

What support do MSD leaders need to thrive?

MSD Leadership Brief 2

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Overview

This brief demonstrates the rationale for investing in support for MSD Team Leaders. It assesses the strengths, weaknesses and enabling conditions of existing supports.

The **MSD Leadership Briefs** are the product of the MSD Leadership Clinics, a 6-month engagement process in 2023 with 42 senior leaders (donors, implementers, and consultants). Participants met monthly in small groups led by facilitators to discuss practical issues related to leadership in programmes that take a MSD (market systems development) approach.

The first brief examined the career pathways of MSD team leaders and how to boost their supply. This second brief focuses on how to support MSD team leaders once in post.

Context:

The success of programmes that use an MSD approach depends crucially on having Team Leaders (TL) with a combination of MSD knowledge and leadership skills. As more MSD projects are commissioned, with a wider variation in size, scope and emphasis, demand has increased for leaders who can work in different contexts and sectors, towards different objectives.

Unfortunately, support for these leaders to grow, learn and reflect on their leadership has not kept pace. The availability of guidance, resources and training for general MSD programme staff and for some specialised roles (e.g. MEL / MRM) has expanded greatly in the past 10 years, and yet guidance on how to lead an MSD programme has been virtually non-existent.

Problem:

"There is a mentality that we don't want to burden the TL with extra work since they already have so much on their plate and if they are keeping the client happy then we don't need to invest in the TL. Most of the time the client only cares that we are meeting our short-term results. Only when there are serious management issues that arise or when the donor is technically savvy enough to raise an issue does headquarters backstopping intervene." (HQ implementer)

This brief responds to a chronic underinvestment in MSD team leaders. TLs are usually the highest paid individual on a programme and are typically named on proposals to demonstrate leadership capacity. This sets the stage for an unfortunate constellation of incentives whereby nobody wants to admit that TLs are works-in-progress, learning on the job in a high-pressure, complex environment. Instead:

- Team leaders themselves need to put their best foot forward, often via a CV that conveys years of experience managing donor-funded programmes.
- Implementing organisations portray their proposed candidate as fully formed, ready to lead without any weaknesses or need for support.
- Donors want confidence in the TL who ultimately is managing their funds and responsible for achieving scalable, sustainable and inclusive results.

Approach and scope:

Despite the incentives, there is hope. Many projects and organisations are finding creative ways to support learning and growth of their TLs – both new and experienced. This series of briefs draws on the experiences of the 42 participants in the MSD Leadership Clinics, the majority of whom have led MSD programmes. This experience is complemented by interviews and surveys on MSD leadership competencies.

This brief argues that supporting TLs is a good investment of public resources. The brief synthesises existing experience into a simple structure that highlights options and trade-offs to key decision-makers – implementing organisations and their donors. Finally, it offers TLs themselves a road map for advocating for effective support and resources.

Intended users & uses

- Implementer HQ leads: to review and reflect on the organisational approach to supporting MSD TLs, including resource allocation, types of support, and how TLs are positioned in project design and proposal writing processes.
- Donor programme managers in embassies: to hold implementers to a higher standard when it comes to supporting their MSD TLs, by requiring more resources to be allocated, and more attention to detail on the quality of support.
- Team leaders: to recognise the breadth of types of support available, and to understand how to request and advocate for what they need to do their jobs.

Part 1 Why support leaders?

1.1 Why do MSD leaders need support?

Leading a development programme is challenging. This intensifies when implementing MSD approaches, as team leaders (TLs) must consistently challenge established practices. They must persuade technical, MEL, operations and finance staff to work differently, while continuously realigning expectations with organisational headquarters and donors regarding programme learning and results.

These pressures mean TLs need targeted support and reflective spaces to navigate overlapping challenges. Despite a common assumption that anyone in a leadership position is "fully baked," the reality is that all MSD TLs are continually learning. This ongoing development is essential for an approach grounded in core principles but requiring critical thinking and constant adaptation to each context.



There is the expectation that once you reach the TL position that there is no need to invest in development and learning. But resources are needed!"
[former team leader]

1.2 Why should organisations invest in support?

The primary rationale for implementers to invest in TL support is improved implementation quality, increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable results at scale. However, the reality is more complex.

