



CASE STUDY REPORT

BLENDING LEARNING USING AMEA TOOLS

AFRICA TURNAROUND
ALP IMPLEMENTATION IN KENYA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Case Study Profile	1
Africa Turnaround Ltd.	2
Project background and objectives	2
Selection Process of Farmer Organizations and Learners	3
Demand Driven and Self-Managed Learning	4
Challenges and Adaptations	6
Results	7
Lessons learned	7
Lessons for the AMEA Tools	7
Lessons for remote delivery of services	8
Lessons on cost-effectiveness	8
Conclusions	9

CASE STUDY PROFILE

1-pager summary/
profile of case study
report that follows

PROJECT: Blended Learning using AMEA Tools in a pilot project in Kenya

IMPLEMENTER: Africa Turnaround Ltd. (ATL)

PARTNERS: AMEA, SCOPEinsight, Mastercard Foundation and a regional financial institution

GEOGRAPHY OF INTERVENTION: Six regions in Kenya

OBJECTIVES:

- 1 Provide scoping services that provide a tested and acceptable and standardized measure of Farmer Organizations (FO) capacity and progression towards professionalism;
- 2 To deliver a highly innovative and scalable digital financial ecosystem solution for rural smallholders and pastoralists;
- 3 To improve productivity amongst rural agro-entrepreneurs through facilitating quality extension, inputs and veterinary care as well as digital content services such as training and market information and;
- 4 To facilitate improved access to produce markets and returns through organizing smallholders and linking them to agribusinesses.

Number of beneficiaries: 360 farmer organizations (FO) assessed by Aug 2020; 108 FO leaders of 35 FOs selected to participate in the training/coaching.

AMEA Tools implemented:

- IFC's Agribusiness Leadership Programme (ALP) – Foundations of Cooperative Management
- SCOPEinsight's SCOPE Basic and SCOPE Pro



AFRICA TURNAROUND LTD.

Africa Turnaround Ltd. (ATL) is an agribusiness consultancy firm and has been an AMEA Kenya member since 2018. ATL works with farmer organizations and other market actors to build farmer inclusive market ecosystems driven by the vision of shared prosperity.

ATL is dedicated to building a system for integrating farmers in food market systems, delivering access to market, inputs, finance and technical assistance in a commercially sustainable way that allows actors to cost share, profit, and scale. ATL does this through a combination of capacity strengthening and supporting linkage to markets.

To deliver capacity strengthening to the farmer organizations, ATL uses a combination of the SCOPE assessment tools and IFC's Agribusiness Leadership Program (ALP), both AMEA Tools. ALP was specifically designed to be aligned to the SCOPE assessment tools, and so, each of the eight dimensions measured in the SCOPE tools can be addressed through the ALP training and coaching. The assessments enable farmer organizations to understand the gaps in their organizational, managerial, and financial capacities. The ALP curriculum is then adapted to respond to these needs.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

This project stems from a five-year partnership program between MasterCard Foundation and a financial institution Kenya which targeted agricultural value chain actors to offer mobile-based financial inclusion and information to smallholder farmers and pastoralists in Kenya and Rwanda. The program has four main objectives:

- 1 Provide scoping services that provide a tested and acceptable and standardized measure of FOs capacity and progression towards professionalism;
- 2 To deliver a highly innovative and scalable digital financial ecosystem solution for rural smallholders and pastoralists;
- 3 To improve productivity amongst rural agro-entrepreneurs through facilitating quality extension, inputs and veterinary care as well as digital content services such as training and market information and;
- 4 To facilitate improved access to produce markets and returns through organizing smallholders and linking them to agribusinesses

Africa Turnaround Limited A(TL) was one of two organizations that were contracted to carry out this project. An outline of the key steps in this initiative are shown below:



For objective **1**, ATL and SCOPEinsight were contracted to conduct assessments of 310 Farmer Organisations (FOs), between October 2017 and December 2018. To conduct the assessments, SCOPEinsight trained a mix of 18 ATL staff and independent contractors to become SCOPE certified. The SCOPE assessment tools measure the level of professionalism of farmer organizations through eight dimensions (1. operations, 2. internal management, 3. financial management, 4. production base, 5. sustainability, 6. market strategy, 7. external risks and 8. the enabling environment). In the SCOPE methodology the different dimensions are scored from 1 to 5. These SCOPE scores function like a common language and indicate how professional the farmer organization is and how reliable the farmer organizations are as a business partner.

