



Photo Credit: Likati Thomas, Feed the Future Tanzania Mboga na Matunda

MARKET SYSTEMS AND PARTNERSHIPS ACTIVITY (MSP)  
SEMI ANNUAL REPORT  
Reporting Period April 1, 2021 - September 30, 2021

**Submitted on:** October 15, 2021

**Submitted by:** Bronwyn Irwin, Chief of Party

**Submitted to:** Kristin O'Planick, Contracting Officer's Representative

---

This program is made possible with support by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the terms of Contract No. 7200AA20C00054 and managed by DAI. The opinions expressed herein are those of DAI and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States government.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary **04**

About MSP **06**

MSP Learning Agenda **08**

Technical Implementation:

Objective 1:  
Private Sector Partnerships **09**

Objective 2:  
Analytical and Other Services **18**

Objective 3:  
Generating Knowledge **20**

Objective 4:  
Capacity Building **29**

Project Management:

Project Management & Operations **30**

MEL and CLA **31**

Reflections on Challenges & Iterative  
Learning **32**

Indicator Performance Table **33**

# Executive Summary

The Feed the Future Market Systems and Partnerships (MSP) Activity **shifted into growth mode this period**, continuing to advance learning and good practice on market systems development (MSD) and private sector engagement (PSE) within USAID, USAID's implementing partners, and market actors. This period (April 1 – September 30, 2021), MSP:

- **Launched the first private sector partnerships under MSP's \$30 million Partnership Facility.** Three partnerships (with a fourth signed soon) will leverage \$3.14 million in USG and private sector investment in private sector investment with an average firm-to-USAID co-investment ratio of 1:1. The partnerships will strengthen agricultural trade and investment between five southern African countries and South Africa and the United States. Over two years, the partnerships will generate significant agricultural exports and benefit an estimated 126,700 smallholder farmers (51 percent women) in more inclusive, sustainable supply chains.

As an important element of MSP's approach to partnership development, this period MSP also engaged in **extensive co-development** with partners who applied to the southern Africa and Cambodia facility windows, averaging six hours per partner, in order to collaboratively refine the shared value and enhance both business and development outcomes. Partnerships for the Cambodia facility window are now in the final stages of negotiation and will launch next quarter. For the third facility window in the Solomon Islands, MSP completed critical sector assessments and opportunity identification, which will inform the technical design of a forthcoming Request for Applications (RFA). *More on Pages 9-17, including snapshots of each southern Africa partnership and MSP's gender-lens investment strategy.*

- After much stakeholder engagement, in July MSP **published a multi-pronged Learning Agenda** that articulates strategic goals of the five Learning Streams and heightens the focus on driving behavior change of the target audience. MSP piloted several additional internal processes to enhance designing-for impact, launched quarterly technically-focused consortium calls to encourage cross-fertilization across Learning Streams, and integrated a 'layered learning' approach that connects MSP's Learning Agenda to learning opportunities within MSP's Partnership Facility.
- Finalized **9 learning products** that advance good practice and learning in PSE and MSD, **accessed by 4,979 individuals** around the globe through interactive meetings and

## KEY RESULTS TO DATE



**10** Learning Products Developed



**5,040** Individuals Accessing Resources on MSD and PSE Good Practice and Learning



**84** Collaborators from USAID, Implementing Partners, Private Sector Bringing Diverse Perspectives



**\$11 million** Combined Funding Committed for Private Sector Partnerships



**3** Partnerships Launched Across **5** southern Africa Countries



**10** Buy-ins (4 USAID/Washington, 6 Missions)



**55%** Life-of-Activity Budget Ceiling Committed

online engagement this period. These represent the first wave of learning products across MSP's five Learning Streams and provide a foundation upon which MSP is building to strengthen adoption of good practice. Under the Transformational PSE stream, for example, MSP finalized two resources - a [Primer on PSE in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations](#) and **PSE for Nutrition: A Strategic Engagement Tool, Partnering Guidance, and Case Studies** (beta version currently internal to USAID). These form part of an emerging and growing series of guidance and tools that support PSE for special considerations, as evidenced by recent buy-ins to develop guidance on PSE for Climate Adaptation to Advance Resilience (USAID/Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS)/PSE Secretariat) and PSE for Large-Scale Food Fortification (RFS/Center for Nutrition).

Under the Social Inclusion Learning Stream, MSP published and promoted several resources, including an [Evidence Gap Analysis on The Return on Investment from Social Inclusion in Developing Countries](#) and key findings from research on [How COVID-19 is Impacting the MSD Talent Pipeline](#). MSP also laid the groundwork for two major initiatives linked to MSD: a forthcoming **curated MSD tools library**, and [a series of ex-post studies](#) on the long-term sustainability and scale of USAID-funded MSD Activities. More starting Page 22.

- **Developed a five-day training course for USAID staff on the Fundamentals on MSD**, which includes over 300 training slides, four video interview compilations with influential USAID staff around the globe, 21 hands-on exercises, surveys, and a facilitators guide. The course will be delivered by USAID to USAID staff (primarily Mission-based) and is designed to strengthen USAID staff capacity to operationalize MSD in their daily activities and communicate, champion and advocate the MSD approach. MSP conducted a training of trainers in September and USAID expects to initiate the first cohort of participants in early 2022.
- **Continued taking a highly collaborative approach**, engaging with 40 new stakeholders this period (nearly double from last period) through consultative feedback sessions, technical advisory committees, peer review, and case study capture. MSP also launched a [newsletter](#) to support engagement and build relationships with other major platforms including ones internal to USAID (e.g. Feed the Future, PSE Hub) and the implementer community ([register here](#)).
- **Scaled up and diversified MSP's portfolio of buy-in clients and themes with 5 new buy-in engagements from USAID/Washington and Missions**. The new buy-ins are from RFS/Center for Nutrition (a repeat client), RFS/PSE Secretariat, USAID/Uganda, USAID/Nepal (via funding from RFS jointly allocated with USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance), and USAID/Asia Bureau. This doubles the total number of buy-ins to 10, and brings MSP to 55% of ceiling committed, a strong indication of the significant demand for MSP's offerings across the Agency and around the globe.

## Looking Forward

Over the next six months, MSP will initiate private sector partnerships in Cambodia in the areas of cold storage, agricultural storage capacity, and logistics; roll out second-wave Learning Activities across multiple Learning Streams; and finalize, publish, and promote adoption and uptake of key technical resources and learning now underway. MSP will also scale up its overall volume of activities significantly, diversifying its geographic and technical foot print to include fieldwork in Nepal and Uganda and engagements with a variety of new clients.



## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



## THE MSP TEAM

### About MSP

The USAID-funded **Feed the Future Market Systems and Partnerships (MSP)** Activity is advancing learning and good practice on market systems development (MSD) and private sector engagement (PSE) within USAID, USAID's implementers and market actors. MSP provides and improves upon the evidence, capacity, tools, technical assistance, and services required to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate activities that lead to inclusive and resilient agriculture-led economic growth, improved food security and nutrition, and increased incomes for the poor.

MSP will support USAID **to bring about a major cultural and operational transformation** by integrating PSE across all activities, while at the same time deepening MSD and facilitative approaches across the program cycle.

DAI (prime)

EcoVentures International (EVI)

Global Knowledge Initiative (GKI)

ISF Advisors

MarketShare Associates (MSA)

TechnoServe

Plus valuable collaborations with local partners, strategic technical advisors, industry peers, private sector partners, and other donors key to delivering on MSP's goal.

# MSP Core Objectives

## FEED THE FUTURE MARKET SYSTEMS AND PARTNERSHIPS ACTIVITY: CORE OBJECTIVES



**Support effective private sector partnership development and management**

Via a Partnership Facility, executed through multi-year, demand-driven engagements with USAID Missions, and focused on advancing transformational outcomes



**Provide USAID Missions with analytical and other services for design, implementation, and M&E**

Through demand-driven analyses, design support, evaluations, stocktakings, and more



**Generate knowledge on MSD and PSE**

Via implementation of a multi-stream Learning Agenda and iterative learning-by-doing from MSP's own implementation



