

CV: Mike Klassen

Mike is a market systems development consultant with 15+ years of experience in capacity building, organizational learning, and knowledge translation. Starting with direct coaching of market facilitation project teams with EWB Canada in 2010, he has developed a portfolio of capacity building work in MSD, recently leading the sector-wide MSD Competency Framework, the MSD Procurement and Contracting Clinics, and the MSD Leadership Clinics for the BEAM Exchange. He completed his PhD in Higher Education focused on cross-national comparative analyses of skills systems in professional and vocational education. Currently, he is working to integrate theories, methods and systems approaches into development programs focused on education, skills and employment.

Personal details

Nationality: Canadian
Qualifications: PhD Higher Education, University of Toronto, 2023
MA Higher Education, University of Toronto, 2018
Graduate Diploma Social Innovation, University of Waterloo, 2014
BASc Engineering Science, University of Toronto, 2010
Language skills: English (mother tongue), French (basic)

Career history

2018-Present Principal Consultant, Mike Klassen Consulting Ltd, UK
2021-2022 Research Assistant, SKOPE Centre, University of Oxford, UK
2014-2018 Assistant Director, Institute for Leadership Education in Engineering, University of Toronto, Canada
2013-2014 Senior Analyst, Success Markets Inc., Washington DC
2011-2013 Venture Leader & Portfolio Manager, EWB Canada, Ghana/Uganda
2010-2011 Technical Leader, ADVANCE project, ACDI-VOCA, Ghana

Relevant experience

Consulting

GLOBAL – Consultant on MSD and Climate Change, Swisscontact/Springfield

Phase 1: Undertaking a comprehensive stock tacking of how market systems development principles and approaches are being applied in the domain of climate change. Conducting in-depth interviews with two dozen project and technical leaders from across the organisation, synthesizing key learnings and patterns. Working closely with thematic leaders on climate change and MSD to inform future strategic direction. Facilitating in-depth ‘case clinics’ among new cadre of climate change focal points. [2022-2024] Phase 2: Co-designing and leading internal learning and leadership development initiatives for MSD and climate change. Writing a series of six short case studies with complete dissemination strategy. Co-designing and launching a new internal leadership initiative, the “Climate Catalysts” in close collaboration with regional directors, acquisitions team and climate advisors. [2022-present]

GLOBAL – PSD Backstopping Support to Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)

Part of the global PSD backstopping mandate for SDC. Led an internal Open Mic webinar on findings of the MSD4E Landscape Assessment in Sept 2025. [Jan 2025 – present]

EAST AFRICA – TA team reflection and redesign for DREEM, WUSC/Mastercard Foundation

Conducting in-depth interviews with key technical leaders to understand their value proposition and ways of working. Pinpointing key strengths, processes and cultural elements, while looking for ways to redesign team approach for scale up in DREEM 2.0 – across multiple countries and new geographies. Working closely with Project Director and Deputy to shape a vision for technical assistance that maximizes impact and improves team coherence. [June – Sept 2025]

GLOBAL – Adaptive partnerships clinics, USAID MSP

Co-leading the design and facilitation of two tracks of learning clinics focused on operationalizing MSD – specifically the challenges of adaptive partnerships with private sector partners. One track focuses on senior leaders in key USAID implementers – compliance directors and heads of technical departments. The other track focuses on USAID mission staff who manage MSD projects. Overall goal is to align practice, challenge assumptions and help MSD projects overcome internalized risk aversion to be more flexible, adaptive and systemic. *[May 2024 – Jan 2025]*

GLOBAL/CANADA – Adaptive management advisor, ACDI/VOCA

Supporting a cross-functional working group within ACDI/VOCA focused on ‘Integrated Approaches to Capacity Building for Adaptive Management’. Designed and launched highly successful ‘adaptive partnership clinics’ for 5 market systems projects which offer an innovative approach to capacity building of a cohort, including both market systems leads and operations managers. Led the internal research and design for a new integrated suite of leadership development programs for local project staff across the organization. *[2023-2025]*

GLOBAL – Market systems capacity support, WUSC

Developing a suite of internal capacity building and learning initiatives to strengthen understanding and application of market systems approaches in WUSC. This includes 3 components: (1) New internal community of practice on systems thinking; (2) A series of highly interactive partnership clinics with 5 MSD projects; (3) 1-on-1 MSD leadership coaching with a selected group of project directors and country directors. Follow-on work included comparative analysis of 3 internal communities of practice, and follow-on leadership coaching work in Kenya. *[Oct 2023 – present]*

