

MAINSTREAMING SCALING INITIATIVE CASE STUDIES

*The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's
Research and Innovation for Development Program
(TRANSFORM)*

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MAINSTREAMING SCALING

Scaling in the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's
Research and Innovation for Development Program (TRANSFORM)

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A Case Study for the Initiative on
Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations

For the Scaling Community of Practice

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Preface

The Scaling Community of Practice (SCoP) launched an action research initiative on mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations in January 2023. This initiative has three purposes: to inform the SCoP members and the wider development community of the current state of support for and operationalization of scaling in a broad range of development funding agencies; to draw lessons for future efforts to mainstream the scaling agenda in the development funding community; and to promote more effective funder support for scaling by stakeholders in developing countries. (For further details about the Mainstreaming Initiative, see the Concept Note on the SCoP website). The Mainstreaming Initiative is jointly supported by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the SCoP. The Mainstreaming Initiative team consists of Richard Kohl (Lead Consultant and Project Co-Leader) and Johannes Linn (Co-Chair of the SCoP and Project Co-Leader) and Larry Cooley (Co-Chair of the SCoP). MSI staff provide administrative and communications support, in particular Leah Sly and Gaby Montalvo.

The principal component of this research is a set of case studies of the efforts to mainstream scaling by selected funder organizations. These studies explore the extent and manner in which scaling has been mainstreamed, and the major drivers and obstacles. The case studies also aim to derive lessons to be learned from each donor's experience, and, where they exist, their plans and/or recommendations for further strengthening the scaling focus. The present case study focuses on the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's TRANSFORM program. It was prepared by Richard Kohl with the support of Johannes Linn. SDC funded this study as an external learning exercise in support of the development of its own strategic direction in integrating scaling, as a contribution to the Mainstreaming Initiative, and as a contribution to an example of a bilateral donor implementing the DAC Guidance on Scaling Development Outcomes.

Acknowledgements

This paper was written by Dr. Richard Kohl, Principal and Lead Consultant of Strategy and Scale, LLC. The paper is based on a review of SDC documents, interviews with several key informants drawn from SDC's Analysis and Research Section, and interviews with key informants from other research and innovation funders working in the international development and humanitarian assistance space. The authors received the support, cooperation and comments from Manuela Bärtschi, Odile Robert, Jonathan Demenge, and Martina Schmidt. Their input and generosity with their time is gratefully acknowledged. Nonetheless the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this publication remain those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of these individuals, the Scaling Community of Practice, nor the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, its Board of Directors, or the Swiss Government.



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Executive Summary

This paper is a study of the mainstreaming¹ of scaling within the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) research and innovation for development program. It focuses on the TRANSFORM program which is funded and coordinated through SDC's Analysis and Research Section (A&R). This study complements and draws on a two-year "action-research" initiative on the part of the Scaling Community of Practice (SCoP) to study mainstreaming scaling in international development funder organizations.

When the SDC first initiated TRANSFORM in 2020, there was little emphasis on integrating scaling into its design, contracting and implementation. While this study devotes some attention to the extent to which scaling has been integrated into TRANSFORM, the study is primarily forward looking. Its goals are to make recommendations to A&R as to how it can further integrate scaling into its funding and projects and strengthen the link between research, innovation and impact at scale or scaling. The study focused on providing evidence and recommendations on:

1. The TRANSFORM programs' main achievements, including good practices, strengths, opportunities and successes as well as main challenges related to scaling.
2. What it takes to bring research results to optimal scale (defined below), necessary preconditions, enabling factors, good practices and challenges and traps.
3. Best practices and support mechanisms (incl. steering structure and selection criteria) found in other research and innovation funders in the development sector.
4. The design and preparation of new scaling instruments in SDC's research for development portfolio.
5. How to support research initiatives on their transition to optimal scale.

To address these questions, the authors conducted interviews with members of the A&R team and reviewed an extensive set of documents and websites about TRANSFORM and its individual partner programs and projects. To identify best practices in other research and innovation funders, and offer concrete examples to illustrate specific recommendations, the authors interviewed representatives and reviewed documents from nine comparable institutions. This included: (i) the CGIAR system; (ii) Grand Challenges Canada (GCC), (iii) France's Fund for International Development (FID); (iv) the former USAID's Feed the Future Innovation Laboratories (FTFIL); (v) Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA) and its Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF); (vi) USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV); (vii) Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC); (viii) the Global Innovation Fund (GIF); and (ix) Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA).

The report contains four sections. After the first introductory section, the second section presents definitions of key terms and identifies good scaling practices and principles in international development. These are drawn from the international literature, work by the SCoP, and the DAC Guidance on Scaling Development Outcomes. It highlights the importance of using optimal and transformational scale as definitions, integrating scaling and scalability into research from the beginning, having a clear scaling vision and pathway, localization, and financial and implementation sustainability. The rest of the paper provides a description and analysis of how scale has been integrated into

¹ Mainstreaming means systematically integrating scaling into organizational objectives, strategies, business models, operations, resource allocation, managerial and staff mindsets. Mainstreaming is not itself scaling, if done properly, it should lead to more, better and more effective scaling.



TRANSFORM and its programs and projects. The paper concludes with the strengths and challenges that TRANSFORM and its projects face in scaling and makes recommendations as to how A&R can build on those strengths and address those challenges.

The paper found that TRANSFORM had several key strengths for scaling: emphasis on optimal scale and equity, localization, an emphasis on evidence and proof of impact, and ensuring alignment with local needs and context. Some of the key recommendations are:

1. Develop a scaling vision and objectives for SDC's research and innovation approach; communicate that to current projects and integrate into future proposals.
2. Further integrate scalability criteria throughout all phases of the project or grant cycle, from calls for proposals to proposal assessment, approval, and monitoring.
3. Require research teams to include a high-level scaling vision and pathway in their proposals, and include in their partnership actors who have relationships, advocacy and other skills, and knowledge of the context at scale to create and implement a scaling strategy.
4. Provide guidance to projects on how to make trade-offs between scale/reach, sustainability/durability, narrow technical impact, and other objectives like gender equity, social inclusion, climate change adaptation, etc.
5. Provide training, coaching, and other non-financial support to current and future program managers and research teams in scaling using qualified external consultants.
6. Assist research teams in finding the next round of funding for scaling and/or hand-off, leveraging A&R's relationships with the rest of SDC, Swiss embassies and other donors and funders.

The paper notes that the TRANSFORM portfolio has a strong emphasis on gender equity and social inclusion, humanitarian and environmental issues, and many of its project's implementing partners are small, local NGOs. Because of this, standard scaling pathways and goals, e.g., through private or public sector pathways, and understandings of financial sustainability (as duration) may not make sense for many projects. Alternatives that have been developed for humanitarian innovations in conflict and other settings, such as 'transfer and adapt' may be more appropriate and are worth considering.

Finally, the paper notes that A&R's funding and staff size are smaller than that of many comparable organizations. In that context, the paper recommends that in moving forward with mainstreaming scaling, A&R give serious consideration to placing a greater emphasis on co-funding and partnerships with other funders as there are economies of scale and scope in funding and supporting innovations. This might also include contracting out some parts of the grant making cycle and providing support to grantees, such as validation of proposal's analysis and assumptions about the local context or providing training and coaching in scaling and other types of non-financial support to grantees.



Acronyms

A&R	Analysis and Research Section	IPSR	Innovation Package and Scaling Readiness
AfDB	African Development Bank	JtS	Journey to Scale (HIF program)
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa	KI	Key Informant
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	KII	Key Informant Interview
CHF	Swiss francs currency (as of this mid-March 2025, exchange rate of \$1.14/CHF)	LLD	Locally led Development (or localization)
CfP	Call for Proposals	MoH	Ministry of Health
ComBaCaL	Community Based Chronic Care Lesotho	MSI	Mainstreaming Strategic Initiative
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research	NCD	Non-communicable diseases
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
DFID	UK Department for International Development (subsequently FCDO)	OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
DIV	Development Innovation Ventures	PMC	Project Management Cycle
ELHRA	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance	RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
EPFL	Swiss Federal Technology Institute of Lausanne	SCoP	Scaling Community of Practice
ETH	Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich in English the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich	SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
ETH4D	ETH for Development program	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office	SISC	Swiss International Cooperation Strategy
FID	Fund for International Development	SNSF	Swiss National Science Foundation
FTF	Feed the Future (USAID agri-food and malnutrition/stunting program)	SOR4D	Solution-oriented Research for Development
FTFIL	Feed the Future Innovation Labs	SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
GCC	Grand Challenges Canada	TAAT	Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation
GSMP	Good Scaling and Mainstreaming Practices	TAGS	Transformation Acceleration Grants
H4H	Hands for Health or Hands4Health	Tech4Dev	EPFL Technology for Development program
HIF	Humanitarian Innovation Fund	TOC	Theory of Change
i2i	Innovation to Impact	TTS	Transition to Scale
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross	VHW	Village Health Worker
IDRC	International Development and Research Center (Canada)	WASH	Water, Waste, Sanitation and Hygiene
IFE-2-LNOB	Innovative Financing for Education to Leave No One Behind	WB	World Bank
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action		



Introduction, Background and Structure of this Report

Purpose and Objectives of this Study

This study focuses on the work of SDC's Analysis and Research Section (A&R), which is the focal point for research-related policy, strategy, and coordination, and its flagship initiative TRANSFORM. Between 2020 and 2024, SDC invested between CHF 40 and 50 million (US\$57 million)² annually in research initiatives. Their aim is to generate and disseminate new knowledge and innovative, science-based solutions. Of that total, the A&R section manages 20-25 percent.

Launched in 2020, TRANSFORM built on previous research investments by SDC, which evaluations had found to be pioneering, but whose actual impact could be further strengthened. TRANSFORM represents a step forward by requiring that, in addition to academic or university involvement from both Switzerland and the partner countries, projects would include local implementing partners – NGOs, or public or private sector actors.

Upon reaching the mid-term of the TRANSFORM program, A&R recognized that implementation does not automatically include scaling and commissioned this study to assess both progress and what could be done to facilitate scaling moving forward. A&R was aware that the integration of transition to scale into TRANSFORM at its inception and during its first few years of implementation was limited. While the study assesses the mainstreaming of scaling into TRANSFORM to date, its primary focus is forward-looking. In this context, the principal objective of this study is to provide recommendations to SDC A&R on how to strengthen the link between research, innovation, and impact at scale or scaling, i.e. how scaling could be further integrated into TRANSFORM in the future. In that context, it looks to provide evidence and recommendations on:

1. The TRANSFORM programs' main achievements, including good practices, strengths, opportunities and successes as well as main challenges related to scaling
2. What it takes to bring research results to optimal scale (defined below), necessary preconditions, enabling factors, good practices and challenges and traps
3. Best practices and support mechanisms (incl. steering structure and selection criteria) found in other research and innovation funders in the development sector
4. The design and preparation of new scaling instruments in SDC's research for development portfolio
5. How to support research initiatives on their transition to optimal scale

The findings and recommendations for this paper draw primarily on two sources. First, international research on "good practice" in scaling, as found in the published literature and particularly the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Guidance on Scaling Development Outcomes³ and Scaling Community of Practice's (SCoP) Scaling Principles.⁴ Secondly, the experience of other innovation funders

² Financial information in this paper is quoted in CHF and US\$ for the convenience of the reader, and the country of the donor where appropriate. As of this writing in April 2025, the \$/CHF exchange rate has fluctuated between \$1.08 and 1.19/CHF. The conversion rate of \$1.14/CHF

³ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/dac-guidance-on-scaling-development-outcomes_621810cc-en.html

⁴ <https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/wp-content/uploads/bp-attachments/8991/Scaling-Principles-Paper-final-13-Dec-21.pdf>



making investments in international development and humanitarian assistance.⁵

The SCoP Mainstreaming Initiative

This paper is one of a series developed for the Mainstreaming Strategic Initiative (MSI)⁶ of the SCoP.⁷ The SCoP provides a platform for knowledge exchange among experts and practitioners on approaches to scaling up development interventions, for developing partnerships, and for championing the idea that scaling up development impact is critical for achieving global development aspirations, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate change aspirations.

Launched in spring 2023, the MSI is a two-year “action-research” effort to study mainstreaming scaling in international development funder organizations. The purposes of this initiative are to: (i) assess progress in mainstreaming to date; (ii) develop lessons learned; and (iii) disseminate those lessons to encourage and inform further mainstreaming by interested organizations. In its first year, the MSI produced a set of background papers,⁸ thirteen case studies,⁹ and an interim Synthesis Paper and Policy Brief.¹⁰ Based on the positive assessment of the MSI, the SCoP has decided to continue the project for a second year, through mid-2025. This study of SDC’s research and innovation investments under TRANSFORM is one of the Phase II reports. It uses a methodology and approach like the one used for the cases from Phase I, adapted to the needs of the SDC, and draws on the findings and lessons of the Phase I case studies.

Structure of this Report

The rest of this report is divided into three sections. Section II provides definitions of scaling terms and concepts as well as a discussion of what is considered good scaling practice in international development. This serves as a benchmark for analyzing mainstreaming to date as well as a source for recommendations. Section III describes the TRANSFORM initiative in terms of its design and the programs and projects it has funded. It identifies TRANSFORM’s strengths and successes as well as gaps and main challenges.

Based on the analysis identified in Section III, Section IV makes recommendations as to how A&R can strengthen and scale TRANSFORM, as well as position itself to support scaling more generally in any future investments in research and innovation. It illustrates those recommendations with examples drawn from the experience of comparable institutions, broadly defined as other funding organizations that invest in research and innovation for international development and humanitarian purposes, have integrated scaling into their operations. (see the list in the previous subsection)

⁵⁵ As discussed in Annexes of this paper, this includes Grand Challenges Canada (GCC), Fund for International Development (FID); the former USAID Feed the Future Innovation Laboratories (which work in the agri-food sector) (FTFIL); Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELRHA) and its Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), USAID’s Development Innovation Ventures (DIV); Canada’s International Development Research Center (IDRC); the Global Innovation Fund (GIF); and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA).

⁶ <https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/mainstreaming-initiative/>

⁷ The SCoP was created in 2015 by Larry Cooley and Johannes Linn, initially to serve as a virtual community for scaling practitioners to exchange experience and learning about scaling in international development. Since that time, it has expanded from forty to over 4,000 members and produces knowledge products. The various SCoP reports and working papers can be found at <https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/resources/working-papers/>

⁸ <https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/resources/background-documents/>

⁹ <https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/resources/case-studies/>

¹⁰ <https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/resources/summary-reports/>



Definitions, Concepts and Good Practices

The terms “scale” and “scaling” mean diverse things to different people and organizations. This subsection briefly defines those terms and elaborates on other key concepts, definitions and good practices, with greater detail provided in several Annexes, particularly providing examples from other innovation funders. These are drawn from work on good scaling practices and principles developed by the SCoP¹¹, the International Development Innovation Alliance’s (IDIA) guidance on scaling,¹² and the recently issued Development Assistance Committee Guidance on Scaling Development Outcomes (hereafter referred to as DAC Scaling Guidance).¹³ It makes use throughout this paper of the IDIA’s six-stage scaling architecture for innovation and scaling, as presented below.

