

Market Systems Development Working Group

MINUTES

Tues 20th June 2023 at ITC, Geneva, Switzerland

WG Chairs

Margot Lobbezoo (CBI)

Pauline Baars (CBI)

MSD WG Members present

Alex Kucharski (BII)

Andrea Inglin (SDC)

David Neven (FAO)

Elisabet Montgomery (Sida)

Gun Eriksson Skoog (Sida)

Kristin O'Planick (USAID)

Lidwien Sol (RVO)

Merten Sievers (ILO)

Pascal Fabing (LuxDev)

Rana Fakhoury (UNIDO)

Rob Skidmore (ITC)

Steve Hartrich (ILO)

Susi Thiard-Laforet (ADA)

Takafumi Ueda (JICA)

Tom Sanderson (FCDO)

Yan Chen (GIZ)

Other Members & Observers

Atsuko Toda (Mastercard Foundation)

Dean Karlan (USAID)

Janneke Vereijken (CBI)

Lea Richard (ILO)

Maasa Ohsumi (JICA)

Marleen van Ruijven (Dutch MoFA)

Nic van der Jagt (IKEA Foundation)

Tonderai Manoto (ILO)

DCED Secretariat

Mike Albu, Isabelle Gore, Mike Klassen

Apologies in advance

Arjun Bhoopal (Gatsby Africa)

Ellie Horrocks (Gatsby Africa)

Urkaly Isaev (IFC)

AGENDA

09:00 **Welcome & introductions**

09:20 **Member updates – poster session**

10:00 **Roundtable Discussion** of most urgent issues & challenges facing members

10:30 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 **Task team meetings (three in parallel)**

Workstream 3.2: MSD for Employment & Skills Development

Workstream 3.5: MSD for Trade

Workstream 3.6: Systems thinking support

12:00 **Planning for DCED global event in 2024**

13:00 LUNCH

13:45 **Guided discussion:** how can MSD contribute to desired global transitions

14:45 COFFEE BREAK

15:15 **MSD for Youth Employment** (interactive activity)

16:15 **Closing session**

LEAD

Chairs

ALL

Margot

Mike K

Margot

Pauline

Mike A

Mike A & Pauline

1. Welcome & introductions

The co-Chairs Margot and Pauline (**CBI**) welcomed all to the 28th meeting of the MSD Working Group in Geneva. A warm greeting was extended to observers from other Working Groups who joined us during the day. No changes were proposed to the March meeting minutes which were therefore approved.

2. Member updates

Updates were presented in an engaging new way, with each member fixing a large wall-poster about their agency's work in response to the advance questions:

- What was your organisation's greatest MSD success last year?
- What is your largest MSD challenge for coming year?
- About what can we always call you (as fellow member of the working group).
- What is your most urgent question that needs answering?

Members then circulated to review the posters, register their interests in different details of other agencies' work and discuss shared experiences in informal small groups. This was very successful in building connections between members and kick-starting productive conversations.

3. Round table discussion

Margot (**CBI**) then summarised the main points, issues and challenges she had observed or heard discussed in the various posters and conversations. WG members then discussed these points further.

- Convincing colleagues to use a consistent approach, especially when leadership changes: systems thinking is nascent, MSD initiatives are considered 'side experiments'.
- Bolstering understanding, capacity and competencies in embassies, field teams & partners
- Building expertise & assuring quality in decentralised organisations, and ensuring local ownership without have a full-time local presence
- Applying MSD in conflict-affected settings & during responses to shocks
- Using MSD in sectors other than agriculture and operationalising MSD for 'green' employment focused initiatives
- Measuring (aggregating) impact at the programme portfolio level, especially of systemic change

In response to a question about using MSD beyond agriculture, several members & observers gave current examples. For example, Nic (**IKEA Foundation**) described waste-management activities in Kenya and India. Atsuko (**Mastercard Foundation**) mentioned entrepreneurial eco-systems initiatives and business processing outsourcing (BDO). Kristin (**USAID**) mentioned water services, garments and tourism.

There was a lengthy discussion about the issues of recruitment and capacity-building for MSD professionals with contributions from representatives of ILO, Dutch MoFA, FAO, GIZ.

4. Task Team Meetings

For the next hour, WG members divided into three groups affiliated with three of workstream activities:

Workstream 3.2: MSD for Employment & Skills Development

This active group is building on the popularity and success of the [Rough Guide to MSD for Youth Employment](#) and the resurgent interest in using a systemic approach in the field of skills development / vocational education. The group included Pascal (**LuxDev**), Andrea (**SDC**), Elisabet (**Sida**), Nic (**IKEA Foundation**), Merten (**ILO**), Atsuko (**Mastercard**) and Mike Klassen (**Secretariat**).

The task team focused on better understanding the approach and the emerging insights from the associated MSD4E Landscape study. Need to think together about what the shared interest is, and how the task team can amplify the findings. Distinctions between working on employability, employment and skills were drawn out - these are major, not minor differences. Flagged importance of thinking through what level of 'bridging' between MSD and other communities: this is a big influence project and needs clear scoping. Main takeaway was to keep receiving detailed updates from the consultants, and have more chances to learn alongside the study and be open to ideas about how to amplify the findings once they are ready.

