

# **SCALING-UP SOCIAL INNOVATIONS: THE 4 D MODEL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Demand responsive models or community engaging social ideas had always been the salt for the development sector. However, the efforts had mostly been localized and transitory. Often the valuable innovations are lost as just a drop of excellence rather than a model of replication. Though a sea of literature is available on strategies and factors that enable scale up of an idea, scaling a community focused innovation has not been much researched about.

Often the idea is supposed to exist in a certain universe; the real opportunity is when it is adopted by a larger universe as a process of social change. Scale-up thus turns into a multiplicative strategy for making an impact felt to a greater population.

The paper attempts to devise a strategic framework for taking a community focused innovation from pilot to scale. It looks into how the designs, underlying purposes, changing political and social contexts and identities foment the uptake and scale up of an innovation. The paper analyses the variables to base assumptions on and the way the assumptions drive the acceptance of an innovation.

**Keywords:** Scale up, Innovations, Social Change, Community



## INTRODUCTION

There has been a paradigm shift in the way development interventions have been rolled out in the country. The innovation portfolio has seen a grand restructuring and augmentation and a well devised strategic framework is articulated every time for interventions. The major shift has been in designing a model that is expandable, sustainable and replicable. The strategic focus thus is shifting either on adopting policy focus or preparing a blueprint for diffusion of the idea in the community.

Innovation in the way systems have worked and delivered has often been seen as the vaccine for reviving the dead systems. The major focus has turned towards developing models that can answer these existing problems and replicating them in bigger geographies and newer landscapes. Development sector often misses the reading on the front of successful execution and replication of innovative models. Thus, either the innovations fail to deliver or the innovations that deliver fail to get scaled up. The sector has to have an understanding of reading the innovation matrix, positioning the strategy and fitting the model frame in the local landscape.

The idea of scale up has been seen with a 'too corporate like' look. The development intervention may not be so market oriented as McDonalds but it entails an entire chain of management strategies and works on a scale with a defined goal in focus. Today, there may be no idea with greater currency in the social sector than "scaling what works." Either through expansion of geographies, sustaining ideas in new landscapes or replicating the successful ideas. A shift towards the 'big and better society' reinforces the idea of scaling up across the sector.

The focus has to shift from "trying out new" to "work on the proved." The key is working on ideas that can work on ground. Be it an 'innovation with mettle' or 'a proven strategy,' a move should be from boutique approaches to pragmatic ideas which can be replicated at higher volumes and quality.

A clear thinking of the landscapes in which the problem exists provides the suitable grounds for the idea. Ideas don't exist in two-dimensional frameworks; and are not independent variables. It's a complex system in which ideas or rather solutions survive. There has to be a distinctive model of system transformation associated with social innovation dependent on cross- scale change. The model for social innovation and the

framework for scaling up of an innovation; needs to look at different tracks which merge to provide an overarching frame to the problem, the idea intends to solve. Leadbeater suggests social ideas operate within the larger framework of “wider trends of thought and practice” (Leadbeater, 2007).

## **WHAT NEEDS TO BE QUESTIONED AND WHAT IS TO BE ANSWERED**

Social scientists tend to propose more complicated definitions. Robert Berg, (1987) for example, talks about scaling-up organizationally, management-wise and financially, while Goran Hyden (Hyden, 1992) differentiates between scaling-up organizationally and functionally or activity-wise. "Organizationally" is defined by both authors as "serving larger constituencies. Clark (1992) makes a different distinction among three types of scaling-up: project replication, building grassroots movements, and influencing policy reform. The literature regarding scaling up is reminiscent of Loch Ness monster. It has been sighted myriad of times but its description is as varied as the authors who have written about it. A variety of definition can fit into it and the phenomenon can be understood with different lens. This in itself shows the complexity of the sector and the model where compounding factors add more grain to the model than the ones thought of.

