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Formation of effective multi-stakeholder Platforms: Lessons from coffee innovation platforms in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural innovation systems' thinking has been adopted in agricultural research and development to harness the actor innovative capabilities, knowledge enhancement and social transformation. Hence there is growing recognition of the viability of Innovation platforms (IPs) as an approach to stimulating development of agricultural enterprises due to their emphasis on value chain development, networking and partnerships. However, despite the key role of the formation process in realization of desired outcomes, there is insufficient knowledge on how to form vibrant agricultural innovation platforms under diverse contexts. This study sought to examine the gaps and draw lessons for effective IP formation using the case of the coffee IPs in the four districts of Luwero, Ntungamo, Bushenyi and Rakai in Uganda. Data were collected through key informant interviews with 32 actors of the coffee steering committees and from document review. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using content and thematic analysis. Gaps identified in the IP formation processes included exclusion of some key stakeholders, unclear management and financing mechanisms, and weak governance structures at lower levels. To enhance legitimacy of innovation platforms, the study recommends a formation operational model with four main components of actor identification and mobilization, visioning and strategy formulation process, IP culture and development of governance structures.

Key words: Coffee, innovation, multi- stakeholder platform, Uganda, value-chain development

RÉSUMÉ

Des réflexions sur les systèmes d'innovation agricole ont été proposées dans les domaines de la recherche et du développement agricoles pour un meilleur usage des capacités innovantes des acteurs, le renforcement des connaissances et la transformation sociale. Ainsi, la viabilité des plateformes d'innovation (PI) est de plus en plus reconnue, comme une approche visant à stimuler le développement des entreprises agricoles, car elles mettent l'accent sur le développement des chaînes de valeur, le réseautage et les partenariats. Cependant, malgré le rôle clé du processus de formation dans la réalisation des résultats escomptés, les connaissances sur les modalités de création des plates-formes d'innovation agricole dynamiques dans divers contextes sont limitées. Cette étude a examiné les lacunes et tiré des leçons pour une meilleure formation sur les PI, avec un cas d'étude sur les PI du café dans quatre districts en Ouganda (Luwero, Ntungamo, Bushenyi et Rakai). Les données ont été collectées à travers des entretiens avec 32 acteurs des comités directeurs du café et une revue des documents. Une analyse du contenu et des thématiques a été effectuée. Les lacunes identifiées dans les processus de création des PI comprenaient l'exclusion de certains acteurs clés, des mécanismes de gestion et de financement peu clairs et des structures de gouvernance faibles aux niveaux inférieurs. Pour renforcer la légitimité des PI, l'étude recommande un modèle opérationnel de formation comportant quatre composantes principales: identification des acteurs et mobilisation, processus de formulation et de vision, culture de la propriété intellectuelle et développement de structures de gouvernance.

Mots-clés: café, innovation, plate-forme multi-acteurs, Ouganda, développement de chaîne de valeur

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural innovation systems (AIS) thinking has been adopted in agricultural research and development for its ability to harness the innovation capacity of agricultural systems' actors as they work on collectively defined needs (Spielman *et al.*, 2009; Hounkonnou *et al.*, 2012). Innovation is influenced by diverse and creative actors with the ability to collaborate, articulate a common vision and embrace the spirit of teamwork (Nederlof and Pyburn, 2012). Their actions are dependent on the actions and decision of others hence the need for constant collaboration through new innovative approaches and multi-stakeholder processes (Walters, 2013; Brouwer *et al.*, 2015). Research and development agencies consider innovation platforms as a significant improvement over the linear and less inclusive traditional agricultural research and extension approaches (Mulema and Mazur, 2015). Innovation platforms (IPs) are thus defined as "Networks of diverse stakeholders who cooperate, interact to develop a shared vision and identify solutions to a common problem as a group or individual members" (FARA, 2007; Nederlof *et al.*, 2011).

Recent studies reveal that IPs are perceived as governance mechanisms for enhancing multi-stakeholder interaction and learning, capacity development and coordination and community linkages (Mayanja *et al.*, 2012; Kilelu *et al.*, 2013; Cullen *et al.*, 2014). Their functioning however depends on their organization, stakeholder representation, facilitation and institutional embedding capacity (Nederlof *et al.*, 2011; Boorgard *et al.*, 2013). Steps in the formation of viable-stakeholder platforms include; consultation and scoping, visioning and stakeholder analysis, adaptive planning and developing action plans (Hall, 2007; Brouwer *et al.*, 2015). In Uganda, the IPs were recognized as a viable approach to stimulate development of agricultural enterprises including coffee due to its emphasis on value chain development,

networking and partnerships (Rajalahti *et al.*, 2008; MAAIF, 2010; Pyburn and Woodhill, 2014).

