

LANDCARE AND THE ISSUES OF “SCALE” REFLECTIONS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

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Summary

This paper reflects upon the experiences of scaling-up Landcare in the Philippines. Clearly, Landcare is impacting on farmers and their landscapes. Its metaphor illustrates a biological growth-model where few interested farmers grow into a movement of loosely knitted Landcare groups dedicated to improve their well-being and reverse land degradation. Today, over 400 Landcare groups are operating within 15 municipalities in Mindanao and Central Philippines. Continuous demand from the public and private sectors indicates the potential spread of Landcare. However, this development is twined with a growing concern on how the properties that gave Landcare its name are maintained with site-specific adaptations and large-scale implementation.

The paper discusses three key questions: What does it take to scale-up Landcare? What are the issues and concerns? What are the conditions to scale-up? It will also discuss aspects of scaling-up design and management from an institutional perspective. It will consider that much of a scaling-up dilemma arises when the demand-driven approach changes to a supply-driven approach, with the risk of completely corrupting the whole process. Nonetheless, with much acceptance of a combined approach, it will argue that examination of issues at hand is important to effectively address, perhaps some unintended effects of projectizing Landcare.

The Evolution of a Landcare Movement in the Philippines

Landcare in the Philippines takes its humble beginning in 1996, when a group of 25 farmers who participated in one of the training sessions facilitated by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) in Claveria, Misamis Oriental, established a farmer-led conservation effort which had evolved into a farmer association known as Landcare (Arcenas, 2001). ICRAF helped in the development of Landcare and adopted the same, as an Action Research that aims to test the effectiveness of Landcare as an approach that fosters rapid dissemination of technologies. Landcare has caught the attention of development agencies and local governments because it is considered to be one of the most organised and successful farmer-led soil conservation initiatives in the region of Mindanao (Arcenas, 2000, p.2). Today, Landcare is growing to include more than 6000 farmers in north-central, southern, and eastern Mindanao, as well as in central Philippines (Mercado, A. et al, 2000; Catacutan, D.C & Mercado, A., 2001). Landcare groups have successfully extended conservation farming based on natural grasses as vegetative filter strips (NVS) to no less than 5000 farmers, and established more than 400 nurseries that produced hundreds of thousands of fruit and timber trees, all done entirely with local

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This paper is based on field experiences and preliminary results of a PhD Research conducted by the Author on the issues and methods of scaling-up Landcare in the Philippines. The author benefited from several interaction with colleagues, however, the views expressed in this paper are those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICRAF and the University of Queensland.

resources (Garrity, D.P., 2000, Mercado, A. et.al, 2000). Many of the groups have also initiated community-based projects on stream rehabilitation and riparian management, buffer zone reforestation, water quality monitoring and stream rehabilitation (Catacutan, D. & Mercado, A., 2001). Local Governments are now supporting Landcare activities. A number of them are now pursuing to adapt the approach into mainstream extension system. Some groups are now engage in on-farm research in areas of their own self-interest, and ICRAF is backing-up the necessary technical guidance. As these efforts are under way, there is a prospect for research to be carried out through, and managed, by Landcare groups, and this could be an enabling major innovation in the way-on farm participatory research is done (Garrity, D. P., 2000). External investments to scale-up Landcare as an Action Research in other Philippine sites have been provided by the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) and the Spanish Cooperation Agency (AECI). Several other investors and internationally funded projects have also shown interest in adapting the Landcare Approach into their project frameworks. This interest for expansion is considered phenomenal in the context of a research-laden institution where resources for development-type of initiatives are very limited against the expected impacts of their work.

Early Impacts

Obviously, Landcare resulted in an unprecedented boost in the adoption of conservation and agroforestry technologies in Mindanao. Presumably, adoption of these technologies brings long-term economic and environmental benefits. Initial results of an evaluation study revealed that farmers perceived high economic benefits from adopting the technologies and participating in Landcare activities namely: adoption of technologies and improvement of farming system, increased income, improved vegetation and protection of the environment, and community development. While the number of adopters is arguably insignificant to solve a universal problem, the success of Landcare lies much in catalysing a change urgently needed to reverse the issue of land degradation and the improvement of agricultural production among farmers, policy makers, landowners, government officials and the entire community. Earlier we summarised the following indicators of success and impacts of Landcare (discussed by Catacutan, DC and Mercado, AR., 2001):

