

# KEY PRINCIPLES AND IDEAS GUIDING THIS BOOK

This book is guided by many principles and ideas, many learnt from others, but all honed and sharpened from experience. We offer four “guides” that we have found to be particularly true and useful in our work.

## **Development (and the will to develop) is a natural, inborn process.**

In whichever state we may find organisations, they are already developing. They may or may not be developing healthily or in ways they like or are even conscious of, they may be stuck in some places, but they have been developing long before facilitators came into their lives and will continue to do so long after they have left. *We cannot deliver development* – it is already happening as a natural process that we need to read, respect and work with.

## **People’s and organisation’s own capacity to learn from experience is the foundation of their development, independence and interdependence.**

Learning from experience is as old as the hills, one of the natural, organic processes, though seldom used consciously, by which people develop themselves. We learn by doing, by thinking about what we have done and then doing it a bit better next time. We also learn especially well from peers, horizontally, who share with us their experience, connecting it to our own experience.

Learning how to learn effectively, from own experience, enables people to take pride in their own intelligence and knowledge and to build a healthy independence from outside experts.

## **Development is often complex, unpredictable and characterised by crisis.**

What does it take, and how long, to help a woman in crisis to find her courage to deal with an abusive husband or for a community to find the confidence to deal with corrupt councillors? When an organisation seems to be on the verge of imploding is this the end or a chance for renewal? What complex and unanticipated development of forces contributes to a once-flourishing social initiative rolling over and dying?

Development is inherently unpredictable and prone to crisis. Yet almost miraculously, developmental crises are pregnant with opportunities for new movement, for qualitative shifts.

Practitioners or donors often avoid offering support in times of crisis, thinking it signals failure, when the opposite may be possible. Recognising and working with crisis, with all its unpredictabilities, are central to a developmental approach.

## **Power is held and transformed in relationships.**

We live, learn and develop within three kinds of relationships: relationship with self, interpersonal relationships with people around us and external relationships with the rest of the world. Power is held in relationships, whether it is the struggle we have with ourselves to claim our inner power, or the power some have over others or the power we hold with others, or the power the State wields in relation to its citizens – without relationship power means little, it has no force, for bad or for good. *If we want to shift power, we have to shift relationships.*