Donors rarely hold implementers accountable for leadership quality and implementation methods. Short-term management focuses on budget expenditure and reaching immediate targets. Donors seldom enquire about leadership skills or support mechanisms after the bidding process. To be pragmatic, investment justifications must align with organisational incentives:

- **Future Business Development:** impact that translates into competitive advantage for winning future projects
- **Leadership Pipeline:** building internal leaders committed to systems thinking rather than hiring externally
- **Reputation Building:** establishing organisational credibility in the MSD space

A compelling business case is the cost of inaction. Unsupported TLs risk burnout and departure, triggering expensive transitions with direct recruitment costs and significant programme disruption. Programme teams hesitate to take risks during leadership vacuums, and multiple transitions within a programme create exhaustion from constantly changing strategies and direction, leading to staff frustration and disengagement.

1.3 Why is this a hard case to make?

Donors, implementers, and TLs themselves have incentives to perpetuate the pattern of over-hyping and under-supporting TLs. The persistent myth of the "hero team leader" who possesses all required skills makes it difficult for any single implementer to acknowledge their TLs need additional support without appearing weak compared to competitors.

Solving this collective action problem requires change from multiple directions:

- Donors must presume all TLs need support and request implementers to demonstrate what they offer in this domain
- Implementers must acknowledge that all TLs are learning and either fund their support or explicitly request resources in project budgets
- Leaders must self-advocate for necessary supporting conditions without bearing this burden alone

RECOMMENDATIONS: Understand the need for leadership support

For Implementing organisations:

- Acknowledge that all TLs require ongoing support regardless of experience level
- Recognise the substantial business cost of TL burnout and turnover
- Move beyond the "hero TL" myth and normalise leadership development

For Donors:

- Assume all TLs need support and evaluate implementers on their support approach
- Increase emphasis on implementation quality in programme evaluation
- Create incentives that reward investment in leadership capacity

For Team Leaders:

- Proactively identify development needs and advocate for appropriate support
- Build peer networks for knowledge sharing and emotional support
- Recognise that acknowledging development needs is a strength, not a weakness

Part 2 What support do leaders need?

2.1 What does it mean to be a good MSD leader?

There is no single model for an effective MSD TL. Precise specifications depend on programme scope, technical domain, strategic objectives, team size and budget. However, research and conversations with MSD TLs have already identified key role functions across four domains.

Domains of competency for MSD team leaders			
A. Manage a portfolio of interventions	B. Shape the team's learning culture	C. Create the space to operate	D. Adaptive operations
Deal-making, experimentation and capacity building within a broader vision of systemic change	Setting the structure and culture for dynamic learning and mutual feedback between technical and MEL teams	Managing the most influential relationships internally and externally, so the team focuses on the core work of MSD	Taking charge of hiring, promotion, budgets and grants/procurement to make those functions more flexible and 'fit for MSD'

The key competencies required for MSD TLs include:

- **Technical understanding:** all MSD TLs need a strong grasp of MSD principles and their practical application to develop effective intervention portfolios. While they need not be technical experts, they must understand the fundamental principles of the approach and its application to their specific context.
- **Learning culture:** MSD TLs can disproportionately influence the programme's learning culture. In-depth engagement with functional teams in technical debates and partnership development is essential for maintaining adaptive management.
- **Relationship management:** MSD TLs must simultaneously manage multiple high-stakes internal and external relationships. Effective management acts as a buffer against external pressures to create space for implementing MSD; poor management causes distractions and erodes learning culture.
- **Adaptive operations:** MSD TLs must proactively engage in staff recruitment and promotion, budget management, and strategic use of procurement and grants instruments. This requires partnering with operations departments to drive changes that often challenge standard practices.

These domains require working under pressure on complex, evolving issues with many stakeholders - the essence of MSD Leadership.

2.2 How do the needs of different types of TLs vary?

People enter the TL role with varying backgrounds, so their skills need to be calibrated with others in the management team. Having a mix of experiences (with the country, sector, donor, and MSD approach) can compensate for individual gaps. Job descriptions and organisational charts should be adapted to match the people who occupy the roles.

Two key dimensions of experience are:

1. level of experience applying the MSD approach; and
2. level of experience leading development projects.

Based on these two dimensions, scenarios can be imagined for different types of tailored support.

These examples are meant to challenge binary assumptions about 'good' and 'bad' leaders and demonstrate instead that all leaders benefit from support, though the nature of support will differ significantly based on experience and context.