GLOBAL – Consultant supporting internal learning on MSD and skills development, Swisscontact/Springfield

Liaised with senior technical leaders in MSD and skills; interviewed 15 project managers/directors and reviewed extensive project design documents. Facilitated workshop and laid foundation for learning agenda including adding examples and tools of skills development to a toolkit for systemic approaches. Lead author for a chapter for NORRAG edited volume on systems approaches in education. Building coalition of leading organisations interested in MSD for skills development and employment, alongside Mercy Corps. *[July 2020 - present]*

GLOBAL – Stakeholder influence and learning exercise, USAID MSP activity

Co-led intensive stakeholder influence and learning assessment for USAID’s flagship market systems learning activity, MSP. Interviewed 50+ stakeholders and adapted key elements of Rogers’ diffusion of innovation framework to analyze key factors which led to more successful dissemination and application of findings from a range of 20+ knowledge products. Presented strategic recommendations to the MSP team, which led to significant shifts in strategy and resource allocation. *[Oct 2023 – Mar 2024]*

AFRICA – Targeted workshops and network building for Africa Engineers awardees, Royal Academy of Engineering

Supporting the Royal Academy of Engineering to better understand and support their large portfolio of awardees (19) leading projects focused on changes to engineering education, profession and the wider ecosystem across more than a dozen countries in Africa. Conducting interviews with project leaders, designing specialized workshops, conducting an assessment of the network strength, advising program managers of possible support structures. *[Nov 2022 – June 2023]*

GLOBAL – Design of executive coaching modules for MSD Team Leaders, The Canopy Lab

Supporting the managing partners of The Canopy Lab to structure a unique coaching service for Team Leaders of MSD projects. This builds on and extends the nascent competency framework for MSD Team Leaders. Focus on integrating coaching principles with deep technical knowledge on the competencies of MSD TLs. *[Oct-Dec 2022]*

COLOMBIA – Technical backstopping on systemic approach to education systems change, Swisscontact/Springfield

Helping project team to engage stakeholders in Colombia's education system, including employers and chambers of commerce, to analyze the possibilities for widespread uptake of 'dual' education approaches in the country. Supporting the framing and analysis of the system, providing technical review of stakeholder workshop plans, and helping synthesize and integrate findings into project design. *[May – Dec 2022]*

GLOBAL – Clinics methodology advisor for MEL virtual clinics, Market Systems and Partnerships / DAI

Supporting the design and rollout of a methodology for peer learning and knowledge capture by project-level MEL managers on MSD projects. Drawing on the lessons from prior knowledge clinics, adapting to the context of a specific role/function. *[Feb 2022 – Mar 2023]*

GLOBAL – MSD thought leader on internal assessment of MSD strategy and approach, Technoserve/The Canopy Lab

Providing technical inputs and review on an assessment of the changing external landscape of MSD funding and implementation, and development of tailored toolkits and organizational strategies for accelerating Technoserve's adoption of a systemic approach. *[Dec 2021 – June 2022]*

GLOBAL/CANADA – Lead consultant on Skills for Employment portfolio review, WUSC/Springfield

Led the review of five skills for employment projects seeking to take a systemic approach, in close collaboration with WUSC senior technical advisors. Analyzed the organizational systems and supports for systems thinking and provided recommendations to strengthen the portfolio. *[Sept 2021 – Jan 2022]*

GLOBAL/AFRICA - Consultant supporting program design, implementation and reflection for engineering ecosystems change in Africa, IDRC Canada

Worked closely with IDRC to design call for proposals for systems change in engineering ecosystems in Africa. Interviewed experts on capacity building, engineering labour markets, and higher education in Central and West Africa. Proposed systemic change interventions via funding mechanisms adopted by IDRC which attracted an unexpectedly high number of submissions, five funded in 2018. Organized and facilitated 3-day launch workshop in Ghana with leading academics, policymakers, and professional engineers. Supported projects to reflect on key learnings and articulate targeted policy briefs. Organized final learning session with organizations working on engineering in Africa. *[2017 - 2022]*

GLOBAL/USA – Adaptive management advisor to internal project on operational efficiencies, ACDI/VOCA

Worked closely with internal cross-departmental working group to assess the alignment between ACDI/VOCA's operational systems and processes and projects taking a systems approach. In-depth interviews with 30 leaders from across head office and field projects, and provided recommendations for organizational change initiatives. *[Sept-Dec 2021]*