Study context. Coffee is one of Uganda's key economic agricultural enterprises, contributing 20% of the total export revenue (MAAIF, 2013). The economic and institutional reforms in the early 1990s attracted several actors into coffee production and marketing which necessitated changes in institutions, processes and structures in the coffee sector. The coffee sub-sector is fully liberalized with a strong government commitment to its growth which offers several investment opportunities at national and international levels (UCDA, 2013). The coffee value chain is characterized by small scale traders (aggregators), farmer groups, middlemen (processors and merchants), and small and large coffee exporters (UCDA, 2013). In the public domain, the services to the coffee sub-sector are segmented among Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) for regulation, National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) for research and Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES) through local government production departments for extension services. All the three institutions are under the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF, 2013). However, there are weak institutional linkages among the organisations which lead to inefficiencies in the agricultural extension system (ibid, 2013). The decentralization policy legalized by the Local Government Act of 1997, led to devolution of powers and responsibilities from central to local levels. Consequently, provision of agricultural extension services continues to be a decentralized function for better service delivery to the poor (Bashaasha *et al.*, 2011; MAAIF, 2016).

The operations of coffee actors along the value chain are expected to be guided and regulated by the National Coffee Policy (2013) whose vision is to have a competitive, equitable, commercialized

and sustainable coffee sub sector. The sub-sector supports about 3.5 million families across the value chain of whom 39% are small holder farmers (UCDA, 2014). However, its production has stagnated at three million bags per year for over four decades due technological and non-technological constraints which prompted actors to seek solutions through initiation of the coffee innovation platforms in 2008 (UCDA, 2012; MAAIF, 2013). Such challenges still exist and include inadequate extension services, limited knowledge sharing, low adaptation of improved agricultural technologies and weak institutional capacities among diverse actors where less than 15% of the farmers belong to associations, cooperatives or organizations (UCDA, 2014).

In an effort to revitalize Uganda's coffee sub-sector, Café Africa, a Swiss non-profit organization (<http://cafeafrika.org>) in collaboration with Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) launched a national campaign in 2008 to improve coffee production and marketing in Uganda. A key component of the national campaign was the establishment of the twenty¹ innovation platforms (IPs) to fill the void resulting from the collapse of the cooperatives and parastatal bodies in the coffee sub-sector (Café Africa, 2009). The objectives of the platforms were to promote the adoption of improved coffee varieties and recommend agronomic practices, re-introduce and promote collective activities, strengthen the coffee value chain as well as advocate for increased investment in the sub-sector (Café Africa, 2009). The district coffee innovation platforms are governed by the National Coffee Steering Committee comprised of 13 coffee organizations. Café Africa as a member of the national steering committee was assigned the responsibility of overseeing the formation of the IPs and their operations. Each of these district level IPs comprised of different actors in the coffee sub-sector including producers, nursery operators, processors, exporters, researchers

and extension workers at district level. Each district IP had a structure referred to as district coffee steering committee composed of an elected chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and committee members. The IPs were expected to foster knowledge sharing and learning thereby contributing to better functioning and overall performance of the coffee sub-sector. However, these desired goals are yet to be achieved (MAAIF, 2013). This situation could be attributed to challenges that normally plague IPs in fostering and managing interactions among actors (Kilelu *et al.*, 2013). Such challenges are related to the choice of the right partners, accountability, transparency and intangible results, which make it difficult to demonstrate benefits and to justify future funding of IPs (Kibwika *et al.*, 2009; Agrawala *et al.*, 2011).

Studies on innovation platforms have focused on collaborative learning, power dynamics, facilitation and brokering (Woodhill and van der Vugt, 2011; Buchanan *et al.*, 2013; Cullen *et al.*, 2014). Consequently, little is still known on critical processes for forming vibrant agricultural innovation platforms under diverse contexts. The formation process of the IPs largely influences their implementation and eventual realization of desired outputs and outcomes. This study sought to examine the gaps and draw lessons for effective IP formation processes using the case of the coffee IPs in the four districts of Luwero, Ntungamo, Bushenyi and Rakai in Uganda.

