

Research on Scaling Up



Research and Development (R&D) institutions are now committed to scale up the impacts of technical innovations. This is because of the increasing pressures to account for resources and to demonstrate that they are important investments of public resources. A combination of economic and developmental motives makes a good justification for scaling up. However, the question is how to scale up successful programs in a cost effectively manner.

This paper is part of an initial analysis of the results of a PhD scaling up research of the author.

Several reviews on scaling up case studies provided useful lessons. However, they were mostly based on informal analysis and reflections from practitioners rather than on planned research. The lack of research in scaling up is considered a problem and is primarily due to the traditional view that:

- ❑ dissemination and scaling up is devoid of research; and
- ❑ it is free from the responsibility of pure development and extension agencies.

This reflected the long-held gap between R&D. However, if R&D institutions are to close this gap, scaling up research should be high on their agenda.

The Problem: Why is Scaling Up Research a Tenuous Agenda?

Participants at a workshop in 2000 convened by the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) succinctly defined scaling up as the process of bringing more benefits, to more people, more quickly, more equitably, and more lastingly over a wider geographic area. Different sectors, including education, health, nutrition, and agricultural extension, have also equated scaling up with expansion and replication to reach out to more targeted groups in wider areas to increase the level of project impacts. Even so, both definitions reflect a common understanding that scaling up is a form of expansion, or a planned dissemination effort designed to be faster and of greater magnitude than the normal process of expansion. This is a good working definition, which appeared to have a wide acceptance across a variety of sectors. Viewed even in these simplified terms, however, scaling up is a complex subject embodying a myriad of related concepts and assumptions.

Scaling up research has been tenuous because scaling up efforts are in the first place generally initiated with development goals, rather than with research goals, showing the separate worlds of research and development. In addition, the complexity of scaling up makes it a more difficult research agenda. The general trend has been to expand the partnership-base in the project initiation and implementation phases to increase the prospects of scaling up before or at the end of project life. This is particularly common in a spontaneous scaling process, but this approach is generally weak in addressing complex scaling up issues.

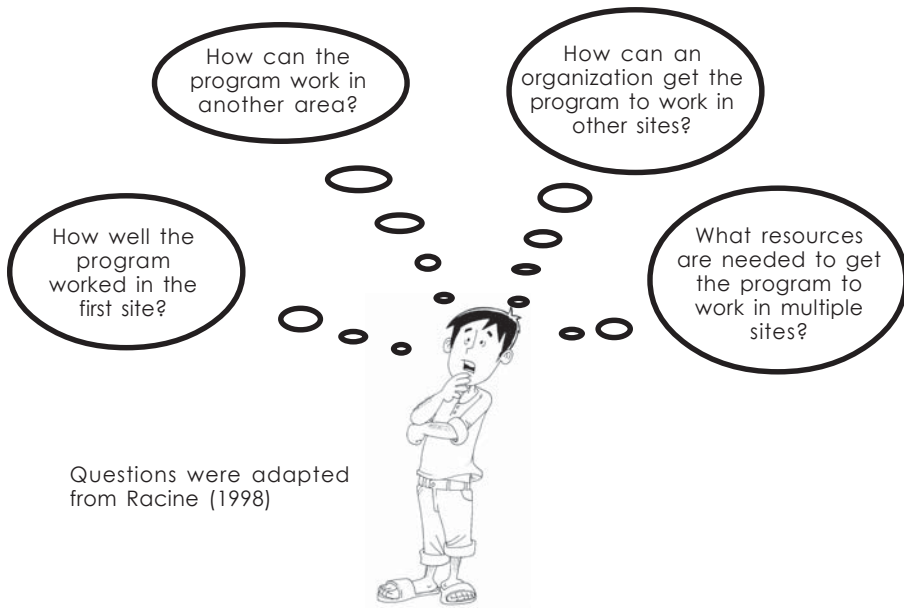
Increasingly, it is recognized that a planned scaling up process could go along a spontaneous process. However, a planned scaling up process is advantageous, in that issues and research questions are identified at the outset, making it a central part of action research. A planned scaling up could now proceed as both a development and a research agenda.