A High-Level Architecture for Scaling Innovation



This paper defines scaling as transformational as opposed to transactional scaling. Transactional scaling measures scale in terms of the number of people reached within a pilot effort or project. Rather than in proportion to the size of the problem, need, demand or challenge, it assesses progress from the starting point. Scale is used more as a description than a goal or objective; almost any reach or coverage of people/places is seen as scale no matter how small. Transactional scaling builds on a projectized view of development that focuses on disbursements, intermediate outputs, and outcomes rather than impact, hitting project goals of reach, coverage, and impact within the confines of a short-term (usually three to five year) project. Because of the limited time frame, there is usually little, or no attention paid to long-term sustainability of funding and implementation after the project ends, i.e., ensuring future scalability, let alone putting in place the systemic conditions and handing off to domestic actors who can continue to drive scaling after project completion.¹⁴

¹¹ Richard Kohl and Johannes Linn (2021) Scaling Principles. Paper Prepared for the Scaling Community of Practice. December 12. <https://www.scalingcommunityofpractice.com/wp-content/uploads/bp-attachments/8991/Scaling-Principles-Paper-final-13-Dec-21.pdf>

¹² As found in IDIA (2017) Insights on Scaling Innovation. June. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6295f2360cd56b026c257790/t/62a1d43829d380213485d4f9/1654772794246/Scaling+innovation.pdf>

¹³ OECD DAC (2024) Guidance on Scaling Development Outcomes. 17 December. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/dac-guidance-on-scaling-development-outcomes_621810cc-en.html

¹⁴ In fact, in many cases projects target maximal impact for a given population based on best practices whose unit costs are so high, compared to domestic resources or ability of end users to pay, that they are neither scalable nor sustainable using domestic resources.



By contrast, transformational scaling targets long-term sustainable impact at large scale. In transformational scaling impact is measured in terms of outcomes, not outputs, and relative to the scale of the problem itself. Transformational scaling usually requires a long-term time frame – 10-15 years or more – with initial projects focusing on creating the pre-conditions for later projects or domestic actors to continue to progress along scaling pathways. It often involves a sequence of projects or a programmatic approach where systems change and greater scale proceed in a synergistic, iterative, and dialectical fashion. It sees one of three viable scaling pathways: public sector, private/commercial sector, or a hybrid combination of the two.

Financial and implementation sustainability are critical components of transformational scaling. Financial sustainability is defined as having a domestic Payer in place. While external funders may cover the costs of scaling (IDIA stage 5) and institutionalization (IDIA stage 6), for sustainability it is almost always domestic Payer or funding mechanism (or actors) that covers the ongoing costs of the intervention's implementation. Viable funding mechanism can be fiscal resources for public sector pathways, the consumer/end user pays in private sector pathways, or a hybrid public-private model. Doers are one or more domestic actors who have the necessary capacity (can implement at scale), capabilities (have the skills, staff and technical knowledge to implement the innovation with fidelity and impact), mandate, and incentives to be able to implement the innovation with quality, fidelity and impact at large scale. In most cases, non-profits dependent on donors, philanthropy, or charitable contributions are not viable funding models unless they have earned income, i.e., are social enterprises.¹⁵

Optimal Scale. Central to the concept of optimal scale is the idea that scale is not the only or even the primary objective of scaling. (For purposes of clarity, in the rest of this paper the narrow concept of scale, in terms of either numbers of people or places covered, will be called “reach” or the “breadth” of impact. Impact on the problem being targeted, e.g., food insecurity on the part of small farmers, will be called the “technical impact” or “depth” of impact.) It recognizes that other objectives may be equally or more important than reach or technical impact, such as equity and especially gender equity, environmental sustainability, social inclusion,¹⁶ addressing climate change, or alignment with local priorities and culture. It also notes that scaling can have unintended consequences and those need to be attended to. Thus, in optimal scale there are tradeoffs between different objectives – given limited resources not everything can be achieved with one innovation, program or project. In application of optimal scale, it is important to make explicit exactly what the priorities and tradeoffs are.

Because of the emphasis on sustainability and social inclusion in optimal scale, in most cases this requires a transformational approach that specifically addresses those issues. The exceptions are where the transactional investment fully addresses the problem and does so sustainably. That is possible but uncommon because sustainability and social inclusion require having an external environment that is well suited to support the innovation, i.e., a supportive policy enabling environment and domestic funders and implementers are available who have the resources and capacity to continue to implement and grow the reach or coverage to the size of the problem. In most low and low-middle income countries in the Global South, that is not the case and so successful transformational scaling will require some investment in systems changes such as policy reform, capacity building, and possibly reducing the unit cost of the innovation while retaining impact to affect scaling. In middle income countries with stronger budgets, governance, and institutions, e.g., much of Latin America, systems strengthening is less often required.

In the rest of this paper, scale is defined as transformational and optimal scale – targeting the challenge

¹⁵ For humanitarian interventions, where the need is often in places where neither a public nor private funding model is viable, is more complex.

¹⁶ SDC centers gender and social inclusion (GESI) in all of its work, and therefore GESI is one of the impacts that must be taken into consideration in setting optimal scale objectives for TRANSFORM.



in proportion to the size of the need, looking to continue scaling over a long time horizon, integrating systems change to address constraints to future scaling, and make clear and explicit tradeoffs between reach, technical impact, and other objectives.

In addition to transformational and optimal scale, it is important to integrate internationally recognized good scaling and mainstreaming principles and practices (GSMP). The paper applies GSMP derived from the SCoP, IDIA, DAC, publications in grey literature and peer-reviewed journals, and the experience of other innovation funders. A summary of GSMP is presented in Box 1.

Box 1. Good Scaling and Mainstreaming Practices and Principles

1. **Scaling needs to be at the core of an organization's objectives and championed by organizational leadership.** Incorporate scaling into organizational strategy, integrated into institutional policies and operational procedures, and adequately funded.
2. **Build scaling in from the beginning** – integrating scaling into projects into design, research, prototyping, piloting and proof of concept, as opposed to waiting until proof of technical impact has been reached or a project is near completion.
3. **Have a clear vision of what sustainable impact at scale looks like** (from the beginning) – expected impact, scale or scaling potential and who Doers and Payers will be.
4. **Apply scalability criteria and assessments throughout the project or grant making cycle.** This includes integrating scalability criteria in calls for proposals; proposal evaluation, improvement, and approval; project monitoring and evaluation; and, in general, decisions as to whether, what, where, and how a project or intervention should be scaled.
5. **Integrate (and fund or otherwise support) relevant systems** change that address constraints and obstacles to sustainable impact at scale, such as to the policy enabling environment, public sector and civil society institutional capacity, gaps or weaknesses in market systems and value chains, and public, cultural or social norms, beliefs and attitudes.
6. **Start with and regularly update a scaling vision and strategy** that: (i) identifies what sustainable impact at large scale would look like; (ii) makes explicit tradeoffs between reach, technical impact, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), and other objectives (optimal scale); (iii) outlines a preferred scaling pathway; and (iv) specifies who will play the intermediary role – funding and implementing going to scale and institutionalization (IDIA Stages 5 and 6).
7. **Continually develop and use evidence on scalability and progress on scaling** throughout the research, innovation and scaling pathway and using that evidence on decisions about what, where, how and whether to scale. Integrate local preferences and the needs of potential Doers, Payers, and other stakeholders to support advocacy, marketing and communications.
8. **Mainstream localization and locally led development (LLD)** into all aspects of scaling. Localization is foundational to scaling and should be integrated into all stages. LLD describes an ongoing development process where local actors have agency, and preferably take the lead, in framing, designing, delivering (including control over funding), accounting or/and learning, with or without the support of international development co-operation. That process should be inclusive of various stakeholders, especially targeted populations and in-country government partners, and enable these and other local actors to express competing voices and find common ground. It should ensure that solutions to problems are not only needed but wanted and demanded. GESI LLD is foundational to scaling.



9. **Integrate partners into scaling strategies at all levels to supplement the resources of core funders and lead partners.** As stated in the DAC Scaling guidance: "Bring in partners that can take on distinct roles and responsibilities for the long-term: as funders, implementers, intermediaries, or advisors. [...] Assess and strengthen capabilities of in-country partners to maintain operations of the innovation or intervention at scale over time." p. 8
10. **Fill or support the intermediary function.** The intermediary function is the role to lead, drive and facilitate scaling through IDIA scaling stages 5 and 6, scaling and institutionalization. The functions of the Intermediary are, among others: (i) funding and fundraising; (ii) investment packaging and placement; (iii) capacity building and institutionalization; (iv) organizing and managing partnerships for scaling; (v) advocacy, marketing, knowledge dissemination and awareness raising; (vi) convening; (vii) change management; and (viii) systems strengthening. If neither the innovation funder nor the research and innovation team are able or willing to play this role, then another organization or partnership needs to be identified to play that role.

Scaling and the TRANSFORM program

This section describes SDC's TRANSFORM program and the extent to which scaling, especially transition to scale, has been integrated into TRANSFORM.

The TRANSFORM program

Overall Goals, Approach and Specific Investments

The TRANSFORM program aims to bring research and practice closer together and at making use of research results on a larger scale. Within that overall objective, TRANSFORM has three major goals. These are:

- To **generate transformative knowledge and technology** that contribute to sustainable development in the global South
- To **foster utilization of research-based knowledge, technologies, and innovation** in development policies and interventions, through engaging implementing partners from the onset of research projects
- To **enhance scientific skills** and know-how in conducting transformative and transdisciplinary research on complex development challenges

TRANSFORM contains two sets of workstreams: a set of partnership programs jointly funded with Swiss research institutions and several flagship projects. Each partnership program is led by either a Swiss university or research institution. Each partnership program in turn funds and provides in-kind support for multiple, individual projects through their own calls for proposals. Similarly, the flagship projects were selected through an open call for proposals (CfP) managed by SDC in 2020.¹⁷ The programs and projects are summarized in Box 2 below.

¹⁷ The call for proposals was open to all sectors or thematic issues and all countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Initial project grants were for five years and with the maximum SDC contribution being CHF 1 million annually (US\$ 1.14 million), or CHF 5 million total (US\$ 5.7 million). Grants had to be co-financed, with SDC funding a maximum of fifty percent of the total budget. Ultimately, SDC selected four projects for support



It is beyond the scope of this paper to carry out an in-depth review of the scalability of the four TRANSFORM flagship projects or the three partnership programs. This case study looks at the TRANSFORM instruments in general (e.g., call criteria) - not the individual projects. The analysis of these instruments serves as the basis for the findings and recommendations provided in Section IV.

Box 2. TRANSFORM flagship projects and joint partnership programmes

Flagship Projects

AgriPath

AgriPath aims to bring sustainable agriculture to scale by identifying and promoting promising pathways for digitally supported agricultural advisory services that effectively and efficiently empower female and male smallholders to make informed decisions and sustainably increase their agricultural productivity, income, and climate resilience through the uptake of sustainable farming practices. It aims at filling the gap of scientifically validated evidence in that field and investigates different delivery models for digital advisory services (DAS), trying to understand which has most impact on the scaling-up and adoption of sustainable agriculture practices.

ComBaCaL

The Community Based Chronic Care Lesotho project (ComBaCaL) combines research excellency from Switzerland and Lesotho to validate an innovative e-Health prevention and care model for non-communicable chronic disease (NCD) in health facilities and communities in rural Lesotho and beyond. The project assesses the value of an innovative and effective community-based health care model and how this improves NCD prevention and care, as well as related social and economic development in low resource settings by reducing avoidable morbidity and mortality of people at risk of NCDs.

Hands4health

Hands4health tests new water efficient hand washing technologies and promotes a holistic approach to hand hygiene, water quality and sanitation. The project works in primary health care facilities and schools not connected to a functional water supply system. It assesses how innovative WASH interventions, combined with systematic behavior change measures, can increase water use efficiency, reduce costs and ensure that hand hygiene behavior norms are followed by all user groups. Moreover, the project aims at improving the health of staff, patients, visitors and students in health care facilities and schools by avoiding the transmission of communicable diseases through improper and non-consistent hand hygiene.

IFE-2-LNOB

The Innovative Financing for Education to Leave No One Behind project (IFE-2-LNOB) assesses specific innovative financing mechanisms such as impact bonds and social lending schemes with regards to their effectiveness and cost efficiency towards quality education of marginalized children and young adults. The project assesses if impact bonds and the social lending scheme for education are more efficient and effective, and, based on solid scientific research, tries to influence the related global policy dialogue. Therewith, IFE-2-LNOB aims at more and better use of financing towards inclusive and equitable education as impact bonds and the social lending scheme shall be attractive for donors, governments and impact investors.

Joint Partnership Programmes

SOR4D

The Solution Oriented Research for Development programme (SOR4D) is a joint funding instrument by the SDC and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Building on experiences and



lessons learnt from previous joint programmes, SOR4D aims to foster needs-driven, transdisciplinary research that generates actionable knowledge, innovative solutions, and transformative approaches to advance sustainable development and poverty reduction in the least developed, low-, and lower-middle-income countries. The programme supports equitable partnerships between researchers in Switzerland and the Global South, along with implementing partners, to conduct research that responds directly to local challenges. By focusing on evidence-based solutions, SOR4D enables their delivery, testing, and implementation at the local level, ensuring real-world impact and long-term sustainability.

ETH4D

The ETH for Development program (ETH4D) is a university-wide effort by ETH Zurich to deepen its commitment for the SDGs. It seeks to harness technological innovation alongside a deep understanding of human behavior and environmental contexts to develop impactful solutions that improve the lives of people living in poverty. It supports research and learning that combines diverse knowledge and skills from engineering to the social sciences, from the natural sciences to the humanities, from scientists to citizens, and from research to practice, and connects researchers across disciplines with civil society, industry, and policymakers to co-create knowledge and drive societal change. A key focus of ETH4D is to educate the next generation of global changemakers, equipping engineers and scientists with the skills and mindset to design, implement, and scale transformative innovations with a global perspective.

Tech4Dev

Tech4Dev is an international cooperation acceleration program developed by École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in collaboration with the SDC. Its main goal is to foster research and innovation that contributes to the SDGs in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It catalyzes cross-sector collaboration and matches technological innovations from EPFL Laboratories with development needs identified by NGOs and local stakeholders willing to co-create solutions that address global challenges such as climate change, healthcare, and energy access. The program emphasizes human-centered design and provides funding and support to help projects move from an idea to real-world impact.

Integration of Scaling into TRANSFORM call for Flagship Projects

In terms of scaling, TRANSFORM expected that the programs and projects would produce: “research-based innovation with tangible results in the next three to five years” that would “facilitate the validation of research findings and up scaling.” [emphasis added] However, at the time of its design in 2019-20, beyond this mention, TRANSFORM did not frame its goals or approach as one of innovation leading to scaling and thus any analysis needs to recognize and acknowledge this up front. Nonetheless, the CfP for the individual flagship projects had several requirements that were relevant to scaling. First, projects had to include both an in-country research institution and one or more implementing partners that had a pre-existing presence on the ground. Implementing partners could be from the public or private sector or civil society – NGOs or social enterprises. This was clearly an improvement on past research investments that had often not led to either adoption or implementation on the ground;¹⁸ the inclusion of local implementing partners was designed to address this gap. It also was explicitly intended to ensure that the problem being addressed was relevant to the local context, and that there was local need for any solutions developed. This was to ensure, among other things, that neither the research agenda nor solutions were being developed and imposed from the Global North, and Switzerland in

¹⁸ Some of the proposals built on previous research that was financed going back to 2014-2015, and at that time it was pure research with no implementing partner.



particular. Thus, localization or LLD - a foundational GSMP - has been a core component of TRANSFORM from its inception.

Second, project proposals were required to conduct impact evaluations and thus provide evidence that could be used as proof-of-concept. Generating evidence through impact evaluations and being evidence-based is also a foundational GSMP.

Finally, the proposals were expected to produce research papers and other outputs that would be relevant to local audiences, particularly policy makers, and serve as the basis for awareness building, dissemination and policy dialogue. To the extent that there was a scaling strategy and pathway, it seems that there was a presumption that many research solutions would scale through a public sector pathway. The hand-off or exit strategy would consist of a combination of publications and other knowledge products, dissemination efforts, and most of all, policy dialogue.

While these aspects of projects and programs did lay some foundation for scaling, overall scaling did not receive much consideration in either the proposals that were submitted nor how they were evaluated and approved as it was not an explicit priority in 2020 when these programs and projects were started. Most projects had small, local NGOs as implementing partners, though there were also a few larger NGOs and INGOs like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Given the small size of implementing partners, it seems likely that few of these partners of the projects funded under the three joint research programs – especially the implementing partner – had the capacity, skills, resources, or motivation to advance solutions developed beyond policy dialogue¹⁹ or the equivalent in private scaling pathways, i.e., to take the innovations at least through the Transition to Scale stage. Proposals were supposed to have a sustainability and exit strategy, but in most cases did not. Where sustainability was mentioned, it seems to have been more often used in its environmental sense than in terms of enduring benefits.