Analytical framework. This study is anchored in the Social Exchange Theory (SET). The theory of social exchange postulates that individuals will make decisions based on certain outcomes and that costs are the negative consequences of a decision, such as time, money and energy and rewards are the positive results of social exchanges (Cook *et al.*, 2013). Blau (1964) defines "Social exchange as voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the

¹Arua, Bushenyi, Ibanda, Kanungu, Kapchorwa, Kasese, Kibaale, Kyenjojo, Luwero, Manafwa, Masaka, Mbale, Mbarara, Mpigi Mukono, Rukungiri, Nebbi, Ntungamo, Rakai and Sironko

returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from other". Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), summarize the key tenets of the social exchange theory as (i) rules and norms guiding the processes, (ii) rules of exchange, (iii) benefits, and (iv) relationships from the exchange process. This study however used three key tenets of the SET that is rules and norms guiding the processes, rules of exchange and potential benefits members accrue from participating in the platform. In this study we refer to rules of exchange as the guidelines used during the formation process and form the basis for relationships that evolve over time into trust, loyalty and commitment. Benefits refer to the expectations of actors for participating in the IPs. It is assumed that actors who participate in IP formation processes realize more benefits than the actors who do not participate. Participation refers to representative attendance to IP meetings and how they mobilized actors at lower level to engage in IP activities. This was the most appropriate measure because formation processes had already occurred and it was impossible to observe how actors engaged in the process.

Social Exchange Theory has been used in analyzing relationships and exchanges between an individual and employer (Cropazano *et al.*, 2002), in studies on interest groups between an entrepreneur and customer (Salisbury, 1969) and in analyzing social behavior in collective action (Mulema and Mazur, 2015). All these studies emphasize the value of benefits and role of interdependence in strengthening human relationships. Mulema (2012) used the social capital theory to examine how IP organizational structures foster information and knowledge exchange. Cropazano *et al.* (2002) however recommends further studies on rules of exchange since they are deciding factors for individuals to engage in a particular type of exchange relationship. Hence there is need to examine how the rules guiding the formation

processes affect actor participation in the IP initial activities.

The purpose of the study was to propose a model for establishing viable multi-stakeholder platforms that enable effective participation of actors in the IP initial activities. Specifically the study examined the processes in the formation of Coffee IPs and how these processes influence the participation of actors in the initial IP activities.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the constructivist paradigm in order to understand the formation processes basing on individual perspectives and experiences of diverse actors involved in the process (Baxter and Jack, 2008). A qualitative multiple case study research design (Yin, 2003) was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth inquiry into how the innovation platforms were formed and why they were operating the way they do within their context. The study was therefore done with coffee IPs of Rakai and Luwero districts in central region and Ntungamo and Bushenyi districts in western region of Uganda as multiple cases. The study sites were purposively selected as the major growing areas for Robusta coffee, a preferred type on the export market and hence targeted for improvement using IPs. The sites were also selected because these are among the 20 districts where Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) and Café Africa intensively promoted coffee campaigns. Central region covers an area of 61,403.2 km² and has a population of 9,579,119 persons while the Western region covers an area of 55,276.6 km² with a population of 8,939,355 persons (UBOS, 2015). About 31% of the coffee growers are in Luwero, 32% in Rakai, 33% in Ntungamo and 28% in Bushenyi district, respectively (Luwero DLG, 2009; UBOS, 2011; Rakai DDP, 2015). Nationally, over 85 per cent of coffee producers have intercropped smallholder farms with an

average hectareage of 0.33 ha per household (UCDA, 2013).

The study sample was purposively selected from the current lists of the members of the district steering committees as at November 2014. The lists were provided by the chairpersons and regional coffee coordinators of the four coffee IPs of Luwero, Ntungamo, Bushenyi and Rakai. The total sample size was 32 respondents. Twenty seven (27) respondents were selected from 67 members of the District Steering Committees and four respondents were selected as members of the National Coffee Steering Committee. Café Africa consultant was purposively selected based on her experience of working with the coffee IPs during the formation process. The criteria used to select the respondents included (i) position held in the platform, (ii) involvement in the platform activities, and (iii) knowledge of IP formation. Sixty –six percent (n=21) of the respondents were men and thirty-four percent (n=11) were women. In Table 1 the respondents were categorized as farmers (22%), government extension agents (19%), nursery operators (16%), SACCOs (9%), promoters (16%), processors (9%), and agro- input dealers (6%) and district leaders (3%). The gender disparity in the IPs may be attributed to the fact that coffee production in Uganda is mainly dominated by men.

Data were collected between November 2014 - March 2015 with an average of three field visits per district in the four IPs of Luwero, Ntungamo, Bushenyi and Rakai districts. The primary data collection tool was an interview guide with each interview lasting about an hour and was audio recorded. The interviews captured information

on the expected objectives of the IPs, goal of IPs, the actors involved, actor roles and tasks and the engagement processes. Data were also collected through document reviews which included inception workshop reports, consolidated action plans for the IPs, committee reports and the National Coffee Policy of 2013. Secondary data were used to validate primary data obtained from the key informant interviews. Interview guides were pre-tested with three members of Mukono coffee district platforms who were not part of the respondents and later revised to include local terms as understood by the community.

