



Early Learning Innovation Fund Evaluation

Final Report

Authors: Sue Upton, Lisa Slifer-Mbacke and Julian Glucroft

Contents

Acknowledgments	i
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	ii
Executive Summary.....	iii
Introduction.....	7
Chapter 1: Setting the Scene	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review and ISOs' Approaches.....	9
Chapter 3: Lessons Learned and Recommendations	12
Chapter 4: Promising Innovations	17
Conclusions	19

ANNEXES

- Annex: 1 – Formative Evaluation and Monitoring & Evaluation Audit of Two Early Learning Innovation Funds Literature Review
- Annex 2 – Early Learning Innovation Fund Promising Innovations
- Annex 3 – :Realistic Timeline for Project Start-Up and Management

Acknowledgments

MSI would like to sincerely thank all those people who contributed their time, energy, thoughts and ideas to this report, which would not have been possible without the help of the Hewlett Foundation, our advisory committee, Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica staff and their partners across Tanzania, Senegal, Mali, Kenya and Uganda. The evaluation team is extremely grateful for their readiness to tell their stories and share their learning and reflections, as well as for the many warm and friendly welcomes received. The report makes every effort to do justice to their valuable work and visions for the future.

Cover photo: Madrasa Resource Center, Kenya

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBO	Community-Based Organization
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISO	Intermediary Support Organization
KG	Kindergarten
LARA	Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity
LCD	Link Community Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEN	Ministry of National Education
MRCK	Madrasa Resource Center, Kenya
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCODE	Organization for Community Development
QEDC	Quality Education Developing Countries
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SAWA	Safina Women's Association
SHRP	School Health Reading Program
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics (or <i>Société Internationale de Linguistique</i>)
TAHEA	Tanzania Home Economics Association

Executive Summary

This is a formative evaluation of the Hewlett Foundation's Early Learning Innovation Fund that began in 2011 as part of the [Quality Education in Developing Countries \(QEDC\) initiative](#).¹ The Fund has four overarching objectives, which are to: promote promising approaches to improve children's learning; strengthen the capacity of organizations implementing those approaches; strengthen those organizations' networks and ownership; and grow 20 percent of implementing organizations into significant players in the education sector. The Fund's original design was to create a "pipeline" of innovative approaches to improve learning outcomes, with the assumption that donors and partners would adopt the most successful ones.

A defining feature of the Fund was that it delivered assistance through two intermediary support organizations (ISOs), rather than providing funds directly to implementing organizations. Through an open solicitation process, the Hewlett Foundation selected Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica to manage the Fund. Firelight Foundation, based in California, was founded in 1999 with a mission to channel resources to community-based organizations (CBOs) working to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families in Africa. It supports 12 implementing organizations in Tanzania for the Fund.² TrustAfrica, based in Dakar, Senegal, is a convener that seeks to strengthen African-led initiatives addressing some of the continent's most difficult challenges. The Fund was its first experience working specifically with early learning and childhood development organizations. Under the Fund, it supported 16 such organizations: one in Mali and five each in Senegal, Uganda and Kenya.

At the end of 2014, the Hewlett Foundation commissioned Management Systems International (MSI) to conduct a mid-term evaluation assessing the implementation of the Fund exploring the extent to which it achieved intended outcomes and any factors that had limited or enabled its achievements. It analyzed the support that the ISOs provided to their implementing organizations, with specific focus on monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The evaluation included an audit of the implementing organizations' M&E systems and a review of the feasibility of compiling data collected to support an impact evaluation. Finally, the Foundation and the ISOs hoped that this evaluation would reveal the most promising innovations and inform planning for Phase II of the Fund.

The evaluation findings sought to inform the Hewlett Foundation and other donors interested in supporting intermediary grant-makers, early learning innovations and the expansion of innovations. TrustAfrica and Firelight Foundation provided input to the evaluation's scope of work. Mid-term evaluation reports for each ISO provided findings about their management of the Fund's Phase I and recommendations for Phase II. This final evaluation report will inform donors, ISOs and other implementing organizations about the best approaches to support promising early learning innovations and their expansion. The full report outlines findings common across both ISOs' experience and includes recommendations in four key areas: adequate time; appropriate capacity building; advocacy and scaling up; and evaluating and documenting innovations.

Overall, both Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica supported a number of effective innovations working through committed and largely competent implementing organizations. The program's open-ended nature avoided being prescriptive in its approach, but based on the lessons learned in this evaluation and the broader literature, the Hewlett Foundation and other donors could have offered more guidance to ISOs to avoid the need to continually relearn some lessons. For example, over the evaluation period, it became increasingly evident that the current context demands more focused advance planning to measure impact on beneficiaries and other stakeholders and a more concrete approach to promoting and resourcing potential scale-up. The main findings from the evaluation and recommendations are summarized here:

¹ QEDC was an initiative ensuring that children learn to read, calculate and begin to think critically by the end of third grade. Funds from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supported it.

² This report uses "implementing organizations" to refer to Innovation Fund grantees that received support from the two Fund ISOs.

1. Adequate Time

Allow time for start-up of both the ISOs and the implementing organizations' management of grants to achieve realistic and adequate project implementation. Many implementing organizations did not have sufficient time to pilot their interventions. In several instances, when implementing organizations were ready to test their innovations, they had only one school year or less to measure changes in learning outcomes. During that period, many implementing organizations were adapting their innovations based on lessons learned. Assessments did not reflect consistent input and probably under-reported the benefits of the innovation if it had been applied exactly as intended. In an ISO model to manage funds, start-up occurs on two levels. The first is the start-up of the ISO's management of the fund; the second is the start-up of the fund's implementing organizations. Delays in an ISO's project start-up will have a ripple effect on the whole project, resulting in reduced time for implementing and testing innovations. If, in spite of all efforts, start-up does overrun, one strategy to mitigate the negative effects might be the early agreement of a low- or no-cost extension to enable the testing of innovations to be implemented as planned. While a one-size-fits-all time scale does not exist, the approach adopted needs to fit into the time allocated. This could mean a nine-month start-up phase that includes both ISO and implementing organization start-up. ISOs should assess and account for factors that influence the time required for each phase.

Donors should pay close attention to the timing and sequencing of activities. Coordination between the implementing organizations is difficult to achieve, especially when they follow different school calendars. For instance, some implementing organizations received funds after the school year had started, which negatively affected their ability to implement their program. The same can be said about M&E-related activities. On several occasions, M&E technical assistance came too late and baselines did not take place until after the program began. Assessments should conform to the implementing organizations' program cycle, which may not align with the funding cycle.

2. Appropriate Capacity Building

Donors should ask explicitly for an indication of an ISO's proposed capacity-building strategies in response to the initial call for proposals. Understanding the ISOs' capacity-building approach will help donors assess whether adequate budget and resources have been allocated. A requirement for institutional capacity building, where needed, would indicate that donors are concerned with the sustainable development of the organizations they support. It would also facilitate a discussion around how capacity building can contribute to a program's effectiveness.

ISOs are advised to measure institutional and project-focused capacity-building needs through a standardized institutional assessment tool that will permit monitoring institutional change over time. Assessing the institution should include the implementing organization's participation. Priorities, targets and a vision for where the implementing organization wants to be in one, two and three years should be established. An effective approach is the use of a standard assessment tool that enables key personnel to discuss and score their organization against a set of criteria. The ISO facilitates the use of the tool, which is repeated at different project stages to track areas of improvement and those needing additional attention. Firelight Foundation uses an effective, interactive, Excel-based organizational development tool. Once priorities and appropriate strategies are identified, it is important to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to enable these priorities to be met.

3. Advocacy and Scaling Up

Donors should require specific strategies related to an ISO's expansion or scaling approach. Neither the Firelight Foundation nor TrustAfrica had explicit scaling-up strategies that outlined their approach to supporting the expansion of effective innovations. While the Fund was designed to create a pipeline of innovations that could be tested and passed along to other donors to fund their expansion, the Hewlett Foundation did not explicitly request that each ISO present a scaling-up strategy. ISOs made assumptions on how scaling may occur, but made limited progress in securing donor recognition and support for effective innovations.

ISOs and donors should ensure that national-level stakeholders, particularly ministries of education and education development partners, are aware of the project at the outset of design and start-up. Based on the literature review completed as part of this evaluation, innovations should be planned from the beginning in partnership with national ministries of education. At the outset of the project, both ISOs and the Hewlett Foundation had limited understanding of the importance of the national government and donor interface. Funding organizations should offer more advice to ISOs on advocacy and communication with other relevant donors and government to facilitate the eventual expansion of promising innovations. Firelight Foundation focused its attention at the community level due to its community-based design approach. This link with local education officials is important, and local officials often can serve as champions of the innovation at a regional or national level. TrustAfrica helped its partners interact with relevant donors. Both ISOs connected their funded implementing organizations to each other through joint training workshops, email lists or virtual platforms to share innovations and lessons learned. However, neither organization made it a priority to engage directly with the national government. This was regrettable; no matter how small the interventions, education ministries are the statutory bodies responsible for children's education and must ultimately take responsibility any education reform's implementation.

Donors should consider having ISOs conduct a political economy analysis of the target country's basic education sector to support more strategic and effective interventions. The Fund design did not emphasize the importance of understanding and influencing the enabling environment. ISOs focused on the implementing organization programs and relationships between them, rather than how different actors in the system could support or prevent their wider adoption. The literature on scaling up social innovations emphasizes the importance of "enabling conditions" in determining a model's scalability.³ Education innovations do not take place in a political and economic void. The literature review explains that political economy analysis is critical in understanding the financial and political context into which an innovation will be introduced. These factors will have tremendous influence over the potential for a national ministry and partners to take programs to scale.

4. Evaluating and Documenting Innovations

A full-scale impact evaluation will rarely be appropriate for innovations implemented at a small scale. Any proposed impact evaluation needs to be planned prior to the launch of a project. It should account for guidance that ISOs and implementing organizations provide, so that the basic criteria and methodology for assessing outcomes are integral to overall planning, implementation and budget. This did not occur with the Fund. The variety of innovations and approaches to assessing learning outcomes, small sample sizes (only one to five intervention schools or early childhood learning centers) and lack of consistent control groups or baseline data led to this evaluation's conclusion that an impact evaluation would not be viable.

Donors should communicate their M&E expectations clearly and base them on the implementing organization's capacity. The ISOs had only partial success in delivering relevant and effective M&E technical assistance to implementing organizations. TrustAfrica emphasized learning results assessment using control and treatment groups, which was not appropriate for several implementing organizations and contexts. The level of analytical rigor that the organizations tried to achieve did not reflect the organizations' existing M&E capacity, and many of the necessary conditions, like the sample size and timing, were not in place. Therefore, it is important that M&E technical assistance appreciate and incrementally build upon an organization's assessment practices. For instance, if an organization collects anecdotal information from direct observation, M&E support may focus on development of an observation grid that helps an organization collect and score that information in a systemic manner.

Documentation of the model and qualitative approaches of evaluation are recommended to assess effectiveness of small-scale innovations. For such pilot projects, qualitative approaches drawing on interviews with parents, community members, teachers and students can complement the sort

³ Cooley and Linn (2014) identify the following key enabling conditions: financial, natural resource and environmental, policy, institutional capacity, political, cultural and partnership.

of quantitative assessment of changes to learning outcomes that many Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica implementing organizations use. These results will provide the data to assess which innovations are sufficiently successful to move to a larger stage of implementation in 30–50 schools, at which point an impact evaluation becomes more feasible. There are inevitable tensions between enabling experimentation and establishing baselines to rigorously test learning outcomes to justify taking an innovation to scale. Documentation and sharing of successful and not so successful innovations is particularly important at different stages of the development process since it serves to make learning available to the wider development community. It can save time and resources if others are able to draw and build on what has already been learned.

The Hewlett Foundation has agreed to a second and final grant for the two ISOs. Key recommendations from this evaluation are that ISOs should highlight and provide ongoing support for the most promising innovations and focus on disseminating information about the innovations and advocacy to attract support for scale up where this seems appropriate. This should include ongoing capacity building support to enable implementing organizations to fulfil their role with increasing effectiveness and consolidate their learning from the project.

Introduction

The report contains four chapters. Chapter 1 describes the Hewlett Foundation's Early Learning Innovation Fund and the purpose of this evaluation. Chapter 2 assesses Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica's overall approaches in managing the Fund and a summary of key points from the literature review conducted as a part of this evaluation. Chapter 3 offers lessons learned and recommendations based on four categories and Chapter 4 highlights some of the most promising innovations identified as a part of this evaluation.

Chapter I: Setting the Scene

Program Description

The Hewlett Foundation established its Early Learning Innovation Fund in 2011 as part of the Quality Education in Developing Countries (QEDC) initiative,⁴ which aimed to improve learning outcomes. The Hewlett Foundation's original design for the Fund sought to identify, support and foster effective education innovations and thus create a "pipeline" of small projects that it and/or other donors could take to scale. Thus, the funds were quite open-ended, with an assumption that government or other funders would take up effective innovations.

Innovation was defined to include both *incremental and disruptive innovations*. Incremental innovations are those that improve, adapt or apply a model for quality education and learning that occurs in a new setting, with a new population or in response to a new problem. Disruptive innovations are those that provide an uncommon opportunity to deliver learning in a distinctly new way. The Fund had four intermediate outcomes, which were to:

1. Identify or foster promising approaches to improving children's literacy, numeracy and critical thinking in and out of school. Assess learning results and cost-effectiveness.
2. Strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized organizations to assure children's learning and to have strong voices advocating for learning at the local and district levels.
3. Strengthen civil society education networks, ownership and engagement.
4. Over the long term, grow at least 20 percent of sub-grantee organizations into significant education sector players at the state or national level.

A defining feature of the Fund was that it delivered its assistance through two intermediary support organizations (ISOs), rather than directly funding the implementing organizations. Through an open solicitation process, the Hewlett Foundation selected Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica to manage the Fund. Firelight Foundation, based in California, was founded in 1999 with a mission to channel resources to community-based organizations (CBOs) working to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families in Africa. It supported 12 implementing organizations in Tanzania for the Fund. TrustAfrica, based in Dakar, Senegal, is a convener that seeks to strengthen African initiatives to address the continent's most difficult challenges. The Fund was its first experience working specifically with early learning and childhood development organizations. Under the Fund, it supported 16 such organizations: one in Mali and five each in Senegal, Uganda and Kenya.

