AMEA WEEK:

TAKING GLOBAL TO LOCAL

WASHINGTON D.C.
2nd to 6th DECEMBER 2019

WHAT WE AIMED TO ACHIEVE

We started the week by setting out our objectives which were:

- Deepening relationships to generate new collaborations.
- Strategic reflection on the network's purpose and future direction.
- Enable local networks to develop meaningful relationships that help accelerate their work.
- Develop a strategy for outreach to non-members (including strategic partners).
- Create strong commitment to the next phase of work and deepen commitment within member organizations.

This report provides the details of our discussions. Below is a summary of the key outcomes from these discussions:

CONVENING OUTCOMES

- The Global Guidelines strategy will be revised and a roadmap to an ISO standard be developed with NEN (The Dutch standardization bureau).
- Material owners to submit profiles of where the tools are being used and by whom.
- Members to formally commit to provide data/information required for tracking projects using AMEA products (e.g. IWA 29, Toolkit).
- Members to propose peer reviewers for tool accreditation and re-accreditation processes. Peer review processes to start by April 2020.
- Bankability group to broaden its' scope to focus on Access to Finance. Leadership challenges to be addressed by January 31st.
- AgTech guide to be launched externally in April 2020 in Addis Ababa.
- Fintech is potentially the next round of AgTechs to be looked into. A collaboration with Access to Finance group in this activity will be considered.
- Working Groups to recruit high potential people amongst members and ensure clear milestones for 2020.
- Local Network MOUs to be signed in December 2019.
- Planning for Regional Coordination recruitment and placement is a priority.
- Local Networks planning process to be prioritized in Q1 2020 on the assumption that IFAD proposal is approved.
- Local Networks to implement membership fee policy with support from GCO.
- AMEA will have only one Global Convening in 2020 but will also invest in Regional events. First one is likely to be IFAD start up process in April/May 2020.
- Explore new local networks in: India (with IFC and Tanager), Ghana (with Rikolto), Rwanda (with ICCO, IFC, SCOPEInsight and CNFA) and Peru/Honduras (with Rikolto and NCBA CLUSA).
- AMEA strategic review is planned for 2021.
- All members to use Slack!

DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS

The AMEA Week started with Brown Bag meetings with ACDI/VOCA and NCBA CLUSA staff. In total we met over 50 staff and discussed how AMEA can add value to their work. We discussed how to engage strategic donors such as US and Canadian agencies. We also talked about the use of AMEA tools in programs which brought out how we need to improve the way in which we communicate with each other and harness the learning from initiatives. The next steps will be to:

- Agree on which US Missions to target and develop a strategy of engagement led by the Local Networks. This strategy should ensure that the AMEA strategy speaks to USAID priorities i.e. market systems approach.
- Engage with the Market System community of practice through events such as the Market Systems Symposium.
- Engage with Canadian agencies through AMEA members.
- Prioritize the mapping of AMEA tools use by members and development of AMEA learning processes.
- Continue to provide AMEA member staff with the resources to understand how to get the most out of their membership e.g. Toolkit Guide.

"STRATEGY AND STRUCTURE MATTER, BUT THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR BEHIND ALL SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION IS TRUST-BASED RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PARTICIPANTS. MANY COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS ULTIMATELY FAIL TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL BECAUSE THEY LACK A STRONG RELATIONAL FOUNDATION" JANE WEI-SKILLERN, HAAS/BERKELEY CENTER FOR SOCIAL SECTOR LEARNING

FRAMING THE CONVENING

AMEA has been convening its' global members every 6 months in order to guide its' strategy to accelerate the professionalization of farmer organisations. The Washington D.C. Convening took place over 2 days from December 3rd to 4th. 27 people from 11 members gathered and 10 people from strategic partners joined us for the Collaborations session. We began the convening by 'connecting and re-connecting' participants. AMEA is a Network and building trust is a key element of a successful network.