**Build capacity to design, implement, and MEL from MSD and PSE**

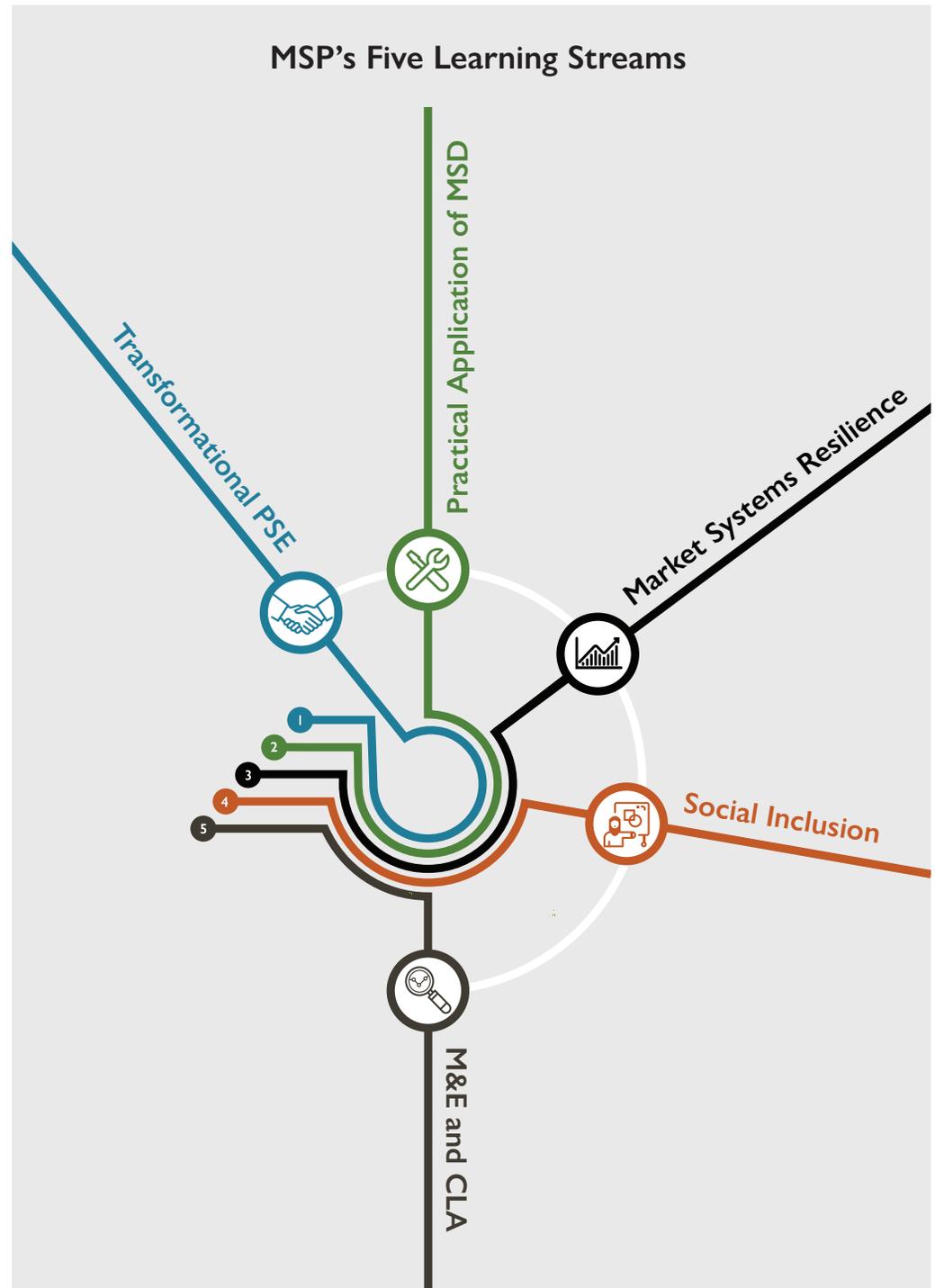
Through participatory trainings, tool and resource development, experiential learning, communities of practice, peer learning exchanges, and more

**COLLABORATION, LEARNING, ADAPTING**

# MSP Learning Agenda

In April and May, MSP conducted a series of consultations both internally (through strategic visioning sessions with each technical advisor across the consortium) and externally (through a participatory session with industry stakeholders at the Market Systems Symposium) to evolve and refine the Learning Agenda. Published in July, the [MSP Learning Agenda](#) describes **five key priority areas for learning (called Learning Streams) on MSP; transformational PSE, practical application of MSD, market systems resilience, social inclusion, and M&E and CLA.** The Learning Agenda also outlines MSP's strategic goals and updated illustrative activities that provide information on the types of initiatives MSP may implement to advance those goals for learning and adoption. The Learning Agenda establishes the learning priorities over the course of the Activity and helps to spark ideas with stakeholders. It will be a living document, updated regularly throughout the life of MSP as needed.

All MSP activities across the four objectives are aligned with and contribute to the MSP Learning Agenda. For example, MSP incorporates applied learning into its Partnerships Facility activities by using a 'layered learning' process, launched in the previous reporting period through team brainstorming sessions, to identify opportunities within each partnership window to generate learning that aligns with MSP Learning Agenda priorities.



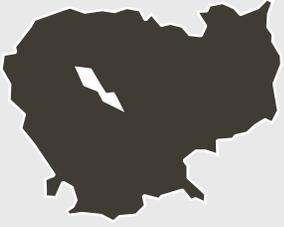


# OBJECTIVE 1: PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

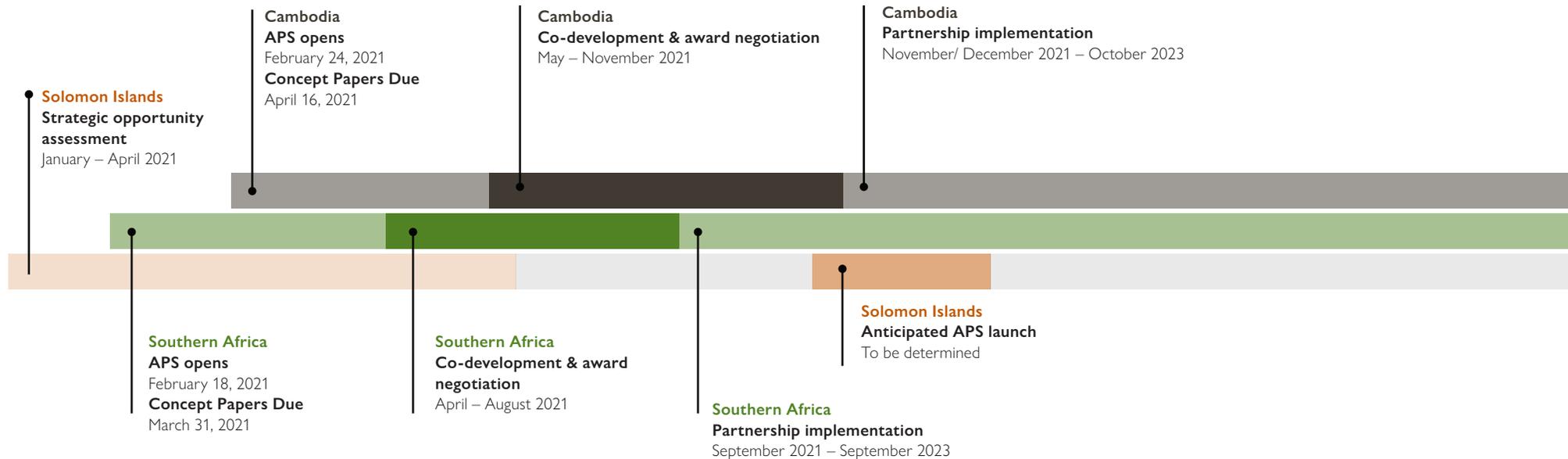
MSP facilitates private sector partnerships that create shared value from the alignment of core business objectives and development goals. **As of September 30, MSP has three active buy-ins with USAID Missions in southern Africa, Cambodia, and Solomon Islands, with a combined initial Partnership Facility value of \$11 million.** In the beginning of Activity Year 2, the total value of the current grant windows is now over a third of MSP’s overall \$30 million Partnership Facility.

MSP-facilitated partnerships channel corporate resources, expertise, technology, and influence in service of addressing a development problem; push firms and investors outside normal business practices by taking a socially inclusive approach to testing a new model or to scaling a business service or product; and shine a light on systemic barriers in the market system which constrain private sector involvement and investment. USAID can use these MSP partnerships as live case studies to help address constraints. In doing so, USAID, and its ecosystem of actors, can foster the conditions necessary for the focus investment or business practice to endure (and even scale) beyond the life of the MSP partnership. This facilitative approach can pave the way for other industry actors to follow suit in addressing business challenges in a way that advances development objectives.

During this reporting period, MSP conducted after-action reviews at the close of partnership evaluation and co-development processes for southern Africa and Cambodia facility windows. Leveraging the learning identified in these reviews, MSP refined its partnership procurement process to gain greater efficiency, updated partnership evaluation criteria to more clearly signal priorities to firm applicants, adapted internal procedures to guide milestone development with partners, and updated the southern Africa and Cambodia layered learning strategies.

Southern Africa	Cambodia	Solomon Islands
<p><b>Status</b> Partnerships (3 of 4) awarded for Window 1</p>  <p><b>Technical Focus</b> Input distribution, supply chain management, business and other support services</p> <p><b>Details</b> Current Fund: \$5.5 million over 2 years Awarded to Date: \$1.5 million</p>	<p><b>Status</b> Finalists selected, partnership awards under negotiation</p>  <p><b>Technical Focus</b> Cold chain, logistics, transport</p> <p><b>Details</b> Current Fund: \$ 2.5 million over 2 years Award Range: \$100K- \$1 million</p>	<p><b>Status</b> RFA drafted, Release Pending Bilateral Agreement</p>  <p><b>Technical Focus</b> Increased product quality, improved value addition of agricultural products</p> <p><b>Details</b> Anticipated Fund: approx. \$3 million</p>

## MSP'S PARTNERSHIP FACILITY: A TIMELINE



## FEATURES OF MSP'S PARTNERSHIP APPROACH:

MSP's Partnership Facility selects concepts based on the strength of five core factors: business concept, development impact, sustainability, scale and funding justification (additionality). Our approach focuses on:

- **Prioritizing upfront strategic opportunity analysis** so that MSP is working with the most impactful partner or coalition of partners and on the most strategic activities that can drive systemic impact;
- **Deciding to engage only when MSP's additionality is projected**, where MSP's involvement is critical to unlocking market-based solutions;
- **Drawing on good relationship management practices** to effectively steward partnerships, foster relationship health, as well as capture and disseminate learning;
- **Creating connections between the firm partner and other USAID projects and resources in-country** to broker fair and productive relationships between market actors that will bring sustained benefit to target populations;
- **Using partnerships as live case studies to shine a light on barriers in the broader environment, constraining private sector involvement and investment in a sector**, so USAID, and its ecosystem of actors, can foster the conditions necessary for the focus investment or business practice—and others of its kind—to endure (and even scale) beyond the life of the MSP partnership;
- **Integrating gender** in all stages of partnership design and implementation to empower women as suppliers, business leaders, customers, and employees.



# Gender in Partnerships

This period, MSP established and piloted a gender-lens strategy for its Partnership Facility integrating gender in all stages of partnership design and implementation. MSP does not discriminate in favor of women but instead has an inclusive status in engaging firms where they are—regardless of their current approach to enhancing women’s empowerment (WE)—and working with partner firms to strengthen their positive impact on women as suppliers, customers and employees. MSP’s goal is to co-develop strategies with partners that shift firms towards a more empowering and inclusive approach to doing business.

