

Node: Suite Summary^{1,2}

Bolivia: Strategies for scaling-up

Context

From a livelihoods perspective, the conventional approach to natural resources (NR) research has been criticised for its failure to reach the poor and other disadvantaged groups such as women. Where interventions have reached the poor and provided sustainable benefits, poverty alleviation has generally been restricted to relatively small numbers of farmers, who have been directly involved in the research. Donors, such as DFID (Department for International Development), have since the late-1990s responded to the limited uptake of outputs from poverty alleviation research by making it mandatory that research proposals identify their 'dissemination pathways' and 'target groups'.

Practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and funding agencies agree that, while there is a substantial body of knowledge available, it is often produced in a research context that makes the outputs difficult to communicate more widely. Yet with scarce resources, researchers are under increasing pressure to demonstrate practical impact of the results of their research projects. Therefore, 'scaling-up' has, since 2000, become a major concern of research programmes such as NRSP, and a focus of increasing attention and resources by the research and development community. Developing strategies for scaling-up has become a routine part of research project design. It requires planning and involvement of stakeholders to spread the results of the research to a wider community than those immediately involved in the research. The key challenge, then, is how research on the NR management problems of the poor can be scaled-up in order to make a significant contribution to poverty alleviation.

To emphasise a people-centred vision to scaling-up, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) defines the term as "to bring more quality benefits to more people over a wider geographic area more quickly, more equitably and more lastingly". This vision of scaling-up, adopted by NRSP, introduces the dimension of 'quality' and highlights the importance of time, equity and sustainability – all aspects that are incorporated in NRSP's goal and purposes. This is why the Hillside production system log frame, within which the Bolivia Suite 2 projects are situated, has included since 2000 "ways to accelerate and upscale pilot research experiences to the wider community" as the third of its activity sets to meet the Output of "improved hillside farming strategies relevant to the needs of marginal farmers developed and promoted".

Research Topics

- How can more resource-poor farmers be reached by the results of natural resources research (i.e. 'scaling-up')?
- Can more benefits be brought to more poor people more quickly?
- What is needed in the design of research to maximise the probability of scaling-up?

¹ This document summarises NRSP's work in one of its Uptake Promotion Node: suites. For further details and links to project and project documents see <http://www.nrsp.org.uk/6.aspx>

² This document presents research funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.

- What stakeholders need to be involved to spread research messages more widely, and how?

Projects

In its first five years (1995-99) NRSP invested substantial research funds in technology generation for improved systems of soil and water conservation, especially for the difficult conditions of Hillside production systems in the Andes. Two projects attempted to take technology generation into local communities (see project linkages below). R6621 and R6638 identified the need for further research on methods and processes to reach more resource-poor farmers than were included in the original research.

R6621 (1996-99) had as its purpose the packaging and promotion of economically viable soil and water management practices. Local communities were involved in a participatory technology development process using their criteria and valuations of costs and benefits as the main key to evaluating the technologies. The project concluded that, “there is now a need for scaling-up pilot level activities to a wider landscape scale that will involve other natural resources user groups...NGOs and community groups will require the appropriate skills to facilitate this.” (Sims, B. 2000. Strategies for improved soil and water conservation practices in hillside production systems in the Andean valleys of Bolivia).