Data were analyzed by content and thematic analysis using the model by Braun and Clarke (2006). Field notes and recorded interviews were translated and transcribed from local dialects (Luganda and Runyankole) to English. Codes were derived using the inductive approach as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2009) by attaching meaning to individual narratives basing on the researcher's perception and experience. The steps followed included (1) conducting the interviews and transcribing the data, (2) familiarizing oneself with the data, (3) generating initial codes, (4) searching for and reviewing themes, and (5) defining and naming themes. Participation was analyzed by measuring the initial activities IP actors participated in. The activities included monthly planning and review meetings, identification of actors' needs and interests, identification of management and financing strategies as well as mobilization of actors at lower levels. The expected benefits to coffee actors included linkages to markets, formation of associations, financing and access to production and marketing information. Data were organized into the broad themes in Table 2.

Table 1. Respondents by category

Actors	Frequency	Percentage
Extension agents	6	19
Farmers	7	22
Nursery operators	5	16
SACCOs	3	9
Promoters	5	16
Processors	3	9
Agro-input dealers	2	6
District leaders	1	3
Total	32	100

Source: Primary data, 2015

Table 2. Thematic and axial categories generated

Thematic categories	Axial codes
Participation in IP formation activities	1. Attendance to IP meetings 2. Mobilization of actors at lower levels
Identification and mobilization	1. Actors involved 2. Promoters of IPs 3. Methods of identification
Visioning and strategy formation	1. Goal formation 2. Setting of objectives 3. Action plan 4. Implementation process 5. Financing mechanisms
Perceived benefits	1. Access to markets linkages 2. Access to inputs 3. Access to information 4. Linkages to other stakeholders 5. Form associations
Formation of IP steering committees	1. Selection of leaders 2. Formulation of TORs 3. The IP Governance structure
Gaps	1. Exclusion of some actors 2. Lack of involvement of district actors at the planning stage of IP formation 3. Lack of financing mechanism at IP formation 4. Lack of strong governing structures in the IPs

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formation process of the coffee innovation platforms. The formation processes of the coffee IPs consisted of three stages implemented in a cyclic process. These included; identification and mobilization of actors, formation of the visioning strategy and formation of the steering committee (Figure 1). The formation processes were guided by a terms of reference referred to as “Rules of exchange (RoE)” and pre-determined by Café Africa. According to the SET (Cook *et al.*, 2013), The RoE included the goal of forming the IPs, the objectives, composition of the actors and role of committee members. Café Africa as a member of the national steering committee was assigned the responsibility of sensitizing and guiding the actors in the formation of the IPs and their operations. The entire process was collapsed into a one meeting event, which had implications on the success of the coffee IP. Success of the IPs was analysed in terms of diversity of actors, attendance to meetings and their ability to mobilize and organize their constituent members to engage in IP activities. The participation of actors in initial IP activities are discussed in the three stages of the formation

processes.

Identification and mobilization of diverse actors for the coffee IPs. The entry point for Café Africa in the districts was through district coffee coordinators and district production officers as innovation intermediaries who assisted in identification of the actors within the coffee value chain. Across districts, the innovation intermediaries mobilized the actors using formal invitation letters. Interviews and coffee IP reports indicated that the actors invited for the meeting composed of farmers, coffee processors, extension agents, coffee nursery operators, agro-input dealers, local council chairpersons and bankers (Table 3). Other actors who participated in the identification process were the extension agents and nursery operators. One of the strategies Café Africa used in the identification process and later activities was of involvement LCV chairpersons, secretaries for production and internal security officers as local administration and political leaders. The choice of actors was largely influenced by the nature, mandate, knowledge and experience of the various stakeholders.

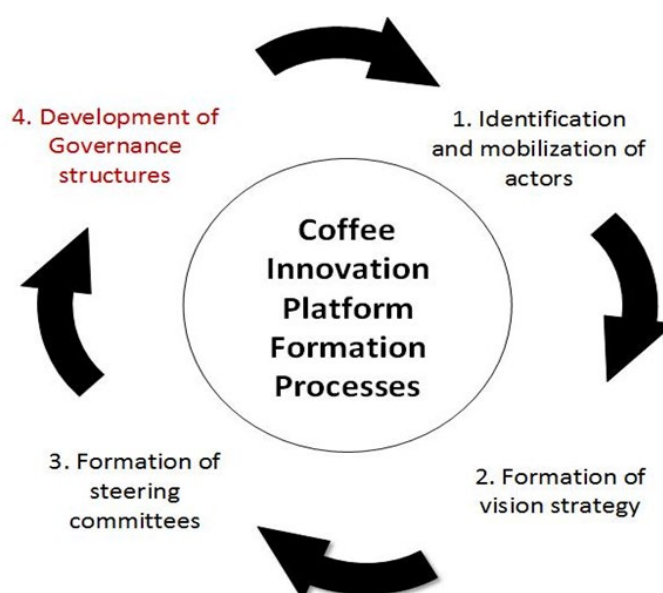


Figure 1. Coffee innovation platform formation processes
Source: Primary data, 2015

