



Child-Centred Risk Reduction Research-into-Action Brief:

Understanding Scalability

Abstract

This Research-into-Practice Brief explores the meaning of “effective scaling up”. It observes that there are both quantitative and qualitative attributes of scaling up and that effective scaling up initiatives need to be adaptable, sustainable and successful in achieving their objectives. The importance of incorporating monitoring and evaluation throughout the scaling-up process is described. The Brief also reflects on the internal and external factors that create supportive environments for scalability and the different pathways that scaling up may take. A case study describes a scalability toolkit developed by Save the Children. The Brief concludes with a discussion on measuring scalability and how different features identified in understanding scalability can be used to assess and plan.

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Statement of purpose

The Research-into-Action Brief 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, and school safety. This purpose of this brief is to provide a concise review of research findings for practitioners about the critical factors for post-disaster educational continuity, especially in areas affected by urban floods.

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Scalability	The <i>potential</i> of a particular initiative to be effectively scaled up
Scaling up (or scale-up)	<i>Expanding</i> the physical spread of activities, structures or materials as well as the spread of practices, behaviours or norms
Effective scaling up	<i>Expanding successful and adaptable</i> initiative(s) that are <i>sustained</i> over time with the aim of benefiting more people; it also calls for monitoring and evaluation throughout scaling-up processes
Scaling entity	The institution or organisation that seeks to and is expected to adopt and implement the initiative(s) to be scaled up
Piloting entity	The institution or organisation that implements the pilot and/or unscaled initiative
Horizontal scaling up	Scaling up initiative(s) that increase by size, reaching a larger population and/or geographical base. One of two main types of scaling up relevant to Child Centered Disaster Risk Reduction (CCDRR)
Vertical scaling up	Scaling up initiative(s) that work on the level of institutionalisation and/or policy reform. One of two main types of scaling up relevant to CCDRR
Scaling up pathways	The different routes that scaling up can take
Internal factors	Factors that can influence scalability in relation to the initiative’s design, scaling entity and/or scaling up strategy
External factors	External conditions and institutions that can influence scalability, e.g., policy

Introduction

In its most basic form, the concept of scaling up is a form of “enlargement” – that is, the growth or expansion of an initiative. However, research shows that scaling up is not limited to *quantitative* growth. For example, in relation to school reform it has been argued that traditional definitions which focus on “numbers alone” overlook *qualitative* aspects such as the spread of principles, norms and behaviour (Coburn 2003). Including qualitative measures is important if scaling up (directly or indirectly) aims to change or influence practices. Moreover, it has been argued that “DRR education can and should have clearly expressed behavioural outcomes that are practiced and lived” (UNISDR 2012, p. 47). As such, **“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.** However, *effective* scaling up needs to be considered in a broader way.

This brief examines what constitutes effective scaling up, the factors that enable its success and the different forms it can take. In conclusion, the brief reflects on how these attributes and factors create a framework for both measuring and planning scaling up when taken together.

What is effective scaling up?

There are four key features of an initiative that has been effectively scaled up: (1) it successfully achieves its objectives ; (2) it is adaptable; (3) it is sustainable (e.g., can be maintained over time); and (4) its effectiveness and implementation have benefited from monitoring and evaluation. As such, we can define effective scaling up as the *expansion of successful and adaptable* initiative(s) that are *sustained* over time with the aim of benefiting more people; it also includes iterative monitoring and evaluation (M&E) throughout the scaling-up process.

Let’s look more closely at what the terms successful, adaptable and sustained mean in this context.

“Successful” refers to the demonstrated effectiveness of the initiative to be scaled up – in other words, the initiative is not diminished in quality or effectiveness as it expands (M&E is an important factor here). Furthermore, the way we assess success is not always legitimate: initiatives may have been evaluated during their pilot phase, but not once they’ve been scaled up, or after an actual disaster. For example, the Great ShakeOut is an earthquake and tsunami school drill initiative that started in California in 2008 and which was scaled up nationally and internationally. Despite this expansion, certain studies have raised questions as to its potential effectiveness outside the original classroom setting (e.g. Johnson et al. 2016; Johnson 2013).

