Integration of Responsible Scaling in CGIAR and Beyond

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Part of continuing work with Erin MCGuirre, Ojong Baa and Hanna Ewell

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REFLECTION SESSION

Scaling Coalition Ambitions

Currently on the website

THE COALITION

A Coalition for Effective Scaling

Brings partners together to overcome barriers to scaling agrifood innovations in the Global South, tackling what no single institution can address alone: aligning investments, knowledge, standards and partnerships.

Turning scattered efforts into coordinated action so proven solutions reach the people who need them most, faster and at scale.

The Coalition Ambitions

By adopting shared protocols, improving data use and drawing on collective expertise, the Coalition aims to:

Improve coordination and efficiency

Reducing duplication and making better use of resources

Advance evidence-based scaling

Including responsible approaches that are inclusive, sustainable and context-aware

Connect research to real-world use

Supporting end-to-end pathways from innovation to large-scale adoption

Increase system-level impact

Especially in a changing donor and investor landscape

Innovation and scaling are not neutral, and carry inherent risks!

SCIENCE

Risks in what we know and assume

Technocentric approaches
Focus on the innovation while overlooking broader systemic conditions.

Context blindness
Assume evidence and solutions can be transferred directly across contexts.

Engineering complexity
Treat scaling as predictable and linear rather than emergent and adaptive.

PRACTICE

Risks in how scaling happens

Exclusion and inequality
Scaling may reinforce existing inequalities or leave marginalized actors behind.

Misaligned values and priorities
Objectives may not reflect local realities, needs and incentives.

Insufficient adaptation and feedback
Replication can replace continuous learning, co-production and adjustment.

FUNDING

Risks in what gets prioritized and enabled

Upstream priority setting
Funders and other upstream actors may determine priorities with insufficient local influence.

Scale and speed incentives
Pressure for reach and rapid results can favor replication over adaptation.

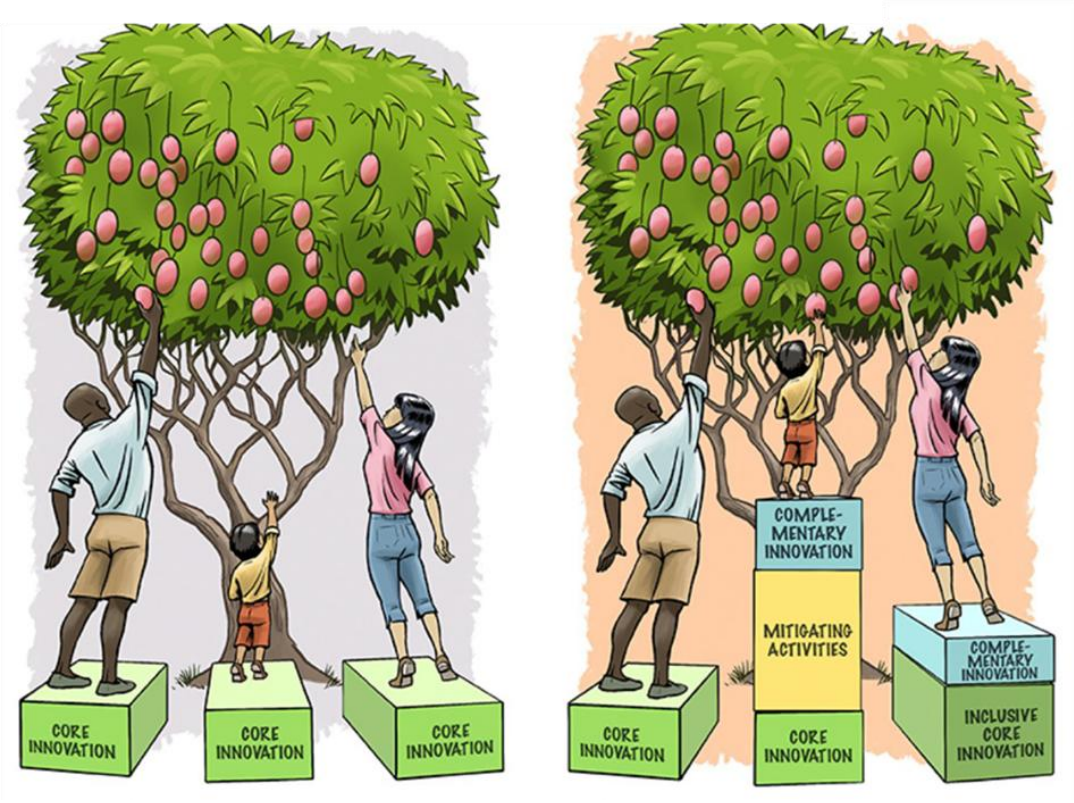
Power asymmetries
Resources and decision-making remain upstream while risks and accountability shift downstream.