Table 3. Attendance in the initial meetings by category and district

Type of actors	Rakai	Luwero	Ntungamo	Bushenyi	Total
Farmers	20	12	20	21	73
Processors/Traders	2	2	3	5	12
Extension agents	8	12	5	6	31
Nursery operators	11	4	3	6	24
Agro-input dealers	3	1	1	3	8
Political leaders	3	4	3	2	12
SACCOs	1	0	1	0	2
Bankers	0	0	2	0	2
CBO's /NGO's	4	4	2	3	13
Total	52	39	40	46	177

Source: Innovation platform Inception reports, 2008

Mobilization activities were mainly done to organize smallholder farmers. Even though some of the coffee actors suggest that the platforms have not been successful, in some of the platforms, mobilization activities yielded positive results. In Rakai, since the chairperson was a farmer representative he used his personal experience and leader position to link up with the chairpersons of coffee farmer cooperative societies in greater Rakai. Some respondents noted that;

"I wouldn't say that we have been successful as a platform but at district level we mobilized coffee farmers to form small groups then high level organizations within their locality to increase on their bargaining power. At least we have nurtured five coffee cooperatives who have linked up with other service providers. These are mainly Kasaali and Luanda coffee farmers' associations." (Male member, Rakai district, 17th December 2014) *"....Our role was to mobilize platform representatives at sub-county and parish level and advise them but were only relying on existing ones. The platform had only farmers, there was no effort to mobilize processors, the nursery operators would have formed platform where members would discuss a given problem"* (Female member, Luwero, 26th November 2014).

It can be noted that members participated in these activities by volunteering to in order to implement certain tasks, but due to financial constraints, members' participation was sometimes limited. Mulema and Mazur (2016) noted that community members are more likely to participate in collective action if they are relatively certain that participation will generate the anticipated benefits. In Rakai district, the representative for nursery operators was able to mobilize his fellow nursery operators to form an association of 30 members within three months of IP formation. After the inception meeting, the representative as an extension agent and nursery operator with his business experience of 15 years worked hand in hand with the regional coffee extension officer to form an association for district nursery operators as narrated by some respondents;

"...We started with about 11 nursery operators, and I was elected as the chairperson and the numbers increased to 30. We started the association by inspecting all existing coffee nurseries. Members drafted a constitution in collaboration with UCDA and DAO, to easily supply certified coffee seedlings (Male member, 16th December 2014).

Rakai Nursery Operators' Association easily linked with people in authority, therefore

improving service delivery. In Uganda, Sseguya *et al.* (2015) support these findings; they suggest that farmers participate best in groups where material benefits are realized and that groups successful in achieving objectives tend to establish networks with other stakeholders. Some critical actors to IP formation processes who did not have offices at the district like the exporters and the bankers except in Ntungamo district were difficult to engage during the initial formation stages of the IPs and yet these actors are essential to the strengthening of commodity value chains through support and market services (Nederlof *et al.*, 2011). This finding is corroborated with other studies where critical actors in the value chain have often been excluded during IP formation process due to their lack of activities in designated geographical locations (Nederlof *et al.*, 2011; Adekunle *et al.*, 2012). Identification and mobilization was thus necessary to enable actors to participate in the inception meetings to identify a shared vision.

Visioning and strategy formulation process.

In the second stage of the formation process, with the guidance of the consultant hired by Café Africa, actors participated in the development of the visioning and strategy formulation through a participatory method that included visual presentations and discussions on the concept of IPs. Participants also brainstormed on the pre-

determined objectives and activities by Café Africa and development of action plans, which were later constituted into generic district action plans. Information from the inception reports (2008) revealed that the same goal and objectives outlined in rules of exchange (RoE) were presented to the IP actors. The plans outlined proposed action points, outcomes and partner organizations. Initial discussions during the meetings were to identify of actors' needs and interests, identify management and financing strategies and to mobilize actors at lower levels to form and strengthen local institutions though these outputs were not realized then. Some members, said that;

“One of activities was to mobilize actors to understand the platform, lobby for investment because the platform had no funds, people just volunteered because there was no sure sources to carry out the activities. The platform was supposed to move up to sub-county level but sustaining them was not easy because people needed compensation for their time” (Male member, Rakai district, 17 December 2014).

As the actors joined the platforms, they anticipated returns in form of benefits. In order to engage into strong relationships, they anticipated the benefits to outweigh the costs in terms of time, effort and money.

