
Conditions needed for scaling up successfully

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3. CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR SCALING UP SUCCESSFULLY



There are a number of pitfalls to avoid when talking about innovation. First is not embracing an overly romanticized vision of bottom-up innovations. Then there is the risk of blithely embracing technophilia. Many initiatives remain small scale and might never have the reach needed to overcome the challenges of accessing essential services across Africa. There are a number of seemingly vital success conditions to meet if innovative solutions for accessing services are to see lasting improvement.

DIVERSIFY SOURCES OF FINANCING

In recent years, in a context of economic growth in Africa, national governments have played an important part in financing infrastructure. But sadly, the amounts committed remained greatly insufficient. Overcoming the shortfall in public financing will require encouraging private investment and revisions to mechanisms used for covering and sharing risk. Processes under way in the off-grid energy sector are particularly interesting, recalls Jean-Michel Severino. Increasing the role of private investment does not mean that states should withdraw. Indeed, governments must remain key stakeholders to ensure that all services, including the less profitable, operate correctly.

ENCOURAGE COALITIONS

Governance of essential services suffers from excessive fragmentation and is often answerable to several centralized bodies. The must is to opt for decentralized decision-making so action can be taken at the most appropriate level. Multi-stakeholders' approaches, similar to the Toilet Board Coalition model presented in this issue by Erin McCusker, are also worth developing. Lastly, governance requires more focus on, and involvement by, users when designing services. This is essential if innovations are to be accepted.

ADOPT A USER-CENTERED APPROACH

Users are at the heart of services. No matter how innovative a newly built infrastructure may be, this is not in itself enough to generate uptake for new types of essential services. The user or customer experience is fundamental to overcoming barriers to uptake. The multi-country study run by Firmenich and Archipel&Co on behalf of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, presented here by Bérange Magarinos-Ruchats and Maureen Ravily, shows how users are very unlikely to switch to toilets

instead of practices such as open-air defecation when they have unsatisfactory experiences using toilets. Innovative solutions have to be known and understood by the populations if they are to be adopted. Awareness-raising and education of users and consumers is a cornerstone for ensuring successful uptake. Modern awareness campaigns are very different, and are becoming far more interactive thanks to the reach of digital and social media. But they must also reach out to groups who lack online connectivity or live in remote settings. Gordon Achola, Nana Asamoah-Manu, Andrea Weiss and Younès Drici Tani take a look at examples of campaigns and best practices covering all four services. Lastly, user-centered approaches also rely on choosing the right technical and technological solutions. Experience shows that when trying to convince people to adopt new solutions, particularly the digital ones presented here by George Bauer, it is better to build on existing habits rather than trying to create new ones.

ASSESS THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE SOLUTIONS

Impact assessments are, rightly, becoming central to rolling out any project. The complexity lies in being able to measure change and ascribe it to an action put in place. Several methodologies have been developed in recent years: randomization, control groups, before-after studies, and so on. Jean-Claude Berthelemy describes a triangulation approach used to analyze off-grid energy projects.

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