**Responsible scaling means actively managing these risks —
through context-responsive science, locally owned practice and funding that enables inclusion and adaptation.**

Innovation effects on different groups of people

One-size-fits-all
The same core innovation for everyone does not deliver equal benefits

Inclusive scaling
Complementary innovations and mitigating activities help everyone reach the fruits



Responsible Innovation's six key dimensions



01 Anticipation

Considering potential impacts and unintended consequences before they happen



02 Inclusion

Ensuring diverse voices, especially marginalized groups, are part of the process



03 Reflexivity

Being self-critical about our assumptions, values and choices



04 Responsiveness

Adapting innovations as contexts and needs evolve



05 Legitimacy

Ensuring processes are transparent, fair and trusted



06 Knowledge

Generating and using evidence in ways that are relevant, reliable and accessible

Responsible scaling: commitments made in Scaling for Impact

A shared ambition, translated into concrete targets for 2030



"Responsible scaling requires an ethics of co-responsibility to ensure that intended beneficiaries capture the impacts, while negative societal and ecological consequences are minimized."

Scaling for Impact Program (2024)

Responsible scaling is not a peripheral aspiration — CGIAR has made explicit, measurable commitments to embed it across science, partnerships, policy, capacity and investment by 2030.

SCALING FOR PEOPLE, PLANET AND PROSPERITY

CGIAR | CGIAR SCALING FOR IMPACT

Scaling-out gender transformative approaches in agriculture research for development

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Gender transformative approaches (GTA); scaling innovations; agriculture research for development (ARAD)

ABSTRACT
This paper looks at the spread and socialization of gender transformative approaches (GTA) within a network of research and development organizations that focus on gender and agriculture. We conducted in-depth interviews with 20 respondents from 19 development and research organizations who work in the agriculture sector and have some interest or engagement with GTA, and we analyzed the scaling drivers and patterns within and beyond this immediate network. The findings show a rapidly growing interest in GTA across the ecosystem, especially among organizations with a strong commitment to helping achieve gender equality. GTA are scaling out across the ecosystem in a nonlinear way through both direct and indirect strategies. Factors such as the mandate and agency of an organization, as well as the presence and passion of individual stakeholders appear to be important drivers in influencing how GTA are spreading. Despite the enthusiasm and high momentum for doing gender transformative work across the organizations, this study also surfaces serious reservations about how rapidly the terminology and/or tools related with GTA are being adopted, while there remain widely varying levels of understanding, gender expertise, and funding for the type of intensive effort that is required to achieve a true paradigm shift in the sector.

ORIGINAL RESEARCH article
Front. Sustain. Food Syst., 28 September 2023
Sec. Social Movements, Institutions and Governance
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'They think we are delaying their outputs'. The challenges of interdisciplinary research: understanding power dynamics between social and biophysical scientists in international crop breeding teams

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Scaling – from "reaching many" to sustainable systems change at scale: A critical shift in mindset

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Anticipating social differentiation and unintended consequences in scaling initiatives using GenderUp, a method to support responsible scaling

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Breaking biases and building momentum for transforming agricultural research for development practices: recommendations and research opportunities

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Check for updates

Too late for responsibility? Dialogic prompts for responsible decision-making in agricultural research for development

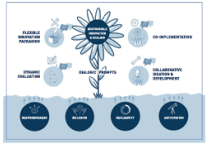
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HIGHLIGHTS

- Responsible Scaling is considered too late for agricultural research for development to achieve desirable impacts.
- The Responsible Innovation and Scaling (RIS) framework integrates anticipation, inclusion, reflexivity, and responsiveness across key innovation and scaling phases.
- To this end, selected methodologies, methods, and dialogic prompts can support researchers and practitioners to engage in responsible decision-making.
- It is nevertheless critical to attend to the socio-institutional conditions that enable and constrain RIS in practice.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



CGIAR SCALING FOR IMPACT

Our evidence base
Recent publications

Future implications on science, practice and funding

SCIENCE

FROM

Testing whether innovations "work"

TO

Understanding where, for whom, under what conditions and with what system-wide consequences they work, including trade-offs, equity effects, feedback loops and unintended outcomes

PRACTICE

FROM

Linear scale-up models

TO

Adaptive, participatory scaling: continuously reassessed, tailored to context, combined with enabling conditions, and changed or stopped when evidence shows negative effects

FUNDING

FROM

Short-term, output-driven funding

TO

Longer-term, flexible financing for experimentation, learning, collaboration, course correction and evaluating responsible scaling, not only reach, adoption or delivery targets

Our ask to SCoP members

Responsible scaling is everyone's job: researchers, funders, implementers, governments and the private sector



DO

Share a real case

Share one example where you adapted, paused or stopped scaling because of risks, so we learn from each other



CHANGE

Ask the hard question

Build "who benefits and who bears the risk?" into your scaling tools, reporting and funding decisions



TRADE-OFFS

What does it cost?

Be upfront about the costs responsible scaling adds (time, budget, engagement) and how it affects delivery speed, so they can be planned and funded



LET'S DISCUSS

Thank you

Share your thoughts in the chat