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Long-term Assistance and Services for Research (LASER)
Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

VALUE-ADDED OF PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: EVIDENCE REPORT 3

SUPPLEMENT TO AGREEMENT NO. AID-7200AA18CA00009
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ABOUT LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a five-year, $70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3000 researchers and development practitioners in 61 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices, and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

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ACRONYMS

BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DDI	Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation
EGM	Evidence Gap Map
ESG	Environment, Social, and Governance
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
ICT	Information, Communication, and Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KI	Key Informant
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LASER PULSE	Long-term Assistance and Services for Research, Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VA-PSE	Value-Added of Private Sector Engagement
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evidence report, the last in a series of three, focuses on dissecting the value-added of private sector engagement (VA-PSE) in the humanitarian space. Our results, based on an analysis of 184 documents, are general insights into private sector engagement (PSE) in HA but do not aim at statistical validity and generalization. The report is intended for USAID staff, private sector partners, and the broader humanitarian community with the purpose of understanding the state of the evidence in the PSE field. Available evidence of PSE in HA is often based on qualitative findings. In brief, the key takeaway is that the evidence on VA-PSE is not well documented, at least in a way that shows the effects of PSE on the performance of HA activities when controlled for the PSE variable. However, in several instances, the VA-PSE could be comfortably implied based on approaches, partnerships, and achievements documented in the reviewed literature. This study takes advantage of such implied VA-PSE in addition to those that are more explicitly stated. Still, due to methodological limitations, the added value (contribution) may not be entirely attributable to the PSE approaches discussed in many instances.

Findings

1. The **evidence on the VA-PSE is limited and not uniformly spread** across all stages of HA and within regions, types of emergencies, and technical sectors. Overall, the evidence of improved reach is the most established, and the evidence of cost efficiency is the least.
2. **Three out of ten documented evidence sources on value-added of PSE approaches in HA are related to improved reach** of HA. Factors contributing to this better reach may include reduced time for relief delivery, increased numbers of beneficiaries, or the ensuring of better safety and security of the people impacted by the emergencies.
3. The **limited documented evidence on the cost efficiency due to PSE is prevalent** across all regions, types of partners, or strategies for which the private sector is engaged in HA activities.
4. About **one-quarter of the documented evidence of VA-PSE is related to better tools** that are tested, introduced, or scaled due to the engagement of the private sector in HA.
5. The **documented evidence of VA-PSE from** engagements related to national businesses and SMEs, higher educational institutions, and engagements aimed at advancing learning and market research **is limited**.
6. The **evidence on the role of the private sector when engaged in HA to add value in terms of better partnerships** (synergy and sustainability) **is limited**. Only 12% of the total evidence of value added of PSE falls in this group. This poor documentation of evidence can be explained by PSE being limited to emergency responses, generally short-term engagements.
7. **One-fifth of the PSE-VA evidence is related to better capacity**, which represents the value added based on the capacity enhancement of partners, especially national-level partners (government, NGOs, and businesses) in their ability to plan, prepare and respond to emergencies. The evidence suggests the capacity enhancement evidence is

concentrated in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and health-related sectors and documented most in the context of COVID-19.

Evidence Gaps

1. While PSE in HA literature is improving, not all documented engagements provide details on the mode of engagement and the value-added from such engagements. **The value added from PSE is based on subjective judgment, as opposed to rigorous research showing an attributable, causal relationship between PSE and the desired results when documented**. The amount of documented evidence of value-added from PSE in HA activities varies across the six indicators. These six indicators are: *Improved Reach, Cost Efficiency*; *Better Resources; Better Tools; Better Capacity; Better partnership*. For three of the six indicators (*Better Capacity, Better partnership, Cost Efficiency)*, the documented evidence is limited. The documented evidence on Cost Efficiency due to PSE in HA has the least.
2. **The documented evidence on the VA-PSE in HA is least documented for the mitigation stage, North America and Europe region, and causes of emergencies related to agriculture** compared to other stages, regions, and causes of emergencies.
3. The **VA-PSE evidence is poorly documented for most of the 12 technical sectors considered** for our analysis. Four of the 12 sectors (financial services, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)/Telecommunications, logistics, and health) contribute more than half of the total VA-PSE documented.
4. The documented evidence of VA-PSE from engagements related to **national businesses and small and micro-enterprises (SMEs), higher educational institutions, and engagements aimed at advancing learning and market research are limited**.