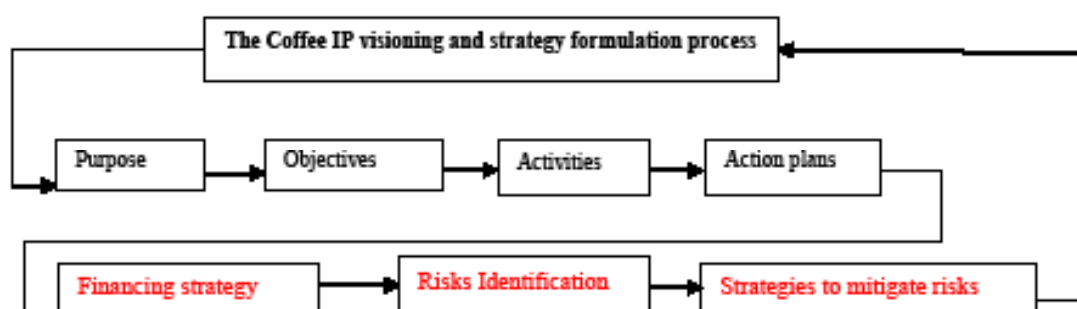


Figure 2. Flow chart of the Coffee IP visioning and strategy formulation process

Table 4. Expected benefits by actor category

Expected benefits	Farmers (count= 7)	Extension agents (count=6)	Processors (count=3)	Nursery operators (count= 5)	Input dealers (count= 2)	Total (count=23)
Access to information	7	4	2	3	2	18
Exchange visits	1	0	0	0	0	1
Obtain farm inputs	1	0	1	0	0	2
Sell collectively	5	1	0	1	0	7
Enforcing laws	4	0	1	1	0	6
Promotion of activities	4	1	1	1	1	8
Form associations	1	1	2	4	1	9
Link with others	2	2	1	1	2	8
Coffee grading	1	0	0	0	0	1

Source: Primary data, 2015

In line with the SET (Cook *et al.*, 2013), most actors expected intrinsic benefits from participating in the IPs through information sharing, linkages with other actors, business promotion and institutional development (see Table 4). All actors expected these platforms to provide avenues for information sharing and learning while farmers expected the IPs to address their marketing challenge by organizing them for bulk marketing and quality assurance. On the other hand, coffee processors and nursery operators expected the platforms to support them in institutional development that would enable them to acquire processing and post-harvest equipment which they were unable to acquire individually as reported by one of the processors;

“...We expected the platform to assist the processors to have raised drying facilities, provide information on prices then inform others and to mobilize farmers to sell in groups” (Male member, (Rakai district, 16th December 2014).

In Luwero the failure of the IP to achieve their expectations demoralized active nursery operators as reported by one of the actors;

“I represent nursery operators and we were expected to form an association to unite us. We had a meeting to decide if we need an association. We expected the platform to hold meetings at least once every month. But this

never happened so due to lack of meetings as nursery operators, we never shared our needs on the platform” (Male member, Luwero district, 27th November 2014).

In New Zealand and Netherlands, Klerkx and Leeuwis (2009) and Botha *et al.* (2014) suggest that divergence between initiator preferences and stakeholder needs have important implications for the representation of different types of market chain actors. Brouwer *et al.* (2015) suggest that, for a successful IP visioning and strategy formulation, seven processes have to be conducted and should include the development of the financing strategy, risk identification and strategies to mitigate the risks as illustrated in Figure 2. The involvement of the coffee actors would ensure most stakeholders participated in critical stages of the IP formation processes.

Formation of steering committees. The selection of the steering committee members were done as one of the initial activities of the IP formation process (Table 5). The guidelines to select these members were well documented in the Rules of exchange (RoE where each of the district IPs steering committee was to have a composition of 14-16 people drawn from different actor categories. The process involved organizing participants into specific sub-groups, each sub-group was composed of members from the same category. These sub-groups then

identified and nominated representative(s) to the district steering committee. Members of the constituted district steering committee then proceeded to select the executive leaders who were comprised of the chairperson, secretary, treasurer and committee members. The different actor categories were farmers, extension agents, nursery operators, NGOs/CBOs, processors, traders, agro-input dealers, regional coordinators, district leaders and bankers. Even though some categories of actors did not meet the stipulated number of members to the sub committees, selection of the sub committees established the foundation for the governance of the IPs.

