



GLOBAL CONVENING

2025 REPORT



Youth Rising

INNOVATIONS IN AGRI-ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

Beyond capacity building - towards **lasting impact**



7th & 8th October, 2025
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania



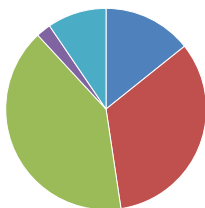
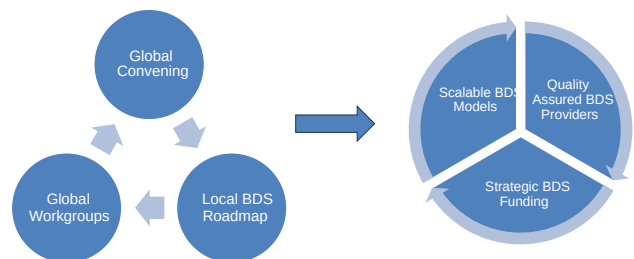
Over **80 people** from Africa, Europe and the United States came together to learn, debate and agree on actions to improve support to agri-enterprises, with a specific focus on enterprises that deliver meaningful opportunities for young people.

The first day was led by our hosts the AMEA Tanzania Local Network, which was followed by the AMEA Global Convening Day.



Local Networks Day: A Deep Dive into Youth Agribusiness

An AMEA Convening is not just another Conference. We learn, co-create and turn ideas into actions through the Working Groups and 8 Local Networks. We also work on the difficult issues such as how to create scalable BDS models, develop BDS markets which have quality assured providers and stimulate the development of strategic BDS funding facilities.



■ Government ■ Local BDS Provider ■ International Agency
■ Financial Institution ■ Association/Network

Who Was In The Room

Learning and co-creation is deeper as AMEA attracts experts from various stakeholder groups. At this Convening we can also see a better balance between international and local organisations from both public and private sectors.

Opening Conversations

Josephine Mingi and Edmond Ringo started the conversation with a panel that provided insights from Build a Better Tomorrow (BBT), Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO), youth run Raha Farms, AGRA and Ndogwe, a youth marketing cooperative.

It appeared there was consensus on the key enablers being LAND, FINANCE, TECHNOLOGY and ACCESS TO MARKETS; and Business Development Services (BDS) and other support to youth entrepreneurs must be PRACTICAL and HANDS-ON. PATIENCE was also stressed as mindset

change can be slow and MULTIPLE APPROACHES are required to support youth from different backgrounds. Training is valuable but should be supported by MENTORING. However for this to succeed we should AVOID FORCING them into programs they are not interested in. A more debatable idea was national service (military training) to develop discipline and the "right" mindset.

However the strongest theme in this session was the need for COLLABORATION to deliver JOINED-UP SERVICES aligned to a common objective.

Youth Programming Global Best Practice

Cathy Phiri then presented the Youth Empowerment Workstream’s Position Paper on Empowering Youth in Agriculture Through Inclusive Farmer Organizations and Forward-Thinking Partnerships. The Paper presents examples of successful approaches but is not yet making any conclusions or recommendations as it is a living paper. A key proposition was to redefine “youth” as a dynamic life stage which could be seen through the lens of a three-category model:

Youth Category	Age	Professional Milestones
Early Youth	12 - 18 years	Formative years for secondary education/career/professional identity
Transitional Youth	18-25 years	Entry into tertiary education or economic/labour life
Established Youth	25-35 years	Graduating from tertiary education. Seeking professional and economic stability and leadership roles

The best practices proposed were then segmented per life stage as follows:

Youth Category	Best Practices
Early Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with schools Building Youth-Led Agritech Curiosity Encouraging Intergenerational Engagement
Transitional Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening Youth Roles in Agri Service Delivery Cooperative & Farmer Organization Reform Leveraging Digital Platforms and Peer Learning
Established Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlocking Access and Finance Through Innovation Expanding Roles in Value Chain Leadership Institutional Partnerships for Professional Growth

Tanzania Strategy for supporting Youth Agribusiness

Judith Silayo then led a deep dive into youth programs delivered by BBT LIFE, SIDO, Plan International, SUGECO, Kilimo Tija and AgResult Dairy Productivity Challenge. The session distilled best practices as experienced by these programs which generally validated the Global Position Paper. Additional insights were gathered as follows:

- 1 Agribusiness should be encouraged as a future livelihood from a very early age. The feeling that farming is a form of punishment must be addressed.
- 2 Public-Private Partnership approaches can deliver coordinated, bundled BDS to youth interested in agri-enterprise (Kilimo Tija provided a good example).
- 3 Incubation services are essential to provide start up support for youth.
- 4 Leasing can enable youth to access land to start their agribusinesses.
- 5 Youth are attracted by technology but it is often better to start with low-tech options to enable accessibility and scalability.
- 6 The best opportunities for youth often exist in the last mile delivery of services to farmers, including data services. Youth can be attached to private enterprises to provide these services.
- 7 Tailored services are essential and this requires segmentation of the targeted youth and the BDS providers. Providers should be certified.
- 8 Government backed loans with low interest rates are often essential to encourage investment.