⁴ QEDC was an initiative ensuring that children learn to read, calculate and begin to think critically by the end of third grade. It is implemented in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Table 1: Overview of ISO Portfolios

ISO	Implementing organizations	Target populations	Innovations
Firelight Foundation (Tanzania) \$1,225,000	12 Tanzanian NGOs (funding withdrawn from one)	Pre-primary children attending early childhood development (ECD) centers Primary school children teachers, parents, communities	Emphasis on community-based interventions to support children's literacy in school
TrustAfrica (Senegal, Mali, Kenya, Uganda) \$1,500,000	16 organizations including INGOs, NGOs and CBOs (funding withdrawn from one)	Predominantly primary school children, teachers, parents	Emphasis on mother-tongue literacy and bilingual education: curricula, methodology and teaching/learning materials development and testing

Note: The dollar amounts in the column on the left correspond to the grant's total value over three years.

Evaluation Purpose

At the end of 2014, the Hewlett Foundation commissioned Management Systems International (MSI) to conduct a formative evaluation assessing the implementation of the Fund over its first three years, exploring the extent to which intended outcomes were achieved, and factors that had limited or enabled achievements. It analyzed the support that the ISOs provided to their implementing organizations, with specific focus on M&E. The evaluation included an audit of the implementing organizations' monitoring and evaluation systems and the data collected to determine whether an impact evaluation would be feasible and valuable. Finally, the Foundation and the ISOs hoped that this evaluation would reveal which of the innovations were most promising, and inform planning for Phase II of the Fund.

The evaluation findings are intended to inform the Hewlett Foundation and other donors interested in supporting ISOs, early learning innovations and the expansion of innovations. TrustAfrica and Firelight Foundation provided input to the evaluation's scope of work as the evaluation was expected to help both organizations learn from their experience and plan for the next phase of their grants.

Evaluation Methodology

MSI consulted with the Hewlett Foundation and an advisory committee of early childhood development and early grade learning specialists to develop the evaluation process. A mixed-methods approach was used that included: a literature review of best approaches for ISOs and scaling-up of social innovations; an online survey of implementing organization personnel; an analysis of national education contexts; and a comprehensive review of project documents. An evaluator traveled to Tanzania, Senegal, Kenya and Uganda and interviewed staff from Firelight Foundation, TrustAfrica and 24 implementing organizations, as well as education specialists and representatives from ministries of education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and ISOs' Approaches

Chapter 1 summarized the purpose of the Early Learning Innovation Fund and this evaluation. In this chapter, we assess Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica's overall management approaches, both from a technical design perspective and in budgeting. First, we will present the key findings of the literature review that help to inform our assessment of Fund management.

Literature Review

Before beginning field work, MSI conducted a literature review in December 2014 (Annex 1) to provide a theoretical framework, against which we could draw conclusions and recommendations.

Specifically, we found that an ISO is effective when it:

- Communicates well with donors, community-based groups and other partners;
- Assesses the institutional and programmatic needs of smaller CSOs;
- Develops, delivers and evaluates appropriate capacity-building strategies;
- Understands the implications of power relationships, governance issues and participation;
- Understands donor requirements and objectives;
- Coordinates financial and narrative reporting so that information and funds flow effectively to enable program activities to progress;
- Coordinates shared learning and advocacy so that government and national-level actors are aware of and, where possible, involved with innovation; and
- Evaluates the most promising innovations, encouraging and facilitating plans to expand them.

The need for ISOs derives from a single organization's lack of the financial and social capital needed to achieve its desired goals. Intermediaries provide a link between grassroots activities and the larger socio-political systems and institutional structures in which they are embedded. ... Intermediaries typically fulfill functions such as organizational capacity building, institutional development, staff training, research and advocacy, collection and dissemination of information and networking.

– Sanyal, 2006, quoted in MSI's Literature Review for the Early Learning Innovation Fund Evaluation

In addition to the findings related to ISOs, we identified the following most salient points on scaling up social innovations:

- Innovations need to be designed and implemented from the outset of activities in coordination with the national ministry of education and national partners in education;
- Political economic analysis is an important step in understanding the potential of and interest in an innovation to be taken to scale. Analysis should include: financial and environmental, policy, institutional capacity, political context, cultural context and current donor and implementer partnerships and innovations;
- Evidence helps determine whether an innovation should be scaled and is ready to scale;
- Monitoring and evaluation helps organizations fine-tune their programs as well as advocate to other stakeholders; and
- Innovations are more likely to scale when they build off existing systems.

To understand how a pilot project could be expanded, it is insufficient to know that it worked in one context. Donors must perform the due diligence of understanding the political economy of the context in which the innovation or pilot will be implemented. While it is tempting to devise and study pilots as a way of understanding what might work at scale, the act of scaling up can pose political economy obstacles that a small pilot does not encounter.

– Chandy et al., 2013, quoted in MSI’s Literature Review for the Early Learning Innovation Fund Evaluation

Overall Approaches

The different approaches of the Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica demonstrate alternatives to consider when designing and scaling up innovations. Table 2 gives a brief overview of each ISO’s program design, capacity-building support and assumptions on expansion:

Table 2: Summary of Overall Fund Management Approaches

Project Aspect	Firelight Foundation	TrustAfrica
Type of innovations supported	Largely community-based, focused on early childhood development	Largely school-based, within formal education system
Institutional capacity building	Standard organizational development tool used to identify and prioritize needs and measure progress. National consultants contracted to do the identified training and follow-up.	Did not offer training for institutional capacity building, but supported implementing organizations with technical capacity to improve interventions and measure learning improvements.
Programmatic capacity building	Adaptation/ training for tools to measure changes in learning outcomes (Uwezo for primary and ZamCAT for pre-primary) Peer learning opportunities at training workshops hosted by implementing organizations that shared their innovations	Support for monitoring and evaluation development tailored to each innovation provided by technical consultant field visits/e-mail support Peer-learning opportunities through virtual community of practice and international workshops
Assumptions about how scale-up would happen	Lateral/organic spread within and across communities and between implementing organizations	In the longer term, government or other donors would pick up successful innovations and take them to scale

Capacity Building

According to the literature review, capacity building is one key service an ISO can provide to implementing organizations. The following section explores the key findings on the two ISOs’ capacity-building approaches.

Capacity building was an important component for both ISOs, although Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica adopted substantively different approaches. Firelight Foundation had a broad approach to assess and develop the institutional capacity of the implementing organizations addressing eight domains. It used a flexible seven-year partnership model to build institutional capacity based on a participatory needs assessment and prioritization of identified needs. TrustAfrica’s capacity building was more focused on project management, monitoring and evaluation. It achieved this through two major channels: 1) Technical assistance that a consultant provided on M&E and early learning and 2) Creation of a virtual network to share best practices, which Senegalese NGO ImaginationAfrika was tasked with managing.

Both ISOs conducted organizational assessments to inform their capacity-building support. Firelight Foundation facilitated organizational assessments where organizations would measure themselves along eight domains: identity and agency; child rights; structure and function; strategy and programming; relationships; human resources; financial resources; and governance, leadership and

management. Capacity development plans were based on the weakest areas and those that were seen as the most important to that organization's personnel. TrustAfrica conducted an initial needs assessment as part of its application process. That assessment informed capacity-building plans, which were tailored to increase each organization's capacity to implement its project and to measure learning outcomes.

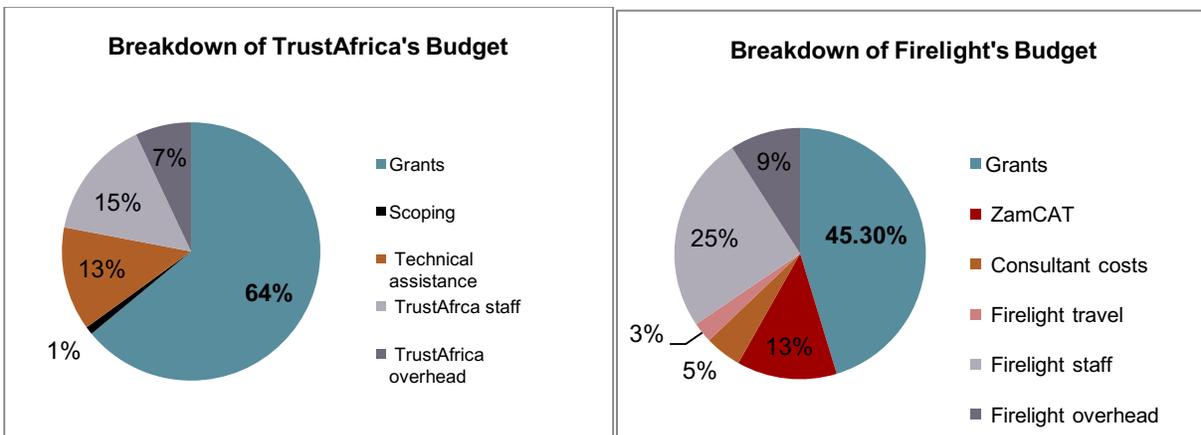
The Hewlett Foundation needs a broader approach to achieve its desired outcome of organizations becoming significant education players. However, the more narrow project-focused capacity-building approach has merit, either as a first phase of broader capacity building or in prioritizing limited resources.

Use of Financial Resources

Neither organization had the appropriate amount of resources available for capacity building. Firelight Foundation was unable to recruit a lead partner organization or consultant to manage the capacity-building activities. This left the onus on the program director, who ended up being overstretched. The program director was the only person who conducted annual visits to and field work with the implementing organizations. Firelight Foundation has since resolved those personnel issues. TrustAfrica relied on a consultant, who had only eight days a month to support 14 organizations in four countries.

The largest portions of funds were allocated to the grants and staffing, with varying amounts allocated for capacity building, monitoring and evaluation and overhead costs. TrustAfrica's budget was more limited in allocation of capacity building and its consultant was unable to provide the required support. This also says something about the ambitious nature of the TrustAfrica design. In retrospect, TrustAfrica's senior staff said they would narrow their geographic focus to provide better support in the future. The most noticeable gap in the funding allocations of both ISOs was the lack of provision for advocacy and national networking. While some of the capacity-building budget supported implementing partner networking and shared learning, this fulfills a distinctly different need. It did not have the purpose of making sure innovations were embedded in the wider national education framework.

Table 3: Breakdown of ISO Budgets



Note: The TrustAfrica pie chart is based on actual expenditures through March 2015. The Firelight Foundation pie chart is based on its 2013–2014 budgets.

Chapter 3: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In this chapter, we provide recommendations for the management of future early learning innovation funds with respect to the use of ISOs and scaling of innovations. Each recommendation cites background and findings to support it.

Adequate Timing

A common challenge for both ISOs was the short period available for piloting interventions. By the time implementing organizations were able to start testing their innovation, most had a school year or less to measure changes in learning outcomes. During the same period, many implementing organizations were refining and improving their innovations; when they had evaluations, they did not show the results of consistent input and probably under-reported the benefits of the innovation applied in an optimal fashion. Future early learning innovation funds should follow these recommendations regarding project timing and start-up.

Allow adequate time for startup — both of the ISOs’ management of grants and of the implementing organizations — to achieve realistic and adequate project implementation. Using an ISO model to manage funds, start-up occurs on two levels: the start-up of the ISOs’ management of the fund and the start-up of the fund’s implementing organizations. Delays in an ISO’s project start-up will have a ripple effect on the whole project, resulting in reduced time for the implementation and testing of innovations. If, in spite of all efforts, start-up does overrun, one strategy to mitigate the negative effects is the early agreement of a low- or no-cost extension to enable innovations testing as planned. While a one-size-fits-all time scale does not exist, the adopted approach needs to fit within the time allotted. This means that proposed activities need to be realistic, given the time available. ISOs need to assess the time needed for their own and their implementing organizations’ start-up and implementation, as well as a consolidation end phase. Factors that influence the time required for each phase need to be identified, analyzed and taken into account. While the desired duration of a funding cycle depends on numerous factors, Table 4 provides some guidance.

Table 4: Realistic Timeframe for Grant Start-up and Implementation

Key phases in working through intermediaries to test innovations	Duration	Factors that can influence the time allowed
ISO start-up (recruitment, informing appropriate authorities, selecting organizations, planning capacity building, initial workshop for implementing organizations, grant dispersal)	6+ months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary contextual research may require additional time 2. Recruitment can take longer than planned – recruit and network early on in proposal
Implementing organization start-up (recruitment, procurement, initial stakeholder engagement)	3+ months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same as above 2. Working in formal school system will take time in approvals and coordination with ministry of education 3. Remote areas or poor internet access will require more time
Main implementation phase (testing and measuring the results, capacity building, advocacy and communications)	2-3 years	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The length of one program cycle: an innovation intended to have an impact on the first three years of primary education ideally needs to run for three years
Consolidation (Disseminating synthesis of program results, capitalize on advocacy, plan for next phases)	6 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any second phase of funding should pick up as quickly as possible after the first ends to avoid losing project staff and stakeholder confidence

Donors should pay close attention to the timing and sequencing of activities. Coordination between implementing organizations is difficult to achieve, especially when they are following different school calendars. For instance, some implementing organizations received funds after their school year had started, which negatively affected their ability to implement their program. The same can be said about

M&E-related activities. On several occasions, M&E technical assistance came too late, with baselines being conducted after the program had begun. Assessments should conform to the implementing organizations' program cycle, which may not align with the funding cycle.

A more detailed timeline for project start-up and implementation is in Annex 3.

Appropriate Capacity Building

Implementing organizations are likely to have both institutional and project-related capacity-building needs. ISOs need understand both and have a carefully considered strategy to support either type of capacity building — or, ideally, both. Donors need to ask for the specific approach that ISOs will take in building the capacity of implementing organizations and the types of tools that will measure institutional development over the course of the intervention.

Institutional capacity building develops an organization's long-term effectiveness and sustainability, typically focusing on issues such as governance, monitoring, evaluation and learning and advocacy. Institutional capacity building is an opportunity to invest in civil society's stake in national development from community-level work to influencing national policy. The Firelight Foundation showed itself to be particularly strong in this respect. It worked with implementing community-based organizations and non-government organizations through a flexible seven-year partnership model. This strengthened institutional capacity using a participatory needs assessment to prioritize that organization's needs. Examples of Firelight Foundation's capacity building include training for management bodies to improve governance and helping partners to improve their monitoring and evaluation strategies to build reliable data based on measurable outcomes and a clear theory of change.

