



RIU Practice Note:
**Lessons for Out-scaling
and Up-scaling from DFID's
RNRRS Studies and Research**

Foreword

Lessons learned from RNRRSⁱ synthesis studies and summaries of various DFIDⁱⁱ research themes

Research Into Use (RIU) is interested in learning lessons from previous investments in DFID's natural resources research and related research activities because we believe it will help us respond appropriately to demand from our in-country counterparts. We've therefore commissioned a science-communications company (Scriptoria) to scan the information available on DFID's R4D websiteⁱⁱⁱ and identify potentially useful documents that might help us in our work to up-scale and out-scale new technologies, practices and policies, and to summarise them with practitioners in mind.

Preliminary analysis showed that 19 themes, synthesis studies and summaries commissioned under the RNRRS seemed to be directly relevant to RIU's work. Many of these original documents were too long and technical for a practitioner audience and did not focus specifically on issues relevant to getting research into use. The science writers, therefore, produced 3-4 page synopses of the documents, which have now been checked either by the authors of the source materials or by RIU staff. They also summarised the findings into very useful Practice Notes in the introductory section.

The documents available here contain key lessons potentially relevant to up- and out-scaling; also, you will find reviews of relevant findings, and illustrative 'case-studies' or 'success stories'.

For those who need to delve deeper into a particular topic, each document also provides references for and internet links to the sources. We trust you will find these documents useful for your work. Clearly, we will build on this foundation over the next few years and ultimately produce more consolidated guidance to enable in-country institutions to more effectively transform research into practice.

Dr Wyn Richards
Director of Communications
DFID Research Into Use Programme
NR International Ltd

ⁱDFID's Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (1995-2006)

ⁱⁱUK Department for International Development

ⁱⁱⁱ<http://www.research4development.info>

Introduction

Why lessons learned from RNRRS research are important for out-scaling and up-scaling

Research Into Use (RIU) believes that to help RIU practitioners to up-scale and out-scale new technologies, practices and policies it is vital to reflect on what worked and what did not work in previous DFID natural resources research and related activities.

RIU's user-oriented, innovation systems approach aims to stimulate the uptake of research findings among the poor and to create new opportunities for research and service providers to help them do this. The purpose of this Practice Note is to bring together and highlight some of the key lessons RNRRS has learned from its many years of research and to feed them into this process. An understanding of 'lessons learned' may benefit judgements and decisions that may have to be made in out-scaling and up-scaling research into use.

Out-scaling and up-scaling

The innovation systems approach taken by RIU stresses the importance of mapping out how technologies will spread geographically—*out-scaling*—from farmers to families, villages, communities, districts and regions, nationally and internationally.

Vertical integration (top-down and bottom-up) of processes and policies into economic and social systems—*up-scaling*—is equally important. This means new ways of doing business in local, regional, national and international institutions and involves policymakers, donors and development institutions.

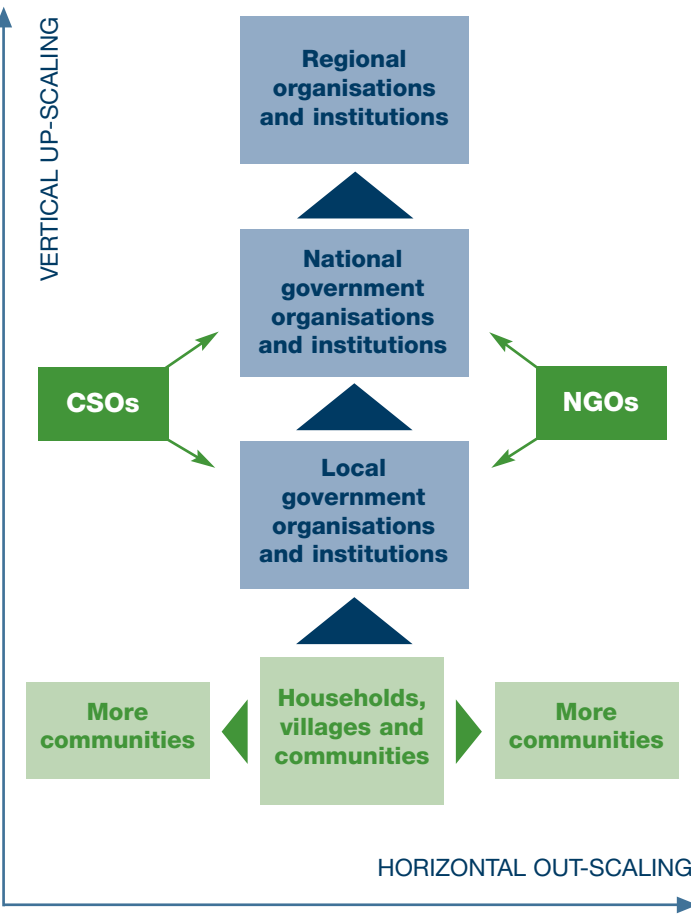
Up-scaling can be bottom-up or top-down and means engaging groups in institutional relationships in the vertical pathway.