We are talking of moving a step further in developing strategies to take effective ideas to scale to persist in larger geographies and impact larger demography. Scaling up requires a well articulated strategy and an operational framework based on grounds of reason and logic to effectively design solutions organize scaling up process and adapt the ideas to place it in the institutional and policy spaces. This helps moving from having 'band-aid' solutions to having meditative impact on underlying causes. Seeing the spectrum of the development sector, ideas emanating from the community folds position

A novel piece that has seen a lot of discussion in the development sector is the concept of “Frugal innovation” (Thornton, 2012). Frugal innovation is a new type of innovation where solutions that are positioned are low-cost, robust and easy to use, and have the potential to be targeted at large populations. Innovation has now been seen as a fulcrum that propels long standing ideas to expanding theorems of change. It is now seen as a golden calf of development sector. In this regard, Clayton Christensen and Joseph L. Bower promulgated their ideas on disruptive theory (1995).

Expanding these notes the hybrid model theory was theorized and publicized by the new genre of social innovators. But while social innovation and its integration with the demands of society has been a key area of research, developing a model for community driven innovations has not been much worked out. A catalytic model which sees the whole village as a social innovator still remains unpictured in the strategy papers.

Innovation has been touted as an element of paramount importance in development sector. It is about the story of Abhay and Rani Bang<sup>2</sup>(SEARCH Foundation, Gadchiroli) (Bower, 1995), about solar microgrids lighting rural markets, about innovating supply chains, about precision farming. Thousands of companies, governments, and regular men and women are working to address some of India's seemingly intractable problems. And innovation is a story of seeing these changes impacting at scale. Ideas need to move beyond the pockets of excellence to be delivered at scale.

## **SOCIAL CHANGE AS A PROCESS**

Development is a potent and imminent vehicle for bringing a social change in theory and practice. New ideas and project approaches bring in their own implicit understanding of change. There are assumptive, indicative and implicit changes associated with any development intervention. Project interventions themselves introduce the change stimulus and processes that matter and are the vehicles that can actually deliver development (Reeler, 2007). Development projects follow an assumptive line, a trajectory of change. But when the same is applied at a community level, the conditions may not follow the defined track. It often turns out to be more transformative and emergent change than projected change.

When a community development initiative is processed, there are projected changes which are assumed to happen due to the intervention. This assumed theory of change considers the change to be absolute and chronological. However demand focused interventions are more uneven in nature. There is an innate element of 'ripple effect'

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Abhay Bang and Rani Bang have founded [SEARCH](#) (Society For Education, Action and Research In Community Health) - a non-profit organization in Gadchiroli, which is involved in rural health service and has brought in revolutionary changes in infant mortality and home based neonatal care in these areas, substantially reducing infant mortality rates. The World Health Organisation and UNICEF have recently endorsed their approach to treating newborn babies and the programme is currently being rolled out to parts of Africa.

and transformation imbibed in such interventions. These are unconscious changes which happen at a macro-community when a micro community is impacted by an intervention. The changes are disruptive, uneven, at times untraceable but emerging out as an unintended response. This less conscious, emergent change requires a reading of greater respect and subtlety. If appropriate, longer cycles and moments of reflection can be built into the process, culminating in bigger learning, taking care of the need for evaluation.

Social change comes with a complex definition and a hard-wired track to follow. There are spill-overs of an event and in a development pretext; they are often chaotic: running calmly and deeply and transformative in nature. Transformation is where the process culminates. Glasl and Lemson in 1970 demonstrated this in their 'U theory of transformation' – which sees the transformative process as elements of co-initiating, co-creating and co-evolving.