A basic issue is whether a program is worth scaling up. The problem with scaling up is that project implementers are easily overwhelmed by the so-called, “Universalist Principle” thus, eliminating the value of the “Contextualist Principle.” Although in practice, these principles are not mutually exclusive and can be combined, a careful balance on their use is required since an indiscriminate emphasis to one would have far-reaching consequences.

Universalist Principle – based on the belief that universal solutions can be widely applicable to increasingly shared problems

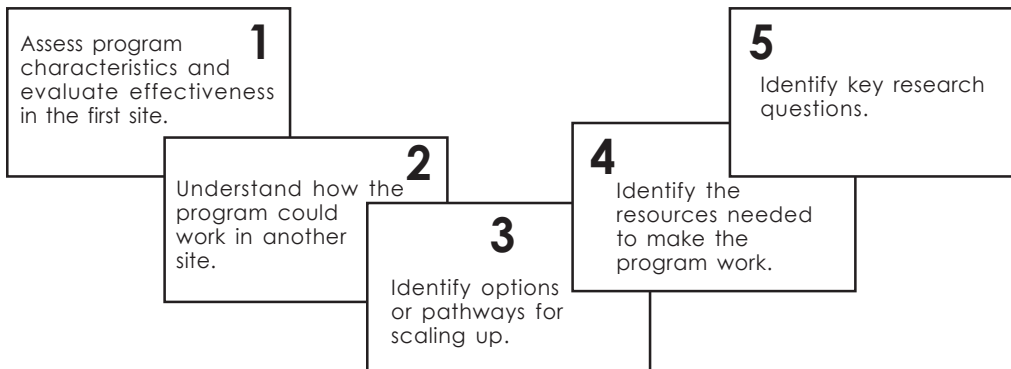
Contextualist Principle – gives primacy to local needs and contexts

In consideration of the above, four practical questions are important before embarking on a scaling up research.



Five-Step Process

In relation to the above questions, a five-step process is necessary for a planned scaling up research to take off.



Step 1. Assessing Program Characteristics and Evaluating Effectiveness in the First Site

A necessary step is to determine the “worthiness” of a program for scaling up. The proponent institution should first examine how well the program has worked in the pilot site. This requires an understanding of the program context, and how it performs in relation to the socio-economic, political, institutional and environmental conditions in the area where it operates. This is important because program context matters with site contexts. Some program characteristics or processes are inherently difficult to replicate, and hence, to scale up, because the pilot site is not a characteristic of the scaling up site (new site).

Scaling up would benefit from an evaluation of program effectiveness. This could be started by looking at the advances made towards meeting the program's objectives, as well as an analysis of conditions predisposed to successful implementation. A matrix of fundamental, essential, negotiable, and non-negotiable conditions in relation to certain important characteristics of a program, otherwise known as the Program Context and Pre-Conditions (PCPC) Matrix would best serve the purpose of effective scaling up (see Table 1).

The PCPC Matrix (if any) could be extracted from rigorous project evaluation/assessment reports and help reduce the risk of project failure in the scaling up sites.

Table 1. Program Context and Pre-Conditions Matrix

Key Characteristics of the Program (Program Context)	Fundamental Conditions	Essential Conditions	Negotiable Conditions	Non-negotiable Conditions
Participatory	High relevance to potential users	Sense of volunteerism and participation values	Participatory approaches, pre-existing human or social capital	Facilitation skills, capability building activities
Technology-oriented	Availability of technically-equipped institutions	Participatory generation of appropriate technologies	Dissemination approaches (eg., farmer-to farmer, etc.)	Continuous flow and sharing of technologies
Farmer-focused	High program relevance to farmers	Participation, unity and cooperation, sense of solidarity	Pre-existing human and social capital	Training, capability building and facilitation
Based on partnerships	Local government support	Other institutional support	Pre-existing partnership schemes	Convergence of common interests and goals