The key lessons for up-scaling and out-scaling research into use come from 19 significant reviews, syntheses and reports on the R4D website. From each topic, we have drawn out the background, key points and lessons learned and illustrated them with examples and case studies to make the lessons 'real'. For those who wish to learn more, references and internet links to the source documents are provided.

This Practice Note is not a comprehensive listing of all lessons learned from RNRRS research. Neither is it a

Introduction *continued...*

'how to' guide to out-scaling and up-scaling research findings. The lessons show that although we have learned a lot there are significant gaps in our understanding of how to out-scale and up-scale research. This Practice Note is just a beginning for what we hope will be a continuous process of actively sharing lessons learned and making learning part of everything we do.



Horizontal out-scaling and vertical up-scaling (after J. Ellis-Jones, Silsoe Research Institute)

Key Lessons

Probably the most important lesson we have learned about out-scaling and up-scaling research into use from RNRRS experiences is that we still have an awful lot to learn. There are significant gaps in our knowledge, particularly in how we feed research findings into policy processes, and how we learn from our experiences and share this learning with others. Nevertheless, what we have learned is of real value and this Practice Note aims to share these lessons with practitioners to guide them in their efforts to put more research into use.

Rather than try to categorise the lessons learned we have chosen to highlight five key themes which emerge from experiences of putting research into practice.

- Start from what's on the ground
- Understand the key players and build relationships
- Be realistic about what can be achieved
- Partner, communicate, advocate and build capacity strategically
- Capture your own learning and learn from others

Start from what's on the ground

Most successes in spreading the uptake of research findings came about when the people involved understood what was happening on the ground, including indigenous knowledge on practices and processes, and worked with it. This is true at the local level, in communities, and at administrative and government levels.

Assess the influences that will affect putting research into use: do your homework

The interactions between social, political, local, national and international development agendas are complex. One of the key lessons for out-scaling and up-scaling research findings is that we must start by figuring out these interactions and how they may affect putting particular research results or baskets of research findings to use. Unfortunately best practices cannot just be collected and transferred from one setting to another. They need to be adapted to what is already happening in any specific situation.

Any attempts to out-scale and up-scale research findings need to acknowledge and consider the history, points of view and where people are coming from in any particular situation. It's important to assess these influences and how they may shape people's reactions to research findings at the outset.

Find and use existing channels: go with the flow

Points of entry for out-scaling and up-scaling are many and varied, and the adoption of research findings may take many possible paths. Looking at ways that have been previously been successful in speeding the uptake of research findings can provide useful lessons for out-scaling and up-scaling. Many used existing channels that end users know and trust.

For out-scaling in particular, researchers have worked with NGOs and CSOs that penetrate deep into target communities and have well established relationships with different sectors of the poor. Local suppliers and farmers who own local supply networks are other ways of reaching targets and can speed up the spread of new crops and varieties. This does mean that researchers need to be willing to step outside the research sphere and work with those who already have the connections and systems in place.

For up-scaling, it's very important to find out how, and with whom, target groups communicate and use these channels and people to inform, persuade and influence.

The responsibility for up-scaling and out-scaling falls on our shoulders

In an ideal world, public and private extension-oriented institutions would have the skills and resources to promote and market emerging technologies, practices and policies to potential users and, in turn, would relay the demands of users for information, and problems in need of resolution, to research organisations. In practice, these skills and resources are grossly lacking and, so, the responsibility has by necessity fallen on the shoulders of the CSO, commercial and researcher communities.

Understand and link to development agendas: join forces

Out-scaling and up-scaling research findings are most likely to have an impact when they are aligned with national, regional and global development agendas. These agendas—poverty reduction strategies and national development plans—present openings for development agencies and national organisations to join forces and work together to reduce poverty.