Other possible follow-up work for the Task Team:

- look at cross-cutting markets?
- look at skills development?
- Interesting linkages with other work (e.g. paper that takes a critical MSD perspective on entrepreneurial ecosystems approaches, led by Lorenz W)

Workstream 3.5: MSD for Trade

This is a new task team for the MSD WG, with enthusiastic engagement from members including Rob (ITC), Margot & Janneke (CBI), Steve (ILO), Gun (Sida), Maasa (JICA) and Dean (USAID). Consensus that the goal relates to SDG's 1 and 8, and decent jobs. The group discussed whether to include in-country trade or only cross-border. In general in-country trade is part of most MSD programmes while cross-border trade with actors from different countries is not well researched.

International Trade can be regional (neighbouring countries) or across continents. All members had one or two examples. For instance a non-GMO programme around the Danube.

Before designing a TOR for research the following steps were agreed:

1. Task team webinar on the MSD cross-border paper to presented by Steve (ILO)
2. Setting up co-working space in teams Janneke (CBI)
3. Collecting our own cases, put them in co working space (ALL)

The group is planning further meetings together over the coming months.

Workstream 3.6: Systems thinking support

This is also a new task team and workstream activity for the MSD WG. The group included Kristin (USAID), Yan (GIZ), David (FAO), Alex (BII), Rana (UNIDO), Pauline (CBI), Marleen (MoFA), Lidwien (RVO), Mike and Isabelle (Secretariat).

Initial conversation was about differences between looking at challenges through a systemic 'lens' (an increasingly common phenomenon) and actually designing and implementing interventions with a systemic 'practice' (still difficult and rather rare?). In any case the group agreed that the focus of this new workstream activity should be on mutual support and learning regarding the latter. This includes both big conceptual questions (should we get consensus?) but also very practical issues (how to get people along in this?).

The idea is to have a documented conversation starter and benefit from mutual exchange.

Building further on the paper of Mike A (Secretariat), looking at the core of MSD, but looking for commonalities of the different other approaches.

5. DCED Global Seminar / Event in 2024

Mike (DCED Secretariat) led a discussion about the proposed DCED global seminar in 2024. He explained that he had observed an early strong interest in a focus on MSD for skills development and employment, on MSD in fragile and conflict-affected settings, plus the perennial topic of assessing or measuring systemic change.

The Secretariat's preliminary assumption that Asia (e.g. Bangkok) would be good candidate location – due to venue costs, travel and visa accessibility – was pushed back by several WG members. The visa restrictions arising from a location in the US or Europe were also emphasised. This makes it infeasible to run a global seminar back-to-back with the DCED's 2024 AGM, as the latter is likely to be hosted in Washington.

A strong preference was therefore expressed for a location in Africa where member agencies have active programming. Suggestions of Addis Ababa and Kigali were made. This facilitates travel approval. Gun (Sida) argued that the ideal event would balance equal numbers of donor staff and implementers (unlike previous BEAM Exchange Conferences, which were majority implementer staff). Members approved of this idea.

In the meantime, Mike (DCED Secretariat) explained that the BEAM Exchange team is collaborating with Vikara Institute to curate content for their [2023 MS Symposium](#) in Cape Town (November 2023), and he encouraged WG members to attend.

Members then adjourned for lunch.

6. Guided discussion: how can MSD contribute to desired global transitions

Mike (**DCED Secretariat**) kicked off the afternoon session with a short presentation about the recent evolution of the MSD approach in practice, including his thoughts on the relationship of MSD to other forms of 'systemic' thinking and practice. Pauline (CBI) added some further thoughts based on CBI's experience of using a framework called Sustainable Market Transitions. All these [slides can be viewed here](#).

The presentations (particularly Mike's concluding table, slide 10) triggered some interesting conversation about the relationship between MSD and agencies' ambitions for systemic transitions.

Tom (**FCDO**) said the contents of the table's second column resonates with FCDO's impatience for action that changes systems. Yan (**GIZ**) questioned why MSD shouldn't include more interventions with 'rules' and public institutions. Andrea (**SDC**) emphasised the importance of donor presence in-country to influence political frameworks beyond markets. Gun (**Sida**) argued that even in public sphere, 'market' supply & demand as a metaphor for political accountability is useful.

Kristin (**USAID**) suggested everyone work on governments, but it's slow so not as visible as what's done with the private sector. Same with social norms – change takes a long time to happen. MSD's private sector focus provides options to move things forward in ways not possible with government.

7. MSD for youth employment (interactive session)

Pascal (LuxDev) led a session that started with some interactive exploration of the framework for using MSD for youth employment as drawn from the [Rough Guide](#). Then the room broke up into small groups to discuss the insights gathered and members practical experiences of using the approach.

Topics discussed (as revealed in later feedback in plenary) included centrally questions and conundrums about how to engage young people

- in strategy and vision
- in diagnosis and design of interventions
- in implementation at pilot stage, and in scaling up
- in measurement of results

An important issue is engaging young people whose experiences and aspirations are representative of the majority of beneficiaries agencies are aiming to serve. Appropriate and innovative use of social media undoubtably key to this.

8. Closing remarks

Margot (CBI) thanked everyone sincerely for their enthusiasm and active participation in the WG meeting day – and welcomed the participation of observers from IKEA Foundation as well as members from other WG's representing Netherland MoFA, ILO and JICA.

She announced that the next MSD WG meeting will take place in mid-September (date tbc).