

CASE 11:

SCALING UP THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS: THE CASE OF LANDCARE IN THE PHILIPPINES

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In the mid-1990s in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, soil degradation was among the urgent environmental issues associated with agricultural development. Thus, an approach known as Landcare drew interest as a means of enhancing the development, dissemination and adoption of appropriate conservation farming measures by farming communities.

Landcare was an approach for mobilizing collective action by local communities to deal with land degradation and natural resource management issues. It was a grassroots initiative based on a *three-way partnership* of farmers, local government units (LGU), and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

One Landcare pilot-project involved the propagation of "natural vegetative strips" (NVS) as a form of low-cost conservation farming in a municipality in north-central Mindanao, called Claveria, followed by nearby municipalities. The initial uptake of NVS encouraged ICRAF to examine the phenomenon further, to see how public sector research and extension institutions could develop more effective techniques to diffuse the NVS technology rapidly to a large number of interested farmers. With increasing demand for training in soil conservation technologies, ICRAF established a partnership with the municipal government to set up the Contour Hedgerow Extension Team (CHET) in 1996, comprising a trained farmer, an agricultural technician, and an ICRAF staff member.

In late 1996, a number of trained farmers agreed to form a municipal-wide group, which was given the name, Claveria Landcare Association (CLCA). The CLCA then proceeded to set up community Landcare groups

in the villages and sub-villages of Claveria to help promote NVS. Landcare thus developed into an approach that rapidly and inexpensively disseminated conservation farming technologies based on an effective partnership between farmers, local government, and the ICRAF staff. This three-way partnership, described as the *Landcare triangle*, has resulted in widespread adoption of NVS and agroforestry practices.

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

While it was widely agreed that the technical merits of NVS were a major advantage, rapid adoption was also attributed to the triadic partnership of the CLCA, the LGU, and ICRAF researchers and facilitators. The CLCA and its network of landcare groups promoted farmer-led extension of technologies, while ICRAF provided technical and logistical support and the LGU provided policy and financial support. LGU informants agreed with Landcare facilitators that the CLCA was the center of the partnership and was crucial to success.

Other important ingredients included the catalytic role of ICRAF in technology development, effective facilitation, and the provision of effective training programs. The stable political situation was also impor-

tant, in which LGU political leadership and administration were in the hands of one political family, and Landcare leaders had an established relationship with LGU officials. It can be concluded from this case study that the Landcare program flourished in Claveria because of a favorable environment, in which locally adapted technologies had emerged, the LGU was supportive of grassroots initiatives and had the desire to work with farmers and other agencies, and ICRAF provided a long-term research and extension presence.

Given this initial success, Landcare was scaled up in other sites using different modes. The hypotheses were twofold: (1) Landcare could be implemented more widely given the differences in farming systems, socio-political, institutional, and economic environments in various Philippine locations; and (2) Landcare could be scaled up at the least cost through partnerships. The latter was based on the fact that ICRAF had limited resources to initiate a scaling up process.

THE NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY

Scaling up Landcare in the study sites was met with flexibility using different modes of scaling up to adapt to specific conditions, conforming to Berman and Nelson's (1997) view that success depends upon adapting a model program to the local situation. However, this did not come easily; in the process of adaptation, some aspects of the Landcare Program were changed to fit to the local conditions, at the same time as the Landcare Program changed the local situation. It was difficult to juggle the compromises and tradeoffs between process and outcomes, especially where Landcare involved both technical and institutional in-


novations. For instance, the promoted technologies were more easily adopted than was the Landcare process itself because they were less complex and easier to implement.

Although, Berman and Nelson (1997) support the view that outcomes are more important than fidelity to the adopted model, this provided some philosophical and operational challenges in scaling up, and raised concerns about the sustainability of the adoption process. The relative importance of scaling up just the technical innovations or the institutional innovation was a matter of institutional choice. In this case, ICRAF was rather free flowing, because it did not perceive Landcare as a prototype, nor had it established a long-term scaling up strategy at the outset. Implementation was met with a myriad of issues including political conflict, leadership, participation, and sustainability issues; but the overall outcomes were impressive. The most important outcome was the improvement of human and social capital, enabling farmers to adopt conservation technologies and agroforestry practices with foreseeable improvements in natural and financial capital.

OUTCOMES

There was evidence that Landcare had, in one way or another, reoriented the extension system and effected changes in local budgeting and policy formulation. At the farmer level, it regenerated the culture of volunteerism and cooperation, and fostered community participation. Relative to varying levels of investments and different timescales at each site, the extent to which the goals were achieved (e.g., technology adoption) and the positive spillover effects demonstrated cost effectiveness.





The study also found that scaling up could proceed with fewer requirements of institutional and technical input from an external agency. For ICRAF, the resources used in implementing Landcare were more technical or human, rather than purely financial. Although the latter was important, the fiscal cost was cut down significantly through consolidation of gains, decentralizing training at the farmer level, and testing different modes of scaling up. The different modes showed that ICRAF's cost of scaling up per site was significantly reduced, with local partners sharing the overall cost of implementation. From the point of an external agency, implementing indirect impact activities through "partners" was a cost-effective approach for scaling up; a combination of direct and indirect impact activities could thus be promoted as a two-pronged approach for scaling up.

Some broad generalizations can be made about the preconditions for successful scaling up, with the relative importance of each precondition depending on local realities.

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SCALING UP

1. The wider adoptability of NVS, and the flexibility to develop complex agroforestry systems from this starting point, was an advantage. Hence a set of widely adoptable technologies would be desirable for effective scaling up. Where a proven technology is absent, a locally adapted technology could well be a starting point.
2. It appeared that Landcare succeeded in areas where farmers were wholly focused on farming, conservation efforts were promoted and supported, and farmers were not affected by rapid economic change, such as the growth of large-scale agribusiness or non-agricultural employment. However, where these conditions are absent, Landcare could potentially expand its scope to include NRM-based livelihood options, industry-based strategies and foster private sector support.
3. Landcare had better prospects where local politics were stable, allowing the Landcare triangle to prosper. However, in cases where LGU support is limited or where the political situation is hostile, a committed and highly competent external agency is an essential ingredient, offsetting the immediate need for LGU support.
4. In connection with the above, a highly competent external agency proved desirable, not only for offsetting the weakness of the LGU, but also for providing the necessary technical expertise and longer-term presence to explore different strategies and adopt a step-wise development approach. However, this requires high institutional competencies that might be uncommon even with experienced NGOs and with other research and development (R&D) institutions.
5. An initial level of human and social capital is desirable, but is not essential for scaling up, as Landcare involved investments for maintenance and expansion of human and social capital within a sensible timeframe.
6. Effective training, communication, and facilitation are essential ingredients for scaling up, without which the essence of farmer-based extension embodied in the Landcare approach would be difficult to achieve and maintain.

In summing up, Landcare could be only partially scaled up where the conditions that made it successful in one site were not fully replicated in the other sites. This supports the finding of Lovell et al. (2003) that scaling up research in NRM was challenging because the rules or relationships that hold at one scale often do not transcend scales. Several authors (Berman & Nelson 1997; Schorr et al. 1999) agree, and stress that successful scaling up depends on replicating the conditions where the program has worked rather than replicating the program itself. The implication is that

these conditions should be considered in planning for the scaling up of Landcare beyond its current domain, as they define the mode, strategies, and scope of the scaling up process. Finally, the case studies have shown that to mobilize communities for Landcare outcomes, a balance has to be sought between community-initiated change, *partnerships* with local governments, and promotion of technological and institutional innovations by external actors, this balance depending on a range of contextual factors.

