The results achieved by programmes that use the market systems development (MSD) approach

A narrative synthesis of current evidence

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The BEAM Exchange – in partnership with the DCED - is a platform for knowledge exchange and learning about the role of markets in poverty reduction.

The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

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Executive Summary

Introduction (section 1)

Market systems development (MSD) sets out to harness the energies, resources and skills of the private sector for the benefit of people living in poverty. Advocates argue that – by facilitating enduring market system change – MSD can make a significant contribution to sustained poverty reduction on a large scale. Naturally, donors, recipient governments and other stakeholders need to question how well the approach delivers results, and whether the evidence exists to justify its adoption in a wider range of contexts.

From time to time, BEAM Exchange publishes a Review of the latest evidence material. This year's review analysed 52 documents, representing evidence from a total of 36 programmes, mostly published in the last two years: including impact evaluations, reports, evidence briefs and case studies. It examines what this new evidence says about the impacts of MSD programmes, summarises key findings, and identifies trends, challenges and lessons from the evaluation of MSD practice. These findings are illustrated with snapshots from fourteen programmes presented as 'MSD cases' and 'spotlights'. The review also makes recommendations about how to improve the production of credible evidence.

Evidence about poverty reduction (section 4)

Most MSD programmes' objectives and intervention strategies show a strong poverty-focus. The review found ample data about changes in the incomes of people living in poverty i.e. as a result of increases in sales of produce, of wages earned, or of more and better jobs

Summary of headline increases in incomes and jobs (Figure 2)

Programme	Period	Country	Headline: Increases in income & jobs
ALCP	2008-17	Georgia	• US$ 34.7m in additional sales for 403,000 farming households
AVC	2013-19	Bangladesh	• US$ 117m in increased income for 307,000 households • 111,700 full-time equivalent jobs created
Ghana MADE	2013-20	Ghana	• US$ 87m additional net income for 95,000 farmers
GROW	2014-20	Liberia	• US$ 8.0m net attributable income gain for 29,100 h/holds
IMSAR	2018-19	Rwanda	• US$ 1.9m in increased income for 35,000 rural h/holds
InovAgro	2015-20	Mozambique	• US$ 18m net attributable income increase for 34,900 smallholders
MADE	2013-20	Nigeria	• US$ 59m increased attributable income for 300,000 farming households
MDF	2011-19	Multiple	• US$ 112m in increased income for 242,000 adults
PMDP	2014-18	Palestine	• US$ 180m increased revenue for 884 MSMEs • 3,400 jobs created
R2J	2015-18	Afghanistan	• US$ 2.1m of additional rural income • 48,800 improved jobs
RLDP	2005-15	Tanzania	• US$ 41m of additional income for 627,000 households

The table above (Fig. 2) shows data from 12 programmes. With due caution, given variations in how this data is calculated, the overall picture illustrates the scale of impact which many programmes achieved. Increases in daily additional income attributable to the programmes, while modest in absolute terms, were significant relative to their baseline incomes, and were reaching tens, or hundreds of thousands of people per programme. Beyond income, we saw evidence of MSD programmes creating transformative change (in self-esteem, in social capital, in local influence) in people's lives.

The scale of these results needs to be placed in the context of the costs of these programmes. The table below shows headline results for eight programmes' success in generating attributable net income increases. Most programmes achieved results in other areas of impact, so these figures are a rather narrow and crude basis for assessing performance. However, even when so tightly-defined, these benefits were often worth three or more times programme costs. There is clear evidence here for the capacity of strong MSD programmes to deliver large-scale impact cost-effectively.

Cost effectiveness calculations for a selection of MSD programmes (Figure 5)

Programme	Country	Costs	Additional Income	Beneficiaries	Ratio of income benefits to costs[1]
ALCP	Georgia	$ 8.8m	$ 34.7m	403,000	3.9
AVC	Bangladesh	$ 34m	$ 117m	307,000	3.4
InovAgro	Mozambique	$ 20 m	$ 18 m	35,000	0.9
MDF	Asia: multi-country	$ 48m	$ 112m	242,000	2.3
PMDP	Palestine	$ 28m	[2] $ 180m	3,400	n/a
R2J	Afghanistan	$ 7.5m	$ 2.1m	49,000	0.3
RLDP	Tanzania	$ 8m	$ 40m	627,000	5.0

Attention to gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) in growing in MSD programmes, as practical guidance becomes better established. Qualitative evidence of this is scattered throughout the evidence documents, and MSD programmes typically counted women as 40% - 60% of their beneficiaries. Trade-offs between GESI and scale / sustainability in MSD programmes may be hard to avoid. However lessons can now be learned from a few outstanding programmes in which women form the vast majority of their beneficiaries.

Evidence about pro-poor growth and access to services (section 5)

Many of the programmes we reviewed provide evidence of pro-poor growth or improved access to services. The largest proportion of evidence documents described agricultural sector outcomes (e.g. improvements in access to agricultural inputs and information).

Three of the four cases we are highlight in this section reflect the increasing diversity of applications of the MSD approach. The first is about access to financial services in Bangladesh (AVC), the second describes skills development and innovation for MSMEs in Palestine (PMDP) and the third sanitation services (improved latrines) in Cambodia (SMSU). Finally, there is an example from Rwanda about better access to agricultural inputs.

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[1] Note: this figure does not include the value of other programme benefits such as improvements in job quality, access to services, resilience

[2] Note: figure refers to revenue (not profits) of 884 MSME's who received support from PMDP

One common proxy for programmes' success in catalysing pro-poor growth is the level of investment stimulated among private-sector partners (as a result of a programme's interventions). We found that across programmes that reported these figures, the level of private partner investment (the leverage ratio) converged to between 1.3 to 3.3 times programme expenditure.

Evidence about market system change (section 6)

The aim of programmes that adopt a systems change approach, such as MSD, can be summed up succinctly as 'shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place'

Half of the documents reviewed described successes in changing policies, including changes to Government, institutional and organisational rules and regulations, but also to the priorities that guide their actions. Such successes are often prized for the scale of impact to which they contribute, even though benefits are very difficult to measure.

All programmes reported evidence of changes in the practices of businesses, institutions, coalitions, networks, and other targeted entities. These included procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits that comprise their work. The most frequently reported ones were changes in agricultural management techniques, post-harvest techniques, provision of embedded services, agricultural input purchasing practices, contractual arrangements, and business administration practices.

Insights & reflections (section 7)

In respect to the evidence challenges, lack of methodological clarity was an issue. The documents reviewed were most-frequently identified as 'theory-based evaluation' using 'mixed methods'. Unfortunately only 40% of the impact evaluations included a clear description of the research and evaluation methods used. Only a handful explained how mixed methods were strategically combined to reinforce the validity of their results. Overall, the proportion of evidence that met the inclusion criteria for 'high confidence' has grown (60% in 2021 vs 47% in 2019), but this still leaves plenty of room for improvement.

On a brighter note, more than half (19/36) of the programmes from which we reviewed evidence are using the DCED Standard for Results Measurement, of which six have passed audits. It was also good to see that evaluators are making more methodical use of complementary perspectives so as to generate a more rounded picture of interventions' impacts, as recommended in DCED's new guidelines for assessing systemic change.

Conclusions (section 8)

MSD programmes represented here are operating well and delivering impressive results despite many operating in highly difficult, volatile and dysfunctional contexts. At the level of pro-poor growth and improved access to services, there is convincing evidence that MSD programmes are achieving sustained, lasting outcomes. The durability of results at this level was explored by diving deeply into the stories that explain how programmes facilitated enduring changes in business models, rules and practices with their business partners and other stakeholders.

Most MSD programmes identified as such apply the core principles and practices of a systemic approach in their work. Many examples of this related to policy change (see Market System Change Cases $1-3$). This suggests that MSD programmes are not avoiding the 'business environment reform' dimension, even if their focus on rules tends to be on specific industries.

Encouragingly there is explicit attention to business behaviours, practice changes and relationships in the evidence. Repeatedly this demonstrated the causal relationship between MSD programmes' interventions and poverty reduction, albeit occurring indirectly via improved access to services and pro-poor growth.

We also observed a growing level of maturity and sophistication in the design, implementation and management of MSD programmes. The knowledge and experience that comes from implementing the MSD approach is giving both MSD implementers and donors a better sense of what works and what does not in different contexts, and is enabling them to continually improve the application of the approach.

Meanwhile, there is a convergence of concepts and practice around measuring systemic change. The AAER Framework has been augmented by pragmatic guidance for practitioners, and clarifications to the DCED Standard for Results Measurement.   In future, this should help programmes' MEL teams reconcile conventional evaluation methods with the complex, adaptive nature of market systems.

It would be helpful to see a shift away from the emphasis on quantitative measures (e.g. changes in incomes) towards qualitative indicators that pick up changes in the underlying conditions for competitiveness, inclusiveness and resilience in systems. This would improve the richness of evidence about the diverse and wide-ranging impacts of well-executed MSD programmes.

The results achieved by programmes that use the market systems development (MSD) approach

1   Introduction

Market systems development (MSD) sets out to harness the energies, resources and skills of the private sector for the benefit of people living in poverty. Ample practical experience in the last fifteen years has convinced advocates that the MSD approach – by facilitating enduring market system change - can make a significant contribution to sustained poverty reduction on a large scale[3].

Donors, recipient governments and other stakeholders can be forgiven for being sceptical. They need to be able to hold the implementers of development cooperation and aid accountable. Even if the MSD approach works in principle and in model programmes, questions will remain about how well it delivers results in general practice, and whether the evidence exists to justify its adoption in a wider range of contexts.

With this in mind, the BEAM Evidence Map was created in 2015 to continually gather and curate documents that report the outcomes and impact of programmes that use the MSD approach. Its purpose is to support senior managers and practitioners to design and implement better programmes, to guide donors and investors in the allocation of funds and achieve greater value-for-money.

Every couple of years, the BEAM Exchange publishes a review of the latest evidence material. The previous Evidence review in 2019 highlighted the increasing breadth of application of the MSD approach across sectors and regions from silage and fodder markets in Pakistan, to business advocacy and policy reform in Nigeria. Its analysis and credible examples confirmed that by working through local system actors many programmes achieve systemic change that leads to economic growth and sustained benefits for the poor in various ways.

This year's review is based on the analysis of 49 new documents which met BEAM's criteria for inclusion in the Evidence Map. These included impact evaluations, reports, evidence briefs and case studies, most from the last two years. The review examines what this new evidence says about the impacts of MSD programmes, summarises key findings, and identifies trends, challenges and lessons from the evaluation of MSD practice. These findings are illustrated with snapshots from 14 programmes presented as 'MSD cases' and 'spotlights'. Finally, the review also makes recommendations about how to improve the production of credible evidence.

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[3] Bekkers & Zulfiqar (2020) The Story of MSD beamexchange.org/resources/1353
A retrospective account of the MSD approach told through twelve examples from four continents.

2   Market Systems Development approach in a nutshell

MSD is a coherent approach to understanding and intervening in market systems so that they perform better. In so doing, it aims to create sustained improvements in the livelihoods or well-being of large numbers of poor women and men.

Since 2005, the MSD approach has been applied in diverse sectors from agriculture to finance to water & sanitation in almost every region of the globe, to create jobs, raise incomes and improve access to services.

The interpretation of 'better performance' is context-specific. It may include poverty-reducing outcomes such as increased incomes, more decent jobs, better access to essential services, resilience to climate-related and other shocks, alongside economic objectives such as improvements in growth, investment, competitiveness, productivity.

> **Market system: a working definition[4]**
>
> A market system is any arrangement of firms, organisations & individuals that produce and exchange a similar type of product, good or service or provide related market-supporting functions, in a particular region. The actors in market systems include both public agencies and private sector enterprises, formal and informal.   And they operate under the influence of formal rules and informal norms - also considered part of the market system - that shape behaviours and help determine the system's overall performance.

2.1   The rationale for a market systems approach

Market systems involve large numbers of interdependent actors exchanging information, products and services: constantly trying to predict what the others will do, and responding according to their context, skills and resources. These actors are not just businesses; they include public agencies and institutions, as well as civil society organisations. Out of those interactions different functions emerge and evolve, such as production, transformation, aggregation, transportation and financing.

Together these characteristics mean that markets can be understood as 'complex adaptive systems'. The MSD approach becomes relevant when critical market functions are absent, weak or producing undesirable effects such as exclusion and vulnerability. Like any strategy for system change it represents 'an intentional process using purposeful interventions to (permanently) alter the status quo, by shifting the underlying structures and supporting mechanisms which make an identified system operate in a particular way. These can include policies, routines, relationships, resources, power structures and values.'[5]

MSD differs from much conventional development cooperation and aid in its emphasis on identifying the underlying causes of market system dysfunction. Instead of reacting to observed problems or symptoms with quick fixes (such as grants and subsidies), MSD programmes aim to permanently improve the terms of participation for poor women and men. This is achieved by engaging with local market actors (both businesses and governments) as partners to bring about enduring changes in incentives, rules, norms or supporting functions of the system. When this works, the impact is more likely to achieve both scale and sustainability.