The lessons of ATL-SCOPEinsight partnership for objective **1** will be explored through another case study report. For this case study, we are focusing on

SELECTION PROCESS OF FARMER ORGANIZATIONS AND LEARNERS

The program aimed to train 100 learners from Kenya through a partnership contract with ATL. These learners represented six regions in Kenya. ATL developed guidelines for the selection process and collaborated with officers of the program to select up to five Farmer Organisations in each Region. A combination of leaders and managers in each Farmer Organisation were identified for training and coaching. It should be noted that a key selection criterion was that learners must be able to communicate in English and to be able to participate remotely; and the Farmer Organisation had to be actively engaged in the existing program. In total 108 learners were selected from 35 Farmer Organisations.

the lessons from ATL's blended learning approach, covering objectives **2**, **3** and **4**

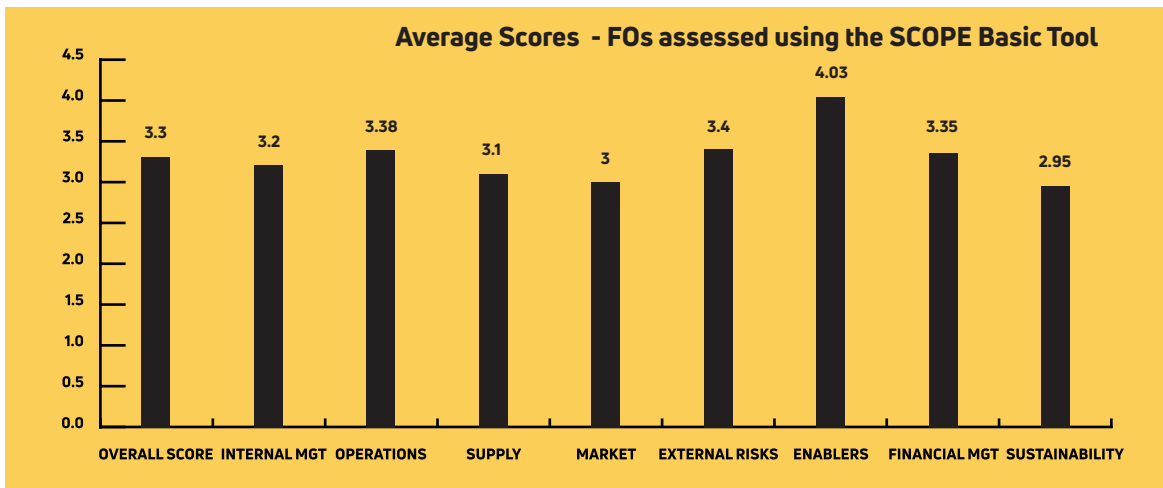
ATL was contracted to support the program across all three objectives (2-4) by piloting a blended learning program as well as a market ecosystem management approach in Kenya. ATL digitized modules of the ALP curriculum and delivered a combination of virtual training followed by one to one coaching.

The six ALP modules that were adapted and digitized by Africa Turnaround were: Welcome and Introduction, Business Planning, Growing our Member Base, Marketing our Produce, Financial Management, and Governance. These modules were selected following the results presented in the SCOPE Business Intelligence reports. The modules are available on ATL's [Learning Management System \(LMS\)](#) platform.