- Transformed the norms in agriculture and natural resource management
- Influenced and challenged the promulgation of local policies
- Improved decision-making
- Harnessed private sector support
- Drawn other support from local community members (People's Organisation and the business sector)
- Effected the reorientation of the local extension program
- Effected the reorientation of local government budgeting
- Regenerated strengths and revitalised energies which radiated to communal action
- Fostered cooperation, volunteerism and enhanced participation

Issues and Concerns in Scaling-up

Behind this success however, are painstaking issues inherent to a growing program. The issues arising from scaling-up efforts emanate from the natural complexity and multi-dimensionality of contexts circumscribed in the scaling-up process. Firstly, the unfettered concept of scaling-up offered a discourse in recent years. It's taxonomy examined by Uvin (1996), and in a study of replicating social programs, Oudenhoven and Wazir (n.d) listed a myriad of sub-concepts to access a deeper understanding of scaling-up including: acceptance, adaptation, additionally, adoption, application, assimilation, communication, coverage, diffusion, dissemination, distribution, expansion and extension, growth, innovation, and multiplication, among others. On these bases, philosophical, conceptual and operational issues challenge the scaling-up process.

Six broad issues were central to the scaling-up process of Landcare in the Philippines.

1.0 Conceptual Discourse: The meaning of Landcare

As the Australians say, "Landcare means differently to different people", the meaning of Landcare in the Philippines also underwent several stages of "fine-tuning and redefinition". At a certain point, at least 6 interrelated meanings were evident depending on what coincides with the interests of different user groups. While this could be insignificant to the issues at hand, this however, could not be underestimated, since it forms the operational basis of Landcare.

The first definition of Landcare in the Philippines (discussed by Garrity, D.P., et.al. 1998) refers to an approach or method that rapidly and inexpensively diffuse agroforestry practices among thousands of upland farmers based on the farmers' innate interest in learning and sharing knowledge about new technologies that earn more money and conserve natural resources. This operational definition embodies three basic cornerstones: appropriate technologies, partnership building and institution building. From the eyes of the host institution (ICRAF), this operational meaning led to an unprecedented boost in technology adoption. This reflects the early beginnings of Landcare in Claveria, Misamis Oriental.

The next two years saw another way of viewing Landcare. Critics challenged a deeper understanding of Landcare concerning its ideologies, similarities or uniqueness (if it is) from other experiences. This emerged from the fact that, Philippine NGOs are known to have a long tradition of community organising experiences and inflating claims of expertise filled the development sector. Moreover, interaction with friends and colleagues from Landcare Australia spur a more conscious scrutiny of Landcare from a social perspective. The emergence of strong and developed Landcare groups now founded a more socially-oriented meaning of Landcare as: A movement of autonomous farmer-led organisations supported by local governments with backstopping from technical service providers that share knowledge about sustainable and profitable agriculture on sloping lands while conserving the environment and natural resources (discussed by Catacutan, DC. & Mercado, AR., 2001).

Further interactions with practitioners tended to identify Landcare as an extension approach. Also, discrete similarities of other upland programs in the Philippines bring the notion that Landcare can be generically referred as a body of appropriate land management practices. And philosophically, an ethic underlying action, where anyone applying sustainable technologies or having a concern for the environment and promoting its protection should be part of Landcare, as in the Australian Landcare Movement. As it become widely popular, unpacking the meaning of Landcare is almost reaching an impasse. The main question is how do we scale-up a concept that is still a “work in progress?” Apparently, interested colleagues and others that carry high expectations and critiques place the host institution under scrutiny.

