



Annual General Assembly 2019 – Concept Note

“Cracking the Donor Collaboration Code: A deep dive into the context, needs and aspirations of donors in the rural development space”

1. Context

After many years of thematically focused AGAs, we have approached the Platform members and received very positive responses to the proposal for a unique, inward-focused gathering to enable donors to reflect on and leverage their unique strengths in the rural development space. We recognize that content focused conferences and meetings abound. However, little is available that focuses solely on our donor issues and perspectives. How do we unleash our unique value in our sector?

We propose that 2019 is the year to take a pause from a single overarching topical focused AGA and make us, the members, the focus of the next AGA. We propose a **members only retreat** just for this year. We will tackle what matters to us. We will create space for a broad array of topics and work in small interest groups. You can identify and engage with any issue that is of importance to you. You will learn what interests others. Together, we will innovate in a safe and trusted environment, and collaboratively strategize around donor challenges.

The retreat will bring us together with an **action learning mindset** to assess our work individually and collectively, weave our relationships, strengthen our “collaboration muscles” and identify practical next steps both as individuals and as a platform. We will bring those ever-important “hallway break conversations” into the center of the room. This is about US. OUR work. OUR challenges. OUR opportunities. And how we can support each other.

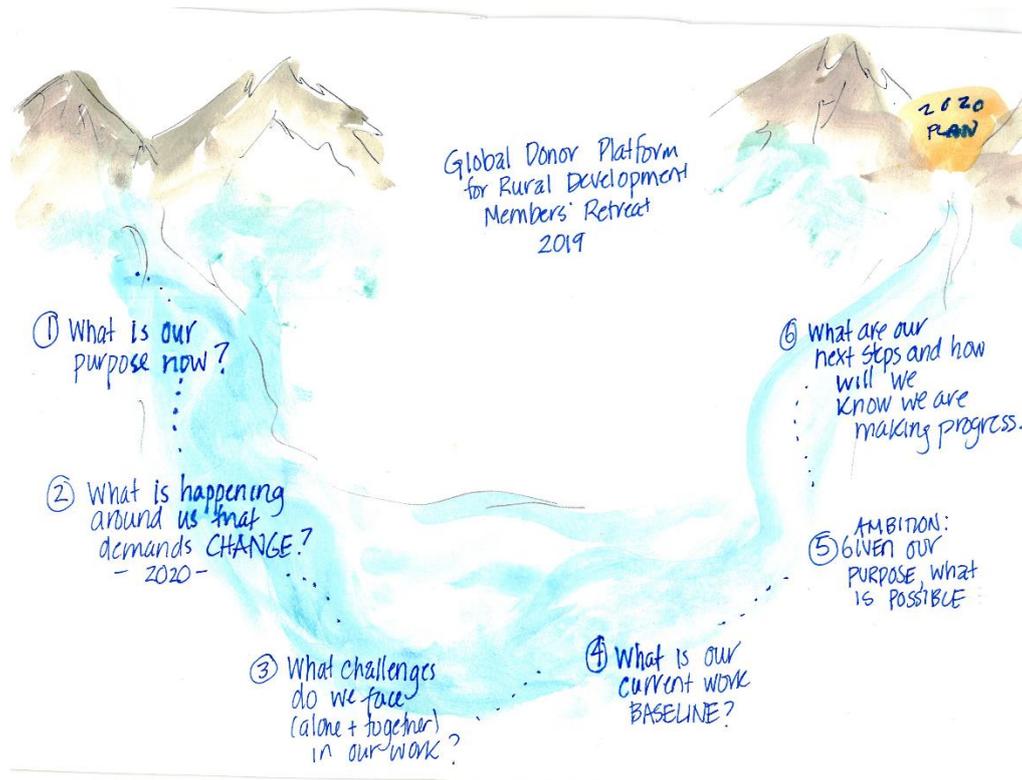
2. Potential Areas of Focus

We consulted our members via a survey in late 2018 and held discussions with the Board. Based on this feedback, we are proposing the AGA to focus on key overarching issues. They will help inform each of us in our individual work and drive us towards a targeted and serve as a kick-off of a strategic plan to be developed in 2020.

We will explore our work through six key questions:

1. **Purpose:** What is the fundamental justification and deepest need for our work in rural development? Individually and as a network? This is more focused than our overarching vision and mission, and is pragmatic and concrete. Exploring this question will also allow us a glimpse into each other’s priorities.
2. **Context:** What is happening around us that demands creative change in what we do and how we do it? Changes in funding amounts and priorities. Shifts in political direction from our leaders. Changes in public and private roles and the impact on safeguarding public goods and interests. Importance of our sector vis-a-vis other sectors.

3. **Challenge:** What are the challenges and paradoxes we must face in order to make progress? Within our context, how can we best and continually make a difference and add value to development work?
4. **Baseline:** Where are we starting, honestly? Individually? Collectively?
5. **Ambition:** Given our purpose, what seems possible now? What focus should we take? Individually? Collectively? How do we manage cross-sectoral issues?
6. **Action and Evaluation:** How are we acting our way toward the future, evaluating what is possible as we go? (a basis for the development of the Donor Platform's plan post-2020 and our own planning/action) How do we measure our progress?



3. Potential Outcomes

- **Awareness:** Wider and deeper understanding of each other's current and planned work.
- **Focus for the post-2020 planning cycle:** Develop shared understanding of key issues, challenges and opportunities to tackle them
- **Connection:** Member relationships are renewed, reinvigorated and new relationships are developed
- **Concrete, Actionable Synergies and Next Steps:** Members walk away with at least one concrete individual next step and potentially one or more collaborative opportunities.

4. Process

The Secretariat will welcome back our long-time facilitator, **Nancy White**. With a steering committee, we will design a fast flowing agenda, identifying/deciding on the topics for discussion and the formats for individual sessions.