Integration of Scaling into TRANSFORM partnership programs

The three partnership programs do incorporate a few criteria and objectives in the overall design and presumably the review of individual project proposals that are relevant to scaling. These include “develop and rapidly transition technologies into adopted solutions”²⁰ and LLD via the inclusion of local partners to ensure that the problems being addressed, and the solutions being developed, are responsive to local needs.

The Tech4Dev factsheet states: “Different models of scale have been created for the projects supported by the program (local social entrepreneurship, NGOs transfer, I/O government transfer), [...] A network of scale fund is under construction.” There is also mentioned that Tech4Dev follows a “funnel” approach, in that as research projects move through various phases of research and development, only those meeting certain criteria will be funded to advance to the next stage. However, the Tech4Dev funnel stops at prototyping and does not extend to scaling, i.e., only covers the first three phases of the IDIA scaling pathway (see p. 10 above).

¹⁹ It is important to note that the general experience of scaling in international development has found that, for successful scaling through the public sector, publications and policy dialogue are usually insufficient, especially if policy dialogue is limited to the last few months of a project. Successful advocacy for scaling is most effective when grounded in a stakeholder and political economy analysis. Advocacy preferably begins early in the research process and continues through piloting and proof of concept. This not only allows research goals to be aligned with local context and the preferences of local actors but creates buy in and ownership as stakeholders are kept informed of progress and join in adaptive decision making as initial results and learning occurs. In this scaling for advocacy approach tends to be more effective than trying to “sell” an innovation at project end and implies that advocacy occurs over years, not months near project end.

²⁰ Paraphrased from Tech4Dev_TRANSFORM peer exchange factsheet.



ETH4D

As with Tech4Dev, the majority of implementing partners for ETH4D projects are NGOs; the ICRC plays a prominent role in several projects. Three projects have an identifiable public sector partner, and three or four seem to be either a social or commercial enterprise.²¹ Most of the partners are engaged in humanitarian work.

Scaling appears to be integrated into the various ETH4D projects in two ways. The primary mechanism is that implementing partner NGOs will adopt and integrate proven innovations into their own work, i.e., through an NGO scaling pathway. In this case, the ultimate scale (reach) of these projects is likely to be limited to the reach of the NGO itself and the sustainability of UN or other donor funding; with ICRC this could be quite large, with many of the smaller NGOs, less so. The other mechanism is through policy dialogue.

SOR4D

As noted above, SOR4D was designed building on the experiences of the R4D programme, specifically "... being at the service of the needs from practice and strengthen the accessibility and potential use of results in practice."²² Selected projects are funded for a three-year research phase, followed by an additional year dedicated to pilot testing and scaling initiatives to accelerate transformation. This additional year of financing are called Transformation Acceleration Grants (TAGs) and are available to "projects with demonstrated high potential for scaling-up, application, and transformation." Given this timeline, the earliest projects are currently in the research phase, and pilot testing and scaling activities are anticipated to commence in 2025.

In the meantime, SDC has funded a second round for two of the three partnership programs, ETH4D and Tech4Dev, and the next phase is planned for SOR4D. Phase II of ETH4D/Tech4Dev adds a more explicit scaling-related objective:

*Outcome 2: (i) development actors which support the scaling of sustainable solutions (Swiss and LMICs actors) are engaged; (ii) the transition of projects to the right scale actor are supported; (iii) development organizations are equipped with relevant solutions and (iv) start-ups are funded to scale innovations in the global South.*²³

Challenges and Alternative Approaches to Scaling

In listing the findings and conclusions of the analysis above, it is important to restate that scaling was not integrated into TRANSFORM's original design in any significant way, and that was equally true of the Call for Proposals and how such proposals were evaluated and approved by SDC. Rather, TRANSFORM's principal goal was to move beyond funding research to achieve at least some implementation through

²¹ ETH4D's Social Impact Pioneer Fellowship empowers entrepreneurial students and researchers to develop their technologies into viable products and services and launch a scalable spinoff company. Fellows receive coaching, entrepreneurial training, support from an ETH professor, and access to ETH infrastructure and its entrepreneurial ecosystem. A review of the social enterprises shows that almost all of them have as a "business" model donations and are not really scalable in the way this word is used in this paper. For example, Aiducation raises money from private individuals to provide scholarships for students in the Global South to attend school (see <https://www.aiducation.org/en>). Equipsent collects donations of used scientific equipment and sends them to schools, universities and other researchers in the Global South. (<https://equipsent.org/>)

²² SOR4D_Credit proposal, dated 17.08.2021, hereafter referred to as the Credit proposal.

²³ See SDC's webpage for "Technology acceleration program for sustainable development: SDC contribution to EPFL's Tech4Dev program phase II and to ETH4D phase II, 2024 – 2027." <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/southern-africa.html/content/dezaprospects/SDC/en/2020/7F10345/phase7>



the addition of implementation partners. In this, SDC has been successful.

Scaling research and solutions are challenging for most funders

Before commenting on how SDC might support scaling in its TRANSFORM program, it is helpful to briefly review the experience of other innovation funders as in most cases SDC faces similar challenges. Many innovation funders, GCC, GIF, USAID DIV, USAID FTFIL, and the CGIAR among them, have funded academics and/or other researchers, particularly experts from hard sciences, to develop solutions relevant to the SDGs and international development learned. Many concluded after several years that this was not leading to innovations being adopted, funded, and implemented at scale, let alone sustainable impact at scale. Drawing on the experience of these funders, the lessons learned are described in Box 3 below.

Box 3. Challenges in scaling research-generated solutions in international development

- 1. Incentives for researchers usually don't include impact at scale.** For most academics and other researchers their primary incentives are publications in peer-reviewed journals, which are the primary basis for promotion, remuneration and professional status, not scaling. Left to their own devices, they do not prioritize implementation or adoption, let alone scaling.
- 2. Research design, piloting, and proof of concept don't include scalability criteria.** Researchers focus on developing technical solutions to problems, but unless explicitly encouraged and incentivized to do so, they do not take include adoption or scalability criteria in their design.
- 3. Belief that proof of concept – effectiveness – is not only necessary but sufficient** to engender adoption and scaling. Because of this, most researchers do not generate evidence relevant to policy makers and end users, such as costs of implementation and institutionalization.
- 4. Research grants do not contain financing for scaling.** While in many cases solutions can be developed at costs in the CHF/\$100,000s, moving further on the scaling pathway, at anything beyond local scale, usually requires resources of one or more million.
- 5. Technical experts tend to underestimate the socio-economic and systems challenges to scaling** in the Global South. Thus, many innovations are a solution to a problem but not scalable.
- 6. Scaling requires building trust and relationships with local stakeholders, not just evidence.** Trust and relationships are only developed after years of working together, longer than the duration of most research projects. While including local researchers in scaling partnerships, and even as research project leads, often substantially improves the relevance of the solution to local needs and context, they haven't necessarily cultivated the necessary relationships or networks either.



Humanitarian issues and localization suggest alternative approaches to scaling

In addition to the issues raised in Box 3 about research, it is important to raise two additional issues about scaling that are found among funders and are relevant for many of the projects funded through TRANSFORM. These are: (i) challenges to scaling solutions, projects and programs that address humanitarian rather than development challenges, and (ii) the issue of localization or locally led development and contextualization.

Humanitarian Issues

For solutions that address humanitarian issues, it is often the case that traditional public and private scaling pathways are not viable since their financial sustainability requires adequate public funding or business models. Outside of corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, most private sector actors are not willing to support scaling of solutions that are not profitable. CSR resources are usually small as compared to the size of the problem and therefore neither a viable nor sustainable source of funding; India may be an exception where firms are required to invest two percent of profits in CSR. Turning to public sector pathways, the greatest need for humanitarian solutions is in fragile, failed, or conflict solutions where governance, implementation capacity and fiscal resources are extremely limited or non-existent. In such cases scaling will have to occur through either large, humanitarian INGOs, networks of community level NGOs – both relying on donor funding or other forms of charity – or through long-term efforts to change social attitudes, such as social movements.²⁴ This suggests that A&R may wish, at least in these cases, to eliminate sustainability from its criteria for scaling.

Localization and scaling

Most of TRANSFORM's implementation partners are NGOs, and in many cases small, local NGOs working at the local community level. This brings with it a great advantage in terms of their knowledge of the local context and their trust and relationships with local communities. Because of these characteristics, these actors not only tend to prioritize and integrate issues like gender equity, social inclusion, and addressing marginalization and vulnerability, but are effective at addressing them, perhaps because they focus on empowering local communities. Finally, working through these types of actors ensures that innovation and project designs are neither being imposed by institutions based in the Global North, nor reflective of post-colonial legacies or power imbalances, nor introducing solutions that are inappropriate for the local environment. All of these issues are aligned with core values and principles of SDC and what it funds.

With all of these advantages comes a downside in terms of scaling, which is that innovations designed for a specific local context may not be easily replicable in other contexts as they tend not to be either designed or tested for external validity, even within the same country. This is particularly true for large, diverse, often Federal countries like Brazil, India, or Nigeria, countries with many different tribes and ethnicities, or of widely varying climates and agro-ecological zones. Thus, it is uncertain whether the solutions developed at the community level are relevant or applicable to much larger scale, such as regional or national, or would be equally effective in diverse contexts. This challenge of what might be characterized as excessive contextualization was noted in both the GIZ mainstreaming study as well as a

²⁴ Changing social norms, attitudes and behaviors, and building social movements are equally valid mechanisms for affecting large scale change and can also create a conducive and receptive environment for scaling. See the figure in Annex III, from the INGO CARE.



forthcoming study of scaling of innovations by the World Bank.²⁵ Similarly, as noted earlier in the discussion of Optimal Scale, attention to GESI and other similar priorities, principles, and values can come with a trade-off between those priorities and scale and impact. It is not the place of this paper to comment or recommend where that trade-off should be made – that is up to SDC and its grantees – except to encourage that it be made consciously and explicitly.

Finally, and closely related, is whether small, grassroots, community-based, local NGOs see scaling to other regions or nationally as part of their organizational mission and vision. Even if they do, they often lack the advocacy and marketing skills, relationships and networks, understanding of national political economy and enabling environment, status and legitimacy, and convening power, necessary for scaling at large scale.

Alternative approaches and pathways for optimal scale

If projects are not scalable through traditional public or private pathways, then it is important to explore alternatives. One such alternative that has been developed in the last few years primarily for humanitarian interventions is a more grassroots, community-to-community form of horizontal scaling called “transfer and adapt” or an approach that is particularly useful in low resource and governance settings called “Innovation as System” (see Annex IV for a brief description).²⁶ “Transfer and adapt” favors contextualization, customization and local ownership and empowerment rather than achieving large reach or scale; in most countries there are too few NGOs with the necessary capabilities to achieve large scale. This approach is not likely to achieve big numbers or geographic coverage (the breadth of scale) in large part because there are no economies of scale in this approach, and scaling is time, resource, and effort intensive. Nor is it financially sustainable in a traditional sense. Nonetheless, scaling through these approaches could have substantial impact on a smaller scale. In this regard, it would be helpful for A&R to clarify what it means by “optimal scale” and whether it includes these alternative scaling pathways.

The rest of this paper does not include these approaches; it applies the definitions, scaling practices, and principles and approaches set out in Section II. Based on the discussion above, those definitions, principles, criteria, and frameworks may be to some extent inconsistent or incompatible with the goals, objectives, and approach of SDC, A&R, and TRANSFORM.

²⁵ See Richard Kohl (2025 forthcoming) Scaling in Innovations in the World Bank: Enabling Factors, Constraints, and Recommendations for Support and Future Analysis. SCoP Mainstreaming Study.

²⁶ Key Informant Interview and Email communications with Dan McClure. McClure is the former chair of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund's Advisory Board and is actively engaged with aid sector programs addressing cutting-edge issues such as scaling, localization and dynamic collaboration-building. See his work and with co-authors: Dan McClure and Jennifer Wilde. (2024) Do Bigger Things. Fast Company Press; Jennifer Wilde and Daniel McClure (2021) *Humanitarian innovation: the next step for greater impact*. Centre for Humanitarian Leadership. Working Paper 016, Deakin University, Australia. July; McClure, D. & Gray, I. (2015). *Engineering scale up in humanitarian innovations missing middle*. Proceedings of the Fifth IEEE Global Humanitarian Technology Conference. Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Piscataway, New Jersey, 114–122. such as: <https://medium.com/hea-learning-series/what-do-we-know-and-what-have-we-learned-about-scaling-humanitarian-education-innovations-d91094fdade1>. See also Rush, H., Marshall, N., Bessant, J., & Ramalingam, B. (2021). “Applying an ecosystems approach to humanitarian innovation.” Technological Forecasting and Social Change. Vol. 165, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120529>.



Strengths, Challenges, and Recommendations in Scaling

Given the general challenges of scaling research, and the fact that scaling was not built into TRANSFORM when it was first designed in 2019-2020, it comes as no surprise that there was limited integration of scaling into its projects and programs. However, the TRANSFORM design and implementation of its programs and projects do have several strengths, as well as challenges and gaps, relevant to scaling. This section assesses those strengths and challenges for a selected set of Good Scaling and Mainstreaming Practices. For each topic, the section offers recommendations for future action and illustrates those recommendations with examples from comparable innovation funders. (A list and brief description of the comparable innovation funders referred to in this paper is presented in Annex V.) Before looking at specific issues and recommendations for A&R and TRANSFORM, this section discusses the implications of A&R's staff size, funding, and organizational capacity for scaling.

SDC and A&R have limited capacity and human and financial resources in comparison to many other innovation funders. Most of the comparison funders have budgets of more than \$20 million, in the \$20-40 million range.²⁷ By contrast, the TRANSFORM budget is roughly \$11 million annually. Similarly, A&R has a relatively small staff, not all of whom work full-time. The resources and capacity of A&R are critical in considering which of the recommendations made below it chooses to adopt. There are several solutions to this challenge. These include:

- engage in co-funding and close partnerships with other funders, leveraging, for example, their capacity to develop scaling criteria, tools and guidance, and conduct due diligence on the ground;
- focus on a limited number of sectors and locations;
- contract out some functions, such as providing in-kind support to project teams; and
- have limited goals and objectives for scaling, especially sustainability.

It is the recommendation of this paper that A&R pursue a combination of all these approaches, with greater use of partnerships, narrower focus, contracting out, and less ambitious goals being the most important. The reader is advised to keep these issues in mind in reviewing the rest of this section.

Integration into Vision, Mission, and Strategy by the Organization's Leadership

It is a good scaling practice for an organization to clearly articulate how scaling fits into its vision, goals, and operational strategy. The same is true for scaling a project, an innovation, or any type of intervention.

Assessment

A&R itself is committed to scaling and has the support and buy-in of its director and staff for scaling. The next step is for A&R to be more explicit as to what its role is in scaling and develop clear objectives for scaling, i.e., what the expected aggregate scale and impact is of TRANSFORM.

²⁷ See Dylan Matthews (2023) "The US foreign aid budget could do a lot more good. This House bill wants to force it to." *Vox*, April 25, https://www.vox.com/2023/4/25/23692700/usaaid-foreign-aid-joaquin-castro-young-kim?utm_source=chatgpt.com



Recommendations

This paper recommends that A&R should consider developing its vision, strategy, and concrete objectives for scaling in TRANSFORM and other future research and innovation funding initiatives, at least in terms of what outcomes it will support through TTS and how it will measure success through that stage if not beyond. Examples of visions for DIV and FID are:

Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) is USAID's open innovation program that tests and scales creative solutions to any global development challenge. DIV's portfolio is made up of grant awards that finance evidence-based, cost-effective, sustainable, and scalable business models, products, behavioral interventions, applied research, and replications of proven innovations²⁸ [emphasis added]

The Fund for Innovation in Development aims to support promising ideas with high potential for impact against poverty and inequality, rigorously evaluate their effectiveness and accelerate their deployment on a larger scale.²⁹

Clear, Widely Held Definition of Scale and Scaling Objectives

Assessment

A major strength of A&R's current approach to investments is its use of optimal scale as its approach to scaling, particularly emphasizing the importance of GESI, and related issues like localization. All TRANSFORM investments explicitly recognize and integrate GESI, with many of the projects targeting those issues as their primary focus. The same is true for alignment with the SDGs. The understanding that scaling is important has been transmitted to existing programs and projects and is expected to be fully integrated in the next round of funding under TRANSFORM.