DEMAND DRIVEN AND SELF-MANAGED LEARNING

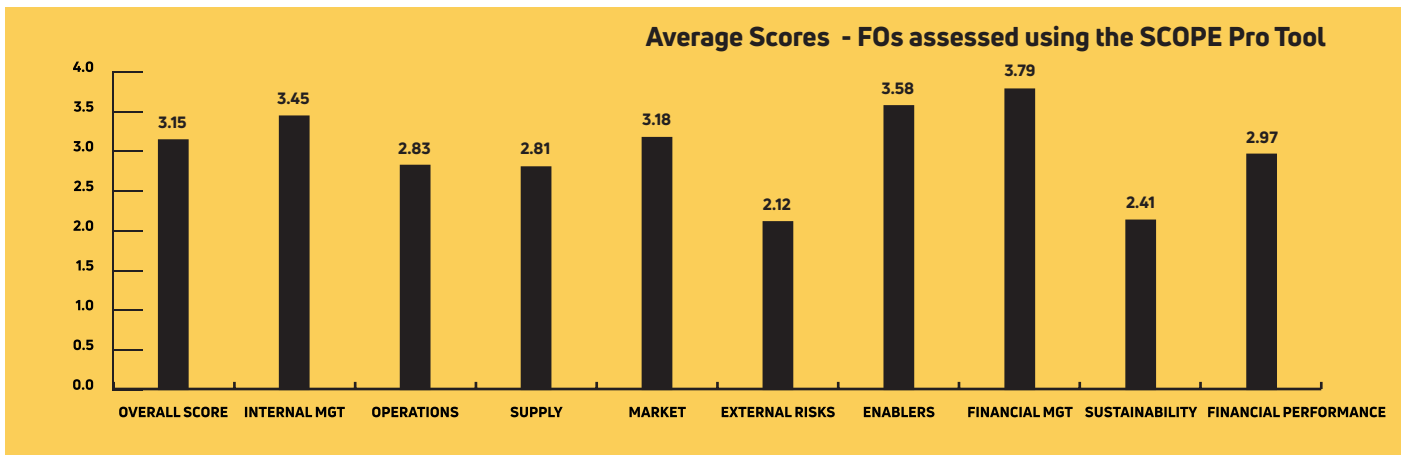
Each learner received individual login that allowed them to access the LMS platform and use the digitized ALP content to learn. The learning was supported by six coaches. Each coach accompanied just under 20 participants by calling and following up on a weekly basis, or in response to demand by the learner. The coach initially supported the learners to decide which modules they wanted to start with. By the end of the pilot in May 2020, all 108 learners had completed the training of at least two out of the six modules. Participants in 10 out of the 35 FOs completed all modules. This was a more tailored approach to support Farmer Organization leaders and managers based on their own perceived needs.

Coaches' support was essential to provide clarifications and to facilitate group work to develop a plan to address the weaknesses identified by the SCOPE assessments. The baseline assessments of 24 FOs are shown below:



SCOPE Basic Tool (n = 11 FOs)

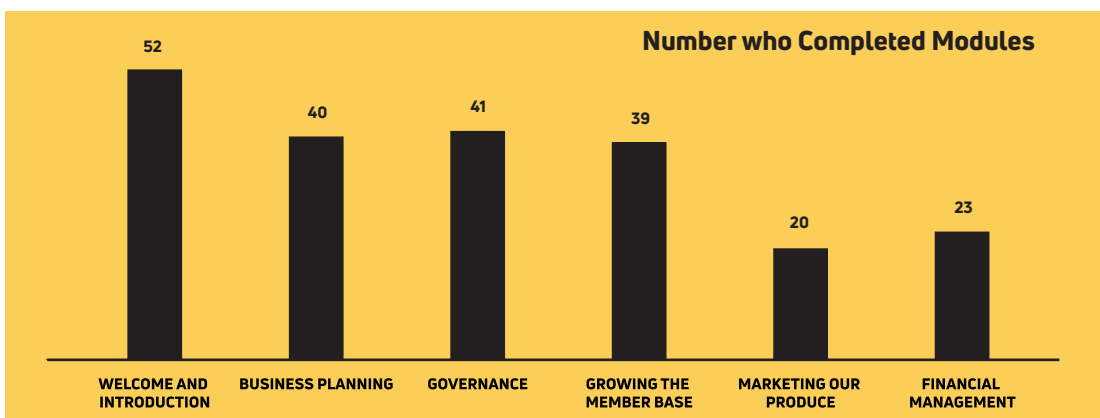
The average overall score was 3.3. This is an average overall score that generally points to a maturing level of FO professionalization – so, not yet very professional. The lowest average scores were registered in the Sustainability, Market and Supply Dimensions. The highest average scores are in Enablers, External Risks and Operations.



SCOPE Pro Tool (n = 13 FOs)

The average overall score was 3.0. The lowest scores were registered in the External Risks, Sustainability and Supply Dimensions. The highest average scores are in Enablers, Financial Management and Internal Organization.