The criteria for selection of the IP leaders were not clear but actors based their selection on leaders' experience in community development

work and local leadership positions. As determined and explained by Café Africa, the roles of the selected committee members were strategic action planning, technical management and process management. Other roles were fundraising, networking and information sharing, lobbying and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation at district level. It was assumed that by virtue of their leadership positions and experiences, the committee members would steer the platform activities, but the leaders lacked clear guidance on how innovation platforms operate and how to command compliance and cooperation from the actors. This negatively influenced the governance of the coffee IPs as committee members needed guidance and facilitation to be able to perform their roles as narrated by some respondents; "... *We were not assigned roles and it was voluntary*

Table 5. Selection of leaders, committee composition and expected roles for Coffee IPs

Actors	Selection process	Committee composition	Committee roles
Farmers	use value chain concept to involve others	farmers, nursery operators extension staff exporter traders processor, group leaders, banker, NGO/CBO, district coffee coordinator media, self-selection of leaders	regular monthly meetings. Mobilize, sensitize and train farmers at sub-county level, proposal writing, no funds to train.
Processors	actors grouped identified leaders by category, pre-determined terms	uninterested processors, bankers left out. farmers, nursery operators, extension agents	regular meetings, lack of incentive to engage, non-committal of actors
Nursery operators	actors grouped identified leaders by category	diverse actors of input dealers, farmers, extension workers, politicians, farmer groups, processors, NGOs	link actors, lacks facilitation, activities are not clearly visible
Extension agent	actors grouped identified leaders by category, Process external driven	extension agent farmers, processors, nursery operators, financial institutions, political leaders	develop constitution, objectives, fundraising mobilize actors, organizing coffee shows, advocate and lobbying proposal writing, identify challenges. link actors
Agro-input dealers	appointed by category	extension agent, processor, nursery operator farmers coffee trader input dealer regional extension officer, agric. Prod. Officer, NGO (IBERO), LUDIFA	Members agreed to move out and mobilize actors but was not done due to lack of funds

Source: Primary data, 2015

we were supposed to make follow up visits and mobilize actors but even nearby we did not. So it was a general weakness, we were still waiting for Café Africa to guide us” (Female member, Luwero district, 26th November 2014). “...The problem was in the way it started. The idea was introduced at a fast pace. They were no clear action plans because the roles were not clearly explained that’s why the committees believed coffee shows were the main activity” (Female member, Bushenyi district, 13th March 2015).

One of the critical stages that was missed during the IP formation processes was development of proper governance structures beyond the interim steering committees which affected implementation of planned activities. Yet, governance structures are perceived to be critical for successful implementation of organizational activities (Kiskel, 2011).

GAPS, LESSONS LEARNT AND IMPLICATIONS

1. The success of IPs could be attributed to the diversity of the actors, their attendance to meetings and experiences to mobilize their members to engage in the platform activities. This is so because across districts, the meetings pooled representatives from the public and private sector.
2. While opening spaces for dialogue through invitation is necessary, it is by no means sufficient to ensure effective participation. A lot depends on how people take up and make use of what is on offer, as well as supportive processes that enhance capacity building and empowerment of the actors to engage in decision-making processes. Lack of involvement of the critical local stakeholders by the promoter in developing the terms of reference, which in this case was referred to as “Rules of Exchange” meant that the formation process of the Coffee IPs was a top-down approach and this affected ownership of the IPs.
3. The roles of private sector actors like the traders, bankers and exporters in the IP activities

were not clearly defined from the initial stages yet these are critical actors in any commodity value chain. From the findings, only Ntungamo district Coffee IP had the bank as one of its stakeholders at the initial formation stages. This affects the initial engagement, interactions and mobilization of the market orientated actors in the IP activities.

4. During the strategy and visioning process, among the stages that were missed out were the financing strategy, risk identification and strategies to mitigate the risks. This affected the performance of the IPs as members were not clear on where the financing of the IP activities would come from and how to deal with complex conditions in collective action. Apart from supporting the actors to realize a shared goal, Café Africa should have engaged the stakeholders in developing mechanisms for achieving their goal in terms pooling financial resources and dealing with uncertainties at formation stage.

5. In Policy, although efforts were made to involve the local district administrators and politicians, their roles in the IP formation process were not clear and how they would link with the higher government authorities, research institutions and Universities were not well articulated.
6. In terms of Governance of the IPs, steering committees were formed at the district level and the lower governance structures were omitted. Lack of structures at the lower level meant a weak direct linkages with the nursery operators, the producers and buyers and other pertinent stakeholders. Therefore, it is not only about identifying actors at higher hierarchy but engagement of actors require clear and defined organized structures at the grassroots.

For an ideal IP formation process to occur, there has to be in place a holistic governance system composed of key players. This study proposes a formation operational model composed of four major components, actor identification and

mobilization, visioning and strategy formulation process, and IP culture and development of governance structures (Figure 3). Each component having its unit of sub-components (Figure 3).