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[4] Adapted from Taylor & Donovan (2016) beamexchange.org/resources/1225

[5] Adapted from the New Philanthropy Capital's 2015 handbook, as cited by Taylor (2016) Systems and Systemic Change – Clarity in Concept beamexchange.org/resources/819

2.2 The MSD framework / theory of change

This rationale for MSD can therefore be expressed as a simple **theory of change**. (Figure 1).

 i. interventions facilitate positive and sustained changes in the behaviour of market actors
 ii. this contributes to changes in the structures and functions of the market system in ways that make them more inclusive, efficient and productive
 iii. these changes lead to pro-poor growth and improved access to inputs and services
 iv. finally this contributes to sustainable poverty reduction at scale

Figure 1: M4P Strategic Framework (Springfield Centre, 2015)
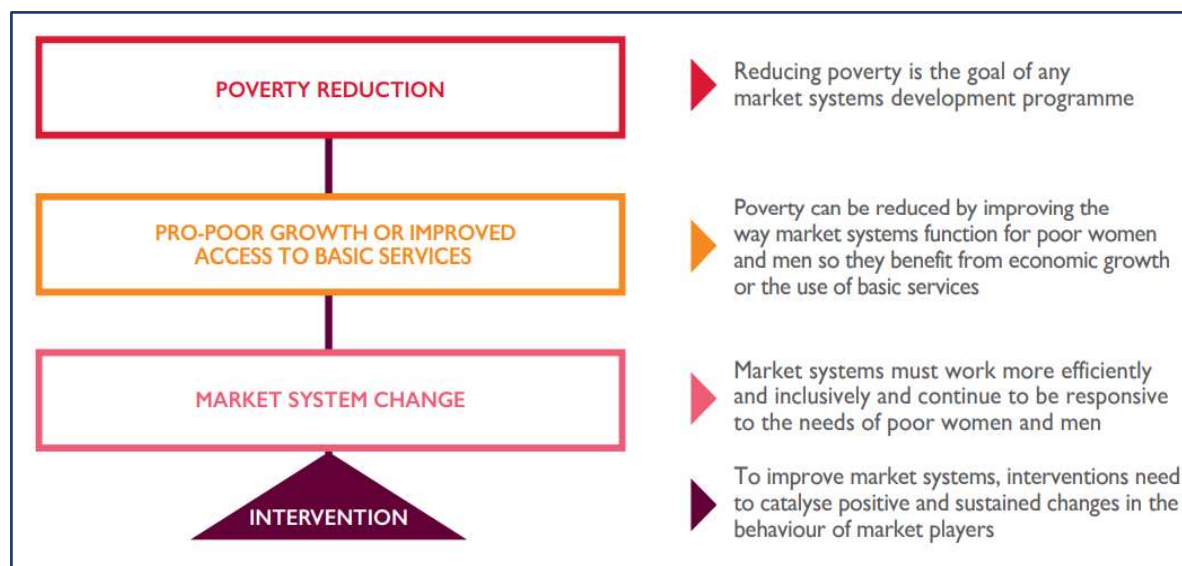
3 Methodology: reviewing evidence for the MSD approach

3.1 The nature of this review

The purpose of this review is to help donors, implementers and other stakeholders gauge whether the resources invested in programmes that use the MSD approach are worthwhile. In other words, do MSD programmes successfully achieve the impacts they set out to deliver, and what kind of impacts are these?

With this in mind, it is important to consider what kind of evidence can possibly emerge from a broad approach such as MSD that is applied in a wide range of contexts. The MSD approach is qualitatively different from narrow interventions, 'treatments', or policies focused on a single goal (such as, for instance, setting up a microcredit service, or making conditional cash transfers to improve educational outcomes). A review of a single policy or intervention type might directly compare reported impacts in different contexts, for instance by compiling results from a number of evaluations using statistical or experimental methods (e.g. randomised controlled trials). However, the breadth of application of the market systems approach precludes such direct comparisons. While the evidence documents reviewed below do in many cases provide quantitative results, it is not possible to compare these in a like-by-like manner.

This means it is not feasible to undertake a *formal systematic* review of the MSD evidence, as one might if comparable quantitative evidence of impact, such as that obtained using statistical or experimental methods, was available. Instead, this document is best described as a ***narrative***

synthesis: an approach to the synthesis of findings from multiple studies "that relies primarily on the use of words and text to summarise and explain the findings of the synthesis".[6]

Therefore this review will not highlight a particular model of best MSD practice that can be expected to deliver the same result when applied in a different context. Examples of successes should not be interpreted as providing transplantable examples of 'what works'. They may however be valuable in suggesting issues that should be taken into account when designing and implementing interventions in other contexts.

What this Review can do is:

- Profile and summarise the kinds of evidence available for market systems approaches
- Illustrate some of the areas where market systems approaches 'worked' in terms of sectors and countries
- Review the kinds of nature and scale of the impact achieved (local or national, achieving incremental or transformative change etc.)
- Provide the basis for assessing the validity of the approach – has it worked in enough contexts to justify its continuing use?

3.2   Selection of evidence documents

This review is based on the analysis of evidence documents selected from among 130 candidate documents identified through searches or submitted by MSD practitioners and evaluators[7]. The documents are mainly impact assessments, evaluation reports and case studies that provide evidence of results, impacts and effectiveness of MSD interventions.

From these candidates, 52 documents representing evidence from a total of 36 programmes were selected using inclusion criteria established by the BEAM Exchange in 2015. These evidence documents were uploaded to the BEAM Evidence Map[8] and a full analysis of the sources of this material by sector, geography and type is provided in **Annex 1** of this report.

For the purpose of this Review report, a subset of 14 programmes were further chosen as examples to illustrate the nature of the results that the MSD approach can produce, and provide tangible detail to the Review findings. These cases provide evidence of systemic change, positive impacts on large numbers of people, capacity to collaborate with different market actors, and adaptability to unexpected challenges.

In addition to the material in the 52 fresh evidence documents, this Review also took into consideration the findings and conclusions of previous BEAM Evidence Reviews, as well as complementary studies by USAID[9], DFAT [10] and World Bank[11]. Together these materials helped identify patterns in MSD implementation and evaluation practices and informed the final conclusions and recommendations.

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[6] Hagen-Zanker & Mallett (2013) cdn.odi.org/media/documents/8572.pdf

[7] A total of 120 experts were contacted and around 50 responded.

[8] BEAM Evidence Map @ beamexchange.org/evidence

[9] Cassinath & Mercer (2020) *Youth, Women, & MSD in Agriculture & Supporting Markets* beamexchange.org/resources/1402/

[10] DFAT (2020) Synthesis Review of DFAT-Funded Market Systems Development Initiatives

[11] Independent Evaluation Group (2019) 'Creating Markets' to Leverage the Private Sector for Sustainable Development & Growth: openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32078

3.3   Challenges of producing evidence from MSD programmes

Evaluators of MSD programmes face some particular methodological challenges which arise from some inherent characteristics of the MSD approach. These issues have been discussed in previous BEAM Evidence Reviews, in earlier BEAM Exchange guidance[12] and most recently in a detailed technical paper published by IFPRI[13]. The issues described in these resources, and encountered in the evidence that informed this Review, included:

Independence

It is difficult to establish strictly independent evaluations of MSD programmes. Many of the concepts, phenomena and units of analysis - for example 'market system', 'systemic function' and 'system change' - are subjective or lack consensus definitions. When an evaluator is required to maintain a strict distance from the implementation team these communication difficulties are amplified. This can obstruct the design of effective evaluation methods that accurately reflect the focus of MSD interventions and take into account externalities affecting a programme's results. IFPRI[14] recommended that MSD implementers be allowed to present their detailed theory of change to the evaluator, to review target populations of interviewees for relevance, and in general to have 'a steady interaction with the evaluator'.

Selection bias

The MSD approach relies on partnership with firms and private-sector actors. Programmes engage businesses that have the best incentives and capacity to innovate, to provide products or services to large numbers of people, to stimulate crowding-in. Self-selection is intrinsic to the engagement process and also to the transactional relationships between businesses and their customers / programme beneficiaries. All this makes it tricky for evaluators to identify control groups or establish credible counterfactuals.

Contamination issues and spillover effects

After impact evaluation methods including appropriate controls are established, issues may arise due to control groups being exposed to benefits from the programme's interventions, or from other organizations delivering similar services. Paradoxically, such effects are strategically intentional in the MSD approach, which relies for scale and sustainability on the private-sector partners and others developing the market and spreading business innovations to other areas. It may be difficult for evaluation teams to find relevant control groups that are immune from such effects, especially as programmes move from initial pilot interventions to larger scaling up phases.

Moving targets & unintended effects

MSD programmes and their partners work in competitive and entrepreneurial spaces where risk and unpredictable economic forces shape incentives and behaviours. To engage effectively with stakeholders and deliver results, MSD programmes need to be managed adaptively[15]: using iterative learning and analysis to pivot strategies and reconfigure activities as contexts change. This means areas of work get re-prioritised, theories of change are adjusted, indicators get modified or addedto reflect what is happening in the market system.

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[12] O'Sullivan (2016) *Impact evaluation for market systems programmes*, beamexchange.org/resources/698

[13] Ghebru, Grant & Smart (2021) Design and Implementation of Impact Evaluation of MSD Projects
   beamexchange.org/resources/1460

[14] *Ibid.,* p28

[15] The necessity of such adaptive management in complex dynamic operating environments is widely recognised, for example Schreiber & Loudon (2020) Fit for fragility: Practice to policy, OECD
   doi.org/10.1787/543d314e-en

A related issue is that programmes designed to facilitate systemic level change are prone to unintended effects, both negative and positive. This calls for more elaborate evaluation methods, for example adding a variety of proxy variables to account for unintended effects. Ultimately, these features of MSD programmes demand mixed and qualitative methods that go beyond the 'what' and 'how much' questions, to address how and through which mechanisms outcomes were achieved.

3.4   Presentation of evidence findings

The findings of this Review are arranged and presented following the same logic of the MSD strategic framework (see Figure 1): starting at the top of the diagram

Chapter 4 summarises the evidence for large-scale reductions in poverty associated with increased income, more and better jobs and other benefits arising from the work of MSD programmes. We also examine evidence about how inclusive these impacts or benefits were for people living in poverty, their value-for-money and their sustainability.

Chapter 5 examines the evidence for claims that MSD programmes' interventions are behind the pro-poor growth and better access to basic services that underpins those reductions in poverty.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses evidence of market system change: exploring how successful MSD programmes achieved these results through interventions that shifted the underlying conditions determining the performance of market systems.

In Chapter 7 reflects on the lessons and insights gained more broadly from this evidence literature. We examine both the insights for improving programme design, management and implementation, and the lessons for better results measurement and the more effective production of future evidence.

4 Evidence about poverty reduction

Our review begins by examining the evidence for reductions in poverty which ultimately and indirectly resulted from the interventions of programmes that used the MSD approach.   Bear in mind, results at this level were only possible because programmes succeeded in facilitating market system change that led to pro-poor growth and / or improved access to services for people living in poverty.

Most material we reviewed showed a poverty-focus to MSD programmes' objectives and intervention strategies. And in 16 documents, poverty reduction was the predominant type of evidence presented. Geographically, the evidence was drawn from a wide range of countries across Africa, Asia and to a lesser extent the Pacific (see Annex 1, for details).
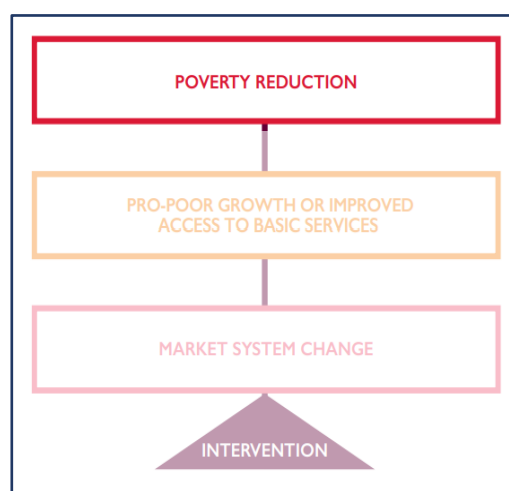
4.1   Large scale increases in jobs and income

Primarily, this evidence takes the form of data about changes in the incomes of people living in poverty, i.e. as a result of increases in sales of produce, of wages earned, or of more and better jobs. Figure 2 shows data published from 12 programmes.

There are significant variations in operational contexts, and how these indicators are calculated, so caution is needed in comparing or aggregating this data. Nevertheless, the overall picture clearly illustrates the scale of impact which many programmes using the MSD approach achieved.

Figure 2: Summary of headline increases in incomes and jobs

Programme	Period	Country	Headline: Increases in income & jobs
ALCP [16]	2008-17	Georgia	• US$ 34.7m in additional sales for 403,000 farming households
AVC [17]	2013-19	Bangladesh	• US$ 117m in increased income for 307,000 households • 111,700 full-time equivalent jobs created
Ghana MADE [18]	2013-20	Ghana	• US$ 87m additional net income for 95,000 farmers
GROW [19]	2014-20	Liberia	• US$ 8.0m net attributable income change for 29,100 households
IMSAR [20]	2018-19	Rwanda	• US$ 1.9m in increased income for 35,000 rural h/holds
InovAgro [21]	2015-20	Mozambique	• US$ 18m net attributable income increase for 34,900 smallholders
MADE [22]	2013-20	Nigeria	• US$ 59m increased attributable income for 300,000 farming households

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[16] ALCP (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1363

[17] Wall (2019) beamexchange.org/resources/1233

[18] White & MacCarthy (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1478

[19] Adam Smith Intl. (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1458

[20] IMSAR (2019) beamexchange.org/resources/1434

[21] DAI (2021) beamexchange.org/resources/1541

[22] Fiesta & Freer (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1319

Programme	Period	Country	Headline: Increases in income & jobs
MDF [23]	2011-19	Multiple countries	• US$ 112m in increased income for 242,000 adults
PMDP[24]	2014-18	Palestine	• US$ 180m increased revenue for 884 MSMEs • 3,400 jobs created
R2J[25]	2015-18	Afghanistan	• US$ 2.1m of additional rural income • 48,800 improved jobs
RLDP [26]	2005-15	Tanzania	• US$ 41m of additional income for 627,000 households

Increases in daily additional income attributable to the programmes are modest in absolute terms: in the range of US$ 0.5 to $2 per day per beneficiary. In most MSD programmes, such changes in income are at best incremental rather than transformative. However, these benefits are reaching large numbers of people, and are significant relative to the baseline income of most target populations living close to the international poverty line (US$ 1.90 per day). Moreover, beyond income, we see evidence of MSD programmes creating transformative change (in self-esteem, in social capital, in local influence) in people's lives.

> MSD Impact Case 1: MADE in Ghana
>
> Sustained income increases for over 95,000 small farmers as a result of developing market systems to bundle agricultural inputs and services
>
> MADE (Market Development in Northern Ghana) was an agricultural market development programme operating in Ghana's acutely impoverished northern region. Over two phases, MADE ran for seven years at a total cost of US$ 22 million, and eventually established a successful sustainable business model of out-grower extension supplying affordable bundles of inputs and services to smallholders.
>
> During those years, MADE generated approximately US$ 87 million additional net income for 95,000 smallholder farmers, of whom over 45% were women: representing an average increase in income of US$ 920 each. These figures almost certainly understate the real extent of penetration of the model, as later surveys found evidence of 30,000 additional beneficiaries. Former partners from the first phase were also found to have expanded outreach by up to 70,000 farmers since leaving the programme. Overall, the programme generated $4 additional income for smallholder farmers for each $ spent.
>
> Source of evidence
>
> White & MacCarthy (2020) MADE programme PCR supplement beamexchange.org/resources/1478/

4.2   Value for Money (VfM) and cost-effectiveness

Clearly, the scale of these reported results needs to be placed in the context of the costs of the programmes if we are to make any judgement about their VfM. It is useful here to refer to FCDO's (DFID's) approach to calculating VfM which breaks the concept down into various domains:

The evidence documents from eight programmes used this DFID framework or, in the case of PMDP and MDF, a modified version of it to assess VfM. Most other evidence documents had at least one indicator of cost-effectiveness. Comparing and analysing this data is not a straightforward exercise however, especially when programmes comprise multiple components, and it is not always easy to

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[23] MDF (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1373

[24] PMDP (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1429

[25] Watkins et.al. (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1283

[26] RLDP (2016) beamexchange.org/resources/1441

determine which costs are associated with which results. Figure 4 show the types of indicators typically used by the programmes that adopted DFID's 4E framework.