Project focused capacity building is directly related to the effective implementation of the project itself, to support the achievement of its stated objectives. This was the focus of TrustAfrica's capacity building. It addressed the implementing organizations' capacity to effectively measure changes in learning outcomes being realized as a result of the innovations being tested. Implementing organizations learned a more impact-oriented approach to project monitoring and evaluation than many were accustomed to; they also received advice and support to develop tailored monitoring and evaluation methodologies for each innovation. This resulted in a number of comprehensive assessments of the changes in learning outcomes attributed to each specific innovation. TrustAfrica focused its resources to expand its limited experience of working in primary education through valid measurement of learning outcomes, which was central to achieving project objectives. Firelight Foundation took a different approach to project-focused capacity building. It identified and adapted common tools (Uwezo and ZamCAT) to measure learning outcomes for primary and pre-primary innovations, respectively.⁵

Future early learning innovation funds should follow these recommendations regarding institutional capacity-building:

Donors should ask explicitly for an indication of an ISO's proposed capacity-building strategies in response to the initial call for proposals to ensure that the institutional capacity of implementing organizations will be assessed and that appropriate capacity building is part of the ISO's program planning and budgeting. A requirement for institutional capacity building would indicate that donors are concerned with the sustainable development of implementing organizations. It would also facilitate a discussion around capacity building and the role it will play in the program concerned. If donors have a clear understanding of this, they are more likely to agree on a suitable budget.

⁵ The Uwezo assessment tool was initially designed as a large-scale, nationally representative household survey to assess the basic literacy and numeracy competencies of school-aged children across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The Zambian Child Assessment Test (ZamCAT) was developed in 2010 as an early child development instrument to assess the abilities of preschool Zambian children in nonverbal cognition; receptive and expressive language; fine motor skills; information processing; executive function; socio-emotional development; and task orientation. Firelight Foundation adapted the tool to the Tanzania early childhood development context.

ISOs are advised to assess institutional and project-focused capacity-building needs through a standardized institutional assessment tool, which will allow monitoring institutional change over time. Assessing an institution should take place with the implementing organization's participation. Priorities, targets and a vision for the implementing organization in one, two and three years should be established. An effective approach is a standard assessment tool that enables a group of key personnel to discuss and score their organization against a set of criteria. The ISO facilitates the use of the tool, which is repeated at different stages of the project to track areas of improvement and areas that still need attention. Firelight Foundation uses an effective interactive, Excel-based organizational development tool. It allowed organizations to visualize how they scored along different organizational development criteria and how they progressed in those areas over time. After identifying priorities and appropriate strategies, it is important to ensure allocation of adequate resources to enable meeting these priorities.

Advocacy and Scaling Up

Both ISOs connected their funded implementing organizations to each other through joint training workshops, email lists or virtual platforms to share innovations and lessons learned. However, both ISOs did limited work to connect implementing organizations to larger-level national education structures, such as the ministry of education and other relevant education partners. These linkages are important in terms of the need to advocate for education reforms and to increase awareness of the need for new and effective education approaches. Advocacy is also critical to any effective expansion strategy. The literature review conducted for this evaluation noted the importance of ISOs' advocacy for both reform and scaling-up purposes. Advocacy allows ISOs to connect grassroots organizations to larger socio-political systems and institutional structures in which they are embedded (Sanyal 2006). The ISOs made some efforts in this regard. However, this was not an overall priority. Both TrustAfrica and Firelight Foundation did not truly engage national structures, especially the ministries of education. While these structures are not expected to be deeply involved at the pilot stage, they are responsible for ensuring access to quality education and, as such, should be informed from the outset and on a periodic basis. Early involvement makes it easier to gain later buy-in.

For future early learning innovation funds, we recommend the following:

Donors should require specific strategies related to an ISO's expansion or scaling approach. Neither the Firelight Foundation nor TrustAfrica had explicit scaling-up strategies that outlined their approach to supporting the expansion of effective innovations. While the Innovation Fund was designed to create a pipeline of innovations that could be tested and passed along to other donors to fund their expansion, there was no explicit request for each ISO to have an explicit scaling strategy. ISOs each had assumptions on how scaling would occur. However, they made limited progress in securing donor recognition and support for effective innovations.

ISOs and donors should ensure that national stakeholders, particularly ministries of education and education development partners, are aware of the project at the outset of design and start-up. Based on the literature review completed for this evaluation, innovations should be planned from the outset in partnership with national ministries of education. Both ISOs and the Hewlett Foundation had limited understanding of the importance of the national government and donor interface at the outset of the project. Funding organizations should offer more advice to ISOs on advocacy and communication with other relevant donors and government to facilitate the eventual expansion of promising innovations. Firelight Foundation focused its attention at the community level due to its community-based design approach. TrustAfrica worked with CBOs and national and international NGOs and did facilitate communication with some other relevant donors. However, neither organization made it a priority to engage directly with government. This was regrettable; however small the interventions, education ministries are the statutory bodies responsible for children's education and must ultimately take responsibility for implementing any education reform.

Evaluating and Documenting Innovations

The Hewlett Foundation and the ISOs recognize the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in identifying, supporting and promoting the expansion of promising innovations. However, lack of clear M&E guidelines from the Hewlett Foundation led ISOs to adopt distinct assessment approaches. The lack of guidance also made ISOs unsure if the Hewlett Foundation expected an impact evaluation for each innovation or across the various innovations the implementing organizations managed. The Firelight Foundation adopted the Uwezo tool to measure learning progress among early grade beneficiaries and the ZamCAT to measure changes in school readiness skills for preschool beneficiaries. They emphasized training for implementing organizations to use these tools and share results of tests with parents and community members. In this way, implementing organizations saw the tools as an innovative way to gain insight into the cognition of learning and to share immediate results with parents. In addition to training the implementing organizations to use the tools, Firelight Foundation also retained teams of consultants to conduct baseline testing across a sample of early learning centers and primary schools.

TrustAfrica took a different approach to measuring implementing organizations' progress. They retained one consultant to provide assistance to implementing organizations in designing a quasi-experimental learning assessment approach, testing students in both pilot and comparison groups.

Given the diversity of the innovations, the variety of languages and the small sample size, it is not feasible to conduct any type of impact evaluation for this Fund. For future early learning innovation funds, we recommend the following:

The design of M&E assistance should result from a needs assessment and understanding of the operating environment. M&E assistance carries a risk of responding to donor requirements, rather than an implementing organization's needs. This was evident with the use of logical frameworks, which may have been introduced prematurely or with not enough guidance for some implementing organizations. M&E assistance should be sequenced so that organizations first are able to articulate their theory of change, and then can translate in a logical framework to guide their activities. There was also the issue with organizations already having M&E systems that contradicted the guidance provided under the Fund. In these situations, M&E technical assistance should not attempt to establish a parallel M&E system, but rather build off what is already there.

Donors must provide guidance on monitoring and reporting expectations for any intervention with improved learning as its outcome. The Hewlett Foundation provided limited guidance to its ISOs on expectations around monitoring of learning outcomes. Both ISOs provided resources, technical support, and time to conduct standardized learning assessments. However, issues around quality of sample and sample size impede the ability to conduct quality evaluations with credible impact attribution.

A full-scale impact evaluation will rarely be appropriate for innovations being implemented at a small scale. Any proposed impact evaluation needs to be planned prior to a project's start. It should take into account guidance from funders, ISOs and implementing organizations, so that the basic criteria and methodology for assessing outcomes are integral to overall planning, implementation and budget. This did not occur for the Innovation Fund. The variety of innovations and approaches to assessing learning outcomes, small sample sizes and lack of consistent control groups or baseline data led to the conclusion that an impact evaluation would not be viable.

Documentation of the model and qualitative approaches of evaluation are recommended to assess effectiveness of small-scale innovations. For such pilot projects, qualitative approaches drawing on interviews with parents, community members, teachers and students can complement the sort of quantitative assessment of changes to learning outcomes that the Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica implementing organizations used. These results will provide data to assess which innovations are successful enough to move to a larger stage of implementation in 30–50 schools, at which point an impact evaluation becomes more feasible. Tensions are inevitable between enabling experimentation, establishing baselines and rigorously testing learning outcomes to justify taking an innovation to scale.

Documentation and sharing of successful and not-so-successful innovations is particularly important at different stages of the development process, since it makes learning available to the wider development community. It can save time and resources, as others are then able to draw and build on what has been learned. Documentation of each innovation needs to be detailed enough to be useful but succinct enough to ensure that key points are readily available. It might include descriptions of context, presenting issues, the innovation, key stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities, qualitative and quantitative effects on beneficiaries and their learning outcomes and particular successes, challenges and lessons learned. A point of contact for further information should also be included, as well as a photograph.

Chapter 4: Promising Innovations

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the Early Learning Innovation Fund and the rationale for this evaluation. Chapter 2 assessed the ISOs' overall approaches and highlighted key points from the literature review. Chapter 3 presented recommendations for future early learning innovation funds based on lessons learned. In this chapter, we highlight some of the promising innovations supported by Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica. The scope of this evaluation did not include a rigorous assessment of each innovation. However, field interviews and document review provided the evaluation team with enough information to establish a preliminary selection of programs based on the following criteria:

1. Particularly innovative or comprehensive program models.
2. Relative success in assessing learning results or M&E practices, mostly with standardized before-and-after assessments showing improvements in learning outcomes.
3. Stakeholder engagement and ownership, primary at a local-level.

These criteria were based on some of the salient points identified in the literature about scaling up social innovations. However, as mentioned, some of those key points — like engaging national stakeholders and conducting political economic-type analyses — did not feature in any of the innovative programs.

We also chose to feature three diverse implementing organizations from each ISO for all project countries (except Mali). The Organization for Community Development (OCODE) and Safina Women's Association (SAWA) are community-based NGOs. Tanzania Home Economics Association (TAHEA) is a national-level NGO. Société Internationale de Linguistique (SIL) and Link Community Development (LCD) are international NGOs. Madrasa Resource Center, Kenya (MRCK) is a community-based program of the Aga Khan Foundation.

Table 5 provides an overview of the selected models (with further description in Annex 2). Note that innovative aspects may not always be novel. Rather, social innovation can entail applying proven models in a new context, like the example of remedial classes for OCODE in Tanzania.

Table 5: Promising Innovations

Organization/Country	Program Model or Theory of Change	Learning outcomes	Stakeholder Buy-in	Innovative Aspects
<i>The Organization for Community Development (OCODE) – Tanzania</i>	Training teachers in reading, writing and arithmetic for slow learners. Providing teaching aids and materials. Establishing and equipping remedial classes. Sensitize parents to get involved in the learning struggles of their children.	Based on before/after assessment: -Pupils who can read a story in Swahili went from 18% to 77% -Pupils who can read letters in English went from 33% to 97% -Pupils who pass mathematics test went from 22% to 56%	-Parents in the community contributed cash to the program. - Schools outside intervention zone asked to use the model.	Use of SMS to engage and sensitize parents
Tanzania Home Economics Association (TAHEA) – Tanzania	If youth mobilize parents and communities to support numeracy and literacy skill development, the literacy and numeracy of children in primary school will improve.	No standardized assessment of learning outcomes took place, but TAHEA had one of the stronger M&E frameworks.	-Adults in communities were beginning to see youth as part of the solution, rather than the problem. -Engaging youth.	Combining children's literacy with youth development.
Safina Women's Association (SAWA) - Tanzania	If the Mvomero District Council is actively engaged in ECD policy, budget planning and evaluation processes at the community level, ECD centers will have more resources for service delivery and child learning outcomes will improve.	No learning data. SAWA uses Uwezo and ZamCAT tools. SAWA is the accredited trainer for Uwezo in Morogoro region and trained other Firelight Foundation implementing organizations to use the tools.	Community engagement model. Local government authorized land use for school construction. Community members contributed building materials and were involved in managing the ECD centers.	Promoting ECD and establishing centers where they did not previously exist.
Société Internationale de Linguistique (SIL) – Senegal	Increase learning outcomes by creating a program to facilitate the transfer of reading skills from L1 (mother tongue) to L2 (French).	Before-after comparison with baseline that was conducted after project start. 19 evaluation criteria. Overall positive results compared to treatment group. Average score in print awareness went from 5.3 to 10.37 for treatment and 4.63 to 8.42 for control.	Advocacy has included national-level authorities. Contact with other bilingual education models.	Bilingual education model using Serer and French.
Madrasa Resource Center, Kenya (MRCK)	Classroom and community-level interventions focused on improving teaching and learning practices and teachers' tools for literacy assessment and supporting and encouraging parents' participation in reading with and for their children.	The endline study indicated positive gains in reading scores for pupils at both KG2 and KG3 levels in comparison with the control groups, but few of the findings were statistically significant. There were criteria where the control group performed better.	Works with county education authorities around Mombasa to implement ECD centers.	Teaching reading at the pre-school level with children as young as 3.
Link Community Development (LCD) – Uganda	LCD worked in 16 schools, facilitating eight school performance reviews and training for 16 literacy teachers, 16 school management committee members and 16 parent/teacher association members.	Example from EGRA: At baseline, P1 pupils could read 0 words correctly in English and Runyoro. At endline, the average was 2.7 (English) and 1.6 (Runyoro).	Organizes annual stakeholder meetings with all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education.	School performance review measurement tool.

Conclusions

Both Firelight Foundation and TrustAfrica supported a number of effective innovations working through committed and largely competent implementing organizations. The program's open-ended nature avoided being prescriptive in its approach, but based on the lessons learned in this evaluation and the broader literature, the Hewlett Foundation and other donors could have offered more guidance to ISOs to avoid the need to continually relearn some lessons. For example, over the period of the evaluation, it became increasingly evident that the current context demands more focused advance planning to measure impact on beneficiaries and other stakeholders and a more concrete approach to promoting and resourcing potential scale-up.

The Hewlett Foundation has agreed to a second and final grant for each of the two ISOs. Key recommendations from this evaluation are that ISOs should highlight and provide ongoing support for the most promising innovations and focus on disseminating information about the innovations and advocacy to attract support for scale-up where it seems appropriate. This should include ongoing capacity-building support to enable implementing organizations to fulfill their role, increase effectiveness and consolidate their learning from the project.

