UGANDA FORUM FOR AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES

African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
Knowledge & Novelty for Africa's Livelihoods

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global forum for rural advisory services
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Communities of Practice

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Presented at the UFAAS GP-SAEP Workshop, January 21, 2025; The Great Outdoor, Kalanamu, Luweero

Presentation outline

1. Situation of CoP in UFAAS Strategic documents
2. A Community of Practice defined
3. Key features of a CoP
4. Setting up a CoP
5. Exercise: The GPSAEP Agroecology CoP

CoP anchor in the UFAAS Value Proposition 2024-28

(What we want to be known for: KM, networking, information sharing is critical!

That contributes to a resilient, productive and sustainable agri-food system in Uganda

Targeting over 2,000 AEAS actors (individuals and organizations), from all sectors

A unique innovative, pluralistic and inclusive platform

To achieve quality AEAS delivery service to over 1,000,000 AEAS beneficiaries, especially farmers

Strengthening their capacities, through networking and information sharing, training, effective coordination, professionalism, and advocacy

CoP anchor in GP-SAEP Project

"Communities of Practice (CoP) on Agroecology will help galvanise momentum for change and include participants beyond the training as well as sustain the achievements beyond the project period"

GP SAEP project guide

What is a Community of Practice?

- A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of individuals who share a common interest or passion and come together to share knowledge, improve skills, and advance their collective practice.

  Lave and Wenger, 2019

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CoP…

A characteristic of knowledge management

A useful approach to knowing and learning.

Based on Allan, B. (2008). Knowledge creation within a community of practice

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Key features of a CoP
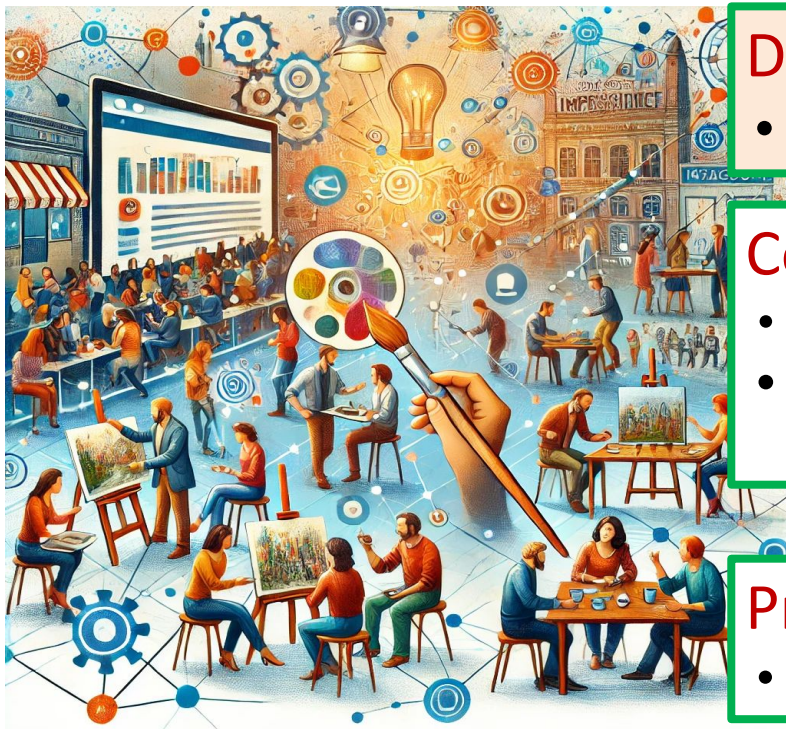
Domain

- A shared area of interest

Community

- Individuals who care about this domain.
- **<u>Willing</u>** to build relationships and learn together

Practice

- Shared tools, techniques, and knowledge

(Wenger et al., 2002)

CoPs: examples

- A group of engineers working on similar problems
- A network of surgeons exploring novel techniques,
- A gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope

- A group of extension professionals seeking better AEAS delivery models

- A group of agro-ecology practitioners….

CoPs: what they are not

- A website in itself is not a community of practice.

- Having the same job or the same title does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn together.

- Students in high schools may have much in common, yet unless they interact and learn together, they do not form a community of practice.