Differing support needs based on levels of experience		
	Less experience in leadership positions	More experience in leadership positions
More experience with the MSD approach	Example 1: An experienced intervention manager on an MSD programme is promoted to deputy TL. Support: structured training on MSD & leadership, leadership coaching to approach new role.	Example 2: An experienced MSD TL who has led one programme in a familiar sector in their home country is hired to lead a new programme in a different context/country. Support: peer networks with contextual knowledge, leadership coaching to actively adapt approach to new context.
Less experience with the MSD approach	Example 3: A technical expert hired from a specific sector into an MSD programme is rapidly promoted into a head of portfolio role based on their skill and an unexpected opening. Support: MSD training, mentoring and peer networks within implementer's portfolio.	Example 4: An experienced TL with established technical expertise (e.g. in education or health) is hired to launch a programme taking an MSD approach in that sector for the first time in a given country. Support: MSD training, follow-up coaching or mentoring, access to peers applying MSD in the sector globally

2.3 Different types of support available

Support for TLs falls into two broad categories: hierarchical support (training, backstopping, coaching, mentoring) and horizontal support (peer networks, communities of practice).

Hierarchical support

Hierarchical support involves TLs learning from those with more expertise in specific areas. Overall, backstopping is the most common approach in current practice, typically provided by specialised head office teams who support MSD programmes through periodic calls with the TL.

This is an important organisational function, but it rarely foregrounds the leadership development of the TL, instead it focuses on fighting fires and solving technical issues. In contrast, many TLs articulated their desire for more customised and in-depth support via explicit coaching and mentoring.

Hierarchical support	Good for:	Requires:	Limitations:
Training	Providing basic tools, setting frameworks. Technical leads with limited management experience can develop leadership approaches. General managers' chance to grasp MSD approach holistically.	Budget and time for TL participation. High quality training oriented to management positions in MSD.	Difficult to address messy real-world applications. Budgets for expensive training. Limited available offers currently.
Back-stopping or advising	Technical MSD learning. Insight into organisational functions (operations, HR).	HQ staff with field experience, MSD knowledge, 'fit' with the leader, and time for ongoing relationships.	Time pressures (HQ pulled into business development). 'Fly in' experts with new ideas can undermine leadership.
Coaching & mentoring	Demand-driven holistic approach to building leader skills and confidence to manage MSD projects.	MSD leadership experience, coaching skills (listening, questions, challenging assumptions), humility, time.	Cost and time availability of skilled coaches on an ongoing basis.

Horizontal support

Horizontal support relies on peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange. The main resource required is MSD TLs' time, along with organising infrastructure. Peer exchanges offer more direct interaction and relationship building but require resources for facilitation and coordination. Virtual interactions can lead to insights through reflection but create more pressure on individuals to find time, which can result in low engagement rates.

Horizontal Support	Good for:	Requires:	Limitations:
Small group peer networks and targeted exchanges	Idea exchange. Venting frustrations. Problem solving specific issues. Building networks for future work.	Availability and openness from peers based on familiarity & shared struggles. Base level of skills / knowledge in group. Time allocated to learning.	Lack of in-depth attention to individual needs. May get stuck 'experience sharing' with limited development of leadership skills.
Large group webinars, communities of practice	Technical learning. Documentation of leadership case studies.	Openness to share, clear framing or curation of topics. Experienced 'practitioners' to learn from.	Lack of online engagement. Harder to build trust in purely digital spaces.



You need a relaxed and safe space to share ideas. There is a personal risk that you take when exposing or expressing vulnerabilities
[clinic participant]

RECOMMENDATIONS: Understand the need for leadership support

For Implementing organisations:

- Invest in a mix of support that addresses both technical and leadership dimensions
- Create structured pathways for different TL experience profiles
- Prioritise long-term, relationship-based support over one-off interventions
- Build internal peer networks to leverage existing organisational knowledge

For Donors:

- Fund specific leadership development activities in project budgets
- Recognise that different TL backgrounds require different support approaches
- Encourage cross-project learning and knowledge sharing

For Team Leaders:

- Identify your specific profile of experience and seek appropriate support
- Balance technical MSD learning with leadership skill development
- Engage with both hierarchical support (training, coaching) and peer networks
- Allocate protected time for learning and reflection despite operational pressures

Part 3 How to support leaders

3.1 How are individual needs identified?

Beginning a conversation about leadership support requires acknowledging that individual TLs have unmet needs. Currently, the process for identifying these needs remains ambiguous and implicit in many organisations. While large implementers typically have formal performance review processes for all staff, including TLs, these rarely connect to tailored support for developing MSD leadership capacity. These processes are often managed by generalist human resources departments that may miss opportunities to incorporate MSD-specific insights from technical departments.