Moving from Projects to Systems

Edmond Ringo congratulated the projects that are delivering these best practices but reminded us that this is not the norm. There are lots of horrible, horrible projects! Edmond urged us to imagine a better future:

Standardised BDS Assessment : Youth enterprises are evaluated using common frameworks that track business growth stages

Tailored Service Delivery : BDS providers offer specialised support based on real time business diagnostics, not generic training modules

Integrated Service Networks : Financial services, technical assistance, market linkages, and mentorship flow seamlessly between BDS providers

Market - Ready Enterprises : Banks and investors see organised, credible, finance ready youth agribusinesses with verified track records

Evidence - Based Scaling : Governments and donors align behind proven BDS models that demonstrate measurable impact on youth enterprise sustainability

This can be achieved by developing a BDS market system and the Convening developed thinking around 4 key elements of this system.

➤ BDS Service Delivery Pathways

Group 1 considered how to design progressive, standardised BDS pathways that move youth agribusinesses through clearly defined growth stages. They identified 4 stages in enterprise development, the most significant needs of those enterprises and what is missing from the current enterprise development system. The key takeaways were the need for more investment in the start-up stage, more affordable finance and the need for policy which supports the BDS/finance market to improve their services.

STAGE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE NOW	BIGGEST BDS NEED	WHAT'S MISSING NOW
STARTUP (IDEA → FIRST SCALE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRE-REVENUE VALUE PROPOSITION CLEARLY CONCEIVED UNASSIGNED MARKET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLEAR BUSINESS MODEL MENTORSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING MARKET RESEARCH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INADEQUATE ATTENTION/SUPPORT FOR START UP STAGE. INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING FAMILY FRIENDS & PEERS
EARLY GROWTH (BUILDING CAPACITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POST REVENUE BUSINESS MODEL EXISTENCE THERE SUB-SCALE OWN SOURCE (BOOTS TRAPPING) FUNDING. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACCESS TO CAPITAL PRODUCT MARKET FIT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO FINANCE SUPPORTIVE POLICY (POLICY INCENTIVES)
SCALE UP (EXPANDING MARKETS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALIVE PAST YEAR 3 CLEAR & TESTED BUSINESS MODEL BANKABLE PROFIT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES SCALE UP CAPITAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACCESS TO SCALE UP CAPITAL (ALTERNATE CAPITAL)
MATURITY (EXPANDING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCALED BUSINESS STRONG BALANCE SHEET PROFIT BREAKING EVEN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BESPOKE SUPPORT DIVERSIFICATION (African context) INNOVATION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POLICY INCENTIVES. UNAVAILABILITY OF QUALITY BDS SERVICE PROVIDERS

➤ BDS Intelligence & Data Systems

Group 2 highlighted a need for investment in data systems which would better inform businesses (clients) and BDS (providers). The need for segmented data was noted and project/BDS data should be integrated into a Government database. Data quality is a significant concern therefore there has to be investments ensuring enumerators are incentivized to deliver quality data, which would be backed up by a data quality assurance system. Investments should also be made to make the data gathering, analysis and use as efficient as possible, which means finding the right digital systems. Ongoing costs could be covered (partially?) through a pay to use business model.



➤ BDS Financing & Incentive Models

Group 3 had four propositions:

- 1 Tripartite cost sharing agreements developed between SMEs, BDS providers and financial service providers
- 2 Co-creation/co-investment in sustainable financing models for BDS
- 3 Development of business cases for financial institutions to partner with NGOs and/or BDS providers to develop BDS packages that create a pipeline of clients.
- 4 Coordinated action to change the prevailing expectation of free BDS. The emergence of “grant-preneurs” needs to be challenged.

These propositions can be tested within initiatives that support agribusiness and agri-finance development such as VSLAs and outgrower schemes. The need to select motivated and competent SMEs and BDS providers was emphasised.