These findings and gaps led to a series of recommendations, which included investment in both a more localized and a more rigorous evidence base for VA-PSE, developing a monitoring and evaluation toolkit that encourages common definitions, a corpus of potential indicators, and rigorous tools and metrics that can assist donors, implementers, PSE partners, and local actors to contribute more effectively to a robust evidence base, and lastly, to encourage cost-efficiency inquiries in PSE activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian Assistance (HA) has become increasingly globalized, complex, and challenging to manage and fund as the frequency, intensity, and resource needs of emergencies increase. Aid agencies (including donor governments), international organizations, and aid recipient governments are increasingly looking for ways to engage the private sector, and many have made private sector engagement their strategic approach for HA (1, 2, 3). Engagement of the private sector can leverage new resources, expertise, network, business practices, and perspectives to make HA activities more effective and efficient. The PSE in HA has grown, and the mode of engagement is transitioning more to in-kind and direct involvement versus charitable contributions (4,5,6). However, rigorous assessments of PSE that demonstrate a causal relationship between PSE in HA and changes in target results are lacking (7). The lack of systematically indexed databases and repositories poses challenges for rigorous assessment of the value-added of private sector engagement in HA. The current evidence base on the PSE in HA relies on case studies and a review of existing but unorganized publicly available reports, primarily from humanitarian agencies. Thus, the need emerged for an independent and systematic assessment of existing literature, identifying the evidence gaps on how PSE in HA can help improve the scale, effectiveness, and efficiency of humanitarian engagement.

A partnership between the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), and the Pulte Institute for Global Development at the University of Notre Dame, through the USAID Bureau for Democracy, Development and Innovation's LASER PULSE mechanism, initiated an effort to synthesize and review existing literature in PSE in HA activities. We reviewed 184 documents from 50 repositories suggested by 21 Key Informants (KIs) from USAID and other agencies[1]. The information from the literature is to be included in the PSE Evidence Gap Map (EGM). The selection of the KIs was based on BHA recommendations to capture the experience across regions, agencies, and technical sectors related to HA. The selected documents were coded using a nested codebook that defines different types of PSE, geography, type of HA, and the stages of emergencies they engaged in using qualitative software Atlas.ti. (Figure 1).

This evidence report is the third in the series of three and focuses on illuminating the value-added of PSE in HA.

[1] Of the 21 Key Informants, 11 (4 female, 7 male) were from USAID from PSE Hub and five different divisions of BHA. Other 10 Key Informants (6 female, 4 male) were from six different agencies outside of USAID including UN agencies (1), INGOs (8), and the private sector (1).

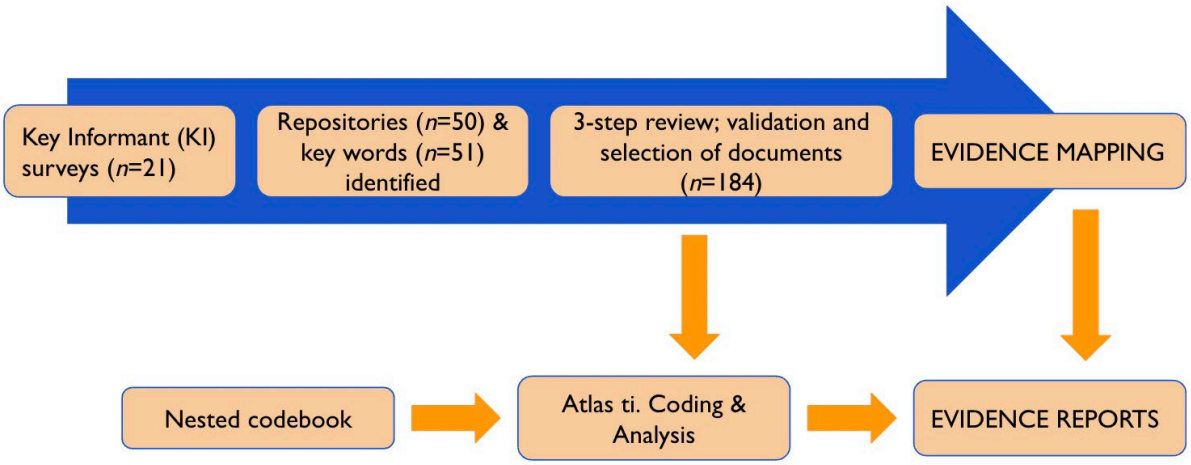

Figure 1: Evidence search strategy for evidence mapping and evidence-report preparation

For the analysis, the study relied on examples and statements in the reviewed documents to code for value-added as a result of private sector engagements (VA-PSE) in HA. The PSE in HA aims for improved reach and cost-efficiency, which can be achieved with better tools and methods, additional resources, capacities and capabilities, and partnerships and networks. Our codebook, prepared and reviewed with BHA, included six indicators of VA-PSE. Two of the six VA-PSE indicators reflect the additionalities of PSE (improved reach and cost efficiency), while the other four can be considered intermediate indicators (Figure 2).

