



March 10, 2021 – Module 1

### Engaging with the private sector in health: an introduction

As an introduction to the topic, the first event of this webinar series offered a 360° view on private sector engagement (PSE) in health cooperation. Guest speakers from different fields shared insights and their experiences in global frameworks and multilateral instruments to promote partnerships, engagement with the private sector in a humanitarian context, as well as opportunities and challenges that shape the private-public partnership landscape along the health sector value chain.

#### Summary

This first session highlighted that more efforts are yet to be invested in rethinking private-public partnerships to shift towards a conceptualisation of PSE as a *collective effort* between a diversity of stakeholders and resources to improving global health. The presentations and the following discussion showed that frameworks to promote partnerships are already in development (see e.g. [WHO's strategy report](#)), with growing opportunities, for both governments and the private sector to move beyond the classic public vs. private dichotomy. Existing challenges and gaps were also identified. For example, developing regulatory frameworks has been hindered by disagreements around which are the suitable mechanisms for engagement. Matching the best fit models with the need for a collective standardised approach has also proven to be difficult. Partnerships driven by market forces are largely opportunistic and tend to develop at a speed that is hardly compatible with multilateral practice. And last but not least, mistrust and prejudice prevail between both sides.

#### Key messages:

- Productive partnerships with the private sector cannot be created in the middle of a crisis, trust and constructive dialogue need to be cultivated over time
- The unexpected necessities emerging from the COVID-19 crisis have nevertheless forced both the public and the private sectors to creatively engage with one another
- Documentation about successful stories of PSE lie in anecdotal evidence; strategies to harness it need to be identified
- Public sector cannot continue to promote PSE in the absence of the private sector around the negotiation table. Mixed health systems require new forms of governance
- Generating profit is essential to increase health sector financing: finding a win-win balance between profit and social returns is the key challenge

The next module will take a private sector development perspective and will dive into the role of local businesses and bottom-up levers for change.

A total of 73 participants joined the event, representing different stakeholder groups: development and cooperation agencies, NGOs, philanthropy organisations, academia and private companies.