This report has made a number of recommendations to assist the Hewlett Foundation and other donors working through ISOs to support innovation and the scale-up of promising approaches. Donors can provide some useful general guidance, without becoming prescriptive, to assist ISOs in developing interventions. Such guidance might include:

- An expectation that institutional and project-focused capacity-building needs of implementing organizations will be assessed using a standard tool, and that a capacity-building plan will be established, funded, implemented and evaluated as part of the project.
- An expectation that ISOs will, at a minimum, introduce the planned innovations to ministries of education, keep them informed and updated on innovations being tested and, where possible, involve government representatives in implementation and discussions concerning the innovations.
- A requirement for a political economy analysis of the national education sector detailing relevant policy and active partner activities, networks and stakeholders. This would be completed prior to ISOs' selection of implementing organizations. This political economy analysis will provide insight to the ISOs in helping to identify some of the unique innovations with potential to scale.
- An expectation that ISOs will provide a strategy for the scale-up of successful innovations.
- Clear guidance about any monitoring and evaluation requirements and whether an impact evaluation will be required so that appropriate provision can be made from the beginning of the project to conduct baseline testing.

While donors will have some constraints that influence their proposed funding period, this needs to be based on a realistic assessment of the time required for each phase of the project, with discussion of contingency plans to mitigate any delays that occur. This is an example of the need for donor awareness of the power dynamics between donor and grantee. As the agency with ultimate control of funding, donors need to make space for more frequent, ongoing and structured dialogue to ensure that ISOs do not attempt to meet unrealistic objectives in a given time. Approaching the dialogue in the spirit of collaborative learning and adapting will help to facilitate an open and honest discussion with ISOs.

Annex 1 – Formative Evaluation and Monitoring & Evaluation Audit of Two Early Learning Innovation Funds Literature Review

Formative Evaluation and Monitoring & Evaluation Audit of Two Early Learning Innovation Funds Literature Review

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
December 12, 2014

Submitted by:
Management Systems International, Inc. msiworldwide.com

200 12th Street, Suite 1200
Arlington, VA. 22202 USA

Tel: +1 703.979.7100
Fax: +1 703.979.7101

Contents

- Introduction..... 3
- Effective Models for Selecting, Managing and Supporting Intermediaries 3
- Defining the intermediary organization and what it does 3
- Intermediaries and systems..... 6
- How to assess an intermediary 10
- Expanding and Disseminating Innovations..... 12
- Defining social innovation..... 12
- Frameworks for Expansion..... 12
- Types of expansion 18
- Conclusion..... 21
- Works Cited 22

Managing and Disseminating Innovation through Intermediaries

Introduction

The critical role of civil society organizations (CSO) in international development gained wide recognition in the late 1980s, and their role has steadily increased since. However, a number of factors have persistently inhibited CSOs' ability to support and empower disadvantaged groups and facilitate sustainable social transformation. These barriers include a lack of organizational management capacity; an overreliance on and accountability to international donors; and difficulties in encouraging governments to take successful innovations to scale and link them with larger-scale policy and decision-making.

Intermediary organizations emerged to link international donors and, to some extent, governments, with community-based organizations (CBO) and initiatives. The relationships between intermediaries and other actors are not always linear or hierarchical. The potential for intermediaries to support social change lies in their understanding of the systems they inhabit and their ability to affect them.

CSOs also play an important role in the design and piloting of innovations, many of which have proved effective and transformative at the community level. However, it has proved to be more difficult to introduce such innovations into national policy and still more challenging to bring them to scale on the ground.

In the first part of this literature review, we examine how intermediary organizations influence systems and support diverse actors to meet common goals. We highlight lessons learned to assist donors with effectively engaging intermediaries and look at the roles, skills and capacities required by the parties concerned. In the second part of this literature review, we examine processes based on lessons learned for the expansion and dissemination of innovation.

Effective Models for Selecting, Managing and Supporting Intermediaries

Defining the intermediary organization and what it does

Intermediary organizations can be thought of as “conduits of resources” (Vogel and Fisher 2008), since they are first and foremost resource organizations for others. The main distinction between traditional, charitable nongovernment organizations (NGO) and intermediary organizations is that intermediaries provide resources to other actors who implement social programs instead of directly to the ultimate beneficiaries of those programs. Information is one of the important resources channeled and influenced by intermediaries, which act as buffers and interpreters of diverse cultures and perspectives, ideally enabling donors and community groups to better understand each other.

Four Primary Resources Intermediaries Provide

1. **Funding**
2. **Technical Assistance**
3. **Training**
4. **Information and Research**

The need for intermediaries derives from a single organization's lack of the financial and social capital needed to achieve its desired goals. Intermediaries provide a link between grassroots activities and the larger socio-political systems and institutional structures in which they are embedded (Sanyal 2006). This function sets them apart from their client CSOs that support service delivery or advocate for specific causes. Intermediaries typically fulfil functions such as organizational capacity building, institutional development, staff training, research and advocacy, collection and dissemination of information, and networking (Sanyal 2006). Resources that intermediaries provide can be divided into four broad categories: funding, technical assistance, training, and information and research.

From the perspective of international donors, intermediaries are usually seen as pass-through organizations for the provision of resources that enable local organizations to affect change. Using local intermediaries rather than providing direct assistance to CBOs is perceived as a more manageable, effective and sustainable approach to building local capacity to achieve social change. However, intermediaries can be perceived as a necessary evil rather than as a critical link in a chain of relationships, and this perception can inhibit donors from seeing support for their effective operation as a valid use of resources.

Often, but not always, intermediaries are CSOs that support other CSOs. The intermediary role can be played by different actors at different points within multi-directional exchanges and flows of information (Fisher and Vogel 2008). Intermediaries can be research institutions, foundations or private companies. And, a single intermediary can have clients that are international organizations, national organizations and grassroots groups. For example, Netherlands-based Aflatoun (discussed in more detail below) works with smaller-scale CSOs; international NGOs, such as U.K.-based Plan International; and the government of Egypt (Amur and Munk 2014).

The CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI),⁶ a participatory needs assessment and action-planning tool for civil society around the world, enables us to define intermediary organizations in comparison to other types of CSOs. It divides citizens' organizations into three categories: mutual benefit, public benefit or pretenders. Intermediaries fall into the category of public-benefit organizations — defined as being formed by one group of citizens to benefit other groups of citizens, often with support from third parties (Holloway 2001). Within that broad category, intermediaries are CSOs that provide capacity-building support, networking, research and representation.

Intermediaries have been established as specialist support organizations to help less-developed CSOs build their institutional, organizational and technical capacities (Holloway 2001). They act as networking organizations, coordinating activities of other CSOs and developing CSO networks; research and think tanks on specific issues to support NGOs, business and local or national government; and representative CSOs that help others liaise with government institutions. These functions are not exhaustive; intermediaries often work across these categories, and nonintermediary CSOs can take on these functions as well.

In international development, much of the literature on intermediary organizations focuses on their capacity-building function and the different modalities for providing that service to client CSOs (Ashman et al, 2011). The most frequent modality is through training but can also encompass periodic support for planned organizational learning and change processes, facilitating exchange visits among groups that implement similar programs, sponsoring conferences, and providing Web-based programs. The degree of formality of capacity building also varies from structured courses or programs offered to other CSOs to informal capacity building through information sharing and networking (Ashman et al, 2011).

Research and think tanks are sometimes referred to as information or knowledge intermediaries and are especially well-suited for promoting innovation. They generate, interpret, organize and communicate research-based information for a particular group for a social purpose (Fisher and Vogel 2008). They help establish a communication structure and enabling environment that invites the use of evidence in policy and practice. Thus, at their most effective, intermediaries do not just communicate information from one actor to another, they interact with stakeholder groups through varied communication channels to engage in the interpretation of information and use it to co-create new knowledge. They reinforce successful programs, identify challenges and support learning from experience.

One example of how some of these functions come together in practice is provided by the U.S. government's Social Innovation Fund (SIF), which uses grant-making intermediaries to competitively select nonprofit organizations to develop promising, evidence-based solutions in economic opportunity, healthy futures and youth development (Shah and Jolin 2012). Intermediaries use their relationships with innovative social programs and their flexibility and ability to manage risk to connect government funds

⁶ Accessible at www.civicus.org/index.php/en/csi/123-introduction-to-the-csi.

with socially driven organizations, enabling the federal government to fund promising innovations (Smith 2009).

SIF intermediaries collect and assess evidence on potential grantee programs to advise the federal government on how it should allocate funds, thus supporting the federal government in good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Intermediaries evaluate program potential and effectiveness and make investments accordingly. SIF's tiered grant-making approach is designed to give more money to organizations with proven impact, while not excluding organizations that lack the evidence for their impact. The three grant categories (fig. 1) correspond to the strength of the evidence that exists for that particular program. In developing countries as well, differentiated grant making allows donors and intermediaries to reach CSOs with limited management capacity (Tembo et al 2007).

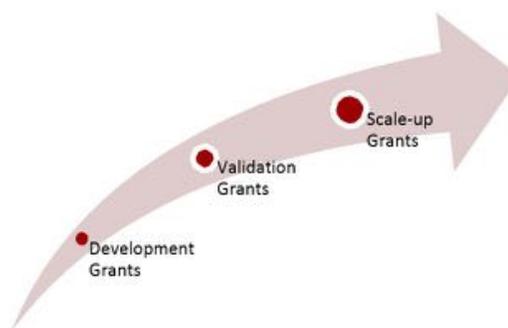


Figure 1. SIF Grant Categories.

SIF evaluation criteria are based on grantees' past and planned evaluations. Flexibility toward the actual evidence a potential grantee has or plans to collect avoids excluding nascent programs and organizations. However, certain sectors and types of programs risk being disadvantaged, such as those doing advocacy work where impact can be more difficult to measure (Abramson et al 2012).

Linking bureaucratic grant-making processes with emerging social innovations is not without its challenges and requires reconciling diverging cultures. In the SIF example, a peer-review process was used to evaluate and approve government grants. Such systems are typically used to prevent government agencies from allocating federal grant awards in biased ways, as opposed to maximizing quality decision-making or improving the value of programs (Shah and Jolin 2012). The result is that investment analysis best practices cannot easily be used in the allocation of government funds. To be effective in this system, intermediary grant-making organizations need to push the government to adapt evaluation practices to the requirements of investing in social innovations. This requires going beyond paper applications and allowing enough flexibility for further analysis of evidence, consultations with potential grantees and site visits.

The in-depth analysis of social investments that intermediaries can provide is akin to the services that marketing information services provide for the retail sector (Smith 2009). In other words, they can assess and develop advice on the quality and efficacy of emerging social innovations, which can both inform governments and donors on how to allocate their money and educational institutions on whether they should adopt that particular program. Thus, intermediaries create a common source of information for policymakers, donors and practitioners/implementers.

There is also the question of how intermediary organizations participate in and influence the decision-making processes of the initiatives they are involved in. The World Bank has long been aware of the importance of this role — seeing CSOs as important intermediaries in World Bank-funded projects that depend on participation and capacity building at the community level. Successful collaboration depends

on identifying an organization with appropriate characteristics and involving its staff in decision-making from as early as possible in the project cycle. Steps must be taken to prevent World Bank or government requirements from undermining the participatory orientation of the CSO and, where necessary, to strengthen its capacity, encourage cooperation among CSOs, and support communication between CSOs and government. (Carroll, Schmidt and Bebbington 1995). This recognizes the power dynamics within a program and the importance of enabling intermediary organizations to represent and advocate for marginalized groups.

Where poverty reduction, investment in human resources and environmental management are concerned, projects increasingly depend on participation and capacity building at the community level.

Participatory, community-based development depends in turn on intermediary organizations with the specialized skills and experience to provide links between community-level institutions on the one hand and national and international institutions on the other. The intermediary functions include facilitating communication between project beneficiaries and government; helping to identify and voice community needs; supporting participation and group formation; training and building the capacity of community groups; and channeling resources to the community level.

We have seen that relationships and systems are essential components of the role that intermediary organizations take on. In this next section we look at the environmental conditions that affect the form that intermediaries take and their relative success.

Intermediaries and systems

An analysis of the systems in which an organization operates is useful when determining whether and how to engage with that organization. The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) 2011

Forward Reform Agenda focused on building capacity of local actors with the idea that "to invest insustainability, the Agency must have a greater capacity to nurture lasting institutions, systems, and capacities in developing countries that enable them to confront development challenges effectively" (USAID 2011).

This reform agenda has manifested itself in two ways: first, through increased funding being disbursed directly to local organizations and, second, increased adoption of a systems-thinking perspective in alignment with the Agency's Local Systems Framework. This states that "the focus on local systems is rooted in the reality that achieving and sustaining any development outcome depends on the contributions of multiple and interconnected actors. Building the capacity of a single actor or strengthening a single relationship is insufficient" (USAID 2014).

This second interpretation encourages international donors to intervene in a way that leverages systems as a whole as opposed to focusing on capacity building for individual organizations. Thus, donors might think of themselves as conveners and enablers rather than simply as providers. In this case, a local intermediary organization can play a critical part in stimulating and supporting local actors who are committed to reform and social progress. However, since intermediary organizations are often dependent on external funding, donors need to consider supporting and building an organization's capacity to sustain its operations after a project ends in the same way that intermediaries need to build sustainability into their work with their grantees.

Ultimately, the intermediary organization's ability to connect key players in a network is a strong indicator of its effectiveness and credibility. One would have to also look at the quality of those connections and whether they are placing organizations in a better position than they were without the network. In the case of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), a critical element of its effectiveness was its success in linking international donors with grassroots groups (Sanyal 2006). Governments and donors gain from their relationship with intermediaries by being able to improve the reach of their services and programs to disadvantaged groups. Grassroots groups benefit from new resources allowing them to carry out their goals.

PRIA is an international center for learning and promotion of citizen participation and democratic governance used by NGOs, governments, donors, trade unions, private business and academic institutions. It focuses on citizens' empowerment through promoting access to rights and entitlements, including basic services in health, education and water; women's literacy and livelihoods; forest rights of tribal peoples; land rights; and occupational health and safety.

PRIA's theory of change comprises three interrelated elements:

- Mobilization and collectivization of citizens prepares them in becoming informed and active.
- Creating coalitions of countervailing power such that pressure to energize and reform governance is generated.
- Influencing governance institutions to become accountable to their mandates and citizens.

PRIA's strategy comprises:

- Supporting knowledge enhancement and capacities for active citizenship.
- Facilitating building of collectives and associations of citizens so that their voice is amplified.
- Enabling civil-society partnerships and alliances to engage governance institutions.
- Convening multi-stakeholder dialogues in the public and private spheres.
- Advocating to support participation and democratic governance.