Many development agencies now believe that the best way to reduce poverty is by addressing the needs of all institutions involved in the farmer to consumer network through so-called innovation systems. They are directing more and more of their funding through coalitions of donors and partners rather than through individual programmes or projects. So, those aiming to out-scale and up-scale research findings need to find ways to be part of discussions on development issues. There are many events on development schedules and networks at regional and national levels that provide openings.

Understand the key players and build relationships

Starting from what is on the ground leads to an understanding of who the key players and local champions are, and how they operate. This mapping of institutions and understanding of their roles in a network are pre-requisites for deciding who we need to invite to join 'coalitions', as we call the groups of people and organisations who get together to out-scale or up-scale research findings. Understanding what they want and where they are coming from also helps build trust and relationships with them.

Understand the key players

Any effort to make changes—to out-scale or up-scale research findings—needs a detailed understanding of the formal and informal relationships among stakeholders. This is a major shift in emphasis from a focus on the research itself, the 'what', to a focus on 'who' will get the research out there and 'how' they will go about it.

The shift from 'what' to 'who' and 'how' is important for both out-scaling and up-scaling research findings. As mentioned earlier, experience in most developing countries shows that NGOs and CSOs are often the key players in out-scaling.

In policy making, dealing with the 'who' involves engaging deeply with the key decision makers. But policymaking processes are political and by no means rational or purely based on research evidence. This means thinking and operating politically.

What has been learned is that researchers were most successful in engaging with policy makers when they engaged them in the research process and engendered ownership; they explained in plain words what their research was about, what the research did and did not show, how they thought it could be used, and what the research did not and could not take into account. In these cases, researchers' willingness to explain, to listen and to clarify built trust and meant that policy makers listened to them and took what they put forward into account in the policy making process.

Involve the key players

Understanding who the key players are and what they want is one thing. Involving them is another. Ideally, all key players should be involved and be represented. Experience shows that in nearly all cases of out-scaling or up-scaling research findings some form of

participation of all key players—and we need to remember that participation takes many different forms—is going to be essential. But there are considerable hurdles to be overcome in getting full and representative participation. To date, most participation has been at the grass-roots level and ways of getting full and representative participation at higher levels still have to be found.

Plus, processes that depend on the involvement of many people or groups have often proved quite challenging to manage. They have needed to be flexible to achieve goals within usually limited timeframes. They have also needed to be soundly costed as working with a wide range of stakeholders is seldom quick and cheap.

Often, what seems to have worked well is when ways of getting participants to 'own' decision-making throughout were found. The most successful participatory approaches were those where groups were shown ways to express their needs and do something about them. By learning to collect, analyse and share information, they themselves became the driving force in making decisions that affected them.

Forge relationships

Significant long-term commitments are needed to build and nurture relationships that pave the way for major out-scaling and up-scaling. Research was most successful in creating local impacts and working outwards and upwards where local partners—and by local we mean groups both at the community and national levels—come to 'own' the agenda and influence policy. Many years of sustained funding gave relationships time to develop and bear fruit.

Persistent face-to-face communication also helps build trust and gets results. This is particularly true at the grass roots (farmer field schools and community workers for example) and at what might be considered high levels (meetings with ministry officials, round tables, national and regional dialogues). Building relationships, whether with ministers, officials in ministries and national institutions or community groups and farmers, takes commitment and perseverance.

Shaping policies is a long-term undertaking. Changes build on each other over time. This means taking a strategic view when feeding research findings into policy processes. Advocacy and activities aimed at shaping policy must go far beyond the project cycle.

Be realistic about what can be achieved

Sometimes we have to face up to the fact that the conditions for uptake of research findings just aren't conducive. For example, experience shows that any innovation in developing countries where innovation frameworks and infrastructure are weak is tough. Out-scaling and up-scaling research findings have a better chance of success where governments have encouraged adoption of new technologies by, for example, supporting producer prices, subsidising inputs and credit for new technologies, and investing in irrigation, roads and marketing systems.

The reality is that certain conditions need to be in place for uptake of research. Intersectoral approaches are gaining ground as the realisation that successfully resolving the problems of, or benefiting from opportunities faced by, poor communities requires more than narrow disciplinary approaches. Such an inclusive approach is also part of the global move towards integrated natural resource

management. But, because governments generally haven't adopted integrated governance structures (and this is reflected in their educational and research infrastructures) a lot of integrated natural resource management research hasn't been put to widespread use.