CoPs…*continued*

- "Healthy CoPs have a culture built on professional networking, personal relationships, shared knowledge, and common skills."

- Through sharing information and experiences, members have an opportunity to develop personally and professionally." (Wenger etal, 2022)
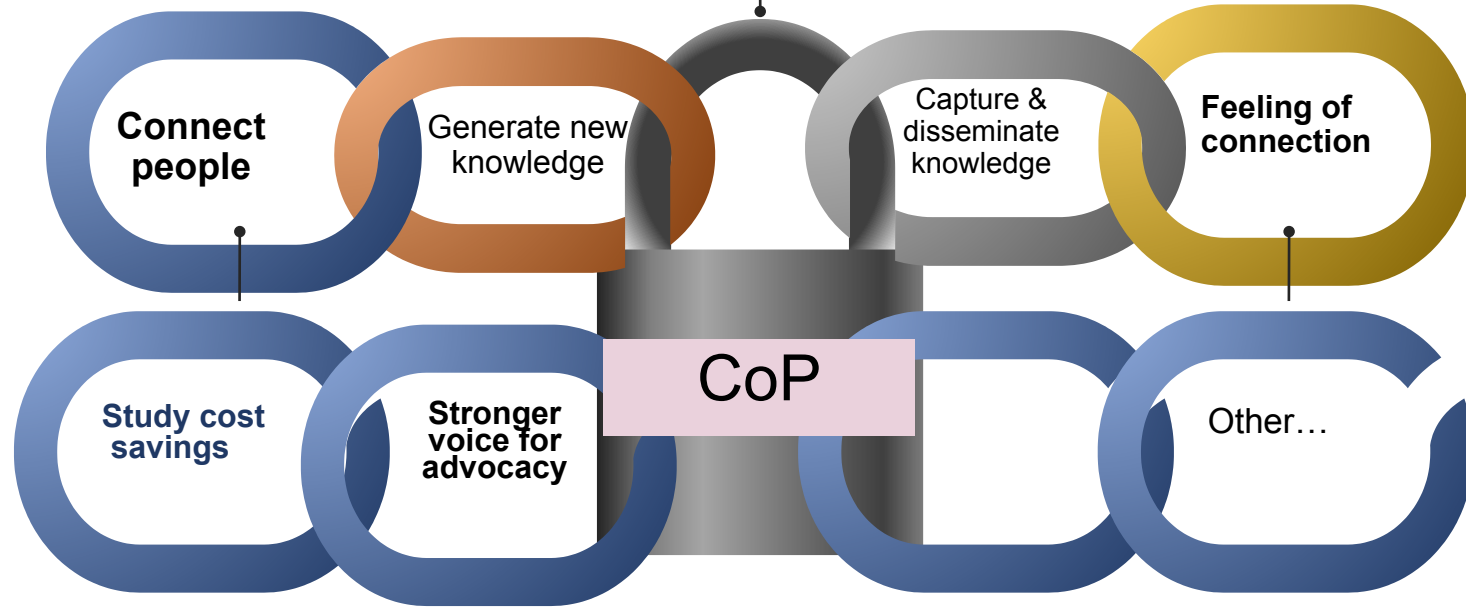
CoPs: various names, same purpose

Learning networks, thematic groups, or Technical working groups.

- While they all have the three elements of a domain, a community, and a practice, they come in a variety of forms.
  - small- large.
  - local -global.
  - Meet mainly face-to-face- some online.
  - Intra organization- Inter organizations.
  - Formally recognized/ with a budget - some completely informal and even invisible.