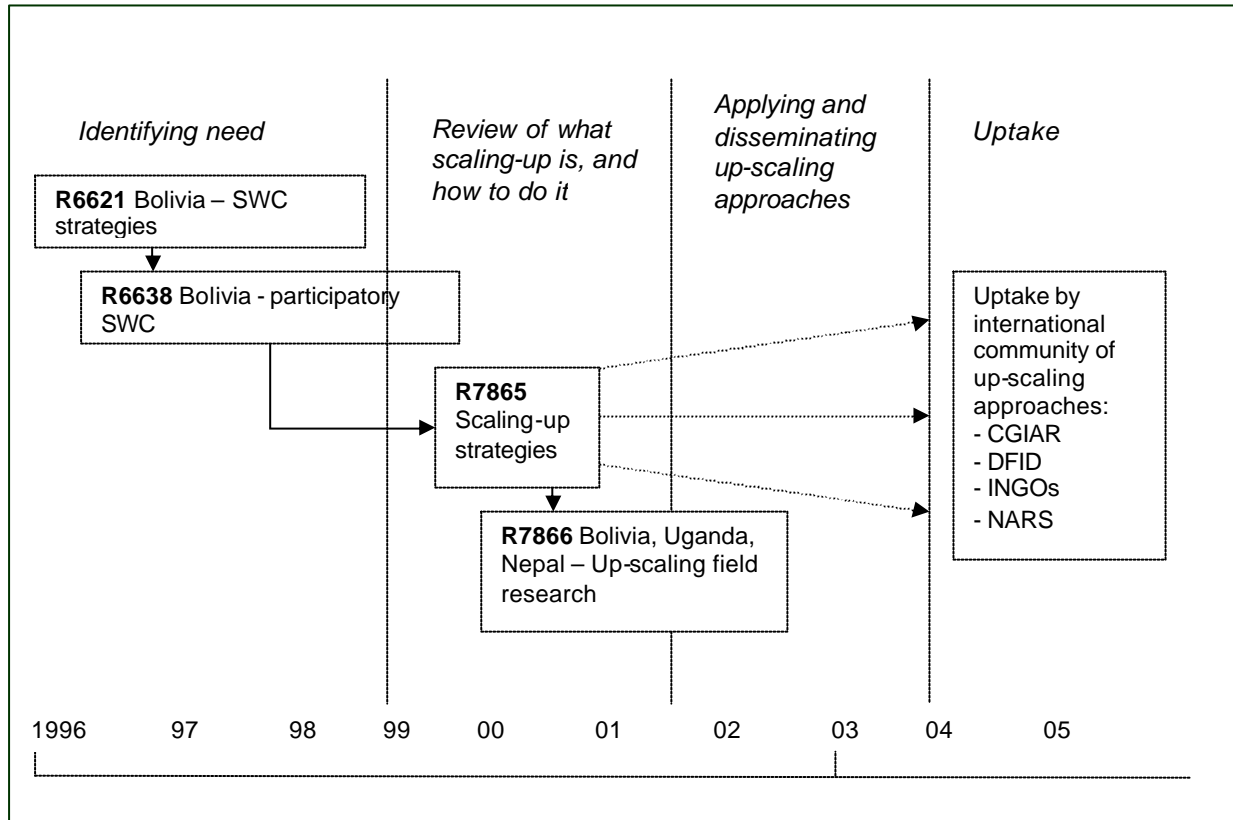
The second project, R6638 (1996-99), examined the conditions needed to promote land, soil and water conservation (SWC) in the temperate valleys of the Santa Cruz region that suffer severe soil erosion. The project outputs focused on farming systems, local perceptions of soil problems and increasing access to knowledge of practices that could achieve both production benefits and environmental protection. The project developed a methodology that brought together local and scientific knowledge. R6638 concluded that, “while the research led to useful methodological insights and institutional progress in the region, its most important output is an unplanned one: i.e. new questions about the linkages between experimentation at the individual level, and the social demands of resource management at catchment level.” (Lawrence, A. 1999. Participatory improvement of soil and water conservation practices in hillside production systems in the Andean valleys of Bolivia). In other words, the process of scaling-up had not been addressed and the technologies were not necessarily the most suitable for the social and economic conditions of local people.

With the restructuring of the NRSP portfolio in 1999-2000, scaling-up was introduced as a major area of investigation in the Hillside production systems. The first step was to commission a review of scaling-up, R7865, to identify appropriate strategies to accelerate the uptake of innovations by target farmers. Documents related to scaling-up were reviewed and a mid-term workshop was held with various stakeholders from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Few cases of successful scaling-up of the results of research were found. Where research had created impact, this was largely due to post-project development of uptake materials. The review concluded with suggestions on how scaling-up strategies could be built into projects from inception.

In parallel with the R7865 review, scaling-up strategies were directly investigated in a multi-country study, R7866. Through a case study approach on seven projects in Bolivia, Nepal and Uganda, the factors important to the facilitation of scaling-up of promising land management practices were identified and analysed. ‘Best option strategies’ were developed and then tested with development projects in Bolivia. R7866 also attempted to build the

capacity of local professionals and improve the functional linkages between local researchers and local government. In addition, communication materials were written, and a ‘scaling-up kit’ for the practical development of work plans for research projects was promoted.