A&R has been less clear on what is meant by scaling in terms of the expected size or reach of impact or what is different about scaling as opposed to older concepts like research into practice, and what tradeoffs it expects to make between reach and impact versus what might be called equity objectives like GESI. Many of the original proposals and their targeting of knowledge products to be used in policy dialogue seem to reflect these older and less ambitious approaches. In this regard, it is worth quoting from IDRC's Scaling Playbook:

Scaling impact requires mechanisms and varied knowledge sources that can move research back and forth along this spectrum. [...] Scaling [...] moves beyond targeting knowledge users in a specific context and instead considers the full range of Knowledge translation and scaling initiators, enablers, competitors, and impacted who will support or hinder downstream results of the innovation. In essence, scaling moves researchers' mindsets beyond outputs or solutions (often described as outcomes) and towards impact. Knowledge translation is about moving research generated knowledge into action. Scaling is how we amplify, distribute, sustain, and at times de-scale, the impact of these actions.³⁰

In terms of objectives and tradeoffs, A&R has yet to define success in terms of scaling for TRANSFORM, given that it has only the resources to at best support innovations through the stages of policy dialogue and Transition to Scale (TTS).

²⁸ [DIV at a Glance](#) accessed 4 April 2025

²⁹ [Home | Fund for Innovation in Development \(FID\)](#) accessed 4 April 2025

³⁰ [Price-Kelly, Hayley, van Haeren, Leonie and McLean, Robert](#) (2020) Scaling playbook : a practical guide for researchers. IDRC, Canada. <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/91bd5b2d-7ddd-41db-81a6-bcd80345bf1f/content> p. 4 ff



Returning to optimal scale, a key principle is that funders and grantees need to make explicit what their scaling vision is in terms of its multiple, diverse impacts. Impact starts with reach/breadth, technical impact (depth) and durability (sustainability over time, not environmental sustainability).³¹ Within that collection of multiple impacts, IDRC strongly implies that these tradeoffs and the scaling vision should be determined in a broad and inclusive process.³²

Once again, this is a challenge that is being faced by almost all innovation funders; they only have the funding, human resources and mandate to support innovation and scaling through, at best, TTS, yet they often have been created based on the expectation that eventually some of their innovations would achieve impact at large scale. In the cases of the CGIAR and GCC, when such results are not forthcoming, even though those organizations have not supported scaling beyond TTS, they are often held responsible for the lack of results at scale. In both those and other cases, at a minimum they are doing more to track what happens to innovations they have funded after the TTS stage. In the case of the CGIAR, they have moved more aggressively to act as scaling intermediaries, not only creating partnerships with donors, national actors, and other stakeholders who can do the actual scaling, but working to manage and facilitate such partnerships on an ongoing basis.

Recommendations and Examples

This paper recommends that A&R provide guidance to current (and future) TRANSFORM projects on what its scaling priorities and objectives are and how to make tradeoffs between these priorities. This would likely be much easier and feasible on a portfolio basis, i.e., for the aggregate of all the projects that the programs fund, rather than on a project-by-project basis. Based on this guidance, the program leads can then use this as guidance as to how they allocate funding for TTS investments.

It is important to acknowledge that most innovation funders have avoided making such tradeoffs, as it is politically expedient to avoid prioritizing. Funders tacitly take an all-of-the-above approach rather than explicitly focusing on gender or marginalized or vulnerable groups even if that means they are going to reach fewer people. However, all-of-the-above means that whatever tradeoffs are made are a random result of events rather than intentional. It is not for this paper to advise A&R as to what its priorities are, only to suggest that these decisions be made consciously and explicitly.

Localization and Locally Led Development

Assessment

The greatest strength of TRANSFORM for scaling is its integration of localization or locally led development, but at the same time, as noted above, this can also be a challenge. The heavy emphasis on partnerships that include local researchers and NGOs, or at least Swiss or INGOs operating locally, has meant that the problems selected are relevant to local needs and communities, and to local context. However, when innovations are designed to maximize their relevance and efficacy in a local context, it is not clear whether they can be scaled to different contexts, or what types of adaptations might be required to do so. Adaptation can take considerable time, effort and resources - GIZ has found that this

³¹ Other types of impact include the choice or prioritization of who the end users or beneficiaries are (e.g., any potential user, only the poor, the poorest of the poor, poor women), gender equity, social inclusion, climate change, and environmental sustainability. According to IDRC, which developed the term "optimal scale," scaling "produces a collection of impacts. Impact at optimal scale balances dimensions of magnitude, variety, equity, and sustainability."

³² *Ibid*, "Optimality also raises the question of who defines this "right" scale. Numerous stakeholders, including researchers, funders, and beneficiaries, may all have different views. Considering different perspectives, and setting out a process to determine optimal scale that [local stakeholders at all levels] endorse is key to successfully scaling impact"



can take 18-24 months³³ - which is why building scaling in from the beginning is critical. If adaptation must be repeated in many new contexts, the economies of scale and scope that are often critical to making scaling financially feasible may be compromised or lost entirely.

Recommendations

As with optimal scale generally, it is up to A&R to decide what tradeoffs they wish TRANSFORM projects to make between localization and scaling. A&R and its TRANSFORM projects would benefit from clarity on how to balance the virtues and strengths of localization, with its downsides for reach/breadth and replication.

Account for System-Level Constraints to Scale³⁴

Assessment

An important good scaling practice is to identify systemic constraints and obstacles to scaling early in the project and either ensure that the intervention is scalable within existing systems and constraints, or initiate system change and strengthening actions to relieve those constraints. These systems constraints need to be at whatever the intermediate and ultimate scale has been set in the project's scaling vision, and not just at local community levels. National systems constraints can often have little impact or be invisible at local scale. If they do pose challenges, prototyping and piloting projects often have sufficient management capacity, funds, and local influence to find workarounds to address those issues. As scaling proceeds to more people and places, systemic challenges become more salient. While alignment with local systems, as discussed in terms of localization, has been central to TRANSFORM projects, systems analysis and integration of systems constraints at scale was not requested by SDC of its research partners up until this point.

Recommendations and Examples

This paper recommends TRANSFORM projects integrate systems analysis and constraints at scale into research and innovation processes if they wish to introduce scaling, similar to the political economy analysis discussed earlier. This has clear implications for the selection of implementing partners – they need to be sufficiently knowledgeable about systems at scale to inform all those items. As suggested above under inclusion and optimal scale, this means consulting with and preferably including scaling partners in TRANSFORM projects from the beginning. While such analysis can be delayed until after proof of concept or even later, the downside is that there may be proof that an innovation is effective or has efficacy, but it may not be feasible to implement at large scale for a variety of reasons, e.g., too expensive, too complicated, requires certain infrastructure, equipment or human resources like highly trained or educated staff to implement that don't exist in large numbers nationally. In that case the innovation will have to be modified to fit within financial or other constraints, and, once modified, that proof of concept or the size of impact is no longer valid. However, building in political economy and systems analysis from the beginning takes extra resources and is being invested in innovations that have yet to prove their effectiveness.

³³ Richard Kohl (2023) *Mainstreaming Scaling: Case Study of GIZ*. January.
<https://scalingcommunityofpractice.com/mainstreaming-scaling-a-case-study-of-giz/>

³⁴ In this discussion of systems, it is important to clarify that we are not referring to innovation ecosystems, which have become quite trendy for innovation funders.



Another alternative is to address systemic constraints at scale so that there is no need to adapt or modify the innovation, or the need is minimized. However, for most innovation funders whose resources at best allow for TTS grants in a range of at most a few million US dollars or Euros, their funds are insufficient to support systems change (as opposed to project funders with resources in the tens of millions).³⁵ If A&R wishes to consider integrating systems change, A&R could: (i) partner with innovation funders who have greater resources; (ii) help support their projects in finding partners to hand-off to (who can affect systems change); and (iii) integrate TRANSFORM innovations into SDC projects that do have the resources and mandate to affect systems change as far as feasible.

Integrate scaling criteria into the project management cycle combined with long-term, phased, and dedicated funding to support scaling

Assessment

TRANSFORM represents a major improvement over earlier research funding by requiring the inclusion of implementing partners in projects. Most implementing partners have solid credentials on social activism, work for basic human rights, and support a progressive development agenda. They are strong in identifying local needs, representing or at least engaging with local populations and communities, and in general utilizing participatory, inclusive, and equity-based approaches. This is aligned with SDC's emphasis on saving lives and supporting access to high-quality basic services, guaranteeing environmentally friendly and climate-resilient development, promoting peace and human rights, and integrating gender equity and social inclusion.

At the same time, many existing implementing partners appear to be unable to act as scaling agents; again, it is important to reiterate that this was not requested or expected when TRANSFORM was first designed and calls for proposals issued. Offering an explicit funnel with multi-stage funding explicitly available upfront, as discussed in the recommendations below, may help them shift to a longer-term, scaling perspective.

Recommendations and Examples

This paper makes several recommendations for integrating scaling into the project management cycle and its funding instruments.

Calls for proposals and evaluation of proposals should include scaling criteria, be evaluated on those criteria, and use similar criteria in project quality assurance and improvement and approval

This paper strongly recommends that A&R integrate scaling criteria in all phases of the project management (or grantmaking) cycle. This has been done by every comparable innovation funder surveyed. Consequently, there are many examples of scalability criteria from literature and other funders to draw upon. Some examples from these organizations and the literature are presented in Annex IX, along with recommendations.

³⁵ Some of the innovation funders reviewed for this study provide modest funding for systems strengthening such as policy reform, e.g., FID and IDRC, but not capacity building.



Adopt a funnel, stage gate, or phased approach that provides funding and support for grantees to move through at least the first 4 stages of the IDIA scaling framework. Each phase should integrate explicit scaling criteria to receive funding for the next phase.

The CGIAR, FTFIL, FID, GCC, GIF, IDRC, and USAID DIV have all explicitly adopted some form of a phased approach with scalability criteria at each stage. The CGIAR's \$200 million, five-year Scaling for Impact project (S4I) phased approach involves four phases: (1) identifying demand with potential scaling partners and other stakeholders in-country; (2) identifying innovation bundles³⁶ and packages³⁷ and scaling strategies and pathways; (3) identifying and addressing systems level scaling constraints and obstacles; and (4) operationalizing scaling into donor/country/private sector projects and partnerships i.e. IDIA stage 5.³⁸ (See the bow tie figure in Annex VI that illustrates this approach).

As noted above, USAID's agriculture bureau found that the research it was funding through its innovation laboratories - FTFILs - were in most cases not producing scalable innovations, let alone going to scale. The bureau commissioned the Soybean Innovation Laboratory to develop its Innovation to Impact (i2i) tool, which uses a stage-gate, product life cycle approach drawing on the approach of commercial seed companies. (See Annex II for the details). This tool showed extremely promising results in the first few years of piloting and prototyping.

Consider using a two-step process for proposals - concept notes and proposals – to better integrate scaling visions and strategies. Provide scaling training and coaching between the two stages.

Several funders that use open calls for proposals for research and scaling, such as IDRC and ELRHA/HIF, do so in two steps. Both organizations ask for something akin to a concept note first (ELRHA calls this strategy development) and then work with potential grantees to develop their notes into full blown proposals (ELRHA refers to this as strategy implementation). This is because both organizations have found that many potential grantees have strong technical proposals but neither understand scaling in general nor how to design and implement a scaling vision and strategy.³⁹ In addition to IDRC and

³⁶ Innovation bundles are the combination of a core innovation (such as a new seed or breed) with complementary technologies, agricultural practices, etc. necessary to achieve impact. The CGIARs Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness tool and framework (IPSR) defines an innovation bundle as the core innovation plus complementary technologies and practices necessary to achieve impact.

³⁷ Innovation Packages start with innovation bundles and add the required enabling conditions, especially supportive policy enabling environments, value chains and market systems, that are necessary to affect transformation and impact at scale in a specific context.

³⁸ S4I is not designed to implement phase four itself but does take responsibility for facilitating all four phases and convening, organizing and managing partnerships in phase 4, i.e., a partial handoff. (S4I will provide ongoing technical support and, where appropriate, policy advice during Phase 4). As such, S4I sees itself as a scaling intermediary between CGIAR researchers and scientists, and scaling partners, as can be seen in the bow-tie model it uses as an organizing framework.

³⁹ "Having a fully developed scale vision and strategy is not expected for the Phase 1 application, but successful applicants should have a high-level idea of what their pathway to scale could be (e.g., direct implementation, adoption by others, or policy or practice standards) and how they could make their innovation financially sustainable (e.g., selling directly to users, attracting mainstream humanitarian funding, or leveraging supplementary revenue streams)." The goal for ELRHA is to "support ten teams in developing scaling strategies for their innovations ... [and] then award five teams with the strongest proposals flexible funding of up to 580,000 GBP each to explore different scale pathways and refine their approach...." See ELRHA's webpage for the now completed Journey to Scale2 grants.

<https://www.elrha.org/funding-opportunities/journey-to-scale#:~:text=At%20the%20end%20of%20the%20Strategy%20Development%20phase%2C%20the%20ten,former%20grantees%20and%20humanitarian%20partners>. Accessed 8 April 2025. For the rationale behind Journey to Scale and the challenges that ELRHA and the Humanitarian Innovation Fund have identified, see their publication: ELRHA. (2018) 'Too Tough to Scale? Challenges to Scaling Innovation in the Humanitarian Sector.' ELRHA: London. https://www.elrha.org/docs/document/elrha-tts-a4-final.pdf?file_url=document/020dvn5ku14tp7qtc81ikrel3q/jun1mwvlglsyrlqkij5pgroifd0/original?content-type=application%2fpdf&name=elrha-tts-a4-final.pdf



ELRHA, both DIV and FID⁴⁰ give grants for proposal preparation (see Annex VIII for their sequence of grants and related criteria).

A&R could implement something similar to these two-step processes. This could include a combination of training project partners and/or providing coaching from scaling consultants to work with the teams to translate the concept notes into a full proposal. A&R, partnering with other innovation funders interested in supporting innovation and scaling ecosystems, could work to develop and/or strengthen qualified scaling consultants. Alternatively, like DIV and FID, it could provide grants for proposal preparation.

Project teams should include partners who can drive scaling or substantive exit strategies.

A&R needs to retain the strengths of the TRANSFORM projects' existing local implementing partners while working to integrate partners who can design and implement scaling strategies or at least plan and get to a hand-off or exit strategy (with greater depth than the current policy dialogue). Potential scaling partners should be assessed in the proposal stage on the capacity, experience and motivation of the scaling partner to advance the innovation further on the target scaling pathway.

The ability of partners to scale is critical for many innovation funders. For ELRHA it is critical that the partner act as a leader, driver, and champion of moving forward on the scaling pathway. FID looks at the "skills of the team behind it" and one of its evaluation criteria are that project teams have a "Strong understanding of local context(s), current implementation challenges and barriers to success".⁴¹ For FID, local context is not at the community level but means at the level of scale.

A more explicitly phased funding approach should be accompanied by funds to support each phase.

This paper recommends that A&R consider having multiple phases of grants, as many innovation funders do, i.e., research and development, piloting and proof of concept, transition to scale, and, if resources permit, support for scaling. Regardless of the number of phases, the purpose of and criteria for each phase scaling should be clearly specified.