Figure 3: DFID's 4E approach to VfM: economy, efficiency, effectiveness & equity[27]
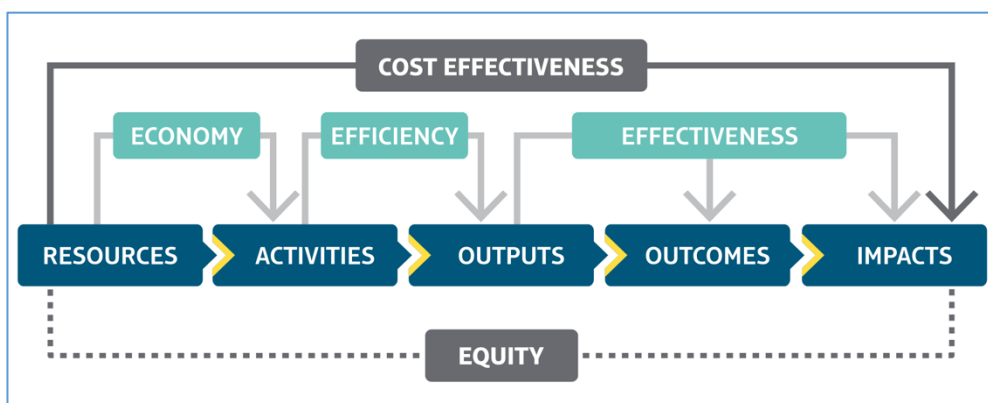
Figure 4: Examples of VfM indicators used by MSD programmes

VfM Domains	IMSAR Rwanda	FoodTrade East &Southern Africa
Economy	Proportion of total cost spent directly on delivery	Fund management cost ratio Administrative cost ratio
Efficiency	Cost per farmer reached through access to inputs, services, and buyers	Smallholder engagement rate
Effectiveness	Value of investment leveraged per $ spent by programme Value of additional funds partners invested without matched funding	Volume of staple food sales contributed to per farmer reached
Equity	% of female farmers engaged, and % of beneficiaries who are poor	Cost of female outreach Female outreach (%)
Cost-effectiveness	Cost per job created Social Return on Investment.	Portfolio-wide leveraging ratio

Evidence documents that reported VfM assessments, used this to reflect on programme performance, strategies and interventions, rather than to compare with other programmes. This is not surprising given both the wide range of intervention strategies, hence variety of indicators, and the diverse operating contexts (e.g. from Afghanistan to Zambia).

The one aspect of VfM that in principle is comparable across programmes is cost-effectiveness. Figure 5 shows headline results for the success of eight programmes' in generating attributable net income increases. Most of these programmes achieved results in more than this one area of impact, so these figures are a very crude basis for assessing performance. While advocating caution in drawing inferences from comparisons or contrasts in these figures, nevertheless, there is clear evidence here for the capacity of strong MSD programmes to deliver large-scale impact cost-effectively.

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[27] Adapted from DFID (2011) DFID's Approach to Value-for-Money beamexchange.org/resources/270

Figure 5: Cost effectiveness calculations for a selection of MSD programmes

Programme	Country	Costs	Additional Income	Beneficiaries	Ratio of income benefits to costs[28]
ALCP	Georgia	$ 8.8m	$ 34.7m	403,000	3.9
AVC	Bangladesh	$ 34m	$ 117m	307,000	3.4
InovAgro	Mozambique	$ 20 m	$ 18 m	35,000	0.9
MDF	Asia: multi-country	$ 48m	$ 112m	242,000	2.3
PMDP	Palestine	$ 28m	[29] $ 180m	3,400	n/a
R2J	Afghanistan	$ 7.5m	$ 2.1m	49,000	0.3
RLDP	Tanzania	$ 8m	$ 40m	627,000	5.0

NOTES

- Beside the great diversity of market conditions in the countries listed above, the definition of beneficiaries is not standardised across MSD programmes. Some programmes talked about 'direct' and 'indirect' beneficiaries; others about 'income' and 'job beneficiaries'.
- Programmes embedded in larger multinational umbrella initiatives e.g. MDF (MSD Impact Case 2) may benefit from economies of scale in administration, management and technical support.
- In multi-phase programmes, impacts in one phase may have been enabled by interventions in previous phases.
- In countries with a history of MSD programming, implementing organisations benefit from connections with experienced individuals and institutions with good understanding of key market issues. This can significantly reduce implementation costs.

MSD Impact Case 2: MDF in five Pacific & South Asian countries

Increasing incomes for 250,000 people in Fiji, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka & Pakistan through access to a diverse range of urban and rural services

The multi-country MDF (Market Development Facility) programme promoted higher incomes for women and men in South Asia and the Pacific. Sectorally, it focused mainly on tourism, high-value agriculture, dairy, livestock and some urban industries.

As of December 2019, the programme had had positive impacts for almost 250,000 adults. Its portfolio has generated more than US$ 111m in additional income for adults across the facility, and US$ 114m of additional revenue for its partners. The value of additional transactions increased by 25% in 2019 alone, demonstrating a steady uptake of goods and services offered by MDF's partners. And for every dollar invested by the programme, the private sector invested more than three. Examples of the services promoted are mechanical harvesting, mobile access to weather information, aggregation services, and outsourcing.

Across all countries, 44% of beneficiaries were women. In the Pacific, the percentage of women benefitting from MDF's work continues to increase, and despite restrictive cultural norms in South Asia, the number of women benefitting during 2019 more than doubled.

Source of evidence:

MDF (2020) MDF Annual Report 2019 beamexchange.org/resources/1373/

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[28] Note: this figure does not include the value of other programme benefits such as improvements in job quality, access to services, resilience

[29] Note: figure refers to revenue (not profits) of 884 MSME's who received support from PMDP

4.3   Equity: gender, diversity and inclusion in MSD programme results

Income is only one dimension of poverty reduction. Keen observers want to know how fairly benefits are distributed, the extent to which marginalised groups are included and how changes in income translate into improvements in well-being, empowerment and resilience for people living in poverty. Aggregated results data are poor indicators of programmes' equity performance in this regard.

In the past, many MSD programmes struggled to meet equity expectations. MSD works with independent businesses partners and their self-selecting suppliers or customers (rather than with sub-contractors and passive recipients of handouts). So the approach does not lend itself to focussing benefits on only the most desirable target groups. However, a lack of attention to equity is changing as practical guidance becomes increasingly well established. One influential example is the WEAMS Framework[30] which describes how to intentionally embed women's empowerment and equitable systems change in MSD programmes.

We found qualitative evidence of equity in results scattered throughout the evidence documents. Programmes like Alliances, AVC, PMDP, MDF, PAVE and HIPSTER showed instances where the teams' awareness of women, youth and family factors contributed to their capacity to engage key stakeholders and operate in difficult contexts. Often such programmes leveraged the interconnectedness between sub-sectoral systems (e.g. rice, livestock) and cross-cutting systems that contribute to scale and sustainability, such as educational, community and political systems.

Because of the wide divergences in criteria used for defining poverty, and the way such data was reported, it was not feasible within the scope of this review to systematically analyse this evidence here. However other observers have found that "being intentional about gender integration in planning, implementation, staffing and leadership, and MEL approaches leads to increased evidence of positive impacts related to women in MSD programs" [31].

One quantitative result that was reasonably well reported in the evidence literature[32], and may therefore serve as pragmatic proxy for equity, is the number of women among beneficiaries.

Figure 6: Women as proportion of beneficiaries in MSD programmes

Programme	Country	Women %	Evidence document
Alliances / ALCP	Georgia	54%	beamexchange.org/resources/1363
AVC (financial services)	Bangladesh	43%	beamexchange.org/resources/1233
Ghana MADE	Ghana	45%	beamexchange.org/resources/1478
GRAISEA	Multi-country	45%	beamexchange.org/resources/1421
GROW	Liberia	54%	beamexchange.org/resources/1458
HIPSTER	Ethiopia	87%	beamexchange.org/resources/1418
IMSAR	Rwanda	42%	beamexchange.org/resources/1434
KAVES	Kenya	53%	beamexchange.org/resources/1420
MADE Nigeria	Nigeria	46%	beamexchange.org/resources/1426
MDF	Multi-country	44%	beamexchange.org/resources/1373

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[30] Jones (2016) *The WEAMS Framework* beamexchange.org/resources/794

[31] Cassinath & Mercer (2020: 42) *Youth, Women and MSD in Agriculture* beamexchange.org/resources/1402

[32] There were some surprising gaps in this data. For example, programmes that evidently targeted women as beneficiaries (e.g. Bangladesh AVC, FSDT in Tanzania) but whose results were not clearly disaggregated by gender in the documents reviewed

Programme	Country	Women %	Evidence document
PMDP	Palestine	46%	beamexchange.org/resources/1428
Propcom Mai-karfi	Nigeria	22%	beamexchange.org/resources/1266
RLDP	Tanzania	36%	beamexchange.org/resources/1441
Samarth – NMDP	Nepal	48% – 65%	beamexchange.org/resources/1322
Yapasa	Zambia	23%	beamexchange.org/resources/1444

Clearly, many MSD programmes are not achieving equality in gender inclusion, so would not compare well (in this respect) with non-MSD programmes that deliver support directly to women living in poverty. No doubt these MSD programmes' results reflect not just the operating environments in which they work, but the modalities of working through markets for sustained and largescale outreach.

Arguably, for an approach that seeks to avoid the distortion, dependency and disempowerment associated with protracted hand-outs, this trade-off between inclusion and scale / sustainability is acceptable. However, some MSD programmes, such as Alliances in Georgia, GROW in Liberia, KAVES in Kenya and HIPSTER in Ethiopia are seeing women as the majority of their beneficiaries. Lessons may be learned from such programmes about how to improve gender inclusion.

4.4   Sustainability

A core rationale for the MSD approach is that interventions not only reach scale, but by creating lasting systemic change, they have an impact that is enduring.

Figure 7: Contrasting the impact of MSD programmes with conventional aid
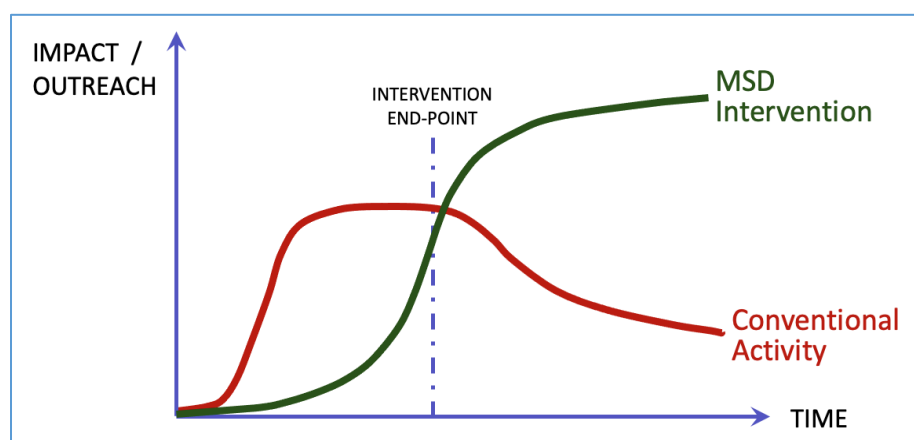
If MSD lives up to its name, impact does not decline after interventions end but continues to grow as businesses adopt and adapt innovations, and the wider market system expands and responds to the new opportunities. This difference from conventional aid programming is shown in Figure 7.

The MSD literature does provide some evidence for this pattern of results – with accelerating impact around and after the end of the intervention phase. These patterns are best documented in multi-phase programmes, which afford implementors the opportunity to continue internally monitoring results after intervention activities have ended. Examples can be found from:

- The MADE programme in Nigeria (see MSD Impact Case 3, below)

- The Alliances (ALCP) programme in the Caucuses, especially ALCP's work in livestock health (veterinary) services[33], dairy & cheese markets[34] and media markets[35]
- Various case studies from the Katalyst programme in Bangladesh[36]

However, unfortunately, in most cases the final independent evaluations and impact assessments commissioned by donors usually take place before, or very close to, the intervention end-points. Full ex-post evaluations conducted two, five or even ten years after a programme closes to assess sustained long-term impacts are rare[37].

MSD Impact Case 3: MADE in Nigeria

Sustained income increases for over 300,000 farmers from better market systems for agricultural services and outputs

MADE (Market Development in the Niger Delta) was an agricultural market development programme operating in a deeply poor, highly fragile and conflict-affected region of Nigeria.

The first phase ran from 2013 to 2018 with a budget of US$ 19 million. Working mainly in Agri-inputs, Cassava, Fish, Poultry & Palm Oil sectors, it enabled over 150,000 farmers (46% women) to achieve at least 15% increase in net income (worth US$ 23 million) as a result of attributable improvements in farming practices, yields, productivity and sales.

The MADE programme was then extended to 2020 (at a cost of US$ 9.5 million) to reach an additional 150,000 households. These two extra years saw farmers generate an additional US$ 36 million in income, indicating how benefits were extending and accumulating over time. The independent evaluation calculated that by 2019 the programme was delivering farmer income worth $2.50 for every $1 spent.

The changes MADE achieved involved a range of innovative partnerships with lead firms, and by building networks of village-level entrepreneurs such as: poultry vaccinators, input dealers, aquaculture service providers and seed entrepreneurs. As a result, more than 300,000 small scale farmers (nearly half female) are now part of a system that increasingly supports and rewards their hard work, perseverance and aspiration. They have increasing access and choice to input and output markets which are delivering higher margins and higher returns to their labour. They are starting to gain the respect that they deserve as discerning consumers, as capable farmers, as responsive suppliers worthy of investment and attention.