PRIA operationalizes its strategy through:

- Enabling micro-macro and macro-micro linkages that create strong support for influencing various actors. Therefore, PRIA works at the grassroots level to evolve innovations that are scaled up provincially, nationally and globally.
- Developing and nurturing relationships with grassroots actors and systematizing practical knowledge.
- Promoting capacity building through distance education, structured events, field exposure and information dissemination. Undertaking transnational initiatives based on the principles of south-south cooperation.

PRIA's expertise in management of social development programs comprises participatory approaches in planning, monitoring and evaluation, gender audits, training and human resource development, strategic planning, legal and financial planning, organizational development, team building, policy analysis and advocacy, building coalitions and networks.

Accountability is a common challenge in defining operational arrangements between actors. An organization tends to serve the interests of those to whom it is accountable (Caroll et al 1995). In principle, the intermediary organization should be accountable to the local organizations it serves and to a lesser extent to those organizations' ultimate beneficiaries. However, in reality, donor funds are tied with reporting requirements, which can contribute to a patron/client relationship with the intermediary organization (Holloway 2001). Evidently, this misguided accountability compromises the intermediaries' intended purpose, which is to support organizations or programs that address the needs of disadvantaged groups and, when taken to extremes, can encourage donor driven initiatives.

In each system, forces working for and against social progress compete with one another, creating an environment that is more or less conducive to innovation and social progress. The education sector in the United States was created to value stability over adaptation. Promising innovations occur not because of the system, but in spite of it (Smith 2009). Innovative programs do not happen in a vacuum. To gain traction, they must be carried out in parallel with a realignment of incentives and priorities of those within the system, which includes policymakers, rules, and regulations in addition to users, buyers, investors, and researchers (Smith and Peterson 2011).

One way to realign incentives and unify actors around a common purpose is through public-private partnerships. For SIF, public-private partnerships were built in from the beginning in the way a grant would be disbursed. Each federal dollar granted is matched by the intermediaries and then again by their sub-grantees with money from private and other non-federal sources, thereby increasing the return on

taxpayer dollars and strengthening local support (Shah and Jolin 2012). By virtue of investing in the solution, multiple actors demonstrate their commitment and converge around the investment and its intended purpose. However, such coordination and collaboration demand a fairly high capacity from all the actors involved and may be ambitious in less developed countries where communication infrastructure and levels of education are more limited.

The USAID-funded CSO Sustainability Index assesses key components of a country's civil-society sector and the forces working for and against the ability of CSOs to operate successfully. One of the dimensions examined is the level of support provided to CSOs by intermediary support organizations. Those intermediary organizations are seen as important in providing local sources of funds; training and mentoring programs to CSOs and the ability to network, share lessons learned and advocate for policy reform around sector-specific areas.

International development interventions adopt a systems approach to varying degrees. One promising example from Indonesia is the Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI), which is a 15-year project between the governments of Indonesia and Australia. Although it is too early to say whether the KSI is successful, it shows a thoughtful approach to engaging a system through targeted engagement with intermediary organizations. KSI seeks to improve the quality of public policies by making better use of research, analysis and evidence. In this case, the system is the national knowledge sector which includes the government, universities, consulting firms, grassroots organizations and the media.

The intermediary organizations are the research institutions or universities that disseminate knowledge to inform policymaking processes. The project's theory of change is if the capacity of knowledge producers (i.e., the intermediaries) is increased and there is a strong demand for knowledge to formulate policies, then evidence-based policies that benefit citizens will be realized. Accordingly, the project's first phase focuses on the supply side of knowledge, which entails building the capacity of intermediaries and strengthening their networks, facilitating a dialogue around a shared vision, promoting information policy reforms, building constituencies, and commissioning studies. The project's second phase will focus on the enabling environment, or demand side, promoting tax incentives, procurement regulations, and university reform. This project model acknowledges that sustainability depends on intermediary organizations that are capable of promoting social progress, as well as a legal environment that is conducive to their operation.

KSI also shows the importance of national policies and ownership at the national-government level. The government of Indonesia was engaged from the beginning in the project design, which increases the likelihood that gains will be integrated into national institutions. Indeed, a successful project does not automatically lead to national adoption for a number of reasons. One reason is policymakers' lack of experience with poverty or innovation and their tendency to base decisions on direct experience and professional training (which may work against incorporating new sources of evidence), political pressures and multiple and competing demands in limited amounts of time (Fisher and Vogel 2008). These significant hindrances to advancing social progress should not be underestimated and need to be taken into account in project design and ongoing implementation.

Intermediaries are best defined as actors who support the enabling environment and they should be evaluated accordingly. However, evaluations of intermediary organizations have tended to focus on the funded projects rather than the organizations themselves (Nye & Glickman 2000). Donors and foundations have focused on the results of grantees, which has failed to capture the full impact of intermediaries on community development systems (Chavis 2002). Instead, it may be more appropriate to design, monitor and evaluate programs in terms of the intermediary's capacity to affect positive changes on the local system in which it operates.

The Association for the Study and Development of Community's six components of community capacity can be used as a framework for assessing an intermediary's impact on a community's (or other system's) capacity to facilitate social change (table 1 below).

Component	Explanation
Systemic Learning	The ability of a network of organizations to generate and use information for planning, decision making and capacity building.
Adequate Human Capital	Access to and engagement of individuals with the expertise and skills to provide leadership, implement practices, increase resources, promote learning, enhance policies, and promote collaborative relations.
Effective Practices	Use of strategies, programs, and procedures that appropriately and effectively address the aspirations and needs of communities.
Supportive Policies	Existence of public and institutional rules, regulations, and laws that can support social, economic, and community development.
Collaborative Relations	Use of networks among community organizations and between the community and external systems toward the increases in systemic learning, adequate human capital, effective practices, supportive policies and sustainable resources (e.g. social capital).
Sustainable Resources	Access and use of financial, technological, and training opportunities to support sustainable and successful community change.

Table 1. Association for the Study and Development of Community's Six Components of Community Capacity.

Another useful framework for evaluating impact on a system comes from empirical evidence in the health sector, where four key areas to assessing successful network development (table 2) have been identified (Ashman 2003). These areas address how actors relate to one another and network building based on these principles takes time. Monitoring and evaluation needs to look at how the network is functioning with regard to these criteria in addition to the actual performance of the network.

Area	Explanation
Preexisting Social Capital	Groups or networks of people and organizations with common objectives that share a history of working together, with relationships characterized by mutual trust and common norms that facilitate cooperation.
Strategic Fit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goals address needs and issues perceived to be significant by all of the important participants and stakeholders 2. Methodology based on a successful model for addressing needs that is shared by the partners and major stakeholders. 3. Partners are not competitors. Activities represent a meaningful value-added to the organizational portfolio of each partner. 4. The functional roles of the partners are complementary.
Shared Control in Governance and Management	Network designers can review and select alternative models for sharing control based on the purpose of collaborating, the level of preexisting social capital, available resources, and expected timeframe. Partners can be represented at the policymaking level, whether formally or informally. Operational management coordinates (rather than directs) member activities. Members and partners feel they can influence major decisions, depending on the established network rules. Transparency among donors, intermediaries and sub-grantees builds trust and allows actors to see how funds are contributing to the network's goals and what challenges need to be addressed.
Donor Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors provide support that facilitates autonomy avoiding over direction and unilateral control. • Relationship mechanisms are flexible, promote mutual accountability, and avoid burdensome reporting and one-way accountability. • NGOs communicate goals, objectives, and activities to donors to act consistently with one another and do not simply do what the donor wants. • Program managers realize agreements with groups of NGOs take more time than those with a single organization. • Donor agencies realize that the more they take the lead in defining the goals, targets, partners, and outcomes, the more they will tend to drive the network and lessen chances for ownership and sustainability.

Table 2. Four Key Areas to Assessing Successful Network Development.⁷

Social capital was particularly important for PRIA, an intermediary organization that provided capacity-building support to other CSOs. Its ability to establish a cohesive network of CSOs was due in significant part to encouraging some of its longtime associates to establish organizations that would then act as its partners (Sanyal 2006). The extent to which an organization is present and has strong relationships with other actors will inevitably affect its ability to engage with and mobilize those organizations toward common goals. When selecting intermediary partners, donors should look at those organizations' record in working with CSOs, especially nontraditional groups (Tembo et al 2007). This would include assessing the quality and power dynamic of the relationship; how well an intermediary is representing the needs of its community-based partners and balancing these with the needs of the donor; the level of support and effectiveness of capacity-building activities; and degrees of sustainability after the partnership ends. This is particularly important where nontraditional groups are concerned, because their specific needs and circumstances cannot be automatically extrapolated from general experience.

The literature identifies other elements that allow for positive engagement with systems. A first feature is self-awareness. Intermediaries need to be aware of how their "power of in-between" affects the flow of perspectives and sources of evidence into the research policy environment (Fisher and Vogel 2008) in addition to having the skills and experience to assess their client's capacity-strengthening potential in terms of that organization's mission, governance structure and reputation (Ashman et al 2011).

How to assess an intermediary

We now have an idea of the range of services and functions provided by intermediaries. We have also examined the systems in which intermediaries operate and their potential for influencing those systems. To effectively provide these critical services and functions, intermediaries themselves need a particular set of skills and competencies and donors and other partner organizations need to be able to assess the degree to which intermediaries will effectively meet their needs. Based on the literature reviewed, we have identified that intermediaries need to be able to

- Communicate well with donors, community-based groups and other partners;
- Assess the institutional and programmatic needs of smaller CSOs;
- Develop, deliver and evaluate appropriate capacity-building strategies;
- Understand the implications of power relationships, governance issues and participation;
- Understand donor requirements and objectives;
- Coordinate financial and narrative reporting so that information and funds flow effectively to enable program activities to progress;
- Coordinate shared learning and advocacy so that government and national-level actors are aware of and, where possible, involved with innovation; and
- Evaluate the most promising innovations and encourage and facilitate plans to expand them.

These skills and competencies can be assessed by looking at an intermediary organization's track record through its reports and publications and talking to previous partners at different levels (community/national/international). Intermediaries will have particular strengths based on their experience and may be keen to develop others. Foundations and other donors have a vested interest in helping intermediaries develop their skills to fulfil diverse and complex roles so that there is a growing pool of intermediary organizations capable of implementing initiatives with sustainable impact.

In our 2011 discussion paper on intermediary support organizations (ISO) as partners in strengthening local civil society, MSI highlights the following initial criteria for selecting ISOs:

- Established capacity in the areas related to program goals, e.g., conflict resolution, democracy promotion, organizational development, climate change adaptation, maternal child health, etc.

⁷ Adapted from "Towards More Effective Collaboration in NGO Networks for Social Development: 'Lessons Learned' from the NGO Networks for Health Project and a Framework for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation" by Darcy Ashman, May 2003.

- An organizational mission and track record in building the capacity of other groups and organizations. Unless ISO leaders and staff understand the larger goals for civil society capacity building and share the desire to strengthen other groups, they probably will not develop the positive relationships with their clients that are necessary for successful capacity building.
- Reputation with local NGOs and other civil-society groups, e.g., is the ISO well known and respected as a grassroots actor or is it seen as a group of urban intellectuals who lack community perspectives?
- ISO governance and management capacity, e.g., will the ISO be able to manage the grant or contract requirements associated with its capacity building responsibilities? If it is going to make and manage grants to local organizations, is there separation between grant management and capacity building services? Will the board and senior management provide the needed overall direction? Are there any areas in which the ISO may need some strengthening? ISOs may be sound overall, but benefit from some upgrading of their skills, especially in newer programmatic areas like use of social media, anticorruption or climate change adaptation, or from some organizational strengthening of their own in areas like marketing or governance.

The importance of governance and management capacity cannot be over emphasized, since it is this that provides the nuts and bolts of making any partnership function well, with ripple-out effects on program implementation and impact. If donors can be persuaded of their role in supporting capacity building for intermediary organizations, this will be a significant contribution to development resources and influence the way that intermediaries work with their sub-grantees.

Once an intermediary has been selected, a discussion about its capacity and approach to fulfilling its role in the specific program concerned is an important prerequisite to starting work. This can serve to identify any areas that need strengthening and provide a forum for discussing how this might be done. Technical and organizational strengthening can be integrated to ensure that leadership and systems are prepared to support and manage new technical expertise.

Donors also need to be aware of the dangers of fostering unhealthy competition among CSOs, which need to be working cooperatively and collaboratively to build effective civil societies. There is a need for strategies to avoid positioning local organizations against each other; particularly, asking intermediaries to sub-grant to or build the capacity of rival organizations seeking funds from the same sources. This may create a difficult dynamic for both parties. MSI suggests some proactive strategies to avoid these outcomes:

- Match larger NGOs as ISOs with smaller and newer organizations;
- Coordinate ISOs with NGOs according to regional location; and
- Design the capacity-building activities to complement NGO activities, e.g., organize training of trainers, resource centers, convene thematic meetings, disseminate new technical or policy related information, etc.

A further strategy may be to support the development of existing networks to enable them to build the capacity of their member organizations. As such, they are primarily accountable to their members and act as an access point to enable donors to reach organizations with expertise, interest and commitment to a specific aspect or area of development. In addition to playing an intermediary role to support the distribution of funding, such networks can also transmit information and support advocacy from the grassroots toward national and international decision-makers, thus fulfilling a short-term programmatic role and supporting the longer-term development of an active civil society.

A further issue for consideration is the sustainability of intermediary organizations if they are simply seen as mechanisms for funding distribution rather than as critical links in the community of organizations working together to bring about change. This latter, healthier perspective gives value to capacity building and support so that organizations can sustain themselves even after program funding comes to an end.

Having examined the roles and tasks of intermediary organizations and looked at some lessons learned with regard to their selection, how to work with them effectively and encourage their sustainability, we will

now discuss the dissemination and expansion of innovations that are often developed and tested by intermediaries and their partners.

Expanding and Disseminating Innovations

In this section, we explore how social innovations can be taken to scale, highlighting critical and recurring drivers, challenges, and lessons learned. While drawing from theoretical frameworks on this subject, we will focus on the literature's implications for donors who seek to engage constructively in expanding social innovation.