The results of this demand-driven approach are shown below (based on end-of-training survey completed by 74 participants), with modules such as “Governance”, “Business Planning”, and “Growing the Member Base” being the most frequently selected modules (besides “Welcome and Introduction”).



KEY FINDING

80% of learners only used phones and 17% used both phone and computer. So, very few learners (3%) only used a computer. This demonstrates that training and coaching by phone is feasible; and this approach was not as vulnerable as others to the restrictions brought in with COVID-19.

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

The pilot program closed in May 2020 and a final report was produced. The key challenges and adaptations noted in this report and brought out through this case study process are listed below:

CHALLENGE #1

The majority of learners are above 35 years of age. Some are elderly, and they need added support and encouragement to adapt to this new style of learning (i.e. remote training).

MITIGATION

- An introductory meeting allowed the coaches to support the members in learning the basic navigation of the LMS to limit the risk of a negative or ‘frustrating’ learning experience.
- The LMS platform was designed for a rural/non-university audience with clear and simple steps that can be followed once the learners are oriented.

CHALLENGE #2

While a majority of learners have smartphones, the internet speed varies depending on the make and model of the smartphones.

MITIGATION

- Learners were encouraged to access farmer organizations’ office computers (where this was available) in order to carry on with learning.
- Some learners also borrowed phones for learning e.g. from family members.
- Some learners accessed the LMS from cyber cafés

CHALLENGE #3

Coaches encountered the challenges of having non-responsive learners, who did not always respond to their phones during the scheduled phone meeting times.

MITIGATION

- Coaches found it useful to work with key farmer organizations’ officials (e.g. society chair and manager) in order to follow up on the learners who were not responsive.

CHALLENGE #4

The COVID-19 pandemic led to slower responsiveness by learners in the month of April.

MITIGATION

- A physical introductory meeting between learners and coaches had previously been held which was useful for coaches doing the follow-on calls (i.e. there was already a good rapport).
- The pandemic meant that learners had no alternative to virtual learning and this accelerated the acceptance of the approach.

RESULTS

Whereas the outcomes for the 35 farmer organizations participating in the pilot program are still to be assessed by the end of the program, it is already possible to list a few preliminary results.

1

Farmer organizations performance:

- Professionalism: 18 out of 35 FOs had development plans in place which target the most critical areas for improvement, in terms of business performance. Business performance is expected to improve as FOs implement their development plans.

We will be able to measure the effectiveness of this approach at the end of 2021 when new SCOPE assessments will be undertaken. By that time, we will also be able to assess improvements on Market and Finance Access, by capturing how many farmer organizations have new buying contracts and how many members are accessing new/additional input loans on the basis of assured off-taking.

2

A system for blended learning has been piloted and with COVID-19, this is even more relevant. The challenges and lessons learned (see below) will guide the next stage of development. A commercial phase to scale the blended training is underway.

LESSONS LEARNED

While the program is still ongoing, AMEA has also learned many lessons from its Toolbox tools implementation.

- Analysis of the SCOPE assessment results enabled ATL and its partners to decide on the choice of modules to be digitized. Programs should consider whether they should be digitizing all content or just a selection.
- The SCOPE tools implemented do not cover all types of FOs that financial institutions are interested in supporting e.g. Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCO). SCOPEinsight has developed specific questions for SACCOs and is studying if there is enough demand to build it into their systems. Therefore, SCOPE tools could be adapted for these purposes or other tools can be brought into the AMEA Toolbox.
- Integration of Financial Literacy, Farming as a Business and SME Capacity Development are modules that are also needed. These modules could be taken from existing IFC materials.
- Financial institutions may consider SCOPEinsight tools to be useful in providing information that allowed learning needs to be identified (the position of the FO in its' development path), but also the financial services which financial institutions/banks could offer.
- SCOPEinsight saw room to link the different SCOPE dimensions to the digitized LMS modules and market them where possible. In so doing, the LMS would also be available to FOs who are ready for blended learning.