BDS quality could be enhanced through enabling adoption of best-in-class tools such as the [AMEA toolbox](#). BDS should also charge for services and should be supported to develop pricing models.



➤ Local BDS Ecosystem Ownership

Group 4 also highlighted the need for SMEs to pay a fee for BDS and this should be recognized as an indication of quality services. BDS pricing models should be based on an understanding of affordability within different SME segments. Fees can also be embedded in contracts from larger agribusinesses such as offtakers and processors. The development of these ideas could be through a Community of Practice, which could eventually become a BDS Association.

This would enable BDS providers to network, collaborate and develop proposals for changing the BDS market. However transformation is likely to require large Public-Private-Partnership investments that combine access to productive assets, such as land, together with high quality, coordinated service packages. AGCOT is one such example that has this potential.

We ended the day reflecting on the insights and ideas. These were taken into Day 2 and included in the actions proposed at the end of this report.





AMEA Global Convening Day

Development Financing: Crisis or Opportunity?

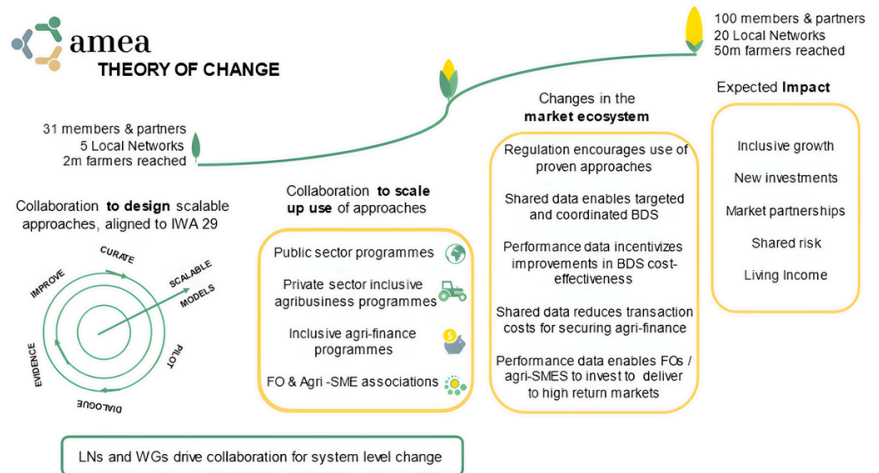
We are clearly in a time of significant restructuring and rethinking of international development financing. Madelon Pfeiffer opened with a proposition:



When traditional support fades, it's not the end—it's an invitation to lead. Innovation, collaboration, and courage must now become our capital.

Madelon Pfeiffer

In this session we considered the changes that are taking place, and will take place, to assess AMEA's theory of change.



We looked at this from 3 different angles:

Group A:

Collaboration & Networks

- What happens to local networks and partnerships when funding decreases?
- How does this affect the design and scaling of models?

Group B:

Scaling Through Programs

- Impact on public and private sector programs
- What are alternative funding sources or structures?

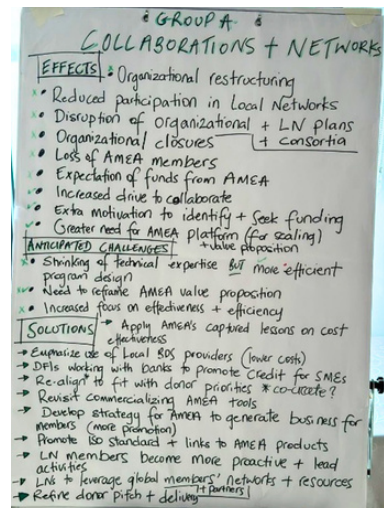
Group C:

Market Ecosystem

- What happens to data sharing, BDS, and agri-finance when grants decline?
- How can transaction costs still be reduced?

The insights from the group work included the following:

AMEA will change as organizations are forced to restructure and re-position. Member fee income has come under pressure and this is likely to continue. Member expectations may increase, especially for enabling fundraising. However it is also likely that there will be more pressure to collaborate and develop more cost-effective, scalable approaches. This will involve greater use of local BDS providers and other local agencies.



- AMEA must therefore also re-position itself and reframe its' value proposition to members, partners and financiers (donors, governments, etc).
- AMEA should support the commercialization of the tools i.e. a business model.
- AMEA should promote members and other agencies who use ISO 18716 and BDS best practices in order to enable them to acquire more business
- Local Networks find ways to leverage global and local member/partner resources

Blended finance is one of the areas which is attracting new public investment as it has the capacity to leverage significant private sector investment. At the same time there is growing appreciation of the value of segmenting SME markets and BDS markets. This relies on high quality data.