Defining social innovation

Despite the ubiquity of innovation in policy discussions, few published articles on social innovation actually define the term. It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore the nuances of the concept. However, we propose using the Stanford Social Innovation Review's definition as a foundation. The definition states that an innovation must meet two criteria. "The first is novelty: Although innovations need not necessarily be original, they must be new to the user, context, or application. The second criterion is improvement. To be considered an innovation, a process or outcome must be either more effective or more efficient than preexisting alternatives" (Deiglmeier et al 2008). In other words, innovation is a process or outcome that is new and improved.

Next, it is important to articulate what distinguishes social innovation from other types of innovation. The line dividing the two is blurry. Commercial or business innovations often produce social goods or positive externalities and, similarly, innovations in traditional social sectors, such as health or education, usually entail some form of private-sector involvement or commercialization. Nevertheless, there are two features of social innovation that help to set it apart from other forms. If one of the following applies, then an innovation can be said to be a social innovation: The first is that social innovation provides a service that government institutions would typically provide. Here, innovation is a novel way of delivering social services. Social innovation does not require government ownership or leadership, however. The second feature is that social innovations target poor or disadvantaged groups. This type of innovation may not necessarily be a novel product, but rather an improvement on its distribution and availability to those who would not be reached by commercial innovations alone.

Finally, the Stanford Social Innovation Review article cited above includes the element of sustainability. This is particularly relevant to the discussion of innovation's expansion and wide adoption. An innovation can be new and improve on an existing process or outcome. However, if it cannot be sustained financially, organizationally and environmentally over time, then its social purpose is questionable at best. Therefore, social innovations must be sustainable over time.

Frameworks for Expansion

Now that we have an understanding of what is social innovation, let us explore what it means to expand, disseminate or scale innovation. We first look at the types of organizations involved, the approaches and methods that can be deployed, and the necessary conditions for taking innovations to scale.

First, there are three key and distinct organizational roles that are involved in scaling up: the originating organization, which develops and pilots the model; the intermediary organization, which assists the scaling-up process; and the adopting organization, which takes up the model.⁸ Too little attention is paid to the intermediary organizations. They are at the center of multi-stakeholder alliances and are responsible for critical aspects of scaling up innovation that other organizations are unable to do. A full list of the key intermediary organization functions is included in figure 2 below.

The types of organizations that take on these three critical roles vary greatly. Private and public organizations and NGOs all play important roles in taking innovation to scale. Private sector actors bring

⁸ Cooley 2012 adapted from Simmons and Shiffman (2003)

the knowledge of the market. They are particularly well-placed to develop innovative pilots and assess business models, organizational processes, marketing, and investment packaging and placement. Public agencies are important for institutionalizing innovations. They also provide financing and assure that the policy, regulatory, and political environments are supportive. NGOs add value with their rich perspective on disadvantaged groups' issues and needs, as well as the cultural realities and grassroots networks that will have to be leveraged for the innovation's broad adoption. The continuum of partnerships between public and private organizations and CSOs can be seen in figure 3.⁹

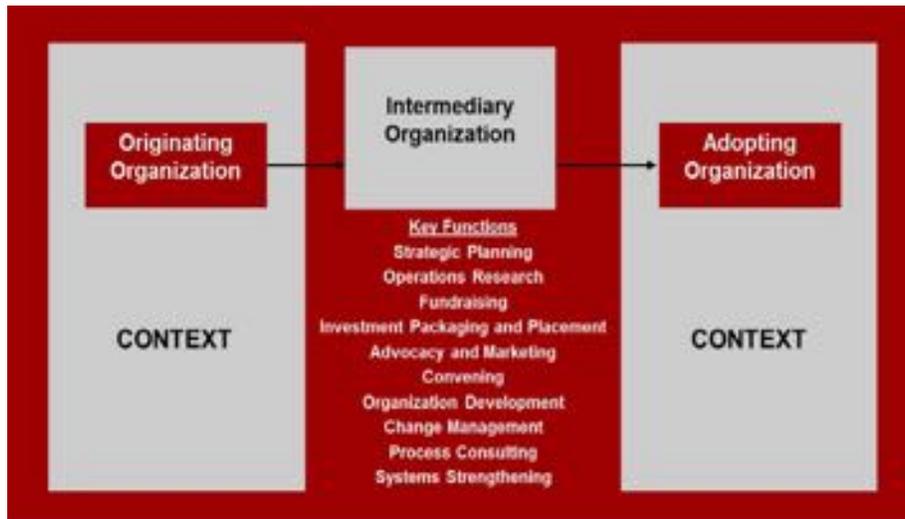


Figure 3. Actors Involved in Taking an Innovative Model to Scale.

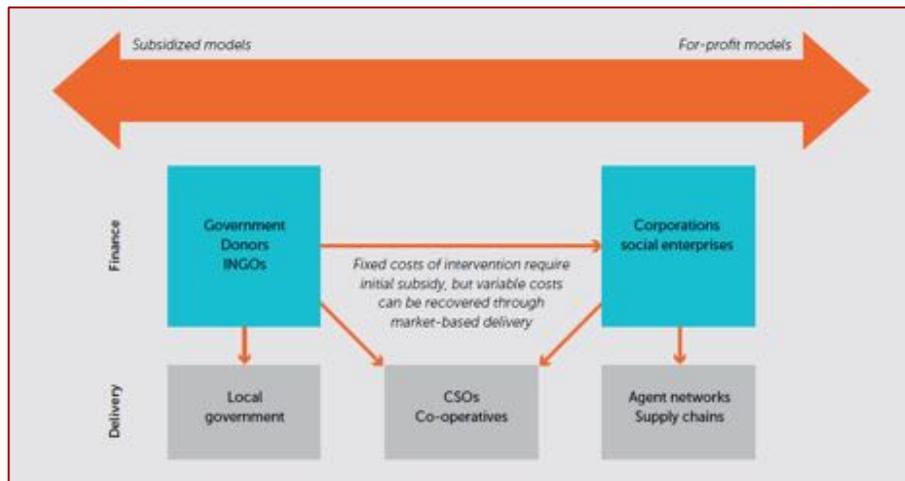


Figure 2. Continuum of Partnerships Between Public and Private Organizations and CSOs.

After who, we must identify how innovations are taken to scale. MSI's Scaling Up Framework identifies nine different methods of achieving scale, which fit within three overarching categories: expansion, replication, and collaboration (table 3).

⁹ Chandy et al 2013

Approach	Method
Expansion	• Growth
	• Restructuring or Decentralization
	• Franchising
	• Spin-Off
Replication	• Policy Adoption
	• Grafting
	• Diffusion and Spillover
Collaboration	• Formal Partnerships, Joint Ventures, and Strategic Alliances
	• Networks and Coalitions

Table 3. Types and Methods for Scaling Up.

The methods above are not mutually exclusive and are often used in tandem or in sequence with one another, especially for methods within a single approach. The varying degree with which the innovation's originator remains involved in scaling up distinguishes these three approaches. The originating organization is most involved with expansion, which is increasing the scope of an organization that originally developed and piloted the social innovation. For an organization to expand an innovation, it fills a service provision gap and maintains a high degree of control. Replication involves increasing the use of a particular process by getting others to implement the model. Here, less control characterizes the originator's relationship with other actors implementing the model. The relationships are especially diffuse and informal, especially with diffusion and spillover and mass media methods of scaling. Finally, collaboration is in between expansion and replication and includes formal partnerships between organizations as well as informal networks. In these varying structures, there tends to be some form of division of responsibilities among collaborating organizations.

Innovation does not occur in a vacuum and there needs to be an innovation ecosystem that is conducive to the development, diffusion and adoption of new ideas. Scaling up approaches must be based on how the operating environment will enable or hinder the generation and dissemination of innovative ideas.

The IFAD Scaling-Up Framework identifies four common drivers of innovation and eight spaces that need to "opened up" for the environment to be conducive to scaling up innovations (Hartman and Linn 2008). The drivers that are needed to push the scaling up innovation process forward are:

- **Ideas and Models.** The idea or model must work at a small scale and must be attractive enough to drive diffusion.
- **Vision and Leadership.** Leaders must be able to communicate that expanding a given innovation is necessary, desirable and feasible.
- **External Catalysts.** Political and economic crises drive the need for innovation.
- **Incentives and Accountability.** Rewards, competition and pressure are institutionalized so that actors are evaluated according to their relative contribution to the scaling-up initiative.

There are conditions that allow innovators to see a problem in a new light, create potential solutions, refine their approach, and ultimately bring to scale effective ideas, products, processes, and platforms (Smith 2009).

For innovation to take hold in education, we need to make some significant changes to the way the education ecosystem's wide array of stakeholders do their work, orienting them toward common goals and providing incentives for all of them to strive more effectively and collaboratively for approaches that create better outcomes for children and communities (Smith and Peterson 2011).

The enabling conditions for scaling innovation can be divided in the following seven spaces:

- **Financial.** Resource mobilization mechanisms need to be in place and goals need to be consistent with budgetary realities.
- **Natural Resource and Environmental.** Impact on the environment should be considered and benefits to natural resources should be promoted.
- **Policy.** Policy and regulatory frameworks should be permissive or can be adapted to support the innovation.

¹⁰ Ada Adapted from Cooley 2012. pted from Cooley 2012.

- **Institutional Capacity.** Organizations, institutions and human resources need to be sufficient or supported to carry the process forward.
- **Political.** Critical political actors need to allow and preferably support scaling up efforts.
- **Cultural.** Cultural support mechanisms should be leveraged and cultural obstacles should be mitigated.
- **Partnership.** Partners need to be mobilized.

These factors help donors determine which innovations should be taken to scale because, evidently, not every innovation can or should be taken to scale (Cooley and Linn 2014). Thus, it is important to use to assess several criteria before investing in scaling a particular innovation. In addition to the dimensions listed above, donors should look at an innovation’s level of evidence to determine its readiness to scale. Donors and other actors must assess whether an innovation delivers the socially desirable outcomes that it is intended to generate and do target users need and demand the innovation.

The MSI Framework’s adaptation of the National Science Foundation’s evidence continuum (fig. 4)⁶ can help donors and other actors determine whether an evaluation is ready to scale. It categorizes innovations according to their standard of evidence and argues that an idea should not be taken to scale unless it is established at the level of a good or best practice. As seen with SIF in the previous section, such a categorization is not only helpful for determining whether a program or innovation is ready for expansion, but also can help donors use evidence to calibrate their level of support.

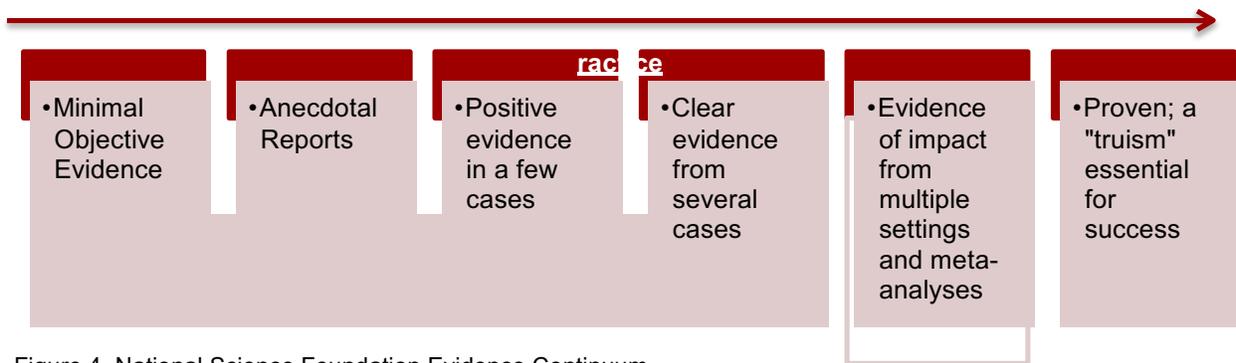


Figure 4. National Science Foundation Evidence Continuum.

One of the underlying principles and important takeaways should be that scaling up is a process that demands a deliberate and systematic approach. MSI’s Scaling-Up Management Framework allows practitioners to translate the key features of scaling innovation discussed above into an operational guide with 10 concrete tasks within three steps (table 4 below).

Steps	Tasks	Key Questions, Tools, and Approaches
1. Developing Scaling Up Plan	1. Create a Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What is being scaled? ✓ How it will be scaled? ✓ Who does what (organizational roles)? ✓ What is the scope?
	2. Assess Scalability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is there a need for this particular model? ✓ Is the model cost-effective? ✓ Are there economies of scale? ✓ Can contextual factors be replicated? ✓ What is unique and would need to be replicated? ✓ Do actors have the capacity and resources? ✓ Does the necessary funding exist? ✓ Compatibility of organizations' cultural values of with the innovation
	3. Fill Information Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Documentation of model including goals and distinguishing technical, organizational, and process elements, demand for innovation ✓ Comparative analysis of costs ✓ Evaluation of the model's impact and success ✓ Refinement and simplification of the model ✓ Key resources needed to transfer model
	4. Prepare a Scaling Up Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Summary of the need ✓ The vision and evidence for the model ✓ Proposed actions, timetable, roles, and responsibilities, and resources needed.
2. Establish Preconditions for Scaling Up	5. Legitimize Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enlist prominent spokespersons and advocates ✓ Develop and popularize slogans and symbols ✓ Establish high-advisory boards ✓ Lead media and public education campaigns ✓ Conduct policy debates
	6. Build a Constituency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organize multi-stakeholder coalitions ✓ Work through political parties ✓ Engage legislative committees ✓ Outreach to businesses, religious groups, and other civil society organizations ✓ Mobilize grassroots networks and campaigns.
	7. Manage the Scaling Up Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Donor roundtables ✓ Budget hearings and transparency campaigns ✓ Fiscal decentralization ✓ Bridge financing and other market mechanisms
3. Manage Scaling-Up Process	8. Modify and Strengthen Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Apex organizations ✓ Conferences and retreats ✓ Business process reengineering ✓ Leadership development and coaching ✓ Continuous training.
	9. Coordinate Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interim Secretariats ✓ Formal joint ventures and partnerships ✓ Performance based reimbursement plans, grants, and contracts ✓ Virtual networks
	10. Track Performance and Maintain Momentum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Citizen oversight panels ✓ Public hearings ✓ Blue-ribbon panels, ✓ International monitoring groups, ✓ Listservs and Web-based dissemination ✓ Third-party monitoring ✓ Comparative scorecards ✓ Sustained media coverage

Table 4. Scaling-Up Management Framework.¹¹

As seen in Hartman and Linn's spaces and the MSI Framework, one of the critical points in assessing readiness to scale is the level of development of the organizational and institutional architecture required to support the innovation's expansion. This concern is especially important in terms of the intermediary organization's role in leading multi-stakeholder coalitions. Donors in the intermediary role must assess the capacity, willingness and appropriate positioning of leading organizations. Also, when organizations are leading social innovation, it is important that leadership be cultivated organizationally as opposed to relying on a single charismatic leader. A fundamental problem with leadership and values is that they will not last unless carefully nurtured (Hartmann and Linn 2008).