LESSONS FOR REMOTE DELIVERY OF SERVICES

- Farmer Organizations are still not ready for 100% e-Learning experience. A blended approach combining e-training with coaching (either face-to-face or over the phone), based on a rapport between the coach and the learner is still necessary.
- The selection process of FOs is critical and significantly affects the potential for achieving the targeted outcomes. The way in which ATL and its partners worked together on the selection process backed by detailed information from the SCOPEinsight reports is a practice which should be recommended for other programs.
- Selection also must take into account learners' access to technology and internet services.
- A self-managed learning approach provides a clearer indication of what learners want to learn. In addition, learners are able to choose the most convenient time to invest in learning, often doing this in the evening and on weekends.
- Coaches who dedicate their time to organize live follow up sessions (phone or in-person) increase the chances of trainees finishing their training. Coaches also decrease frustrations of learners who are not used to remote training technology and mindset.
- There is still a need to improve on the facilitation skills to enable online group processes to be more interactive and engaging.
- There also appeared to be significant unmet demand for more modules from the learners. Programs should therefore consider how to support this unmet demand.
- One program partner also noted that the speed of implementation could be improved as well: from the assessments to the identification of learning needs to the delivery of training.
- SCOPEinsight and the [LMS Platform](#) can team up and market themselves in Kenya and rest of East Africa as a cost effective approach, where ATL delivers the local services – including the SCOPE assessments – for partners who are looking for a scalable approach and for individual FOs that can pay for the services.

LESSONS ON COST-EFFECTIVENESS

- The blended approach clearly reduced the costs of training per participant. In-person training is very expensive in terms of accommodation, per diem and logistics, among others. It is likely that this approach will be more cost-effective in the future.
- However it was noted by ATL that the learner may need to be reimbursed for the costs they incur e.g. internet access, data usage, and their time. A cost-sharing model will be developed.
- Blended learning approach would be more effective than full digital learning as it is clear that the coaching support was essential.
- The effectiveness of this approach is yet to be assessed in terms of improved FO professionalism and business performance. This can be assessed at the end of the program.

CONCLUSIONS

ATL responded to a request for proposals that a large, regional financial institution put out seeking innovations on managerial training. Africa Turnaround won the bid on the basis of four strengths:

- Access to global tried and tested tools to assess learning needs for officials and managers of farmer organizations (SCOPEinsight tools)
- Access to a global curriculum for managerial training of farmer organizations (IFC's content, namely the ALP)
- Proven track record of FO assessment and training using these tools, allowing a holistic perspective on FOs
- Proven track record of working with the market "ecosystem" that enables them to link FOs to better markets.

ATL took a lead on digitizing ALP modules and piloted a blended approach. This has proved very timely given the surge in demand for this type of approach due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The learning from this pilot is therefore relevant to a variety of stakeholders interested in supporting enterprise development. The findings, however, are not conclusive as there has not yet been enough time to assess whether learning has been acted upon.

This being said, ATL and its partners are convinced that they are moving in the right direction. The next phase of work will be the operationalisation of a comprehensive smallholder market ecosystem platform (Twalisha). Twalisha is a platform that plans to organize the entire ecosystem. It will connect buyers and organize logistics – making it more efficient for all actors – but will also create certainty of sales for buyers and farmer organizations.

The aim is to make Twalisha commercially viable and the Learning Management System will soon have additional content from the AMEA Toolbox available. ATL does not see a need to move beyond the AMEA Toolbox. As this ecosystem platform is developed and scaled up, ATL expects to see economies of scale which will lower the cost of the service and ultimately make the service commercially viable.

COVID-19 has been devastating but perhaps there are some positives to be taken from the creativity that has emerged to find ways to deliver blended

learning such as this pilot. It may also have changed learner expectations and increased demand for these approaches as well. Perhaps we may have an opportunity to move away from the perverse incentives that training in a hotel with per diems bring?

The delivery of Twalisha and proving the concept of an ecosystem approach is likely to be a challenging one. However, there is a greater chance of success where there is such a close collaboration between SCOPEinsight, IFC, ATL and regional financial institutions. This close collaboration was clearly appreciated by ATL's partners in the program.

AMEA hopes to revisit progress at the end of the program and engage with Mastercard Foundation to allow for learning to flow between AMEA and Mastercard Foundation, who are investing in similar projects. Other program partners also see the value of AMEA in bringing different actors together to experiment, learn and improve together; and the focus on professionalisation is the right one.