For each partnership window, MSP intentionally targets outreach to businesses that positively engage with women and integrates potential gender impact into the Activity’s evaluation criteria. Upon initial advancement in the selection process, and to inform co-development, MSP identifies the firm’s current status on enhancing WE through questions integrated into an initial partner survey, first launched in April. Findings from the survey can be found in the highlight box on the right.

As a result, MSP is co-developing customized strategies with all partner firms to enhance WE impacts through MSP partnerships and supporting firms to incrementally move along a WE continuum from ‘no awareness’ of WE to ‘transformational impact.’ For example in southern Africa, MSP encouraged partners to commit to ambitious yet attainable smallholder farmer and field agent recruitment targets to support women’s participation and diverse leadership in training delivery to farmers. These strategies feed into the layered learning across partnerships, as social inclusion is a key MSP Learning Stream.

MSP’s initial partner survey includes 15 questions on WE. Averaged results this period show that among firms selected for award:



**83%** of partners have gender equality policies in place (e.g., workplace protection, anti-harassment measures)



**38%** of senior managers are women (with substantial deviation ranging from 6% - 63%)



**21%** of board members are women



**66%** disaggregate data of customers or suppliers by gender



**16%** report having customized products or services to target or benefit women as customers



**83%** report having customized activities to target women as suppliers

# Spotlight on Southern Africa Agricultural Trade and Investment Activity

The Southern Africa Agricultural Trade and Investment Activity is the first Partnership Facility window launched by MSP. The objectives are to: 1) increase agricultural trade from regional countries to South Africa, 2) increase agricultural investment from South Africa to the region, and 3) increase agricultural exports from southern African countries to the United States through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Through strategic co-investment with the private sector, MSP will incentivize firms to test and adopt sustainable and impactful business models in the southern Africa region.

Following the launch of the first MSP Partnership Facility window in February, six applicants were shortlisted for co-development and due diligence in late April 2021. Throughout May and June 2021, shortlisted applicants participated in co-development with MSP to clarify the proposed application, identify areas of shared value, and make recommendations on how best to refine the concept to meet the USAID/Southern Africa Missions objectives. Concurrently, MSP performed organizational due diligence through remote and in-person engagement to confirm eligibility and firm capacity. In June, MSP reviewed final applications and selected four final candidates at the Technical Evaluation Committee meeting; USAID grants approval was secured in September. As of writing, three awards are signed, with a fourth coming soon.

**MSP is excited to now begin partnerships with three strong firms: Nature's Nectar, European African Seed Initiative (EASI), and AfriFruta.** The following pages spotlight each partnership, anticipated results, and how it will advance inclusive agricultural trade and investment.

## KEY FACTS:

**Objectives:** increased regional agricultural trade; increased agricultural investment from South Africa to the region; increased agri-exports to the U.S. via AGOA



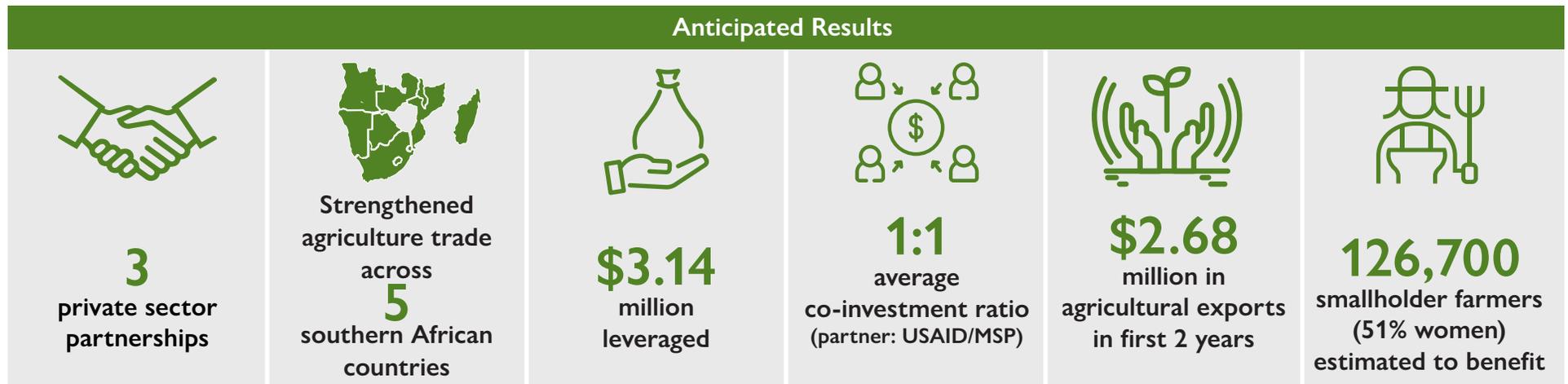
## Current Fund (Window 1):

\$5.5 million (\$1.5 million awarded to date)

**Award Timeline:** October 2021–September 2023

**Multi-stakeholder partnerships**

## Anticipated Results



# Southern Africa Partnership: Nature's Nectar

## Overview:

Nature's Nectar is a sustainable honey processor and exporter that sources raw honey from smallholder farmers in rural Zambia using non-destructive beekeeping practices. This partnership will enhance inclusive, regional trade opportunities between Zambia and South Africa by introducing new processing technology to the country that improves quality and expands the integration of smallholder beekeepers into a sustainably-sourced supply chain. Within five years, the partnership is anticipated to generate \$3.8 million in export sales from 81 MT of honey and benefit thousands of smallholders.

Traditional beekeeping in Zambia is a male-dominated economic activity that is an inherently destructive practice which contributes, among other things, to forest fires and destruction of indigenous trees. Nature's Nectar supports its suppliers—50% of which are female—to operate top-bar beehives made from cultivated pine trees. The hives are established with land protection rights from the government to protect smallholder farmers' livelihoods and conserve land. This land protection is managed by communities and registered as a Community Managed Forest Area. Modern top-bar beehives allow more diverse participation as it utilizes a pulley system rather than requiring climbing high into trees to collect and maintain the beehives.

Nature's Nectar currently outsources processing, which ultimately degrades end-product quality due to inconsistent processing and high instances of product loss. MSP's partnership will support Nature's Nectar to introduce a new processing line that will allow the firm to bring processing in-house and introduce this technology for the first time to Zambia. Increased and consistent quality will heighten demand for local raw honey and provide incentives for farmers to adopt more sustainable production practices. Nature's Nectar will also have a medium-term opportunity to diversify its business model to include offering processing services to other firms.

## Updates:

The partnership award was signed on September 24, 2021, and Nature's Nectar has begun work on the first two milestones:

- Work plan—this will provide an updated and detailed timeline of activities, farmer recruitment, planned equipment purchase, and identification of new technology or approaches to be deployed during the life of the partnership.
- Establishment of processing line—Nature's Nectar will immediately initiate activities to increase its in-house capabilities.



## Objectives:

**Hive Construction and Distribution.** Distribute 12,000 beehives in multiple production areas to increase honey supply.

**Beekeeper Engagement.** Offer annual workshops and trainings to increase the adoption of best practices in sustainable beekeeping methods with top bar beehives.

**Honey Processing.** Establish improved honey processing line in-house to increase the quality and quantity of end-product required to meet increased sales targets.

**Export of Honey.** Package the final product for export to South Africa including preparation of all required export documentation and certifications.



Partnership value:  
**\$529,502**  
1:1 Partner/MSP  
commitment ratio



Geography:  
**Zambia and  
South Africa**



Projected sales:  
**\$283,500**



Projected exports:  
**81 Metric Tons (MT)**



Projected number of  
smallholder farmers  
benefiting:  
**2,700**



Partnership value:

**\$1,885,276**

**1:1** Partner/MSP  
commitment ratio



Geography:

**Malawi, Eswatini,  
Lesotho, South  
Africa**



Projected sales:

**\$2,361,600**



Projected exports:

**849 MT**



Projected number of  
smallholder farmers

benefiting:

**121,000**

## Southern Africa Partnership: European African Seed Initiative

### Overview:

European African Seed Initiative (EASI) is an input supply firm that sources seeds from European and African seed industries for distribution in southern and eastern Africa. They bring extensive market research and experience in the seed sector and identified a key constraint to seed production in Malawi, Lesotho, and Eswatini: the limited access to Early Generation Seed. Under this partnership, EASI will address the Early Generation Seed market shortfall and produce smallholder farmer-generated seed for distribution across southern Africa, spurring a more forward-leaning seed sector and providing the ingredient to a more competitive agro-industry in the region overall. MSP's partnership supports EASI to expand the agropreneur model to three new countries to deliver hands on training and inputs to smallholder contract farmers. Through this model, EASI will contract with smallholder farmers for production of open-pollinated groundnut and sugar bean.

### Updates:

The partnership award was signed September 29. EASI is initiating work on the first two milestones:

- Work plan—this will provide an updated and detailed timeline of activities, farmer recruitment, equipment purchase, and identification of new technology or approaches to be deployed during the life of the partnership.
- Recruitment of agropreneurs—EASI will begin critical recruitment and training of agropreneurs to facilitate timely deployment to their assigned region.



Photo Credit: EASI

### Objectives:

**Identification and Training of Agropreneurs.** Recruit, train, mentor, and equip a group of nine rural youth (18–35 years) to become rural-based agropreneurs, providing training and inputs to farmers. Three of the nine agropreneurs will be female.

### Recruitment of Smallholder Farmers.

Contract 520 sugar bean seed growers through local partners Lehakoe Seed Company in Lesotho and Tshala Seed Enterprise Eswatini and 550 groundnut seed growers through the EASI subsidiary in Malawi. Smallholder farmers—50% of which will be women—will receive inputs, training on seed multiplication, and ongoing support from agropreneurs during the production season.