“Adaptable” is how well the initiative can be adapted to different contexts or target groups while still achieving its objectives. One example is the Pillowcase Project, a program that teaches young students about personal and family preparedness, local hazards. and basic coping skills. Initially developed by the American Red Cross in Louisiana in 2005, the program has been scaled up nationally and internationally in both developed and developing countries. Each country adapted the initiative

“Scaling up is more than quantitative growth...the qualitative aspects of scaling up allow for the consideration of principles and norms in defining “spread...”

to its own context and culture, modifying the “pillowcase” to locally appropriate forms of ‘grab bags’ that can be filled with items needed during an emergency, as well as different hazards, delivery models and curriculums.

“**Sustained**” means maintaining the initiative on a lasting basis (ExpandNet/WHO, 2010). Sustainability can be influenced by numerous factors, including dependence on external stakeholders and funding. Evidence shows that **horizontal (quantitative) and vertical (institutional) scaling up – the two types most relevant to CCDRR – should be combined for long-term success.** Examples of long-running scaled-up CCDRR initiatives that combine both strategies include road safety initiatives in South Korea that began with policy reforms in 1988 and which were supported by the government, civic and research organisations; and school earthquake drills in Iran initiated in 1996 with support from the government and the International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology. Examples can also be found in numerous early child development initiatives. For instance, the 1998 introduction of a reception year for children aged five years as the first year of schooling in South Africa (Grade R) was supported by government, non-government and private organizations. Similarly, the ‘Educate your Child’ preschool education program in Cuba is a community-based initiative introduced in 1992 and run by the Ministry of Education..

Enabling environments

Even when those critical features are present, the success of scaling up is influenced by both external and internal factors that create supportive – or, alternatively, non-supportive – environments. External factors are conditions and institutions outside of the scaling entity.

These factors (and their qualities) include:

External	Internal
Political will, support and/or buy-in for the initiative from local/national authorities	The initiative to be scaled up addresses a perceived need
A supportive policy environment (e.g., laws, mainstreaming of DRR in the curriculum, organisational/ institutional policies that prioritise the initiative)	The initiative is simple or has the potential to be simplified
Leadership/someone who champions the initiative	Scaling up is included in the initial planning/design of the pilot
Local/multi-stakeholder partnerships engaged with the process	The scaling up process is gradual (rather than rapid)
Timing of the scaling up	The scaling entity has adequate resources and capability to implement the initiative

External	Internal
Timing of the scaling up	The process has an adequate budget and is affordable
	Scaling entity and/or key stakeholders have a shared vision of the initiative
	The initiative is linked to incentives (monetary or non-monetary)

External factors such as policy environments or organisational structures vary considerably and need to be assessed case by case prior to scaling up and monitored throughout the process. It is important to consider those key or underlying assumptions about factors, such as political will or supportive policies, which may be integral to the program design but may not apply or be present in all contexts and situations (McClure and Grey, 2014).

Internal factors also need to be examined: they stem directly from the initiative's design, scaling entity and/or scaling-up strategy. Those most significant to effective scaling up are also found in the table above. Internal factors often vary. For example, while the shared vision for the Pillowcase Project positively supported scaling up in some contexts, a less fully shared vision in certain contexts was reportedly responsible for halting the implementation of the initiative (Selby and Kagawa, 2016). Not all internal factors will be equally significant for each initiative and the absence of one of these factors may not be a deal breaker, though they may make scaling up more challenging.

The literature offers more specific lessons relevant to CCRR that were (or could be) useful in certain scaling-up initiatives:

- The positive role of a multi-sector/cross-departmental approach in government-led scaling-up initiatives;
- Mainstreaming DRR into the curriculum;
- A communication/advocacy campaign to raise awareness of national initiatives where the government is the scaling entity.

