Fueling Local Solutions Through Collaborative Innovation

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Debunking Innovation Myths
Myth #1: Innovators are born, not bred

Myth #2: Some places are just better for innovation

Myth #3: In rural contexts, importing—not growing—innovation is best

Myth #4: Laboratory research is the mother of innovation
What is innovation?

**Definition:** A break from typical practice that unlocks outsized improvements in efficiency and/or effectiveness. While the change may be incremental, the impact is not.
Different types of innovation abound

**Product Innovation**
- Improved Storage

**Process Innovation**
- Just-in-time processing

**Market Innovation**
- At-home delivery of locally grown food

**Organizational Innovation**
- Farmer-based orgs as hubs of agriculture services

Photos: Purdue University, Transpak, IITA, World Bank, C. Beaumont, Tyddyn Teg
The Innovation Ambition Matrix

**Core**
Optimizing existing products for existing beneficiaries

**Adjacent**
Expanding from existing practice into “new to the organization practice”

**Transformational**
Developing breakthroughs and inventing things for markets that don’t yet exist

**Where to Play**
- Serve existing markets and customers
- Enter adjacent markets, serve adjacent customers
- Create new markets, target new beneficiaries

**How Radically to Innovate**
- Use existing products and assets
- Add incremental products and assets
- Develop new products and assets

More transformational = greater returns

Pursuing transformational innovation

• “The Medici Effect”
• Inspires big ideas that occur at the intersections between sectors/disciplines
• Emphasizes recombining ideas and the power of diverse teams and networks
But, how collaborative are we really?
Introducing Collaborative Innovation
The Power of Collaborative Innovation

**Definition:** The act of combining efforts and sharing complementary resources with partners to create, test, and implement innovative ideas.
Who we are: The Global Knowledge Initiative (GKI)

Mission: GKI builds purpose-driven networks to deliver innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing problems.

We thrive on creating the enabling environment, the mindset, and the tools that make Collaborative Innovation possible globally.
GKI: Our work

- Network Design and Facilitation
- Social Innovation Lab
- Innovation Policy and Strategy
- Collaborative Innovation Capacity Building
- Systems Research and Evaluation
What we’ve learned about Collaborative Innovation (CI)

- Problem framing is key
- Users are central to every step
- Systems matter
- CI mindset, tools, and process can be learned
- Network facilitators assure CI across systems

Photo: CAFOD, Used through Creative Commons
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Case Studies of Collaborative Innovation in Action
Challenge: How might we identify and shape integrated solutions to reduce post harvest food loss in Africa using an innovation lab approach?
Frame Challenges
- Collectively parsed food loss into smaller, actionable challenges
- Built an integrated “challenge map”

Assess Resources
- Local and global experts catalogued available resources already positioned to deliver solutions

Envision Solutions
- Co-created integrated solution sets
- Weighed trade-offs between options

Mobilize Innovation Networks
- Identified and assembled partners
- Matched partners and solutions

Social Innovation Lab on Post Harvest Loss
*By the numbers*

- 590 problems/opportunities to curb food loss in Africa identified
- 120 participants in 9 countries engaged
- 50+ integrated innovation solution options
- 130 Million dollars leveraged
YieldWise Begins

Our Social Innovation Lab triggered a $130 million Rockefeller Foundation-supported 7-year initiative that aims to reduce food losses by at least 50% in representative value chains, improving millions of rural lives.
Infusing YieldWise with Collaborative Innovation

Our Goal: boost the degree to which collaborative innovation is used to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and, ultimately, the impact of YieldWise.
What our Lab taught us about CI

**Insight 1**
Separating divergence from convergence enables better brainstorming and more efficient decision-making across networks.

**Insight 2**
Resources exist locally. Documenting them before structuring partnerships validates and economizes.

**Insight 3**
Quickly testing the fit between resources, people, and pieces of a challenge (rapid prototyping) builds the basis for continuous CI.
LINK Challenge: How might we eliminate potato taste defect in Rwandan specialty coffee?
Adding Value through LINK

Deepen Skills
• Trained on innovation tools and methods
• Facilitated innovation strategy

Deliver Solutions
• Used systems analysis and context insights to inform solutions
• Developed and vetted solutions to challenges
• Implemented and monitored solutions

Nurture Networks
• Identified partnership needs
• Found and recruited partners
• Managed and monitored networks

LINK Rwanda
By the numbers

30+ organizations
4 continents
Thousands of resources mobilized
Millions of dollars leveraged
What LINK taught us about CI

**Insight 1**
Systems mapping underpins smart partnerships and more effective problem-solving networks.

**Insight 2**
Training on an as-needed basis in key CI skills enables additional partners/teams/network members to develop shared CI knowledge and skills.

**Insight 3**
Facilitators who can design and shepherd CI processes—which maintain knowledge flows and momentum between activities, meetings, and convenings—are vital.
Looking Ahead
Benefits of embracing Collaborative Innovation

**Innovative Solutions**

New technologies, processes, etc that address pressing implementation needs

**New Insights & Perspectives**

Deepened “innovators mindset” & appreciation for options & assets at your disposal

**Additional Partners**

Individuals and institutions with a shared vision and complementary resources for achieving change

**Problem-Solving Tools**

Proven methods to support the innovation process, from idea generation to achieving scale

**Collaborative Innovation Skills**

Core capabilities to innovate collaboratively and creatively

**New Ways of Working**

Process improvements that increase efficiency and effectiveness of innovation pursuits
“When each step of the journey from problem to solution is collaborative, innovative solutions never thought possible, become realizable. Collaborative Innovation recognizes our common fate and empowers us all to actively innovate the future that we seek to see unfold.”
Thank you.

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