GLOBAL – Consultant supporting revitalization of Participatory MSD approach, Practical Action

Worked closely with senior leaders for markets systems within Practical Action to review and redesign a flexible toolkit of resources, tools, case studies and applied guidance for Participatory MSD (PMSD). Supported 6 project teams to test tools and write up case studies and helped set conditions for an internal community of practice on market systems. *[July-Dec 2020]*

GLOBAL - Lead facilitator for MSD procurement and contracting clinics, BEAM Exchange

Led the design, recruitment and facilitation of new initiative to investigate the skewed incentives for procurement and contracting of MSD programs. Worked with 20 senior sector leaders from donor, implementer and consulting organizations in four groups to identify key topics, drive meetings forward and generate key action-oriented outputs. *[Jan – Oct 2020]*

INDONESIA – Consultant supporting business model development for private midwife quality scheme, MarketShare Associates/DAI, Jalin project

Worked with Chief of Party and Technical Leader to design a process for engaging the Indonesian Midwives Association to redevelop business model for franchise model of certifying private midwives. Adapted tools; hired local consultant; led SoW. *[Feb – Dec 2020]*

INDONESIA – Consultant leading global scan of market systems for health, MarketShare Associates/DAI, Jalin project

Led assignment to gather examples of good practice in applying MSD in health systems. Conducted 12 interviews with leading practitioners from donors, implementers and policy organizations. Synthesized findings into recommendations for program strategy. *[Oct 2018]*

GLOBAL – Technical inputs on toolkit for market systems for WUSC-Uniterra program, via MarketShare Associates

Provided technical inputs on a comprehensive toolkit for inclusive market systems to be used by the multi-country Uniterra program, implemented by WUSC and CECI. Created examples of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practice to illustrate the key principles of market facilitation. Ran a dynamic experiential workshop on market facilitation for Uniterra staff and stakeholders at the WUSC/CECI International Forum in Ottawa. *[2015-2016]*

GLOBAL – Author of short case studies on market systems programs, BEAM Exchange

Wrote, edited and published 14 case studies of market systems programmes in ‘snapshot’ form to make the approach accessible to new audiences. Consulted with field staff, HQ staff, and a wide range of program documents to identify strong examples. Worked closely with team of key stakeholders at the BEAM Exchange to design a ‘template’ for the structure of the case studies. *[2014]*

UGANDA – Senior consultant supporting embedded consultants on Tetra Tech Agriculture Inputs Project

Provided coaching and backstopping to lead consultant developing the change management strategy and staff competency framework for newly awarded project. Gave feedback on drafts of ToRs for embedded consultants, helped strategize on approach to change within project team, including USAID relationships and exit strategy from project. *[Nov 2012 – June 2013]*

KENYA – Senior consultant designing partnership with Kenya Markets Trust, MAP Programme

Worked closely with Technical Director over a six-month period to understand the need and opportunity for EWB presence on our first DFID funded M4P programme. Performed an abbreviated organizational diagnostic based on semi-structured interviews with key programme staff, approved decision to go after a major partnership. Handed over the partnership development to upcoming EWB leader and mentored him through the process. *[Oct 2012 – June 2013]*

UGANDA – Senior consultant leading partnership with Mercy Corps Uganda, SUSTAIN Project

Led initial conversations with Chief of Party on the potential for EWB support to newly-awarded large scale programme including M4P, conflict and governance components. Handed over leadership of the partnership to upcoming leader and mentored him through the process of scoping and recruiting for the assignment, building trust with key actors. Provided feedback and input on the design and facilitation of staff training and orientation workshops. *[Sept 2012 – June 2013]*

UGANDA – Senior consultant for large multi-element capacity building partnership with Tetra Tech ARD, LEAD Project (USAID/Uganda)

Worked with Chief of Party to develop intensive partnership with 7 EWB consultants for one year to leverage opportunity to prove facilitation and advance USAID’s CLA agenda. Provided technical and change management support to 2 consultants who conducted a full organizational diagnostic of the project’s capacity for facilitation. Participated in the presentation of these results to USAID/Uganda Economic Growth staff. Hired and recruited two long-term embedded consultants. *[Feb 2012 – June 2013]*

UGANDA – Senior consultant supporting Mercy Corps Uganda, RAIN Project (USDA/Uganda)

Worked with Country Director and Economic Development Advisor to test out a partnership to demonstrate EWB's value proposition to an M4P project. Designed ToR for one fulltime EWB consultant to support a small, start-up project in Northern Uganda, and coached consultant throughout the process from diagnostic to interventions, which included results chain development, team restructuring and hypothesis testing. *[June 2012 – Mar 2013]*