Step 2. Understanding How the Program Could Work in Another Site

The PCPC Matrix should be used to examine whether the conditions are existent or non-existent in the scaling up site, otherwise, a compromising strategy should be adopted. One caution is that local adaptation has two sides of the coin. It could mean that some program attributes are compromised to fit in the local condition in the same way as some conditions have to be constructed with

Important Questions to Ask in the Scaling Up Site:

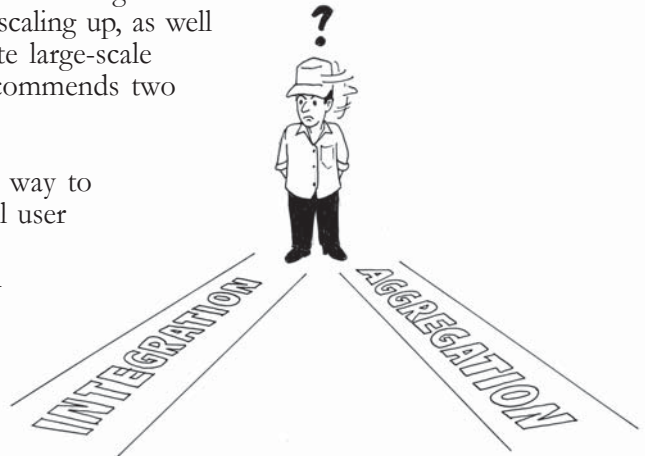
- What is the relevance of the program in the scaling up site?
- Will the program address a significant issue in the scaling up site?
- Can the program alter its operation to meet local demands without necessarily hurting the basic characteristics that made it effective in the first site?
- Will there be local institutional leadership? Would it be easy for potential users to learn to implement the program?

match program characteristics. Nonetheless, there is no perfect fit between program context and site contexts, but complementarity is important where trade-off exists. This should be clarified at the outset, such that mitigating measures can be earlier developed.

Step 3. Identifying Options or Pathways for Scaling Up in New Sites

For the proponent's part, it involves looking at processes, pathways or modes of scaling up, as well as institutional capacities to initiate large-scale implementation. The literature recommends two common pathways in scaling up:

- ❑ **Integration** is the fastest way to scale up once the potential user finds its value into their program. This is common with governments through partnerships and collaborative arrangements. However, the consistent requirement to adaptive management could be difficult within government bureaucracies.
- ❑ **Aggregation** is combining the resources or programs within a single organization or two or more independent organizations in a full or partial merger of activities.



On the part of the potential user such as the local government unit (LGU), it involves looking at its own organizational capacities to manage, co-invest, or engage in partnerships, and its willingness to try new approaches.

Step 4. Identifying the Resources Needed to Make the Program Work

This step is tied to the notion of institutional capacity in as much as scaling up is essentially an institutional process. Institutional capacity both concerns the proponent institution and the potential user. One could begin by referring to the PCPC Matrix to find out whether institutional resources are available to get the program to work in relation to the preconditions earlier identified. If the resources are completely absent, there is no use pursuing the program in other sites and the program may not be worth replicating.

Step 5. Identifying Specific Research Questions in the Scaling Up Sites

Because of the wide scope of researchable issues in scaling up, it is important to identify those that are most important. The choice of research questions is often influenced by the initiating agency depending on its own particular interest. Nevertheless, all partners or stakeholders could jointly identify research questions in a similar manner, as the technical research issues are now generated from farmers.



However, this depends on the interest of the partners. For example, an LGU may not be interested in research at all, but if the LGU or non-government organization (NGO) partners are convinced on the value of research, it is desirable to identify the research questions in a participatory manner. Alternatively, the proponent institution can begin with presenting the twin goals (development and research) of the scaling up efforts.

Excerpt of a Scaling Up Research Design in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon Province, Philippines

Research Objective: To test the applicability of the Landcare Program under the LGU leadership.

Research Hypothesis: Scaling up the Landcare Program can proceed under the LGU leadership with fewer institutional and technical support from an external agency like the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF).

Research Questions:

- What institutional infrastructure is available in the LGU to implement a Landcare Program?
- What capacities are needed to enable the LGU to implement a Landcare Program?
- What resources are available in the LGU to implement a Landcare Program?
- What part of the Landcare Program is easily replicable?
- What are the key innovations of the Landcare approach?

