Summary: Research-into-Action Brief

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Research-into-Action Brief series

The series provides concise summaries of academic and grey literature on a range of topics for practitioners working in the fields of child-centred risk reduction (CCRR), climate change adaptation (CCA), and school safety. This summary highlights the main messages in the full Research-into-Action Brief on understanding scalability.

Find the full Research into Practice Brief here:

http://www.gadrrres.net/resources

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Understanding Scalability

"Scaling up" is defined as the expansion or the physical spread of activities, structures and materials as well as the spread of practices, behaviours and norms. For example, when a successful CCRR initiative expands from one school, to all the schools in a district, the initiative has been 'scaled-up.' Scalability is the *potential* of an initiative to be effectively scaled up. 'Scaling up' includes:

- Quantitative growth: increasing numbers – for example, more students, more schools, or more teachers learning about disaster risk reduction (DRR).
- Qualitative aspects: changes to behaviour and norms.

What is effective scaling up?

An initiative is effectively scaled up when: (1) it successfully achieves its objectives; (2) it is adaptable; (3) it is sustainable; and (4) its effectiveness and implementation have benefited from monitoring and evaluation. In this context, the terms successful, adaptable and sustained mean:

- "Successful" means the demonstrated effectiveness of the initiative, taking into consideration that the initiative does not have lower quality or become less effective as it expands;
- "Adaptable" is the ability to adjust the initiative without reducing effectiveness, such as how well the initiative can be adapted to different contexts or target groups while still achieving its objectives;
- "Sustained" means that the initiative can be maintained over the long-term. For long-term success, research shows that scaling up should include both horizontal (quantitative) scaling up *and* vertical (institutional) scaling up, for example both expanding the initiative to include more people while also engaging in policy reform or institutionalisation.

Enabling Environments

The success of scaling up is influenced by both external and internal factors that create supportive – or unsupportive – environments.

- External factors are conditions and institutions outside of the organisation leading the scaling up (scaling entity), for example, political support for the initiative, policies, partnerships, champions and timing that help to facilitate scaling up the initiative.
- Internal factors come directly from the initiative's design, the scaling entity and/or scaling-up strategy; for example, whether the scaling entity has enough resources to implement the initiative, shared vision or whether the initiative is simple enough to be effectively scaled up.

Scaling Actors and Pathways

Identifying who will do the scaling up is critical. Scaling up can be undertaken by the organisation that has piloted the initiative or another scaling entity. **The scaling entity is the institution or organisation that**

seeks, and is expected, to adopt and implement the initiative to be scaled up. The scaling entity can be governmental or non-governmental, an alliance or network or a combination. Three common examples in CCRR are:

a) an initiative piloted and then scaled-up by the same NGO or institution;
b) an initiative piloted by an NGO but intended to be scaled-up by the Ministry of Education (MoE); or
c) initiatives that are jointly scaled up by the NGO/NGOs and the MoE.

There are three different pathways that scaling up can take:

- Expansion is the deliberate and planned scaling up of the initiative(s) by the entity that piloted them.
- Replication is the intentional and planned scaling up of the initiative(s). This reproduces a tested project in more places; this 'reproduction' is not a pure 'copy' but rather maintains the *hard* (essential) while the *soft* (adaptable) components are tailored to the context.
- Spontaneous is the expansion or replication of an initiative that is unplanned by the piloting entity and is not a deliberate process.

Planning to Scale Up

Planning is needed to effectively scale up an initiative. The key features of effective scaling up and an enabling environment can be used to help plan for scaling up. There are also checklists and worksheets that can be used to identify the weaknesses of the initiative and ways to correct them. They can also help to identify initiatives that although successful as pilots may not be effective on a larger scale. Example checklists and tools that practitioners can use include:

- Save the Children's CCRR-appropriate Scalability Assessment and Planning Toolkit: www.gadrrres.net/resources
- MSI's Checklist: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/development-impact/Scaling-Up%20Checklist.pdf
- UNDP's Checklist: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/development-impact/Scaling-Up%20Checklist.pdf
- ExpandNet and WHO: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44708/1/9789241502320_eng.pdf

Scalability and Scaling Up

In summary, *effective* scaling up is characterised by successful, adaptable and sustainable initiatives that use monitoring and evaluation. Scaling up can be enabled by external and internal factors that will differ for each scaling entity and context. There is more than one pathway to scaling up. Scaling up is always a complex process; however critically assessing the extent that initiatives align to the key features of *effective scaling up*, and careful planning, increases the likelihood of success.

Readings

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