GHANA – Senior consultant for ACDI-VOCA ADVANCE Project (USAID/Ghana)

Maintained senior level partnership for 2+ years with Technical Director, Chief of Party and Technical Leaders to improve implementation of value chain approach. Designed and approved ToRs for nearly 10 EWB consultants covering a wide range of different functions – refining strategies, testing interventions, building internal communication systems, developing management capacity. *[Nov 2010 – July 2012]*

GHANA – Senior consultant exploring partnership with MEDA Ghana, Northern Ghana Food Security Project (CIDA/Ghana)

Leveraged international relationships to develop a test ToR for an EWB consultant to support project design in using design thinking tools to gather better insight on markets. Provided extensive feedback and technical review on the market analyses for soybean and groundnut subsectors in Northern Ghana. *[Apr – June 2012]*

GHANA – Senior consultant supporting short-term consultant in IFDC Ghana, Farmer to Market, AVC Mentorship Project (AGRA/Ghana)

Worked directly to influence the Country Director of IFDC to take a facilitative approach, redesign key failing projects, and invest in staff capacity. Designed ToRs for 2 short-term assignments: (1) real time monitoring feedback on the internal business dynamics in target firms; (2) change management for internal learning during the staffing and start-up phase of new project. *[Aug 2011 – Dec 2011]*

Research

GLOBAL: Landscape assessment of MSD for employment, ILO/Swisscontact/Mercy Corps

Co-lead of global study of 50+ MSD4E interventions. First systematic attempt to map the field of practice, co-funded by a trio of implementers. Interviewed 12 senior donor and implementer leads, and interviewed 25+ project teams, wrote up key findings in a structured format, presented to multiple key audiences and developed online 'intervention library' on the BEAM Exchange. *[2023-2025]*

ETHIOPIA: Resilience study on market systems interventions in refugee camps, OU/DAI

Co-lead of internal resilience study on refugee business models in refugee camps in Ethiopia. Conducting literature review and design/adaptation of resilience framework, alongside data analysis of in-depth qualitative interviews with refugees. *[May – Dec 2024]*

UNITED KINGDOM: Research assistant on green skills project at Oxford, Edge Foundation

Led scoping review of green skills and jobs in the construction sector in England. Analyzing different perspectives and conceptions drawn from industry, policymakers, educators and researchers. Worked with interdisciplinary team to plan and deliver stakeholder workshops focused on industry and policy actors. *[2021]*

GLOBAL: Consultant researcher supporting EcoVentures International, Fintrac and USAID

Worked with team of MSD experts, economists and policy experts to ground new framework on Inclusive & Entrepreneurial Market Systems in interdisciplinary academic literature from economics, sociology, social psychology and anthropology. Developed a new framework for analyzing 3 levels of institutions: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive in order to shape market systems investments by USAID missions. *[Jan-Aug 2020]*

UK/SINGAPORE/AUSTRALIA/SOUTH AFRICA: Lead researcher on multi-country comparative analysis of quality assurance systems for professional education [PhD thesis]

Interviewed 80+ stakeholders from private sector, professions and universities in four countries. Developed a theoretically-grounded comparative case study of the political and organizational

dynamics affecting implementation of system for accrediting degrees; analyzed impacts on technical and soft skill emphasis in curriculum. *[Sept 2018 – Mar 2023]*

KOSOVO: Writing case study of private TVET models for ILO The Lab

Identified non-traditional MSD business model in the TVET sector in Kosovo, implemented by Helvetas. Interviewed program manager and key technical staff, reviewed program documentation and wrote structured case study. Organized webinar through BEAM Exchange to present report findings. *[Apr-June 2019]*

GLOBAL: Research on M&E For Systemic Change, MarketShare Associates/USAID

Researching, analyzing and vetting more than 15 different tools, methodologies and approaches to measuring systemic change to determine their viability to be applied in agriculture and market development projects. *[2014-2015]*

Training & capacity development

GHANA: Market facilitation support, ACTIVATE project, WUSC/Mastercard Foundation

Individual coaching and team coaching with key technical leads and cross-cutting leads from a unique project applying MSD to the agricultural TVET system. Presenting team-wide case studies to stimulate learning. Supporting piloting of new fee-based training models. Facilitated 1-day in-person MSD training in Dec 2025. *[Nov 2024 – present]*

GLOBAL: Facilitator and project lead, MSD Team Leader Competencies, BEAM Exchange