**Harvest and processing.** Seed produced by smallholder farmers will be harvested, de-seeded, dried, and aggregated, then exported to South Africa for final processing and sale.



Partnership value:  
**\$729,329**

**1:1** Partner/MSP  
 commitment ratio



Geography:  
**Mozambique,  
 South Africa**



Projected sales:  
**\$32,000 USD**

**(5 year est: \$376,000)**



Projected exports:  
**40 MT**

**(5 year est: 470 MT)**



Projected number of  
 smallholder farmers  
 benefiting:  
**3,000**

## Southern Africa Partnership: AfriFruta

### Overview:

AfriFruta is a mango and coconut processing company, which currently exports dried mango and coconut primarily to Europe and the southern Africa region. AfriFruta operates in Inhambane province in Mozambique where the Reiner mango is currently the only useful mango variety that smallholder farming households can access. The harvest window for this variety is only six weeks long. Through this partnership, AfriFruta will extend the harvest window by introducing three new mango tree varieties (Tommy Atkins, Kent, and Keitt) to the region, as well as introduce a new variety (Brooks), to Mozambique. AfriFruta will contract with 1,200 smallholder farming households (primarily headed by women) and increase the volume and variety of mango exports to South Africa and beyond. Mango trees take approximately four to five years to mature; this partnership is thus a long-term investment by USAID into the health of the mango industry in Mozambique, expanding the population of productive mango trees and strengthening livelihoods and food security of participating communities for years to come.

### Updates:

The partnership was signed September 28, and AfriFruta has begun working on its first two milestones:

- Work Plan—this will provide an updated and detailed timeline of activities, farmer recruitment, equipment purchase, and identification of new technology or approaches to be deployed during the life of the partnership.
- Establishment of the nucleus gene orchard—AfriFruta will initiate the setup of its nucleus gene orchard, a key input into reaching the sales targets.



Photo Credit: AfriFruta

### Objectives:

**Community engagement and recruitment.** Lead community sensitization meetings to introduce smallholders to grafting non-productive trees through a series of community meetings, eventually selecting participants to opt into the program. *Grafting is a technique commonly used in agriculture to bind new and younger plant growth, as well as new varieties, onto older, unproductive trees to allow the new plant to thrive and grow.*

**AfriFruta Orchard Established.** Establish a nucleus gene orchard which will serve as the “home base” of the operation. Cultivate and maintain a stock of new varieties that will be used to graft the newly cut trees throughout the communities.

**New Mango Variety Grafting.** Older trees will be prepared and the new varieties will be grafted to each of the selected trees. AfriFruta Technicians oversee the process and provide ongoing support to farmers.

# Spotlight on Cambodia Agricultural Investment Activity

Challenges in Cambodia's storage and logistics capacity are impeding growth of the agriculture sector, which accounts for a quarter of the country's GDP and employs approximately half of its rural population. On behalf of USAID/Cambodia, MSP launched a \$3.5 million facility window to co-invest with Cambodian firms to address these challenges. The window focuses on three areas: cold chain, agricultural storage capacity (warehouses, deposits, or holdings of farm products), and logistics.

By partnering with firms and investors to test innovative business models, pilot new technology, or expand into new high-risk markets and scale innovation, MSP will help reduce post-harvest losses, increase smallholder incomes, and better integrate women and youth into supply chains. These new MSP partnerships will test and promote the uptake of successful storage and logistics innovations that will ultimately crowd in further private sector investment along Cambodia's agricultural value chains and increase regional and international trade integration.

MSP worked closely with USAID/Cambodia and both donor and private sector networks in Cambodia to actively promote interest in this opportunity. By the close of the application window on April 16, MSP received concept notes from 12 prospective partners. MSP and USAID selected four firms for further co-creation. Upon completing co-creation, two firms (Khmer Cold Chain Company and Amru Rice) were selected for final negotiation during the final Technical Evaluation Committee meeting hosted in September. Final awards will be made at the end of November 2021.

## KEY FACTS:

### Objective:

advance economic competitiveness and inclusiveness through market access, agricultural services, infrastructure and logistics, and PSE and investment across the agricultural value chain.

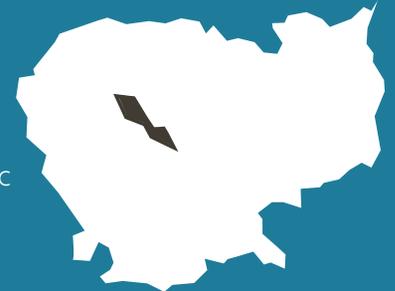
### Current Fund:

\$2.5 million over 2 years

### Award Range:

\$100K- \$1 million

**Awards estimated:** November 2021



**12**  
applicants



**4**  
partners invited to  
co-development



**9**  
hours of co-development  
sessions for each  
successful firm

# Spotlight on Solomon Islands: Strategic Opportunity Identification

This reporting period, MSP completed critical sector assessments and opportunity identification necessary to establish the SI-SCALE facility window, which has a planned launch once the United States and Solomon Islands sign a pending bilateral agreement. USAID's overall SI-SCALE program includes five Activities and aims to advance the Solomon Islands' economic competitiveness and inclusiveness with specific emphasis on the development of the agribusiness sector and improved management of the forestry sector. The MSP engagement is focused specifically on the sub-objective of promoting the expansion and further development of the agribusiness sector by improving agriculture production capacity of selected high-value crops, enhancing the quality of crops and value-addition of agricultural products, or expanding domestic and international agribusiness trade.

MSP used a **participatory analysis process** to develop a **competitive appraisal matrix, identify strategic partnership opportunities,** and shape the technical design of the Request for Applications (RFA). This involved consultations with 50 stakeholders located in Solomon Islands and in the region including: government officials, investors, and industry groups. As a result of these discussions, as well as extensive desk research, **MSP recommended three sub-sectors for prioritization:** cocoa, coconut, and kava. MSP learned from these consultations that the greatest constraints to firms operating or wishing to expand their operations in these sectors were: 1) limited availability of raw material and 2) quality concerns related to post-harvest handling and processing. Based on these assessments and the identified opportunities, MSP designed a responsive RFA, to be released upon finalization of the bilateral agreement.



## KEY FACTS:

### Objectives:

Increased production and product quality and improved value addition of agricultural products

### Anticipated Fund:

\$3 million

### Anticipated Award Launch:

Quarter 1, Fiscal Year 2022



## OBJECTIVE 2: SERVICES



MSP offers rapidly mobilized technical assistance services in response to USAID's demand for supplemental support to design, implement and monitor MSD and PSE activities. This period, MSP diversified its buy-in portfolio by launching multiple new engagements under Objective 2, highlighted below and on the following page.

- In Nepal, MSP is gearing up to launch an **assessment focused on market systems resilience (MSR) in the Feed the Future Zone of Influence**. It is conducted for USAID/Nepal with funding from USAID/RFS, jointly allocated with USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). The study will look at 1) the drivers of MSR through a qualitative diagnostic of the market system, 2) insights on the role that layered implementation of several Activities may have had in shaping these MSR drivers and enhancing household ability to benefit, and 3) spotlight several innovative practices. This work also feeds into MSP's Learning Stream on MSR and will be initiated next quarter with a series of design sessions and stakeholder consultations. In early 2022, MSP will conduct field work, followed by an assessment report with case studies, and a series of learning-focused workshops in Nepal and Washington DC. *MSP partner EVI will lead this work.*
- In September, MSP received a buy-in from USAID/Asia Bureau's Office of Technical Services, Economic Growth Team (Asia/EG), **to pilot PSE and MSD activities that test, amplify, or scale good practices linked to economic growth priorities**, including improved policy environment to promote sustainable economic growth and prosperity; improved regional economic cooperation; inclusive and resilient market systems; and increased incomes for the poor while also expanding markets for U.S. goods and services in the Indo Pacific. Through a series of to-be-determined, demand-driven activities, MSP will engage with Asia/EG and Missions to support and co-create market-based solutions with the private sector, local government, and implementers and enhance learning and good practice. *MSP prime DAI will lead this overall buy-in.*
- In August and September, MSP provided rapid, on-demand **support to USAID/RFS and the Feed the Future Innovation Labs by developing a package of technology-focused prospectuses (i.e. pitch sheets), shared by USAID at the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF)** to spur investment. AGRF is a major global forum blending donors, investors, innovators, and other firms to advance agricultural transformation in Africa. MSP also prepared an internal USAID learning brief on insights to enhance success in future efforts to pitch innovations to the private sector. *MSP prime DAI led this work.*

# Spotlight: Uganda Transaction Advisory/Hub

In September 2021, MSP launched the Uganda Transaction Advisory activity to support USAID/Uganda with two main services: **a landscape assessment of agro-industrial parks** and **transaction advisory services** for the Busia Trade and Logistics Center (TLC).

These engagements build on the Government of Uganda's Third National Development Plan that includes a strong focus on agro-industrialization. MSP will conduct a landscape assessment to identify opportunities for USAID investment in agro-processing tied to agro-industrial parks within the Feed the Future Zone of Influence in Uganda. The assessment will focus on a subset of up to five parks identifying strategic opportunities for: agricultural commodities and products produced for domestic and export markets, potential for job creation (both directly and indirectly), use of locally available raw materials, and the modalities for USAID to facilitate strategic public private partnerships to operate and maintain the park. The landscape assessment will be complete in Quarter 2, Fiscal Year 2022.