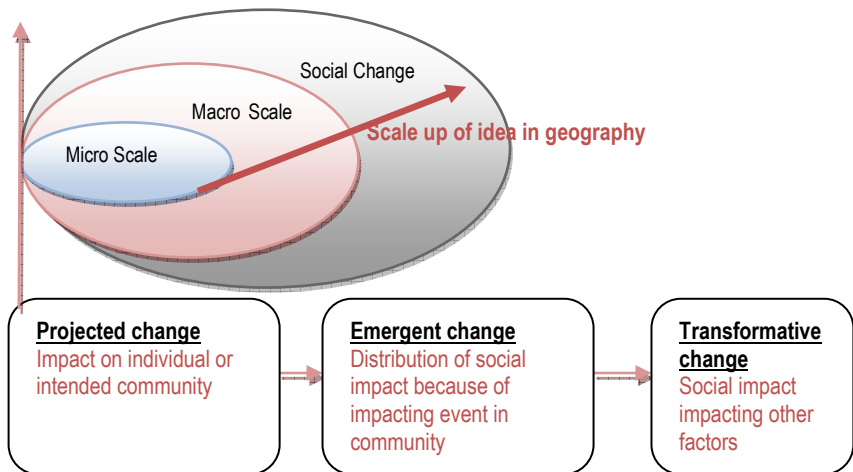
The definition of social process goes beyond the boundaries in which it exists – it propels a 'ripple' which affects the macro-community of which the impacted micro-community is a part and with passage of time enables a transformative change in the larger community – a change which was not defined initially. This transformative change could be a change in policy, the larger acceptance of the thought or pulling in of capacities to deliver the intended change at scale.

The ultimate aim of any idea is also to go beyond the geographies and build itself in the structural frame of the society. The figure below presents how a social change evolves as a process and leads to greater impact on larger community.

## **SOCIAL CHANGE PROCESS**

The lay-out of a social change moves from a projected change in the impacted community to emergent change at an expanded geography which was not a part of the intervention. This emergent change is due to 'ripple' of the change occurred. The process, at times culminates in a bigger transformation at the society level after being focused in a policy framework or larger adoption by the community. This is the stage of 'transformative change' or simply put – self replication of the idea.





*Figure 1: Social Change Process*

## FAILURE GIVES SOME FUNDAMENTAL INSIGHTS

Many a community driven development interventions have worked assiduously, but failed to impact a greater scale of community. And that brings into concept the irremediable reminder in regards to what works and what does not in stimulating, facilitating and supporting the scaling up of innovation. Probably the most publicized and validated of our failure is the lack of ability to discover, design and deliver “the right thing.” Often the grand declarations about successful innovation are followed by a mediocre execution (2004). Drawing from recent literature on developing strategies to expand beyond the horizons of immensely successful pilot programs, it is evident that beyond discovering the contextual factors; institutional arrangements, capacity elements, resource capabilities and cross-linking networks etc. Often the interventions miss on the line of sustaining an intervention by engaging the community to take control of their own change and hence become a self driven driver of social change once the intervention has been withdrawn from the geography. We have to adopt a balanced approach of strengthened advocacy and capacity building that would entail institutional and policy change. And simultaneously we also have to collaborate partnering of enabling organizations that would facilitate the organizational growth and hence only can we sustain productive innovations.

There is one thing common in successful scale ups, that they have a successful pilot as the basis of taking up the idea from its cradle to expand beyond its horizons of excellence to greater impact. The details and finer nuances of a careful planning or a systemic and evidence based approach may vary. At the pilot level, it is essential to understand the factors that enabled or hindered the acceptance of an idea. A pilot could have got well anchored in a certain landscape because of a specific approach or actor; though while scaling, it is the idea that gets scaled and not the approach to anchor the idea. Hence it is essential that learning is drawn from landscapes and the approach adopted in one landscape is contextually realigned in a different landscape. All the adopted approaches use the same derivative of anchoring their intervention or approach with the existing demand responsive processes, frameworks and the contextual environment or the overarching governance system. Hence we have to understand that while going from successful pilots to actual delivery at scale we need to contextually align the idea in the existing systems of governance, policy and programs.

Pilots are the seeds of a successful scaled up intervention. Approaches adopted in the pilot reflect the strategic framework adopted for the intervention. Studying the environmental and institutional factors open the gates to building the strategic frame required. Whether the programs are meant to be expanded horizontally or vertically they follow certain principles, ride on certain drivers and create spaces for it to breathe. The strategy adopted to propel an idea and position it in a certain system is very liable to fail to read these factors in a culturally and socially diverse landscape like India. These failures provide a fertile ground for learning of the way systems work. Quoting Justin Rattner, Chief Technology Officer, Intel Corp, "Part of the problem is that people don't celebrate failures, they always celebrate success. I think there is great value in learning from failures. When you succeed, you have all kinds of convenient explanations and everybody is patting you on the back but when you fail you get some very fundamental insights, and that's where the real learning takes place." (Mishra, 2012) We do not actually introspectively look at these fundamental insights that the unsuccessful trials and operational research studies provide.