¹¹ Adapted from Cooley 2012.

Savings Groups: An Innovation Taken to Scale Savings groups (SG) provide poor women with a secure place to save money, the opportunity to take out small loans, and a network of support and solidarity. Members also learn about malaria prevention. The over 7 million SG members worldwide demonstrate that the model is replicable. In Mali, randomized control trials and a qualitative longitudinal study indicate that women in SGs save and borrow more than other women, invest more in livestock (a critical asset for increasing resilience during shocks) and build stronger relationships with community members. The studies also reveal the model's limitations. It increased knowledge of preventing malaria but had no impact on behaviors. It also had no impact on income, health or education. This begs the question of whether the model can be refined to create that impact or if parallel interventions addressing those areas more desirable. The studies also offer findings particularly important to the model's scalability. They showed that providing formal training for "replicators" was a cost-effective way of increasing uptake. They also found that financially and socially active women were more likely to join groups, as more disadvantaged groups of women joined later on. Donors and implementers need to plan accordingly. They should implement and rigorously test adaptations to the model to find out what works best for ensuring that the model reaches the poorest of the poor (Saving For Change Report Summary, Oxfam 2013).

Other times, organizations are not the main actors. Rather, it is the combined capacity of organizations, diffuse actors and value-added partnerships that contribute to an organizational landscape that can carry an innovation. The organizational lens is useful but not sufficient. Often, innovations are more diffuse and not easily understood in terms of organizational boundaries. In those cases, one must look at whether established systems and institutions can take on a similar function.

While it is best for donors to be confident in the enabling organizations, systems and institutions, sometimes their suitability and capacity lags behind the innovation's growth. This was the case in Niger with the expansion of an innovative approach to school

Through its 10⁸-year policy for education-sector development and its decrees, the government of Niger led the implementation of a new model for local school councils. It decided to expand the local school council model from 240 to 9,000 schools before this innovative approach was refined and standardized and before the systems to ensure functionality were put in place (Honda and Kato 2013). For instance, it was five years after it began that formal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were put in place.

Nevertheless, its success is demonstrated in that the local school councils continue to function and are ubiquitous in Nigerien society today, community engagement remains high, and primary admission rates have increased as a result. The model has also gained attention among neighboring countries, where up to 1,000 similar local school councils have been set up, and Niger is also continuing to expand as it looks to applying the model to preschools. Given the program's achievements despite its risky and ambitious approach, a closer look at what contributed to enabling factors is warranted.

The first major success factor was how the initiative went about monitoring and evaluation to address problems and identify what worked and what did not. In parallel with the local school councils, the government of Niger also established federations of councils, whose primary purpose was to monitor the implementation of school programs and to "share experience of school improvement activities through the [local school council] mechanism and to discuss concrete actions on important issues in the presence of major stakeholders" (Honda and Kato 2014). In addition, the monitoring function was deliberately given to the federations so as to not overburden the local school council administrators and managers with those duties. Not only was monitoring and evaluation valued, but its implementation was done in consideration of the varying capacity of actors and supported by functioning working procedures.

Next, there were features of the local school councils' standardized institution model that were paramount to its success. It was effective at bringing key stakeholders¹² together and uniting them toward a

¹² Stakeholders included teachers, parent teacher associations, moth parents, and other community members such as village chiefs.

common goal, based on principles of transparency, legitimacy, and genuine community engagement and participation. Transparency was manifest in the school action plans, which incorporated voices of local school council members and were approved by a community assembly. These aspects of the program had a broader impact on the openness of the political space, increasing the community participation and engagement necessary for supporting its continued expansion.

Types of expansion

We have defined social innovation and provided guidance on how to determine an innovation's readiness to scale. Now, we will provide a more in-depth look at scaling-up models and examples, referencing MSI's Scaling-Up Framework when appropriate.

Franchising is an often-cited model for expanding social innovation. Social franchising is based on the commercial franchise model, where a central organization develops an operating model and then recruits franchisees to adopt that model (Amar and Munk 2014). Aflatoun is an educational program that teaches children social and financial skills. It started in 1,100 schools in India and now serves 21,000 sites in 103 countries nine years later. To scale up, it used a centralized model with core principles that local organizations would adopt and make their own (Robinson 2014).

One of the keys to Aflatoun's success was its ability to extend ownership to its partners in a genuine way. Despite its centralized Amsterdam-based secretariat, franchisees have the freedom to adapt the program to their local circumstances. They are treated as equal partners, and policies allow them to shape the work of the secretariat.

How Aflatoun Took its Innovation to Scale

- A clear vision: If children are self-confident, socially responsible and financially competent, they will be in a position to improve their own lives and the world around them.
- Market research and identification of a product niche
- Dispel any expectations of top-down control and give partners the freedom to adapt to local circumstances
- Develop a manual outlining core program principles and how to adapt to local circumstances
- Evaluate the pilot program to understand what works and what does not, and update manual accordingly
- Treat partners equally
- Implement practices that allow partners to influence the work of the secretariat and vice versa
- Decentralize training and quality assurance

Ongoing challenges:

- Balancing delegation and supervision
- Managing partners' expectations
- Using partner feedback in secretariat level decisions based on
- Creating space for lateral partner-to-partner collaboration
- Systematically evaluating program quality instead of adopting the mentality that they can empower themselves based on their own experiences.

Ownership is a typical challenge when expansion requires diverse organizations to implement a model. Sometimes, innovation does not spread, because central or originator organizations are unwilling to let go and delegate. However, the converse can also be true, when organizations are unwilling or unaccustomed to accepting ownership. Unfortunately, international development has too often adopted a welfare approach, breeding a culture of dependency and passivity of local organizations (Yachkashi 2005). In these situations, organizations are reactive, waiting for others to empower them, instead of adopting the mentality that they can empower themselves based on their own experiences.

For innovative social programs, a strong attention paid to producing and disseminating manuals and providing intensive training are fundamental to maintaining the core components of an innovation within

what may otherwise be a diffuse, organic and informal network. This was certainly critical in Aflatoun's ability to connect its partners and ensure quality control. Another example is the Lions Club International Foundation's Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence Program, which the Realising Ambition Program replicated in the United Kingdom.¹³ One component of its strategy to ensure that the service was offered consistently was the dissemination of manuals and teaching materials and an intensive training program focused on experiential learning. Recognizing that the ability of its trainers to train other service providers would be critical to its success, Realising Ambition trainers participated in three training conferences. For the first session, the trainers were participants. In the next, they began to lead sessions with some guidance. Finally, in the third session, they delivered portions of the program independently.

Case Study: Replicating Innovative Education Programs through Realising Ambition Realising Ambition is a program of the Big Lottery Fund, the philanthropic branch of the U.K. Lottery, which invests in proven and promising programs to keep youth (ages 8-14) out of the criminal justice system. This example of expanding innovation represents a horizontal scaling which introduces an innovative model into a new geographical context.. The Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence Program was identified as having proven success in other countries, and Realising Ambition wanted to bring it to the United Kingdom. It invited its membership to tender for delivering the program and selected the partners based on how many young people they said they could reach, their budget and their existing partnerships that could be leveraged. An important success factor for expansion was the organizational and financial support that Realising Ambition provided. The program also benefited from a professional delivery network with strong implementation experience. The actual features of the program were also critical. It focused more on relationships and context, rather than content. It helped build the needed trust by involving the youth, parents and teachers involved from the beginning. And, it benefited from a training model that focused on experiential learning. The Realising Ambition program responsible for training other institutions took part in three training conferences, the first as a participant, the second leading some sessions and the third delivering portions of the program independently.

The Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence Program and Aflatoun highlight the trade-off between centralized control and organic diffusion. Centralized control ensures program quality and consistency, but reducing the speed of diffusion was adopted. Successful expansion models are usually able to balance the two.

Despite this trade-off, compromising quality of an innovation is not a condition for achieving scale. Evidence suggests that it is possible to unbundle complex interventions and replicate core components without compromising quality (Robinson 2014). What exactly is at the core of an innovation will depend on the innovation and have to be assessed case-by-case through rigorous and repeated testing. Davies (2014) provides a potential way of distinguishing between a program or innovation's core and surface elements. Fidelity to the core is defined by the four components below.

- Targeted delivery: Delivered to those who are intended to receive it;
- Adherence: Core components of innovation are delivered;
- Dosage: The right volume or quantity of the intervention; and
- Quality of delivery.

The degree of centralization that Realising Ambition and Aflatoun demonstrate is not always necessary for the spread of innovation. However, without it, there lacks a defined system or structure, which is what social service providers (NGOs or governments) typically desire. An example of organic and diffuse expansion can be found in crowdsourcing platforms. Massachusetts-based InnoCentive, for instance, uses a crowdsourcing platform for solving problems in the social space. It awards prizes to social scientists and thinkers for their novel ideas on how to solve important problems (Rodin 2011). Crowdsourcing is a platform innovation, which relates more to the "how" than the "what" (Rodin 2011). This is opposed to a product innovation, which usually refers to something tangible, such as a solar panel.

¹³ Before Realising Ambitions expansion effort, Lions Club International was implementing the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence program in other countries, but not the United Kingdom.

Crowdsourcing highlights how social innovation is a dynamic process and how adoption, adaptation and replication are intimately tied together and, in many cases, spreading an innovation can provide a platform for new complementary or supplementary innovations to be developed (Davies 2014). An open feedback loop that enables continuous improvement and informs future innovation is necessary (Smith 2009). So, crowdsourcing can help identify social innovations and create a forum for improving innovative concepts.

Donors should also take note of crowdsourcing's intermediary function and its impact in connecting philanthropists, researchers, scientists and disadvantaged groups. While InnoCentive and similar companies do not have the organizational capacity to manage an innovation's adoption at a larger scale, the crowdsourcing platforms have impacted how governments and international development institutions address social and development challenges. For instance, USAID's Global Development Lab uses Grand Challenges for Development and the Development Innovation Ventures to invite individuals and organizations to submit innovative concepts to be tested, implemented and taken to scale. Other examples include the World Bank Institute — a global connector of knowledge, learning and innovation for poverty reduction — and the Global Innovation Fund — a partnership of USAID, U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Omidyar Network — which uses the venture capital model to fund innovations that can achieve social impact at scale.

The literature also shows that innovations tend to go to scale quicker when they are entering a market rather than creating a new one (Kubaznasky 2013). People are more likely to adopt an innovative product or service if it allows them to do something they already do but in a preferred way. This was certainly the case with Vodafone's M-Pesa in Kenya, which provided mobile banking to half of a largely unbanked population in two years. Mobile banking replaced less convenient and more resource-draining ways to carry out financial transactions. The underlying need to carry out financial transactions facilitates achieving scale on a product innovation that works.

In addition to responding to existing demand, M-Pesa was able to capitalize on existing distribution networks. Specifically, it targeted airtime dealers who sell phone credit; networked organizations, such as courier services or banks; and stand-alone shops. The latter was used to provide coverage in hard-to-reach areas or single locations that had a lot of foot traffic, such as a hospitals or retail outlets.

The importance of leveraging existing distribution networks is also evident in the Realising Ambition program. To implement the innovative Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence Program, Realising Ambition tapped into its vast professional delivery network of schools and other organizations with experience implementing similar programs. Having access to actors who can disseminate the innovation cannot be overstated.

The M-Pesa example also highlights one of the important roles that donors can play, which is to support early-stage innovations so that they can be tested, refined and ultimately ready for scale. Indeed, the initial £1 million grant from the DFID Innovation Fund gave M-Pesa more room to perfect its model because there was less pressure to cover its costs (Vaughan et al 2013). During the pilot, M-Pesa began to educate its customers on how to use the service and monitored behaviors to better understand how it

could facilitate adoption. This helped M-Pesa create a product more likely to be widely adopted and build positive word-of-mouth around the concept. The pilot also revealed the importance of removing barriers to entry for potential consumers. M-Pesa achieved this by making it free to sign up and only requiring a national ID, which most Kenyans possess.

One of the challenges with expanding social innovation, however, is assuming that something that works in one place will work in another. This is especially the case when innovation is taken to new geographical and cultural contexts. Randomized control trials are increasingly used to measure impact and determine what interventions work. The rigor of these evaluations' methodologies provides policymakers with a significant degree of confidence in the impact of specific interventions. However, external validity is a recurring limitation of randomized control trials. Randomization bias, lack of uptake

from treatment groups and contamination of control groups translate into an excessive reliance on researchers' assumptions and puts into question its external validity.

To understand how a pilot project could be expanded, it is insufficient to know that it worked in one context. Donors must perform the due diligence of understanding the political economy of the context in which the innovation or pilot will be implemented. While it is tempting to devise and study pilots as a way of understanding what might work at scale, the act of scaling up can pose political economy obstacles that a small pilot does not encounter (Chandy et al 2013). Therefore, monitoring, evaluation and learning need to focus on the program/innovation itself and the broader context. Finally, effective monitoring and evaluation of scaling-up initiatives will look at the innovative program's impact and success and assess the process itself. This appropriately shifts the learning from monitoring and evaluation to the actual process of taking that model to scale, not just the impact of that model.

Conclusion

In the international development arena, intermediary organizations are supposed to act as conduits between donors and governments and CBOs, ideally enabling donors and community organizations to better understand each other. They are also supposed to facilitate local-level capacity building and provide other means of supporting social change.

However, the potential for intermediaries to support social change lies in their understanding of the systems they inhabit and their ability to affect them. To be effective, intermediaries need to be able to communicate well with donors, community-based groups and other partners; assess the institutional and programmatic needs of smaller CSOs; develop, deliver and evaluate appropriate capacity-building strategies; understand the implications of power relationships, governance issues and participation; understand donor requirements and objectives; coordinate financial and narrative reporting so that information and funds flow effectively to enable program activities to progress; coordinate shared learning and advocacy so that government and national-level actors are aware of and, where possible, involved with innovation; and evaluate the most promising innovations and encourage and facilitate plans to expand them.