- AMEA should invest in generating learning on how blended finance models incorporate BDS to enable SMEs to grow.
- AMEA should continue promoting approaches which use segmentation to enable demand-driven service provision. This learning should dive deeper into the limitations around data generation and data sharing.

It was felt that there was a real opportunity for AMEA to attract interest from public and private sector financiers as AMEA's core messages of efficiency, effectiveness and scalability will have even more traction in an environment of declining resources. AMEA therefore will look for opportunities to co-create with donors, governments and financial institutions.

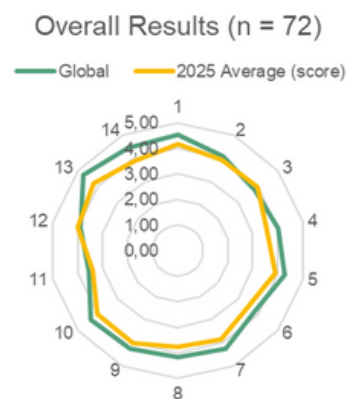
At the end we also reflected on the need to revise the Theory of Change and the need to enable the Network to fully understand it and how to contribute to it. As part of this we will reframe the Toolbox WG as a BDS Markets WG which will have a wider remit to work on some of these issues.

Local Network Development

Desta Heyi led a session where each Local Network Facilitator presented the progress made over the last year. The Network Health average score of 4.2 out of 5 across the 14 parameters were discussed including the significant variation between Local Networks.

The enablers were identified.

- Improved visibility of AMEA. Perseverance.
- AMEA's investment in strategic initiatives e.g. BDS Roadmap, ISO 18716
- Increasing focus by governments on developing value chains. Food Systems just talk for now.
- Interest in collaboration between the public and private sector e.g. MOLS Ethiopia, NEEC Tanzania, MINICOM Rwanda, etc. Government partnership essential.
- Leading, local BDS providers are active in the Network (and become members)
- Balancing members interest (networking, fundraising, collaboration, learning) with system level work (which also enables networking)
- Facilitators who are respected and do more than just facilitation. Personal rather than institutional relationships matter more. Local Network hosts not essential.



The lower scores on the Network Health survey were discussed and it was felt the parameter on controversial issues could be rephrased. The challenge on available time and collaboration appears to relate to “wrong” Network participants (delegated, not interested, expecting quick returns) or limited time to engage in the Network, which is often due to pressures related to fundraising, re-strategizing and re-structuring. However it was noted that future plans must have a **balance between quick wins and the system change work** for Network participants to remain committed.

Blended Finance for Agribusinesses and Nature based Solutions (Nbs)

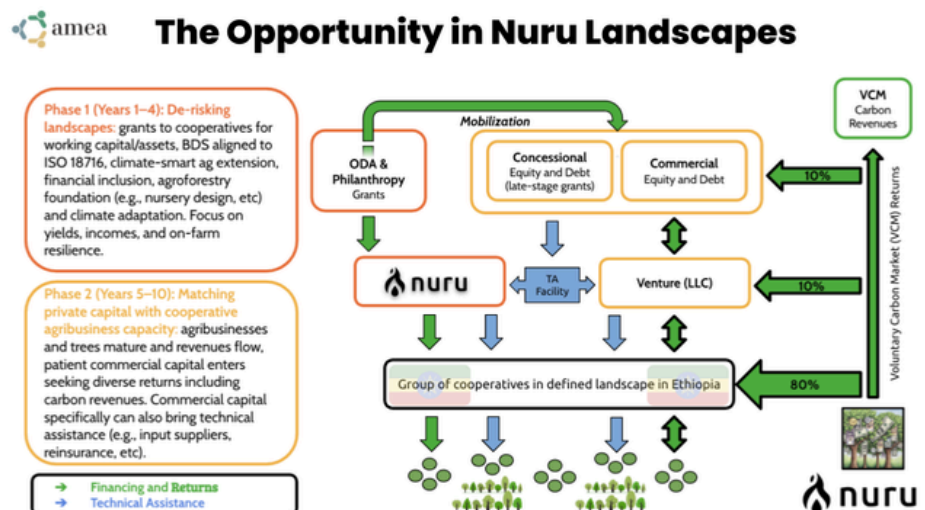
Blended finance is gaining attention across the sector, but can it truly work for agri-SMEs and nature-based solutions at scale? That was the question posed by Casey Harrison, Nuru Chief Sustainability Officer, who leads the AMEA Environmental Working Group (WG) and shared a presentation.