## **ATTRIBUTES: WHAT IS REPLICABLE?**

The potential for wide reaching impact emanates from ideas those are mostly weaved around some common attributes. They may have other finer addendum but mostly

simple and pragmatic models are the ones which have dramatically wider and greater impacts. A very complex approach that is contextually alien to the local cultural norms, a perfect and boutique approach, a highly monitoring or resource intensive innovation or an innovation that was contentious, unaligned with the government's priority, even unaligned with the community need and demand are some of the attributes common to many a ideas that could not have been taken up to scale. The efforts elsewhere to expand the innovation would not have succeeded as we, in some way or the other, try to create a euphemism for our inability to adapt the original spectacularly successful pilot idea to the needs of the new sites. An idea needs a hospitable environment to grow. In order to take ideas forward, there is a need of having right approaches to expand its horizon reaching out to greater scale and all this should ideally follow a trajectory starting from accurately problem framing based on correct assumptions, creating internal and external spaces for growth, developing power and resources, and developing absorptive capacity. Flexibility, adaptability and openness to change coupled with an aggressive spur for adoption to fluctuating community need and demands are the ingredients that sustain an idea.

## **DIFFUSION OF THE IDEA**

Any scale up approach need not be grand. It should rather build upon sustainable social mechanisms to bring in social changes at a greater impact. Translating policy commitments into appropriate resources would delineate creating climate for this desired change. Apart from a problem framing and prototype development a step forward is creating amenable spaces for both the vertical and horizontal expansion of the idea in impact and reach. This is where the discovery of existing capacity, institutions, time, budget, and policy and learning spaces becomes imperative.

## **CAPACITY, INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY SPACES**

Any kind of scale up is an intrinsically valued outcome taken from a successful prototype, and then replicating or diffusing it to greater reach. There may not be a bespoke solution to the challenges for taking up and sustaining an innovation but definitely it would relate to ability of external funding agencies to provide appropriate resources. It would require apt positioning in the intersection of capacity, institutional and policy spaces to bring in desired outcome.

Legitimacy to the innovation can only be brought in through institutionalization in the existing support framework of government system that can be the channel to ensure authority and continuity. There need to be support mechanisms in place through existing institutions. Effective scale up initiatives demonstrate that government can only be the ultimate adopter of any idea but strengthening existing institutions, establishing accountability across, investing in institutional and human capabilities and capacities and percolating the same level of change management to the level of strengthening intermediary organizations can ensure scale up.

Eying for scale up requires investment in capacities. And when you invest in capacities you actually are enabling equitable access to resources. Mobilizing community and building in their capacities will also factor in generating capacities among the community to demand for resources. There need to be generation of knowledge among the community to create an enabling environment through investing in capacities of resources, motivation, commitment and leadership that will prepare the ground for scale up.

Bringing in social change and replicating community based interventions are not mere replication of ideas. It requires anchoring of the innovation in and around the existing framework. In order to breathe and grow, the idea needs an amenable policy environment. Advocacy, collaborative working with the government, working in consortiums and larger networks can help shape the enabling environment within which they can flourish.

## **DONOR'S VISION**

In context of scaling up community development intervention, donor's vision and strategy can actually play a pivotal role in how and what succeeds for idea to scale both functionally and geographically. There has been a paradigm shift in the donor's role over the years. The role has shifted from that of an implementer to more of a facilitator; advocate of an idea to the policy spaces and technical assistance provider to existing policy framework. With the social and development intervention taking a major shift from a donor funded to a public sector funding over the past few years, the role of a donor is shifting towards playing decisive role in delineating scale up strategies.

## THE MODEL FOR SCALING UP A SOCIAL CHANGE

The subsequent discussion underpins the various dynamic elements that affect the potential for any community driven initiatives to effectively scale up. Figure 2 illustrates the strategic steps of discovering, distilling, designing to subsequent delivering the catalysers and triggers of scale up for the mobilization and empowerment of poor communities.