Participants reflected on recent successes in their personal and work life, talked about the challenges they faced this year and what inspires them to do their work. Participants also shared what they hoped to get from the Convening days and what they want AMEA to achieve and how they think they can contribute to it:
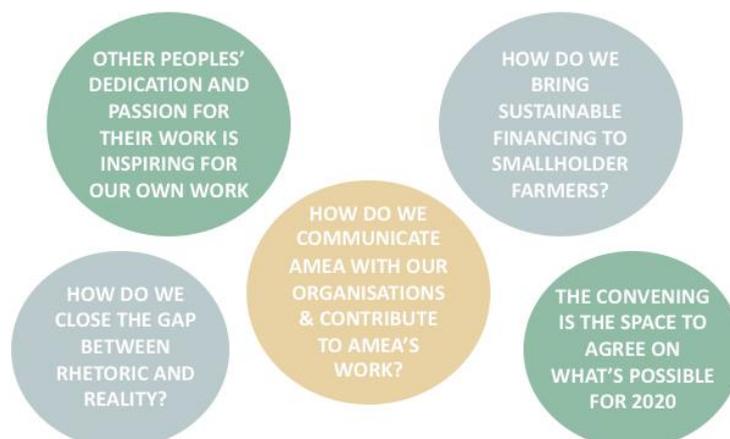
UNDERSTANDING OUR HISTORY AND PROGRESS

In order to understand where we are we must first understand our history.

2016	2017	2018	2019
Legal formation	Network Director	GCO expansion	IWA
Founding partners	appointed	IWA process	Toolkit Guide
Building trust event	Small Foundation	Toolkit	Local Networks
	Business Planning	Network restructure	

The AMEA formation stage took place during 2016 and 2017; AMEA products that deliver value to members were created in 2018 and 2019. **AMEA is now in the testing phase** of whether these products, such as the IWA, the toolkit and local networks deliver sufficient value to members.

This session also included a **re-affirmation that AMEA is a network** and not an organization. AMEA does not have command and control functions. It relies on a combination of member self-interest and shared interest to drive member commitment and delivery of value to members.

In order to assess our progress as Network we used the "5C's":

- For most members, **AMEA is clear on its' purpose**. This is evidenced through Working Group and Local Network surveys; as well as engagement with many external stakeholders. However, we still need to address the doubts of key people within AMEA

"A SHARED OBJECTIVE IS A PRECURSOR TO TRUST. OUR SELF-INTEREST AND SHARED OBJECTIVE LEADS US TO COLLABORATE AND BUILD TRUST"

- **AMEA is convening the right people and developing relationships/trust**. This is evidenced by the number of new partnerships developed. However, there is still a need to deepen the relationship between AMEA and members (which includes gaining members' trust to share their project data and learning). Relationship building includes reaching out to other networks, especially access to finance networks. AMEA still needs to clearly demonstrate its added value compared to these networks.

- **AMEA Working Groups and Local Networks have successfully coordinated** members to produce some excellent outputs: the IWA 29, the Toolkit/Guide, the LinkedIn Hub for Trainers/Coaches and the AgTech Guide. AMEA Local Networks also see significant potential for coordinating joint action on future programming, learning and fundraising. However, a significant challenge is the time that members can commit to AMEA.

- **AMEA Working Groups and Local Networks have started their collaboration for systems impact**. The most obvious is the development of an IWA 29 roll out strategy which Local Networks are now implementing. There are also other interesting initiatives such as the development of a pilot with the Ugandan Government to use SCOPEInsight tools. However, many AMEA members are not aiming for systems impact; and therefore, collaboration may vary depending on self-interest.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

[The Working Groups presented](#) on their progress, challenges, opportunities and plans for 2020. This led into identifying the most strategic issues for AMEA to work on in these two days, but also over the course of the next year. **17 strategic issues were identified and six were prioritised** based on their importance and suitability for debate in the Convening.