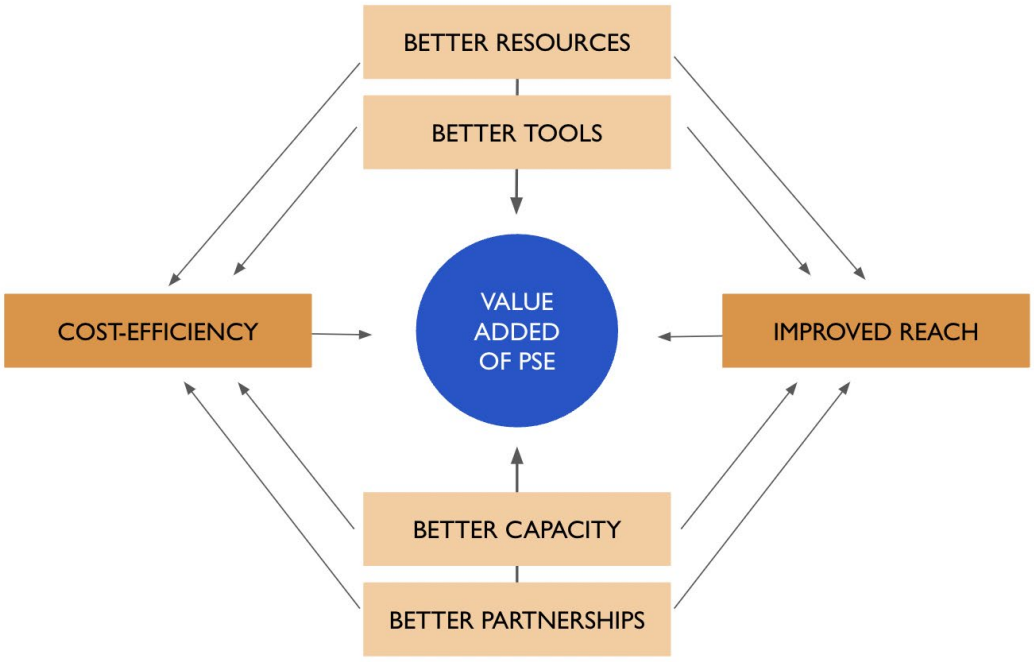

Figure 2: Different measures of value-added of private sector engagement in HA (see footnote for definition)[2]

This evidence report is based on publicly available documentation of PSE in HA from 50 different repositories as suggested by the key informants identified with BHA. Our analysis is based on qualitative methods following a systematic review and coding of documents to provide a contextualized understanding of PSE in HA. Most of the reviewed documents capture the PSE in HA of foreign businesses (primarily multinational businesses), skewed to a few sectors and in the humanitarian response stage. In this regard, our results are general insights into PSE in HA but do not aim at statistical validity and generalization. This research started before the Ukrainian crisis began in 2022; thus, the PSE related to the crisis is not included in our analysis, even though the private sector response to it has been unprecedented. The reviewed documents span two decades (2000 - 2021), focusing more heavily on documents after 2015. The repository search,

[2] ***Improved Reach***: Improvement in reach (geography, number of beneficiaries, and response time) of HA as a result of PSE; ***Cost Efficiency***: Improvement in the cost of delivery of HA as a result of PSE; ***Better Resources***: Access to more in-kind (supplies) or cash for HA as a result of PSE; ***Better Tools***: Use of Innovations (technology, methods, processes, approaches, services) in HA as a result of PSE; ***Better Capacity***: Improvement in the capacity of the different partners (especially the national partners like government, NGOs, or private sector in the global south) to plan, coordinate, and implement HA/ response as a result of PSE; ***Better partnership***: Synergy and sustained partnership between private sector with different partners (aid agencies including UN agencies World Bank or other INGOS, donor governments, governments, NGOs, and with other private sector partners) to work together for longer-term or multiple projects/ activities (rather than just for emergency response or on a single task), i.e., more potent and sustained partnerships as a result of PSE.

document coding, and analysis focused on PSE in HA in the global south. Thus, evidence of PSEs in humanitarian causes in the USA, Canada, and Europe is limited in this report.

FINDINGS

The evidence on VA-PSE is not well documented, at least in a way that shows the effects of PSE on the performance of HA activities when controlled for the PSE variable. However, in several instances, the VA-PSE could be comfortably implied based on approaches, partnerships, and achievements documented in the reviewed literature. This study takes advantage of such implied VA-PSE in addition to those that are more explicitly stated. Still, due to methodological limitations, the added value (contribution) may not be entirely attributable to the PSE approaches discussed in many instances.

Finding 1: The evidence on the VA-PSE is limited and not uniformly spread across all stages of HA and within regions, types of emergencies, and technical sectors. Overall, the evidence of improved reach is the most established, and the evidence of cost efficiency is the least.

When analyzing the evidence related to VA-PSE as a whole, the evidence is more concentrated as it relates to the relief stage of emergency response (44%) followed by the recovery stage (21%). The share of documented evidence pertaining to the African region is the highest (42%), followed by Asia & Pacific (30%), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region (15%), the Middle-East (9%), and US, Canada & Europe (4%). Health-related emergencies and emergencies related to natural causes contribute 70% of the total documented evidence. Three of the twelve technical sectors (financial services, health & nutrition, and logistics/transportation) make up almost half of the documented VA-PSE evidence (Table 1). The evidence documented overwhelmingly surrounds engagements of the foreign private sector (primarily multinationals and other businesses from the US and Europe) rather than domestic businesses from the global south. The documented evidence of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is minimal. The VA-PSE evidence is better documented when the private sector engages with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) (including the World Bank and UN agencies) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and when the engagements are aimed at enabling the environment and harnessing the expertise and innovation of the private sector.

