

A field-based and participatory approach to supporting the development of scaling-up strategies

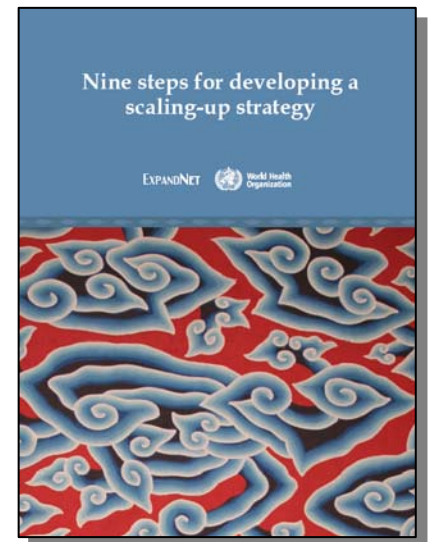
ExpandNet/WHO

Access to health technologies, services and community-based interventions is essential to improve the lives of many people in developing countries. Yet access to quality services often remains limited, resulting in unnecessarily high rates of morbidity and mortality. While small scale interventions testing ways to improve access have often shown impressive results, large scale impact has rarely been achieved. Fostering a process of scaling up requires approaches and skills that typically differ from those of the researchers or project managers who design and implement small-scale interventions. Relevant knowledge and experience about how to proceed exist, but the many lessons, approaches and the technical know-how needed, are not always available to those who require them. ExpandNet is addressing these challenges.

ExpandNet is an informal global network of public health professionals, which seeks to strengthen health policies and programs by promoting the science and practice of scaling up successful pilot, demonstration or other field trials. Activities are focused on development of tools, advocacy, technical assistance provision, networking and research to support scaling-up initiatives. This document describes the approach ExpandNet has used to work with country projects to develop scaling-up strategies.

After extensive review of the literature ExpandNet members developed a conceptual framework for scaling up which was published in a book by WHO together with case studies of scaling up experience in six countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The book was followed by the production of two documents providing practical advice for policy makers, program managers and those providing technical support for scaling-up initiatives. The first, entitled *“Practical Guidance for Scaling Up Health Service Innovations”* utilizes the ExpandNet framework as a basis for a comprehensive discussion of the determinants of successful scaling up and shows how this understanding can be used to guide and manage the scale up process. The second, entitled *“Nine Steps for Developing a Scaling up Strategy”*, is intended for those who have successfully tested an innovation and wish to ensure its broader expansion.

The nine step guide leads users through an analysis of their project that results in a set of recommendations for action which will form the basis of a strategy to scale up successful pilot or demonstration project. The nine step guide is accompanied by a set of worksheets with detailed questions that support the process of strategy development. These two tools can be used by individuals, a small team, or in a multi-stakeholder endeavor. When members of ExpandNet and the WHO Department of Reproductive Health and Research have used the ExpandNet framework and nine step tools to support the development of scaling up strategies, they have done so in a participatory and country-led process that is grounded in field realities. The core elements of the approach as well as some key lessons are described below.

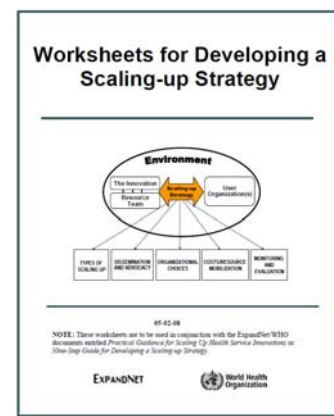


The eight country projects which ExpandNet has helped to implement this approach - in China, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Mali, Nepal, Peru and Sierra Leone - have addressed a variety of public health and education interventions. The interventions have ranged from providing reproductive health information to youths through radio and schools in Sierra Leone, to the development of increased access to both public and private sector family planning, maternal health and sexually transmitted infection services for underserved urban migrants in Yunnan China.

Six components of the participatory, field-based approach to strategy development

Country strategy development exercises in which ExpandNet/WHO facilitators have participated have typically involved the following six components; however, the details have differed depending on the country situation:

1) Exchange of materials and other preparatory steps between facilitators and project leaders. This involves local translation of ExpandNet guidance materials, especially the nine-step guide and the worksheets, and provision of relevant country and project materials to facilitators. This is often followed by conversations about: expectations for the collaboration; the relevant stakeholders to participate in different aspects of the exercise; the development of a workshop agenda and planning for the field site visits. In many cases the Nine Step guide, and sometimes the Practical Guide, have been sent to the workshop invitees prior to the workshop as background reading.



2) One to two day initial meetings with the project team, after facilitators arrive in the country. During this time the current status of the pilot project is discussed and preliminary plans for scaling up are clarified. In addition, team members are oriented to the ExpandNet framework and nine step process. Objectives for the site visits are reached and the rapid qualitative assessment methods to be used in the field are reviewed among team members.



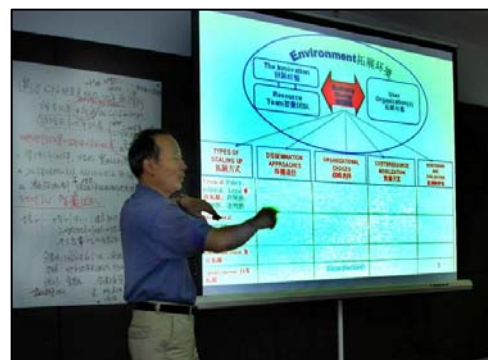
3) Field visits and stakeholder interviews. Over a three to six day period facilitators and country team members visit project sites to understand the local context and local perspectives. Discussions with providers, program managers, community members and clients provide opportunities to understand how the project is implemented on the ground, to identify challenges and opportunities for scaling up and to begin conversations around the type of questions that will be explored more systematically during the strategy development workshop. In addition non-project sites are visited, to understand what might be the implications for scale up in these other

settings. Interviews with key stakeholders at the national and regional level are conducted either before or after the field visits.

