Chapter Event:
Operational Considerations for Expanding into New Markets

EVENT SUMMARY
Online via Zoom
Tuesday, June 29, 2021 | 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Moderator
Hongxia Liu | Non-Executive Director, Sannam S4

Speakers
Robert Bollé | Director, Strategic Partnerships, AFEX
Sivaram Ramachandran | Product Manager, Data Services, Mapbox
Claire Reyner | Associate Director, Global Operations, Clinton Health Access Initiative, Inc.
Austin Walker | Director, Global Operations, Evidence Action

Event Description
Expanding to overseas markets comes in many shapes and sizes. Every market brings its own set of regulations and compliances that must be assessed before choosing how to put boots-on-the-ground overseas. Understanding an organization’s key objectives and timelines for a new market – be it project deployment, fundraising or consulting – helps in assessing the route an organization should consider.

Experts walked attendees through various forms of country setup and how the key objectives and timelines influence key decision making. The presentation aimed to provide participants with an overall framework from hiring a consultant and PEO solutions to establishing a fully-functioning subsidiary/affiliate entity and used anecdotes from key markets, including India, Indonesia and others to illustrate challenges and considerations.
Key Takeaways

1. Decentralizing the process of global market expansion is necessary to cater to the unique characteristics of each country

Claire Reyner (CHAI) emphasized that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work when it comes to entering new markets. Instead, the panelists agreed that understanding the local environment and choosing suitable service providers is an integral aspect of expansion. Since every country is so different, it is important to adapt to the current circumstances and remain flexible to find the best solution. Reyner also mentioned that when expanding, organizations always need to consider the reason for expanding to a certain country. Every market is nuanced and will necessitate a different set of regulations, which is why a decentralized approach is often the best answer.

2. Aligning operations timelines with programmatic requirements

In terms of challenges, Reyner and Robert Bollé (AFEX) agreed that meeting the demands of a tight operations timeline is the most difficult aspect of new market expansion. Operations must often play catch-up to keep up with programmatic requirements. Since staffing, registering, and legal employment procedures are so time and effort intensive – especially on the operations side – staying on schedule is extremely important. To align operations and programs, Sivaram Ramachandran (Mapbox) stated that transparency and communication are the most important values, while Reyner emphasized building trust. Austin Walker (Evidence Action) also proposed a solution that would allow operations work alongside programs work (i.e., hiring someone who understands both the programmatic and operations sides so that companies can manage expectations and reach their ultimate objective).

3. Activating networks to utilize multiple advisors – including professional employment organizations (PEOs) – is the best way to enter a new market

Looking to the future, the best advice that panelists had for those attempting to enter new markets for the first time is that advisors are key. Walker believes that the most beneficial external support is a network of advisors that allows you to take what you need from each external player. For this network to flourish, Reyner promoted working with local counterparts to locate these advisors and have at least one person on the ground. These local counterparts often take the form of PEOs, which have many benefits in reducing personnel issues. However, they need to be vetted and require cultural sensitivity to establish equity and legitimacy. Ramachandran also highlighted the importance of asking providers about proper exit procedures to avoid any unforeseen circumstances when leaving a market.