Table 1: Disaggregation of VA-PSE evidence by stages of HA, region, types of emergencies, technical sectors, type of private sector, and aim of PSE

Disaggregations	Better Tools (n=278)	Better Partnerships (n=142)	Cost Efficiency (n=72)	Better Resources (n=91)	Improved Reach (n=309)	Better Capacity (n=210)
Stages						
Mitigation	11%	13%	3%	6%	9%	9%
Preparedness	15%	14%	20%	23%	13%	15%
Risk Reduction	12%	11%	15%	13%	10%	13%
Response	46%	40%	38%	42%	46%	41%
Recovery	16%	21%	25%	17%	22%	23%
Region						
Africa	48%	48%	53%	36%	41%	31%
Asia & Pacific	29%	26%	16%	34%	32%	31%
Latin America & the Caribbean	14%	19%	5%	18%	15%	17%
US, Canada & Europe	2%	0%	11%	5%	4%	6%
Middle East	7%	7%	16%	7%	8%	15%
Types of emergencies engaged in						
Natural causes	34%	34%	36%	50%	33%	26%
Man-made causes	17%	32%	36%	22%	29%	19%
Agricultural causes	8%	5%	12%	3%	3%	7%
Health causes	41%	29%	16%	25%	35%	48%
Technical sector of engagements						
Agriculture	5%	9%	9%	1%	4%	8%

Disaggregations	Better Tools (n=278)	Better Partnerships (n=142)	Cost Efficiency (n=72)	Better Resources (n=91)	Improved Reach (n=309)	Better Capacity (n=210)
Financial Services	20%	14%	21%	19%	13%	10%
Climate/ Environment	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%
Engineering/ Construction	4%	6%	4%	3%	3%	4%
Food Supply	7%	11%	4%	11%	7%	7%
Governance	1%	7%	1%	1%	4%	3%
Health and nutrition	11%	12%	11%	19%	13%	13%
ICT/ Telecom	17%	4%	15%	14%	13%	13%
Logistics and Transportation	13%	14%	12%	5%	12%	9%
Peace/ security	2%	5%	9%	5%	13%	6%
Social services	8%	12%	4%	11%	8%	11%
WASH	9%	6%	7%	8%	7%	14%
Aim of private sector engagement						
Catalyzing	17%	15%	6%	19%	18%	24%
Enabling Environment	26%	29%	38%	33%	40%	32%
Expertise and Innovation	35%	39%	56%	29%	30%	25%
Information/ Strategy	10%	15%	0%	11%	10%	12%
Learning/ Research	11%	2%	0%	8%	3%	7%
Type of private sector engaged						
Corporations	8%	8%	7%	14%	6%	6%

Disaggregations	Better Tools (n=278)	Better Partnerships (n=142)	Cost Efficiency (n=72)	Better Resources (n=91)	Improved Reach (n=309)	Better Capacity (n=210)
Financial agencies	14%	12%	26%	18%	13%	8%
Foreign businesses	37%	34%	30%	33%	36%	32%
Charitable/ philanthropic	9%	6%	2%	6%	6%	14%
Large national businesses	10%	12%	4%	9%	11%	16%
SMEs	8%	11%	13%	3%	9%	13%
Multinational	14%	17%	17%	17%	18%	10%
Engaging partners						
Donor governments	5%	6%	5%	10%	4%	4%
Financial institutions	14%	13%	10%	14%	14%	10%
For profit agencies	5%	9%	10%	6%	9%	8%
Government agencies	10%	12%	12%	11%	12%	14%
Higher education	5%	4%	0%	3%	3%	9%
ICT firms	24%	11%	16%	9%	17%	11%
INGOs	22%	29%	31%	29%	25%	24%
NGOs	15%	17%	16%	18%	15%	20%

Among the six indicators of VA-PSE, the evidence related to ***improved reach*** is most robustly documented (28% of documented evidence), followed by ***better tools*** (25%), together making more than half of the documented evidence (Figure 3). However, these two indicators have high co-occurrence with other indicators of value-added. The documented evidence is the least robust (6% of the documented evidence) for ***cost efficiency***. The co-occurrence of ***cost efficiency*** is also the lowest with the other five measures of PSE value added.

