

Call for Participants

Market System Approaches to Food Security and Nutrition Programming

The SEEP Network is announcing the launch of an online learning program in Market System Approaches to Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Programming, as a part of its [IDEAL](#) project.

Background

Market systems approaches like market systems development (MSD) or Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) have been identified as an effective strategy for facilitating improved food security and nutrition outcomes. These approaches aim to reduce poverty by transforming the system's structure and characteristics to increase market participation on terms that are more inclusive and beneficial. They identify and address the root causes of why market systems often fail to meet the needs of the vulnerable and marginalized by working with local actors to create sustainable long-term solutions to these issues. The defining characteristic of this approach is finding a way for the market system itself to fix these problems to reduce dependency on external aid and create sustainable solutions that continue far beyond the lifetime of a program.

It is important in fragile and crisis contexts to understand the constraints inhibiting (or that could inhibit) the functionality and access of food systems for vulnerable populations. Such an approach allows us to be 'market system aware' and to identify opportunities to help sustain and strengthen the functionality of inclusive systems critical to crisis-affected populations.

Designing and implementing a market systems approach is a challenging task for any organization, not least those working in fragile contexts. It requires a shift in mindset and skillset from direct provision and intervention to working to better understand local systems, as well as working with local actors to facilitate the interventions needed to improve systems. This can take time to achieve and requires strategic thinking to balance immediate, survival needs with long-term goals. It requires appropriate humanitarian action to support developmental outcomes.

At SEEP, we recognize that adopting market systems approaches into your work is a journey. We know the practical realities of working in challenging environments and the time required to shift organizational and local actor behaviour to embrace new practices. As such the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS) were created.

As part of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership, the MERS provide a contextually applicable set of standards relevant across the program lifecycle to help assess the quality of market system approaches used in humanitarian and development programming. The MERS advocate for the use of market systems approaches in any sector and crisis context at any point in the crisis lifecycle.

The MERS can help organizations build the foundations of basic market systems programming and provide aspirational standards to build higher quality programming as organizations build their internal capacity.

Mainstreaming the MERS into any program will need special considerations to integrate these standards into the policies and standards of the organization, the staffing plans, business development activities, proposals, M&E and implementation phases. The MERS are designed with this in mind, and you do not need to be a market systems expert to understand how to navigate the standards - it is the intention they are accessible to all to facilitate the uptake and use.

Course Objectives

This online learning course will offer a tailored, comprehensive training on applying market system approaches in FSN programming. It will offer integrated approaches that leverage MSD to drive impact, efficiency and sustainability, and provide access to tools that build quality MSD programming as articulated by the MERS.

SEEP will invest its previous set of experiences and capabilities in this field to equip the trainees with knowledge, skills, and abilities so that they have a solid MSD-MERS foundation. This foundation will pave the way for applying market systems approaches in FSN programming and using MERS as a quality and accountability tool within their institutions, with partners, and with stakeholders. The participants will execute realistic activities and develop self-selected learning projects, as required by the curriculum, that are relevant to their current work to ensure immediate applicability of their learning to their work. This will support their respective institutions in beginning to apply MSD approaches in program design and implementation.

The learning course will bring together experienced practitioners from the humanitarian and development contexts in both the field and at headquarters. The practitioners will share lessons learned, solve common problems, exchange practical approaches, and build a supportive network.

Course Description

This course will combine self-paced online learning modules along with live group sessions. To enhance peer learning opportunities, the course will include tailored groups and one-to-one mentoring sessions. Input from participants will be gathered in advance to ensure we tackle relevant topics during maximize participant interaction. The course is expected to cover six modules:

- Module 1: Market Systems and Market Based Programming in Emergencies
- Module 2: MSD in Food Security and Nutrition in Development Contexts
- Module 3: MERS Purpose, Structure, and Application of MERS
- Module 4: MERS General Standards: Core and Assessment and Analysis
- Module 5: MERS Technical Standards: Enterprise and Market Systems Development, Asset Distribution, Financial Services, Employment
- Module 6: Applying MERS in FSN programming

All course participants will use a learning management system (LMS), which will feature course announcements, a discussion forum, class learning modules, and assignments.

Self-study modules will be released through the LMS for participants. Then, all participants (field and HQ) will attend the class sessions together, allowing for cross-fertilization of ideas and exposure to various program and operational contexts.

Each participant will receive live coaching in regularly scheduled intervals throughout the course. Through online coaching, the participants will be supported to develop and execute a MSD-MERS action plan and produce learning resources that promote/support MSD approaches in their FSN practices.

An introduction session will be conducted after participants are selected in which the course outline, delivery and expectations of the learners will be explained. During this session, the participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, add their input into the course design, and express their concerns.

Participant Profile

This online learning course is designed for you if you are an experienced practitioner at the local, regional and HQ level in Sub-Saharan Africa, and have:

- 5 or more years of experience working in a humanitarian or development context, with experience in a relevant technical sector or program area (food security and nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods, emergency response, cash programming, supply chain, monitoring and evaluation).
- Senior/managerial level staff with ability to influence operations and practice at the local, regional and HQ level (eg, senior advisors, senior technical specialists, program directors, business development managers and directors).
- Strong interest in developing practical knowledge, skills, and experience in apply MSD approaches in emergency/recovery contexts and using humanitarian standards in emergency and early recovery contexts; Concrete need/opportunity to apply course learning to develop and implement an MSD-MERS approach within programs, with demonstrated support from organizational management.
- Ability to commit up to 2 days per month to course activities, and secure buy-in and support from direct line managers to participate in course activities.
- Proactive willingness to provide course design input and share/discuss in a discussion forum.