DIV and FID use similar phased approaches to funding scaling. DIV has three stages of grants: Pilot, Test, and Transition to Scale as well as Evidence Generation. Having learned from DIV, FID decided to have a finer gradation, and has five stages: Prepare Grant; Stage 1 – Implementation of a pilot; Stage 2 – Impact Evaluation (or Test and Position for Scale); Stage 3 – Scaling Up; and a grant for transformation of public policies that can either be used for institutionalization of an innovation or capacity building of low- and middle-income governments to design, test, pilot, and/or scale evidence-based innovations. (The details of these stages and their criteria can be found in Annex VIII.)

GCC may be the best example for A&R to draw upon, given similar budgets and having begun its

⁴⁰ FID lists as the potential purposes for a preparation grant: "Examples of activities that Prepare Grants might support include: recruiting partner organizations who will be important to the deployment and scale of the development innovation; funding personnel or other operating expenses to develop a prototype or explore the potential of a new innovation prior to committing to a full pilot or impact evaluation; capacity development for applicant or partner organizations including implementing relevant training or developing data management systems necessary to implement the anticipated innovation; determining market demand for an innovation through population discovery interviews market studies, or other work and expenses relevant to implement an innovation" [FID CALL FOR PROPOSAL EN_maj_juillet_24_6af2d64aa1.pdf](https://fundinnovation.dev/en/uploads/FID_CALL_FOR_PROPOSAL_EN_maj_juillet_24_6af2d64aa1.pdf)

⁴¹ FID. (no date) *Call for Proposals*. P. 10
https://fundinnovation.dev/en/uploads/FID_CALL_FOR_PROPOSAL_EN_maj_mai_23_a289e38e0a.pdf



existence funding primarily research.⁴² At its inception in 2010, GCC only made “seed grants” for a diversity of health-related topics. Seed grants were to develop and test the efficacy of innovations. However, just three years later GCC “recognized a critical funding gap between the pilot stage and where innovators could access capital to scale”⁴³ that was leading its grantees to fall into the so-called “valley of death,” not getting from proof of concept to scale. In response, it created a special facility called Transition to Scale grants to address this. Since then, based on subsequent learning from the experience and needs of its grantees in scaling, it has increased the maximum dollar value, grant duration, made grants renewable, and divided TTS grants into four phases. The details can be found in Annex VIII.

Training, Guidance, and Oversight to Support Scaling (Internally and Externally)

Assessment

Almost all innovation funders and philanthropies that support scaling have found that neither researchers nor small or even medium-sized NGOs have much experience, competence, or understanding of scaling and what is involved. For those reasons, many engage in multiple stages of refining proposals and providing external coaching, guidance, and technical support to potential grantees as they move from a concept note through one or more stages of fully fleshed out proposals, revised proposals, etc. The three partnership program managers do provide some coaching or support to grantees, but it is unclear how much of this support is relevant to scaling and transition to scale in particular; it is beyond the scope of this paper to assess that or how much competency or understanding of scaling the program managers have. To date A&R has not provided in-kind support to any of the TRANSFORM projects or programs, such as building internal capacities relevant to scaling, or providing coaching. Nor has it hired consultants or consulting firms to provide that kind of support.

Recommendations and Examples

This paper recommends that A&R and its partnership programs partners engage external consultants to provide scaling support to individual program managers and potentially projects that have reached a certain stage of the funnel, and that ideally this be provided both in turning concept notes into full proposals as well as during implementation. There are several examples of diverse types of support from innovation funders, collected in Annex XI.

The Intermediary Role, Hand-Offs and Leveraging Partnerships

Assessment

Partnerships are used by innovation funders and scaling organizations to make up for gaps in their resources, capacities (reach), and capabilities (skills and technical knowledge) in scaling. For example, two innovation funders like A&R that are housed within or related to bilateral donors – FID and IDRC – have strong partnerships with AFD (France) and GAC (Canada) in terms of assessing which proposals

⁴² The information in this paragraph is drawn from the Mainstreaming Case study of GCC, which was written by GCC with guidance from the SCoP. See Grand Challenges Canada. (2023). [Scaling Up at GCC. Mainstreaming Case Study](#). Toronto. [Scaling-up-at-GCC-FINAL.pdf](#), p.6

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. xx



are worth funding (due diligence), funding (IDRC often co-funds with GAC) and handing off to support scaling (FID with AFD).

Partnerships are equally if not more important in scaling beyond transition to scale. Finding partners who can undertake both scaling and institutionalization at scale, or the Intermediary functions, and handing them off to such partners, is critical to successful scaling. Intermediary functions include help with funding and fundraising for the next stage of scaling; investment packaging and placement; and convening, advocacy and marketing; and institutionalization and change management. As can be seen, many of these functions overlap with or duplicate the types of external non-financial support many innovation funders supply (see Annex XI again), precisely because many innovation teams lack the capacity. In other words, for scaling to succeed, intermediary skills and capacity need to either be built into the innovation team if they are willing to play that role, i.e., a social enterprise, or find and employ scaling partners who can provide that support and/or play the intermediary role.

Recommendations and Examples

This paper recommends that A&R require projects to integrate scaling partners into TRANSFORM projects, as discussed above, contract out to local actors who can play the intermediary role, or clearly identify and have a strategy from inception to hand-off to intermediaries. A&R and SDC could fill some of the intermediary roles. They could assist projects in making connections to funders or implementers who can take their innovation to the next stage of scaling. This should start with SDC; to the extent possible innovations should be integrated into other SDC projects so that they can go to the next level of scale. In terms of funding, SDC has relationships with MDBs, bilateral donors, and foundations that many small local NGOs usually do not. Similarly, the Swiss government through its embassies as well as other SDC projects in the same country may be able to help TRANSFORM projects connect with relevant public or private sector actors. Finally, A&R should be willing to introduce projects to other donors.

FID is a good example of an innovation funder that uses its own relationships and that of its bilateral host, AFD, to facilitate scaling. FID works to link its grantees with governments, particularly when the innovation has the potential to influence public policy or be scaled through government programs. This connection can help ensure that successful projects are integrated into national strategies or adopted by public institutions. It also provides grantees with networking opportunities that could lead to future funding, whether through investors, foundations, or development organizations, helping them to gain visibility and attract additional resources to scale their work. Many FID innovations are taken up and integrated into AFD projects.

GCC identified a lack of expressed demand for health innovations, as opposed to need by public sector agencies, as a major obstacle to scaling. To address this, it contracts with local organizations that have the knowledge, network and relationships, and status and legitimacy to facilitate introductions to government agencies that could serve as scaling partners, usually the Ministry of Health.⁴⁴ It has also offered support to grantees in obtaining funding for scaling itself, particularly innovators who have the

⁴⁴ In Kenya, GCC has supported and tried several approaches to facilitating scaling up. For example, it supported Research for Development and Insight Health Advisors to help Kajiado and Makueni county governments to identify the challenges which could be potentially addressed by existing innovations, and then identify, assess and select appropriate innovations. It also supported the East Africa Public Sector Scaling Action Lab (PSS Lab), a group of eleven healthcare champions who help advance the demand and scale up of innovations within public health systems in Kenya and Ethiopia.



possibility of attracting impact investors or have minimum commercial viability.⁴⁵ It has also invested in a variety of impact funds as part of its strategy to crowd in investment capital.⁴⁶ In addition, GCC has supported or invested in a variety of other mechanisms to help grantees cross the “valley of death” between Transition to Scale and Scaling.⁴⁷ GCC and especially IDRC have been able to partner with Canada’s Global Affairs Canada (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and International Development) to have some of their innovations integrated into GAC projects.

This paper does not recommend that SDC invest in creating one or more “scaling” websites where innovators post profiles of their innovations, and potential users or adopters search for innovations relevant to their needs. While there are a few examples of such websites that have had some success, (there has been no systematic review of such efforts), successful cases are probably the minority of cases. One of the few successful cases has been Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), but as described in Annex XII, TAAT goes well beyond creating a virtual clearinghouse for agri-food technologies.

Generate Evidence about Scalability and Progress in Scaling

Assessment

Evidence is critical for scaling in multiple dimensions. Innovations should not be scaled, and increasingly can’t be scaled, without evidence of impact and scalability. As noted by GIF: “We invest a lot in evidence generation, [...] because Global South governments are demanding it.”⁴⁸ Evidence needs to be used in making decisions about every stage of the scaling process -- whether, what, how and where to scale. Monitoring needs to be used to track progress in scaling and iteratively adapt and modify the innovation and scaling strategy. Finally, evidence is critical for advocacy and marketing to hand-off innovations to partners who can scale, to Doers and Payers to implement and fund at scale, and for raising funding for scaling. That evidence needs to be based on the information those actors use to make decisions about adopting, scaling and financing innovations. Evidence is foundational to TRANSFORM and projects do produce quality evidence of proof of concept. Nonetheless, evidence relevant to scaling doesn’t seem to go much beyond proof of concept, i.e., effectiveness and impact, to include other factors that policy makers often consider, such as initial costs of adoption and of ongoing implementation.

⁴⁵ One of these initiatives is a partnership with the Health Finance Coalition. Together they are building a deal construction platform: “that provides tailored support to strengthen the investability of high impact health companies in Africa and then works to actively develop, structure and resource blended finance investments on their behalf. The support HFC provides spans a spectrum of activities, such as developing robust market entry and customer acquisition strategies, facilitating strategic partnership linkages, and assisting with key personnel recruitments. ...it includes a capital matching component designed to bridge the gap to scaling capital for supported ventures.” *Ibid.* p.12

⁴⁶ These include Global Health Investment Fund, Cross Border Impact Ventures and the Transform Health Fund. The first is a \$108M USD equity fund that provided financing to advance late-stage development of drugs, vaccines, diagnostics and other interventions against diseases that disproportionately burden populations in low-and middle-income countries. GCC was the anchor investor in 2012, providing a \$10M USD investment. Cross Border Impact Ventures is a \$90M CAD equity fund that invests in early growth stage transformative health-tech companies that address the health needs of women, children, and adolescents globally. The fund was incubated at GCC and spun off as a legally independent firm in 2021 with a \$5M USD investment by GCC. Transform Health Fund is a \$100M USD target blended finance debt and mezzanine fund that invests in the scale-up of high-impact health enterprises that improve access, affordability, resilience, and quality of healthcare in Africa. GCC invested \$5M USD in 2023 and was one of only a handful of investors in the catalytic layer upon first close (remaining investors in commercial layer).

⁴⁷ These have included supporting a regional platform from the Million Lives Collective to curate locally relevant scale-ready innovations from multiple funders that can be matched to demand from governments (either directly or via proxies). GCC has worked with multilateral organizations to source demand, particularly the WHO; this work has focused on oxygen, mental health and primary health care sectors.

⁴⁸ KII with GIF staff member.



Recommendations and Examples

All the innovation funders reviewed for this paper, despite their own limited resources and funding amounts, now require their projects or grantees to produce a much broader set of evidence relevant to scalability and scaling progress and to support advocacy, marketing and handoff. We strongly recommend that A&R develop, or commission the development of, a MEAL framework that includes key scaling criteria for its projects and programs. This should mirror the scaling criteria used in the proposal stage. One alternative is that A&R develop these, pilot them with its projects and programs to test their viability in practice and refine. Another alternative is that the programs and projects do it themselves, at least initially, and that A&R then facilitates a process of harmonization between its three programs and others to achieve a common framework, or at least frameworks that are at least broadly comparable and consistent with each other while not necessarily identical.

Expecting project leaders to understand these concepts merely from the publication or framework is unlikely to generate the desired results. Various innovation funders covered in this survey, such as USAID's FTFIL, found that reporting by grantees on various scaling indicators, such as readiness for scaling, did not bear up after spot checks by USAID staff. This seemed to be less to do with exaggerating progress but to a lack of understanding of what scaling readiness really means. The creation of a MEAL framework and guidance should be accompanied by training for TRANSFORM projects in application of the MEAL framework and indicators, perhaps integrated into training about scaling in general as proposed above.

Confirmation of the parallel nature of scaling criteria and what evidence needs to be generated to support scaling can be found in the approach of Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). IPA specializes in generating evidence for scaling (or not) with potential scaling partners and then engaging in policy dialogue and working with policymakers generally to support scaling. Many of the services it provides to its partners include evidence generation, and need to be done by some part of a scaling partnership.⁴⁹ In identifying what evidence is necessary, IPA believes that three elements have to be in place: (i) an evidence-based program optimized for impact at scale; (ii) a capable implementer to deliver and monitor the program with fidelity; and (iii) a favorable ecosystem to enable and sustain the program over time.⁵⁰

A second challenge for innovation funders is how to assess (and report to Boards of Directors or higher levels of government) what long-term impact at sustainable scale is being or going to be achieved, given that this is not likely to be realized for many years after their investments end. As part of setting goals and objectives for TRANSFORM's impact at scale, it would need to develop a way to measure or project that. GIF's solution, Practical Impact, was described above. Another example that may be relevant to SDC and TRANSFORM is that of GCC; like TRANSFORM, GCC has limited funding, no presence on the ground or ability to validate impact claims and lacks an internal M&E capacity. As a result, GCC developed a bespoke approach to modelling (i.e. predicting future) potential impact (lives improved through measurable improvements in health or wellbeing) resulting from the innovations that receive TTS

⁴⁹ Some of the services that IPA provides in working with its partners include: (i) Comparative cost-effectiveness analyses Adapting, (ii) piloting and testing for optimization; (iii) assessing capacity to scale with fidelity and provide recommendations; (iv) providing technical inputs in funding proposals/budget discussions; and (v) Map stakeholders and develop strategic engagement plans

⁵⁰ To support scaling, IPA collects evidence to answer the following questions: (i) Is the program right for this problem/context? (ii) Is it better than the alternatives? (iii) Can the program be adjusted without losing effectiveness? (iv) Is there capacity (at scale) to implement the program as designed i.e. with fidelity? (v) Is the program having the expected impact? (vi) Who will fund the program at scale? (vii) Are any changes to the policy enabling environment required – policy, regulations, laws, procedures? (viii) Are key stakeholders on board?



grants.⁵¹

Finally, it is important to reemphasize that for most innovation funders, their measures of success are not only impact and scale, they also very much include sustainability, especially financial. Again, referring to GCC:

GCC considers financial sustainability to be a key success factor for scaling impact. ... In the case of for-profit entities, we assess standard financial metrics but do not expect Transition to Scale-supported companies to achieve breakeven during our funding period. For non-profits, ... [financial sustainability] includes plans and opportunities for income diversification or their own income generation, increased sophistication of strategic and financial planning, and sound grant and financial management systems and controls.

GIF attempts to forecast impact using their “breadth x depth x probability of success” model applied to 10 years after project end. A detailed description of GIF’s approach is provided in Annex XIII.

Summary of Recommendations

This paper has made several recommendations for A&R to consider. To summarize, these are:

1. Establish a clear scaling vision, strategy and objectives for TRANSFORM and for A&R’s research approaches in general.
2. Clearly define what is meant by optimal scale and what A&R’s priorities are between multiple objectives, aligned with the scaling vision and objectives, especially localization versus scalability.
3. Consider expanding A&R’s vision of scaling pathways beyond public and private to include options more suited to humanitarian, non-traditional problems and alternative solutions, such as “transfer and adapt” or “innovations as systems.”
4. Use a two-step process for proposals - concept notes and proposals – to better integrate scaling visions and strategies. Provide training and coaching between the two stages.
5. Integrate scaling criteria into calls for proposals and proposal review and approval. Ensure that project teams include partners who can design and implement scaling visions and strategies and can drive scaling or exit and hand-off strategies. This includes having knowledge of the systems, enabling environment and stakeholders at target scale
6. Have projects integrate systems analysis and constraints into their research and design process.
7. Adopt a funnel or stage gate approach to scaling, providing funding at each phase of scaling with specific scalability criteria for each phase.
8. Develop scaling expertise on the A&R team and provide scaling coaching and technical support to project teams, especially in terms of multiple intermediary functions (or use external consultants).
9. Develop a MEAL framework to generate evidence of scalability, track progress through the various stages of innovation and scaling for individual innovations and projects; which can then be used by that project for policy dialogue, advocacy, marketing and communications. Once projects are collecting this kind of data, it can then be applied to an entire program’s portfolio, as is being

⁵¹ “Progress against the modelled impact is tracked through actual results reported by innovators, and the models are periodically updated to reflect actual progress and pivots on the scaling journey. As an impact-first investor, GCC requires that both the impact models and actual results on impact are based on rigorous, scientific evidence. The impact models are designed to be conservative, considering the counterfactual and the likelihood of success for each innovation.” Ibid. p. 16



done by the CGIAR, or even to the TRANSFORM portfolio as a whole.