Sources of evidence

Fiestas & Freer (2020) Independent review DFID Nigeria MADE beamexchange.org/resources/1319

Elliott (2020) MADE Learning Review beamexchange.org/resources/1320

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[33] ALCP Infographic: veterinary sector results, slides 9 − 11, beamexchange.org/resources/1365

[34] Hakemulder (2020) *Better cheese, better work* beamexchange.org/resources/1355

[35] Shah & Fogelberg (2019) *Developing media market systems,* beamexchange.org/resource/1206

[36] For example: Taylor (2016 b) beamexchange.org/resources/1425/

[37] Two examples published by USAID in 2016 are:
Zambia PROFIT marketlinks.org/resources/scaling-impact-zambia-profit-case-study and
Cambodia MSME marketlinks.org/resources/scaling-impact-cambodia-ex-post-assessment
As we went to print, USAID published:

Khatiwada & Waitkuweit (2021) *Uganda Feed the Future CPM Ex-Post Evaluation*. USAID
beamexchange.org/resources/1546

5   Evidence about pro-poor growth and access to services

Our eview continues by examining the evidence for the pro-poor growth or improved access to services, that underpinned the reductions in poverty described above. Bear in mind the scale and sustainability of results at this level rests on the success of programme interventions in facilitating market system change.

Many of the 36 programmes we reviewed provide evidence of this level of impact. Compared to poverty reduction and 'system change' results, these kinds of outcomes are usually relatively easy to measure and attribute to interventions. Hence these are also the results to which programmes are more likely to be held accountable by donors. In 20 documents, this was the predominant type of results described (see Annex 1).
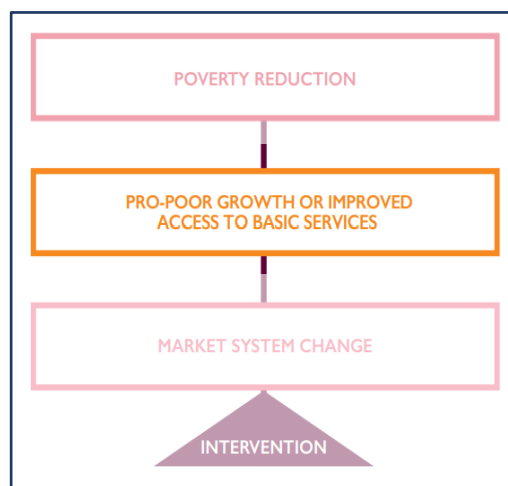
The largest proportion of evidence documents we reviewed described agricultural sector outcomes (e.g. improvements in access to agricultural inputs and information). However, the proportion of non-agriculture related evidence picked up slightly (31%) compared to the previous BEAM Review (28%). To show this, three of the four cases we are highlighting in this section reflect the increasing diversity of applications of the MSD approach. The first is about access to financial services in Bangladesh (AVC), the second describes skills development and innovation for MSMEs in Palestine (PMDP) and the third is for sanitation services (improved latrines) in Cambodia (SMSU). Finally, there is an example from Rwanda about better access to agricultural inputs.

MSD Impact Case 4: AVC in Bangladesh

Improved access for farmers and agri-businesses to appropriate financial & insurance services

The Bangladesh AVC (Agricultural Value Chains) programme worked to enhance food security in the southern delta region. It tackled constraints in the market systems of pulses, groundnut, vegetables, mangos, tomatoes, potatoes, flowers and fibres, as well as transportation and access to technology.

The programme worked with 42 of the most influential firms and organisations in Bangladesh, aligning interventions with their interests and investment opportunities. One example was AVC's partnerships with microfinance institutions (MFIs) and commercial banks. These helped them adjust their financial products to be more suitable to the specific needs of farming customers. As a result, 6,300 business owners and entrepreneurs, including farmers, gained access to loans and insurance products. Almost half were women.

Overall, AVC created benefits for more than 307,000 rural households, with almost all applying new technologies or management practices.

Source of evidence:

Wall (2019) Bangladesh USAID AVC Project - Final Report beamexchange.org/resources/1233/

MSD Impact Case 5: PMDP in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

Jobs & better incomes for 4,200 workers from building the market for strategic skills development and business innovation services

The PMDP (Palestinian Market Development) programme helped strengthen the competitiveness of the Palestinian private sector during an unemployment crisis that followed conflict in 2014. In a fragile and unstable context, with disincentives for private investment, the provision of skills development and innovation services for micro and small businesses (MSMEs) was not well developed. Most Palestinian enterprises did not value strategic business services such as market research, quality standards and marketing strategies.

PMDP used matching grants to change these attitudes and behaviours. PMDP's grant assistance (worth £7.5M) leveraged more than £5M in direct private investment. More than 125 business service providers grew their capacity to offer new and better services to PMDP grantees and other MSMEs. These business services enabled Palestinian MSMEs to develop new products and services, improve their business and technology systems, and enter new markets. The number of companies investing their own funds to hire service providers increased.

As a result, almost 900 enterprises increased revenue (by approximately £130M) and this is estimated to have created 3,000 jobs. PMDP also helped more than 260 firms to get back into business after the conflict, re-employing 1,200 workers.

Source of evidence:

PMDP (2018) Final Report https://beamexchange.org/resources/1429/

MSD Impact Case 6: SMSU in Cambodia - Sanitation services

Improved coverage and health for 1.5 million people from building sanitation markets

The SMSU (Sanitation Marketing Scale Up) programme used the MSD approach to scale up markets for sanitation services across seven provinces in Cambodia. During its first phase, SMSU showed that building markets for sanitation services contributed to significant increases in latrine coverage and created measurable health benefits[38].

SMSU worked with a wide range of public and private actors to develop affordable, aspirational WASH products; train local entrepreneurs to manufacture and install them; and recruit and train independent sales agents to create consumer demand for improved WASH products and services.

Between 2012 and 2018, the programme facilitated the sale of over 300,000 improved latrines through partner businesses, reaching over 1.5m people. Adoption of improved latrines in SMSU areas more than doubled from 29% to 67%, surpassing rates in other parts of Cambodia.

Evidence indicates that the proportion of active Latrine Business Operators (LBOs) who were improving their average monthly profits increase from 27% in 2016 to 32% in 2018.

Source of evidence

iDE (2019) SMSU 2.0 Final Evaluation Report beamexchange.org/resources/1447/

Georgetown University (2018) Measuring the effect of iDE's sanitation marketing intervention beamexchange.org/resources/1474/

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[38] An independent study in 2014 showed the initial introduction of 140,000 latrines (a 20% increase in coverage) contributed to 6.5% decrease in incidences of diarrhoea in SMSU's rural intervention areas.

> ### MSD Impact Case 7: IMSAR in Rwanda
>
> #### Better access to agricultural inputs and financial services for 35,000 households
>
> IMSAR (Improving Market Systems for Agriculture in Rwanda) works to raise incomes of poor households farming cereals, tubers, vegetables and fruits, and livestock. Using a combination of grants and technical assistance, IMSAR promoted innovations that increased access to agricultural inputs and financial services, that improved aggregation to reduce post-harvest losses, and that increased volumes and quality of produce for processing and sale, including exports.
>
> IMSAR built partnerships with 15 different market actors, including agribusinesses, financial institutions and a government agency. The turnover of five IMSAR partners increased by more than US$ 1.8m, exceeding the 2019 target by 160%. Of that amount, almost US$ 140,000 came from exports. Investments by partners exceeded US$ 1.4: more than double IMSAR's target.
>
> As of December 2019, almost 35,000 low-income rural households had raised their incomes by US$ 55 on average (totalling more than US$ 1.9 million). This was 80% higher than comparable farmers who did not adopt innovations promoted by IMSAR. Innovations led to the creation of more than 1,700 on-farm jobs, largely through newly established export-driven out-grower models.
>
> Source of evidence:
>
> IMSAR (2019) IMSAR Annual Report beamexchange.org/resources/1434/

In general, due to the diversity of interventions, and therefore a wider variety of indicators that MSD programmes measure, we were unable to attempt direct comparisons between these and other cases.

However, one common proxy for programmes' success in catalysing pro-poor growth is the level of investment stimulated among private-sector partners (as a result of a programme's interventions). We found that across programmes that reported these figures, the level of private partner investment (the leverage ratio) converged to between 1.3 to 3.3 times programme expenditure. Data for this result came from ALCP in Georgia, HIPSTER in Ethiopia, MADE II in Nigeria, MDF across multiple countries, the latter phase of AVC in Bangladesh and PEPZ in Zambia[39].

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[39] Some of these programmes are not used in this review as examples but are all available in the BEAM Evidence Map.

6 Evidence about market system change

Our review continues by looking at examples of the evidence for market system change facilitated by programmes using the MSD approach. These are the kind of changes which ensure pro-poor growth or improved access to services will be sustained in the longer-term and contribute to impact at scale.

There is much debate about the meaning and definition of 'systemic change', and a great deal of literature on this topic, not just in the field of Market Systems Development, but in many other realms.

For the purposes of this review, the 'rules of thumb' for identifying market system change laid out in recently updated guidance for the [DCED Standard for Results Measurement](#) are a good starting point.
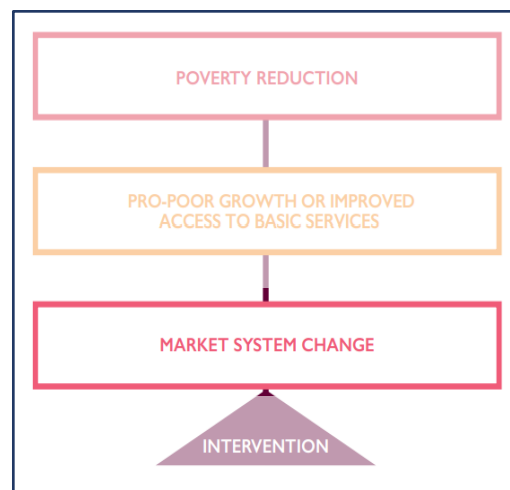
"A systemic change is a modification to how a system works, and what happens as a result. We propose three rules of thumb to identify whether a change is 'systemic'. it should be:

- **sustainable**, continuing without ongoing input from the programme
- **scalable**, capable of benefitting increasing numbers of people over time
- **resilient**, adapting and enduring despite changes in circumstances [40]

It is also useful to consider the aim of programmes that adopt a systems change approach, such as MSD. Their rationale was summed up succinctly by Kania, Krame & Senge as 'shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place'. This encapsulation establishes a clear contrast with actions that may tackle problems head-on but leave their underlying or root causes intact. The authors' model proposed six categories of 'condition', which we found useful for arranging evidence in this review.

Figure 8: FSG's Six Conditions of Systems Change [41]
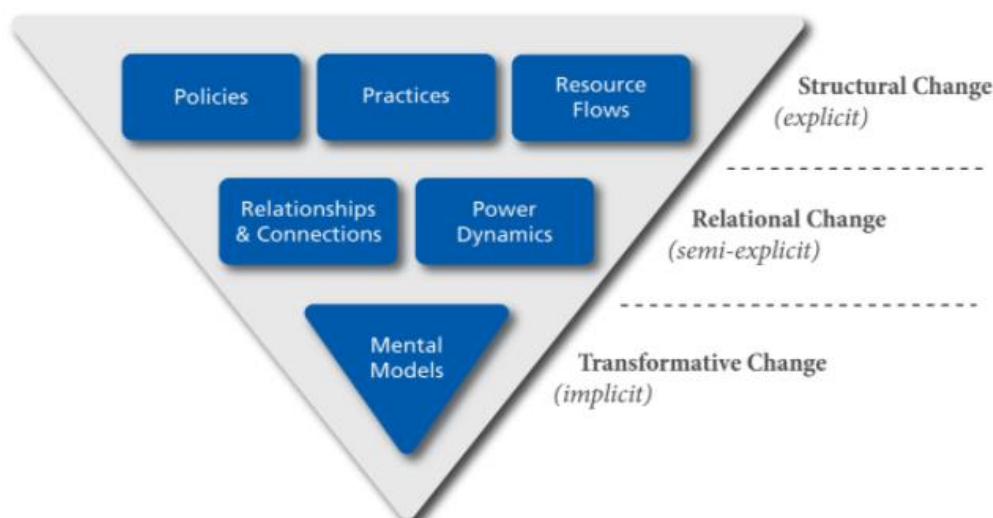
FSG's model recognises that the conditions for systems change are both explicit and implicit. The former are tangible, structural conditions visible as policies, practices (e.g. innovations) and resource flows (e.g. investment). The latter are intangible, social norms and attitudinal changes reflected in power dynamics, relationships, connections and mental models. An important insight is that shifting the implicit conditions (e.g. attitudes to gender roles) often has the deepest potential to lead to transformative change in the long term.

Readers with an even deeper interest in how system change is conceptualised and operationalised by MSD practitioners and programme evaluators will also find Jenal & Grey's 2019 study revealing [42].

6.1   Policies

Around half of the programmes reviewed reported successes in changing policies. This includes changes to government, institutional and organisational rules and regulations. It also includes the changes to priorities that guide their own and others' actions. Such successes are often prized for the scale of impact to which they contribute, even though benefits are very difficult to measure.

In all these cases, there was evidence either of direct attribution (i.e. the programme was a key determinant or driver of the change) or contribution, i.e. the programme contributed to the policy change as part of a broader set of factors.

Market System Change Case 1: HIPSTER in Ethiopia
Better industrial policy to address the root causes of unresponsive labour markets

In 2013, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) launched a policy of tax benefits and trade agreements to attract private investment to state-of-the-art industrial parks. The aim was to modernise strategic industries and create tens of thousands of decent jobs. However, the country´s labour markets were not ready to supply workers familiar with industrial norms and the skills to use new technologies and processes.

HIPSTER was an initiative of the Enterprise Partners (EP) programme to develop an effective market in labour services: such as sourcing, job matching and skills development. It focused on the needs of textile and apparel factories in the Hawassa Industrial Park.

EP convened public and private actors to design and promote practices that encouraged workers to view employment as a career; introduced saving schemes; and advocated for additional facilities and services such as food shops, housing, health centres, transportation and childcare. The response from jobseekers, particularly women, was very positive. As a result, in 2017, the GoE declared that "every industrial park should be supported by the HIPSTER model" – effectively turning HIPSTER into a national policy.

By 2020, more than 30,000 workers had been recruited by 32 factories in three industrial parks. HIPSTER's successful model of cooperation between the public and private sectors enabled these parks to expand production and navigate major economic disruptions, such as COVID-19.