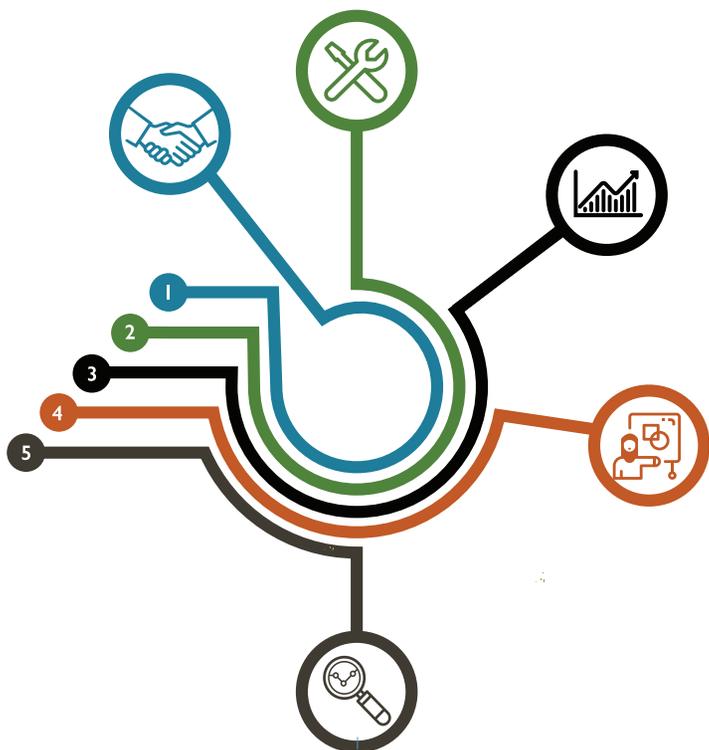
In parallel, MSP will support USAID/Uganda in the development of the Busia TLC, a future agro-processing and logistics center, by strengthening investment in the center. MSP will provide **transaction advisory services** to identify tenants for the park and facilitate investment. MSP partner, ISF Advisors, will mobilize a full-time transaction advisor who will support the Busia TLC activity for a period of 18 months. The transaction advisor will 1) lead the initial financial assessment of the park which will inform pipeline development and deal execution, 2) develop relevant investor materials and conduct investor outreach, and 3) advise on structuring of a special purpose vehicle to facilitate joint ventures or public-private partnerships between the Government of Uganda and investors. The transaction advisory services will complete in March 2023. *MSP partner ISF Advisors leads this activity.*



Photo Credit: USAID Flickr; Uganda



## OBJECTIVE 3: GENERATE KNOWLEDGE



Across five Learning Streams highlighted below, MSP **finalized the first wave of learning products** this period, generating knowledge on PSE and MSD and expanding the evidence-base for good practice. The following pages spotlight many of MSP’s learning activities and products in more detail. Towards the end of this period, MSP began designing a series of ‘next wave’ learning activities to diversify and deepen insights and nurture stakeholder uptake and adoption.

A total of **5,040 individuals around the globe have accessed MSP learning products to date**. This includes participation in interactive meetings (e.g. MSR Community of Practice, webinars) and online engagement (e.g. MSP’s Activity webpage on Agrilinks, the BEAM Exchange), sparked by targeted promotional efforts across social media (especially LinkedIn), newsletters (e.g., internal USAID newsletters reaching targeted groups in the PSE, MSD, and RFS communities; MSP’s own newsletter launched in September), and influencers. In August, MSP also launched several internal processes to cement designing for uptake and adoption, including updating the scope of work template; piloting a dissemination and uptake strategy worksheet; and updating the MEL Plan to lay out MSP’s approach to monitoring adoption and uptake of learning.

### LEARNING AGENDA STREAMS



**Transformational PSE:** MSP aims to apply USAID’s principles of shared value, corporate relationship management and systems change to a multi-stakeholder context to encourage the adoption of a more sustainable and inclusive operating model.

### APPROVED ACTIVITIES

**PSE for Nutrition:** a strategic engagement tool, partnering guidance, and case studies, with pilots being planned to update the current final ‘beta’ version for a final guide. Spotlight 3: Page 24. (DAI, TechnoServe)

**PSE in Fragile and Conflict Affected States:** a primer offering concrete guidance and 13 real-world vignettes. Spotlight 4: Page 25. (DAI, GKI)

Similar thematic guidance on **PSE for Climate Adaptation to Advance Resilience** (DAI, TBD) and **PSE for Large-Scale Food Fortification** (DAI, TechnoServe). Spotlights 5 and 6: Page 26.



**Practical Application of MSD:** MSP aims to build on MSD's broad theoretical base, emerging lessons from application, and existing tools to develop and disseminate practical guidance for operationalizing MSD.

**MSD Tools Stocktaking:** development of a centralized web-based repository of MSD tools, sourced through industry engagement and feedback, to support uptake of good practice in applied MSD. Spotlight 10: Page 28. (DAI)

**Towards Transformation in PSE and MSD:** a consultative brief spotlighting opportunities for strengths-based learning and collaboration across PSE and MSD to advance transformation. Spotlight 8: Page 27. (DAI, MSA)

**USAID Training on Foundations of MSD:** a five-day, mixed-media course to be delivered by USAID staff, primarily to Missions. Page 29. (DAI, EVI, MSA)



**Market Systems Resilience:** MSP aims to support strengthened resilience, a core objective of the GFSS, through a focus on MSR (the ability of a market system to respond to a shock or stress in a way that allows consistency and sustainability in the market system's functioning).

**MSR Community of Practice:** established to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and capture learning in this relatively new technical area. Spotlight 7: Page 27. (EVI)



**Social Inclusion:** MSP aims to strengthen inclusion within the context of MSD and PSE programming by strengthening the evidence base for and ability to assess benefits from social inclusion, with a focus on sustainability and Return on Investment (ROI).

**ROI from Social Inclusion:** analyzing [evidence and evidence gaps](#) on the contribution of social inclusion strategies to ROI for companies and investors in developing countries. Spotlight 1: Page 22. (MSA)

**Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on MSD Talent Pipeline:** [original research with takeaways](#) on effects of COVID-19 on workforce participation and career ambition of COPs and senior staff.

Informed a follow up activity, **Ensuring a Diverse Development Activity Leadership Pipeline in the Face of COVID-19** to expand beyond MSD and spur calls to action. Spotlight 2: Page 23. (Canopy Lab)



**M&E and CLA:** MSP aims to advance best practice in M&E and CLA within MSD and PSE, build the evidence base for the assumed benefits of sustainability and scale, and contribute learning in key concerns such as monitoring market systems change and metrics 'beyond leverage' for PSE.

**MSD Ex-post Study Series:** to evaluate the sustainability and scale of outcomes from system change catalyzed by USAID-funded MSD Activities, with a [rapid harvest of insights](#), research framework design, and eventual studies. Spotlight 9: Page 28. (MSA)

# Spotlight I: New Evidence on Firm ROI from Social Inclusion in Developing Countries

Investing in social inclusion is good for business. It is also central to USAID’s broader goals for achieving pro-poor growth and approaches like PSE and MSD rely heavily on effective partnering with the local private sector. Yet, the evidence on which SI factors lead to impact has not been systematically mapped, particularly in a developing country context, and the framing of both “social inclusion” and “returns” can vary greatly between investors, firms, development organizations, and others.

In August, MSP published an [evidence gap analysis](#) examining evidence on the ROI of social inclusion strategies implemented by the private sector in developing countries. The research spanned 10 industries, 100 papers, and 80 cases and built off a preliminary scan (the outputs of which were captured in an [initial framework paper](#) published in May). The study calls out **three areas (safety and gender-based violence prevention, workplace culture and benefits, and talent) where strong evidence exists. The research also identified three data gaps**, which centralize around:

- **Leadership:** despite a strong evidence base in developed countries, there is limited focus in developing country literature;
- **Consumers:** limited data on the value of market segmentation and targeting women beyond specific sectors and;
- **Supply Chain Diversity:** little evidence on business benefits beyond multinationals corporate social responsibility and branding initiatives.

A BEAM Exchange [blog](#) and active LinkedIn conversations helped inspire energy around these findings. MSP shared this evidence via targeted distribution through USAID’s PSE Hub platforms and a presentation at the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) Annual Conference on September 28. MSP aims to further be a part of building the evidence base with some additional next steps under development. *MSP partner MSA leads this activity.*

## EXCERPTS FROM MSP’S WORKSHOP AT ANDE ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTING KEY FINDINGS



# Spotlight 2: Research on How COVID-19 is Impacting the MSD Talent Pipeline

This period MSP conducted original research which shows that **the impacts of COVID-19 on MSD practitioners, in particular women, are wide-ranging and, if not addressed, will have a negative impact on the talent pipeline and diversity of future senior leaders.** In August, MSP published key findings in a [brief alongside the full study](#), which captures intersectional considerations including gender, professional position, and status as a cooperating country national or expatriate/headquarters staff.

These findings are especially important for MSD as systems thinking requires diversity of perspectives. In addition, the highly adaptive and facilitative nature of most MSD Activities means that senior leaders can have an outsized influence on the Activity strategy and partnerships, which in turn may influence who accesses Activity-facilitated services and benefits. Diversity of perspectives and experiences on the senior management team is essential to implement the MSD approach. The research methodology combined a literature review with primary data collection from an online survey in May, followed by in-depth interviews with a subset of survey respondents.

In September, MSP presented key findings to RFS as part of its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Council's speaker series and began planning for an interactive public webinar in October. MSP also received USAID approval for **follow-on research that expands the focal area beyond just MSD.** It will focus on developing targeted, actionable insights to mitigate COVID-19's impact and build buy-in for uptake through a series of in-depth interviews with development professionals, senior leadership at implementing partners (including HR and recruitment), and USAID AOR/CORs. Research questions will tackle issues such as benefits and flexibility, strategies currently being pursued by implementers, and USAID's role in supporting needed shifts to support a more diverse pipeline. *MSP collaborator Canopy Labs leads this activity.*

## DATA EXCERPTS FROM: HOW IS COVID-19 IMPACTING THE TALENT PIPELINE OF MARKET SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES?

