission; Solenne Delga, global advisor, economic recovery, Danish Refugee Council; Per Heggenes, CEO, IKEA Foundation; Kellie Leeson, lead consultant, Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative; and Amy Slaughter, senior advisor, RefugePoint — all of whom spoke to how the Index will support humanitarian practitioners in designing and providing effective services for refugees, allowing the humanitarian community to scale up the most effective, evidence-based programs.

“The SRI is a critical missing link in global refugee response,” said Sasha Chanoff, founder and executive director of RefugePoint and co-chair of the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative. “Until now, practitioners, policymakers, and funders lacked an objective way of knowing whether our programs and aid added up to improved lives for refugees. The SRI aims to change this.”

In recent years, several high-level intergovernmental initiatives have emphasized the need to enhance refugee self-reliance, including the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Given the ever-growing scale and length of displacement, it is clear the humanitarian community needs to do things differently,” said Dale Buscher, vice president, programs, at the Women’s Refugee Commission and founding co-chair of the RSRI. “We can no longer afford to keep refugees dependent on unreliable humanitarian assistance. We need to help them quickly get back on their feet, assist them to meet their own needs, and restore their dignity.”

Today’s event also unveiled lessons learned about the SRI based on pilot programs in countries including Mexico and Kenya. For example, pilot testing by RefugePoint in a program serving urban refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, found that the SRI highlighted specific socio-economic vulnerabilities in the household,

better allowing humanitarian program staff to understand the range of client needs and design holistic interventions accordingly.

In Mexico, Asylum Access — an organization focused on legal support to clients — reported that the SRI helped them to connect better with their clients and provided them the information needed to better support their clients' needs and identify gaps in services.

“We are very pleased to support the official launch of the Self-Reliance Index,” said Charlotte Slente, secretary-general of the Danish Refugee Council. “Promoting self-reliance is essential to achieving durable solutions for displaced people and is central to our action with refugee populations. There is still much to learn, and we see the Self-Reliance Index as a powerful tool to advance our understanding of self-reliance in displacement contexts and the quality of the services and opportunities displaced populations have access to. Building on our experience with the Index in Jordan, DRC is looking forward to expanding its use to different contexts and to sharing learning with the humanitarian and development communities.”

Support for the development of the Self-Reliance Index was provided by the IKEA Foundation, G. Barrie Landry, the Landry Family Foundation, The ELMA Relief Foundation, the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, the Imago Dei Fund, the Alchemy Foundation, and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

The RSRI is a multi-stakeholder collaboration that promotes opportunities for refugees around the world to become self-reliant and achieve a better quality of life. The RSRI is co-led by RefugePoint and the Women's Refugee Commission.

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