1. IWA 29 - Do we have the right strategy for roll out?

It is clear we have member commitment for IWA 29 with 67% of members saying they have plans to advocate for IWA 29. The National Bureaus of Standards remain the right entry point, however if the process becomes too complex/expensive and has a significant risk of changing the language of the IWA 29 then AMEA should use an alternative strategy, such as working through Ministries of Agriculture and Trade and/or private sector. The "coalition of the willing" should therefore be identified in each country where IWA is to be tested, which may be beyond Local Network countries. It was also agreed that we need a specific roadmap from NEN (Dutch NSB) with milestones (to make sure we meet ISO development requirements). A more formal collaboration with NEN should therefore be explored.

2. How do we re-energize the Achieving Bankability Working Group?

Outcome 2 in the IFAD proposal is dedicated to this theme and Farmer Organisations access to finance is a very strong proxy indicator for their level of professionalism. It was proposed to reframe the WG from 'Achieving Bankability' to 'Access to Finance' to cover a broader spectrum of financing opportunities for Farmer Organisations. This WG should confirm its plan and leadership by January 2020 with Rikolto (Josephine) and SCOPEInsight (Lucas) possibly taking more significant roles. Local Networks must engage strongly in this workstream for it to become vibrant. We should also consider the possibility of having a Global Lead rather than a Global Working Group. The focus could be on the use and relevance of new and existing tools (incl. digital literacy and financial literacy), and on strengthening engagement with Local Networks for system change. The AgTech WG and Access to Finance WG may collaborate in terms of fintech and other relating techs. IFC will also bring their specialist on digital platforms into the Working Group discussions.

3. How do we ensure that the feedback loops for the AMEA Framework are effective to enable learning and improvement?

The credibility of the IWA 29, the Toolbox and most other AMEA products depends on there being good feedback loops that enable systematic improvement of the AMEA products. The process of obtaining feedback in the past has not been good enough, characterised by too few people engaging and a slow, painful process. Recommendations for the future included using Slack more effectively, including at Local Network level but arguably the most important agreement was that the tool owners must fully disclose their portfolios. This will be supported by AMEA obtaining letters of commitment from members for tool owners to disclose this data which AMEA will protect through assurances of confidentiality. We also must think about how to engage non-members who use AMEA tools as is the case currently with iCRA and CTA tools.

4. How to incentivize people to participate in Working Groups?

Working Group leads often feel that the participation is not deep enough and would welcome more constructive, critical input. Proposals for how to encourage this included:

- Encouraging a member to limit participation to one WG
- Develop personal partnerships
- Offer new members opportunity to be assigned a buddy
- Create WG meetings for more sharing of developments
- Focus on fewer key actions as opposed to long, ambitious, overwhelming list
- Recognizing people's contribution ('taco-giving' feature on Slack)
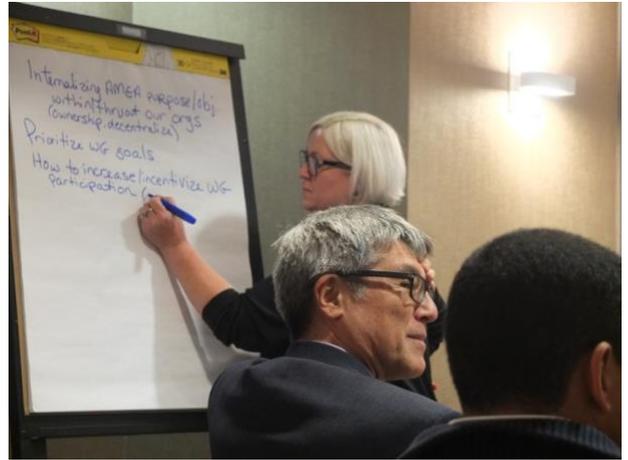
5. What are the triggers for AMEA products to be incorporated into new project designs/proposals?