2.0 Operational Discourse: Projectisation in Landcare

Given the growing popularity of Landcare, the movement runs the risk of “projectising”, that is, attracting the support of projects that do not understand the concept, and that provide funds in a top-down, target-driven mode defeating the whole basis of a farmer-led movement (Van-Noordwijk, 2001). Additionally, host institutions can be easily overwhelmed with its growing popularity, that processes are short-changed with the interest to easily expand its coverage. Local Government Units (LGU), National Government Agencies (NGA) and NGO-managed projects are major client groups who are interested to learn about Landcare. Among them, LGUs have the advantage that they are permanent institutions, they have multisectoral orientation, they are close to the local situation and are potentially responsive to farmers’ needs (Cramb, R., 2000). In this regard, LGUs are a common pathway for dialogues and facilitated negotiation—this alone, already marked an inch of projectisation. While decentralised governments and policies stimulate the voluntary evolution of local institutions for collective actions (Talib Esmail, 1998), local governments however, may perceive Landcare as a formula of achieving its targets that are not necessarily in the best interest of all farmers (Van-Noordwick, 2001). According to Van-Noordwick (2001), this can lead to initiating Landcare targets in a less-democratic way, thereby corrupting the whole basis of a demand-driven and voluntary process, and losing the basic elements where it has made distinctive success. A school for example in Claveria, proposed that children could only graduate from elementary school if their parents had adopted a soil conservation practice promoted by Landcare. Here, the permeability of Landcare Approach tends to result in a greater dilemma of coercion. How can a demand-driven Landcare Program be scaled-up to other sites, with projects having pre-set targets? How can the goals of reaching out more farmers be pursued without hurting the “demand-driven culture of Landcare? As it aims to become a national program, these questions should not go unchallenged least, it is no less than unique to any experience in the past.

Berman and Nelson (1997) say that success depends upon adapting a model program to the local situation. While this had been a rule in development practice, there are exceptional cases. In Manolo Fortich for example, Landcare was introduced to the LGU with the aim to place Landcare in mainstream extension. The main approach was building the capacity of Agricultural Technicians and selected village leaders to enable them to develop their own Landcare program. Since Facilitators were faithfully committed to

principles underlying “context specificity”, the program was integrated into the bigger development plan of the municipality, but serious organisational and political problems impede the whole process. Trained farmers and village leaders remained dependent and voiceless. Critiques about farmer participation in the process proposed that new institutional arrangements beyond the farmer level should presuppose that farmers have been organised around shared interests, and enabled in voicing their demands-- apparently, this was not the case in Manolo Fortich. Changes in political leadership exacerbate the situation hence; the program had been too slowly implemented. This conforms what Schorr (1999) says, that scaling-up will remain an exception rather than the rule unless rigid bureaucracies and negative political influence that undermine the attributes of program success is changed.

In Claveria and Malitbog however, local government support apparently favour the success of Landcare and policy interventions helped in scaling-out Landcare. Regular programs of the LGU, or otherwise, is implemented with Landcare groups, and Landcare is represented in the Local Development Council. However, it is important to be attentive to the processes and outcomes derived from integration in the Local Government, as the integration process could also run the risk of cooptation. How much adaptation is necessary when promising programs are undermined by the rules of larger systems? Reconciling local adaptation and faithfulness to certain values of a program proved to be difficult in practice.

Clearly, this shows that some specific conditions or approaches are not easily replicable and scaling-up can be problematic. Some conditions are common to all the sites, but others differ substantially.

3.0 Institutional Capacity to Scale-up

Scaling-up requires that host organisation has the capacity to interest people and enables them to adopt new ideas or diffuse the intended innovations (Senge, P. et.al, 1999). An important part of this capacity is a required learning infrastructure that involves organisational resources and opportunities for continuous sharing and learning.

Researchers say, that scaling-up is much as an institutional process requiring various levels of policy and institutional arrangements, relationship-building and marketing. The culture, the mandate and the resources of ICRAF significantly influenced the development of Landcare in the Philippines. Being a Research Institution, the implementation of Landcare in the context of research was tenuous, and balancing Research and Development objectives was difficult. Communities generally prefer development projects that bear outright benefits, which means, greater need for direct and tangible project inputs. In ICRAF, the resources dedicated to development-type of initiatives have always been modest compared to the expected outputs. Stretching the limited resources to meet the increasing demands of interested groups, as well as, responding to the growing needs of Landcare groups became a major management issue. In a resource-constricted environment, scaling-up should be made possible through

efficient resource-use, requiring certain managerial skills.

