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Lessons from Scaling Up

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Lessons and Recommendations for Agricultural Practitioners

The new report "Lessons from Practice: Assessing Scalability" aims to provide specific tools and guidance to World Bank Task Team Leaders (TTLs) and other agricultural development specialists which can assist them in identifying the potential for scaling up small, innovative projects throughout the entire project cycle – from inception through completion. This report, developed in collaboration with the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, draws on lessons from the experience of the Development Marketplace (DM) in funding small innovation projects and offers strategic advice to agricultural practitioners on assessing the scalability of such projects.

Innovation lies at the heart of agricultural development and successful innovation demonstrates viable approaches that have the potential to be effectively scaled up – both within countries and across borders. However, innovations are also risky, having the potential to consuming scarce development resources without providing adequate evidence for success. While initial tests of innovations are usually small, they nonetheless need to provide guidance to implementers and funders on whether or not to go to scale and, if so, how to do it – leading to the paradox of needing proof of innovation impact and scalability before deciding to scale up, but requiring decisions on scale up before adequate information is available. The pathways toward effective and efficient expansion, adaptation and replication are neither obvious nor easily followed and there persists a need for new and effective approaches which can better address impediments to effective scaling up. This report – which includes a literature review and three individual case studies – provides findings and recommendations as part of the global donor community's ongoing response to this need for improved scaling up tools and guidelines.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Prioritize simplicity in design and implementation as much as is possible in the complex realities of the development context. Keeping innovative projects simple means limiting the necessary number of implementing agencies, actions and decision-points required for an action to take place. Scaling up is essentially the implementation of *change*, which can be hindered by the employment of complex assessment frameworks. The report concludes that innovations with the best possibility for scaling up **(1)** *have clear and testable designs or theories of change* and **(2)** *are perceived as having local legitimacy, ownership and the capacity to produce benefits.* The use of simple tools to assess scalability can allow implementing organizations and funders to focus on a small number of key actions that will pull along the other implementation steps required for scaling up.

Behavior change is a requirement of successful innovation. Enabling behavior change is often overlooked in considering scalability or planning the implementation of a scaling up effort. Assessing both the kinds of behavior changes required by implementers and participants, and the leadership capacity of the implementing agency is a fundamental part of assessing scalability. It must also be remembered that *innovations require changes in the behavior of project staff as well as beneficiaries* and assessments incorporate this component. Innovations that rely on government services in testing implementation or scaling up initiatives create new

A farmer in India stands next to a cold storage facility made available to him through a 2008 Development Marketplace initiative. Source: ARD.

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work for involved participants, who may need to develop new skills or work with new types of clients. Focusing on investing in incentives, motivation initiatives and trainings can help address the challenge of changing staff behavior and sufficient time should be granted for these behavioral changes to occur. Lastly, the larger the change in practice, the greater the time and resources required for implementing the innovation or scaling up effort.

Scaling up is an iterative process which requires constant stakeholder involvement, continuous M&E and continual reiteration of scaling up commitments and feasibility throughout a project's lifespan. To help better guide the iterations of this process, the report recommends that initial design should include both an assessment of its scalability and a strategy for bridging the gap between testing and scaling up, and the intention to scale should be part of the design of the original project. The decision to move toward scaling up should be based on evidence of results delivery and assessment of potential for replication and expansion. If assessment of scalability is done iteratively, two advantages emerge: **(1)** the information from the ongoing assessments can be used to continually influence implementation of the project – increasing the likelihood of recognizing successful components and potential choke points; and **(2)** information can be used for decision-making on whether or not to proceed toward scaling up throughout implementation, as opposed to project completion.

CASE STUDIES

Central to the lessons and recommendations in the new report was the creation of three case studies, carried out in India, Mongolia and Nigeria. Factors which contributed to the selection of these three projects include geographic and economic diversity, differences in the quality and strength of governance, variety in the approaches to delivering the innovation to beneficiaries and in the types of adopting and partnership organizations. These three case studies will be featured in accompanying ARD Notes.

India. The *"Waste to Wealth by Incubating Mini Cold Storage Technology Ventures in India"* project seeks to reduce substantial post-harvest waste of vegetables in India by giving small farmers access to cold storage units suited to the needs of small producers. Two years of implementation demonstrates a small farmer demand for using the Mini Cold Storage Units (MCSUs), reduction in waste and increased income for small farmers. Rural and semi-urban youth have been trained in MCSU maintenance and management. This project has benefitted from a change of behavior – facilitated in part through the youth training program – and stakeholder buy-in, demonstrated by the development of a financial model by the implementing agency, Tiruchirappalli Regional Engineering College – Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Park (TREC-STEP), which predicts the sustainability of MCSUs as viable businesses operated by youth entrepreneurs.

Nigeria. The *"Adding Value to Waste in the Cassava Processing-Goat Keeping Systems in Nigeria"* project is comprised of five innovations: a simple *technology* (a drying platform for the cassava peels to be used instead of burning the waste), a new *product* (clean dried cassava peels that can be sold as goat feed), an *educational component* (a diet prescribed to goat farmers, designed by animal scientists that utilizes cassava peels and maximizes the growth rate and health of the goats), *access to credit* (facilitating micro-credit loans to build the drying platforms), and a new *market mechanism* (linking cassava processors and goat keepers). This project benefited from a simple theory of change and an iterative assessment of scaling up, which guided the project in expanding to an additional 21 locations, as expected increases in annual income were revised up from US$384 to US$635 – leading to increased demand from extension agents and the communities they served.

Mongolia. The *"Value Chain Development of Textile Products"* project addresses the decline in the quality of raw Mongolian cashmere, yak wool, and sheep wool by creating a decentralized grading laboratory and carrying out extensive training programs on grading, sorting, and quality-based breeding in one rural province. This project facilitates stronger linkages within the entire cashmere and wool value chain – from herders to manufacturers – and strives to increase the competitiveness of firms that produce high quality final goods and improve the design and international marketing for such products. A positive behavior change was noted during this project which continues to nurture promising working relations among all the various stakeholders, who perceive the legitimacy of this project and the potential benefits to themselves and their communities.

Methodology

This study is based on work done by a team from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Background work includes:

- a literature review;
- a desk analysis of available documentation on the 22 Development Marketplace projects selected in 2008;
- field-based case studies of three projects which showed promise of scalability; and
- responses to surveys sent to project managers of the 22 winning projects, 78 finalist projects that were not funded, and TTLs of the 22 winning projects.

This ARD Note was prepared by John Mackedon, Gunnar Larson, and Kaisa Antikainen under the guidance of Fionna Douglas, with special thanks to Susan Holcombe and her team at Brandeis University.