The DCED has been running regular highly-regarded global seminars about private-sector development (PSD) since 2000. Our most recent events merged with the BEAM Exchange conferences in Lusaka (2016) and Nairobi (2018). We return now after a six year break with a new format and fresh ambition.

The 2024 Global Seminar will focus on using systemic approaches for growth, employment and resilience. Sessions will prioritise practical lessons emerging from PSD field experience, evidence of what is working well, along with analysis of the pitfalls.

We aim to create a space conducive for constructive conversations between international donors and experienced PSD practitioners. In order to create the right balance of voices, and enable the most productive dialogue, we will have to restrict the number of places for PSD practitioners. Please apply early to be considered.

The Seminar’s sessions will be organised broadly around the following six strands:

- **Systemic approaches in practice**
- **Employment and decent work**
- **Mobilising finance / investment**
- **Climate adaptation & environmental sustainability**
- **PSD in fragile & conflict-affected settings**
- **Effective donor-implementer relationships**

In addition, the content of many sessions will feature two important cross-cutting themes: the challenges of measuring results (MEL) and promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion.
Systemic approaches in practice

- Language matters: the meaning of systemic approaches
- What counts?: assessing system change
- Back to basics: principles of good PSD practice
- Beyond incremental change: risk & systemic ambition in PSD programmes
- Systemic approaches for trade-related outcomes
- Transformative impact: how can programmes select sectors with high potential?

Employment and decent work

- Charting the landscape: systemic approaches to employment
- Job creation: how does it happen and why isn't there more of it?
- Setting targets and ambitions for realistic employment programme design
- Green jobs and the 'just transition': experimenting with a systems lens (see below)

Mobilising finance / investment

- Bridging the gap: synergy in financial markets
- Investing in frontier markets
- Gender-smart investment
- Climate finance

Climate adaptation & environmental sustainability

- Navigating green PSD
- Climate finance
- Greening the MSD approach in agriculture
- Green jobs and the 'just transition': experimenting with a systems lens

Fragile & conflict-affected settings

- PSD in fragile & conflict-affected markets
- Investing in frontier markets

Donor-implementer relationships

- Reaching across the aisle: the importance of donor-implementer relationships
- Interpreting the rules: managing compliance in systemic programmes
- Donor policies that affect systemic practice
- Investing in emerging leaders on MSD/PSD programmes
Language matters: the meaning of systemic approaches
What does it mean to use a 'systemic approach'? This session will explore the diverse and sometimes contradictory interpretations of system change, systems thinking and systemic approaches. The aim is to lay a foundation for constructive dialogue during the Seminar. Walking through the Agenda, the session also looks to shift the conversation from 'what' systemic approaches are, to 'how' to make them work in diverse contexts and with different funding goals.

Assessing system change: what counts?
To make the case systemic for approaches we must demonstrate that systems have changed as a result of programmes' interventions. This session will share recent examples of evidence for successful system change, and will describe the diverse assessment methods used to substantiate it. Crucially, the session will explore what donors did that facilitated the generation of this evidence. This aims to open up discussion about future programme design; and about how best to foster and support staff in donor agencies to champion these approaches.

Learning from experience: principles of good PSD practice
Lessons from the past 30 years of private sector development efforts point to a core set of critical factors for success. This session will take everyone on that journey and explore what good PSD practice may look like, covering practical implications for donors and implementers alike.

Beyond incremental change: risk & systemic ambition in PSD programmes
We all seek to run innovative programmes that deliver real change at scale which benefits people living in poverty. We are often faced with both real and perceived boundaries, such as related to targets, budgets, and contracting procedures. This session will explore how programmes can be designed with the expectation that some initiatives will fail, while setting high ambitions and encouraging innovation to reach their goals. It will also examine the arguments for using theory-based evaluation methods.

Systemic approaches for trade-related outcomes
Trade can serve as a pull for value addition and better quality products and services that ultimately create opportunities for job creation. How to do this using a systemic approach for trade outcomes that are enduring and scalable is however less clear. This session will highlight lessons from recent experiences - in both MSD and trade projects - to help understand how donors and practitioners can do more in this space in the future.

Transformative impact: how can programmes select sectors with high potential?
Many development programmes select sectors or industries to focus on, but often this is based on whether many poor people are active in that sector, rather than an assessment of the potential to have a transformative impact on inclusive economic development through higher productivity, better quality jobs and / or export growth. How can sector selection be done more effectively?
Charting the landscape: systemic approaches to employment

Employment interventions are broader than just job creation - this includes access to work via job matching or skills development, and job quality improvements. This session presents findings of the global landscape study of MSD for Employment and its implications for donors and implementers in terms of project design, results & evidence, and staffing/capacity building. Donors need to make important decisions about the trade-offs between these different objectives, and implementers need to be clear about what they can realistically deliver.

Job creation: how does it happen and why isn't there more of it?

Job creation continues to be an important priority for donors. Can a systemic approach offer any new insights on how to tackle this enduring challenge? The session will combine research from labour market experts with practical experience of MSD projects targeting job creation to clarify what it means to create a job, and where MSD programmes should focus their efforts.

Setting targets and ambitions for realistic employment programme design

Employment-focused PSD interventions vary dramatically in scale depending on their objectives and context. Numbers can range from hundreds (new jobs) to thousands (people trained), to hundreds of thousands (job matching via digital platforms). This session will explore how donors can set clear parameters for what they mean by ‘employment’ as well as realistic expectations about the scale of results during project design and inception. It will also emphasise the role of implementers in setting expectations and working with donors to ground programme design in reality.