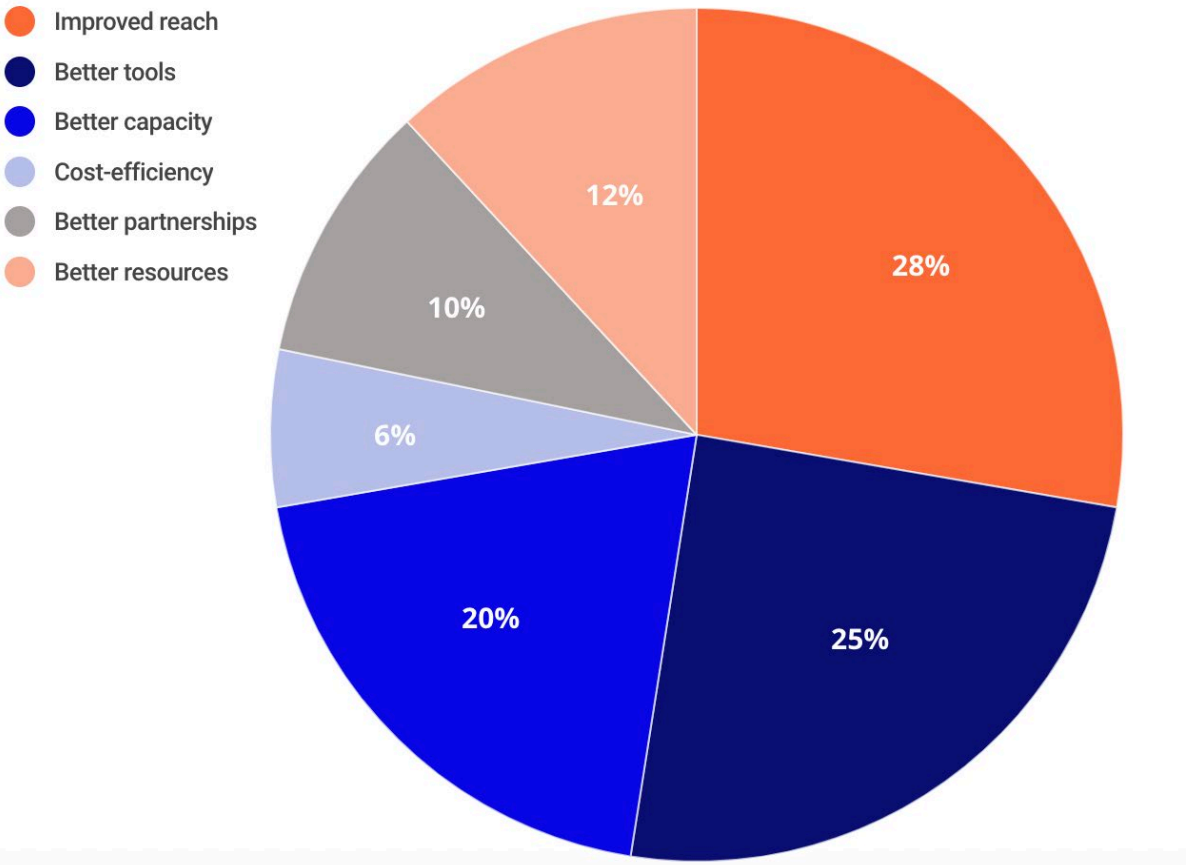

Figure 3: The Disaggregation of the documented evidence of PSE value added in HA activities. Graphic made with Infogram.

Finding 2: Three out of ten documented evidence on value-added of PSE approaches in HA is related to ***improved reach*** of HA. Factors contributing to this better reach may include reduced time for relief delivery, increased numbers of beneficiaries, or the ensuring of better safety and security of the people impacted by the emergencies.

The evidence of ***improved reach*** is the most documented among the six indicators of VA-PSE the study considered from PSE in HA, representing 29% of the total VA-PSE evidence documented. However, the disaggregation of the documented evidence shows a high concentration of the evidence in engagements related to emergency response (40%), African region (41%), causes of emergencies related to health (35%), and natural causes (33%). The ***improved reach*** of HA support activities is more commonly

documented for engagement with the foreign private sector in financial services, health, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and logistics and transportation (Table 1).

Digital finance and risk financing are commonly discussed in the reviewed documents. The successful testing and scaling of financial services across different types of emergencies and countries point to the fact that PSE helped to improve the reach of HA (8,9,10,11,12,13). The evidence of disaster risk financing, including in the agriculture sector, has been documented in some countries, especially in Africa (14,15). The evidence of PSE enhancing the reach of HA is also documented relatively well for humanitarian logistics services (including supply chain management) during the emergency response (16,15,17,18,19, 20), especially as part of longer-term partnerships with UN institutions with global reach (4,13,18). The evidence in WASH and health and nutrition for this indicator is primarily related to the private sector activities during COVID-19 and, to some extent, to other epidemics (21,22,23,24,25,26), and health services provided in response to emergencies related to natural causes (23). In this regard, the VA-PSE related to better reach pertains to the ability to reach a wider geographic area and audience and supply of goods (food, WASH, medical) and services (financial services, search and rescue, medical services) more quickly and safely. This often involved using digital finance, risk financing, software, engineering, and construction-related equipment by the private sector.

Finding 3: The limited documented evidence on the cost efficiency due to PSE is true across all regions, types of partners, or strategies for which the private sector is engaged in HA activities.