Benefits of CoPs

- **Connect people**
- Generate new knowledge
- Capture & disseminate knowledge
- **Feeling of connection**
- **Study cost savings**
- **Stronger voice for advocacy**
- CoP
- Other…

How to start a CoP

- 1. Identify the domain or focus area
- 2. Build a core group of interested members
- 3. Establish goals and objectives
- 4. Decide on communication methods (meetings, platforms, etc.)
- 5. Foster active participation and collaboration

How to start a CoP

- STEP 1: Identify stakeholders and partners: Who might be appropriate members of your CoP?
- STEP 2: Convene partners and establish CoP agreements such as purpose, common goals, expectations, and outcomes.
- STEP 3: Solidify commitments to the CoP project and to CoP team members.
- STEP 4: Develop pathways for CoP communication to build relationships and share personal narratives.
- STEP 5: Determine initial project needs and opportunities.
- STEP 6: Outline project outcomes: What do you need to learn, know, and clarify?
- STEP 7: Identify useful tools to meet CoP goals such as evidence-based studies.
- STEP 8: Finalize project plan details: What are you going to do? What are your first steps? What foundation needs to be laid for long-term impact?
- STEP 9: Plan next steps: What do you need to progress? How can we adequately sustain group efforts?
- STEP 10: Identify strategies of dissemination of information for all audiences.
- STEP 11: Evaluate plan and community agreements: What evaluation tools might be helpful?
- STEP 12: Finalize concept with CoP members.
- STEP 13: Implement plan.
- STEP 14: Disseminate findings to partners
- STEP 15: Celebrate successes!

Challenges in CoPs

- Sustaining member engagement
- Ensuring knowledge flow
- Balancing informal and formal structures
- Measuring success and impact

Some best practices for CoPs

- Encourage open communication
- Provide leadership and coordination
- Use diverse tools and technologies
- Recognize and celebrate contributions
- …etc.

Exercise: The Agroecology CoP

- (To be refined during the team meetings)

Key stakeholders in the CoP

Domain lead

CoP Facilitator

Steering Committee

Members ...

Others

CoP
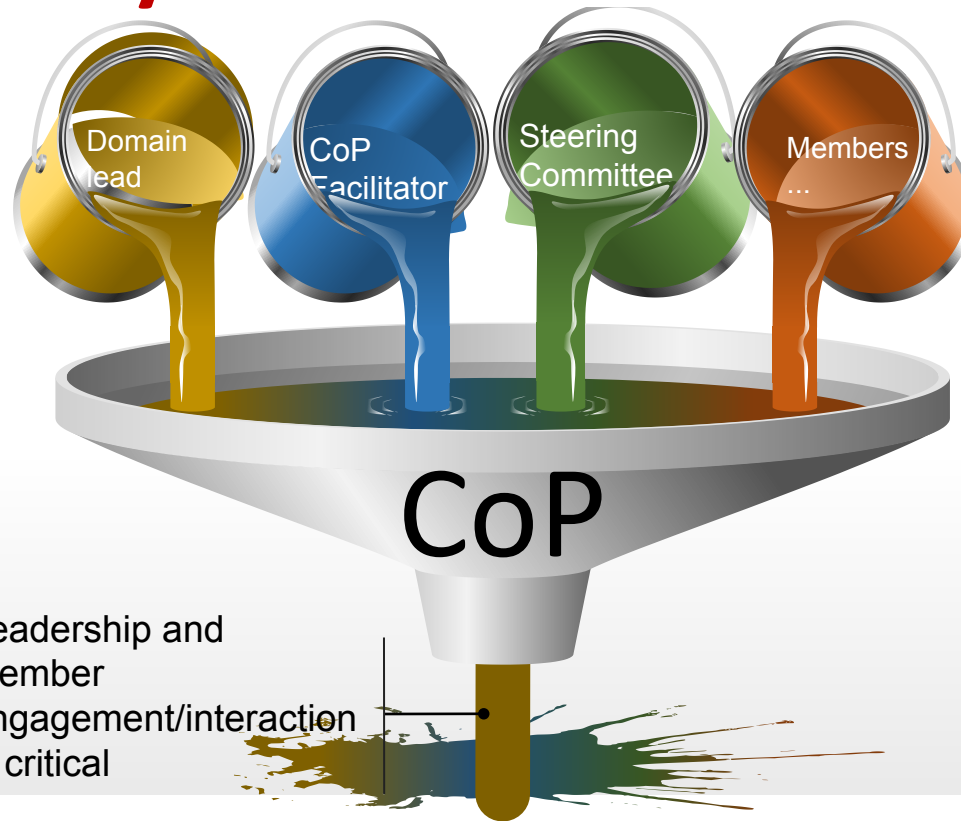
Leadership and member engagement/interaction is critical

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Thank you