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The Canvas Coach Canvas-based coaching tools for experts, consultants, and development professionals who want to build authority, close better deals, and create lasting impact. 500+ Professionals Transformed 90 Days Average Time to Results 3 Systems Proven Frameworks Get Free Toolkit Book a Call I attended the launch of the Uganda Climate Smart Job programme, an FCDO / British High Commission funded programme with Palladium: Make It Possible as the implementing firm. The programme aim to increase climate smart innovations across northern Uganda. Partners in attendance included Stanbic Bank Uganda, Stanbic Business Incubator, CABI, Swisscontact and many other stakeholders. To view or add a comment, sign in LinkedIn and 3rd parties use essential and non-essential cookies to provide, secure, analyze and improve our Services, and to show you relevant ads (including professional and job ads) on and off LinkedIn. Learn more in our Cookie Policy.Select Accept to consent or Reject to decline non-essential cookies for this use. You can update your choices at any time in your settings. If youve been following my Wednesday newsletters, you know Im obsessed with finding ways to make development more impactful and more sustainable. This week, I want to share a provocative idea drawn from my work in Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda: commercialising the facilitation role itself. Why this matters Most market systems programmes rely on facilitators, teams that diagnose constraints, organise actors and broker relationships. They are the glue that holds a value chain together. The problem? These roles are shortterm and grantfunded. When the project ends, the glue dissolves. Research and experience tell us that staff on temporary contracts are less engaged and less effective. In a program in Nigeria we linked farmers to input suppliers and offtakers. In Kenya we supported small businesses with market access. In both cases, when funding wound down, our facilitators moved on. It felt like starting from scratch each time. What if facilitation was a business? This isnt a fantasy. There are realworld examples: Commissionbased brokers. In several projects, local village agents earn around 10% commission from buyers for bringing farmers. Their incentive to nurture deals doesnt disappear when donor money does. Farm business advisors. microentrepreneurs travel from village to village selling agricultural inputs and embedding advice. Farmers pay via the margin on goods, and the advisors make a living. Paid extension services. In Nigeria, a lack of fishfarming advice led to private service providers who charge farmers for training. The value is clear: profits increase by 522% and the market is now filled with dozens of independent providers. My own Ugandan experiment: the Investment Infrastructure model During the programme in Uganda, which operated in a refugee context, I tested what I call an Investment Infrastructure model. We identified a local entrepreneur and helped them build a company whose job was to do the facilitator work: mapping suppliers, recruiting and training agents, and brokering deals between refugee farmers and buyers. The company invested in its network and earned commissions. Because it had skin in the game, the owner kept improving the service after the donor funding ended. Refugee farmers benefited from better input supply and market access; the entrepreneur gained a sustainable business. How could you commercialise facilitation? Heres a simple framework: Quantify the constraint. How much money is lost because farmers lack extension, finance or markets? Determine who benefits. Will input suppliers sell more? Will buyers get reliable volumes? Those beneficiaries are your potential payers. Design revenue streams. Commissions on sales, subscription fees for ongoing support, or training fees can all work. Invest in credibility. Like any new venture, youll need demonstration plots, pilot deals and a period of lossleading investment. Donor or impact investment can play this catalytic role. Lock in the mission. Use a socialenterprise structure or mission statement to ensure that the business serves marginalised groups and doesnt drift towards purely profitable clients. Invitation I dont believe every facilitation role can be commercialised. Policy advocacy and deep systems analysis still need grant support. But when the value creation is clear and the beneficiaries can pay, turning facilitation into a business could be transformative. If youre a programme manager, donor, or entrepreneur, I invite you to consider your own context. What constraints are crying out for a permanent solution? Could a local business provide that glue instead of a shortterm project? Hit reply and let me know what youre seeing on the ground. Lets experiment, learn and share. We collect cookies to enable the proper functioning and security of our website, and to enhance your experience. By clicking on 'Accept All Cookies', you consent to the use of these cookies. You can change your 'Cookies Settings' at any time. For more information, please read ourCookie PolicyCookie SettingsAccept All Cookies Al-Habib Onifade has over fifteen years of experience designing, planning and implementing development programmes in agricultural and agro-processing sectors in Nigeria and as a financial analyst for financial institutions in the UK. He has conducted opportunity and impact assessments for DFID programmes including a rice value chain analysis for PropCom and leather goods scoping study for GEMS 1. On GEMS 1, he also managed the finished leather goods, access to finance and business membership organisation intervention areas which sought to increase incomes and employment in the meat and leather value chains. Mr Onifade now specialises in providing market development advisory services to MADE Nigeria and BIF Nigeria. Im Habib Onifade, a former investment banker turned economic development strategist. Ive worked across Africa, Asia, and Europe - designing, advising, and coaching programs to engage the private sector and transform market systems. Along the way, I saw a recurring problem: Brilliant professionals were equipped with theory but left without the tools to act. So I built the systems I wish I had: practical frameworks that turn insight into impact. Why I Built These SystemsI didnt want to be another consultant handing out advice. I wanted to create tools that professionals could use - independently, repeatedly, and effectively. Thats why each of the 3 systems on this site is: Canvas-based visual, modular, easy to apply Built for fieldwork not just strategy rooms Designed to empower individuals not create dependency Whether youre a consultant, a facilitator, or a team leader I built these tools for you. What Youll Find HereExpert Positioning System To help experts become visible, credible, and sought-after. Private Sector Engagement System To help programs build sustainable partnerships. MSD Implementation System To help professionals translate theory into field-level action.

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