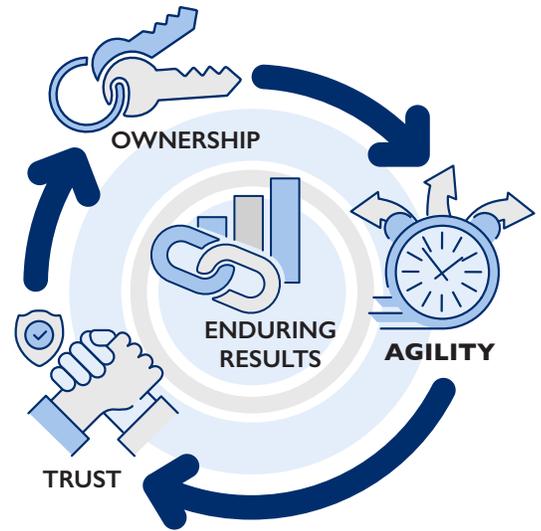


ENDURING RESULTS STUDY 4.0

INTRODUCTION TO ERS 4.0 THEMATIC BRIEFS

INTRODUCTION TO ERS 4.0: THEMATIC BRIEFS

USAID’s fourth *Enduring Results Study* examined 17 diverse partnerships around the globe whose operational period ended in 2019, with a goal of further understanding what drives *enduring results* within these partnerships. A partnership was considered to have produced enduring results when a significant part of its activities - or activities stemming from the partnership - continued (and potentially grew in scale) beyond its operational period to produce ongoing impact. As ERS 4.0 explored broader questions of why and how different types of partnerships produced enduring results, stakeholders repeatedly pointed to the importance of **ownership**, **trust**, and **agility** as foundational ‘building blocks’ in driving enduring results across all types of partnerships. These concepts are often complementary, enabling and reinforcing one another within partnerships that go on to have enduring results. These ‘thematic briefs’ aim to consolidate learnings on these concepts in the partnership context to support USAID staff, implementing partners, and private sector partners in building strong partnerships positioned for enduring impact.



ENDURING RESULTS: KEY DEFINITIONS

ERS 4.0 considered a partnership to have produced enduring results when:

Within this context, ERS 4.0 considered the ways in which partnerships have *sustained* and *scaled* their work in the years following the partnership operational period. Sustainability as per USAID’s PSE policy can be understood as the *ability of a local system to produce desired outcomes over time by obtaining the resources necessary to produce those outcomes*. Scale refers to *growth from increasing the size and/or effect of activities and outcomes that stem from the partnership operational period*. Additional definitions that may be helpful in reading these thematic briefs include:

Each of the partnerships assessed had at least some activities that continued beyond the USAID partnership operational period. This qualifier helped to distinguish those partnerships with *no or few continuing activities* from those that achieved enduring results in much of their work

ERS 4.0 focuses squarely on continuing activities as it offers a more precise standard for the work the partners, participants, governments, or other partnership stakeholders lead following USAID’s partnership operational period in order to achieve enduring results

Acknowledges that not all partnership activities are meant to continue indefinitely, and accounts for related activities that reinforce and extend the core work of the partnership

ERS 4.0 considered a partnership to have produced enduring results when:

a significant part of its activities – or activities stemming from the partnership – continue (and potentially grow in scale) beyond its operational period to produce ongoing impact

While not necessary to meet the ‘bar’ for enduring results, ERS’ also consider the extent to which partnership activities scale as a valuable input into analysis

Specifies that continuing activities should reinforce positive impacts in communities in order to support enduring results

Enduring Results Studies examines the results of partnerships in the 2 years following the formal partnership operational period



- **Activities:** distinct interventions and actions that partners take on to advance identified development result(s)
- **Local partners:** ERS 4.0 follows the Agency’s New Partnership Initiative definition for Local Entities
- **Design phase:** refers to the planning, designing, and structuring phase of the private sector partnership. Relevant processes include legal contract development, partner solicitations, and personnel identification, activity planning, etc.
- **Implementation phase:** refers to the execution phase of the private sector partnership where project plans from the design phase are carried out. Relevant processes include research, trainings, convenings, etc.
- **Post-partnership phase:** refers to the phase after the official partnership operational period. Relevant processes include check-ins and status updates

Sourcing for these briefs include Dalberg interviews and analysis, selected partnership documentation, and internal report including past Enduring Results Studies and the USAID PSE Policy

ENDURING RESULTS STUDY 4.0

THEMATIC BRIEF | THE ROLE OF AGILITY IN SUSTAINING AND SCALING THE WORK OF PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

OVERVIEW OF AGILITY IN DRIVING ENDURING RESULTS

- Agility in the context of this study refers to a partnership’s ability to adapt quickly and position activities for sustainability (and possibly scale) within dynamic and/or challenging circumstances, based on a continuous process of learning and reflection. Agility empowers partnerships to efficiently problem-solve and helps partnerships continue driving towards its objectives in situations of uncertainty, creating a strong foundation for enduring results.
- ERS 4.0 partnerships tended to demonstrate agility across two core domains:

Ways of working

Elements internal to the partnership dynamic, such as processes, collaboration structures, communication cadence and methods, reporting timelines and delivery expectations, among others, that can be recalibrated based on partner needs and constraints as well as shifts in the external environment

Strategic approach

Elements core to a project’s vision and objectives, such as specific partnership activities, definitions of success, composition of partners and capabilities brought to bear, and engagement of stakeholders, among others, that can be evolved to meet dynamic or challenging circumstances - or as a partnership moves into new geographies

- Agility in ways of working can be crucial in many collaborations, but is often especially valuable for partnerships that bring together public and/or social-sector organizations with private sector companies and those that combine partners across regions and cultures- each of which often requires partners to engage early and consistently to **examine and recalibrate their “middle ground”** to maintain a collaborative approach that works for all.
- *Strategic agility* is essential for partnerships targeting broad outcomes or operating in particularly unstable markets or nascent sectors, as they may be required to adapt significant components of their activities and approaches to changing circumstances or new learnings. In these contexts, it is important that partnerships **balance strategic agility with a clearly-defined vision** around which partners and stakeholders remain aligned to ensure partnerships remain on track to achieve enduring results.

LEARNINGS FROM ERS 4.0 FEATURED PARTNERSHIPS

ERS 4.0 zoomed in on four private sector partnerships that past ERSes have shown to play a role in shaping the sustainability and scalability of partnerships. Agility and its sub-components play a role across each of these dimensions:



Partnership Duration

Agility is an important driver of enduring results for longer projects, which ERS 4.0 found to be twice as likely as shorter projects (<2 years) to demonstrate agility. Oftentimes, shorter projects targeted narrow and clearly-defined outcomes with less need for agility, while longer projects often focused on broader goals and required ongoing learning and adaptation to environmental roadblocks and evolving needs in the internal partnership dynamic

In a girls’ mentorship partnership in Kenya, USAID adapted its support model to invest in significant capacity building for the local implementing partner, which was new to working with global donors. The 8-year duration of the partnership created space for USAID to invest this time and for the implementer to grow in its contributions to the project. After the partnership’s close, the implementer has continued driving specific programs initiated during the partnership and has grown to be a repeated implementer for USAID and other major donors



ENDURING RESULTS STUDY 4.0

THEMATIC BRIEF | THE ROLE OF AGILITY IN SUSTAINING AND SCALING THE WORK OF PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

LEARNINGS FROM ERS 4.0 FEATURED PARTNERSHIPS *continued*

ERS 4.0 zoomed in on four private sector partnerships that past ERSes have shown to play a role in shaping sustainability and scalability of partnerships. Agility and its sub-components play a role across each of these dimensions:



Local vs. Global Partners

In partnerships with non-local partners or with a mix of global and local partners, creating space for agility in the partnership's ways of working (e.g., communication tools and styles) can be key to **navigating the differing cultural norms and sensitivities** that show up in cross-regional partnerships. This agility can enable the kinds of successful collaborations that can anchor enduring results and lead to additional partner engagement.

A global social entrepreneurship venture rooted in Asia partnered with USAID to adapt its model to Albania, where the business environment could be at odds with the philosophy of social entrepreneurship. When the team recognized that the definition of “social entrepreneurship” they’d used elsewhere was not a good fit for this context, they created space for interpretation and shifted components of the application process, while maintaining the program’s core vision. This experience helped inform the program’s eventual expansion to similar environments across Eastern Europe.



Market Orientation

Strategic agility is often critical in driving enduring results for market-oriented partnerships that must **navigate nascent sectors or rapidly-evolving markets** (e.g., tech, finance). These partners may find themselves constantly evolving the assumptions or evidence base upon which their work is based, requiring recalibrations large and small to ensure their approach remains fit for purpose and enduring impact.

An SME fund partnership in South Africa designed its partnership set-up to easily integrate various partner investing models into its overall organizational strategy. As one of the only funds focused on investing in SMEs in South Africa, strategic agility was key to navigating the new investment space and implementing emerging learnings throughout the partnership life-cycle. This strategy proved successful and the fund has since scaled by 600%.

“Even in scoping the project...I could see the team really took the time to understand the way our model worked rather than trying to impose an external model—and I think that was very helpful in helping us initially succeed.”

– Implementing partner, South Africa



Private Sector Contribution

Where enduring results hinged on deep involvement from private sector actors, it was important that USAID and its partners found ways to **incorporate the private sector’s ways of working** (e.g., rapid iteration, concise communication) into their approach in order to draw out their deepest engagement and most relevant capabilities.