The proposed formation operating model is a mechanism that can be used by an IP and its members to define the interaction points, translate elements of the policies or by-laws into practice and define the roles and responsibilities of each individual member of the IP. The model can also assist the IPs in assessing its current state

and establish how their governance structures would be. Each of the components elaborated in the model consists of a sub-component that can structure IPs into making informed decisions and define the actions to be taken in governance of IPs. IP performance requires institutional change and political will, commitment and active participation of the actors. Therefore, concerted mechanisms need to be in-built to support collective action; such processes take investment, time and persistence and may not be realized in a one event participatory workshop.

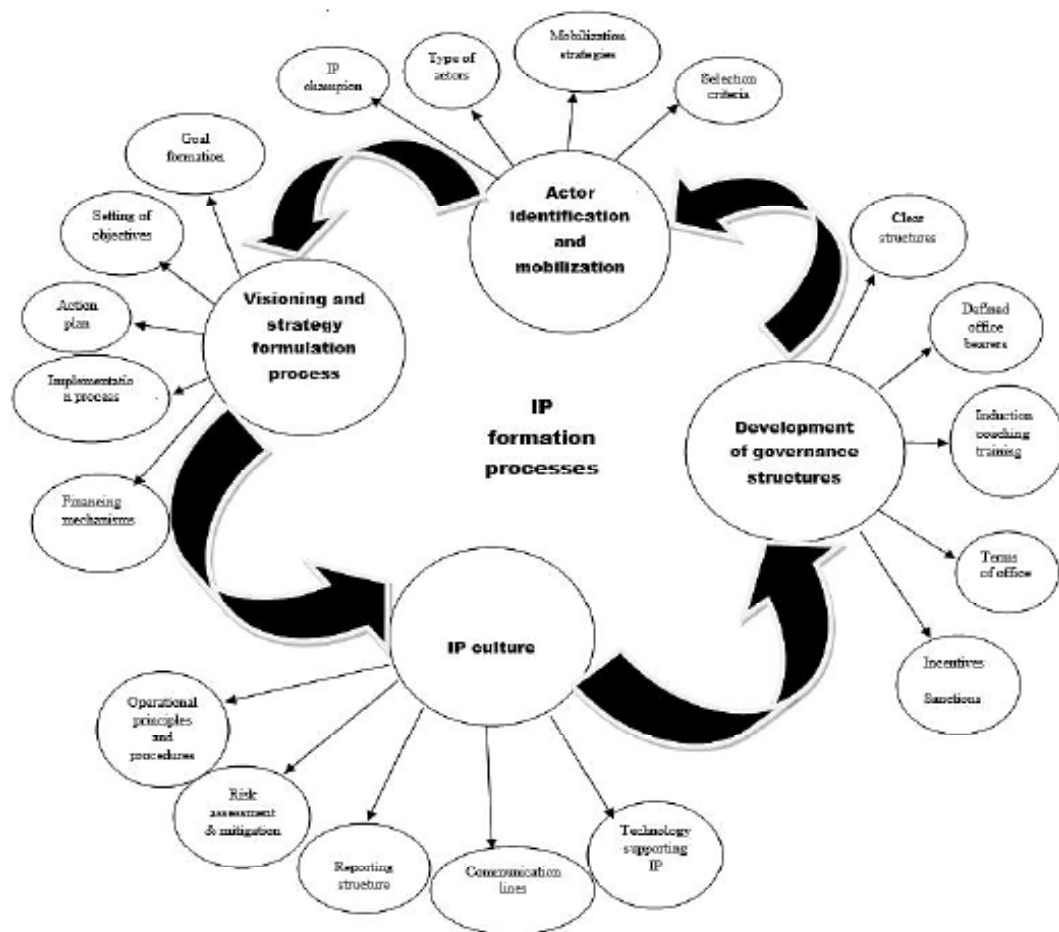


Figure 3. Proposed Formation operational model

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the processes in the formation of Coffee IPs in four districts in Uganda and examined how the processes influenced the participation of actors in the initial activities of the innovation platforms. The gaps in the IP formation processes were exclusion of some key stakeholders, unclear management and financing mechanisms, and weak governance structures at lower levels. These gaps affected engagement of actors in initial activities of the coffee IPs. The study suggests a formation operational model with four main components, actor identification and mobilization, visioning and strategy formulation process, IP culture, and development of governance structures. The model is suggested based on the weaknesses and missing links observed during the coffee IP formation. Since the coffee IPs deal with a highly competitive and demanded commodity at international level, strong governance structures must be in place with emphasis at farmer level. The aspects of actor participation in relation to involvement and influence are some of the gaps that require more empirical evidence; action research is recommended to examine the formation process as it unfolds to understand who participates, why and how their actions influence the decision-making processes in practice. Future research should look at the mechanisms of IP governance and their implementation for successful IP formation.

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STATEMENT OF NO-CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of

interest in this paper.

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