Green jobs and the ‘just transition’: experimenting with a systems lens

Bridging the gap: synergy in financial markets

There is an increase in financial instruments available for investment in development outcomes. Commercial investors, DFIs and MSD/PSD programmes use different criteria to select areas of investment, for instance based on scale, returns, risk appetite, pro-poorness or relevance for adaptation to climate change. Is it possible to achieve greater alignment among these different stakeholders in support of strategic changes for transformation of a system/sector?

Investing in frontier markets

This session will focus on investment in markets that are thin, fragile, and low-income. In such markets, the demand for capital is high, but so are the risks and operating costs. Therefore, it is important that these can be shared. This session explores the scope to develop financial markets in such extreme environments.

Gender-smart investment

How can finance be mobilised to shift the needle towards gender justice? This session looks at the landscape of gender-smart investing. What is already happening? Which financial vehicles can be best used to get finance to women-owned businesses or businesses that improve the lives of women? And what are leading financial organisations changing internally so that their portfolios are gender-smart at scale?

Climate finance
Navigating green PSD
What does Green PSD look like in practice? How do we make sense of the murky jargon around ‘green growth'? This session presents a Green PSD Framework, articulating how different PSD programmes aim to achieve green and economic outcomes, and showcases practical experiences in using systemic approaches to do so.

Climate finance
There is significant investment capital available for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience. Investors want to identify climate-smart businesses with growth potential; MSD programmes want to support local enterprises and influence markets to create green and economic impact at scale. What can each camp learn from each other, and how can their work be linked up so that finance is being directed towards creating lasting, climate-positive systemic change?

Greening the MSD approach in agriculture
How can donors and practitioners design and implement impactful agricultural programmes that use the MSD approach, and want to be intentional about achieving environmental goals? This session will draw on the DCED’s recent ‘Greening MSD’ guide, and several practical examples that informed or illustrate this guide.

Green jobs and the ‘just transition': experimenting with a systems lens
As governments dedicate more resources to climate change mitigation, green policies create both winners and losers - for industries, firms and workers. How can donors leverage this changing landscape to support employment outcomes? What do early-stage systemic interventions look like in this area? How are implementers reconciling competing objectives (environment, employment and inclusion) in project implementation?

Fragile & conflict-affected settings

PSD in Fragile & conflict-affected settings
In regions struggling with conflict and climate-related risks, the private sector offers opportunities to deliver investment that mitigates risks, and helps communities become more resilient. This session will examine the (systemic) impact of diverse PSD initiatives in fragile settings. These range from partnerships with large formal firms (e.g. to extend services such as mobile money and household energy) through to delivery of support services to informal micro-enterprises, farmers and household businesses. We will address how such initiatives could be better coordinated with humanitarian responses in crisis situations.

Investing in frontier markets (see above)
This session will focus on investment in markets that are thin, fragile, and low-income. In such markets, the demand for capital is high, but so are the risks and operating costs. Therefore, it is important that these can be shared. This session explores the scope to develop financial markets in such extreme environments.
Effective donor-implementer relationships

Reaching across the aisle: the importance of donor-implementer relationships for PSD
Systemic approaches require trust and a mutual understanding between donors and implementers about key issues including programme design, staffing, flexible planning, and accountability (MEL).
This plenary explores how donors and implementers can ‘reach across the aisle’ to build better relationships and tackle these key issues together during different phases of the project lifecycle.
It will be guided by the ideas framed in the BEAM paper “Deepening the relationship”

Interpreting the rules: managing compliance in systemic programmes
Every donor has its own set of rules and policies that govern critical aspects of PSD projects: procurement/grants, measurement, budgeting and staffing. Opportunities for working systemically may be undermined and learning lost when narrow and risk-averse interpretations get codified as the only way of doing things. This session will spotlight some positive deviants in this regard:
1. internal champions within donors pushing for org-wide reinterpretations of rules, and
2. implementers that have succeeded at pushing the boundaries - by challenging interpretations to create space for flexibility and learning

Donor policies that affect systemic practice
Many donor agencies give their missions or embassies autonomy to design and manage programmes, but also regularly roll out new policies and priorities from above. This can lead to surface-level compliance without affecting real change. This session examines donor policies that successfully influenced practice in missions/embassies, and project implementation too. What do these examples teach us about the conditions and factors that led to ‘success’ in policy implementation? How can we then apply those lessons to critical areas affecting the implementation of systemic approaches? (e.g. results measurement, staffing)

Investing in emerging leaders on MSD/PSD programmes
Staffing, including leadership, is critical to the success of programmes that use a systemic approach. Yet investment in future leaders is a vital missing piece across our industry. Recent research shows many of the actions needed to strengthen the leadership pipeline lie with implementing agencies. This session will explore initiatives of implementers who have invested their own resources in cultivating MSD leadership. Given the importance of budgeting and resource allocation for such initiatives, the session will also include donor views on how these initiatives were funded and justified.

This event is organised with generous support from Gatsby Africa and the International Labour Organisation

How to apply

There is no fee for participating in the DCED Global Seminar 2024. Participants will be responsible for their own travel, accommodation and subsistence. Click here to submit your application to attend the DCED Global Seminar. Please address any questions to seminar@enterprise-development.org