The evidence of ***reduced humanitarian cost*** is the least documented in the reviewed documents, with just 6% of all documented for six indicators of VA-PSE. Poor documentation of evidence of this indicator, relative to the other five indicators, holds across all disaggregations by stages of HA, regions, causes of emergencies, types of private sector[3] business models, and the strategic purpose of PSE. Similar to the other five indicators of VA-PSE, the evidence for this indicator also concentrates on response stages (38%), for the African region (53%), foreign private sector companies, the financial services sector, and engagements that are with INGOs and NGOs (Table 1). The low co-occurrence of ***cost efficiency*** with the other five VA-PSE indicators also reflects the limited evidence on this indicator. Even when discussing ***cost efficiency***, the documented evidence does not always quantify savings; when it does, it presents the

[3] We grouped private sector business models into two groups, foreign businesses working in the global south, and businesses from the global south (national level businesses). We also considered SMEs but in several instances we were not able to group them as foreign or national.

numbers without much detail, further limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from the body of literature. The ***cost efficiency*** discussion in the reviewed literature revolves around financial services (including digital financial tools) due to reduced response time, the transaction cost of HA support, safety and security of aid workers and aid recipients (27,10,8), and the cost saving due to more efficient humanitarian logistics and supply chain management (28,29,30). A few examples of reduced HA costs documented include the use of technologies like 3D printing (31,23), emergency response by the private sector versus the public sector (32), or market system development activities in different countries (33).

Finding 4: About one-quarter of the documented evidence of VA-PSE is related to ***better tools*** that are tested, introduced, or scaled due to the engagement of the private sector in HA.

Almost one-quarter of the documented evidence of the VA-PSE in HA is related to ***better tools***. Again, the evidence, when disaggregated, shows that the evidence concentrates on emergency response (46%), for the African region (48%), foreign private sector (70%), and engagements that are with INGOs or NGOs (37%). Unlike the other indicators, the evidence of value-added related to ***better tools*** concentrates more on emergencies related to health causes (41%). The sector-wise disaggregation suggests that the information and communication technology (ICT)/ telecommunications and the financial services sector have the strongest documented evidence, followed by engagements in the logistics/transportation and health sectors (Table 1). The relatively bigger share of the financial and ICT/telecommunications sectors is primarily due to the high level of complementarity of these two sectors. Examples of better tools include the use of digital finance and other financial services (10,8), the use of 3D-printing to create disposable first-aid kits (31,34), innovations in logistics and supply chain management (13,15,29), innovations in temporary shelters, geospatial imaging (15), and disaster risk financing tools (35,12) to mention just a few. Not all efforts by the private sector to test and scale new technologies have been successful; for instance, the failed deployment of Golden Rice (a variety with vitamin A in its edible part produced through genetic engineering). The variety was developed to reduce malnutrition but failed due to poor acceptance by both consumers and farmers (36).

Finding 5: The evidence on the role of the private sector when engaged in HA for in-kind and cash donations (***better resources***) is mostly concentrated on emergency responses. The documented evidence is more prevalent for in-kind resources than cash and/or funding contributions.

The literature suggests that PSE is evolving from traditional charitable cash donations to in-kind donations and more active involvement in emergencies with employee mobilization and expert services. In some instances, this is based on commercial motives (4,5,6,37). We find that the PSE is more clearly rooted in in-kind (supplies) or based on actual involvement in the emergency response rather than through charitable contributions. The limited evidence on the VA-PSE indicator related to ***better resources*** suggests that both in-kind and cash contributions from private sector organizations are mainly for the emergency response stage (42%), primarily for emergencies related to natural causes (50%), and in Africa and Asia (70%). While cash contributions are likely happening (e.g., the donations tracker for Ukraine), the cash contributions for HA seem less likely to be formally documented in research and evaluation work because it is considered a relatively light-touch form of PSE.

The evidence also suggests that VA-PSE related to ***better resources*** is stronger for sectors like financial services, health & nutrition (related to food supply), and some social services. Similarly, the evidence for private sector partnerships with INGOs, NGOs, and national-level financial institutions in the global south is strong. In some instances, national and multinational companies contribute funds (for charitable purposes or as part of their CSR). Still, such contributions are primarily for emergency responses when visibility is high (38,16,29,4). The evidence provides some examples in which the private sector provides online platforms and financial services for emergency-related fundraising in different countries (39,12,15). In light of the rising cost of HA that is outpaced by the ability to raise funds by international agencies, including the UN, it is reported that only around 5% of the global humanitarian appeals are met by private sector donations (40). This corroborates our analysis suggesting weak evidence on VA-PSE for our indicator of ***better resources.***

Finding 6: The evidence on the role of the private sector when engaged in HA to add value in terms of ***better partnerships*** (synergy and sustainability) is limited. Only 12% of the total evidence of value added of PSE falls in this group. This poor documentation of evidence can be explained by the private sector favoring short-term engagements during emergency responses.