10. Given A&R's set-up, aim to:

- engage in co-funding and close partnerships with other funders, leveraging, for example, their capacity to develop scaling criteria, tools and guidance and conduct due diligence on-the-ground;
- focus on a limited number of sectors and locations;
- contract out some functions, such as providing in-kind support to project teams;
- have limited goals and objectives for scaling, especially reach and sustainability;
- adopt only a selected number of recommendations, and phase them in; and
- make greater use of the capacity of SDC, its other projects and Swiss embassy staff.

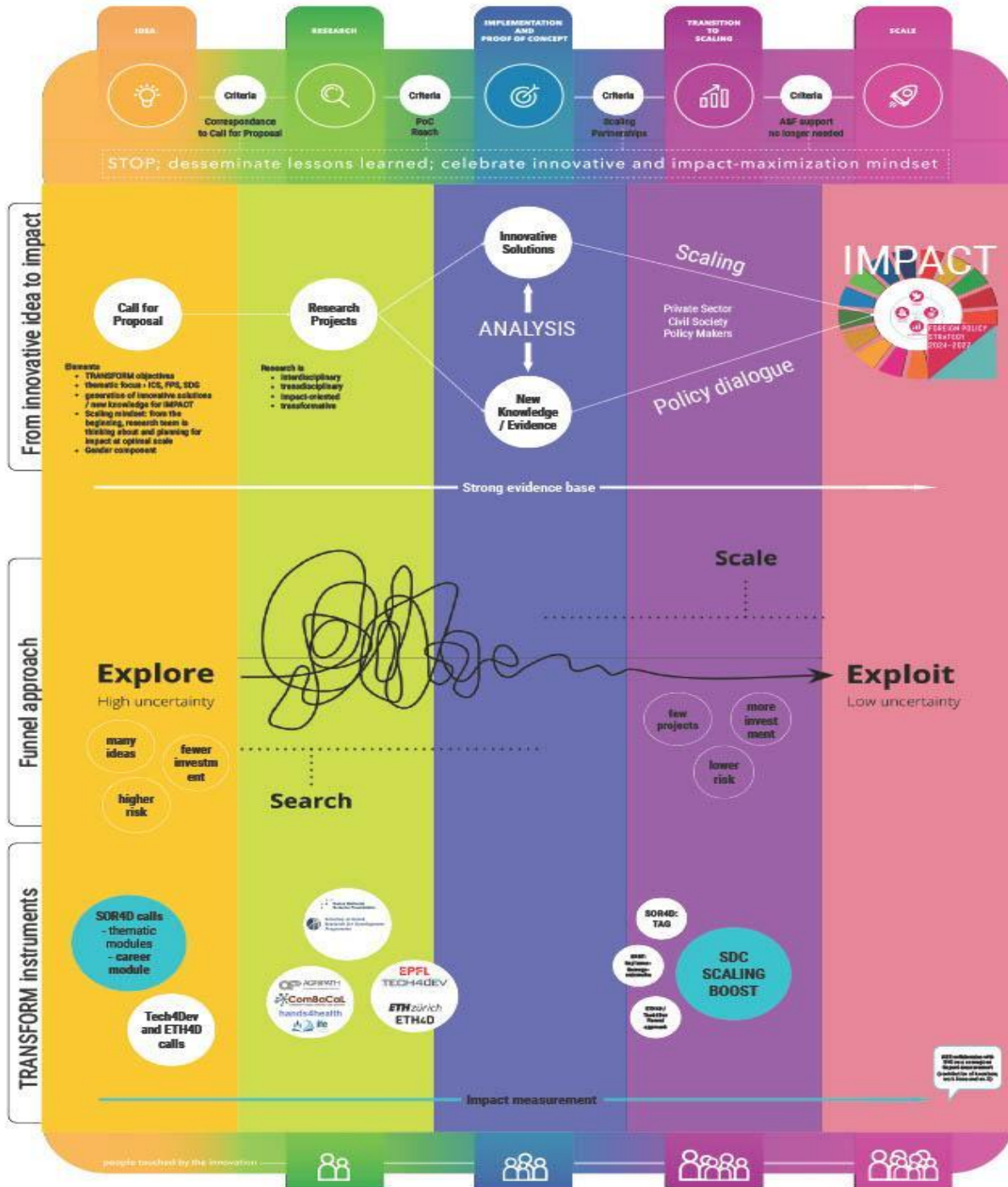


Annex I. TRANSFORM Pathway to Scale Diagram: From Innovative Ideas to Impact.



From innovative idea to impact

SDC promotes research and innovative solutions on their pathway to scale – always backed by strong evidence, and with high impact orientation



Annex II. The Experience of USAID's Feed the Future Agriculture Innovation Labs

The experience with the Tech4Dev model implemented in partnership with EFPL has similarities with the challenges faced by USAID's Feed the Future Innovation Labs (FTFIL). FTFILs were started in 2010 and the program has been funded to a total of well over \$1 billion over the last 15 years. Funding was provided to the CGIAR and major US agricultural universities with a goal of developing technologies and innovations relevant to improving the productivity and incomes of small farmers and addressing food security, malnutrition and stunting in the Global South.

Most innovations were developed in partnerships with research organizations in the Global South, inclusion in those partnerships of local implementing organizations, whether NGOs, public sector or social enterprises, was not mandated but did happen, particularly social enterprises. Over five hundred innovations were produced by FTFILs and a substantial portion were field tested and had some evidence of impact; by and large the only output produced were fact sheets and publications in peer reviewed journals. Based on a review by the USAID team, many were not scalable and very few went to any sort of scale through either public or private scaling pathways. In the mainstreaming case study of FTFILs the poor performance on scaling was attributed to several factors: (i) lack of a viable scaling partner included from the beginning; (ii) lack of a clear vision of impact at scale, including a viable business or financing model and scaling pathway; (iii) no clear identification of demand, such as in the form of a target product profile based on demand assessment; (iv) lack of any incentives for scaling on the part of academic researchers versus strong incentives to focus on publications; and (v) lack of skills, resources or interest on the part of researchers, whether in the US or Global South, to function as a scaling intermediary. Despite being wholly funded by USAID, only a small number of FTFIL-produced innovations were even integrated into FTF country projects on the ground.

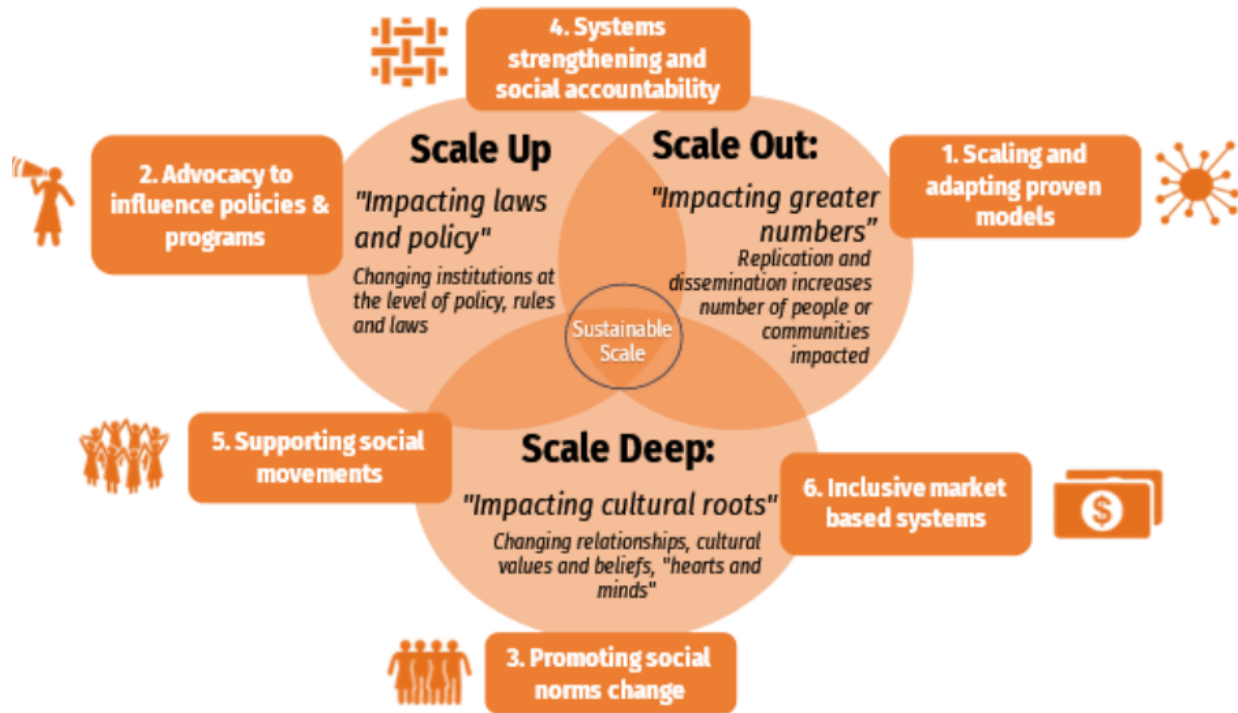
In response, USAID commissioned one of the FTFILs – the Soybean Innovation Lab – to develop an approach to innovation and scaling that could be used by Labs to systematically integrate scaling into their work. The result was the innovation to impact (i2i) framework, which drew on common practices used by commercial seed companies in product development. The stages are in the Table below.

Innovations to Impact – stages and criteria

Customer Engagement	Solution Discovery	Prototyping and Testing	Impact Planning	Launch	Diffusion
Discover the Customer	Solution Scoping	Discovering the right solution	Solution Architecture	Gap Analysis	Diffusion Theory
Customer and Customized Value	Assessment and Alternatives	Solution Build	Strategic Direction	Performing a Gap Analysis	Identifying the Target Market
Understanding the Customer's Needs	Technical Feasibility	Value Chain Structure	Mobilizing Resources		Developing Visual Identity
Assessing Customers	Operational Feasibility		Establishing Performance Metrics and Milestones		Collecting Social Proof
Selecting Customers with whom to travel	Economic Feasibility		Technology Management Plan		Measuring Impact



Annex III. CARE's Approach to Impact at Scale



Annex IV. “Innovation as a System” and Scaling through “Transfer and Adapt”

Dan McClure and colleagues have developed two approaches designed to facilitate scaling of humanitarian innovations or innovations to be scaled in humanitarian contexts. These approaches are “Innovation as a System” and scaling through “Transfer and Adapt.” In this approach, humanitarian innovators increasingly see their job as “Creating Innovative Local Systems.” As discussed elsewhere in this paper, a good scaling practice is that scaling needs to be aligned with systemic constraints, and preferably, those constraints addressed through efforts at reforms to the policy enabling environment, capacity building, and other forms of institutional strengthening. In many humanitarian settings, i.e., refugees, fragile states, conflict zones, the lack of any functioning government or public implementation capacity, or viable market systems, meant putting systems “around” an innovation so that it could scale. For example, traditional humanitarian innovation developed simple products or services that could plug into an international aid response (e.g., a new water filter). In this model a large existing system (UN-led humanitarian response), provides all the pieces needed to adopt and use the innovation.

The new approach seeks to deliver the same value (e.g., clean water) by creating a distinct local system that has all the parts it needs to work. In this case, the “Innovation is a System.” If that is the case, then scaling requires rebuilding that system in each new context. This is either because there is no pre-existing system to plug into or because the system is uniquely tailored to both the context's needs and their capabilities. In this approach, scaling involves replicating systems, not solutions. It is the whole interconnected local system that is being replicated, not a product solution. These systems are developed leveraging local capacity (which may need to be built up) and require lots of buy-in and collaboration across the different participants; they are embedded in local needs, practices, and capabilities.

The challenges with this are that the system cannot simply be copied into the new context, rather a “transfer and adapt” solution is more appropriate. This means taking the core design of the system innovation and then adapting it to the local context. The adaptation may involve changing the design, building new capabilities, changing incentives, or leveraging existing capabilities in new ways. Because the “innovation” is being recreated in each context, economies of scale and scope are unlikely or non-existent, there may even be diseconomies of scale; the development of the initial system and the transfer and adapt path to scale take more effort, longer times and greater financial and other resources. This only makes sense if there is a different scaling aspiration that favors a smaller portfolio, more gradual adoption rate and more equity over breadth of impact or reach. It also requires a different view of what constitutes financial sustainability. While governance and other resources available in local contexts are usually vastly superior to those present in conflict or fragile contexts, the concept of Innovation as System and Transfer and Adapt is equally applicable to scaling innovations by small NGOs that prioritize GESI and other objectives over scaling.

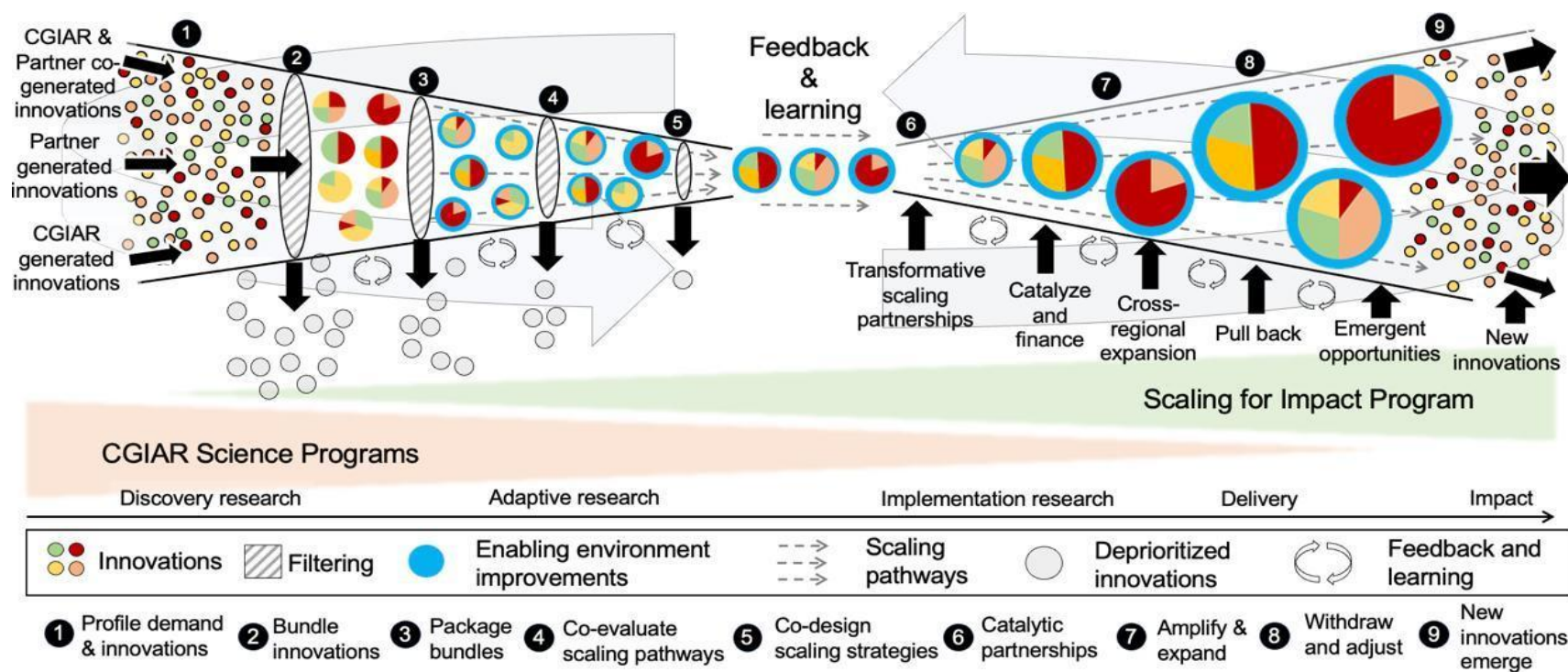


Annex V. Comparable Donor and Funding Organizations Considered

Name	Acronym	Country of Origin	Sector(s)	Budget (millions of US\$)	Staffing	Sources		
						Case Study	KIIs	Document Review
<i>Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research</i>	CGIAR	Multilateral (France HQ)	Agri-Food, Nutrition, Climate Change	\$770 (\$45 S4I)	9,000 (17 S4I leadership)	X	X	
<i>USAID Development Innovation Ventures</i>	DIV	USA	Multi-Sectoral	\$30-40	Not available			X
<i>Enhancing Learning and Research on Humanitarian Assistance</i>	ELRHA	Multilateral (UK HQ)	Multi-Sectoral, Humanitarian	\$11 (HIF 6.7)	32		X	X
<i>USAID Feed the Future Innovation Laboratories</i>	FTFIL	USA	Agri-Food, Nutrition	\$38	45 (core staff est.)	X	X	
<i>Fund for International Development</i>	FID	France	Multi-Sectoral	\$23	15		X	
<i>Global Innovation Fund</i>	GIF	Multilateral (UK HQ)	Multi-Sectoral, focus on gender and climate	\$8.4	38 total (5 on grants)		X	X
<i>Grand Challenges Canada</i>	GCC	Canada	Health, Gender, esp. MCH	\$22	89	X		
<i>Innovations for Poverty Action</i>	IPA	Multilateral (US HQ)	Multi-Sectoral			X	X	X
<i>International Development Research Center</i>	IDRC	Canada	Multi-Sectoral	167			X	X