Assess and acknowledge critical factors for uptake

Many project reports end by saying that for research findings to be taken up certain policies, or systems such as credit facilities, need to be in place. For example, in many developing countries, laws that do not recognise the informal seed sector are barriers to out-scaling.

The lesson we draw from this is that for putting research into use there must be clear pathways for innovation with no barriers for end-users to benefit from uptake. When out-scaling or up-scaling depends on changes outside the scope of the programme or project there is no way of predicting when these might happen. So, we need to consider what important factors for out-scaling or up-scaling must be present if feeding in new technologies is to result in out-scaling or up-scaling.

Education systems in developing countries seldom equip people with the skills and knowledge they need to lift themselves out of poverty. Any capacity building in programmes and projects can only address the tip of the iceberg. Education systems need to change radically. For example, the skills base in fisheries management is generally low. Unless fisheries authorities are suitably staffed, tools and methods that researchers have developed for understanding and managing fisheries will not be used. Training and capacity development in projects may only make a small difference to overall capacity, so, targeting support to strategic areas makes best use of resources.

Assess and acknowledge your own limitations

Few projects realistically estimate the amount of time, effort, money, expertise and degree of flexibility that they need, for example to communicate effectively or advocate for change. Sometimes researchers do not even factor in the time and effort to document successful findings in sufficient technical detail for others to apply them. This is a tragedy as then the research findings are lost for ever.

Partner, communicate, advocate and build capacity strategically

An understanding of the local context, the key players and what can realistically be achieved will help develop clear strategies for 'how'—partnering, communicating, advocating and building skills—out-scaling and up-scaling will be achieved.

Partner strategically

For out-scaling and up-scaling research results, users of knowledge and suppliers of knowledge will need to work together from the start. This means deliberately seeking out strategic partners among the key players.

RNRRS researchers found that they needed to draw on the perspectives of many different partners when drawing up plans to improve uptake of research results. People make choices based on their own experience. Promising options are less likely to get overlooked when people with different perspectives get involved in drawing up plans to improve the uptake of research results. RNRRS researchers found that they partnered with, among others, consumers, purchasers of grain, millers and other processors,

government extension agencies, farmers and 'farmer' groups, community-based groups, the private-sector, suppliers of goods and services, civil society, government organisations and donor-supported development projects.

Partnering with farmers in participatory research that built on earlier strategic research, for example client oriented plant breeding, was particularly successful. Such methods are also likely to work well for out-scaling research findings in marginal areas, to produce varieties to meet the particular needs of resource-poor farmers.

In the context of the innovation systems approach, the lessons learned about partnerships are that they will be a key strategy in getting uptake of research findings. Giving a diversity of partners in a network control of the work to adapt and apply research findings is more likely to result in successful uptake as it allows them to draw on local experience and preferences to adapt new knowledge to their needs.

Communicate strategically

Communication is also more likely to be effective if tackled strategically. But, experience shows that researchers seldom have the communication expertise to develop and implement effective communication strategies for out-scaling and up-scaling research results.

Messages and communications need to be customised for specific audiences. And to implement communication strategies, teams with a mix of skills will be needed to interpret and communicate the results of research different target groups (farmers, policy makers etc.).

A strategy is also essential in focusing efforts because communication takes lots of work, time and money. Working to a strategy also means that important factors, such as the fact that men and women make decisions based on different priorities and get information from different sources, are kept in mind. Appropriate strategies can narrow the information gap between genders by feeding information targeted to women into their natural communication channels.

Advocate strategically

One size does not fit all—campaigns for change must be carefully targeted, tailored and delivered. There are always overlapping and competing agendas, as well as diverging views among stakeholders as to what the important problems are. Facts are tangled up with value judgements, which play a major role. So a strategic approach to advocacy is paramount.

Research projects have found that this usually means helping people become better policy advocates themselves, especially in out-scaling.

At policy levels, appropriate advocates, such as natural and political scientists with knowledge of how the local scene works, have helped find ways to deal with cultural and sectoral dynamics. Here again, it is important to have an integrated strategy for targeting policy shapers and makers—whether individuals or groups—to build relationships with them over time. Then advocates can seize opportunities to make approaches when conditions are ripe for success.

Strengthen capacity strategically

In simple terms, 'capacity' means the ability—knowledge and skills—to do a given task or change the way things are done. So, capacity development cannot be an add-on, it must be approached strategically and built in. Research projects have found that

capacity strengthening works best when the focus is on stakeholder participation and ownership, and on building abilities to turn information into innovation. Demand-driven, action-oriented, integrated approaches show the most promise. Research also shows that male and female roles in any particular context affect poverty. This has significant lessons for capacity development to out-scale and up-scale research results.

