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Methodological approaches to evaluation of complex interventions in maternal and newborn health: IDEAS project



LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE



Authors: Zelee Hill¹, Elizabeth Allen², Bilal Avan², Della Berhanu², Meenakshi Gautham², Lindsay Mangham-Jefferies², Krystyna Makowiecka², Tanya Marchant², Boika Rechel², Joanna Schellenberg², Neil Spicer², Nasir Umar²

1. Institute of Global Health, University College London

2. London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London, WC1E 7HT

About IDEAS

IDEAS aims to improve the health and survival of mothers and babies through generating evidence to inform policy and practice.

IDEAS uses measurement, learning and evaluation to find out what works, why and how in maternal and newborn health.

IDEAS is funded between 2010 and 2015 by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

Focus geographies

IDEAS is working with partners in Ethiopia, North-Eastern Nigeria and the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.

Our project partners are working to enhance the existing health system by implementing health approaches called innovations.



Theory of change

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's maternal and newborn health strategy theory of change outlines a process that will lead to improved health. IDEAS' research is mapped onto this theory of change, and we will work with in-country project partners implementing maternal and newborn health innovations to test the theory in practice.

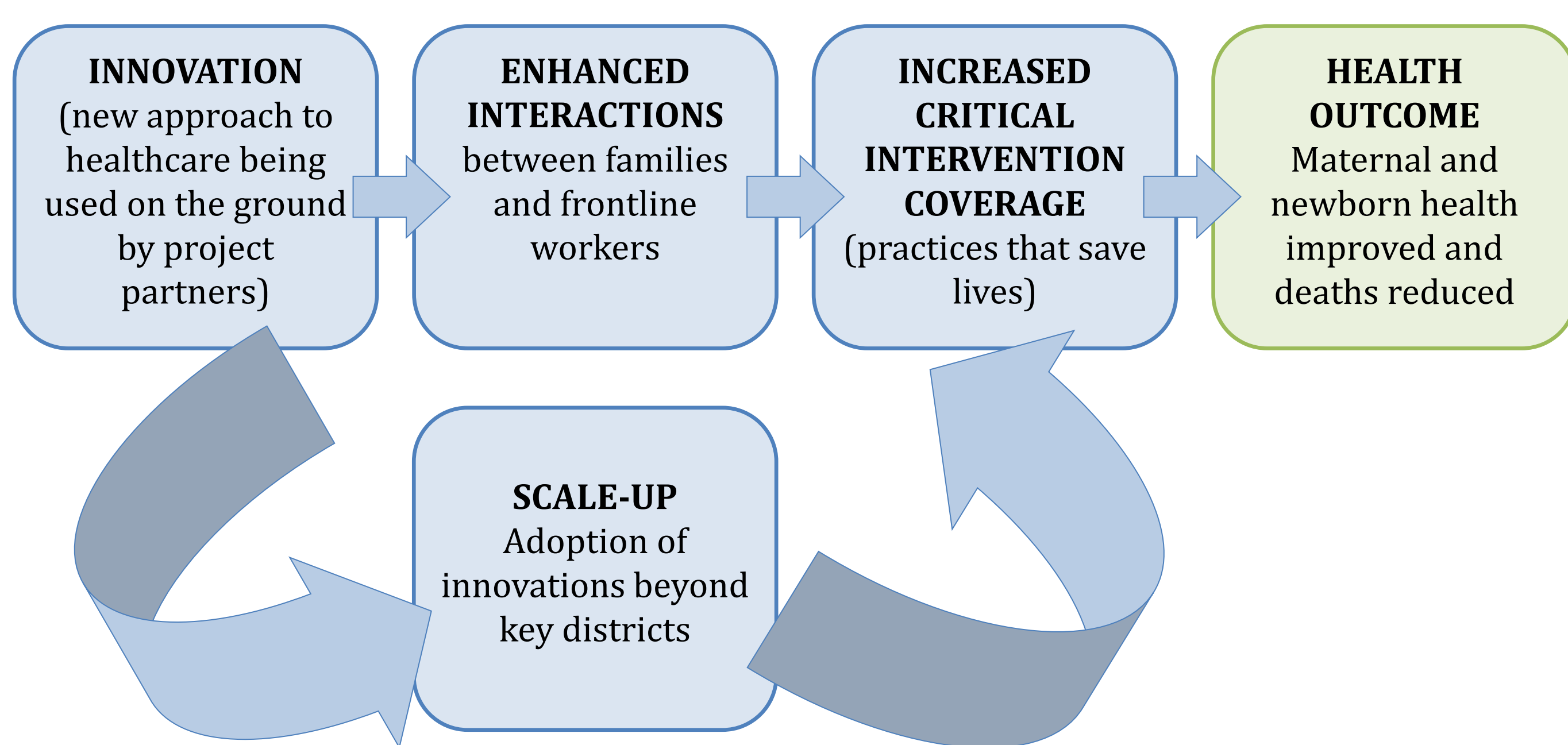


Figure: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's theory of change: Innovations will enhance the interactions between families and frontline workers. This in turn will enable more mothers and babies to access life-saving interventions and lead to improved maternal and newborn health. It is hoped that innovations will be scaled-up from the key districts in which they were introduced to the whole country and beyond, thereby benefiting the health of many more mothers and newborns.



Why is IDEAS important?

IDEAS contributes to the field of the measurement, learning and evaluation in maternal and newborn health through:

- Using standardised approaches to evaluate maternal and newborn health programmes across multiple projects and countries;
- Studying the scale-up of innovations across large geographies;
- Testing the Bill & Melinda Gates foundation maternal and newborn health strategy theory for improving health.

IDEAS project objectives

Research questions to improve the evidence base

IDEAS aims to improve the evidence base for future maternal and newborn health programmes by answering three research questions that look at different stages of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's maternal and newborn theory of change:

1. Have the innovations introduced by our project partners been successful in enhancing interactions between families and frontline health workers, and have these meant that life-saving, critical interventions have reached more mothers and babies? If so, why did this happen?
2. Have the innovations introduced by our project partners been scaled up to reach other areas of Ethiopia, North-Eastern Nigeria and Uttar Pradesh? What helps and what hinders scale-up?
3. Where the innovations have been taken up more widely, have critical intervention coverage and newborn survival improved as a result?

Capacity building

IDEAS is working in with in-country partners to strengthen capacity in measurement, learning and evaluation.

Knowledge into action

Throughout the IDEAS project, we will disseminate best practice and findings as robust evidence on which to base future policy decisions and actions.

Research methods

We are using a range of methodologies to address IDEAS' research questions. These include:

- **Surveys** of frontline workers, households and facilities to explore whether interactions between families and frontline workers are enhanced by maternal and newborn health innovations and whether coverage of interventions increases as a result;
- **Qualitative interviews** with a range of stakeholder groups to understand the facilitators of and barriers to scale-up;
- **Qualitative research** to examine the relationship between enhanced interactions and coverage of critical interventions for maternal and newborn health;
- **Economic modelling** to look at the cost effectiveness of maternal and newborn health innovations;
- **Measuring scale-up through tracking implementation strength.** Based on inputs and processes, scale-up of innovations in maternal and newborn health will be measured through a construct based on implementation strength. The effect of scale-up on coverage of critical interventions will be estimated through before-and-after household surveys.

Image credits

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