ICRAF's scaling-up approach was at the start, opportunistic, reactive or spontaneous, rather than pro-active. This however fostered a self-selection process by participating LGUs and other partners. ICRAF was responding to certain demands that were indirectly created but nurtured through facilitated negotiations. With simple technical innovation as springboard for group formation, the scale at which it could proceed may have not been earlier perceived so as the institutional implications. This however, allowed ICRAF to venture into new ideas and test its application, allowing for a step-wise development of Landcare. Nonetheless, the expansion phase is twined with organisational pains and hardships. Internally, the organisation had to refine its existing structures. New job positions have to fill in human resource gaps. New roles, skills and expertise were compelled and integration of different disciplines was needed. New activities were added, most of which were not originally planned, allowing for experimentation, and earlier strategies that didn't work became dead-ends. New areas were covered and institutional arrangements were made to gain a wider reach of the farming communities. With expanding coverage, staff had work overloads. Flexibility and versatility in the job was very important. Assimilating multiple disciplines in a transdisciplinary manner was indispensable. The organisation thus, grew functionally and in size. The popularity of Landcare has been rewarding in the sense that more donor agencies were attracted to support the program. Nonetheless, the more donors invest on the program, the power play of varying interests is inevitable. And in spite of expression of genuine partnerships with various partners, sustainable and equitable partnerships remained a scarce commodity. The program had always been dependent on productive partnerships. Clearly, ICRAF emulates what Uvin (1990) describes as functional and organisational scaling up. This resulted with more articulation of strategies that meet the broader institutional vision.

ICRAF's research culture and modest resources, nonetheless, served as "push factors" in understanding the issues concerning scaling-up and prompted the making of a self-learning and dynamic organisation.

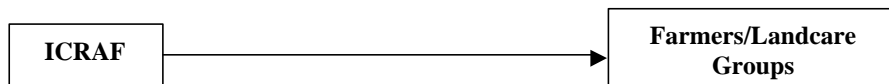
In the long run, institutions like ICRAF maybe unable to play a sole leadership role in Landcare (as it is today). Nonetheless, its sphere of influence in the Research and Development community places itself strategically in the whole scaling-up process. It can provide scientific leadership to backstop the technical needs of its partners in a participatory manner. It can also facilitate knowledge exchange, training and linkages, and emulate the significant role of research in the realm of development. This is only possible by strengthening its network and working with strategic partners, together with others that share the vision.

4.0 Maintaining connection with grassroots

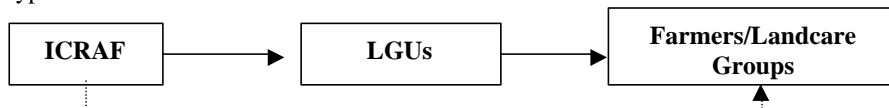
Once a scaling-up process is initiated, the tendency is an expanding distance created between the host institution and the grassroots. Also, when different players and intermediaries come into play, there is a danger of unequal participation in the playing field, undermining the voice of the powerless. Program adaptations in different contexts

would be diverse, and a growing concern for ICRAF is its loosing connection to grassroots, and in monitoring the different adaptations, as well as, the chain of impacts at different layers of stakeholders in different locations. Connectedness and monitoring are important to effectively address some loose ends in program implementation. In the Philippines, training and capacity building has been the dominant strategy. Accordingly, a three-tiered approach is implemented; 1) building the capacity of farmers and Landcare groups; 2) building the capacity of the LGU to develop and implement its Landcare Program; and 3) building the capacity of NGOs and NGAs, so that they too can help build the capacities of LGUs and farmers within their project areas. Capacity building is carried through, in what we can call a “strategic lane”.

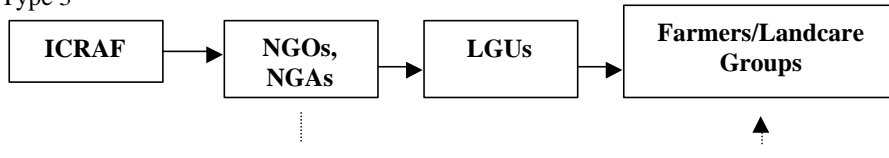
Type 1



Type 2



Type 3



(Adapted from A. R. Mercado, 2001)

From the source of information or product, boundary spanners in the strategic lane play important roles in maintaining the flow of information and in getting feedback. The sheer lack of effective communication from the information source to the user lends itself to some serious flaws in implementing the program. In the current ICRAF set-up, monitoring activities and downstream impacts is a major gap and identifying the most potential partners in the strategic lane also proved difficult.