Figure 5: Desire to Decrease Size and Scope of Next Role

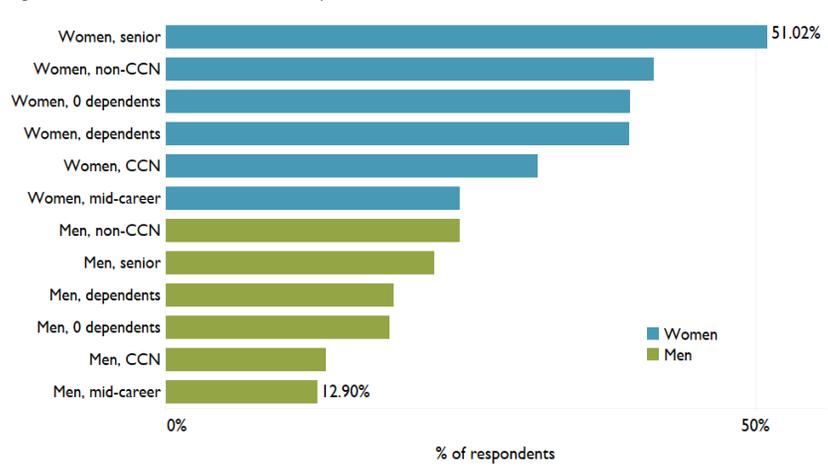
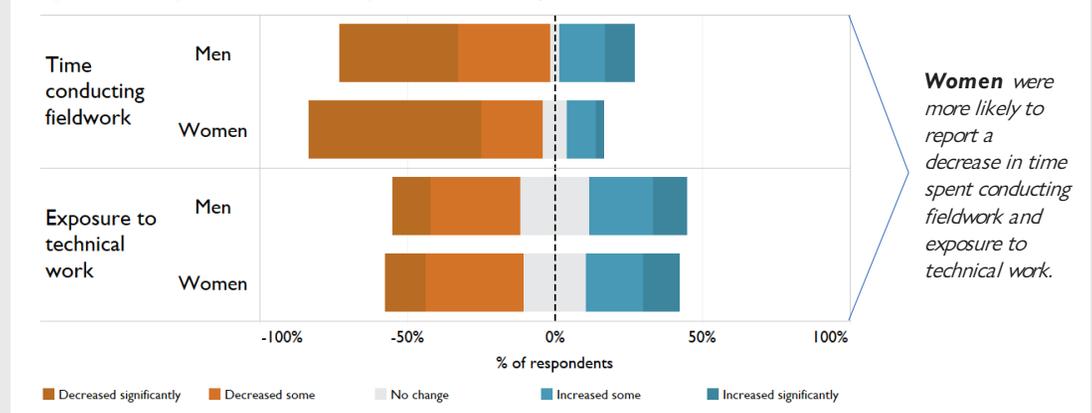


Figure 12: Changes to Time Conducting Field Work and Exposure to Technical Work



# Spotlight 3: PSE for Nutrition Guide (Beta)

In July, MSP finalized the beta version of the resource **PSE for Nutrition: A Strategic Engagement Tool, Partnering Guidance and Case Studies**. This tool gives practical guidance to USAID Missions and implementers to help them: 1) define a prioritized set of nutritional problem(s); 2) identify strategic firm partners in the market system that USAID could engage to address the nutritional problem, as defined, and identify critical public actors that must be engaged for success; 3) determine the appropriate type of partnership archetype for the prioritized private sector partners to be implemented as part of the implementer's SOW; and 4) identify points of entry to integrate potential partnership opportunities across the Mission's broader portfolio. Case studies from Nigeria, Ethiopia, India and Kenya offer additional insights.

MSP did a 'soft launch' of the beta resource for USAID via a webinar organized by the Center for Nutrition, which included participants from RFS and USAID's Nutrition Council. MSP is now designing tool pilots with two sets of Missions and implementers. These pilots will help the Center for Nutrition and MSP to assess end user experience with the tool with respect to ease, efficiency, and value-add to their work objectives. MSP will then refine the tool based on pilot feedback and design a dissemination and uptake process to support the integration of findings into other key existing Mission processes such as implementation of private sector action plans. *MSP prime DAI and partner TechnoServe lead this activity.*

## EXCERPTS FROM PSE FOR NUTRITION: A STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT TOOL, PARTNERING GUIDANCE AND CASE STUDIES



# Spotlight 4: PSE in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations Primer

Engaging the private sector in fragile and conflict-affected situations can uniquely address, and help to mitigate, the drivers of instability and conflict by creating jobs, providing essential goods, increasing financial inclusion, developing infrastructure, and promoting other forms of inclusive economic development. USAID and its implementers can use PSE strategically as a tool to achieve development and humanitarian goals in fragile-affected situations, but standard PSE practices must be adapted in these contexts. This period, MSP prime DAI with partner GKI developed a **primer on PSE in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations**. To be published in October, the primer is informed by an analysis of existing fragile states literature, PSE best practices, and key informant interviews with development practitioners and companies that have implemented partnerships in these contexts. The research benefited from the input of an Advisory Committee, with representation from USAID's Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization, BHA, RFS and the PSE Hub. The primer includes:

- A summary of special considerations and practices needed to conduct effective PSE in fragile and conflict-affected situations;
- Guidance on engaging with different typologies of private sector partners; and
- A series of vignettes that highlight real-life examples of engaging the four typologies of private sector partners.



## Spotlights 5 and 6: Launching New PSE Guidance and Tools

Building on the PSE for Nutrition Tool and Guidance and the Primer on PSE in Fragile and Conflict Affected States, in August, MSP received two new buy-ins to develop additional resources that provide practical guidance and examples that support USAID and implementers to engage the private sector to achieve targeted outcomes. Although the source of demand from within USAID for these resources is diverse, the interest reveals a widespread need for these types of tools and guidance. MSP is now initiating development of the following resources, which will continue over the next several periods:

For the RFS/PSE Secretariat, MSP will develop a user-friendly **PSE for Climate Adaptation to Advance Resilience Guidance and Tool** to support Missions and implementers in engaging the private sector more effectively to address and sustain market-based climate adaptation for the end goal of advancing resilience. Launched in August, MSP is currently identifying a partner to support this work and will launch implementation in the next period. *MSP prime DAI will lead this activity alongside a to-be-determined collabo-*

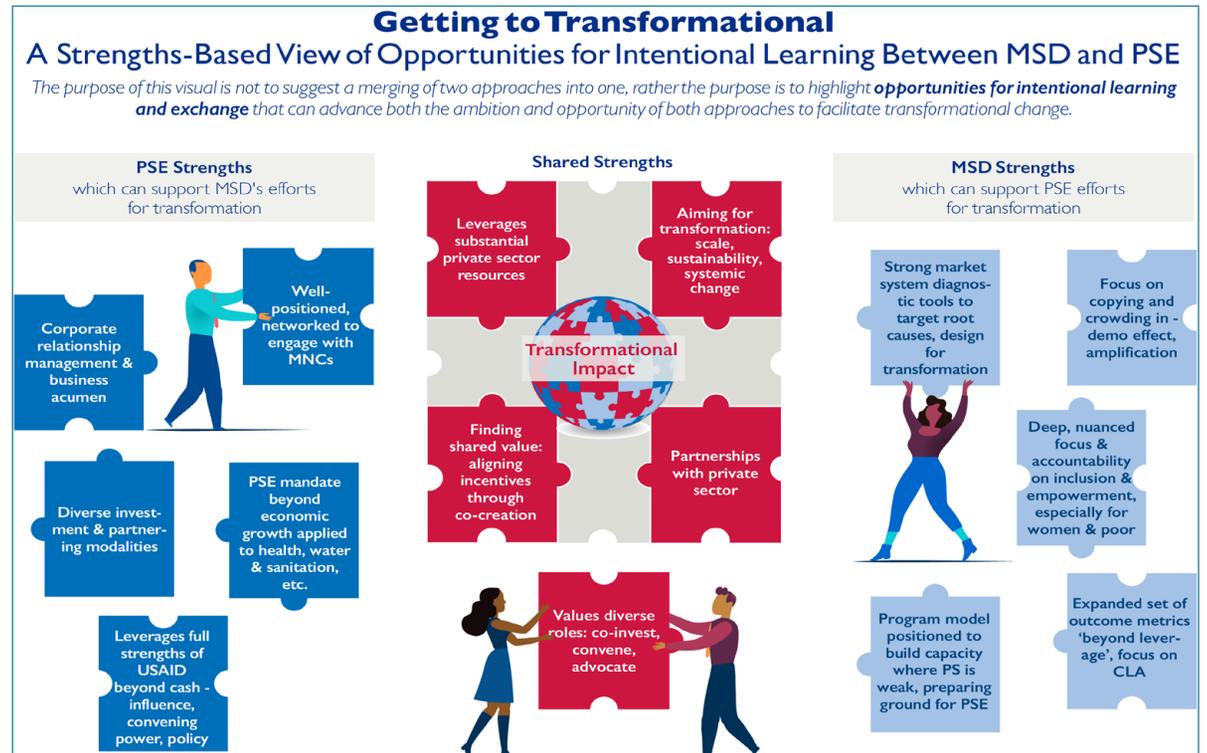


A repeat buy-in client, the RFS/Center for Nutrition engaged MSP to leverage MSP's work developing a PSE for Nutrition Partnering Guidance and Tool to now develop a new resource on **PSE for Large Scale Food Fortification**. Starting in October 2021, MSP will develop, pilot, refine, and finalize a user-friendly methodology to support USAID Missions in assessing the current and projected capacity of industrial-scale food processors to fortify staple foods and condiments that may serve as effective food fortification vehicles based on wide and regular consumption within a given country context. *MSP partner Technoserve will lead this activity, with support from partner ISF and prime DAI.*