The evidence that engagements were sustained and diversified (beyond one activity or one emergency) is limited and makes up only 12% of the documented VA-PSE evidence. Like other indicators of VA-PSE, the documented evidence of ***better partnerships*** relates more to emergency response (40%) in Africa (48%). The documented evidence is more or less similar for natural, man-made, and health causes of emergencies (range: 29% to 34%). These partnerships are more pronounced in financial services, logistics

(including food supply), and health services (Table 1). We found some examples of synergistic and sustained partnerships when there is a need for larger investments and longer-term commitments. Some examples are partnerships for financial services (8,41) and disaster risk financing (35,12). These partnerships paved the way to relax some of the regulatory hurdles through continuous engagement with government agencies. This, in turn, created business enabling environments that reduced the risks of investments and opened doors for commercial opportunities beyond one emergency, or even one humanitarian cause, alone. Other types of partnerships that have sustained the test of time are those with INGOs and UN agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) for food supply logistics (42,17), or with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide on-site disaster logistics during emergencies (43) between multinationals and national banks or telecommunications companies in the global south (44,8,13,41). We also find examples of longer-term partnerships and alliances, including within the private sector, for research and coordination to accelerate emergency responses (45) or to develop cures and treatments for various diseases (46,47,48). A potential reason for limited evidence of sustained partnerships may be because most PSE is aimed at corporate visibility, rather than a plan to work beyond any initial emergency response (see BHA Evidence Report 2[4]). In many instances, the businesses that engage in these emergencies are those already present in the country and decide to use part of their operation (expertise or sometimes resources) to engage in HA strategically, either for business visibility or CSR commitments. Once the response phase is over, they tend to shift the resources and personnel back to their regular business operations, even though there may still be a large need for humanitarian assistance.

Finding 7: One-fifth of the PSE- VA evidence is related to ***better capacity***, which represents the value added based on the capacity enhancement of partners, especially national-level partners (government, NGOs, and businesses) in their ability to plan, prepare and respond to emergencies. The evidence suggests the capacity enhancement evidence is concentrated in WASH and health-related sectors and documented most in the context of COVID-19.

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While financial donations from the private sector remain important, the literature notes an increasing trend of PSE approaches that involve sharing technology and technical capacities with partners in the global south. This would assist them in the planning, coordination, and response to emergencies, and in preparing risk-reduction learnings or activities (49,50). Of the total documented evidence of VA-PSE, the VA-PSE for the ***better capacity*** indicator is 20% (Figure 3). The documented evidence for this indicator is well documented for the emergency response stage (41%), in Africa and the Asia & Pacific regions (together, 62% of documented evidence), and for health-related emergencies (40%). Technical sectors like WASH & health (30% of documented evidence), logistics, and food supply (21% of documented evidence) are more relevant for this indicator. The value added in capacity development (***better capacity***) is higher when the PSE is related to foreign businesses and the engagements are with INGOs/ NGOs and government agencies (Table 1). The reviewed literature provides several examples of the private sector helping to improve national partners' capacity for disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and reconstruction after natural disasters (6,14,51,52), and disaster assessment and mapping (27,53). Other documented examples include capacity developments in areas like WASH and health (54,34,55), logistics (39,18), computer hardware and software (56), telecommunications (15), cash transfers (57), and agriculture (58,59,60), to mention a few.

EVIDENCE GAPS

Evidence Gap 1: While PSE in HA documentation is improving, not all engagements provide details on the mode of engagement and the value-added from such engagements. Even when the value added from PSE is documented, it is based more on subjective judgment as opposed to research showing an attributable, causal relationship between PSE and the desired results.

The evidence of PSE documented in the reviewed literature is skewed more toward Africa, response stage, financial services sector, and engagement of multinational businesses. It is important to note that almost one-quarter of the documents did not indicate the value-added. Moreover, the documented evidence of VA-PSE does not generally assess the causal relationships between PSE and the outcomes or impacts of HA. Most of the evidence we captured comes from case studies or reports prepared by aid agencies or HA activity implementers and, to a limited extent, from independent

researchers' and experts' reviews. We see a clear lack of rigorous, attributable evidence of VA-PSE.

Evidence Gap 2: The amount of documented evidence of value-added from PSE in HA activities varies across the six indicators. For three of the six indicators, the documented evidence is limited, and *cost efficiency* due to PSE in HA has the least amount of documented evidence.

Our analysis shows that three of the six indicators for the value-added of PSE in HA have limited documented evidence. The share of the total documented evidence (of all six indicators) is the least for indicators related to ***cost efficiency*** (6%), followed by ***better resources*** (10%) and ***better partnerships*** for HA (12%). The poor documentation for these three indicators was seen across all disaggregations by region, stages of HA, causes of emergencies, and type of private sector engaged in HA. The documented evidence on ***improved reach*** is good but mostly silent on the inclusivity of its reach. Evidence on inclusion is important, especially when the evidence is concentrated in sectors like ICT and digital financing that favor urban and richer populations, while rural, poor, and disadvantaged groups like women may be underserved.

Evidence Gap 3: The documented evidence on the VA-PSE in HA is least documented for the mitigation stage, North America and Europe region, and causes of emergencies related to agriculture compared to other stages, regions, and causes of emergencies.

The share of the total documented evidence on VA-PSE is the lowest for the mitigation stage (9%) overall, and five of the six indicators. The evidence for a ***better partnership*** is lowest as it relates to the risk-reduction stage. In aggregate, the evidence on the VA-PSE is least documented for North America and Europe (4%), followed by the Middle East region (9%). However, the evidence for reduced cost is the least documented for the LAC region (5%). The lack of evidence for the North American regions may be due to our focus on the global south when deciding on the methodology behind the literature review. The lack of evidence of PSE for agriculture-related emergencies is also reflected in all six VA-PSE indicators (6%).

