

# MDF's Learning Approach

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## Executive Summary

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Market Development Facility | July 2019

As the Market Development Facility (MDF) has grown, its understanding of implementation using a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach has deepened. MDF's collective experience of sectoral economic analysis, political economy analysis, support to new business models, development of economic partnerships, women's economic empowerment models and promotion of improvements to market systems, represents a valuable resource for the Market Systems Development (MSD) community, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), other aid funders and the private sector.

One of the key changes for MDF between Phase One and Phase Two is the addition of structured activities to support external learning. This document includes information on the background to the learning agenda, sets out the overall approach and explains some of MDF's regular external learning activities and methods.

## Objective

The objective of MDF's external learning activities are to leverage MDF's approach, experience and expertise to support DFAT and other actors learning on MSD and private sector engagement. Through improved learning, MDF seeks to influence improved design and implementation of development and private sector led initiatives, both in the MSD space and beyond.

## Principles

MDF external learning activities, will be guided by the following principles:

- **Learning and communications:** MDF understands learning and communications as two sides of the same coin. MDF communications outputs are the key entrance point for external stakeholders to understand MDF, the issues it is engaged with and the practical lessons it has to offer.
- **Collaboration:** MDF will work collaboratively with DFAT and other actors to

determine the focus and scope of the learning agenda on an ongoing basis. Specific events will be agreed upon on an annual basis, through an Annual Learning Calendar.

- **Accessibility:** MDF will strive to make learning activities and materials open and accessible, to maximise the impact of the learning agenda. The learning agenda will incorporate regular and planned activities, but will also allow space for MDF to respond to demand, particularly from DFAT.
- **Complementarity:** Learning activities will complement the achievement of MDF's overarching objective, and not replace or dominate MDF's core business.

## Key topics and questions

MDF learning is primarily focused on the following topic areas:

- Market Systems Development (MSD) and the MDF approach
- Poverty reduction and MSD
- Working with the Private sector
- Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)
- Results measurement
- Economic sectors in which MDF works (e.g. agriculture, tourism)
- National and regional economic development pathways and MSD's contribution to this (e.g. how MSD can work in the Pacific)
- MSD's complementarity with other private sector development trends and approaches (e.g. impact investing, infrastructure development and labour mobility).

## Learning activities

MDF has identified a number of Learning 'streams', under which it works:

- **Market Systems Development training:** MDF regularly provides training for DFAT and other MSD community actors on MSD basics and crosscutting issues. This training is – wherever possible – digitised and shared through the MDF learning portal.
- **Webinars:** MDF hosts its own webinars on a range of topics. MDF staff also present on other MSD community actor platforms as the [Donor Committee for Enterprise](#)

[Development](#) and the Beam exchange.

- **Written materials (Briefs):** All significant MDF research, studies and reports are looked at through a ‘learning lens’, with policy and practice recommendations clearly summarised and considered – based on the MDF ‘how to write a two page brief’ guidance note – for easy uptake by stakeholders. The application of this lens enables improved accessibility and increases the possibility of individuals and institutions independently learning from MDF practice.
- **Learning events and roundtable discussions:** MDF co-hosts with DFAT roundtable discussions on a range of topics related to MSD and private sector development. The most recent of these hosted in Canberra in October 2018, covered a range of issues including adaptive management and women’s economic empowerment.
- **Engagement in global and national conferences:** MDF staff regularly participate and present at a number of in-country and ‘global forums’. These include the SEEP network conference. Similarly, MDF actively identifies forums at a country level, where MDF insights and experiences can be shared to help influence wider changes.
- **Orientation briefings and Field visits for DFAT Activity Managers:** MDF provides regular pre-posting orientation sessions to DFAT officers who are working on the management of MSD programs. In addition one of the most effective learning methods utilised by MDF is field visits. Field visits typically incorporate visits to project sites and partners, as well as guided discussions with program staff.

If you would like to learn more about MDF’s approach to external learning. Please contact MDF’s Canberra-based Learning Manager [Lewis Brimblecombe](#).



**Fiji:** Garden City Business Park, Grantham Road, Suva, Fiji

**Pakistan:** 95-E/1, Syed Shamshad Haider Road, Hali Road, Gulberg III, Lahore, Pakistan

**Papua New Guinea:** Level 6, PwC Haus, Harbour City, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

**Sri Lanka:** No. 349, 6/1, Lee Hedges Tower, Galle Road, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka

**Timor-Leste:** 2nd Street, Palm Business & Trade Centre, Surik Mas, Dili



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MDF is funded by the Australian government. It is implemented by Palladium, in partnership with Swisscontact