Scaling actors and pathways

Identifying who will implement the scaling up is critical. Scaling up can be undertaken by the entity that 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 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 expanded by the same NGO or institution; (b) an initiative piloted by an NGO but intended to be implemented by the an initiative piloted and then expanded by the same NGO or institution; (b) an initiative piloted by an NGO but intended to be implemented 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, replication and spontaneous:**

- **Expansion:** is the intentional and planned scaling up of the initiative(s) by the piloting entity.
- **Replication:** is the intentional and planned scaling up of the initiative(s) by the piloting entity or another entity which reproduces a tested project in additional sites; this reproduction is not a pure “copy” but rather maintains the *hard* (essential) components 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 an intentional process.

Planning to scale up

The key features of effective scaling up and the factors that support its introduction also provide a framework of measuring scalability and planning. Various scalability checklists and scoring worksheets are currently used in international development (e.g., MSI’s [Checklist](#)). This approach also helps 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.

Building on these existing tools and drawing on lessons within CCRR and sectors such as early child development, education and health, Save the Children has developed a CCRR-appropriate Scalability Assessment and Planning Toolkit. Using a workshop format, the toolkit guides teams to score and assess initiatives that could be effectively scaled up. See Case Study (below).

To facilitate planning, practitioners would need to reach numerous milestones, such as those featured in the timeline (see left). So, if “S” represents an effectively scaled initiative, funding would need to be secured months earlier (minimum S-3 months), the enabling environments (external and internal) would need to be ready roughly one year before, and a Go/No-Go Workshop, depending heavily on evaluation, would be staged at S-18m. **It is critical to note that each scaling exercise must be planned on a case-by-case basis and that the periods (length and order) used in the timeline are only illustrative. This sequencing is extrapolated--not derived directly from studies.**

CASE STUDY: Scalability Assessment & Planning (SAP) Toolkit

The SAP Toolkit is based on good practice and lessons learned from research on scaling up in international development and in specific sectors, including CCRR, education and health. It was tested in two countries and later improved.

First the toolkit supports planning scaling up through an assessment of scalability and then looks at corrective actions that would strengthen or enable scaling up. Primarily designed for use in a workshop format, the toolkit can be used during the design phase of an initiative or at the end of a pilot, when scaling up is already underway. Through discussion and debate on the issues and questions from different perspectives, a workshop provides an opportunity for everyone to feel that they are part of the initiative as well as an opportunity to explore the critical issues of scaling up and scalability.

The toolkit includes a pre-workshop 'Go/No Go' checklist for programme managers and technical advisors, a workshop agenda, guidance on workshop length, facilitators and participant profiles, a series of worksheets (to identify types and pathways of scaling up, map the internal and external factors, and to score scalability) as well as a reporting template. This template becomes the foundation of the project plans, clearly identifying the agreed approach, the opportunities and constraints, and the corrective actions that need to be taken to support effective scaling up.

Measuring scalability and scaling up

In summary, scalability is the *potential* of a particular initiative to be effectively scaled up. *Effective* scaling up is characterised by successful, adaptable and sustainable initiatives that incorporate M&E not only during the pilot but through the entire process. These features of effective scaling up are pre-requisites and scaling up can be further enabled (or disabled) by external and internal factors that vary between contexts and scaling entities. Finally, there is more than one pathway to scaling up.

Passing a scalability assessment does not mean that scaling up will be simple. However, critically assessing the extent to which initiatives align to the key features of *effective scaling up* increases the likelihood of success.

Follow-up questions

1. What are the key features of *effective* scaling up?
2. How does combined horizontal and vertical scaling up support scalability?
3. What changes can you make when replicating an initiative?
4. To what extent do external factors enable or disable your initiatives?
5. How do scaled-up initiatives in your programs score on the key features of effective scaling up?

Readings

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Bibliography

All the references cited in this Research-into-Action Brief, can be found in the Child-Centred Risk Reduction and Comprehensive School Safety Bibliography at:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/1857446/ccrr_css

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