# Spotlights 7 and 8: MSR Community of Practice and PSE and MSD Synergies

**Market Systems Resilience Community of Practice:** As the first activity in the MSR Learning Stream, MSP established a Community of Practice (CP) to convene implementers, USAID experts, and other key stakeholders to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and capture innovations and insights for broader dissemination. The CP has convened three times to date—two this reporting period, in June and September. On average, 30 participants from around the globe gathered, representing USAID and implementer field and home office staff, for 90-minute interactive sessions. At the June 2021 meeting, participants used Mural to do a live stocktaking of MSR activities, research, and tool development conducted or planned for in 2022, followed by presentations from CP members from George Washington University (Uganda) and ACDI/VOCA (Honduras). At the September 2021 CP, discussion focused on examples from the field and small group discussions. Practitioners from DAI (Ukraine), Mercy Corps (Timor Leste, Nigeria, Ethiopia), iDE (Southeast Asia), and EVI (Kenya, Ghana) shared examples illustrating an activity that helped a community better manage shocks or stresses by accessing a market or using market mechanisms. The CP concluded with a member ‘pulse’ survey on the usefulness of the CP to members with 92% of respondents endorsing its utility. Members also shared what aspects they valued such as to: connect and interact with colleagues from around the world, learn about different group approaches, and get a pulse on the current state of practice. *MSP partner EVI leads this activity.*

**PSE and MSD Synergies Brief:** MSP operates at the nexus of PSE and MSD. This period, MSP developed a foundational brief to spotlight opportunities for strengths-based learning and collaboration, centered around PSE and MSD’s shared ambition to catalyze transformation. The process has been highly consultative, starting with an interactive brainstorm with USAID to launch the design process, an MSP writing team that represents both PSE and MSD specialists, and an intensive round of feedback from over a dozen USAID and implementer staff. MSP is finalizing revisions and looking forward to launching the foundational brief later this year—and more importantly, using it as a launch point for additional collaboration. *MSP prime DAI with partner MSA lead this activity.*



An excerpt from the forthcoming Towards Transformational Impact brief, which highlights concrete opportunities—each a piece of the transformation puzzle—for a strengths-based exchange of tactics, modalities, and learning in order to advance transformational impact across PSE and MSD activities.

## Spotlights 9 and 10: MSD Ex-Posts Series & MSD Tool Stocktaking

**MSD Ex-Posts:** MSP is designing a series of ex-post studies that apply a consistent evaluation framework to build the evidence base across a portfolio of MSD Activities and assess the scale and durability of outcome trajectories as a result of targeted systemic changes. In August, MSP published an Agrilinks blog on [The Great Opportunity and Challenge of Ex-posts for MSD: Four Takeaways from a Rapid Harvest of Insights](#), which built on a rapid document review and stakeholder consultation with evaluation specialists from USAID RFS/Center for Agriculture-Led Growth, the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, and the PSE Hub; experts from the Springfield Centre; and USAID's Expanding the Reach of Impact Evaluations Consortium, among others. One key takeaway, which MSP will address in its own study series, focuses on putting systemic change at the forefront. While it is important to look at whether results for end beneficiaries continue to endure and scale, an MSD ex-post evaluation must also examine whether desired systemic changes—fundamental shifts in network structure or behavioral norms—have lasted. This requires an additional layer of consideration in nearly all stages—from study design, implementation, analysis and presentation of findings—than traditional ex-post studies that focus only on development results. In September, MSP also hosted the first technical advisory committee meeting to present the initial assessment of a long list of potential Activities to study and endorse a shortlist. MSP is now developing the research framework and reaching out to both Activities and Missions to inform final study selection later this year. *MSP partner MSA leads this activity, with support from DAI.*



**MSD Tools Stocktaking:** While many MSD practitioners are thinking systemically, the community is often still using adapted value chain analysis tools because they are practical, familiar, and easily operationalized. This period, MSP laid the foundation to develop a centralized web-based repository of curated MSD tools to support the uptake of good practice in the application of MSD. Through a participatory tool stocktaking to launch next period, MSP will seek peer input from the MSD community to curate tools, incorporating a broad set of tools integrating other learning streams (e.g., social inclusion, MEL, CLA, and PSE for MSD). This period, MSP focused on solidifying support from a third party to house the tool library on a sustainable web-based platform that will support ongoing community engagement and adaptation and future growth of the tool library. MSP also began developing the back-end logistics and processes (e.g., submission forms, branding and marking implications) and established a technical advisory committee with representatives from USAID, the BEAM Exchange, SwissContact, and EVI. *MSP prime DAI leads this activity with support from partners EVI and MSA.*



## OBJECTIVE 4: CAPACITY BUILDING

To contribute to cultural transformation in integrating MSD and PSE throughout the program cycle, MSP is facilitating development of dispersed local leaders in these technical areas. This period, MSP finalized a significant capacity building initiative: **a five-day training course on the Fundamentals of MSD**. To deepen expertise and capacity in MSD and further develop the pool of local MSD champions, this course was developed by MSP to be delivered by USAID to USAID staff (primarily Mission-based). The objective of this foundational course is to strengthen USAID staff capacity to operationalize MSD in their daily activities, champion and advocate the MSD approach, and be strong communicators on the approach and its differentiators.

The course includes **modules** on behaviors of market systems, working with complexity, facilitation, adapting M&E and CLA, social inclusion, and designing and managing an MSD Activity. The materials include over 300 **training slides**; four **interview videos with influential USAID staff** in Uganda, Honduras, Ghana and more; 21 **hands-on exercises** and corresponding handouts; pre- and post-**training surveys**; daily **questionnaires**; and a comprehensive **facilitator's guide**.

The MSP team conducted a training of trainers with five USAID staff in September 2021. The training content will now be adapted for virtual delivery of the course. USAID hopes to pilot the training with the first cohort of participants in early 2022 and will release an Agency Notice for staff to express interest. MSP will package and share training material appropriate for a broader audience following adaptation after the first training. *MSP prime DAI leads this activity, with support from partners EVI and MSA.*



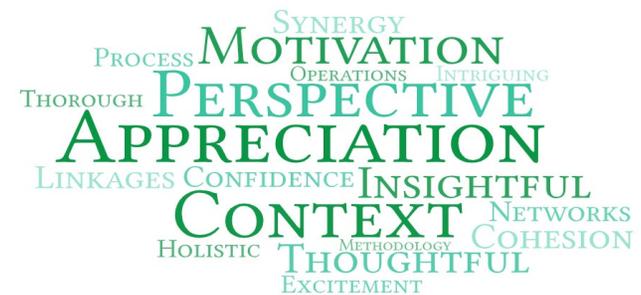
# Project Management and Operations

This period, MSP continued to grow and stretch operationally. Highlights include:

**Operations:** MSP received contract modification number four (in August) and five (in September), incorporating five new buy-ins from the RFS/Center for Nutrition (a repeat client), the RFS/PSE Secretariat, USAID/Uganda, USAID/Nepal (via funding from USAID/RFS), and USAID/Asia Bureau. MSP's two-year option period, covering project Years 4 and 5, was also exercised. These additional buy-ins total \$4.15 million in additional commitments, putting MSP at 55% of funding committed against the contract ceiling with a total of 10 buy-ins to date. Additionally, in September MSP submitted its Year 2 workplan, annual Inventory Report, and updated MEL Plan; all are approved.

**Grants Management:** As highlighted under the Objective 1 Partnerships section above, MSP finalized three grant award packages under the **Southern Africa** Agricultural Trade and Investment buy-in which were approved by USAID in September 2021. The partners were selected out of a total of 61 applications. In early September 2021, two applicants were recommended for award out of a total of 12 applications under the **Cambodia** Agricultural Investment buy-in. Both applicants will undergo final grant negotiations and are expected to be submitted for USAID approval in November 2021. The RFA in support of the **Solomon Islands**-SCALE buy-in was developed and finalized in this reporting period. MSP will publicly release the RFA via its grants website ([www.mspgrants.com](http://www.mspgrants.com)) once the administrative agreement between USAID and the Government of Solomon Islands is signed.

**Staffing:** In this period, MSP added four new full-time positions between April and July (two Engagement Managers, Grants and Subcontracts Specialist, and Communications Specialist), and is recruiting for three new positions (MSD Advisor, another Engagement Manager, and a Finance Specialist). In May, MSP core staff came together virtually for a **team technical and operational orientation**. The workshops were spread across four days, totaling eight hours of presentation, discussion and knowledge-sharing. The orientation included team building exercises and sharing MSP's overall technical vision and strategy, management approach, Learning Agenda, operational systems and procedures, MEL and CLA. To continue to build team cohesion and strengthen collaboration, MSP hosted several additional events this period, including continuing MSP's monthly social hour tradition of virtual games and activities, a confidential survey to surface staff perceptions on strengths and areas for improvement in team dynamics, and a **half-day team building workshop** to build effective communication and collaboration skills. As the team became fully vaccinated against COVID-19, DC-based staff also took advantage of several opportunities for in-person social meet-ups.



*Word cloud showing what staff gained from the team technical and operational orientation*

**Communications:** In September, MSP successfully launched its [inaugural newsletter](#), a key platform to share technical resources and news as it emerges from MSP and to enhance awareness, access to, and uptake of learning. Supported by the addition of a full-time Communications Specialist, MSP also strengthened internal processes and capacities around editing, content development, and graphic design, and formed collaborative relationships with many other key communication platforms (Marketlinks, Agrilinks, BEAM Exchange, RFS' Feed the Future, etc.). MSP continues to use the [Activity Webpage](#) as the primary platform for publishing and aggregating content produced by MSP.