The need to answer this question is also driven by the change in development financing from traditional Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to outcome-based blended finance mechanisms, often with a strong focus on environmental/climate impact. Grounded in research from ISF Advisors and CLIC on Blended Finance for Climate-Smart Agrifood Systems, NAB Impact Investing and the Convergence Network, the momentum and shift to funding outcome-based technical assistance facilities offers a meaningful opportunity for BDS providers to develop new partnerships and share lessons learned.

One emerging challenge for further discussion in the AMEA Environmental WG lies in effectively segmenting targeted agri-SMEs within blended finance mechanisms that channel climate capital to farmers and land managers. While agrifood systems produce nearly 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions, they receive less than 7% of total climate finance, and only a fraction of that reaches smallholder farmers and agri-SMEs operating in frontier markets. Casey emphasized that this gap is not just about capital volume but about fit. The sector needs models that connect agri-SME professionalization (e.g., ISO 18716 and AMEA segmentation frameworks) with investor-ready environmental performance data, allowing BDS providers to become the bridge between finance and field. AMEA Environmental WG webinars will continue to explore models that address these gaps in 2025 and 2026.

In the spirit of collaboration and learning, Casey provided the early-stage Nuru model as inspiration for debate (see below), illustrating how Nuru believes ISO 18716-aligned networks of professional cooperative agribusinesses can serve as credible, scalable vehicles to attract blended capital and meet the scale, additionality, permanence, and co-benefit requirements of high-integrity voluntary carbon markets. The concept is designed to ensure at least 80% of carbon revenues flow directly to farmers and communities, those most responsible for restoring and protecting local ecosystems. The aim of this approach is to anchor blended investments in local ownership and governance while demonstrating how professionalization, transparency, and credible standards can de-risk participation for investors and maximize impact at the community level.



It was clear some members are working on similar models and many Fund Managers do not know how to deploy Technical Assistance (TA) effectively or to generate durable outcomes. This led to an agreement to explore the revival of an Access to Finance workstream, which could link to AMEA's work with the Agri-SME Learning Collective. In addition, the Environmental WG will develop a pitch to attract interested members to collaborate on developing these models further and will continue to seek other experts in the sector to present as part of an ongoing external webinar series.

AMEA Learning Agenda 2026–28

Vanessa and Guillermo presented an update on the learning we have delivered over the past 3 years and posed two questions.

- How has my organization benefitted from this learning?
- How will my organization change in the next 1-3 years?

Inputs were gathered, clustered and discussed with the aim of indicating future learning agenda priorities. The desire to obtain more learning on cost-effective, scalable approaches was validated with the following areas of interest:

- How to adopt and use ISO 18716 (highest priority)?
- How to segment SMEs and provide tailored BDS (second priority)?
- How to develop partnerships which combine direct support to SMEs and ecosystem strengthening?
- How to expand local provision of BDS packages using a blended approach?
- How to support the move to open source, shared data?

AMEA Strategy 2030 – fit for purpose?

The AMEA Director led a session to draw together many of the inputs from the previous sessions to reflect on whether AMEA's Strategy 2030 should be reviewed. The conclusions from this session was:

- The target of 50m farmers is unlikely to be delivered by the AMEA Tools
- The ambition on having 20 Local Networks is not necessary for reaching the 50m target and is unlikely to be achievable. However we should support organic, demand-driven development of Local Networks where there is energy.
- We should invest in learning to understand demand for standardized data and shared data platforms.

This session reconfirmed the need to review the Theory of Change.

Youth Empowerment Workstream Call to Action



- 1 How much might the local networks like to take this forward?
- 2 Where does AMEA want to take this paper?
- 3 Can we test the Best Practices identified?
- 4 Where does the group go from here?
- 5 What are the actionable takeaways for all here?

We finished our event by asking participants to reflect on the two days and make commitments that can take forward AMEA's work on Youth Empowerment. The ideas included the following:

- Incorporate the Tanzania best practices into the Position Paper and promoting it both within and outside AMEA. This can attract new contributions.
- Test a few high potential practices shared by Tanzania local network
- Promote the segmented approach to youth programming with the possibility of advocating for a better approach e.g. lowering the cut off of 35 years old
- Use Learning into Action case studies to assess innovative initiatives such as:
 - cooperative youth models (example to be identified)
 - incubators (Tanzania projects)
 - youth as services providers (ATL Kenya, Farm Africa Kenya, Nuru Nigeria)

These case studies can also look at issues such as low- vs hi-tech; segmentation; child vs family labour; graduation/growth from initial roles.