5.0 Sustainability

Given the success of Landcare, it is most fitting to devise means of instituting sustainability mechanisms. Not only that ICRAF and other supportive partners maybe unsustainable, Landcare groups are also confronted with sustainability issues, such as leadership and participation fatigue, and these are also aggravated by external circumstances. Looking beyond, how can an ever-changing socio-political and economic environments continuously support the plight of Landcare? What mechanisms warrant sustainability? When Landcare reach a point of “diversification”, “reinvention” or completely change its course, what does this mean to sustainability?

Landcare has a vast potential, its greatest challenge is to keep the momentum going and

take advantage of a universe of opportunities, but a sustainable and permanent support system is of high primacy to make this happen.

5.0 Program Context matters

The goals of scaling-up and the program context influenced the process of scaling-up. For example, if ICRAF was only interested in promoting a technology, then, it can proceed without bothering so much on principles of participation, demand-driven and partnerships. It can do so through commercial promotion, branding or franchising. But, the goal was as much as to scale-up Landcare Approach as a social technology in natural resource management, then subsequent strategies in scaling-up is based on that premise, and certain conditions are required to make this possible. Not only that local conditions are important, equally, program context matters—it should not be underestimated in the guise of local adaptation, and at the expense of hurting the principles that make-up the program. The issue however remains whether the host institution or source of information really needs to be concern about how program adaptations are made.

Simply put this way, some programs are highly adaptable, while others are not, and should not be forced to, otherwise the consequences can be costly. It maybe practical to create an entirely new program than confronts the risks of scaling-up.

What does it mean to scale-up Landcare?

Again, I argue that scaling-up process is foremost, influenced by the charter of the host institution. This is supported by the fact, that the concept of scaling-up first assumes that an institution owns a product worthy for expansion, and a universe of potential beneficiaries could benefit through a delivery mechanism that is deliberately planned and systematically implemented. Further, this is based on the premise of the “Universalist approach” (Oundenhoven & Wazir, n.d) which believes in universal principles and assumes that there are universal processes available to solve an increasingly shared common problems, particularly in most developing countries. However, this approach could not be insulated from a “contextual approach” that recognises the inherent conditions and uniqueness of a particular setting. Partnerships and convergence, rather than linear or hierarchical relationships inspire this. Each approach has their own merits and emphasising one over the other result to sharply contrasting strategies (Oundenhoven & Wazir, n.d). This recognition of a combined approach led to the general acceptance and growing practice of a combined top-down and bottom-up approach in social development, which was later adopted in the agriculture and NRM sectors. This however, challenged the practitioners since an indiscriminate favour to one approach would have far-reaching consequences.

The process of scaling-up confronts a diversity of contexts and dimensions that are political, institutional, financial, technical, spatial and temporal (Gonsalves and Armonia, 2000, p.13). The succeeding discussion focuses on the institutional aspects of scaling-up. Berman and Nelson (1997) say that organisations most likely to successfully institute large or scaled-up projects are those with sufficient organisational capacity. The irony however, is that most organisations that need the most to implement large-scale programs

are those with insufficient capacity and is less able to implement them. Particularly in implementing Landcare, such organisational capacity should include:

- **Stability and functional working teams.** In Landcare, working teams are usually composed of Facilitators, Trainers and Communication Specialist. Cohesion, competency and responsiveness are important elements of successful teamwork. Undoubtedly, the ICRAF team portrays their roles fairly well, as alluded by farmers during the recent evaluation study. A greater concern is on the capacity of ICRAF as a Research Institution to institute large-scale implementation of Landcare. What is its influential capacity? And how long can it continue to be in the forefront of Landcare?
- **Professionalisation.** Institutions must change to mature, requiring the development of management systems of planning, organisation and motivation. With Landcare, ICRAF was compelled to rationalise and professionalise the conduct of its activities. This was done along with staff development and reinforced motivation systems.
- **Consolidation.** A growing program within an expanding organisation needs to consolidate its progress. A key task here is to manage seemingly intangible assets of the organisation. This will improve the organisation's ability to systematically transmit their values in constantly changing situations.

Effecting change on a scale enough to matter requires a virtual overhaul of ways of thinking and acting. History of large-scale programs has been sobering since the rules of the larger systems undermine the attributes of good programs. Often, the general conditions do not conform local realities and therefore, implementation is always unmatched, untimely, and interventions were inappropriate--as they say, proper solution to a wrong problem, or proper ways in the wrong place.

