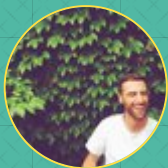


Feb. 9, 2023

# What's missing? Adding to, and refining, the MSD Tool Library



Ryan Bourque



Bronwyn Irwin

All blogs

## Help us identify what's missing in the MSD Tool Library.

The market systems development (MSD) community has built a robust body of theory in applying systems thinking to private sector development. Yet the tools needed to translate theory into practice have not always kept pace.

We use tools to improve our efficiency, help us generate new ideas as well as provide guidance when we are new to an approach. Systems change is messy work and is so often context specific.

MSD tools can help practitioners structure their work in what can otherwise be daunting and complex environments, helping to transfer lessons between contexts and offering practical guidance in the early stages of an intervention.

The Feed the Future Market Systems and Partnerships Activity recently collaborated with BEAM Exchange to create the [MSD Tool Library](#), a centralised repository of MSD tools. This highly participatory process saw tools contributed by over 100 organisations. The subsequent curation process culminated in a 180+ tool library, tagged by tool type, theme and project cycle area.

Throughout this process we asked MSD stakeholders what other tools should, but currently do not, exist. We felt it important to not only catalogue what is already out there - and we encourage you to check out the library (!) - but also to provide some insight into areas for further tool development.

In line with the MSD Tool Library themes, feedback included the following:

## General MSD tools

### › **Market systems analysis toolkit**

While the [M4P Guide](#) provides some high-level guidance on good practice in going about a market systems analysis, when it comes to structuring these analyses many MSD practitioners (writer included) still make it up as they go. While there are some MSD analysis toolkits out there (e.g. one on [analysing end markets](#), and one [looking at a decent work angle](#)), a public MSD toolkit for undertaking market analyses, developed collaboratively with experienced practitioners, would provide stakeholders with a shared understanding of good practice.

### › **A general toolkit for engaging with public policy**

Practitioners noted that there is a lack of guidance and thinking around where the public sector fits into the MSD approach. They argued that MSD can be too reliant on markets to drive change, to the detriment of working through relevant public channels and aligning with government priorities in a change agenda. Having guidance on how to engage with state actors to drive a change agenda within specific markets was deemed to be a fruitful area for further research.

## Fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS)

- › Practitioners noted that (FCAS) situations varied widely and there was a need for general guidance on identifying the ‘modality’, or type of situation, in which practitioners might find themselves. This could benefit from some type of decision tree-related tool that helps practitioners better understand their context to guide them towards a package of options. This would help determine what type of market development interventions are even possible in a given situation, drawing on examples from elsewhere.
- › They also noted that in a shock or emergency, collaboration and coordination is vital, but rarely happens well. See BEAM's [Market systems development in fragile and conflict-affected situations](#) for an overview on some of the issues driving this. So, guidance on how to build relevant coordination networks with other donors/practitioners in moments of crisis/conflict would be helpful for all humanitarian actors, but especially MSD practitioners seeking to build coalitions for change.
- › There are a [few great FCAS-related tools on analysis and implementation](#), but there is a lack of guidance around developing market-sensitive proposals. Practitioners noted that a lot of mistakes can, and often do, happen at the proposal stage and that further guidance for proposal designers in this area would be appreciated, especially those with limited field experience in implementing an MSD approach.

## Gender equity, and social inclusion

### > **Practical tools for GESI integration**

There are many tools out there, and can be found in the MSD library, highlighting how to incorporate GESI into a programme and understanding gaps for historically marginalised groups to enhance their participation in economic life. For example, there is one on [conducting a gender analysis](#) as well as a [disability inclusion framework](#). However, while there are plenty of tools for GESI-related research and analyses, there are fewer on *how* to integrate this analysis into intervention design and evaluation. A toolkit focused on supporting practitioners towards action was noted as an area requiring further thought.

## Monitoring/Results Management, Evaluation and Learning

### > **More tools for assessing specific types of changes**

The library has a lot of great guidance on [assessing systemic change](#) (and [MEL/KM for MSD more broadly](#)), including guidance on mapping pathways of change (e.g. [across a generic system](#), [agriculture markets](#), as well as [entrepreneurial ecosystems](#)). There are also several tools that speak directly to certain methods one could use to assess those changes. For example one tool explores how to use network analysis to assess changes in relationships and information flows across a system. But practitioners noted that we need more tools in our toolbox to assess a wider range of specific categories of change. For example, changes in the enabling environment as well as how social norms change over time.

These are just some early musings. However, **we really want to hear from you:**

Do you know of tools that could fill a gap identified above? What tools do you wish you had access to, but can't find anywhere? Are you interested in helping to develop a tool to fill one of these gaps?

If you have comments or suggestions for areas for us to explore, please comment below, or reach out directly to [msp\\_information@dai.com](mailto:msp_information@dai.com) or to [editor@beamexchange.org](mailto:editor@beamexchange.org)