Sources of evidence

Bear & Grant (2020) Facilitating inclusive growth in Ethiopia beamexchange.org/resources/1448

Bekkers & Ritchie (2020) EP in support of industrial transformation beamexchange.org/resources/1418

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[42] Jenal & Grey (2019) *Measuring systemic change in MSD* beamexchange.org/resources/1415
They found that the two perspectives of systemic change that most influence MSD interventions and evaluation design are change through "innovation diffusion", and through "structural change". The others are systemic change as a "change in state" (e.g. from a state of not having access to improved seeds to having them) and as a change in the "evolutionary trajectory" of the system.

Market System Change Case 2: CAVAC in Cambodia

Improvements in pesticide policy, regulation and usage practices

Pests wreak havoc on Cambodia's crucial national rice crop, and many farmers use chemical pesticides indiscriminately and unsafely. In an uncertain regulatory environment suppliers and retailers were selling products of dubious quality, unable to offer proper advice on their safe use.

In 2012, Cambodia established the first legal framework for chemical pesticide usage. It required suppliers to register and seek approval for any advice they provided to retailers or farmers. However, the Government lacked technical capacity to develop or monitor detailed guidance, which hampered the ability of companies to provide accurate information to retailers.

The CAVAC (Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain) programme worked with government agencies and universities. Together they produced a practical guide on rice pest management that was widely adopted by agronomists, and a diagnostic tool that enabled companies to recommend appropriate solutions to farmers for pests and diseases. CAVAC's field research also provided supporting evidence to a government initiative on pesticide labelling which led to Guidelines for Labelling and Models for Pesticide Information.

CAVAC's influencing of policy on pesticides began too late in the programme cycle for its full impact to be assessed. Nevertheless, the 2017 evaluation reported that "the potential impact of market changes on farmers' productivity is expected to be larger than in the fertiliser market [which was estimated to benefit 2 million farmers by 2015]"

Sources of evidence

DFAT (2017a) CAVAC: Achievements and Lessons Learned beamexchange.org/resources/1203/

DFAT (2017b) CAVAC Phase 1 External Review beamexchange.org/resources/1067/

Market System Change Case 3: FSDT in Tanzania

Improvements to financial sector policy benefiting millions of people living in poverty

The FSDT (Financial Sector Deepening Trust) initially worked simply to support microfinance institutions to achieve greater outreach. In time, its mission evolved to address the deeper underlying constraints on financial inclusion for Tanzanians living in poverty.

During its second and third phases (2007 - 2018), FSDT worked to improve the policy and regulatory framework of the financial sector, improve business services for financial institutions, and increase access of urban and rural enterprises and households to more and better financial services.

At the macro level, evidence suggests that FSDT's support to policy makers contributed to improvements in the policy and regulatory environment for financial services.   Among other things, the programme helped to raise awareness of the importance of mobile money among Bank of Tanzania officials. This led to several initiatives that encouraged the development and uptake of digital financial services, which has been an important contributor to increased financial inclusion. Between 2013 and 2009, the proportion of people excluded from financial services in Tanzania halved, from 55% to 27%.

At the micro and meso levels there were also some notable successes. For example, FSDT helped to create Access Bank to serve microenterprises and SMEs. Access Bank's success led several other banks to enter this new market segment.

Sources of evidence

FSDT (2017) Retrospective Impact Assessment 2005 - 2015 beamexchange.org/resources/1432/

6.2 Practices & resource flows

All documents we reviewed reported evidence of changes in practices. By which we mean activities of businesses, institutions, coalitions, networks, and other targeted entities. Practices include procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits that comprise their work.

The most frequently reported ones are changes in agricultural management techniques, post-harvest techniques, provision of embedded services, agricultural input purchasing practices, contractual arrangements, and business administration practices.

Since MSD programmes are working with businesses, these changes are almost inevitably linked to shifts in resource flows (i.e. finance, investments, sales and profits – but also information)

The most frequently reported changes in resource flows are related to increased transactions in the core market, increased access to agricultural inputs, increased access to knowledge and increased access to financial services.

> ### Market System Change Case 4: Ghana MADE
> #### Establishing better practices and financing for agricultural inputs and services through an out-grower business model
>
> Agricultural growth is key to reducing regional inequalities in Ghana. Acute poverty persists in northern regions whose thin, shallow markets have few agricultural businesses serving the types of agriculture that women farmers and other poor households engage in. In response, Ghana MADE (Market Development in Northern Ghana) helped partnering agribusinesses develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to out-grower services supplying affordable bundles of inputs and services to smallholder farmers. The Advanced Business Model successfully overcame many of the systemic weaknesses in the region's agricultural markets, including inadequate coordination; inadequate private sector engagement in input distribution networks; a lack of product diversity and limited financial services for MSMEs.
>
> MADE's partners were carefully selected intermediary agri-businesses who connected smallholder farmers to inputs and markets. The Advanced Business Model revolves around the engagement of farm enterprise advisors: outreach agents who ensure inputs and services are properly applied, produce is properly aggregated, and business investment is fully recovered. Crucially, the Model also formalised the process of commercial formalisation, contract negotiation and rigorous annual business planning, which enables agribusinesses to scale-up the number of beneficiaries while improving their competitiveness and sustainability.
>
> MADE showed it was possible to align farmer and supplier interests and share risks through commercial partnerships. But significant outreach also came from diffusing knowledge and farm business management capacity at a community level: farmers improved their chances of joining out-grower schemes and securing better terms by joining farmer associations or belonging to community cluster groups.
>
> Results showed that agribusinesses applying MADE's Advanced Business Model were better able to plan and sustain the delivery of their farm advisory services to smallholder farmers. By the end of the programme over 500 advisors were working as outreach agents, and MADE's partner firms had invested more than £54 million to procure and deliver new and improved inputs and services to 136,000 farmers (45% women). Partners estimated that between 25 and 75 % of their growth during the programme was derived from the model.
>
> #### Source of evidence
>
> White & MacCarthy (2020) MADE programme PCR, www.beamexchange.org/resources/1478/

> ## Market System Change Case 5: PAVE in Pakistan
> ### Better farm and business practices linked to more inclusive markets for certified seeds
>
> The PAVE (Partnerships and Value Chain Expansion) programme worked to address the huge gap between potential and actual yields in Pakistan. Its core strategy was the promotion of certified rice and wheat seeds amongst 4,000 smallholder farmers, especially women.
>
> The programme trained farmers on the use of certified seeds and modern agricultural and business management practices. It also invested in demonstration plots to show farmers the benefits of improved seeds. Some farmers were trained to become trainers themselves and multiply seeds for the private sector. 27% went on to establish themselves as high-quality seed suppliers for private companies and farmers in their own villages.
>
> The programme collaborated with public and private actors with the aim of enabling them to take over its activities. As a result agricultural research institutions and private seed companies are now providing training and technical assistance to farmers about modern farming techniques, and rice mills are training farmer groups on water-saving methods. Some large agri-businesses (e.g. Galaxy Rice Mills and Rice Partners) started to adopt PAVE's smallholders' aggregation concepts and sustainability approaches.
>
> Final project survey data shows that PAVE farmers are getting better crop yields and earning more income. According to the report, farmers raised rice yields by 20% over baseline and doubled their profit margins. Similarly, farmers raised wheat yields by 10% and their profit margins by 75%.
>
> Source of evidence
>
> PAVE (2020) Systems Change Study. beamexchange.org/resources/1380/

6.3   Relationships & connections

All programmes reviewed show some evidence of changes to the conditions for relationships & connections, including the quality of communications occurring among actors in the system. However, in some cases, these changes remain limited to the actors with whom the programme works directly or is in partnership with. Fewer programmes *explicitly* mention changes in the relationships and connections between actors with differing histories and viewpoints[43]. Normally these changes are reported by programmes with strong emphasis on women inclusion or women economic empowerment, such as ALCP, IMSAR, MDF and PAVE.

> ### Spotlight: new relationships between women and businesses
> PAVE (see Market System Change Case 5) prioritised private sector engagement with women in farming activities in Pakistan. Now some PAVE partners, such as Rice Partners Ltd, have adopted PAVE's approach and formed women farmers' groups. Others, like Galaxy Rice Mills, have shown interest in working with women. These companies are inviting PAVE farmers - including women - to their workshops to train other farmers.[44]

One of the clearest descriptions of systemic 'relational change' we encountered was in the Learning Review for the MADE programme in the conflict-affected Niger Delta.

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[43] It safe to assume that in many cases, these actors started from divergent and even opposite viewpoints (e.g. how business owners perceive low-income, marginalised actors).

[44] PAVE (2020: p17) *PAVE systems change study*, beamexchange.org/resources/1380

Market System Change Case 6: MADE in Nigeria

Transformative change in business relationships, connections and attitudes around agricultural outputs and service markets

Companies in Nigeria typically regard the Niger Delta region as 'a frontier market': a place too poor, too unproductive, too insecure to warrant any sensible commercial consideration. MADE (Market Development in the Niger Delta) dramatically changed such perceptions: stimulating agri-business and farming-practice changes in cassava, poultry, fishery and palm-oil sectors that have already reached over half a million people.

Initially MADE engaged lead firms to demonstrate the commercial value of providing services, inputs and knowledge to smallholder farmers. Then MADE's strategy expanded to change business practices of local village-level service providers, retailers and lead farmers. Poultry vaccinators grew and evolved to become localised retail networks of village-level dealers (VLDs) whose product lines include vaccines, feed, veterinary drugs, and day-old-chicks. Linkages with lead firms improved: some invested back by providing incentives (refrigeration units, motorcycles etc.) to the most active dealers.

Aqua-culture service providers (ASPs) were engaged and ran paid classes for neighbouring fish farmers. They innovated: for example, introducing a 'mobile pond starter pack', which doubled the proportion of trainees going on to start or improve fish farms. By 2019, a network of 48 ASPs was servicing up to 15,000 fish farmers (75% of all in the region). A similar model created Master Seed Entrepreneurs, with a growing network of 1000+ Village Seed Entrepreneurs (VSEs) servicing more than 30,000 cassava farmers (80% women) by 2019.

In time, MADE was also able to deepen these market systems by facilitating new kinds of specialist aggregators, equipment and service providers. By 2019, these specialist firms were upgrading processing technologies, supplying capital equipment, financing farmers, and providing business services for retailers. Some successfully adopted a new model of 'business-service-supported loans' from the Central Bank of Nigeria, delivering the lowest rate of loan defaults across all its pilot schemes. Many lead firms invested in their distribution and marketing profiles to support the growing sales performance of their retail partners. Some invested in product development – such as bulk-breaking, to better reach smallholder farmer market. Many instances were reported of firms or farmers replicating and applying their knowledge and practices from one value chain activity to another.

Much of this 'system change' was facilitated by a growing sense of connectivity and confidence. Entrepreneurs in the Niger Delta are now better able to see, and to respond to commercial opportunities that hitherto lay largely obscured and untapped.

Sources of evidence

Elliott (2020) MADE Learning Review beamexchange.org/resources/1320/
Fiestas & Freer (2020) Independent review DFID Nigeria MADE project
beamexchange.org/resources/1319/

6.4   Power dynamics

Power dynamics, meaning the distribution of decision-making power, formal authority and informal influence among individuals and organisations was the least reported type of systemic change in the evidence reviewed. It is possible to see these changes manifesting as a result of the interventions of some programmes, but they are not explicitly referred to as changes in power dynamics. For instance, increased farmer coordination and access to knowledge leading to increased bargaining power, and women with higher levels of self-esteem leading to new and more interactions with other market actors.

The most frequent reference to power is made indirectly thorough the concept of 'empowerment', mainly as Women's Economic Empowerment.

> **Spotlight:** coordination and economies of scale that empower
>
> Working in collaboration with a large network of village savings and loan associations, InovAgro Mozambique helped create Fundo Agricola to provide agricultural input loans to smallholder farmers. After just four years, this fund had more than 17,400 members (55% women) who, in 2019, saved more than US$ 250,000 to purchase inputs. This enabled the farmers to negotiate better prices for seed purchases in bulk with large input companies and incentivised more last-mile retailers to provide appropriate and affordable inputs to the farmers.[45]

> **Spotlight:** improvements in decision-making and self-esteem of women
>
> Just two years into IMSAR's implementation in Rwanda (see MSD Impact Case 7), almost 17,000 women improved their income directly, and 20,000 more indirectly. Some 70% of these women were better able to make farming decisions, including what inputs to buy, whether to hire labour and how income should be allocated. A similar percentage of women reported improved self-esteem and self-worth within their family and community thanks to the acquisition of new skills and increased contributions to household income.[46]

6.5   Mental models

Mental models refer to 'habits of thought', deeply held beliefs and assumptions that are taken-for-granted. These are ways of operating that influence how people think, how they talk and what they do. This is the most under-reported type of systemic change in the evidence reviewed. Only a few programmes, such as AVC, MDF and PAVE, mention them *explicitly*.

However, it is possible to see these types of changes embedded in many more programmes. For example, thanks to PMDP, most Palestinian enterprises started valuing strategic business services (MSD Impact Case 6), while SMSU (MSD Impact Case 5) contributed to a change in perceptions about the use of latrines and sanitation behaviour.

> **Spotlight:** women's self-confidence and domestic power
>
> Women who engaged with PAVE (see Market System Change Case 5) felt more comfortable meeting outsiders, participating in meetings, visiting demonstration plots and attending training workshops. They are more confident to run their enterprises at village level, and actively engage in vegetable farming and seed production. They no longer perceive themselves as unpaid workers merely supporting their husbands in the fields. They are contributing household members who are now being consulted by their husbands for important decisions at household level. Women's dependence on men has reduced, and PAVE women famers are earning enough to educate their daughters.[47]

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[45] Grant (2020) *The Complexity of Building a Market for Certified Seeds,* DAI Blog https://bit.ly/3BIwHJq

[46] IMSAR (2019: p46) IMSAR *Annual report 2019*, beamexchange.org/resources/1434

[47] PAVE (2020: p19) *PAVE system change study*, beamexchange.org/resources/1380

7   Insights & reflections

This section presents our reflections and insights from the evidence material reviewed. These fall broadly into two areas:

a. **Producing results:** insights that emerged from the evidence literature that seem valuable for those who are considering how to improve the performance and impact of MSD programmes.

b. **Measuring and tracking results:** methodological practices, adaptations and innovations that are enabling evaluators and MSD teams to navigate the evidence challenges described in 3.3 Challenges of producing evidence from MSD programmes

7.1   The importance of MSD principles

It has long been asserted that success in implementing the MSD approach requires (i) a focus on underlying causes, (ii) a vision of sustainable outcomes, (iii) adoption of a facilitative role, and (iv) embracing adaptive management.[48] The evidence we reviewed provides strong evidence that these principles are visible in the shape of programme strategies and interventions that contributed to the successes of the programmes that used them.

