

Preface

The term “scaling up” is widely used these days in many different settings – in discussions about the needed responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis, in efforts to provide for the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents or in programmes to bring the benefits of health technologies and interventions to the disadvantaged. In the field of development, professionals talk about scaling up initiatives to eradicate poverty, address gender inequities and preserve the world’s limited natural resources. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the wide use of the term, there is no consensus on the concept’s precise definition and meaning among the different people who use it. However, the sense of urgency with which the topic is raised stems from a shared concern: governments, nongovernmental organizations, and technical assistance and research institutions increasingly acknowledge that the goals of health for all, poverty eradication, sustainable development and social equity are not being reached at an acceptable pace. Current efforts need to be multiplied several times over to meet the health and development challenges facing the world at the beginning of the 21st century. This strongly felt need is aptly captured by the term “scaling up”.

This book which I have the pleasure of introducing to you considers the topic of scaling up from a particular vantage point. The focus here is on ways to increase the impact of health service innovations that have been tested in pilot or experimental projects so as to benefit more people and to foster policy and programme development on a lasting, sustainable basis. The book addresses a major failure in the global health and development field: namely, the failure to expand the many successful small-scale pilot or demonstration projects that have been organized around the world so as to benefit larger populations than those initially served. It presents a conceptual framework for thinking about scaling up as well as case-studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America where the potential for expansion was a concern from the very inception of pilot or experimental projects. The case-studies discuss family planning and related reproductive health service interventions as well as other innovations in primary health care. The value of the book, however, is not limited to the specific health areas covered in the case-studies. Anyone who seeks to use the lessons of small-scale initiatives as a means of fostering larger-scale policy and programme development can learn much from it.

The case-studies presented here share a series of common values. They emphasize the imperative to build capacity within public sector institutions to meet the health needs of the disadvantaged. They

highlight the necessity of building a strong sense of both local and national ownership in the identification of priority health needs, the development and testing of local solutions, and the formulation of context-specific strategies for expanding small-scale successes. They also demonstrate that, if scaling up is taken into account from the design phase of an innovation, more people eventually will benefit.

The book builds upon nearly 15 years of experience with the development and testing, in more than 25 countries around the world, of the Strategic Approach to Strengthening Reproductive Health Policies and Programmes. The Strategic Approach has dedicated deliberate attention to scaling up from its inception in the early 1990s. The Department of Reproductive Health and Research of the World Health Organization is now pleased to present this book to the many constituencies in our field who are driven by the sense of urgency that more needs to be done to expand access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services. I hope that readers will benefit from the lessons presented and will in turn be inspired to put new insights into action.

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