Common practice places the burden on leaders to be proactive in accessing support. TLs must self-assess their needs and advocate for resources, as illustrated by these quotes:

 *There was very little support from HQ and no support from the donor for TL or senior management development. Everything has to be self-funded and self-found" [Team Leader]*

 *HQ couldn't grapple with the idea of mentoring support and any external mentoring. I had to fund myself." [Team Leader]*

TLs often access support and learning through informal networks that extend beyond their project and current employer. However, these networks depend on one's history of experience working with MSD and are not equally available to all TLs.

There is a significant gap across implementers in structured approaches to assessing MSD Leadership capacities. Leaving this critical function to TLs themselves is insufficient. Innovation and experimentation are required, addressing questions such as:

- Who decides there is a need: the leader themselves, their supervisor or the donor?
- Who decides what skills to build and how?
- What prompts reflection on a leader's capabilities - a process or a tool?

3.2 How can implementers better support their MSD TLs?

Investment by implementers is crucial to enable TLs to access support. Approaches vary widely between organisations and even across different projects in a single organisation. See the box below for more details. All organisations can improve, and several core principles were evident from examples of effective support: and this brief aims to make the roadmap toward greater investment more visible.

When implementers do invest in TL support, important considerations include:

- **Long-term** capacity building programmes are more valuable than one-off training, providing psychological support through programme challenges.
- Support must be **responsive and tailored** to address rapidly changing TL challenges.
- Support must be **high quality**, provided by someone with strong coaching or facilitation skills and MSD leadership knowledge.

- Support needs a **well-defined role with appropriate resources** and clear boundaries so TLs know what support they can expect.
- Support should be **coherent and coordinated** to avoid frustrating TLs with diverging opinions or rotating short-term consultants who lack programme history.

Factors that influence an implementer's approach to support

Scope of TL role: is the TL solely focused on one programme? Or do they also have a broader set of responsibilities (e.g. business development)

Contract length: does the TL have a multi-year contract for the life of the programme? Or a 1-2 year contract subject to performance-based renewal?

Fee structure and attitude towards TL support: does the implementer have budget room to offer higher salaries, hire more experienced leaders, and therefore invest less in support? Or do they have less budget, hire mid-career leaders (or promote from within) and invest more in support?

Size of MSD portfolio: does the implementer have a large MSD portfolio enabling internal peer learning? Or does it only have 1 or 2 MSD programmes, and therefore depend on external networks for peer TL learning?

Generalist vs specialist identity: does the implementer specialise in MSD as an approach, and therefore invest more in specialised "MSD leadership" support? Or does the implementer have a generalist approach and therefore focus on generic leadership development?

Availability of in-house technical support: does the implementer have a large in-house technical team and can it provide consistent support to MSD programmes? Or does the implementer have limited in-house capacity and rely more on external support?

3.3 How can donors encourage support?



There has to be an incentive for implementers to improve their game, and become organisations that better equip their project teams for the demands of using MSD in the field."
[former Team Leader]

While most direct support activities fall within the implementers' scope, donors play several crucial roles:

1. Increase priority on implementation quality of the MSD approach.
 - Address the underlying issue that implementers aren't typically held accountable for implementation quality. Addressing this strengthens the rationale for investing in teams, including TLs.
 - When donors emphasise adherence to MSD principles, TLs can focus more on delivering benefits rather than advocating for the approach, and HQ backstoppers are motivated to invest in support.

2. Signal the importance of supporting leaders in project design, tendering and co-creation.
 - Ask about people and processes supporting the project team, not just the TL's qualifications. Challenge implementers to strengthen organisational capabilities in order to provide sustainable MSD project support.
 - Request that staff capacity development plans are included in management proposals to secure budget lines for implementation.
3. Encourage and approve budgeting for staff and leader development during annual work planning.
 - Embedding support commitments in budgets greatly increases the likelihood of support actually being provided.
 - Critical focus: continuous support, not just startup training, to address staff turnover and evolving programme needs.