> **Spotlight:** Muddling through complexity
>
> HIPSTER (MSD Impact Case 1) was an initiative established by Enterprise Partners to create jobs and raise incomes of Ethiopians, especially women, living in poverty. The primary focus was to accelerate agro-industrial growth, stimulate private investment and create new jobs in sectors like garments, leather and horticulture.
>
> This programme was aware of the unpredictability of systemic change processes and adopted a strategy of "facilitated muddling through". In practice this led to a highly experimental and flexible approach to planning and implementation that included piloting different interventions models in sequence, building on the lessons learned from the previous pilots. Years of 'facilitated muddling' enabled Enterprise Partners and its partners to develop a sustainable and scalable model[49]

> **Spotlight:** Using grants to engage women and youth
>
> PMDP (MSD Impact Case 5) started with a grant window for Open Technical Assistance. The scheme was a robust mechanism for leveraging co-financing to support economic competitiveness in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. However, the team realised that its criteria and procedures were not helping specifically to catalyse employment among more marginalised women and youth. This prompted the programme to create three new windows, including one for highly marginalised areas, like the Gaza Strip; and another one to support disadvantaged youth- and women-owned enterprises. This adaptation was also accompanied by an effort to focus on sectors with high potential to create jobs for those groups and to partner with organisations working directly with women and youth to develop and deliver targeted business assistance programs.

We found other examples of programmes which adopted these MSD principles and practices belatedly, after the project had already started. In the case of AVC Bangladesh (MSD Impact Case 4), for example, this shift took place two years into the programme.

In the case of RLDP, it took three years. These 'late adopters' report positive outcomes as a result of this shift. RLDP reported that 'The ratio of RLDP investment to additional income generated was

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[48] see the Operational Guide to M4P, for example beamexchange.org/resources/167

[49] Richard & Kashem (2020: p18) *Journeys to impact at scale* beamexchange.org/resources/1417

lower in the first phase [before the adoption of the MSD approach], validating the decision to switch from the initial market linkage approach to the MSD approach from 2008 onwards'[50].

> Spotlight: putting learning at the heart of their operations
>
> The MDF programme (MSD Impact Case 2) was designed as a platform that provided technical assistance to its country teams and promoted peer-learning. "MDF is more than just a programme, it's a community of practice where people can learn [MSD] skills and take those skills to a country where those skills are not present"[51].
>
> AVC in Bangladesh (MSD Impact Case 4) also made a conscious effort to become a learning organisation, for example, by breaking down organisational and physical silos, subverting traditional workplace hierarchies, and incorporating a series of learning events on facilitation of systemic change.

During this review, we looked at what capabilities and capacities are mentioned most frequently as contributing to successful implementation and evaluation of the MSD approach. Of particular importance was the collaboration between MEL teams and those implementing interventions in the field. Successful programmes are characterised as having a culture of open and honest dialogue across programme units. The points we observed are also consistent with the BEAM Exchange's MSD Competency Framework.

Figure 9: Essential capabilities for MSD programme teams

Crucial MSD capabilities	Programme examples
Brokering relationships and partnerships efficiently, with low transaction costs	AVC: redesigned their grants and procurement solicitation procedures[52] PMDP: redesigned and enhanced their grants procedures and windows
Learning quickly and sharing relevant knowledge with programme teams, partners and stakeholders	MDF: a 'facility' that provides TA and learning services to several MSD programmes AVC: transformed its organisational structures and incentives to become a learning programme
Conducting short focused experimental pilot interventions using robust research methods (See also section 7.7)	Habitat for Humanity-KWFT used Difference In Differences, Propensity Score Matching, and random and purposive sampling[53] Mercy Corps used descriptive and multivariate regression analysis methods, and stratified sampling[54] iDE used Randomised Control Trials[55]
Co-designing and coordinating interventions with key market actors	AVC: co-designed with private sector actors the scope of their partnership agreements REACH: built and rehabilitated roads and irrigation infrastructure in coordination with the government and the private sector PAVE: the implementers were a team composed of an NGO (MEDA) and a large agro-inputs supplier

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[50] RLDP (2016) *Key achievements of the RLDP*, beamexchange.org/resources/1441

[51] Personal interview with Harald Bekkers, then MDF's CEO (MDF 2018; p10)

[52] Details of this adaptation can be found in Tweed (2017) beamexchange.org/resources/958

[53] Habitat-KWFT (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1437

[54] Mercy Corps (2018): beamexchange.org/resources/1253/

[55] iDE (2019): beamexchange.org/resources/1474/ and beamexchange.org/resources/1514/

7.2   Adaptive management and the importance of donor relationships

As noted above, adaptive management is explicitly reported as an important success factor in the most effective programmes we reviewed. This manifests in various ways, and at different organisational levels, within the implementing organisations. For example, as:

- managers that create routines and incentives for faster learning and decision-making
- monitoring systems that enable teams to know quickly what is working and why
- organisations with capabilities to readily modify and pivot intervention strategies

The presence of these kinds of processes and decision-making capabilities is frequently a reflection of the quality of the relationship between the implementing organisation and its funder. We see positive signs that the frequency of these high-quality relationships is increasing. On the side of the implementers, evidence about the benefits of adaptive management is accumulating and so is the experience of these organisations in putting adaptive management theory into practice in the context of MSD programmes.

Many donors are also recognising that they need to engage with the implementers as partners and enablers rather than just as funders. For example, Sida wants its leaders to 'support and incentivise a culture of experimentation and active learning to inform adaptive management'[56]. DFAT recognised that it "needs to […] strengthen institutional understanding of the MSD approach; and build internal capabilities for staff and management to engage with and draw from MSD programs"[57]. USAID's Market Systems & Partnerships activity "uses an agile operational approach that captures and communicates innovation, builds broad internal and external stakeholder capacity, and nurtures transformational - and not - transactional partnerships between USAID and the private sector"[58].

7.3   Adoption of relevant indicators

Some programmes showed notable flexibility in designing and adjusting indicators to meet programme needs. This tendency correlated with programmes that used adaptive management, had a strong understanding of market system change, and highly collaborative relationships with their donors.

AVC Bangladesh, for example, was required by their donor (USAID Feed the Future) to comply with standard indicators related to income, sales, jobs, and health outcomes. However, the programme recognised that their challenge lay in establishing attribution and learning from results. For this reason, they added indicators that reflected market systems change such as people's and firms' behaviours; network structures and qualities; exchanges and flows of resources and information[59].

MDF is another example of adaptability on this front. When reporting only on intermediate and headline indicators, there is a significant time lag between activities and results. To overcome this, the programme added leading indicators of access and usage to their standard reporting framework[67].

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[56] Itad (2018: xv) *Evaluation of the MSD approach*, beamexchange.org/resources/1182

[57] DFAT (2020: vii) *Synthesis review of DFAT-funded MSD initiatives*, beamexchange.org/resources/1406

[58] DAI's webpage on MSP. dai.com/our-work/projects/worldwide-market-systems-and-partnerships-msp (Accessed on 20 Jan 2021)

[59] Brand (2017) *Adaptive Management to Support MSD* msdhub.org/adaptive-management-case-study.html

One issue frequently facing MSD programmes is the need to be more sensitive and adaptable to early signals of systemic change. This has led practitioners and evaluators to experiment with different tools and methods for this purpose[60].

> Spotlight: detecting early signals of systemic change[61]
>
> AVC Bangladesh (MSD Impact Case 4) used three categories of indicators in their drive to pick up early signs of systemic change:
>
> - Directionality: crowding-in, consumer-driven sales growth, and replication of innovation outside of the programme's zone of influence.
>
> - Dynamism: partners' response (openness) to competition.
>
> - Durability: linkages between partners and service providers (e.g. marketing services).

There are similarities between these highlighted categories and the ones employed in the AAER Framework[62]. In a recent study of 32 MSD programmes this framework was "despite some criticisms, the most frequently cited by informants" as helping teams to ask relevant questions about relevant signals of systemic change. [63]

7.4   Methodological clarity

Almost all MSD programmes reviewed adopt the kind of theory of change proposed by the Operational Guide to M4P[64], which was represented above in Figure 1. Many combine this with the AAER Framework[65] to describe scale-up and innovation processes.

In the evidence documents reviewed, we found 'theory-based evaluation' and 'mixed methods' were the most commonly mentioned labels used to describe the evaluation approach. A theory-based evaluation tries to assess the validity of causal links and assumptions between the different levels described in a programme's theory of change. Mixed methods is about purposefully and strategically combining quantitative and qualitative data to examine the interactions of complex and changing contextual factors.

Unfortunately, we found only 40% of the impact evaluations[66] included a clear description of the research and evaluation methods used. Just a handful explained how their methods were purposefully and strategically combined to reinforce the validity of their results. The rest did not describe the methodology used or did so only superficially. Specifically they lacked an analysis of why particular methods were chosen, how they mutually contrast or complement each other, and what their limitations are.

These weaknesses in the evidence literature around MSD programmes are not new, nor unique to this field. The issue was highlighted in all three previous BEAM Evidence Reviews (2016, 2017 and 2019) and led the BEAM Evidence Map to introduce a 'flag' to identify whether documents can be considered high- or low-confidence in this regard.

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[60] For example, see Fowler & Sparkman (2016) beamexchange.org/resources/822

[61] Bundick & Raheem (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1149

[62] Nippard et al. (2014) beamexchange.org/resources/130

[63] Jenal & Gray (2019: 16-17) beamexchange.org/resources/1415

[64] Springfield Centre (2015) *Operational Guide to M4P*, beamexchange.org/resources/167

[65] Nippard et al. (2014) *AAER Framework*, beamexchange.org/resources/130

[66] Excluding case studies, briefs and annual reports.

Overall, in the latest tranche of evidence documents, 60% met the inclusion criteria for 'high confidence'. This compares well with the 47% achieved previously, but leaves plenty of room for improvement.

Methodological clarity is important, not only because it provides confidence in the results and findings of impact evaluations, but also (and mainly) because it helps the broader community of MSD practice learn about what methods work and not, and how to use them in specific contexts. In a field where failure and difficulties are to be expected, the least we can do is to maximise the learning value of each intervention and methodological clarity is one of the contributing factors for collective learning.

7.5   The DCED Standard

One way for MSD programmes to enhance the credibility of their reported results is through adherence to the DCED's Standard for Results Measurement. This can include going so far as to have their programme's RM/MEL system independently audited. More than half (19/36) of the programmes from which we reviewed evidence are using the Standard, of which six have passed audits.

The Standard also helps practitioners to articulate the hypotheses in their work, and to systematically set and monitor indicators which show whether results are occurring as expected. An independent review of Sida's programmes found that when applied properly, the DCED Standard "empowers projects to learn and adapt based on the monitoring data which they collect."[67]

In another example, IFDC reported that adoption of the Standard gave their management team significant insights into projected impacts beyond the immediate project cycle. Although time-consuming, it was vital to IFDC's effective use of an adaptive management system[68].

7.6   Assessing systemic change: the use of complementary lenses

Evaluating the 'causes' of systems change can be notoriously tricky. Interventions may generate both positive and negative outcomes and interactions that feedback to produce unexpected results. Some programme evaluators are trying to untangle such chains of causality with methodical use of complementary perspectives so as to generate a more rounded picture of interventions' impacts.

For example, the evaluators of FSDT (Market System Change Case 7) combined an 'inward-out' with an 'outward-in' perspective. The former tracked changes from interventions through to final impacts, while the latter analysed how changes at higher levels of the programme's theory of change (i.e. pro-poor growth, access to services and poverty reduction) were caused by changes in market systems' dynamics.

This method echoes the approach of Outcome Harvesting, which "collects evidence of what has been achieved in reality rather than what was planned. It then works backwards to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change".[69]

Recent detailed guidance[70] on assessing systems change by a team of experienced MSD programme evaluators also employs two complementary lenses. They advocate an 'intervention lens' to assess the adoption and spread of changes introduced by interventions, and a 'helicopter lens' to assess

[67] Itad (2018: p57) *Evaluation of the MSD approach Vol 1,* beamexchange.org/resources/1182

[68] IFDC (2019: p59) *REACH -Uganda,* beamexchange.org/resources/1433

[69] Jenal, M. (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1466

[70] Posthumus et al. (2020) *A pragmatic approach to assessing system change* beamexchange.org/resources/1334

wider changes in the main and supporting systems. Their method, which resembles the 'top down/bottom up' framework found in the GEMS Results Measurement Handbook[71], is also recommended in DCED's new guidelines for assessing systemic change.[72]

7.7 Quasi-experimental methods

Despite the methodological challenges, some MSD programmes have successfully used quasi-experimental methods. The following table shows examples from four programmes. GEM, SMSU and InovAgro were large, multi-year programmes, while Habitat-KWFT was a one-year pilot. Despite their differences, the common practice that enables them to apply these methods is their capacity to isolate part of their target groups from the effects of their interventions, and for long enough to detect changes before scale-up and crowding-in effects contaminate the results.