4) Workshop preparation: Upon returning from the field the project team and facilitators review the “Worksheets for developing a scaling-up strategy” and decide which questions should be answered in the participatory stakeholder workshop. This is essential because not all questions are relevant to the specific situation and often there is not enough time to cover them all. Questions frequently

need to be adapted to the local context. It is useful when the edited list of discussion questions can be printed for distribution to all workshop participants. This is also the time where agreements are reached about the agenda and who will make workshop presentations. Typically senior country team members have presented findings from the fieldwork and have helped facilitate the workshop. External facilitators generally present the framework for participants who may not yet be familiar with it.

5) Two-day strategy development workshop. Workshop participants are key stakeholders in the scaling up process, usually including project team members, senior managers and policy makers, health advocates, providers, partner organizations and community leaders. The group, which in the past has numbered between 15-60 people depending on the circumstances, proceeds through the nine-steps of strategy development. In this process, participants analyze the innovation itself, the organization(s) intended to adopt the innovation, the resource team who will support the scaling up process and the socio-economic, cultural, political and bureaucratic environment in which scaling up takes place. Subsequently participants discuss key choices that have to be made about where and how to expand the innovation and how to ensure institutionalization. Recommended action steps needed to take the innovation to scale are identified and recorded. These action steps constitute the building blocks of the emerging scaling-up strategy.



6) Follow-up: Subsequent to the workshop the project team, with or without the help of the ExpandNet facilitators, reviews and revises workshop recommendations and assembles them into a scaling-up strategy document. Strategy documents are presented at relevant ministry-level task forces and have been influential in shaping subsequent efforts to expand and institutionalize the innovation. The different partners typically need to develop their own organizations' operational plans based on the larger country strategy. In some cases ExpandNet facilitators have made a second country visit; in other cases continued support was provided by phone, e-mail or skype conferences.

All the country teams who have applied this approach have indicated that undertaking a strategic planning process led to very different kinds of activities to advance scaling up than otherwise would have been pursued. They found the scaling up guides and a facilitated process helped them to better understand both the "hardware and software" aspects of their innovations. Some of the key lessons that have emerged from the experience of facilitating strategy-development exercises in countries are described below.

Lesson 1: An intervention that is found to be lacking an essential component should be completed before further scale up

In Sierra Leone, the project team had been working intensively on an innovation within the educational sector to create greater knowledge and awareness about sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents. As part of the ExpandNet strategy development exercise, they realized that their innovation lacked a simultaneous effort to strengthen the health services that were available to address the demand for services that might arise as a result of these educational activities. In this post-conflict setting such a concurrent effort was badly needed and as a result of the exercise, plans were made to address this gap in the project's design.

Lesson 2: Complex interventions should be simplified for scaling up

County and national level participation from representatives of the Ministry of Health and National Population and Family Planning Commission in the strategy development exercise in Yunnan, China led to a concrete and feasible plan of action to scale up a multi-faceted intervention to increase access to quality reproductive and maternal health and STI services for underserved urban migrants. The plan recommended critical modifications of the project model. A key component was to simplify the package of interventions because it became clear that as expansion proceeded not all the components of the package could be replicated. Therefore the ones that were not essential were eliminated.

Lesson 3: If a project is carried out with a high level of external inputs and/or in special settings, a second pilot test under circumstances more characteristic of the scaling up setting may be needed



Testing of introduction of the Standard Days Method (SDM) in Guatemala was carried out by NGOs primarily with external technical and financial resources. Although the pilot had been successful, during the national scaling up strategy development workshop there was recognition by the MOH that there was a need to undertake a second set of testing in a few facilities that were more characteristic of the public sector settings in which expansion was to take place and to observe closely what happened without additional inputs.

Lesson 4: Link scaling up to national health sector reform and seek other ways to institutionalize the innovation

Although very innovative, the Stronger Voices project in Kyrgyzstan was initially tested with inputs that proved difficult to replicate at scale. The project, which sought to strengthen both demand for and supply of quality SRH services, was scaling up from initial pilot villages on the basis of intensive village-level training from national level Ministry representatives. The approach was both unsustainable and unlikely to yield real large-scale impact. As a direct result of the scaling up strategy development workshop, plans were made to link the project with national health sector reform and financing mechanisms already underway; to join forces with related community interventions funded by other donors; and perhaps most importantly to shift from a village to a district-wide focus that involved local government authorities. As part of this effort, plans were made for the project-related training to be integrated into national training programs.

A much fuller presentation of lessons about scaling up are provided in the ExpandNet/WHO document *Practical guidance for scaling up health innovations*, which is available on the ExpandNet and WHO websites. This document contains many more lessons which come from ExpandNet members' scaling up experience and from multiple literatures.

Conclusion

The major shifts in thinking and approach that resulted from these project strategy development exercises came as a surprise to the country teams. Once the teams had a roadmap and systematic approach, it became possible to focus attention on the many actors and environmental forces that need to be analyzed and taken account of in the scaling-up strategy.

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