In a tech sector development partnership in Cambodia, USAID and the implementing partner had to adapt its ways of working to meet tech companies’ working style, including lighter reporting norms and a greater degree of confidentiality in broadcasting successes and participating in evaluations. The team’s agility in building this distinct collaboration style allowed the tech companies to engage comfortably and commit to the long-term work of the partnership even after the end of its operational period.

“For the private sector, they want 15 minutes. ‘Get in, get out. Give me a pitch deck with 3 slides about what I’m getting out of this activity. Tell me what you need from me. Bottom line for your ask’...The whole culture of 20-page proposals with MEL plans...it doesn’t exist for a lot of these actors in the private sector.”

– Implementing partner, Cambodia

ENDURING RESULTS STUDY 4.0

THEMATIC BRIEF | THE ROLE OF AGILITY IN SUSTAINING AND SCALING THE WORK OF PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

CONSIDERATION FOR BUILDING AGILITY INTO PARTNERSHIPS

Guidance below is targeted specifically for USAID teams (indicated by the  icon), implementing partners (indicated by the  icon), and private sector partners (indicated by the  icon) to drive enduring results through strengthening trust

DESIGN	IMPLEMENTATION	POST-PARTNERSHIP
<p> Aim for a longer partnership duration for broad, market-building partnerships and those testing new products and innovations to allow sufficient time for research and iterative testing and promote agility (e.g., via periodic checkpoints to take stock of what is and is not working regarding the pathway to sustainability and scale, then adapt accordingly)</p>	<p> Where possible, allow flexibility in internal processes and reporting structures to encourage implementers and private sector partners to operate with agility and land on collaboration approaches (e.g., meeting cadence and structure, report formats, etc.) that work for each organization (this is especially valuable for businesses that are less familiar with USG processes)</p>	<p> Evaluate the extent to which (and ways in which) agility contributed to the partnership's enduring results to gather learnings to replicate successes in future partnerships</p>
<p> Design partnership structures to allow for agility in ways of working, such as allowing for both short-term and long-term hires, easing extension requirements, availability of ad-hoc grants, etc.</p>	<p> Among all partners, embed more informal learning practices (e.g., stakeholder reflection meetings, expert input) and follow up to ensure teams are integrating learning from these efforts as well as formal MEL activities</p>	<p> Update future partnership agreements and policies to be more conducive to partnerships operating with agility (e.g., amending grant structures and contract mechanisms) based on past learnings</p>
<p> In longer partnerships (>2 years), especially broad, market-building partnerships and those testing new innovations, establish clear expectations and norms (e.g., around approval processes) that empower implementation teams to react quickly to roadblocks and environmental shifts, setting a standard for operational agility</p>	<p> Where appropriate, structure activities as prototypes or pilots to encourage rapid iteration and build learning and adaptation into the process</p>	
<p> Particularly for initiatives with several private sector partners, design lighter-touch governing bodies that can quickly make decisions when needed, and empower team members to efficiently implement decisions within their purview</p>	<p> Share knowledge and practices used within the private sector to maintain agility within collaborations (e.g., more frequent, informal communication; concise reporting methods, lighter decision-making structures) to cultivate positive behavior changes over the course of the partnership</p>	

ENDURING RESULTS STUDY 4.0

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR DRIVING ENDURING RESULTS IN USAID PARTNERSHIPS

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR DRIVING ENDURING RESULTS

[Enduring Results Study 3.0 \(2020\) Summary](#)

An overview of key findings from ERS 3.0, conducted in 2020

[Building Blocks of Successful Shared-Value Partnerships \(2022\)](#)

Report summarizing private sector perspectives on what drives success in USAID's P4I partnerships

[Multi-stakeholder Initiatives with the Private Sector](#)

Guidance on developing successful multi-stakeholder initiatives with the private sector

[Literature Review PSE: A Generalizable Framework \(2021\)](#)

Report synthesizing existing evidence into a Partnership Capacity Theory

[USAID Local Capacity Development Draft Policy \(2021\)](#)

Agency-wide vision and common approach towards developing local capacity

[Locally Led Development Spectrum and Checklist \(2021\)](#)

Instruments developed to help USAID and partners think about locally led development in practice

[Local Private Sector Partnerships: Assessing the State of Practice \(2015\)](#)

Resource to support engagement with local PS companies

[Learning Brief: PSE Relationship Quality \(2021\)](#)

Guidance on developing relationship quality to improve private sector partnership results

This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by Dalberg Advisors with input from the United States Agency for International Development and Catholic Relief Services as part of the LASER Buy-In: Building the Evidence Base on Effective Private Sector Engagement Phase 2 Project and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

For more information on positioning partnerships for enduring results, please reach out to globalpartnerships@usaid.gov, visit the USAID Private Sector engagement [page](#), and/or reach out to any of the [Private Sector Engagement Point of Contact \(POC\)](#).