

Learning from experience in private sector development

An introduction to the DCED

-  DCED members – 23 bilateral donors, UN agencies and foundations - seek to create **inclusive and resilient economic opportunities** in developing countries, in line with SDG8.
-  Exchange happens in **7 thematic Working Groups, Annual Meetings and biennial Global Seminars**.
-  The DCED Secretariat coordinates the DCED's work and **offers tailored advice and support** to members.
-  The DCED facilitates **working level experience exchange** among members and develops knowledge on effective practice.
-  Examples of current **priority themes** across the DCED include PSE, trade and domestic benefits for donors, mobilising private finance, promoting and measuring system change, and green private sector development.
-  DCED members are keen to **explore opportunities for engaging with new global development partners** on how to work effectively in a changing international aid context.

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A forum for exchange on 'what works' in PSD

Most donors and multilateral agencies consider private sector development (PSD) as a core element of their work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) enhances these efforts by facilitating exchange and sharing information about what works – based on practical experience in efforts to create inclusive and resilient economic opportunities in developing countries. Exchange of practical experience primarily happens in quarterly meetings of seven thematic Working Groups and at larger, in-person events – notably the DCED Annual Meeting and biennial Global Seminars (see below). Both focus on curating conversations on evidence on results and lessons learned, (emerging) good practice, as well as challenges and innovation in PSD.



The DCED currently has [23 member agencies](#) – most major bilateral donors, UN agencies and private foundations – with a shared vision to learn from each other and making PSD more effective.

Ultimately, the DCED's purpose and mission is to act as

"a leading source of knowledge on the role of private sector development (PSD) and to support its members in enhancing the effectiveness of PSD."

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The DCED website as repository of PSD knowledge

A substantial body of knowledge and lessons learned is summarised on the DCED's websites: the knowledge portal on all major PSD approaches and themes at [Enterprise-Development.org](https://www.enterprise-development.org) and its platform on Market Systems Development at [BeamExchange.org](https://beamexchange.org).

A particular focus of the DCED is to make knowledge easily accessible to busy readers – including through a growing library of [short document summaries and synthesis notes on PSD approaches](#). The website also serves as a central repository of [current PSD policies of donor agencies](#).

With PSD a priority in most agencies, policy makers are keen to learn about what works and what does not. A focus of the DCED is therefore to communicate data on results in PSD – including through the [DCED 'Evidence Framework'](#) and the [BEAM 'Evidence Map'](#).

News on PSD is regularly communicated through the [DCED Newsletter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). The DCED also offers [webinars](#) on member experiences in different PSD approaches and results measurement.

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Working Groups and cross-cutting priority themes

Many of the DCED's own knowledge and guidance products are developed by its [Working Groups](#). In addition, Working Groups offer a safe space for members to discuss current developments and share updates on their work. As such, many groups, as well as other DCED initiatives, are currently focusing on how PSD donors can navigate the changing global aid context (see below).

Current cross-cutting priority themes of the DCED and its Working Groups

The complexity of global aid agendas is increasing, but so is the relevance of PSD. A number of shifts are being observed and discussed within the DCED:

- Widespread budget cuts mean that the private sector is essential for addressing increasingly complex development agendas.
- There is a growing realisation of the need for commercial finance for development, but that mobilising SME finance for emerging and frontier markets requires PSD-supported market creation activities.
- There is a new ambition to align PSD with domestic benefits for donor countries. Implemented well, PSD can offer a route towards mutual economic and other benefits for donor and developing countries.
- Fragility is the new development reality. PSD is essential to help economies recover from conflict and climate shocks, and provide long-term economic prospects to affected populations.
- Preparing for an environmentally sustainable future for all requires private investment in innovative practices and technology at scale.
- Inclusion is under growing pressure but remains a proven lever of sustainable growth; PSD can be a key tool to integrate and empower marginalised groups in economic systems

The DCED provides a space for funders and other development partners to learn from each other and define effective ways for navigating this new aid landscape – through its Working Groups, website, online and in-person events.

A new Working Group on Mobilising Finance has been formed in June 2025; examples of recent work of other Working Groups are outlined below:



Examples of current and recent work by the DCED's Working Groups



Private Sector Engagement Working Group (PSE WG)

Donor engagement with partner companies is now an established way of working, using a [variety of strategies](#). The PSE WG has served as a forum for peer exchange among donors as they embarked on major organisational changes to [enable more strategic private sector engagement](#). Most recently, members discussed ways in which they have streamlined their offer to the private sector and developed a synthesis of recent PSE portfolio evaluations. The group is also working on a shared theory of change on how PSE leads to both development outcomes and domestic business benefits. [Innovative financial instruments](#) to mobilise private finance and enhancing synergies with DFIs are also topics of interest to the group.