Nothing 'new' is needed. Mentoring is the key, and it already exists. It just needs to become more normal and used more frequently. Donors need to require it in tender documents, and it will be included in technical proposals with a budget line." [Experienced TL]

RECOMMENDATIONS: Create effective support systems

For Implementing organisations:

- Establish structured processes to identify TL development needs, rather than relying on self-identification
- Create formal mechanisms for integrating MSD expertise into performance management systems
- Invest in long-term, responsive, high-quality support with clear scope and coordination. Ensure this aligns with organisational identity and fee structures

For Donors:

- Hold implementers accountable for implementation quality, not just results
- Explicitly require TL support plans in proposals and work planning
- Approve budgets for leadership development throughout the programme lifecycle
- Create incentives for implementers to invest in TL capacity

For Team Leaders:

- Proactively seek support and be specific about development needs
- Build networks beyond organisational boundaries to gain varied perspectives
- Collaborate with HQ to design systems that address real needs.

Part 4 Who does, who pays?

This section explores who delivers support to TLs and who pays for it. The table below summarises the array of support types and who typically delivers and funds them, based on anecdotal insights from TLs and HQ support teams.

Type of support	Who does (current)	Who pays (current)
Training	Internal and external training providers	Mix of project & HQ budgets
Backstopping and advising	- Internal technical support units - External consulting firms providing backstopping	- Some organisations fully cost backstopping to the project - Others draw from HQ overheads
Coaching / mentoring	- Internal: experienced TLs and senior managers - External: consulting firms or individual coaches	- Coaching: project or HQ budgets - Mentoring: often informal or unfunded
Small group peer networks & exchanges	- Mostly internal groups & networks - Occasional external and cross-organisational exchanges	Mostly un-funded / informal
Large group COPs, webinars, forums	Mostly external / cross-organisational	- Publicly funded (e.g. BEAM) - Drawn from volunteers

4.1 Who delivers the support?

There is a clear division between internally and externally delivered support. Training, coaching and communities of practice tend to be delivered by external actors, while backstopping/advising, mentoring and peer networks are typically offered internally.

The most important factor regarding 'who does' is quality, typically proxied by MSD leadership experience. Problems arise when organisations assign support functions to roles in HQ global support teams regardless of individual skill and experience. As implementers invest in full-time technical staff for backstopping, they naturally want to leverage this group for demand-driven support, especially coaching.

As external coaching and training grow, the key challenge is how to structure and fund the costs.

4.2 Who pays for the support?

There are significant disagreements around how easy, or possible, it is to allocate budgets for TL support. This section provides perspectives from various implementers but lacks hard data on spending patterns and donor rules. Further research is needed in this area.

The two primary and immediate funding sources come from project budgets and HQ organisational budgets (derived from retained resource overheads or profits from running projects). A rare third possibility is a separate donor providing funding specifically for this activity.

While all money ultimately comes from donors, in practice organisational control of resources matters as departments compete for budget shares. The challenge arises when trying to identify a single stakeholder responsible for TL learning and capacity building.



The budget (for support) is expected to come from project budget, or directly from the donor, with no overhead contribution from implementer HQ." [Team Leader]

A more productive approach focuses on the shared interest that donors and implementers have in investing in TLs, recognising both private and public benefits:

- Strong support helps TLs thrive and so improves project outcomes - which is in the donor's ultimate interest and helps the implementer's competitive positioning for future work.
- Stronger leaders increase the size and quality of the talent pool, which is a public good, even if leaders leave projects before completing their expected tenure.

Donors and implementers should work together to jointly fund appropriate, high-quality support. This may require implementers to invest their 'own' resources to demonstrate commitment and potential impact. The vision is a new baseline assumption where donors expect implementers to invest in support and to include it in proposals, budgets and work plans. In turn, implementers respond by establishing or expanding the types of support that they and their TLs deem most valuable.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Establish sustainable funding & delivery models

For Implementing organisations:

- Build support costs into project budgets from the proposal stage
- Develop clear criteria for when to use internal versus external support providers
- Assess whether internal technical support staff have both MSD and coaching/mentoring skills
- Engage external firms where appropriate
- Allocate a small percentage of overheads to TL development as an organisational investment

For Donors:

- Recognise TL support as a legitimate project expense that contributes to outcomes
- Consider joint funding models where donors match implementer investments in TL development
- Support sector-wide initiatives that improve the overall quality of MSD leadership
- Evaluate proposals partly on the quality and sustainability of TL support approaches

For both donors and implementers:

- Create shared funding models that acknowledge both private and public benefits
- Invest in developing a qualified pool of MSD leadership coaches and mentors
- Document the return on investment from TL support to build the business case
- Establish industry standards for appropriate levels of TL support investment

Part 5 A roadmap for action

This brief has argued for increased investment in MSD TLs, outlined the competencies they need, assessed the various types of support available, and examined who should deliver and fund this support. To conclude, this section summarises key recommendations for each stakeholder group along with promising pathways for collective action.

