

Curriculum Vitae

Douglas Reeler

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South African

Born 22 June 1957, Zambia

CORE COMPETENCIES / COMPETENCY SUMMARY

I have been working for over thirty years, mostly in Southern Africa and East Africa, and sometimes in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, in contexts of under-development, poverty and oppression, across multiple issues and sectors. I am a social process designer and facilitator.

My key competency, as a social process facilitator, is to help people to better see themselves, to bring to light the hidden dynamics in their immediate and wider contexts, to better understand what is really happening, to learn from their experiences and each other, to reveal the enormous and hidden resourcefulness they have and the choices that are available to them.

My skills, and that of my colleagues, has extended into the design and facilitation of processes of collective horizontal action learning, participatory action research and the collective writing and publication of practice guides and case studies (most strongly manifest in the [Barefoot Guides](#)). Not only do we know that action learning is in the DNA of adaptive or emergent processes of change but we have learned from our own and others' experiences that collective horizontal learning processes often provide the best foundations for collaborative working processes and initiatives.

More specifically:

- A. Concept and process design, materials development and facilitation of small and large group processes for accompanying civil society organisations, networks, alliances and multi-actor initiatives
 - to more consciously surface and deepen their work practices and to find the forms of organisation and leadership that best support their practice;
 - ♦ to undertake strategic planning processes which focus on the whole system, including practice in the field;
 - ♦ to carry out self-evaluation around practice and organisation;
 - ♦ To write and publish reflections and case studies.

- B. Facilitating participatory action research, horizontal learning and knowledge production with a wide range of social change organisations/actors, including the design and facilitation of linked “Writesshops” (writing workshops)
 - to support the formation or strengthening of communities of practice within or between organisations;
 - to create [Barefoot Guides](#) to distil good practices in widely accessible (and freely available) publications;
- C. The “Training of Trainers” (facilitators) and the development of appropriate materials, in community development, organisation development, basic local government functions and facilitating Writesshops.
- D. Concept and process design, materials development and facilitation of a range of courses, including community development, organisation development, PME&R, and writing for development (case studies and proposal writing)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1997 to present – Fulltime Practitioner with Community Development Resource Association (CDRA)

In this time, I have employed the skills described above with a wide range of organisations and processes, most recently and significantly:

- Pioneer and co-leader of the Barefoot Guide Connection - 2007 to the present – www.barefootguide.org
- Facilitating Writesshops for Barefoot Guides 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 – between 2007 and 2017. (N.B. Barefoot Guide 5 on Inclusive Development to be released in October 2017 and Barefoot Guide 6 on Seed Sovereignty to be released in 2018/2019. This has included coaching, editing and training practitioners and social leaders in writing case studies and stories from the field, and for the MCNV-led initiative “Embracing Inclusion” – see the [Barefoot Guide](#) website;
- Training facilitators to design and facilitate Writesshops and the development of courseware – 2017 – the Hague, Paris and Cape Town (for October)
- WarChild Holland – 2016 and 2017 – Courses in “Facilitating Child-Centred Community Development” - in Lebanon and South Sudan - +/-25 participants in each. This included working with a local co-facilitator in each country to pass on skills;
- Plan International Academy – 2015 to 2016 – Training facilitators in “Facilitating Child-Centred Community Development” in Southern, East and West Africa (28 facilitators) and Latin America (24 facilitators);
- Free Press Unlimited (FPU) – 2017 – Facilitating FPU (50+ staff) to become a more conscious learning organisation – preliminary research, a 5-day workshop plus a 2-day follow-up;
- UN Associations of Finland and East Africa (including World Federation of the United Nations Associations) – 2012 to 2107 – strategic review and capacity development workshops;
- Nuba people of Sudan – 2015 to 2017 – strategic workshops with regional leadership (“paths before and after liberation”) and training of 24 facilitators in the basics of democratic local government (along the lines of Gram Panchayat system of India which I researched with them in 2016);

- Plan International and partners – 2016 – Research and facilitation of multi-actor process to form an initiative to combat Child Marriage in Southern Africa.

Some other organisations with which I have worked

- Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Association (PELUM) of Southern and East Africa – a network of 150+ NGOs – 1997 to 2007 – accompanying the leadership team through various capacity development and strategic processes. They are part leading the writing of the Barefoot Guide on Seed Sovereignty which Writeshops we are facilitating;
- East and Southern African Small Farmers Forum – 2002-2003. I supported the farmer leaders to facilitate the Small Farmers Convergence at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg;
- SNV Netherlands Development Organisation in Zimbabwe and Rwanda (2005 to 2014) – various strategic planning, learning organisation and management coaching assignments.
- Early Childhood Development Learning Community – a South African partner network of Bernard van Leer Foundation. Facilitating and coordinating;
- ActionAid International – various assignments including PME&R processes with practitioner teams;
- Voluntary Services Organisation (VSO) – strategic review in Southern Africa
- Swedish International Development Aid – running PME&R courses in their Centre for Civil Society, Hanosand, Sweden – 2007.