Evidence Gap 4: The VA-PSE evidence is poorly documented for most of the 12 technical sectors considered for our analysis. Four of the 12 sectors (financial services, ICT/Telecommunications, logistics, and health) contribute more than half of the total VA-PSE documented.

The evidence for sectors like climate and environment, governance, and construction and engineering is the lowest; these three sectors make up less than 10% of the documented evidence on VA-PSE. The evidence of value-added from the PSE in HA activities in the agriculture sector is also low (6% of the total VA-PSE). The evidence of VA-PSE in agriculture mostly comes from financial services, including agricultural risk financing and activities related to displaced populations (including refugees) (61,12). Most of the natural causes of emergencies are climate-change induced (62,63), but there is limited PSE and evidence of value-added from PSEs in this area. Also, there is low engagement and VA-PSE evidence for mitigation and risk reduction stages. PSE is more geared toward immediate response when corporate brands have higher visibility (16,56). These kinds of PSE are usually based on short-term repurposing of existing operations and resources for HA, especially in regions where they already have a business presence or business interest (16,64). This can also explain why the evidence for VA-PSE in terms of ***better partnership*** is relatively low.

Evidence Gap 5: The documented evidence of VA-PSE from engagements related to national businesses and SMEs, institutions of higher learning, and engagements aimed at advancing learning and market research are limited.

Of the different types of private sector businesses, the evidence of value-addition in engagements with SMEs is the most limited, followed by national businesses from the global south. This lack of evidence is also reflected in these overall private sector engagements. It is important to effectively mobilize the in-country businesses from the global south (both large and small) to make the value-added more permanent. However, the lack of adequate evidence on the value-added of PSE makes it hard to assess national capacity to face humanitarian challenges. The lack of evidence of SMEs' engagement in HA or the value-added of such engagements is concerning, given that SMEs make up to 90% of the private sector in developing countries.

CONCLUSIONS

As this report demonstrates, the evidence of VA-PSE is not well documented in breadth or scope. Evidence was concentrated in documents describing private sector engagement with INGOs or NGOs and when the aim was to enable the environment or harness the expertise of the private sector. Within the limited evidence pool, almost three-fourths of the documents focused on two regions: Africa and Asia & the Pacific, thus also limiting the evidence to the types of emergencies prevalent in these regions. In addition, this report has documented that most VA-PSE is related to improved reach, while the least documented is related to cost-efficiency. One important finding to note is the

increasing trend of PSE approaches that rely on more active involvement (e.g., technical services provision) over traditional financial support. Finally, there is poor documentation of all types of emergencies, and not all documents provide details on the mode of engagement and the value-added from such engagements. Hence, it is important to understand if these gaps are due to the type of emergencies that were documented or whether they reflect inadequacies elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Invest in localizing the evidence base

The poor representation of SMEs and other local businesses in the PSE in the HA evidence base is out of proportion to their importance in local economies in the global south. The combination of their economic significance, as well as their continued presence in communities facing emergencies, warrants additional investigation and investment within the PSE evidence base. There is a strong possibility that the VA-PSE of local private sector actors differs from their foreign counterparts.

Recommendation 2: Invest in a more rigorous evidence base for VA-PSE

A significant gap likely exists between reality and the evidence documented around VA-PSE in HA. Results measurement, research, evaluation, documentation, and dissemination require a certain level of investment. To date, investments in this space have been largely ad-hoc and internally led, resulting in the evidence base around VA-PSE being largely limited to qualitative case studies with little rigor, and, likely, high bias. There is a noticeable lack of third-party, externally led evidence-building activities regarding PSE in HA. Ensuring sufficient resources to allow such activities ensures a higher likelihood that future evidence will be less biased, more objective, and more rigorous.

Recommendation 3: Develop a VA-PSE Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) toolkit

Making the case for broader and deeper PSE involvement in HA necessitates the ability to speak credibly around the value this approach adds to resource-scarce and time-sensitive environments. However, VA-PSE is loosely defined and even more loosely measured, leading to a relatively limited evidence base. Developing a toolkit that encourages common definitions, a corpus of potential indicators, and rigorous tools and metrics can assist donors, implementers, PSE partners, and local actors to contribute more effectively to a robust evidence base.

Recommendation 4: Encourage cost-efficiency inquiries in PSE activities

Even among the many gaps in the VA-PSE literature, the near total paucity of literature on cost-efficiency is notable, given the juxtaposition when examining the private sector's expertise in tracking return-on-investment, and other cost-efficiency metrics, within their standard operations. If PSE in HA fails to demonstrate approaches that can reduce costs and increase the efficiency of humanitarian endeavors, then it will fail to make a case for its necessity. Much as costing and efficiency metrics have become part of key performance indicators at a business level, cost-efficiency metrics may become a standard part of PSE in HA operations.

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