5.1 Implementing organisations

Implementers need to be the protagonist in the TL support story. They have the most to lose if TLs are unsupported, and they are the main organisational structure that can actually implement effective support at scale. Doing so requires changes to mindset, structure and resourcing.

Mindset shifts:

Implementers need to challenge the “hero TL” myth for themselves and donors. What’s needed is an explicit acknowledgement that all TLs need ongoing support, regardless of their experience level. Fundamentally this is about reframing leadership development as an investment, not a cost.

Investing resources:

Implementers should combine a mix of hierarchical and horizontal support to get the best of both worlds. Implementers can provide quality hierarchical support by funding long-term engagements with qualified coaches and mentors who understand MSD and leadership. To ensure quality horizontal support they must invest in structures that enable formal peer networks and facilitated knowledge sharing between TLs.

Structural change:

Key to unlocking resources is to include support costs in proposals and operating budgets as standard practice. This requires a shift in mindset, so individual proposal leads aren’t forced to justify their proposal each time. Other key structures include clear career pathways that reward technical and leadership growth, and longer-term contracts that encourage investment.

5.2 Donors

For implementers to drive change, donors need to actively support and reinforce the direction advocated in this brief at different stages in the programme lifecycle:

Programme design and evaluation:

Donors should explicitly include requests for leadership support in requests for proposals and their evaluation criteria. This gives implementers the permission to write it into budgets, and the incentives to invest in TL support. More broadly, a focus on implementation quality (over short-term results) creates the conditions focusing on TL support.

Funding mechanisms:

Donors have different levers they can use to shape funding decisions. At a basic level, they need to approve budget allocations for ongoing leadership development throughout the programme lifecycle. Other avenues to explore include matching fund approaches to encourage implementer investment, and funding sector-wide leadership development

initiatives that benefit the MSD field (e.g. cost-sharing the development of advanced training courses on MSD leadership)

Relationship management:

In day-to-day programme management, donors should engage with implementers about leadership challenges rather than expecting perfection. This is rooted in a donor programme manager mindset: recognise the connection between TL support and programme outcomes.

5.3 Team Leaders

This brief is advocating for long-term change to the enabling environment - something TLs can't influence alone. However, the short-term reality is that TLs need to be savvy and pragmatic about getting the support they need to grow and thrive.

Prioritise skill development:

TLs need to balance technical MSD learning with leadership skill development. Context-specific guidance is key when transitioning to new sectors or geographies. TLs should explore this new self-reflection tool: MSD TL competencies framework.

Knowledge sharing:

Many MSD TLs already contribute to peer learning networks and communities of practice - this is a critical informal resource for others to benefit from. TLs should continue to mentor emerging leaders to strengthen the overall MSD talent pool. Finally, with some potential risk to reputation, TLs are encouraged to share their successes and challenges to help normalise leadership development as a continuous process.

Self-advocacy:

Building on self-assessment, TLs (at present) need to request appropriate support for themselves. This includes engaging with both formal and informal support networks, inside and outside their organisation, and requesting financing for specific activities (e.g. coaching, training).

Conclusion: a collective responsibility

Supporting MSD TLs is not the sole responsibility of any single actor. It requires coordinated effort from donors, implementers and TLs themselves. The challenges are real - competitive pressures, focus on short-term results and resource constraints. But the potential benefits are substantial: improved programme outcomes, reduced burnout and turnover, and a stronger overall MSD field.

Many high-impact changes may not require significant new funding but rather shifts in mindset, priorities and organisational culture. However, without some dedicated funding, these behavioural changes may not be sustainable in the long term. The most effective approach combines targeted funding to support and reinforce desired behavioural changes.

By taking concrete steps to better support the leaders who drive MSD programmes, we can significantly enhance the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of market systems development work worldwide. Leading MSD programmes have already figured out how to do this on a 'special case' basis, but the challenge laid down in this brief is how to do it reliably and at scale.



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