You do not need to have any proficiency in market systems approaches to apply. Those with some proficiency in market systems should expect to find some of the introductory content not new but, having run similar courses with cash and markets advisors and MSD practitioners in the past, we know the majority of the content will be new. We will be expanding on basic market systems knowledge to discuss application of it across the humanitarian and development programming nexus; the MERS; and adoption of quality programming in organizations.

We aim to convene a cohort of 12 participants representing 4-6 participants from local NGOs and 4-6 participants from INGOs and/or multilateral organizations.

Course Schedule

The online learning course will be carried out from August 2021 to January 2022 (the timeline for course delivery will be discussed in the introduction session). The online modules will be released through the LMS. The course facilitators will arrange for a two-hour class session to complement each online module. Class sessions will be scheduled at a time and frequency that all participants can attend with consistency. The coaching sessions will be arranged between the facilitators and each participant separately based on their availability. A final virtual learning event will be held at the end of the course to disseminate and promote final outputs from each implementing organization.

About SEEP

[SEEP](#) is a collaborative learning network. Through our 100+ members we support thousands of implementing practitioners to scale strategies that create opportunities for vulnerable populations, especially women and those affected by crises and disasters, to participate in markets and improve their quality of life. SEEP leads development, revision and dissemination of the MERS, the internationally recognized consensus on best practices for building economic resilience for crisis-affected communities. Over the last 13 years MERS initiatives have engaged a diverse group of practitioners working across the domains of food security, livelihoods, economic recovery, and emergency response to improve crisis response in humanitarian and development contexts.

SEEP produces and curates hundreds of resources (publications, blogs, webinars) that explore solutions and challenges related to food security and nutrition (FSN) in emergency and development contexts. Through these efforts, SEEP has built strong internal understanding of market-based and market systems approaches, the benefits of these approaches in emergency/assistance programming, and the unique challenges to applying these approaches across a range of contexts.

SEEP has 35 years of experience developing online and in-person platforms that enable learning and collaboration across a broad network. Over the last three years, SEEP conducted an average of 40 learning events per year, and annually directly engaging 6,000+ practitioners from 1,300+ organizations. Learning formats range from webinar series, in-person convenings, in-person and virtual trainings, and peer learning groups.

Course Facilitators

Katie Whitehouse

Beginning in Accenture plc, Katie has 15 years of work experience working across a broad range of industries on building more inclusive business models, products and sustainable operational practices into organizations. She was lead consultant on an award-winning feasibility study with Vodafone on developing opportunities for livelihood growth in developing countries through

mobile technology. Her background in strategy alongside Environmental Engineering has also led to her driving the uptake of MSD in WASH and clean energy.

Katie is a freelance consultant providing technical advice, project delivery, organizational strategy and training support to the aid sector using market-based approaches. Katie is passionate about making solutions practical for adoption to those working in complex situations. More recently she has worked with Mercy Corps and DRC on using these approaches in displacement contexts and organizational transformation for adoption of market systems approaches. She is trained in Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) and a specialist trainer for 3 years in the SEEP Network in Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS), including the recent MERS Focal Point program. She has delivered a number of publications and trainings on integrating market thinking into the sector, whilst working closely with the Markets in Crisis community.

Maha Hayek

Maha Hayek is a market systems development advisor, with over six years of experience working with vulnerable groups, including women and youth, in marginalized areas. Maha has contributed to the implementation of many international development programs, with different donors, such as SIDA-Sweden, DFID-UK and DFAT-Australia. The scope of her work includes but is not limited to analysing and assessing the needs of different economic sectors, identifying the related market failures, designing, and developing intervention models and assuring such interventions have sustainable impact to contribute to the economic development. Maha has recently joined the SEEP Network as a Resilient Markets Advisor and is facilitating the Markets in Crisis ([MiC](#)) community of Practice.

Application Deadline

If you are interested in applying for this learning opportunity, please fill out this [online application](#) no later than **August 9, 2021**.

Practical Considerations Before Applying

This is an online course. There are self-paced modules to allow for the majority of learning to take place in your own time to support your availability, computer, and internet access. All course materials and classes will be delivered in English.

However, the course does have interactive group and mentoring sessions that are vital to your learning experience. During these pre-scheduled sessions, you will need to make sure you have a good enough internet connection to engage with the session. These will likely take place only once a month and you will be given dates in advance for planning purposes.

Remember, this is an interactive training course, and all participants will be expected to fully contribute to group sessions and individual mentoring sessions in order to complete the course. All interactive learning forums will be safe spaces to share questions, concerns and ideas amongst peers and mentors. We hope this will be especially useful to those often working in isolation or small groups to be able to hear and share different experiences and perspectives.

Attendance will be monitored, and you will not be deemed as fully completing the course if all self-paced modules are not completed and, at least, 80% of online classes and mentoring

sessions are attended and contributed to. Full completion of project work is conditional of completion of the course.

If you think you will be unable to attend this training this time, please do not apply but do indicate your interest; tell us why you were unable to apply at this time; and if you would like to be contacted in case of future training to Maha Hayek at hayek@seepnetwork.org.