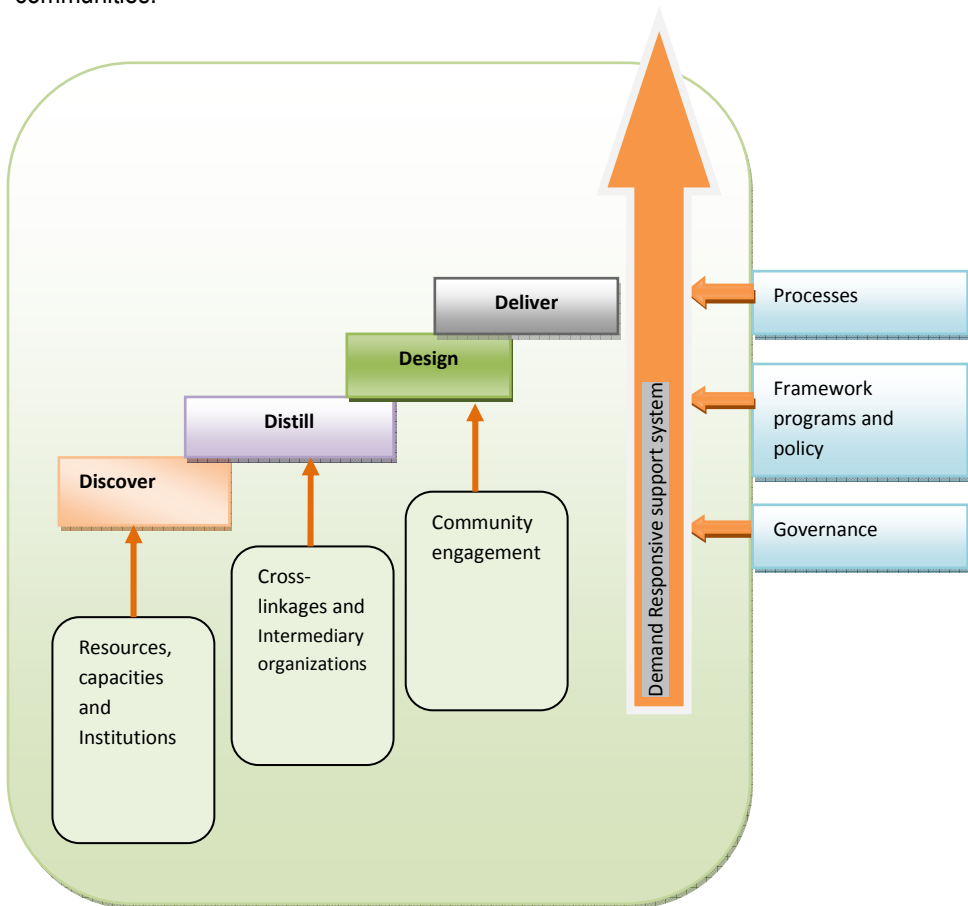


Figure 2: 4D Model for Scaling Up of Social Innovation

## **DISCOVERY OF RESOURCES AND CAPACITIES**

The very core approach of the proposed model is individual empowerment. Any kind of community based intervention that aspires to sustain and expand its quantitative, functional and socio political reach have to have a self driven development process and hence mandatorily ensure empowerment of the poor and the underserved. The model is about the 'whole village delivering the change' and being at the delivering end rather than on the receiving end.

With an inherent hierarchy existing in the society that preys on the equitable access of citizens to services, to entitlements and to information, the entire approach of mobilization and hence individual empowerment in itself becomes fragmented and episodic. Access to information and lack of it is a much bigger fish to fry. The fundamental error may exist at the very household level. We may not acknowledge the fact that in some way or the other we are trying to create a euphemism for the grave lack of equity for the poor and the underpowered. Economic empowerment at the community level can be a driver for equitable access to information and entitlements to the poor. There is a grave disparity in access to credit and information that leads to inhibited access to services among poor. And a delicate balance needs to be developed involving the power dynamics of the environment within which such initiatives emerge and grow. Rather a caveat is required, as power dynamics in community at social, cultural and financial level can greatly shift control over decision making and hence resource mobilization. Empowerment can ensure accountability and sustainability, bringing in equitable access to services. We have to assimilate the fact that if we propose to create socially focused projects focusing on the needs of the bottom of the pyramid; we first have to break the sickles of inequality existing at social, gender, cultural and financial dimensions.

