

# LESSON 2:

## BUILD EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

**Partnerships that combine community insight with private-sector capacity, civil society and government leadership enable faster humanitarian responses that leave behind stronger, more connected systems capable of withstanding future droughts – especially when built *before* a crisis.**

Building partnerships that bridge humanitarian, government and private sectors alongside community knowledge and civil society enables more coherent and sustainable drought responses. When agencies, local authorities, traders and service providers collaborate in joint market analysis and response planning, programmes become better aligned with how local economies function. This prevents duplication, enhances accountability and strengthens the connection between emergency action and long-term recovery.

Public–private partnerships have proven effective in scaling up interventions such as livestock management, agricultural activities, water resource management and cash and voucher assistance. For example, collaborating with payment service providers, mobile network operators and financial institutions increases the efficiency, reach and transparency of cash delivery while also expanding financial inclusion. In several drought-affected regions, mobile cash transfers have prompted people with no existing bank account to open mobile money accounts, giving them lasting access to savings and credit. In turn, these financial linkages have revitalised trade, supported local markets and strengthened relationships between producers, suppliers and consumers.

Given the different language and jargon used by private-sector and humanitarian organisations, establishing good working relationships can take time. As such, it is best done at a time when there is not a major scale-up. It can also be valuable for a third party to broker the relationships. While it is important to acknowledge that private-sector objectives extend beyond humanitarianism (for example, market penetration and developing a positive brand image), these need not be counter to humanitarian goals. For partnerships to be effective, both parties need to see value in the relationship.

Number of documents contributing to the lessons: 7

Average evidence scores of all documents contributing to the lessons: 4

Median evidence strength of documents contributing to the lessons: 80%

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Humanitarian actors should invest in building partnerships with communities, civil society, local authorities and the private sector in areas at risk of drought as part of preparedness, rather than waiting until drought response is underway.
- Humanitarian and development organisations should work with community-based and local actors to co-design interventions that reflect local priorities, capacities and accountability mechanisms.
- Donors and international actors should systematically analyse how decisions on priorities, resources and actions are made and adapt programme governance, funding modalities and partnerships to enable meaningful decision-making by local actors and institutions.
- Humanitarian actors and donors should engage private-sector actors – such as traders, financial institutions and service providers – to improve the efficiency, reach and sustainability of drought responses, particularly for cash- and market-based programming.
- Organisations entering public–private partnerships should explicitly recognise differing incentives and objectives, and design partnership arrangements that create shared value while safeguarding humanitarian principles.
- Donors and coordination bodies should support partnership models that are embedded within national and community systems and contribute to longer-term resilience beyond individual drought responses.