Proposed, recruited and facilitated a cross-organizational task force of donors, implementers and consultants to explore and articulate the competencies of MSD Team Leaders. Phase 1 focused on gathering and synthesizing diverse perspectives. Phase 2 engaged a series of knowledge clinics to dive into organizational implications including hiring criteria, pipelines for future team leaders, and programs to develop and strengthen leadership. This has led to publication of leadership briefs and a TL competency framework. *[Oct 2021-present]*

GLOBAL: Facilitator, Learning group on organizational applications of MSD competency frameworks, BEAM Exchange

Organized and facilitated a cross-organizational learning group consisting of Palladium/PRISMA, ILO and Gatsby Africa to share experiences and insights on applying an MSD competency framework at the organizational level. Deep dive into HR implications of a competency approach – recruitment, hiring, role scoping, performance evaluation, certification. *[Sept 2021 – present]*

GLOBAL: Lead author of MSD Competency Framework, BEAM Exchange

Designed, tested and launched a new competency framework for market systems development to guide design of training and capacity building across the sector. Synthesized hundreds of relevant resources and organized into a dynamic, web-based portal for supporting learning and development of MSD practitioners & trainers. Developed partnerships with a range of leading MSD organizations to pilot the MSD Framework with head office and field teams. *[2017-2019]*

CANADA: Leading complex multi-stakeholder training workshops on leadership research, Institute for Leadership Education in Engineering, University of Toronto

Designed, developed and facilitated six separate one-day conferences for 70+ participants from academia and industry focused on leadership and skill development of engineering workforce. Integrated cutting-edge educational research with practical exercises; led facilitation team. *[2016-2018]*

CANADA: Launched and grew national community of learning on skills for innovation & leadership: National Initiative on Capacity Building and Knowledge Creation

Spearheaded a new national community of learning on skill development for innovation, leadership and entrepreneurship in engineering education. Leveraged a new systems change platform “The Engineering Change Lab” to generate funding and buy-in from government agencies, private sector and 15 universities across the country. Led the organization and technical program design of the first 3 conferences. *[2016-2018]*

GLOBAL: Facilitator for market systems practitioner learning groups, SEEP Network

Interviewed 15-20 keen market systems practitioners from all over the world to participate in facilitated learning groups to progress on common challenges. Built relationships with individuals, understood their contextual challenges, and facilitated productive group conversations to move forward a common learning agenda across 4 groups. Topics ranged from 'gender norms in market systems' to 'business models to reach the last mile'. [Mar – Sept 2016]

Publications

Market systems development

- Lead author, [MDF Sri Lanka climate change case study](#), BEAM Exchange [2025]
- Co-author, [MSD Team Leader Competency Framework](#), BEAM Exchange [2025]
- Author, [What support do MSD leaders need to thrive?](#), BEAM Exchange [2025]
- Author, [Where do MSD leaders come from?](#), BEAM Exchange [2023]
- Lead Author, [MSD Procurement Paper Series](#), BEAM Exchange [2020]
- Co-Author & Architect, [MSD Competency Framework](#), BEAM Exchange [2019]
- Co-Author, [Social Norms in Market Systems Development](#), BEAM Exchange [2017]
- Author, [Market Systems Snapshots in Action](#), BEAM Exchange [2015]
- Co-Author, Institutional Diagnostic for Facilitation – Revised M4P Operational Guide
- Co-Author, Market Facilitation in Practice: Case Studies for Implementers – USAID Microlinks [2011]

Skills development & higher education

Klassen M., Rothboeck, S., & Buckley, A. (2023). Adapting inclusive systems development (ISD) to vocational education and training (VET) and skills development. In Faul, M. and Savage, L. (Eds) *Systems Thinking in International Education and Development*. NORRAG.

Klassen M., Jesiek B., Zheng L, & Case, J.M. (2023). Institutionalizing Engineering Education Research. In Christensen, S.H. (Ed.), *Engineering, Social Sciences and Humanities*. Springer.

Klassen, M. (2022) Curriculum governance in the professions. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 27:8, 1103-1119.

Klassen, M., & Case, J. M. (2022). Productive tensions? Analyzing the arguments made about the field of engineering education research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 111(1), 214–231.

Klassen, M., & Sá, C. (2020). Do global norms matter? The new logics of engineering accreditation in Canadian universities. *Higher Education*, 79(1), 159–174.

Full academic publication list available at [Google Scholar](#) with most full articles on [ResearchGate](#).