Market Systems Development Working Group (MSD WG)

The DCED's work on MSD, under the BEAM Exchange, includes extensive resources for donors and implementers on the [BEAM Exchange website](#). Focus areas include [capacity-building for MSD](#), [evidence](#), and peer exchange through [webinars](#). Recent and ongoing workstreams include lessons on [applying the MSD approach to trade](#), [Greening MSD in agriculture](#) and enhancing synergies between MSD and development finance.



Results Measurement Working Group (RM WG)

The DCED is also well known for its guidance on results measurement in PSD, the [DCED Standard for Results Measurement](#) provides a common framework for measuring programmes' results in practical yet credible ways. It is implemented by [around 150 development projects globally](#). Forthcoming workstreams of the RM WG include measuring system change at portfolio level, and consultant support to selected 'green' PSD programmes combined with case studies on defining and measuring green PSD indicators.



Business Environment Working Group (BE WG)

DCED members' common understanding of good practice in Business Environment Reform has been documented in the [Practical Guidance on BER](#). The BEWG continues to tackle new angles on BER, such as [Implications of New Environmental Regulations](#), [The renewed SME agenda in the context of a green and just transition](#); and [donor BER support and investment facilitation](#). Current work includes research on competition policy to advance a green transition, and BER for private capital mobilisation.



Women's Economic Empowerment Working Group (WEE WG)

The DCED's WEE WG has spearheaded international work on how to integrate [WEE considerations into PSD programming](#), including in [results measurement](#). Current work covers gender-lens investing and the how to mitigate the effects of climate change through access to care.



Green Growth Working Group (GG WG)

The Green Growth Working Group covers both the integration of environmental sustainability as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation in PSD policy and programming. It has published a [Green PSD navigator](#) and is working on topics including Green Industrial Policy, an enabling environment for a circular economy, and the role of trade and MSME development in driving a just transition.

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Annual Meetings, Global Seminars and flexible responses to member needs

Members and Working Groups meet in-person once a year, at the [Annual Meeting](#). This four-day event features a Thematic Day with international experts on a key trend or priority, such as [PSD at the nexus of green and digital transformations](#) (in 2024), and [PSD in the changing global aid context: Navigating trade, fragility and reconstruction](#) (in 2025). In the Business Session, members vote on annual Work Plans, decide on applications for membership (which involves a modest annual contribution to an IFC Trust Fund) and elect the five members of the DCED's [Executive Committee](#). Overall, the Annual Meeting offers a key forum for members to network with other agencies, present their own agency experiences and plan joint projects.

The DCED also has a track record in running Global Seminars to learn about effective practice in PSD –including in Nairobi (2024 and 2018), Lusaka (2016) and Bangkok (2014, 2012 and earlier). In 2024, The [DCED Global Seminar](#) brought together 180 participants from 45 countries on the theme of 'Systemic approaches for growth, employment and resilience'. It was the first Seminar explicitly designed as an exchange between donors and implementers – with 40% of participants coming from donor agencies. [A synthesis report with key insights from the Seminar discussions is available here](#). A new iteration of the Seminar is planned for June 2026, for the first time in combination with the 2026 Annual Meeting. This will be a strategic convening of DCED members and experienced practitioner on the topic of 'PSD at a crossroads: Navigating a shared way forwards!.

Overall, the DCED seeks to respond to member needs in a nimble and timely manner, informed by regular member surveys and dialogue.

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Other DCED membership benefits and requirements

On request, the [DCED Secretariat](#) offers presentations and tailored workshops on PSD, current trends and specific technical themes to specialists or non-specialists in member agencies. Members can also [ask the Secretariat for advice on technical questions and for relevant resources](#) on PSD at any time. Overall, the Secretariat provides reliable institutional memory in the fast-moving field of PSD, and facilitates coordination and exchange among DCED members on a day-to-day basis. DCED membership involves an annual contribution to the DCED Trust Fund managed by the IFC.

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Engagement formats for organisations interested in membership

In order to facilitate the engagement of new funders and development partners in the DCED, a number of formats can be explored together to inform their decision on whether to apply for membership. These may include:

- Joining Working Group meetings and other DCED events as observers and external contributors
- Regular calls with the Secretariat for updates about, and feedback on, current activities in the WGs
- Tailored online or in-person presentations by the Secretariat on recent DCED activities
- Introductions to counterparts in other agencies for practical exchanges on PSD and the value of the DCED.

