

My time with Mesopartner



I worked for six years with the Dutch Development Cooperation in Pretoria, focusing on youth development. This was a job I thoroughly enjoyed doing, since this was soon after the advent of the “new South Africa”. My task soon expanded to include a focus on local government planning in South Africa where many developments and changes were also happening. After a huge growth spurt with the Dutch Development Cooperation and six years later, it was time for me to grow in new directions.

I ventured out on my own in 2000, joining a team of consultants who were working on various topics in development, and it was during this period in 2001 that I came into contact with Mesopartner when the team was invited to a PACA training in Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal. Since I was following a university study on local government support for business development, I was hugely interested in what this training would offer. Needless to say, the training, the methodologies and the practical encounters with real business people during planned interview sessions left me hooked and eager to learn more. I was soon invited to many more Mesopartner training sessions, including training on the Hexagon of LED, after which I was offered a job working with the InWEnt (now GIZ) team to assist in the rolling out of the Locati training – predominantly focused on the Hexagon of LED.

This catapulted my connection and association with the Mesopartner, and soon I was referencing and making use of their practical tools and methodologies to engage with several stakeholders in LED. I was even more motivated when I discovered that the tools and methods assisted in demystifying the concept of LED to people at grassroots level, but were just as effective in engaging LED practitioners as well as scholars on the subject.

The height of my association with Mesopartner was of course my first participation in the Summer Academy in Duisburg in 2006, which showcased not only new insights into LED, but also highlighted the similarity of LED challenges in diverse countries. The Academy allowed a great exchange of experience and lessons among practitioners from various countries. I was impressed by the approachability of the Mesopartners, as well as the practical, simple tools which assisted me to connect the dots in often complex contexts.

I soon became a Mesopartner Associate and in 2012 was offered the incredible opportunity to become a partner. There have been many developments and transformations in the world, regional and local economies since my first encounter with Mesopartner in 2001, and the firm has maintained its relevance throughout this dynamic evolution, having transcended their label as the ‘PACA guys’. The team’s continued commitment to finding more effective and efficient mechanisms to work and contribute to development processes in a complex world keeps me hooked.

Zini Godden (zg@mesopartner.com)