

A project design framework for scaling up NRM research

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The overall question addressed during the workshop in Whitstable, UK, was “*what can research contribute to scaling up*”. The mix of participants from relevant projects in Nepal, Uganda, Bolivia, Colombia, UK and the Philippines, from the North and the South, from academic and development backgrounds helped to bring out key issues, which contributed significantly to the process. During the workshop the participants discussed the importance of a framework for scaling up and

identified strategic elements. The workshop was part of a wider review process facilitated by the Natural Resources Institute on which a report is available.

A project based framework

Creating impact from research results has in the past focused heavily on the “post-project” stage. However, many of the key strategies which have been identified as prerequisites for successful scaling up need to be addressed more extensively in the “pre-project” and “implementation” phases. Project oriented

Table 1. Activities, strategic elements and attributes of scaling up processes for NRM research

Project phases	Activities relevant to scaling up	Strategic elements towards successful scaling up	Attributes
Pre-project	Situation analysis	Engaging in policy dialogue on pro-poor development agendas.	Inclusive & plural
		Identify community, institutional, and environmental enabling and constraining factors to scaling-up	Recognise differentiation
		Appraisal of institutional capacity of agencies to be involved in scaling-up required.	
	Identifying target groups	Identifying appropriate research objectives and outputs within development processes to ensure widespread uptake	Consultative
	Setting objectives and outputs		Collegiate
	Developing M&E system	Identify indicators and planning, monitoring and evaluation methods to measure impact and process of scaling-up	Participatory
Collaboration	Building networks and partnerships to increase local ownership and pathways	Constructive	
	Funding mechanisms	Develop appropriate funding mechanisms to sustain capacity for expansion and replication	Innovatory
Implementation	Capacity building	Building capacity and institutional systems to sustain and replicate	Vertical sharing
	Institutionalising		Start early
	Partnership forging	Demand, supply & support actors identified. Other resource organisations contribute with products and by building technical capacity	Collegiate
	Networking		Inclusive
	Awareness raising	Multi-media dissemination of findings.	
	Policy dialogue	Aggregate and assess findings from individual projects and derive policy relevant information	Pro-active
	M&E and Support studies	Central to scaling-up processes in providing evidence to influence policy-makers, in deciding what should be scaled-up and how this might be achieved	Participatory Plural Post-project
Post-project	Exit strategy	Concerted action required on a regional level	Concerted
	Dissemination	Should involve the target group as disseminators	Accessible
	Impact assessment	Built upon M&E. Representatives of target part of assessment team. Technological and livelihoods assessment required.	Participatory

development activities can be criticised for being too donor driven, time bound and often too narrowly focused in relation to the wider context. They do, nevertheless, serve as a primary tool in terms of moving from ideas into action. We have therefore chosen the broad flow of project design to develop a framework for scaling-up strategies.



The full version of the review document can be obtained from NRI

Table 1. shows the proposed framework for guiding scaling-up of NRM research. It links, chronologically, key elements which strengthen the likelihood of successful scaling up. In general, we advocate that scaling up should be considered during early stages of planning research activities. However, the strategic elements, while essentially recommended at the pre-project phase also have a bearing throughout the project and programme implementation phases. They can be used at different entry points in a research implementation process: reviewing ongoing work, as well as finished research

projects with existing potentially useful outputs. It may also serve as additional material in evaluations of research programmes.

Key strategic elements for successful upscaling

1. **Engaging in policy dialogue on pro-poor development agendas.** Research needs to be placed in the context of local, regional and national development agendas as this helps identify key entry points and the major needs. This is ideally done at an early stage so as to shape the overall project design, but can also be done through regular reviews of the project or at other development discussions.
2. **Doing situational analysis to identify community, institutional, and environmental enabling and constraining factors to scaling up.** The likelihood of scaling up will be increased if key hindrances as well as opportunities are found out at an early stage, thereby allowing key channels for scaling up research activities and development outcomes to be identified. All enabling and constraining factors cannot be identified at the outset and so the research activities (project) will need to build in mechanisms to review new issues and plan around them or with them. This is crucial in terms of addressing the real priorities of target groups, as well as in identifying catalysts for scaling up.
3. **Identifying appropriate research objectives and outputs within development processes to ensure widespread uptake.** Rather than identifying outputs and forms of dissemination just at the end of research, these should be shaped at an early stage together with stakeholders and users, and subsequently modified throughout the project. These outputs may include identification of solutions, which can be very technical in nature.
4. **Identifying indicators and planning, monitoring and evaluation methods to measure impact and process of scaling up.** Should be central to scaling up processes in deciding what should be scaled up and how this might be achieved, and in providing validated evidence to influence policy-makers. To manage, learn from and gain credibility, methods and measures for assessing pro-poor and NRM

impact on different scales needs to be elaborated. The intermediate supporting processes and institutional changes to achieve this will also need agreed measures and review mechanisms. Various participatory methods are vital to ensure open feedback. A major area of this work is in identifying cost-effectiveness, so as to work towards it.

5. **Building networks and partnerships to increase local ownership and pathways to scaling up.** In order to achieve the above elements, researchers and their institutions need to develop relationships throughout the process which can then develop into firmer partnerships with development and other institutions, always with a firm link to the grassroots and end users. Personal relationships also foster direct interest and enthusiasm, increasing the chances of institutionalisation and spread of ideas.
6. **Building capacity and institutional systems to sustain and replicate.** The capacity to manage 'learning through doing' is critical for scaling up to be an on-going and dynamic process. It is also important especially in the implementation and exit stage to internalise new ideas within institutions, especially within communities and government.
7. **Developing appropriate financing mechanisms to sustain capacity for expansion and replication.** Maintaining flexibility and ensuring funding for softer activities (local and regional networking, capacity building, consultations) is considered in the pre-project stage. At the same time, one has to begin building ownership through clear shared resource commitments to activities. Seek opportunities for self-sustaining results in research outcomes, or at least mechanisms for reducing costs when expanding, replicating etc. Take into account the very real dynamics between technologies and wider economic spheres, and financial constraints facing local and government institutions.

The strategies and framework proposed are not prescriptive and have to be understood as a guide only. The limited number of successful cases in scaling-up research shows no absolute strategies or prioritisation of elements.

Major implications for research

The adoption of the above framework for guiding future research projects and programmes will have major implications for researchers and research programme managers:

- Project calls have to be addressed towards institutions and organisations in the target regions to strengthen the implementation of a demand-led approach.
- Shifting the emphasis of research to partners in developing countries may require the development of regional capacities in terms of demand-led approaches, sustainable livelihoods and scaling up and development of partnerships, and innovative means to fund, monitor and evaluate these strategies.

The implications for researchers and their institutions are:

- The establishment of functioning partnerships with in-country agencies, particularly in terms of working within participatory development processes and producing outputs suitable for addressing and communicating local and regional situations.
- That researchers and their institutions have to become accountable in their contribution to scaling up, which in turn requires the identification of indicators that show research effectiveness in terms of extent of impact.

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