Looking Forward

The participants then contributed their thinking about what we should focus on in 2026.



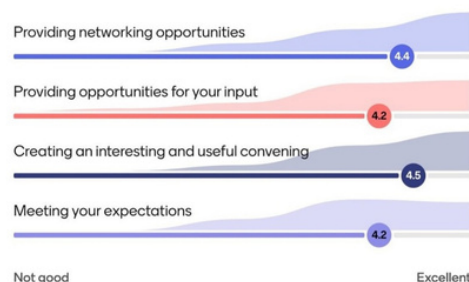
Specific actions, related to these themes, that emerged from the two days were:

- 1 Revise the Theory of Change based on learning and current trends. Disseminate and use this to bring in other groups such as donors, agrifinanciers and agribusiness.
- 2 A significant TOC change will be to recognize the strategic shift to promote BDS best practices and not just an AMEA Toolbox, which is already current practice. The Toolbox WG will become the BDS Markets System WG in order to guide our work.
- 3 Invest more in promoting the use of segmentation at scale by using the drive for standardization and cost effectiveness. Improved pitches to donors, governments and others will be developed.
- 4 Strengthen the voice of BDS providers in AMEA and the BDS markets system change processes. This is also an opportunity for member recruitment.
- 5 Members will find ways to integrate the BDS markets system change agenda into their organizations, including influencing project designs. We must walk the talk.
- 6 Explore the potential to influence the design and implementation of Public Private Partnerships, such as AGCOT, to invest in BDS market development. This could address the need identified to break-down silos of projects.
- 7 The Learning Agenda will continue to be developed under the BDS Markets WG and will reflect the new interest areas i.e. Environment, Youth, Segmentation/Data.

- 8 In order to drive deeper learning at Global and Local levels the Environment and Youth workstreams will become separate, full Workgroups. We expect from this Convening to mobilize more participants, evidence and ideas.
- 9 The Environment Working Group will consider how to support a co-creation process for a Climate Finance/TA Facility. We will confirm interest from across the whole Network in the next 2 months.
- 10 The Youth Empowerment Working Group will review the position paper and develop a dissemination plan, which can also reach Francophone networks. The ideas for taking forward Youth Empowerment will also be debated and we hope for joined up work between the Global WG and Local Networks.
- 11 There was demand for an Access to Finance Workstream to be revived. We will support an exploratory process with Andrews, Maurice, Aceli, Edmond, Quentin, Ian and ?Can we attract financiers? Focus on pipeline generation?
- 12 There were also potentially strategic opportunities identified for AMEA Tanzania such as leveraging on AgriGRADE's support to the Tanzania Cooperative Masterplan, which connects to similar processes in Ghana and Uganda. This could also be linked to the BDS Guidelines and ISO 18716 adoption in Tanzania.
- 13 Other Local Networks were clearly inspired by the Tanzania Local Network's progress in one year. 2026 plans for these Local Networks will incorporate some of the ideas gathered from this Convening.

How Did We Do?

It was very clear that participants enjoyed the Convening thoroughly. However there is still room for improvement. We are therefore considering extending the 2026 Convening to 3 days in order to enable a deeper dive into fewer topics. We also recognized the need to onboard new people to enable everyone to have a similar understanding of concepts such as AMEA's Theory of Change. We will also aim to explore Public-Private-Partnerships which could attract donors, investors, financial service providers and agribusinesses. This should lead to clear actionable items.



Day 1 Presentations

- [Local Networks](#)
- [Projects to Systems Session](#)
- [TZ Youth Programs AG-RESULT](#)
- [TZ Youth Programs BBT](#)
- [TZ Youth Programs Kilimo Tija](#)
- [TZ Youth Programs PLAN INTERNATIONAL](#)
- [TZ Youth Programs SIDO](#)
- [TZ Youth Programs SUGECO](#)
- [Youth Workstream Position Paper](#)

Day 2 Presentations

- [AMEA Learning Agenda](#)
- [Development Finance](#)
- [Environmental Workstream](#)
- [Local Networks Progress](#)
- [Strategy 2030](#)
- [Youth Workstream Call to Action](#)

AMEA Convening 2026

Thank you to everyone for making this a successful event.

We hope you will also join us in 2026. Our current thinking is that we could hold it in Uganda or Ghana. If you have ideas let us know. **We co-create!**