On the other hand, scaling-up successful programs require larger systems that are in itself sustainable. A critical mass of Landcare network groups would not likely to evolve spontaneously; guidance from a central entity is needed to sustain the whole process. It will have to be structured within a larger system, but based on multi-agency partnerships, each playing their roles based on their comparative advantage.

Based on initial results of a PhD research in the Philippines, the conditions for scaling up require participation from the larger system. Specifically, these include:

1. A decisive state policy that place Land Conservation and Management in the fulcrum of rural development, thus providing an enabling legal backbone for developing a land stewardship ethic. Systemic change should be required in government agenda and structure.
2. Decentralised policies and programs that stimulate voluntary action and the evolution of local institutions for collective action that produce private, pure public and quasi-public goods.
3. Strengthening leadership and local organisational capacity is needed. Building rural leadership program is a compelling demand where upland communities are socially distant from resource and information centres.
4. Network of like-minded LGUs, NGOs and other private groups that share a common purpose, to facilitate the process of cross learning involving the acquisition,

absorption and sharing of knowledge. A central entity which is privately managed and autonomous from central government agencies can serve as convener and facilitator of Landcare groups and LGUs, to avoid the ill-effects (perhaps, unintended) of complex centralised bureaucratic management.

5. Massive information, communication and education program help develop an informed community on matters pertaining land management, sustainable livelihoods and rural development. This will also ignite the interest of all, even the less-affected sectors in waging a war against unsustainable practices.
6. Establishment of public and private incentives in various forms for adoption of conservation practice.
7. Basic socio-economic needs are met, and infrastructure and market made available. Market viability of farm products and good price supports increase the incentives for adopting conservation technologies.

Again, some conditions are common, but some vary substantially according to site-specific circumstances.

Conclusion

The scaling-up experience of ICRAF in Landcare indicates some characteristics that fall under what Oudenhoven & Wazir (n.d) described as Spontaneous or Endogenous Replication. Informal contacts and communication between like-minded groups and individuals characterise this. In the case of ICRAF, the Landcare phenomena largely spread by “word of mouth” during formal and informal occasions and the demand was indirectly created. The demands are non-directional from the grassroots, their conduits and intermediaries. Communication flow is not one way—but rather, a two-way process of convergence where participants create and share information (Oudenhoven & Wazir, n.d). Additionally, Landcare, as was scaled-up can be classified as a “Concept Replication”, again based on Oudenhoven & Wazir’s (n.d) classification. What are essentially scaled-up are general components and principles rather than specific elements of Landcare. Inflexible adherence to specific elements is not required and success is measured in terms of local adaptation. Further there is no accountability on how the components are adapted and used at different sites. But again, this should not be allowed to go unchallenged. Program context matters along with context of the locale. Local adaptation should not undermine the inherent character of the program, and therefore, a combination of types, pathways and approaches in scaling-up should be encouraged.

Scaling-up is an outcome of an intricate interplay of various players. In reality, it encompasses a suite of approaches and pathways, requiring high institutional capacity to institute sustainable mechanisms for large-scale implementation. In Landcare, the greater dilemma lies in upholding its values with diverse local adaptations. In recognition that LGUs are permanent institutions, they are highly expected to take leadership in Landcare, but still, it is not a stand-alone solution. Landcare needs the support of the larger system. Landcare networks need to be coordinated and facilitated to sustain the process, uphold its culture and take advantage of vast opportunities. Initial research findings disclose a consensus that a private institution with strong influence from central government agencies will be more appropriate to supervise a national Landcare Program.

Management of Landcare by central government agencies may defeat the basis of community-led and participatory processes, however, their participation is fundamentally important in providing support systems needed for sustainability. Clearly, ICRAF has limited capacity to implement Landcare on a national scale, but it will have a significant role in knowledge generation and exchange, in conducting action research to test different Landcare adaptations with the end view of contributing to a body of knowledge in social science and development practice. It may also continue to nurture its current learning sites to continually draw out lessons. Furthermore, it has a sphere of influence in the Research and Development community needed for cross regional and international scaling-up. This implies that ICRAF would need to consolidate its gains in Landcare and deliberately will have to relinquish major tasks to capable institutions. Finally, some conditions for scaling-up are generally common, but some are substantially different in specific locations. This require utmost flexibility, creativity and sensitivity in the light of combining approaches while keeping in mind the basic elements that gave Landcare its name.

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