Annex VI. CGIAR phased approach to scaling: Bow Tie diagram



Annex VII. ELRHA scaling approach and criteria

Scaling Approach⁵²

ELRHA's approach (to be precise, that of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund) to scaling has three components to creating a scaling strategy: a scale feasibility assessment, a scale vision, and a scale strategy. It uses the MSI scaling checklist for the first task. For creating a scaling vision, it asks innovation teams to develop a snapshot of the innovation in five key areas of scale:

1. **Solution:** The innovation you have been working on, whether it is a product, process or service.
2. **Adoption (market):** Your users and buyers, how you reach them, and the barriers you and they need to navigate.
3. **Business model:** The business model you have hopefully started to develop in the Invention and Pilot stages.
4. **Ecosystem:** Your value/supply chain to help you deal with the full lifecycle of your solution (particularly physical products), and the long-term partnerships you need for sustainability.
5. **Financials:** The revenue model that will provide the full funding that you might require to scale and ensure ongoing financial sustainability.

HIF suggests that grantees develop their endgame, where they see their innovation in 15-20 years. This has four components: (i) Envision your endgame; (ii) Set a (medium-term) scale goal; (iii) Reflect on possible routes to scale; and (iv) Develop scale targets. HIF, borrowing from Gugelev and Stern,⁵³ identify six endgame options, which are a function of its business model and scale pathway. These are presented in the table below.

Endgame	Description
Open source	Solution is free for others to adopt and integrate
Replication	Solution is easy for other organizations to adopt and deliver
Government adoption	Solution is integrated into government service delivery/provision
Commercial adoption	Solution has commercial value and so could be delivered for profit
Mission achievement	Solution has eradicated the problem, and does not need any organization to continue to support/deliver it
Sustained service	Solution is being delivered primarily by your own organization

⁵² This section is drawn from HIF's Humanitarian Innovation Guide, which can be found at <https://higuide.elrha.org/toolkits/scale/scale-vision/envision-your-endgame/>

⁵³ Gugelev, A., & Stern, A. (2014). What's Your Endgame? *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 13(1), 41–47. <https://doi.org/10.48558/Q4SM-M719>



Finally, HIF suggests that innovation teams develop a scale strategy. Notably, it states that:

*Your Scale Strategy will need to be more detailed and cover more areas than the strategies you may have developed for testing prototypes and carrying out your pilot. At this point, the level of funding necessary and the complexity of the scaling process mean that you need a far more robust strategy. However, it is still not intended to be a fixed 'blueprint'; rather, it should be a 'live' document updated and iterated, and contains the potential for significant pivots.*⁵⁴[emphasis added]

Scaling Criteria

In terms of actual proposals and evaluating them, HIF's Journey to Scale program criteria starts with evidence. ELRHA requires at Level 3, 4 and 5 in the NESTA standards of evidence. These are: (i) evaluations use at least a control group, random selection of participants, and a large sample for high levels of statistical likelihood; (ii) have had an independent evaluation of effectiveness; and (iii) "be able to show that their intervention could be operated by someone else, somewhere else and scaled up, whilst continuing to have a positive and direct impact on the outcome. And whilst remaining a financially viable proposition."⁵⁵ (This largely overlaps with the evaluation concept of external validity.⁵⁶) Evidence should go beyond impact and effectiveness to demonstrate: "acceptability and usability of the innovation, its cost, efficiency, feasibility or sustainability."⁵⁷

Assuming the evidence is satisfactory, it also uses as criteria: (i) a well-understood (defined) problem; (ii) have an impactful solution, notably; (iii) readiness for scaling; (iv) right team for scaling; and (v) relevant partners and networks. In the context of readiness for scale, sub criteria include "the breadth and depth of impact in 10+ years' time",⁵⁸ the pathway(s) to scale being considered, and the key hypotheses that need to be tested and barriers to be able to overcome in order to scale.

Successful teams will also have a good understanding of the ecosystem in which their innovation is situated. This means that they can articulate their role within the wider system and how the system might influence their pathway to scale. They will know who the key actors are, as well as how external factors such as location, politics, economics, social and cultural dynamics, the environment, and the available infrastructure will impact on their innovation's ability to successfully scale. [Emphasis added]

For ELRHA, the composition of the scaling team is equally important to the other criteria, and in this regard, they are referring to those of the lead organization even if it is part of partnership, or conversely, a division or team within a larger organization. In their view, a scaling team does not need "to already have the full in-house capabilities and skills to scale their innovation." ELRHA does expect them at a minimum to have a good understanding of skills they will need to scale, such as sales and marketing and advocacy and especially "strong leadership with a clear vision for scaling. Successful teams will also have a shared understanding of the scaling vision and potential pathways to scale."

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ "Nesta's Standards of Evidence", [Nesta's Standards of Evidence | Nesta](#) accessed 3 April 2025

⁵⁶ Muhammad Hassan. (2024) *External Validity – Threats, Examples and Types*. March 23 accessed 3 April 2025. [External Validity - Threats, Examples and Types - Research Method](#) "External validity in research refers to the extent to which study results can be generalized or applied to a larger population, settings, or conditions beyond the specific context of the study. It measures how well the findings can be considered representative of the real world." It includes three criteria: "Generalization: Extends findings to wider populations. Relevance: Ensures practical applicability in real-world settings. Transferability: Facilitates replication of results across varied contexts."

⁵⁷ *Op cit.*, *Journey to Scale*, p. 10

⁵⁸ *Op cit.*, p. 13 "We expect successful teams to have a robust understanding of the breadth and depth of the innovation's current and potential impact. For example, ... Might it have a significant impact on a small group of people or a less significant impact across a much larger group?"



Annex VIII. GCC, DIV, and FID Grant Sequence and Criteria

As innovations move from basic R&D to development, piloting, and Transition to Scale they require substantially more resources. Transition-to-Scale (TTS) or Stage 3 innovation funding (as offered by organizations like Grand Challenges Canada, USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV), Global Innovation Fund, and humanitarian Grand Challenges coalitions) is significantly more expensive—often ranging from hundreds of thousands to multiple millions of dollars—than basic research or proof-of-concept grants. These higher costs stem from the complex, multi-component nature of scaling interventions once an innovation has shown early promise.

Unlike pilot or R&D funding—which solely supports experimentation, prototyping, and feasibility testing—TTS funding supports expansion activities such as adapting products or services to diverse contexts or geographies, rigorous impact evaluations (e.g., randomized controlled trials or quasi-experimental studies), organizing training and capacity building, establishing distribution or delivery infrastructure, engaging with governments or private sector partners through intensive advocacy and marketing activities that take many months and often years, and developing and organizing complex financial instruments (e.g. blended finance, equity or loan models, paying-for results). When scaling is driven by a social enterprise, or is achieved by growing that social enterprise, it can often include substantial capacity building of the enterprise itself, such as creating or expanding its own internal advocacy and marketing capacity. TTS requires deeper investment in operational complexity, stakeholder coordination, systems integration, financial structuring, and evaluation at scale—activities that demand far greater capital than the comparatively narrow scope of basic innovation or proof-of-concept efforts.

Grand Challenges Canada's TTS program typically offers grants of up to C\$3 million to innovations that have already delivered proof-of-concept, enabling innovators to scale within the so-called “missing middle.” These grants fund not only incremental deployment but also stage-gated milestones, adaptive implementation, organizational strengthening, and investor engagement to attract leverage financing—all overheads that make TTS more costly than early-stage R&D.

USAID's DIV, which no longer exists, had four tiers of funding; Pilot, Test, and Transition to Scale as well as Evidence Generation.

*DIV provides tiered funding to pilot, test, and transition to scale (i.e., grow to reach the highest number of beneficiaries possible) those innovations that **demonstrate evidence of impact, cost-effectiveness, and the potential to scale** [emphasis added].*

*DIV funds four types of grants. Stage 1, Stage 2, and Stage 3 grants follow a tiered approach that **aligns the funding amount to the strength of the evidence of impact, cost-effectiveness, and scalability of the proposed innovation**. Evidence Generation grants are reserved for rigorous evaluations of already scaled or scaling development solutions that lack sufficient rigorous evidence of impact and cost-effectiveness. [emphasis added].*

Pilot grants are for up to \$200,000 and three years, testing and positioning for scale receive up to \$1.5 million over 3 years, and scaling grants (stage 3) can receive up to \$15 million over 5 years. All grants are renewable for one additional period of 3 or 5 years. Evidence generation grants are for up to \$1.5 million for research reports and evaluations that generate rigorous evidence of an innovation's impact and potential for expansion. USAID DIV's Stage 3 grants were for up to \$15 million precisely because recipients are expected to navigate de-risking, partner alignment, replication logistics, and institutional adoption—all requiring substantial operational and managerial resources.



Fund for International Development (FID) has adopted a similar approach to USAID DIV, in large part because it was based on DIV and attempted to add improvements based on lessons learned. It offers five stages of grants (the text below is a quotation). The general criteria for all grants start with potential for impact, cost-effectiveness, and potential for scale and sustainability.⁵⁹

1. **Prepare grant.** Grant of up to €50 000 to prepare for a pilot in real conditions or for an impact evaluation depending on the progress of the project
2. **Stage 1 – Implementation of a pilot.** Grant of up to €200 000 to implement an innovation in real life conditions. In terms of scale and sustainability, applicants for this grant must demonstrate: “... the potential to sustainably reach a large number of people if delivered at scale, how they expect their innovation to be financially sustained at scale; [and] the types of partners they expect to be relevant to scale and fund the innovation, describe the extent to which such relationships have already been built, and make a case for why such partners will pay for the innovation at scale.”
3. **Stage 2 – Impact Evaluation (or Test and Position for Scale).** Grants of up to €1.5 million to fund the experimentation and impact evaluation of innovations that have already been piloted, i.e. completed Stage 1 or its equivalent. Stage 2 applicants should be able to:
 - Make a compelling case that the solution has the potential for greater or faster impact than alternative solutions, or at lower cost.
 - Simultaneously collecting meaningful cost data to be able to conduct a robust cost-effectiveness analysis by the end of the grant period.
 - Discuss the resources they expect to be required to scale the innovation over time and their plans and vision for how such resources will be obtained and from whom
 - Identify the types of partners that will be relevant to scaling and affording the innovation and should describe the extent to which such relationships have already been built. ... applications [should preferably] include the participation of partner organizations necessary to scale the proposed innovation
4. **Stage 3 – Scaling Up.** Grant of up to €4 million to support the scaling-up of innovations whose impact has already been demonstrated. A Stage 3 grant application should be able to demonstrate its potential for high scalability and sustainability. The latter is defined as “having a lasting impact and benefit for vast numbers of people. [...]”
 - Applications will be stronger if they include evidence of commitment from the relevant country government(s) and other entities that will be involved in scaling the innovation⁶⁰.
 - The Fund does not require the applicant to be the one that ultimately brings the innovation to scale as it recognizes the importance of public partnerships and that innovations can take many paths to scale. Many promising scale-ups of evidence-based innovations involve non-governmental organizations and/or researchers supporting one or more governments to scale the innovation.
 - For Stage 3 and Transforming Public Policy, applicants are expected to demonstrate that strong partnerships with scaling partners already exist.⁶¹

⁵⁹ FID, 5 grant stages, [Our approach | Fund for Innovation in Development \(FID\)](#), accessed 5 April 2025

⁶⁰ [FID Stage 3 | Fund for Innovation in Development \(FID\)](#)

⁶¹ [FID CALL FOR PROPOSAL EN mai juillet 24 6af2d64aa1.pdf](#)



5. **Transformation of public policies.** Grant of up to €500 000 to develop governments' capacity to integrate evidence-based innovations into public policy. There are two types of TPP projects: (i) *Institutionalizing* specific, mature evidence-based innovations with *demonstrated cost-effectiveness and scalability into public policies at large scale*; and (ii) *Strengthening the capacity* of low- and middle-income governments to design, test, pilot, and/or scale evidence-based innovations. [emphasis added]."



Annex IX. Scalability Criteria Examples and Recommendations

One of the better-known examples is the MSI scalability assessment checklist (ELRHA's Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) uses it). The MSI checklist contains several categories of criteria that A&R could draw upon, including:

- i. is the intervention credible, which goes beyond proof of concept to include evidence of external validity and support from key stakeholders (and could include metrics for GESI);
- ii. how much support there is for change (scaling is seen as a form of change), looking at both need and demand from Doers, Payers, end users and other stakeholders;
- iii. the innovation's relative advantages over other existing solutions;
- iv. the ease of adoption by Doers who will produce and distribute the product or service (if relevant);
- v. ease of adoption or utilization by end-users; and
- vi. the sustainability of funding at large scale.

I2i and others all have scaling criteria which can be found in their respective Annexes. In the case of i2i, it is noteworthy that the very first phase includes identifying who the customer is (defined as both the partner(s) that will be the Doer and Funder at scale and the end user). The second phase includes addressing technical, operational and economic feasibility.

While not all IDRC calls for proposals require scaling, many do. Those CfPs ask organizations to show how the guiding principles of scaling science (which was co-developed with optimal scale at IDRC) have been addressed: justification, optimal scale, coordination and dynamic evaluation. A CfP for Care Innovations in Africa requested information on: "Whether the project is co-designed with a women's rights organization, and how it engages other key stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, private sector actors, community-based organizations) to advance, share and apply knowledge to improve lives and livelihoods of marginalized women and girls in SSA."⁶² This is a good illustration of how social inclusion is combined with participation from all relevant stakeholders.

Finally, the Global Innovation Fund (GIF) uses a Practical Impact approach to assessing scalability.⁶³ Practical Impact is determined by three factors: (i) the breadth of impact (the number of low-income people who will benefit at year 10; (ii) the depth of impact – benefit per person; and (iii) the probability of success, i.e. that the innovation will achieve this breadth and depth in 10 years. GIF sees this as a multiplicative equation: Practical Impact = Breadth x Depth x Probability of Success. This is particularly important for A&R to consider, as researchers, like many innovators, tend to focus on maximizing depth of impact without considering that, while more complex and comprehensive innovations can have greater depth of impact, this lowers the chance for successful scaling - breadth and probability of success.