Intermediary organizations also play a critical role in the expansion of an innovation. However, they need to be prepared to play that role and must be a credible organization capable of bringing the various stakeholders to the table and to mobilize them in support of expanding of the innovation. Their credibility is also vital in terms of interfacing and facilitating between the originating organization (a local CBO) and the adopting organization (e.g., the Ministry of Education in the education sector).

Works Cited

- Chavis, David. *Building Community Capacity: An Initial Inventory of Local Intermediary Organizations*. Association for the Development of Community: 2002.
- Fisher, Catherine; Vogel, Isabel. *Locating the Power of In-Between: How Research Brokers and Intermediaries Support Evidence-Based Pro-Poor Policy and Practice*. Institute of Development Studies: 2008.
- Sanyal, Paromita. *Capacity Building Through Partnership: Intermediary Nongovernmental Organizations as Local and Global Actors*. Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action: 2006.
- Tembo, Fletcher; Wells, Adrian. *Multi-Donor Support to Civil Society and Engaging with 'Non-traditional' Civil Society*. Overseas Development Institute: 2007.
- The World Bank Group. *Social Development Notes: Participation and Intermediary NGOs*. Social Development Publication: 1995.
- Yachkaschi, Schirin. *Capacity Building at the Grassroots: Piloting Organisational Development of Community-Based Organizations in South Africa*. International NGO Training and Research Center: 2005.
- Shah, Shivam; Jolin, Michele. *Social Sector Innovation Funds: Lessons Learned and Recommendations*. Center for American Progress: 2012
- Abramson, Alan; Soskis, Benjamin; Toepler, Stephan. *Public-Private Partnerships in the U.S.: A Literature Review of Recent Experiences*. George Mason University Center for nonprofit Management, Philanthropy and Policy. The Council on Foundations: 2012.
- Smith, Kim; Petersen, Julie. *Supporting Social Change: Lessons from the First Round of the Investing in Innovation (i3) Program*. Bellwether Education Partners: 2011.
- Munk, Simon; Amar, Sush. Case Study: Franchising a “Fireball. Stanford Social Innovation Review 2014.
- Smith, Kim. *Innovation in Public Education: Problems and Opportunities*. Newschools Venture Fund: 2009.
- Davies, Anna. ‘Spreading Social Innovations: A Case Study Report’. A deliverable of the project: “The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe” (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research: 2014
- Bradach, Jeffrey. *Scaling Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2010
- Kasper, Gabriel and Marcoux, Justin. *The Re-Emerging Art of Funding Innovation*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2014
- Nye, N., & Glickman, N. J. *Working Together: Building Capacity for Community Development*, in Housing Policy Debate. Volume 11, Issue 1, pages 163-198: 2000.
- Smith, Kim and Petersen, Julie. *Steering capital: Optimizing Financial Support for Innovation in Public Education*. Innovation for the Public Good. Bellwether Education Partners: 2011
- Interview with Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, on the Evolution and Promise of Social Innovation. Huffingtonpost.com

- Chavis, D., Florin, P., & Felix, M. *Nurturing Grassroots initiatives for community development: The role of enabling systems*. In T. Mizrahi and J. Morrison (eds.), *Community and social administration: Advances, trends and emerging principles*. Hawthorn Press: 1992
- Javits, Carla. *Perspectives on the Social Innovation Fund: An Interview with Carla Javits*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2014
- Robinson, Jenny Perlman. *How to Scale Up Learning: Some Early Thoughts From the Millions Learning Project*. Brookings Institution Blogpost: 2014
- Benjamin, Beth. *Case Study: The Encore Fellowships Network*. Stanford Social Innovation Review 2013
- World Bank. *Participation and Intermediary NGOs*. June 1995.
- Capacity Building Through Partnership: Intermediary Nongovernmental Organizations as Local and Global Actors. Sanyal, Paromita.
- Rogers, Everett. *Diffusion of Innovations*. The Free Press 1983
- Intermediate Grant Making Organizations/Foundation Management
- Ashman, Darcy; Carter, Lynn; Goodin, Joan; and Timberman, David. *Intermediate Support Organizations (ISOs): Partners in Strengthening Local Civil Society*. MSI discussion Paper: 2011
- Ashman, Darcy. *Towards More Effective Collaboration in NGO Networks for Social Development: Lessons Learned from NGO Networks for Health Project and Framework for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation*. NGO Networks for Health: 2003
- Fredriksen, Birger. *Education Resource Mobilization and Use in Developing Countries: Scope for Efficiency Gains through more Strategic Use of Education Aid*. Results for Development Institute: 2011
- David Gartner and Homi Kharas (2013). *Scaling up Impact: Vertical Funds and Innovative Governance. Getting to Scale: How to Bring Development Solutions to Millions of Poor People*. The Brookings Institution Press (Washington DC) 103-137.
- Seldon, Willa; Tierney, Thomas; & Gihani Fernando. *High Stakes Donor Collaborations*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2013
- Kimball, Kristi; Kopell, Malka. *Letting Go*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2011
- Bartczak, Lori. *The Role of the Grantmaker in Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2014
- Benjamin, Lehn; Campbell, David. *Programs Aren't Everything*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2014
- USAID Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. *The 2013 CSO Sustainability Index for Sub-Saharan Africa*.
- Halloway, Richard. *Assessing the Health of Civil Society: A Handbook for using the CIVICUS Index as a Self-Assessment Tool*. CIVICUS: 2001
- Clark, Jeff. *The Role of: Intermediary Support Organizations in Enhancing the Civil Society Sector*. Pact, Inc. in collaboration with USAID: 2008

Chandy, Laurence; Hosono, Akio; Kharas, Homi; Linn, Johannes (Eds.). *Getting to Scale: How to Bring Development Solutions to Millions of Poor People*. The Brookings Institution: 2013.

Cooley, Larry; Linn, Johannes. *Taking Innovations to Scale: Methods, Applications and Lessons*. Results For Development Institute: 2014.

Deiglmeier, Kriss; Miller, Dale; Phills, James. *Rediscovering Social Innovation*. Stanford Social Innovation Review: 2008.

Hartmann, Arntraud; Linn, Johannes. *Scaling Up: A Framework and Lessons for Development Effectiveness from Literature and Practice*. Wolfensohn Center for Development: 2008.

National Resource Center for Non Formal Education. *Enhancement of Local NGO Capacity Building*. Literacy Watch Bulletin No. 21: 2001.

Annex 2 – Early Learning Innovation Fund Promising Innovations

The Organization for Community Development (OCODE) has been working in one of the poorer suburbs of Dar es Salaam since 1999. In partnership with the Firelight Foundation with a grant of \$15,000 OCODE set out to improve the numeracy and literacy performance of 377 slow learners in 4 schools. OCODE trained 20 teachers to support slow learners, provided teaching and learning materials and established remedial classes. Parents were encouraged to support their children's learning at school meetings and by SMS messaging. OCODE carried out Uwezo assessments before and after the children attended remedial classes in Kiswahili, English and math over a period of two terms and 90% of enrolled children demonstrated improved reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

An Example of Key Findings from OCODE's Uwezo Assessment		
	Before (%)	After (%)
Pupils who can read a story in Kiswahili	18	77
Pupils who can read letters in English	33	97
Pupils who pass Mathematics test	22	56

OCODE reported: *"Most of the children in the remedial classes were chronic absentees. Knowing how to read and write has provided an incentive for them to attend school as they now feel more confident and comfortable in classes so their school attendance has increased. Being able to read and write has improved their enthusiasm for studying as they understand what they are studying about and this has led to an increase in their general academic performance."* Other neighborhood schools were impressed by these results and asked OCODE to broaden its support to include them, but limited resources meant that this was not feasible. This experience serves to show how significant results can be achieved over a short period with a small amount of money.

The Tanzania Home Economics Association (TAHEA) received grants totaling \$175,000 from Firelight Foundation to support youth groups in five communities around Mwanza. These groups were tasked with mobilizing and enabling parents and communities to support the numeracy and literacy skills development of 4,000 children from five primary schools. Although this initiative had not been formally assessed at the time of the evaluation, TAHEA reported that it was going exceptionally well. Communities which were accustomed to perceiving youth as a problem were beginning to see them as part of a solution. Young people were gaining leadership skills and self-confidence. Children were reported to be improving their numeracy and literacy skills and looked forward to attending after school classes run by youth that they looked up to. TAHEA also supported the youth to implement income generating activities to help them become independent. If the evaluation of learning outcomes confirms these reports, this seems to be a win-win situation that develops children's skills, supports the emergence of young leaders and encourages inter-generational cooperation. In light of high youth unemployment and the urgent need for teachers in most African countries, there may be a lesson here about developing the skills of school leavers to supplement and support trained teachers.

Safina's Women's Association (SAWA) is well established and has extended its work to Maasai communities in southern Tanzania. It received a grant of \$20,000 from the Firelight Foundation to improve the learning environment of 148 children attending two Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers and to establish village managed savings and loans schemes in the target communities. SAWA considered their most effective interventions to be:

- Sensitization that built community capacity in managing ECD Centers and advocacy
- Facilitating advocacy for ECD resources with key decision makers which resulted in the district council increasing the budget allocated for ECD at community level.
- Facilitating economic empowerment through Village Savings and Loans, which increased community capacity to invest in children's education needs

SAWA reported that the village government provided land for construction of one ECD Centers and community members contributed building materials. Parents sent children to the center and provided them

with books and uniforms. SAWA trained paraprofessional and nursery school teachers to implement assessments for 60 children using ZamCAT and Uwezo tools in Swahili and English. Tools were also adapted to the Maasai language and the data collected was used by teachers to improve their teaching approaches. SAWA is the accredited trainer for Uwezo in Morogoro region and trained other Firelight Foundation implementing organizations to use the tools.

The Société Internationale de Linguistique (SIL) received a grant of \$59,288 from TrustAfrica to support the development of EMiLe, one of several approaches to bilingual education under experimentation in Senegal. SIL was responsible for developing a curriculum, materials and teacher's guides for transferring reading skills from Serer, to French as part of the larger EMiLe program. The work took place with 1,100 students (50% boys 50% girls) in grades 1 and 2. SIL was part of a complex and difficult partnership with World Vision and the National Office for Catholic Teaching, supported by local education authorities in the districts of Fatick and Dioffior where the project operated. The SIL team was technically skilled and highly committed. TrustAfrica encouraged a three year longitudinal study to gather data on changes in learning outcomes. The first year of the study assessed a sample of 120 students from six control schools and six pilot schools. The assessment covered literacy development, spoken French and mathematics and results were promising, showing greater improvements in the pilot schools. However EMiLe needs to have a local partner, as opposed to SIL, to consistently advocate and represent EMiLe's bilingual model at discussions concerning the adoption of bi-lingual education that Senegal will eventually scale up to the national level.

The Madrasa Resource Center Kenya (MRCK) received a grant of \$63,000 from TrustAfrica to improve early literacy and school readiness for 5,000 children aged from 4 to 6 in 80 Madrasa community preschools. Classroom and community level interventions focused on improving teaching and learning practices and teachers' tools for literacy assessment and supporting and encouraging parents' participation in reading with and for their children. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) baseline and end line surveys were carried out for 183 kindergarten (KG) 2 and KG 3 children, 34

KG2 and KG3 teachers and 88 parents across 20 schools. Data was collected through child language ability assessment, classroom observation of teaching practices and teacher and parent interviews. Control groups were identified in similar ECD Centers. After a year of intervention, the endline study indicated positive gains in reading scores for pupils at both KG2 and KG3 levels in comparison with the control groups but few of the findings were statistically significant. MRCK takes the findings as an indication that their reading interventions have potential for enhancing reading abilities, but believes that a longer period of intervention is required as preschool teachers require more systematic support to master and apply the teaching of phonetics. In addition, the intervention needs to develop a stronger community of practice among teachers and community members. Through this experience MRCK also learned that their evaluation needed a stronger design and a more significant sample size. It is likely that teachers, pupils and parents in the intervention and control schools interacted on a regular basis and shared practices associated with the interventions.

Link Community Development (LCD) works in Uganda to increase equitable access to quality education, improve the quality and relevance of primary education and the delivery of literacy for early learners. With a grant of \$58,146, LCD worked in 16 schools, facilitating eight School Performance Reviews and training for 16 Literacy Teachers, 16 School Management Committee members and 16

Parent/Teacher Association members. The project targeted 4,795 grade 1 and grade 3 students. Assessments were carried out by the District Department of Education. Tools included LCD's School Performance Review and teacher observation using a notation grid. The baseline and the summative evaluations used an EGRA tool to assess progress in Runyoro and English and covered five schools with a sample of 24 learners from each. Two control schools were also included. Findings showed that 20 hours' one-to-one support for grade 1 and grade 3 teachers in the five schools that received the most focused literacy support saw large increases in their learners' literacy skills over a period of seven months. This level of improvement was not seen in the control schools. Results were disseminated at national level but the approach was seen as too resource intensive by the office for education standards. However results confirmed that primary teachers given short term intensive classroom support alongside support for school management will see a more rapid increase in the literacy levels of their learners compared to those teachers who have no such school-based support.

Annex 3 – Realistic Timeline for Project Start-Up and Management

Key phases in working through intermediaries to test innovations	Suggested time to allow	Factors that can influence the time allowed
<p>Grantee start-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hiring staff / staff induction - Informing appropriate authorities - Selecting implementing organizations - Planning capacity building processes and procedures - Initial workshop for implementing organizations - Grant dispersal 	<p>At least 6 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any preliminary research may require additional time - The overall size of the program – a very large program will need more time. - Recruitment can take longer than planned so it helps to identify potential key personnel in advance and for existing personnel to get start-up activities underway
<p>Implementing partner start-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hiring staff / staff induction - Organizing equipment and office space - Discussions with other stakeholders: partners, local leaders, beneficiaries, administrative/education local authorities 	<p>At least 3 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of stakeholders affects the time required because discussions with more parties take more time. - Distance and communication issues: remote areas or poor internet access will require more time
<p>Main implementation phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing and measuring the results of the innovation - Capacity building - Preparation and implementation of advocacy initiatives 	<p>2-3 years</p>	<p>The length of the cycle of the innovation concerned. An innovation intended to have an impact on the first three years of primary education ideally needs to run for three years</p>
<p>Consolidation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing up and sharing of results - Advocacy follow-up - Planning for next steps if appropriate 	<p>6 months</p>	<p>Any second phase of funding should pick up as quickly as possible after the first ends to avoid losing project staff and stakeholder confidence</p>