One clear lesson from the Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy is that investment in capacity development pays off over the long term rather than the short term. Unless there is a long-term strategy at the outset, capacity building initiatives most often die at the end of programmes and projects.

Demand driven Capacity development needs to be targeted and customised: specific skills for specific groups are critical to uptake of research. Not only do the sets of skills and knowledge for out-scaling and up-scaling differ from those needed for research—there will be a shift from technical skills to the soft skills needed to strengthen institutions and change policy, legal and economic processes—they also need to be learned in different ways.

This means that different kinds of people will be needed to help people learn and acquire new skills—in other words, the range and type of providers of capacity development will expand. They will tend to be from non-government, civil society, the private sector and southern research organizations.

Action oriented Learning by doing, action oriented research, is a quick and effective way of helping communities learn to use and apply research findings. Local institutions rarely have the skills and knowledge to use, for example ways of resolving conflict, managing common pool resources and engaging with national policy makers. Research projects have found that although they came up with techniques that worked, communities did not find these easy to apply on the ground. Action research, learning by doing, proved very effective in helping them come to grips with the new methods to manage common pool resources.

Gender and capacity development Gender roles have deep roots in tradition, culture and religious law and will be slow to change. This means that any work to out-scale or up-scale research outputs needs to, at the outset, take gender roles as they stand and work from there. 'Women only' projects to build capacity may be destructive to gender relationships in the long term. The consequences of empowering women have to be thought through to make a positive difference to gender relations. The role that men play in allowing and helping women to change is integral to success.

There is often a clear split between what men do and what women do. A gender analysis before starting can help set out exactly who will benefit. Gender does make a difference as, for example, if farmers are men, their priorities for spending any extra income might be different and have a different impact on poverty than if farmers are women.

Capture your own learning and learn from others

The key lesson here is that it is essential to capture opportunities to learn and share learning with others. Learning what works and what does not is going to be vital in out-scaling and up-scaling. A good way to capture lessons learned is through a formal system of monitoring

and evaluation that emphasises learning rather than accountability.

Capture learning: Monitor and evaluate

Lessons learned on what worked and did not work in previous programmes and projects have been lost because experiences were not recorded and shared. Ways of doing this—monitoring and evaluating, setting up knowledge systems, arranging events where people can meet and discuss their experiences and making sure networks feed regular updates and information—need to be central rather than peripheral processes and adequate budgets need to be allocated.

A telling experience is that it has not been possible to assess whether the Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy achieved what it set out to do because a formal framework and baseline were not established at the outset. From this it's clear that monitoring and evaluation cannot be an add-on but must be an integral part of how work is done. No up-scaling or out-scaling should begin without a baseline, a monitoring and evaluation plan, and a budget to carry out that plan.

Adoption of the innovation system framework for out-scaling and up-scaling research findings means that the people involved will need to find appropriate ways of monitoring and evaluation. The log frame, a tried and tested tool in research programmes and projects, may be useful although it is likely that more attention will need to be paid to processes rather than outputs.

Because work in out-scaling and up-scaling is likely to involve coalitions of donors, there are opportunities to harmonise monitoring and evaluation. This could lessen the work load, reduce labour costs and provide a valuable opportunity for partners to learn and take corrective action.

Some initial work has identified six process indicators and three outcome indicators for characterising national systems of innovation. These could be the basis for setting baselines, monitoring and evaluating progress and assessing impact in out-scaling and up-scaling research results.

Learn from others

There is a lot to learn from others. NGOs and other agencies that implement development projects may have experiences more relevant to out-scaling and up-scaling than those of the research-oriented projects of the Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy.

Finally, we need to listen more to the users of research—not only to understand the problems they face and the approaches they already use to tackle them, but also to understand the context and social structures in which they operate. Wide-scale adoption will, in the end, depend on changes in mind-sets and the willingness of users to want to adopt new approaches. It is worth noting that farmers worldwide favour traditional conservative approaches rather than radical change for good reason. This is particularly true in the developing world.

Putting lessons learned into practice

One size doesn't fit all. The lessons we have learned will be worked, reworked and adapted by practitioners to different situations. The following sections provide much to reflect on and many case studies that describe what has worked and what has not worked so well in out-scaling and up-scaling research results.