Based on these various sources, a menu of twelve criteria that A&R might draw from includes:

⁶² See IDRC (2019) "Scaling Science: A new model for optimizing the impact of research and innovation." Blog post. [Scaling Science | IDRC - International Development Research Centre](#) Feb. 23.

⁶³ See GIF (2019) [Practical Impact: GIF Approach to Impact Measurement](#). June. https://www.globalinnovationfund/assets/uploads/PDF-Documents/Resources/GIF_practical_impact_v1.01.pdf



- a) high-quality evidence that goes beyond impact to include indicators such as costs, unit costs, inputs needed, sensitivity to context;
- b) external validity – evidence that the innovation works in multiple contexts that exist at scale;
- c) operational and economic durability or feasibility;
- d) the capability and motivation of the program lead/lead project partner to drive scaling;
- e) who are the relevant stakeholders and their motivation and interest;
- f) the quality of partnerships and networking with other key stakeholders;
- g) identified the constraints that exist at scale, especially the enabling environment and financial and implementation capacity, and has taken those constraints into consideration in innovation design, prototyping;
- h) determined need and distinguished need from actual demand from producers/providers as well as end users;
- i) identified the comparable solutions which exist and how proposed solution compares to the alternatives in terms of value-added and all the criteria of optimal scale;
- j) ease of production//provision/distribution and implementation by Doers compared with current practices
- k) ease of utilization and adoption by end users, especially the degree of change from current practices and required changes in other, complementary activities



Annex X. Grand Challenges Canada phases of scaling grants

GCC has two levels of grants: seed grants (for a diversity of health related topics, such as Saving Brains, Saving Lives at Birth, and Starts in Global Health) and a special facility called Transition to Scale (TTS).

"To be selected, proposed innovations must have the potential to be sustainable at scale. Application questions pertaining to scale and sustainability are posed to ensure that applicants are considering their plans for scale from the outset. For example, a past Stars in Global Health application asked applicants to Describe how you would sustainably fund and scale up your proposed innovation and the challenges you foresee in transitioning from proof-of-concept towards scale up. Please also describe the role of strategic partners (e.g. government, regulators, etc.) in this plan."⁶⁴

TTS grants were one of the first of their kind among innovation funders and were designed to fill the gap between piloting and scaling, i.e. "the valley of death"; they were first introduced in 2013, only three years after GCC was created, TTS grants range from CA250,000–CA\$3 million (US\$ 176,000 to 2.3 million). Unlike many funders, GCC has a variety of financial instruments at its disposal in addition to grants, including taking equity positions.

To be eligible for TTS grants, "...only innovators who have demonstrated proof of concept of their idea AND have developed preliminary and feasible plans for scale and sustainability AND have taken steps to identify and/or engage key stakeholders and partners, are considered for potential Transition to Scale program funding."⁶⁵ More specifically, some of the criteria that GCC looks at include: "customer need, breadth and depth of impact, partnership strategy, go-to-market plan, business/scaling model, leadership team, governance, competitive landscape, market size and opportunity, ... financial projections, and funding strategy."

In 2018 GCC introduced a phased approach; TTS grants became available in multiple rounds of funding as long as the recipient shows significant progress towards sustainability and scale. In fact, as shown in the table below, GCC has divided TTS into four phases.

GCC incorporates milestones into every funding agreement to manage and monitor progress towards goals associated with scale, sustainability and impact targets, and to encourage innovator accountability. The milestones are developed in collaboration with each innovator and are tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each innovation. GCC uses milestones as the basis upon which funding tranches are disbursed during the investment period, but with enough flexibility to be able to amend them as new challenges or opportunities arise.

⁶⁴ Grand Challenges Canada. (2023). Scaling Up at GCC. Mainstreaming Case Study. Toronto. [Scaling-up-at-GCC-FINAL.pdf](#), p.6

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 6



	TTS1 Plan	TTS2. Test and Refine	TTS3. Further Iterate	TTS4. Prepare to Scale
Stage of Development	Has proof of impact, not yet a business or scaling plan	Has proof of impact and a business or scaling plan; plan not yet validated	Business or scaling plan needs further work to validate; funders and scaling partners identified with evidence of strong commitment	Successful validation of business/scaling plan complete. Exit partner / strategy identified, with strong evidence of commitment
Objective and Use of Funding	Develop a viable business/scaling plan; Understand customer / user needs, pain points. Develop initial customer proposition. Generate additional evidence if needed	Validate the viability and scalability of business/scaling plan, Address gaps in evidence needed to scale by commercial or public sector scaling partners. Address personnel gaps, recruit staff	Improve and iterate upon business/ scaling plan. Build organizational capability to scale, e.g. processes, systems, talent. Grow/strengthen strategic partnerships and leadership team	Enhance the conditions required for scaling in multiple locations and/or via government uptake. Enhance effective supply chains. Secure agreements to scale to multiple locations. Secure agreements and funding for scale, strategic partnerships and/or government buy-in.

As with ELRHA and others, GCC uses independent external reviewers to ensure that it has the necessary expertise and understanding of local and national context for its initial review. Proposals that are recommended by the staff are then sent to the Investment Committee, which is composed of health, science and business experts. The Investment Committee has four main criteria: “Is this a bold idea? Will it have a big impact? Is there a viable path to sustainable scale? How does GCC add value?”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 7



Annex XI. Examples of Non-Financial Support to Innovators and their Projects

GIZ embedded scaling advisors—called Integrated Experts—in several CGIAR centers to great effect; collectively this was called the Task Force on Scaling.⁶⁷ GIZ found that the Task Force was successful because of seven characteristics:

1. **Interdisciplinary Expertise** - Diverse experience from the private sector, academia and development cooperation allowing integrated experts to develop different scaling strategies and pathways depending on the innovation.
2. **Flexibility and Adaptability** - Extensive engagement and collaboration with the appropriate stakeholders—private, public sector or civil society—is crucial for scaling initiatives.
3. **Collaborative Approach** – Task force experts met regularly and exchanged knowledge, experience and best practices.
4. **Holistic Approach to Scaling** - support scaling efforts from the initial design of strategies to their implementation and facilitate ongoing learning and reflection
5. **Inclusivity** - Emphasis on developing scaling strategies that are gender responsive and socially inclusive. This ensures that scaling efforts not only reach many end users but also promote sustainable change at scale.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation** - Employs a robust monitoring and evaluation system to gain an in-depth understanding of what works, what does not, and why.

Another example is that of DIV. DIV offers the following support services:

1. **Dedicated grant manager** – A dedicated team member to help you navigate USAID and U.S. Government regulations.
2. **Acceleration services** – Helps identify barriers to scale and provides, or connect grantees to, targeted services for specific growth and sustainability needs.
3. **Strategic marketing** – Help with marketing, communications, and branding consultations to develop clear messaging and effectively communicate impact through storytelling.
4. **Sales Strategy** – Supplies practice diagnostics to improve sales pitches, better understand customers, and increase revenue.
5. **USAID network** – Offers connections to technical bureaus in science, technology, innovation, partnership, USAID Missions, and the Development Credit Authority for loan guarantees for commercial innovations.
6. **Connections to partners** – Can supply access to a network of partners, researchers, service providers, and other donor funds, in order to amplify impact and growth.

GCC provides what it calls “venture advisory and technical” support, in response to innovator feedback. Many if not most of GCC’s grantees are social enterprises, which is consistent with the type of support

⁶⁷ See GIZ (no date) *Scaling Agricultural Innovations A Pathway to Global Impact Personal Stories from the Task Force on Scaling*, https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2024-en-Scaling_Agricultural_Innovations-Task_Force_on_Scaling.pdf



they provide. This is provided by external technical experts and advisors in the following eleven areas:

1. Developing a team and board governance structure
2. Understanding market opportunity and industry analysis
3. Validating product/market fit
4. Developing and implementing marketing and sales strategies
5. Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity
6. Incorporating gender equality and social inclusion at the intervention and organizational levels
7. Optimizing corporate strategy and growth opportunities
8. Strengthening business development capacity
9. Raising capital
10. Connecting to industry and finance partners, including structuring smart partnerships
11. Developing financial models and projections

ELRHA also provides non-financial support to its Journey to Scale grantees in their Strategy Implementation phase. Each grantee receives:

“a tailored support package from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), including workshops and one-to-one mentorship. ... Across all teams, focus areas of support will include: Business model development and testing; Research, evaluation and learning; and Organizational and leadership development. Depending on the specific needs of each team, other areas of support may include:

- *Identifying, iterating and codifying the ‘core’ of the innovation*
- *Developing brand, communications and marketing functions*
- *Developing effective partnerships*
- *Managing and supporting a remote and/or growing team*
- *Understanding and managing intellectual assets and property*
- *Embedding ethical, inclusive and responsible approaches to innovation”⁶⁸*

The nature of support needs to be tailored to the needs of the research team in terms of whether they see their scaling pathway as one of growing a social enterprise, handing off to a commercial partner or to the public sector, or “transfer and adopt.” A possible list of support could include:

1. Identifying and documenting the “core” of the innovation
2. Setting a scaling vision and pathway
3. Developing and implementing advocacy, communications and marketing strategies
4. MEAL for and of scaling
5. Developing cost and cost effectiveness estimates, viable business or funding models, financial projections

⁶⁸ *Op Cit.*, Journey to Scale, p. 20



6. Strengthening MEAL capacity and generating additional evidence needed for scaling
7. Understanding market opportunity and sector analysis, estimating potential market demand (vs. objective need)
8. Raising capital and connecting potential financial partners



Annex XII. Websites for Scaling: The case of Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation

The Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) is a continent-wide initiative designed to boost agricultural productivity across the continent by rapidly delivering proven technologies to millions of farmers. It has three objectives: (i) creating an environment that enabled farmers' adoption of agricultural technologies; (ii) facilitating the delivery of proven technologies to the project beneficiaries; and (iii) enabling farmers to actually deploy the technologies.⁶⁹ Phase 1 of TAAT was implemented from 2018 to 2022 with a \$55 million budget with major funding coming from the African Development Fund and the Alliance for a Green Revolution. It was managed by the African Development Bank, and implemented by the CGIAR center, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture.

Its major focus was on creating a clearinghouse for new technologies; a browsable set of e-catalogs in several agri-food subsectors, e.g., seed systems; disease control and management; aquaculture, each one containing pitches for the individual technologies. The majority of these came from CGIAR centers and national agriculture research and extension services centers; private sector organizations were allowed to submit their technologies for vetting, on a limited scale, where doing so made it possible for the program to address a critical challenge and promote the mass adoption of technologies.⁷⁰

Perhaps most importantly, TAAT goes beyond simply listing technologies on the clearinghouse to make them accessible to farmers by actively engaging in partnerships with local organizations, governments, and the private sector to expand outreach and support adoption. Thus, its initial objectives included having 40 million farmers adopt or otherwise benefit from innovations listed on the clearinghouse. As such, TAAT was not simply a website. Thus, a recent evaluation of TAAT by the AfDB's Independent Development Evaluation office concluded that:

"The deployment of technologies required substantial investments, especially for new interventions, concentrated on awareness-raising; establishing demonstration plots; training farmers, experts in national institutions, and other stakeholders; multiplying the production of seeds and other technologies distributed to farmers; and providing the other inputs (fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, etc.) necessary to realize the technologies' full potential for productivity and production"

In addition to technology transfer, TAAT helps build the capacity of local stakeholders, including farmers, extension officers, and agricultural service providers, to better understand and adopt new technologies. It provides technical assistance through its network of agricultural experts and local partners. This can include hands-on training for farmers, extension services, and assistance in the installation and utilization of technologies. It also worked with public sector agencies throughout Africa to "harmonize regional and transnational border protocols for the introduction and release of improved varieties/breeds and other agricultural technologies and to synchronize seed system protocols."⁷¹

While TAAT itself does not directly provide financial support to farmers, it works with the AfDB and other partners to facilitate financing mechanisms for the adoption of technologies. It can help provide grants or support loans for initiatives that aim to adopt and scale agricultural technologies. It also works with the private sector to promote investment in agri-tech solutions.

TAAT is now in Phase II. It continues to work towards scaling technologies, including through capacity

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 43

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 31

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 32



building and strengthening agricultural value chains. Key components of Phase II include commodity compacts in five major areas – cereals, roots and tubers, legumes, fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock – the strengthening of Technology Delivery Platforms,⁷² and greater private sector engagement. Phase I was considered by its funders and stakeholders, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the CGIAR system, as a major success in facilitating the scaling of agri-food innovations. As such, the BMGF and CGIAR are now in discussions as to how to scale TAAT itself beyond Africa to the rest of the Global South.

⁷² TDPs serve as the mechanisms that ensure the delivery, dissemination, and scaling up of agricultural technologies to farmers. They provide the infrastructure, technical assistance, training, and support services that make it possible for farmers to access and adopt the agricultural innovations promoted by the program. For each commodity compact, the TDPs provide the means for delivering the specific technologies and services required for that commodity. There are TDPs in the areas of seeds, input delivery, extension services, irrigation and water management, post-harvest handling, financial services, digital platforms and private sector engagement. They designed to function together in a coordinated manner, addressing various aspects of the agricultural value chain. They provide comprehensive support to farmers by ensuring access to improved seeds, inputs, financial services, extension support, irrigation, and post-harvest technologies.



Annex XIII. The Global Innovation Fund's Approach to Measuring Impact

GIF only provides funding up to transition to scale, yet it has as its goal sustainable impact at scale. This raises the question of how to measure ultimate impact beyond the duration of GIF funding. This challenge is faced by most innovation funders; GCC in particular has grappled with the same challenge.

To address this problem, GIF has developed a methodology for forecasting impact which is simple equation of depth of impact X breadth of impact X probability of successful scaling. GIF measures breadth as the total people impacted, not the total people reached, i.e., the number of beneficiaries who earn less than \$5/day. Breadth includes people impacted by follow-on investments and by spontaneous replication (this includes replication in other countries), which is how they address the attribution issue. This is quite different from many bilateral funders who only count direct attribution.

It measures both depth and chances of success on a four-fold ordinal scale. For depth, this is: perceptible, significant, transformative, and lifesaving. In measuring depth, it puts diverse impacts -- income gains, health improvements and educational improvements -- on a common scale and converts them into income benefits,⁷³ after netting out the cost of providing the benefits. Thus, like almost all the innovation funders, it focuses on cost-effectiveness, not simply impact. For probability of success, the four values are: very unlikely, somewhat unlikely, more likely than not, and very likely. GIF usually develops its own scaling theory of change and determines the probability of success on two types of risk, demonstration stage and scale stage. These two types of risk are measured using the questions below.

GIF's Practical Impact approach to evaluation; its Uses and Limitations⁷⁴

Demonstration Stage Risks	Scale Stage Risks
Does the innovation work?	Is there potential support [from adopters] for the program?
Is the evaluation adequately powered?	Is there sustainable financing [or a business model]?
Was the [demonstration, advocacy, marketing, communications] campaign executed as planned?	

⁷³ "Other benefits, such as health and education, can then be benchmarked using this ladder of depth scores (Figure 3 and Table 1). Depth scores for education are based on the relationship between schooling and wages (recognizing that education has other important and less quantifiable benefits). Health benefits are translated using methods from health economics (see Technical Appendix). Other benefits can be interpolated using the perceptible/ substantial/transformative scale as a qualitative guide." GIF. *Op cit.* p. 4

⁷⁴ GIF, Practical Impact, *op cit.* Table 3, p 9.



Innovation stage	Applicability of Practical Impact
<u>Conceptual</u> : new technology, but the use case is not clear	Nil or limited
<u>Pilot</u> : rough notion of addressable market and potential channels of impact	Usually applicable, if channels of impact are known
<u>Demonstration</u> : some evidence or basis for estimating impact depth; addressable market; risks to scale	Highly applicable
<u>Mature</u> : organization with five-year projections of costs, revenues, activities; and evidence relating activities to social impact	Applicable, useful for comparison and aggregation across the portfolio;