Key Strategies:

For ICRAF: provide training to technicians and farmer leaders with minimum input on group facilitation.

For the LGUs: design the implementation strategy including the provision of key personnel for the program, supporting farmer activities, building local facilitators, and funding training activities.

Lessons Learned

One of the many lessons in scaling up is that success rests on both the systemic change of the larger system (e.g., government) and the nurturing of specific local elements that made the program distinctively successful. Farmers' participation, for example, is frequently acknowledged as the bedrock of success and sustainability, but has not moved beyond the rhetoric in scaling up. The problem

is most institutions are easily overwhelmed as their own desire and demands to scale up that local participation, is inadvertently disregarded. In many cases, the host institution that easily goes to scale expands coverage, adds more activities, influences the vertical structures, and gets more resources to do more work in wider areas.

The experiences in the Philippine Landcare program have shown that this is not always the case. Farmers could easily share the tasks of scaling up by being involved in indirect impact activities (i.e., training, knowledge exchange, and research).



- ❑ Direct impact activities such as building a farmer-led Landcare Foundation is desirable to effectively advocate for policy reforms and generate wider support.
- ❑ Capacity-building and economic improvements are directly built in these scaling up efforts.
- ❑ Farmer participation is enhanced if the benefits are made clear enough to encourage participation.

Linking Farmer's Activities to Wider Scaling Up Efforts

The very idea of scaling up implies that the number of people directly or indirectly involved is increased. This makes the whole scaling up process complex because it requires additional institutional arrangements and coordinate efforts with stakeholders at different scales. However, the real issue is farmer participation becomes strained once the institutional arrangements are elevated to higher levels, while the host institution tends to oversell itself.

Institutional arrangements beyond the farmer level should presuppose that farmers have been organized around shared interests, and enabled in voicing their demands. When disregarded, there is greater risk to defy the critical mass that supports the scaling up process. Scaling up is a two-way, yet mutually reinforcing processes, where both the supporting institution and grassroots organizations simultaneously undertake the scaling up process.



For example, when farmers expand their suite of activities from simple adoption of soil conservation technologies to tree farming and marketing of tree products, the supporting institution needs to bring in new expertise (i.e., hire new staff or implement new research activities). This type of scaling up is described in the literature as "functional scaling up", where the number and type of activities expand. It is quite manageable as the process is still basically local. However, when the scaling up process goes higher in scale, there is an obvious tendency that farmers' participation is diminished. In effect, the host institution will be at a dilemma of putting its resources in equilibrium with what is needed at the local level, and what is needed beyond that level. Again, this balancing act is important to sustain the scaling up process.

Hence, as the scaling up process is aimed at influencing the larger systems (e.g., provincial or national government), farmer participation at the local level has to be enhanced by ways of communicating and strengthening their capacities and linking them to wider scaling up efforts. The host institution, therefore, is challenged with strategies that enable the farmers to proactively take part in wider scaling up efforts, while giving them the pleasure to enjoy the benefits of their own efforts.

Although enhancing farmer participation is a critical task in the scaling up process as it denotes other latent premises such as quantity, quality and equity in participation, it is a necessary requirement for lasting scaling up efforts. The scaling up process therefore could be largely locally derived and nurtured. The tasks and benefits are not exclusive to the host institution. Scaling up can be a two-pronged process, yet mutually reinforcing each other, such that the costs and benefits are both shared by farmers and the host institution.

Conclusion

Practitioners agree that scaling up is a formidable task because of the embedded complexity and diversity of conditions in given sites, and the multiple dimensions involved in the scaling up process. The five-step process is not the end of scaling up. It is only a necessary beginning that guides the effective planning of activities, identification of key research questions, and the over-all implementation of the scaling up efforts. The importance of scaling up research received attention only recently, after a pervasive failure of project interventions. The knowledge-base generated from scaling up research would make a contribution to further scale up the impacts of appropriate technologies, programs or strategies.

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