MEL and CLA are pivotal, inter-related elements core to MSP's implementation and management approach. This period, MSP shifted from establishing core MEL processes and procedures to implementation. Across all of MSP's objectives, MSP worked to **operationalize data collection** by developing the necessary instruments, structuring databases, building monitoring dashboards, and aligning internal roles and responsibilities. To monitor engagement with the wider MSD and PSE communities, MSP rolled out an internal **Customer Relationship Management platform** to organize strategic contacts, generate targeted communication campaigns (such as the newsletter initiated in September), and track audience engagement metrics. MSP also launched the first round of **USAID client satisfaction surveys** to regularly engage buy-in clients to support adaptive management and to inform a key performance indicator – average client satisfaction score. As activities ramp up, MSP will also use this survey as a feedback mechanism from a core audience segment – USAID – around the influence of MSP learning and service delivery on practices and policies. The average client satisfaction score was 4.2/5.

In September, MSP also completed the first iteration of an **annual review of MSP's MEL Plan**, revisiting indicators and MEL approaches in line with the adaptive nature of MSP's implementation approach. The updated MEL Plan approved by USAID incorporates two new indicators applied to all Partnership Facility buy-ins and additional detail regarding MSP's approach to monitoring learning to adoption pathways.

MSP's larger emphasis on **collaboration** with external stakeholders is reflected in earlier sections, as frequent consultation with end users, incorporation of diverse perspectives, and strategic collaboration with champions are central to how MSP designs and implements all its activities. MSP has also been collaborating with USAID's Knowledge, Data, Learning and Training (KDLT) Activity to develop new functionality to meet end user / partner needs with the Agrilinks web platform. Within its own team, this period MSP hosted four **pause and reflect sessions**, focused in particular around capturing real-time, experiential learning from the Partnership Facility (see next page for more). In addition, to help mitigate potential silos within the core MSP team, in June MSP began hosting a series of **"Tech Talks"** short sessions where staff share out key takeaways emerging from MSP activities. Lastly, in May MSP began a quarterly **learning and technical reflection meeting** to exchange technical updates across the Learning Agenda Streams and promote organic collaboration and cross-fertilization of ideas.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE PARTNERSHIP FACILITY MEL PLAN:

In April and May, MSP developed MEL Strategies for the southern Africa and Cambodia facility windows respectively; both received USAID concurrence. Key features are highlighted below.

- **A standard set of performance indicators** applied across all partnerships: value of sales, dollars leveraged from USG and private sector, and number of technologies, practices and approaches under research, development and uptake.
- Light-touch but intentional processes designed to surface learning of strategic importance across three inter-related 'layers': globally across MSP, buy-in specific, and partner-level:
  - **required semi-annual technical touchpoints** to harvest insights that complement performance data and support adaptive management;
  - **relationship health surveys** to get a pulse on partner and MSP perceptions across several standard dimensions of relationship health shown to be predictive of high-performing partnerships;
  - **information to support social inclusion strategies** including analysis of disaggregated data on sales and investment and firm-led customer/supplier insight surveys;
  - **commitment to conduct light-touch ex-post studies** approximately 2 years after closure of the MSP grant for a select group of partnerships. Partners consent to participate in the ex-post study via a consent clause in the award document.

## REFLECTIONS ON CHALLENGES AND ITERATIVE LEARNING

MSP regularly takes time to pause and reflect, in order to surface areas of growth, challenges experienced, and prioritize adaptive actions. Several highlights from this period are organized in the following areas:

**Partnership Facility:** As mentioned above, this period MSP conducted a series of after-action reviews to capture experiential learning as it emerged from evaluation, co-development, and finalizing awards in the southern Africa window. This allowed applicable insights to be integrated real-time into the Cambodia window, phased one–two months afterwards, and into preparation for the Solomon Islands window.

Multiple changes were made as a result of learning, including small changes (e.g., adjusting the agenda for the technical evaluation committee to better enable portfolio-level discussions and refining co-development prompts for more effective outcomes), as well as larger shifts (updating MSP’s selection criteria and streamlining the grant competition process for future facility windows).

Heading into **co-development**, MSP articulated this learning question: *Will co-development make a meaningful difference in aligning objectives, maximizing the development impact, and heightening intentionality of driving benefits towards women?* There is now strong consensus around co-development’s value in meaningfully influencing all these areas. For example, in Cambodia, conversations prompted more transparent, incentive-driven discussions to find shared value around inclusion. Furthermore, three prospective partners were eliminated during co-development; at initial concept note phase there did appear to be alignment with USAID’s development objective interests, but co-development revealed deeper mis-alignment.

**Adoption and uptake:** For a global, demand-driven contract with diverse stakeholder groups like MSP, there are inherent challenges in reaching stakeholders with learning (access), influencing actual learning and uptake of good practice, and in monitoring this access and uptake. This period MSP piloted internal processes to strengthen the focus on adoption and behavior change in learning activities. MSP also sought out learning from other USAID global contracts with learning elements, including USAID INVEST and Feed the Future Advancing Women’s Empowerment, harvesting insights on adult learning for target technical audiences, survey design for capturing uptake, and frameworks for behavior change.

**COVID-19 pandemic:** As the pandemic continues MSP remains a fully virtual project. MSP continued to intentionally mitigate many associated challenges discussed in detail in the last report such as building team culture while working entirely remotely, recruiting staff, and maintaining strong adaptive management capabilities. These persist with evolving implications including:

- MSP had to further delay plans to return to an in-person office planned for September when the Delta variant resulted in a new wave of virus infections in July and August; MSP’s office plans were put on hold through the remainder of 2021;
- The Fundamentals of MSD Training developed for USAID was originally designed for in-person delivery, with the assumption that staff would be back in offices by now instead the training will need to be adapted for virtual delivery;
- Virtual co-development created some challenges (e.g., building rapport between partner and MSP), but an unexpected benefit was the increased timeframe for the discussions over several weeks allowed for more meaningful reflection on important topics.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS PROGRESS FOR MSP INDICATORS

INDICATOR	RATIONALE	DISAGGREGATES	CURRENT REPORTING PERIOD (4/1/21 – 9/30/21)		TOTAL ACCUMULATED TO DATE	
			Disaggregated values	Total Values	Disaggregated values	Total Values
<b>1. Number of buy-in commitments for MSP services</b>	Each buy-in contributes towards the advancement of learning and good practice on PSE and MSD; this is a top-line metric of MSP's reach and responsiveness to USAID demand.	Long-term partnership buy-ins	0	<b>5</b>	3	<b>10</b>
		Short-term learning assignments	5		7	
<b>2. Number of MSP collaborators</b>	Successful implementation requires the integration of a diverse set of expertise and viewpoints that support PSE and MSD learning and good practice as well as collaboration with dispersed leaders to drive cultural and operational transformation MSP seeks to catalyze.	Formal (paid)	7	<b>40</b>	12	<b>84</b>
		Informal (unpaid)	33		72	
<b>3. Number of learning products</b>	Learning products serve to advance learning and good practice and support cultural and operational transformation on PSE and MSD within USAID and its implementers.	N/A	N/A	<b>9</b>	N/A	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Number of individuals accessing MSP learning products</b>	Provides a measure of the volume of exposure of MSP stakeholders to Activity learning products.	In-person or virtual event attendance	112	<b>4,979</b>	176	<b>5,040</b>
		Unique website page views	4,864		4,864	
		Downloads *non-unique subset of page views. Only event attendance and page views are counted in Total.	671		671	
<b>5. Average client satisfaction score</b>	A validation that MSP produces effective knowledge products and services which aim to drive organizational or cultural change and to ensure learning is self-sustained.	Long-term partnership buy-ins	4.25	<b>4.20/5</b>	4.25	<b>4.20/5</b>
		Short-term learning assignments	4		4	

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS PROGRESS FOR MSP INDICATORS (CONT'D)

INDICATOR	RATIONALE	DISAGGREGATES	CURRENT REPORTING PERIOD (4/1/21 – 9/30/21)		TOTAL ACCUMULATED TO DATE	
			Disaggregated values	Total Values	Disaggregated values	Total Values
<b>6. Value of new USG commitments and private-sector investment leveraged by the USG to support food security and nutrition</b>	<i>Applied to the Partnership Facility only.</i>  Measuring “dollars leveraged” is one normalized metric for understanding scale of additionality across diverse contexts. MSP has also introduced other indicators and learning processes to add nuance and depth.	USG commitment amount	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>
		Private-sector partner leveraged amount				
<b>7. Number of public-private partnerships formed as a result of MSP funding</b>	<i>Applied to the Partnership Facility only.</i>  More partnerships are desirable and contribute to inclusive and resilient agricultural-led economic growth, improved food security and nutrition, and/or increased incomes for the poor	N/A	N/A	<b>3</b>	N/A	<b>3</b>
<b>8. Number of technologies, practices, and approaches under various phases of research, development, and uptake as a result of USG assistance</b>	<i>Applied to the Partnership Facility only.</i>  This indicator helps track all partner-driven innovation catalyzed by USAID assistance. It helps to measure innovation at its source and will feed into broader insights around market trends and competitive dynamics.	Phase 1: Under R&D	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>
		Phase 2: Field testing				
		Phase 3: Available for uptake				
		Phase 4: Demonstrate uptake				
<b>9. Value of annual sales of producers and firms receiving USG assistance</b>	<i>Applied to the Partnership Facility only.</i>  Measuring changes in the value of annual sales is an important indicator for business growth, productivity, and overall market health. This indicator also supports insights around several dynamics of inclusivity and diversity by disaggregating data across three levels.	1st level: Type of product/service	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>	<i>Too early to report</i>
		2nd level: Type of producer/firm				
		3rd level (a): Sex				
		3rd level (b): Age				



# FEED <sup>THE</sup> FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

[www.agrilinks.org/msp](http://www.agrilinks.org/msp)  
[MSP\\_information@ftf-msp.org](mailto:MSP_information@ftf-msp.org)