1995 to 1997 – Freelance organisation development facilitator in Cape Town

1994 – National Staff Training Coordinator for SACHED Trust

1987 to 1993 – Director of the Community Education Computer Society, South Africa, an initiative that mobilised capacity development for working-class students and teachers around emerging information technologies, including the formation of 38 school student media committees and 27 teacher subject groups, engaged in numerous activities against Apartheid education and later in support of South Africa as an emerging democracy.

1982 to 1986 – High School teacher in Steenberg High, a working-class school in Cape Town

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

1980 to 1981 - Master of Arts – Economic History – University of Cape Town – full thesis focused on changing economic, social and cultural practices of the Ngoni and Tumbuka peoples of Northern Malawi under the migrant labour system of Southern Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

1976 to 1979 – Bachelor of Arts – University of Cape Town majoring in Economics and Economic History.

GEOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCE

Countries worked in:

South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan, Gambia, Togo, Lebanon, India, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, El

Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, England, France, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Finland.

PUBLICATIONS

Barefoot Guide Publications

The Barefoot Guide 1 - Working with Organisations and Social Change - 2008 co-writer of several chapters and editor - <http://www.barefootguide.org/barefoot-guide-1.html>

The Barefoot Guide 2: Learning Practices in Organisations and Social Change 2010 - co-writer of several chapters and editor - <http://www.barefootguide.org/barefoot-guide-2.html>

The Companion Booklet to Barefoot Guide 2 - 2008: Designing and Facilitating Creative Learning Activities – co-writer – <http://www.barefootguide.org/bfg2-english.html>

The Barefoot Guide 4: Exploring the Real Work of Social Change, 2013 - co-writer of several chapters and editor <http://www.barefootguide.org/barefoot-guide-4---english-final.html>

Publications on the CDRA website – www.cdra.org.za

(several of these have been used by other international publications)

[The Truth of the Work: Theories of Change in a Changing World](#)

by Doug Reeler and Rubert Van Blerk, 2017. Following a series of learning workshops with practitioners from various organisations in Cape Town we wrote this reflection on the use and practice of "Theory of Change" being demanded by donors, and the problems and possibilities practitioners are experiencing.

[Facilitating Social Change: Seven Questions that Keep Us Awake](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2014. Social change does not begin with the ability to find right answers but to continually develop more powerful questions, out of experience, and from there to move forward. Often there are no answers, only continual questioning into the future.

[From Learning Together To Working Together](#)

by Doug Reeler, 2013. The story of the Early Childhood Development Learning Community in South Africa and its approach to mobilising rural caregivers to bring their voice, leadership and initiative to programmes that address the well-being of young children in South Africa.

[Reconciling Community Development and Rights-based Approaches to Social Change](#)

by Doug Reeler, 2010. Some *different approaches to social change* have begun emerging that offer some hope of combining the best of *community development and Rights-Based Approaches* into something more effective and sustainable."

[Sovereign Local Organisations and Social Movements - holding rightful power](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2008. An argument for an organisational approach to development.

[Evaluation – a developmental approach](#)

by Sue Soal, Sandra Hill and Doug Reeler, 2007. A short piece on some fundamental considerations in developmental evaluation.

[A Theory of Social Change - and Implications for Practice, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2007. This paper puts forward a theory of social change that goes beyond implicit conventional theories, providing a different framework for seeing and working with the complexities of change.

[Horizontal Learning - Engaging Freedom's Possibilities](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2005. Exploring transformative practices at the creative margins of the development sector.

[Experiencing freedom's possibilities: Horizontal Learning in CDRA's Home Weeks](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2005. How continuously and rhythmically 'grounding' itself internally is at the heart of CDRA's practice and organisational structure.

[Story-telling - getting to the heart of things](#)

By Doug Reeler 2004. Exploring story-telling as part of practice.

[If you meet the White Rabbit on the road, steal his watch! - ...or what began as an attempt to write a donor report became a stream of consciousness on time, development-land, activism and practice.](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2003

[Unlearning - Facing up to the real challenge of learning](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2001. "Unlearning involves a conscious individual confrontation of the past with the future, involving paradigms or beliefs that come from the fully formed past at odds with those that come from a future, still in formation. "

["A Good Death" - In Search of Developmental Endings](#)

By Doug Reeler, 2000. An exploration of death in organisation and development.