There is a significant interest in AMEA Collaborations (see section below). We also know that to generate meaningful feedback/learning/improvement loops for AMEA products we need to increase the number of collaborations. We feel this process is going too slow, so how can we speed this up?

- AMEA is still young and, once we build up a critical mass of collaborations, we should see other organisations drawn to AMEA and wanting to collaborate. We need to ensure that we make these collaborations highly visible to members and non-members. This also means AMEA needs to know who is using AMEA tools (see # 3 above)
- Members should engage in local networks more pro-actively: most traction should come from local networks and engagement with stakeholders
- Get private sector to be the movers: if AMEA gets into private sector mentality, demand will come from that side
- Work with donors to encourage use of AMEA products – see earlier comment on engaging US/Canadian agencies

6. Expansion of AMEA's scope of work

Bilateral discussions with members have revealed that many projects that are being designed are related to the market systems ecosystem surrounding the farmer and farmer organisation (e.g. the Input Retailer Tool showcased in the Collaborations session). The level of professionalism of a Farmer Organisation also depends on this ecosystem so should AMEA expand its scope? The conclusion was that AMEA MUST keep the emphasis on improving farmer organizations professionalization. However, **AMEA can expand its scope to cover Agricultural SMEs as long as there is a clear impact on farmer organizations professionalization**. This would mean tools such as the Input Retailer are likely to be considered for the AMEA Toolkit.

COLLABORATIONS

On 3 December AMEA held a collaborative event which brought in external people from USAID, IFC, World Bank and the Dutch Embassy in Washington, D.C. The intention of the session was to showcase AMEA collaborations and inspire participants to develop new collaborations. It was clear from participant feedback that this session was highly valued and AMEA must invest in developing content for this type of event in the future, especially where private sector partners present their experiences.

IFC and NCBA CLUSA explained how AMEA tools helped overcome key challenges and risks their projects faced during implementation and shared the solutions for delivering on their Farmer Organization capacity development goals. The next phase of these projects will provide tailored training and coaching to 218 Farmer Organizations which serve over 150,000 farmers.

The launch of the Last Mile Retailer (LMR) tool involved inputs from several AMEA members and their partners. The LMR package is a Capacity Building Program for agro-input dealers and was co-created by IFC, CNFA, SCOPEinsight, Syngenta and Bayer. The presentation included a practical example of implementation by a private sector partner in Honduras (Cadelga Group, with 3700 staff) and reflection from panel members, including USAID and IFC. Caldelga noted that their partnership with Rikolto (another AMEA member) was key to the success of the initiative. It was also fascinating to also learn about CNFA's plans to use virtual reality as a technology for training in Rwanda.

AMEA continued with the theme of collaborations at the ALP Developers Meeting on the Friday and it is clear that there is a significant opportunity for a number of AMEA members and partners to learn from SCOPE/ALP use by ICCO, CNFA, NCBA CLUSA, ACDI VOCA, Glimmer and Nuru. This will also be enhanced by ALP plans to improve and digitalise their curricula (partly through IFAD funding). It should also be noted that ALP is also now available in a number of different languages. AMEA will also be exploring how CIAT's LINK methodology can be integrated into existing tools or brought into the Toolkit.

GLOBAL TO LOCAL

On Day 2 we looked at AMEA from the perspective of Local Networks. **We see the Local Networks as the testing ground for AMEA** and if members see value in the local networks, then it is likely that AMEA will have value at a global level. However, **if AMEA does not create sufficient value in local networks then we need to revisit our strategy.**

> "EVERYONE JOINS AMEA WITH DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS. WE NEED TO CREATE TANGIBLE VALUE FOR ALL OF OUR MEMBERS"

The local networks presented their progress, challenges, opportunities and plans; ending with requests for support over the next year. The highlights from the presentations were:

- All local networks generated a lot of interest and positive energy from members and prospective members.
- There is a concern about how the introduction of local membership fees next year will affect this energy.