Project links within Bolivia Suite 2: 1996 - 2005



Outputs

Findings

Scaling-up may be described in several ways, but the review (R7865) found that the terms ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ scaling-up encompassed most of what is needed in NR management research. Horizontal scaling-up is the geographic spread to more people and communities within the same sector or stakeholder group. Vertical scaling-up is institutional in nature and involves other sectors and stakeholder groups in the process of expansion – from the level of grassroots organisations to policymakers, donors, development institutions and international investors.

Major components of a scaling-up strategy were identified. Projects need to be seen in phases, each with a scaling-up component. In the first phase before starting a project to develop new technologies or practices, target groups for uptake promotion need to be identified, their objectives understood and suitable outputs identified. In the next phase, when moving towards project implementation, it is important to identify necessary funding mechanisms for the scaling-up strategy, develop M&E systems and establish supportive partnerships for undertaking and sustaining uptake promotion. The last phase, undertaken

during implementation of the project, involves devising an exit strategy and planning post-project dissemination.

Key findings and recommendations for scaling-up 'good practice' in pilot research projects are:

- Ensure the concept and principles of scaling-up are understood by all stakeholders.
- Identify appropriate target groups.

Addressing priority community constraints is vital for developing practices which will have the potential for successful pro-poor scaling-up. This can be achieved by using participatory technology development approaches that include the poorest and most marginalised and that take into account the specific circumstances of the poor (e.g. limited resources and the need for quick returns).

Scaling-up strategy can seek to promote long-term impacts and enduring relationships for innovation through:

- Closer integration between research and development activities.
- Securing resources for capacity building, communication, monitoring and evaluation.
- Developing cost sharing mechanisms between local groups and development institutions.
- Sustaining local government support.
- Planning based on realistic time horizons for establishing support at the community level.

Lastly, increased capacity of local institutions is fundamental to scaling-up. Capacity building should focus on three key elements:

- Improving collaboration, networking and strategic alliances.
- Building institutional and community knowledge and skills.
- Ensuring that institutional roles are well defined.

Research Messages

The research confirmed that current concepts of good research/development practice are relevant for effective scaling-up.

- In the pre-project phase, clear responsibilities for scaling-up should be negotiated with each research partner. Multi-disciplinary partnerships should be taken more seriously.
- Researchers should be encouraged and given incentives to focus on more long-term partnerships.
- Participatory approaches with a strong emphasis on learning processes and openness to adapt to new situations should be encouraged.
- NR management researchers must encompass concerns beyond promotion of technologies, and the focus on wider issues has to be valued and recognised by peer review groups. Research on NR management for poverty alleviation has to be integrated within a wider (regional and national) pro-poor development process for effective scaling-up.
- Research should not solely be located in traditional research organisations, but in a wider range of stakeholder organisations.

Key research products

The major product of this Suite was the scaling-up review published by the Natural Resources Institute of the University of Greenwich as an output of R7865. Guendel, S., Hancock, J. and Anderson, S. 2001. Scaling-up strategies for research in natural resources management. A comparative review.

Secondary products are the case studies that provide a selection of rich experiences and evidence to justify strategies for scaling-up (see, for example, the five cases from Bolivia, and one each from Nepal and Uganda in R7866).

Impacts

This Suite investigated the process of scaling-up, raised awareness of the concept and encouraged the development of a scaling-up requirement in other DFID/Renewable Natural Resources Research Strategy (RNRRS) programmes. The raising of awareness in DFID can be seen in the requirements made mandatory from 2003 for developing impact pathways for most research projects. These are plans for generating relevant research results and developing and promoting appropriate products for scaling-up with specific stakeholders.

International organisations that interacted with NRSP and adopted 'scaling-up' procedures and terminology included:

- Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI).
- Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA): scaling-up is built into its Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme.
- Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program (SANREM-CRSP): funded by USAID with research in the Andes, South-east Asia and West Africa with a global decision support office in the US.
- The Sustainable Soil Management Programme (SSMP), Nepal: funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
- Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern, Switzerland.

NRSP research in this Bolivia Suite 2 on scaling-up strategies also contributed to international efforts to better measure the development impact of projects (e.g. the numbers of people affected and how livelihoods have been improved).

Further work

This Suite has identified aspects of scaling-up that could benefit from further work, namely:

- Improvement of M&E systems for scaling-up strategies.
- Refinement of pro-poor targeting.
- Further investigation of appropriate and cost-effective institutional arrangements for scaling-up e.g. partnerships, mechanisms for policy dialogue and channels for communication.
- Exploration of scaling-up in other sectors.