Figure 10: Examples of quasi-experimental methods in MSD evaluations

Programme	Methodology	Result / Conclusion
GEM Nigeria[73] (Employment)	Randomised experiment to test the relative effectiveness of four different approaches to gain business skills, namely business training, consulting, insourcing and outsourcing.	Market-based approaches were more effective at improving business practices than business training, and at least as effective as consulting at half the cost.
SMSU Cambodia[74] (Sanitation) *See MSD Impact Case 6*	Difference-in-difference model to estimate whether sanitation marketing leads to increases in latrine ownership and improvements in health outcomes.	Sanitation marketing produced a 105% increase in latrine coverage and a 61% decrease in diarrhoea prevalence in the intervention area compared to the control area.
Habitat-KWFT Kenya[75] (Housing)	Difference-in-difference approach to evaluate the effects of a new housing microfinance product on low-income families. Propensity score-matching was also used to ensure that credible results of impact were still produced and that the parallel trend assumption was supported.	The product (called Nyumba Smart Loan) had positive impacts on e.g. housing conditions and sanitation, and no effects on e.g. household income and expenditure, and social power.
InovAgro Mozambique[76] (Agricultural productivity)	Randomised trial to evaluate the impact of interventions to improve agricultural productivity. The trial controlled for a wide range of variables, including powerful externalities during the programme cycle, and the impact of direct delivery projects working in the same geographic areas.	Uptake of new technologies (primarily agri-inputs), as measured by crowding-in, copying and their continued application, were very positive. Results were significantly better than direct delivery projects in the same districts.[77]

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[71] Itad (2012) beamexchange.org/resources/216

[72] Kessler (2021) *Assessing systemic change,* beamexchange.org/resources/131

[73] Anderson & Mckenzie (2020) documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/377351608212969114

[74] Rose & Goodwin-Kucinsky (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1474

[75] Habitat-KWFT (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1437

[76] Ghebru et al. (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1460

[77] IFRPI's final evaluation report (pre-publication draft)

7.8   The value of MSD portfolio reviews

Portfolio reviews in the MSD field are not new: FCDO (DFID) had already commissioned one that analysed 32 MSD programmes by 2013[78]. What is new, however, is the frequency with which these reviews are being produced in the last couple of years, and the diversity of donors investing in them. For example:

- A 2018 evaluation commissioned by Sida to draw lessons from 11 of its programmes that have applied the MSD approach[79]

- A 2019 evaluation of the World Bank Group's experience from 16 programmes that used their 'Creating Markets' approach to leverage the private sector for sustainable development and growth[80]

- A 2020 synthesis review of 11 DFAT-funded MSD programmes[81]

- A 2020 analysis of 15 MSD programmes commissioned by USAID's Feed the Future to explore results of the MSD approach for youth and women inclusion in agriculture[82]

These efforts represent the kernel of an important body of knowledge that is influencing the policies and practices of key donors funding MSD initiatives, helping them to identify areas for improvement, and build the capacity and awareness required to interact more fluidly and collaboratively with MSD implementers. The DCED's Working Group on MSD plans to commission a meta-synthesis study of the major insights and lessons captured in these types of review during 2021/22.

7.9   Ex-post evaluations: challenges and progress

In this review we have repeatedly noted that the core rationale for using the MSD approach is largely about achieving sustained change (Sections 2.1 and 4.4). MSD programmes aim to transform market systems so that improvements in incomes, jobs, inclusion and market resilience continue for people living in poverty long after donor-funded interventions have ended. Arguably programmes' most important results are the value created by market actors after support has ended, by virtue of the programmes' earlier interventions.

We also noted that unfortunately, in most cases, the final evaluations and impact assessments commissioned by donors usually take place before, or very close to the end-points, of interventions. Full ex-post evaluations conducted two, five or even ten years after a programme closes to assess sustained long-term impacts are rare[83]. One new ex-post evaluation was published after we completed this review[84].

This crucial gap in the evidence has been noted often before (including in previous BEAM Evidence Reviews)[85]. In 2017, SDC recommended that SDC's MSD programmes should "have a *stand-by phase*

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[78] DFID (2013) Review of M4P evaluation methods and approaches beamexchange.org/resources/133

[79] Itad (2018) beamexchange.org/resources/1182

[80] Independent Evaluation Group (2019) beamexchange.org/resources/1461
  The principles of the World Bank's Creating Markets strategy are similar to those of the MSD approach.

[81] DFAT (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1406

[82] Cassinath & Mercer (2020) beamexchange.org/resources/1402

[83] Two examples published by USAID in 2016 are
  Zambia PROFIT marketlinks.org/resources/scaling-impact-zambia-profit-case-study and
  Cambodia MSME marketlinks.org/resources/scaling-impact-cambodia-ex-post-assessment

[84] Khatiwada & Waitkuweit (2021) *Uganda Feed the Future CPM Ex-Post Evaluation*. USAID
  beamexchange.org/resources/1546

[85] Albu (2019) Blog beamexchange.org/community/blogs/2019/7/16/beams-evidence-review

after project closure to observe how benefits continue to accrue and if service providers continued to operate"[86]. However none of the programmes we reviewed have yet benefited from this.

There are methodological challenges that may help explain why donors and implementers eschew ex-post evaluations. Market systems are subject to churn: people move and change jobs, old businesses close and new ones appear. Finding key informants can be expensive (especially if the project operated in distant locations) and their evidence is affected by recall bias – especially if the programme kept a low profile or intervened 'behind the scenes' through partners. These difficulties might be mitigated by aligning ex-posts with the methods emerging for early detection of signals of systemic change (see section 7.3). Such signals could provide important clues to ex-post evaluators about the location and nature of critical points in market systems to be evaluated beyond the life of the programme.

There are also significant administrative obstacles to ex-post evaluation. We have seen planned and anticipated ex-post evaluations cancelled because previously ear-marked resources were re-directed to 'higher' priorities; because administrative channels no longer exist through which to allocate funds after the original programme has closed; and because key stakeholders who might have championed the effort have moved on to new posts.

What the MSD field needs, therefore, is a dedicated cross-programme initiative that can rise to these challenges. Fortunately, this is now on the horizon with a new initiative of USAID's Market Systems and Partnership Activity. During 2021 and 2022 they are planning a series of ex-post evaluations of MSD programming to build the evidence base across a range of contexts, while also contributing to evaluation practice for MSD ex-posts as part of a broader set of evidence-building and learning initiatives in MSD and private sector engagement[87].

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[86] SDC (2019) *Managing MSD projects: internal guidance* beamexchange.org/resources/113

[87] Fowler & Simmons-Telep (2021) agrilinks.org/post/great-opportunity-and-challenge-ex-posts-msd-4-takeaways-rapid-harvest-insights

8   Conclusions

8.1   Programmes using the MSD approach are reducing poverty at scale

Our core conclusion from the evidence we reviewed is that the MSD programmes represented here are operating well and delivering impressive results. There is steady progress across all three levels of the MSD strategic framework or theory of change. This is despite the fact that many of these programmes were operating in highly difficult, volatile and dysfunctional contexts.

At the level of poverty reduction (Section 4), MSD programmes are achieving significant impact (e.g. reductions in relative levels of monetary poverty, compared to baseline incomes). This can be seen happening on a large scale, with MSD programmes typically benefiting tens or hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty (see Fig. 2). Often these are people who are conventionally excluded from the benefits of mainstream economic activity (e.g. women smallholder farmers). Most MSD programmes count women as $40\% - 60\%$ of their beneficiaries (see Fig. 6)

Moreover, in general the MSD programmes described in the evidence delivered creditable Value for Money, even when judged rather narrowly: for example by increased income created for people living in poverty during the relatively short period of a programme timeframe (see Fig.4). Even these tightly-defined benefits were often worth three or more times programme costs (see Fig. 5).

8.2   MSD is supporting sustained pro-poor growth and access to services

At the level of pro-poor growth and improved access to services (Section 5), there is convincing evidence that MSD programmes are achieving sustained, lasting outcomes. We were able to assess the durability of results at this level by diving deeply into the stories that explain how programmes facilitated enduring changes in business models, rules and practices with their business partners and other stakeholders (see MSD Impact Cases $3 - 7$).

There are clearly patterns in the short to medium-term results data of several programmes that give grounds for optimism about their long-term trajectory. The evidence shows accelerating business growth and expanding outreach of services to poor people. However, independent evidence from ex-post evaluations to confirm the sustained long-term impact of MSD programmes interventions was still lacking in the evidence literature reviewed.

8.3   MSD programmes are facilitating systemic change in markets

It was clear that most MSD programmes identified as such do actually apply the core principles and practices of a systemic approach in their work. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this underpins their performance and impact. At this level (Section 6), most programmes reported one or more examples of system change: their intervention strategies explicitly set out to shift the conditions that were holding problems in place (see Fig. 8), tackling root causes rather than superficial symptoms.

Interestingly, many examples of this related to policy change (see Market System Change Cases $1 - 3$). This suggests that MSD programmes are not in general avoiding the 'business environment reform' (BER) dimension within market systems development, even if their focus on rules tends to be on fairly narrow wins in specific industries.

Encouragingly we saw much explicit attention to business behaviours and practice changes and relationships in the evidence (see Market System Change Cases $4 - 6$). This is the core of good MSD implementation and where most effort has been expended to achieve programme results. There was less evidence on programmes explicitly addressing power-relations within market systems or tackling the underlying social attitudes / mental models that often sustain systemic disfunction.

Most importantly, the evidence reviewed here repeatedly illustrated the causal relationship between MSD programmes' interventions and poverty reduction, occurring indirectly via market

system change, improved access to services and pro-poor growth. The linear structure of this report (breaking down the findings into Chapters 4, 5 & 6) might obscure this insight. Due to the great diversity of MSD programmes, target markets and contexts, this relationship can only be fully appreciated by examining the various case studies cited in the footnotes.

8.4   MSD competencies and adaptive management remain crucial success factors

We observed in the evidence a growing level of maturity and sophistication in the design, implementation and management of MSD programmes. In the younger programmes, recent conceptual and methodological innovations are being adopted into their narratives, strategic design and interventions. In the older multi-phase programmes it is particularly interesting to observe how their understanding and application of the MSD approach evolved throughout their life cycles. In many examples, this led programmes to sharpen the focus of their interventions, drop entire components of their portfolio, improve their private sector engagement tactics, and transform their organisation's learning processes.

The knowledge and experience that comes from implementing the MSD approach is accumulating. This gives both MSD implementers and donors a better sense of what works and what does not in different contexts, and is enabling them to continually improve the application of the approach.

One critical success factor remains the capability of MSD implementing organisations to recruit, train and retain teams with the right mix of leadership, management and field-level competencies[88].

Another is the capability of MSD donors to enable and support flexible, adaptive management strategies, including appropriately designed procurement processes[89], in their programmes.

8.5   Clarity about how to track and measure systemic change is emerging

After many years struggling with the concepts and practice of measuring systemic change, there are clear signs of convergence in the MSD field. The long-standing AAER Framework has been augmented by the publication of pragmatic guidance for practitioners[90], and clarifications to the DCED Standard for Results Measurement[91]. The new guidance should help programmes' MEL teams reconcile conventional evaluation methods with the complex, adaptive nature of market systems. We look forward to seeing this translate into more and better evidence about systems change in future evaluation literature.

The ex-post evaluation work being planned by USAID's MSP program may also assist in refining the relationship between what programmes are trying to change in a market system and how they measure that. It will be important to learn more about whether and how the early signals of systemic change that programmes currently track (e.g. co-investment by private-sector partners) lead to lasting results.

It would also be helpful to see the emphasis on quantitative measures (e.g. changes in incomes) shift towards qualitative indicators that pick up changes in the underlying conditions for competitiveness, inclusiveness and resilience in systems. This would improve the richness of evidence about the diverse and wide-ranging impacts of well-executed MSD programmes.

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[88] BEAM Exchange's MSD Competencies Framework is a useful resource in this respect

[89] The MSD Procurement papers address this issue in practical detail beamexchange.org/resources/1397/

[90] Posthumus et al. (2020) *A Pragmatic Approach to Assessing System Change* beamexchange.org/resources/1334

[91] Kessler (2021) *Assessing Systemic Change,* beamexchange.org/resources/131

Annex 1: Analysis of types of data in the Evidence Map

The 2021 Evidence Review is based on analysis of 52 evidence documents which passed the criteria required for inclusion in the BEAM Evidence Map since our previous review in 2019. These 52 documents describe or represent results from 36 MSD programmes around the world.

31 (60%) of the evidence documents earned BEAM Exchange's 'high confidence' label, meaning they satisfied additional criteria regarding transparency, credibility and cogency.

Currency of evidence

81% of the evidence drawn upon for this review was from new documents published since the previous scan for evidence in mid-2018.

10 older documents that were not picked up in 2018 were included this time.
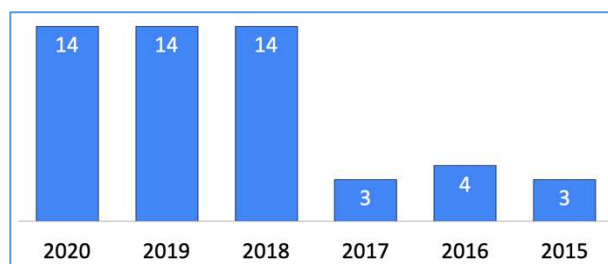
Type of results described

The MSD approach uses temporary interventions to catalyse lasting changes in market systems. Our theory of change is that these should lead to significant-scale outcomes, such as economic growth or improvements in access to services. These in turn have beneficial impacts (such as higher incomes, better jobs, increased well-being) for people living in poverty.
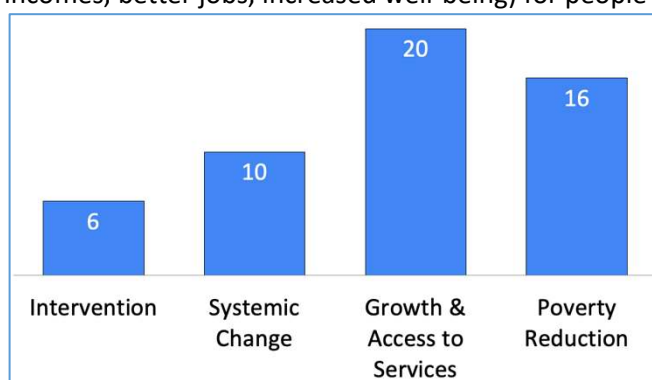
Accordingly, every evidence document in the BEAM Evidence Map is categorised according to the predominant type of results that the document describes.
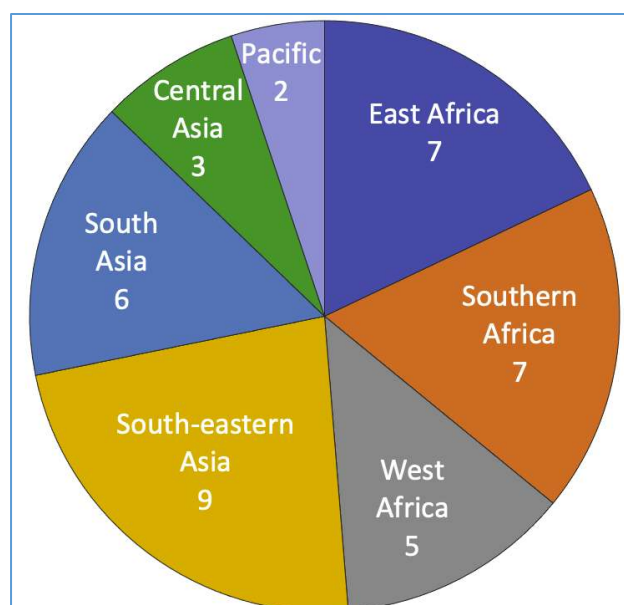
Many evidence documents describe results at more than one level, so this analysis is only broadly indicative of where the bulk of evidence is accumulating.