- The problem of members not participating regularly, or sending different people to meetings, was noted. It was also noted that significant time is required to prepare well for such meetings.
- Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire have strategic stakeholders as honorary members (e.g. government ministries).
- Some Local Networks are happy with a strong core (e.g. Uganda – 10 members) and some are aiming higher (Côte d'Ivoire wants 15-20). There is a need to review what makes a strong membership base to develop from.
- Local Networks need information on membership payments and members' use of tools (who, what, where).
- The MOU with AMEA needs finalising so there can be clear communication with potential partners, especially government and private sectors.
- All LNs have plans to promote IWA29, use the Toolkit, generate learning and foster collaboration between members. Specific examples include:
  o Developing roll out plans for IWA 29 which builds on local laws/policies
  o Developing a clear BDS strategy as this remains relatively vague. This includes revisiting the development of a market for SCOPE assessors and ALP trainers.
  o Developing joint programs (Kenya) and pilots (Uganda). It was noted that Local Networks leads will need to manage this process well to ensure that the pre-competitive space is maintained.
  o Engaging in key events such as AgTech and Access to Finance events in Ethiopia
  o Developing their own events e.g. Cote d'Ivoire annual AMEA event
  o Engaging in policy debate e.g. Cooperative development (Kenya)
- More specific plans on the themes of Access to Finance and AgTech will be developed in 2020 and can be accelerated once Regional Coordinators are in place.
- The above plans will need some financial support. AMEA therefore needs to provide planning/budgeting guidelines which include making clear the expected members in-kind contributions.

NEW LOCAL NETWORKS

We also discussed our strategy for setting up new local networks. The approach for longlisting and shortlisting was discussed and was largely endorsed; one addition being the potential to partner with agribusinesses. The shortlist was discussed with the following conclusions:

- Burkina Faso – should not be prioritised due to significant security challenges
- Ghana – should be explored and Rikolto is establishing a presence there
- Peru and Honduras – confirmed as priorities to be explored; Filipe to visit in Q1 2020
- Nigeria – No strong support to explore so should not be prioritised
- Tanzania - No strong support to explore so should not be prioritised
- Rwanda – ICCO confirmed that they will re-consider leading if other members are unwilling
- Asia – a number of members said that if AMEA is to be a credible global network then an Asian country must be included. IFC and Tanager agreed to explore the potential of India.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION

We held our first ever Slack awards with the following winners:

THE SLACK WIZ: CASEY HARRISON (NURU)

MOST ENGAGING SLACKER: SABRINA AMBURGEY (ACDI/VOCA)

MOST ACTIVE MEMBER: SCOPE*insight*

TOP SLACKER: HILEENA ESHETU CHOLE (IFC)

We agreed to intensify efforts to bring all members on to Slack to enable better communication.

The AMEA GCO also held a separate meeting to revise AMEA's communication strategy. The proposals, which will be put to members in 2020, will be to target strategic events for AMEA to engage in as a presenter and influencer. AMEA GCO will support member staff to be champions for AMEA at these events. AMEA GCO will also support Working Groups and Local Networks to develop communications products on a demand driven basis.

NEXT AMEA CONVENING

You evaluated the two-day Convening and scores ranged from 3.5 to 4.5 out of 5. We reflected on the areas for improvement at the Convening and also in the following Core Team meeting and agreed that:

- We need to improve onboarding to enable more time for strategic discussions and important networking sessions like rapid coordination.

- We will reduce to One Global Convening and add in Regional Events to enable networking at different levels. The Global Convening is planned for September/October and this may be designed around the next AGRF in Kigali. Regional Events are already being planned such as the IFAD kick off meeting and Access to Finance meetings in East Africa during Q2. We will consider whether to use these Regional meetings to include some feedback loop work as the ALP Developers Meeting successfully achieved at the end of the AMEA Week.

RESOURCES

Please see here for the full list of resources referenced in this summary.