Hence, discovery of resources and capacity at the community level should be the first step in delivering a change. In parallel there is need of establishment of thrift and credit societies that will bring in financial equitability and hence control over decision making. By discovery of resources it is implied to nurture strategies to bring in equitable resource mobilization and that should entail breaking the dependency of the poor from the clutches of the existing systems.

## **DISTILLING THE INTERMEDIARIES**

Challenges of scaling up and sustaining a successful innovation are obvious to emanate from the major gap in monitoring and rigor at level of taking ideas to scale. Even after having surplus of resources and capacity to identify development needs and a demand responsive supply system in place. Deficiencies may reflect in their synergistic interaction by virtue of absence of robust accountability structure at various level of implementation. The idea may have a well ingrained strategy to tap the local community need, strength of existing institution and evidence supporting the applicability of the innovation; but at scale the idea may lack control over monitoring and rigor and there is where it all fails. The idea requires support systems to bring in more contextuality, local responsiveness and systems for support. The design requires intermediary institutions for taking the evidence, working with the scale up agency i.e. the government, providing necessary technical assistance and monitoring and provide support in the local geography. These intermediary institutions or local partners can work on the front of creating vision for scaling up, developing capacity in managing finances, bringing in cost-effectiveness in the model and in this lieu these intermediaries can take varieties of form vis a vis:

- Some incubate innovations by providing a 'safe' space for collaboration and experimentation
- Some connect entrepreneurs with the supports they need to grow their innovations
- Others help to spread innovations by developing networks and collaborations

## **DESIGNING A SOCIAL CHANGE**

Need for innovation and delivering the change at scale is a thread running through all communications these days. To design a strategy, let's start by defining a smart failure i.e. the type of failures that should be congratulated. These are the thoughtful and well planned projects that for some reason didn't work. Define them so people know the acceptable boundaries within which to fail. The designing phase is a story of stumbles to strategies. It is accounting more on the institutions distilled, resources, capacities, leaders and strategies adopted and tried. The strategy needs to build on these factors:

- Utilize local resources and capacities
- Give community ownership
- Confront controversies and hindrances

- Sustain engagement

John Kania & Mark Kramer wrote about collective impact for community driven interventions and debate the relevance of organizations existing as individuals and interventions as islands (2011). He wrote, “In short, the nonprofit sector most frequently operates using an approach that we call *isolated impact*. It is an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization.” The design phase has to look into the potential partners and institutions that can help replicate, expand or sustain the change desired. The institutions need to have a mutually reinforcing understanding of taking the innovation forward to scale. The distill phase, thus, forms a pretext to the design phase.

## **DELIVERING A SOCIAL CHANGE**

The earlier stages of discover, distill and design pave the path for the delivery of innovation and a question of sustaining it. A good mix of elements from the three stages, package the intervention for its delivery and replication. This is a stage which sets a platform for learning and developing. The delivery stage promulgates the bright spots of the intervention. This is a stage when data and insights and public perception lead to policy shifts. Aaron Hurst, founder of Taproot Foundation, looks at these components as levers of social change (Hurst, 2012).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper reflects on approaches that could lead to intrinsically valued outcome while taking the idea to scale. Implementing agencies need to broaden our thinking orientation and expand the fundamental premise of weaving our ideas around project mandate and focus on processes and not individual projects. The prospect of the model has greater applicability for community development interventions and proposes elements and strategic approach of discovering the resources and capacities, distilling intermediaries and building linkages, designing a holistic way forward with the fundamental mandate of meeting community needs and demand.

There is no bespoke standardized solution to a problem given various geographic and cultural contexts. The model has to be contextually placed in particular landscapes. The paper reflects critically on approaches that could be adopted for demand side interventions and the limitations of the paper lies in the fact that its findings are drawn



from practical experiences. It is expected that the discussions of the theoretical underpinnings and design implications of the model will be further strengthened through field tested case studies.

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## NOTES