## Geographical distribution of MSD programmes

These 36 MSD programmes operated in a total of 39 countries. [Three programmes - FTESA, BIF 2 & MDF - worked in multiple countries]

The geographical distribution of programmes represented by this cohort is very similar to that found in the Evidence Map previously.
e.g.   Africa: 49% compared to 45% in 2019
        Asia: 46% compared to 42% in 2019

Sectoral focus of the evidence
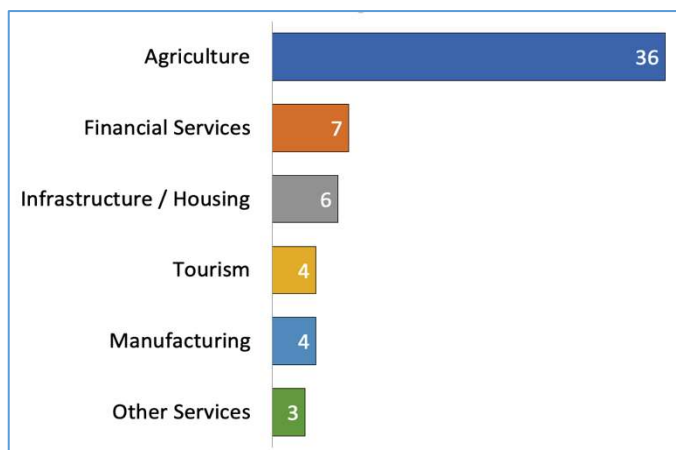
As in previous reviews, the majority of evidence documents describe the results of MSD programmes working in agricultural sectors.

The proportion of evidence from non-agricultural sector work has edged up slightly compared to our 2019 review (from 38% to 40%).

Some documents cover evidence from more than one sector.

## Types of MSD intervention described by the evidence

Entries in the BEAM Evidence Map are tagged according to various categories of interventions that contributed to the results described in the evidence document.

Understandably, most programmes have multiple interventions and most evidence documents tick more than one category (the average is 3.5).

Overall, the weight of intervention activity falls most heavily on information, co-ordination and inputs supply.
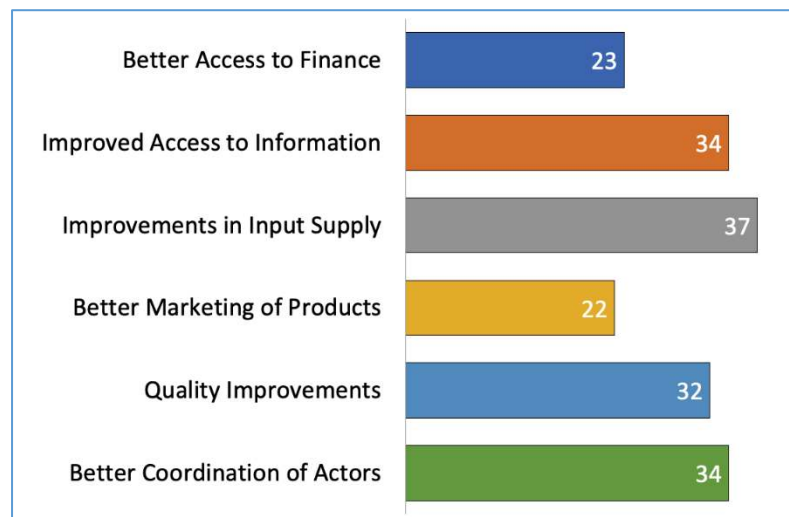
Which donors are generating the evidence?
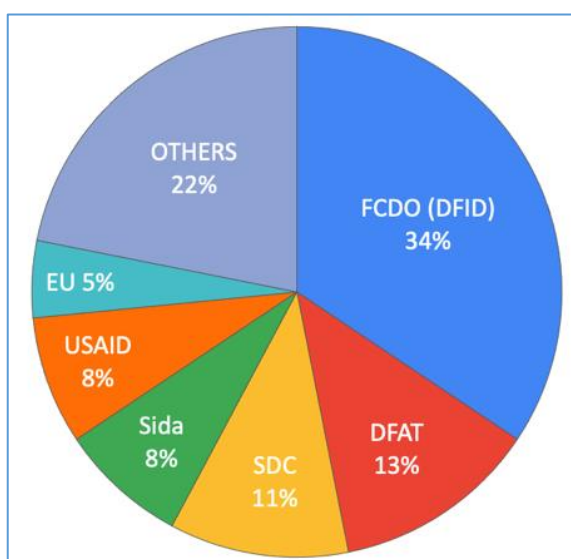
This chart shows which donors funded the programmes which generated evidence documents that fulfilled BEAM's inclusion criteria.

78% of the documents that qualified came from MSD programmes that were funded by just six donors: FCDO(DFID), DFAT, SDC, USAID, Sida and EU.

Other donors behind programmes that created evidence included Danida, the Dutch Government, Big Lottery Fund, MasterCard Foundation and Oxfam.

Which implementers ran programmes that generated evidence?

This chart shows which implementing agencies were running the programmes which created documents included in the BEAM Evidence Map.

61% of the evidence emerged from the programmes of five prominent MSD-implementing organisations: DAI, Swisscontact, Palladium Group, Mercy Corps and Adam Smith International.

The remainder of the evidence was generated by programmes run by a diverse range of 16 MSD implementers – including Nathan Associates, ILO, PWC and the Terwillinger Centre (two each) and thirteen other agencies.
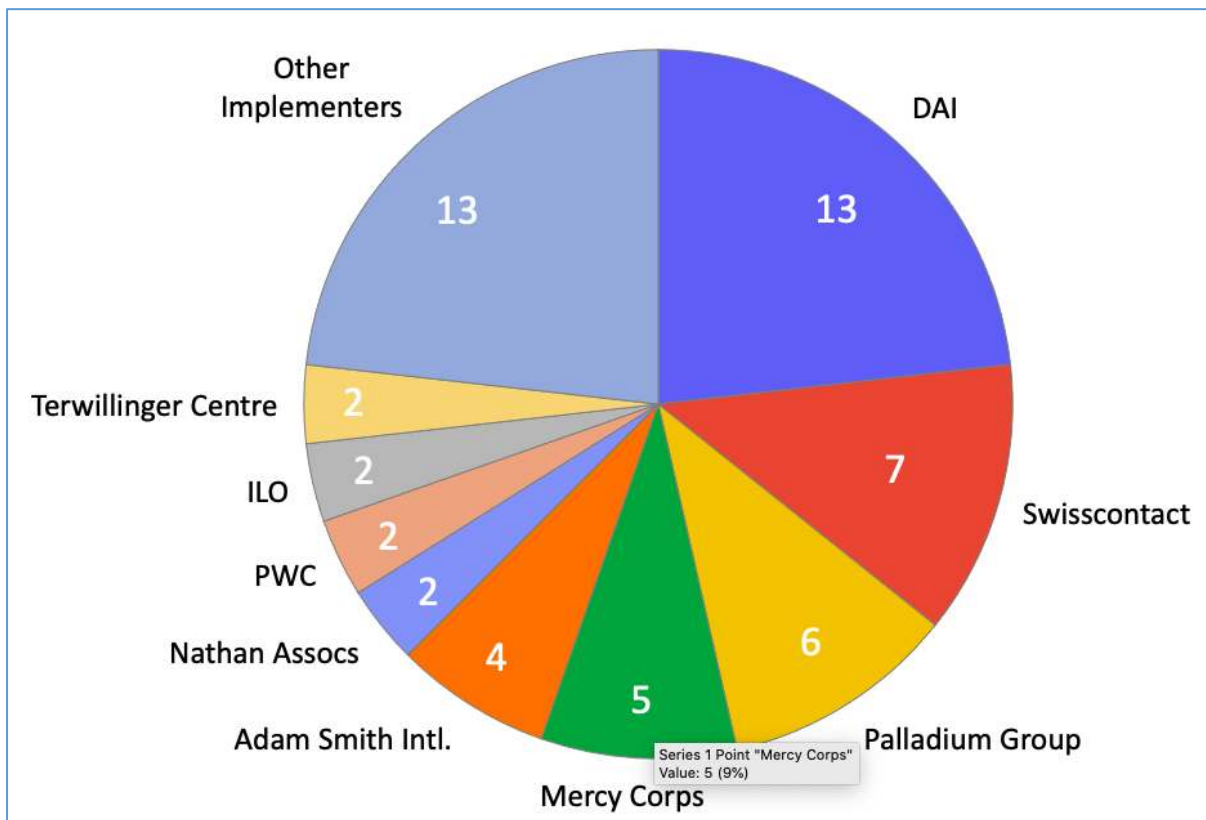
Annex 2: Selection and profiling of evidence

This review is based on the study of approximately 130 documents that were submitted by 115 MSD practitioners and evaluators. The documents are mainly impact assessments, evaluation reports and case studies that provided evidence of the results, impact or effectiveness of MSD interventions.

Those contacted to provide documents were selected because of their expertise in MSD programme management or evaluation. Some of them are connected to or have participated in events organised by BEAM Exchange; some others are part of the authors' professional network. In some cases, the experts contacted connected the authors with colleagues or peers who also contributed with documents.

Approximately 50 documents, representing 36 programmes, were selected from the initial sample using a set of criteria established by the BEAM Exchange (see annex 3). These documents were analysed in detail and uploaded onto the BEAM Exchange Evidence Map[92].

The examples used in this review were chosen because they represent well what the MSD approach is about. They show evidence of structural change, positive impacts on large numbers of people, capacity to collaborate with different market actors, and/or adaptations to unexpected challenges. They also show openness to discuss what went well and not so well. Together, they provide an interesting and diverse landscape of practices, innovations and contexts. There were cases that were very relevant and impressive that were not selected as examples for this review because they had already been covered by previous BEAM Evidence Reviews[93] and Bekkers & Zulfiqar (2020)[94].

Methodological challenges

It is impossible to establish how representative the sample of programmes reviewed is because the size of the universe cannot be known with certainty. Some programmes are being implemented which are not known by the authors and others may be using the MSD approach but are not reported as such. Also, only documents in English were selected. It is likely that other relevant sources exist in other languages.

Another challenge is that most evaluations are carried out during or soon after implementation. In order to know if an MSD programme has delivered on its promise of sustainability, an evaluation would have to be done after a reasonable number of years (e.g. 10 years). And even if ex-post evaluations were the norm, it would be very difficult to establish attribution because, with time, new factors come into play that contribute to sustainability.

The findings are taken at face value from the documents reviewed. Some level of triangulation was possible when there was more than one document about the same programme. However, due to time limitations, it was not possible to contrast or clarify information through interviews to key informants involved in the programmes.

Biases

There are several biases that affect the sample selected for this review and can therefore influence the analysis and conclusions. The following are some of the most important ones:

- Only MSD implementers and evaluators connected to the BEAM Exchange and their closest connections were contacted to provide documentation. We could be missing important

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[92] beamexchange.org/resources/evidence-map

[93] The reviews can be found at beamexchange.org/resources/813 (2016), beamexchange.org/resources/1011 (2017) and beamexchange.org/resources/1226 (2019)

[94] Bekkers & Zulfiqar (2020) www.beamexchange.org/resources/1353

cases about MSD-style programmes that are being carried out by practitioners and donors in other fields of development.

- The documents reviewed were evaluation reports or case studies about MSD programmes[95]. We could be missing important evidence and lessons from programmes that are not labelling themselves as MSD but that are using all the MSD principles and practices[96].

- Only documents in the English language were searched for and used. We could be missing important evidence from non-English speaking regions.

- Stories about positive impacts, good management and cost-effectiveness tend to be highlighted and communicated more than the not-so-positive ones. However, some documents that showed modest results (relative to other programmes) and candidness about their struggles, mistakes and failures were valued and considered for this review and recommended to go up onto the Evidence Map.

- Some evaluations were carried out by programme teams; not by independent evaluators.

- The authors have been supporting and advising MSD programme teams since 2003. To minimise this bias, we used the BEAM Exchange criteria to select relevant programmes, kept a self-critical attitude during the review process, and took into account feedback from the DCED Secretariat to draft versions of the review.

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[95] Relevance is one of the selection criteria used by the BEAM Exchange to decide whether a document is uploaded onto the Evidence Map or not.

[96] For example, the large portfolio of programmes that the World Bank has under its Creating Markets initiative and its Transformative Change agenda. The acronym MSD is not used in the Bank's documents but the similarity of these programmes with MSD programmes is uncanny. See reports by the Independent Evaluation Group dated 2016 and 2019, respectively.

Annex 3: BEAM Evidence Map inclusion protocol

Criteria	Description
Relevance: the document is aligned with the objective of the BEAM evidence base	The document contains evidence of results from programmes using a market systems approach. Documents may include evidence of results from programmes which are designed using a market systems approach only for one component of the programme. Some documents contain evidence of results from multiple programmes using a market systems approach. In particular, the document should illuminate the connection between market system interventions and the intended or unintended results. It is not essential for results to be measured by an independent party or against a counterfactual for the document to be included in the evidence base. The database does not include theoretical or conceptual studies which focus on the construction of new theories rather than generating or synthesising empirical data. The database also does not include knowledge products, such as guidance, think pieces, blogs etc.
Currency: the document has been produced no earlier than 2000	The start date for evidence documents included in the database is 2000 because this is when the original framework document for making markets work better for the poor (M4P) was developed.
Accessibility: the document is publicly accessible or publication on the BEAM website has been approved by the owner of the copyright	All documents are published or publicly available. If not publicly available, BEAM Exchange must have the written consent of the organisation or programme/project to publish it in its evidence database.
Language: English language documents only	Only English documents are included in the evidence database at present as the BEAM Exchange team does not currently have the capacity to review and assess documents in other languages.

Secondary criteria	Description
Transparency: the document is transparent about the data collection and analysis methodology used to measure results	All documents included describe the methodology used to collect and analyse data, and the sample frame used to select data sources (including size and composition) to measure results. Documents based on secondary sources must all describe the methodology to select, assess and compile these sources. Programme documents which self-report results and have successfully passed a DCED audit are rated as partially achieving the criteria. The rationale is that if DCED audited, the programme has been certified as using good measurement techniques, even if the exact methodology is not shared in the document.
Credibility: the data collection methods generate a credible dataset, and analysis methods generate credible results.	All documents included describe a methodology that applies robust measurement and analysis practices that are generally accepted to represent best-fit for the study design to generate data and study results.
Cogency: the report presents a convincing argument	All documents included deliver a plausible, coherent and convincing argument (from design, through data collection, analysis to conclusions) to explain results achieved.

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