

How to Develop Uptake Strategies as part of research projects

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Complementing the Targeted-Micro efforts and the Broad-Macro efforts

For the uptake of research results, a Broad-Macro and Targeted-Micro efforts are recommended.

The Broad-Macro efforts are about making the research information as widely (globally) available as possible and easily accessible. See IWMI's other document, "Global Dissemination Tools and Channels" for ways to make your information and data as widely available as possible.

The Targeted-Micro efforts involve developing a strategy for the uptake of research results to targeted audiences. This will include having an uptake strategy built in to the project as well as feeding project results and activities into a regional uptake strategy.

These are complementary and both are essential to get the full impact from the efforts. There can also be an overlap of the tools and activities that can be used.

The Targeted-Micro Approach

Just providing access to, and building awareness of, research results are not enough. If people are to use or support the results of scientific research they first need to be aware of the problem/opportunity and recognize and value the benefits that might arise if the problem were overcome or the opportunity taken up. They must then be aware of how they might benefit from the research results, have incentives to apply the research recommendations and have the necessary skills to use or apply the results.

The results of each research project needs a targeted strategy targeted at the intended users. Research organizations may have recognized that a publication is not enough to disseminate their information and influence implementation or change. Many researchers think about trying to include some capacity building, maybe some public awareness building and some targeted publications like a policy brief. What is often missing is a 'strategy'. The methodology presented here is designed specifically for developing an uptake strategy for the results of research projects.

Key to the strategy is taking a collaborative approach. This can range from sourcing input from stakeholders to partnering with stakeholders to jointly research and develop solutions. The closer to the partnership end of the collaborate spectrum the greater the chances of uptake.

Taking a collaborative approach at both the proposal development stage and during the research stages are important for future uptake. How to do this should be a key consideration when developing the uptake strategies for the target audiences.

As a result uptake strategies are being implemented from the proposal development stage, throughout the research stage and beyond.

Steps to Develop a Targeted Uptake Strategy within a Project

STEP 1: Identify and detail the impact pathway.

a) Outline the project logframe

There are different methods and terminology used for developing logframes. Typically these include listing:

- the main research steps to be undertaken;
- what is being produced (the outputs) and for what purpose; and
- the impacts and longer-term goals.

b) Detail the impact pathway

For each step in the logframe, ask, “What has to be in place to move from one step in the logframe to the next?”.

For Example: What enabling policies are needed by the government, what market demands need to exist from consumers of the produce, whether seed varieties need to be available through the commercial suppliers, what infrastructure needs to be provided by the government to support the new developments, etc.

Note that through this step we are looking at ‘what’ must be in place. ‘How’ the project team can help or stimulate this to happen will be analyzed in Step 4 when the uptake strategy is developed.

STEP 2: Determine where the project’s timeline will finish along the impact pathway

It is important to define this to:

- ▶ identify up to which section on the impact pathway the project should have a carefully analyzed and detailed uptake strategy; and
- ▶ determine ‘what should be left behind or influenced’ to best help with uptake of the research results outside the timeline and direct role of the project, i.e., further along the impact pathway.

STEP 3: Select where the critical uptake points are on the impact pathway

Decide which steps along the impact pathway where you will try to influence uptake. Each one selected will then require an uptake strategy – which can vary depending on the extent to which the project will go to influence or assist in uptake.

STEP 4: Develop an uptake strategy for each of the selected points along the impact pathway

At the project proposal stage, only a very basic framework for the uptake strategy can be expected to be developed. The full detail of each strategy will later need brainstorming, market research and more professional and local input (see Step 5).

A strategy needs to be developed for each step along this section of the impact pathway. From Step 2, each component of the impact pathway has already been defined as to what needs to be in place/achieved i.e. the desired change, and who does/decides this i.e. who the end target group/person is. Now we need to strategize how to achieve this.

Inside knowledge is needed for the particular political environments, communities, social and cultural environments, etc. The appropriate stakeholders will need to be involved to advise on the most effective approach.

For each critical uptake point along the impact pathway, the following needs to be undertaken:

A) Clarify the desired change

B) Identify who does/decides on this

C) Understand what is needed for each target group/person to act and what is stopping them from acting

CHECKLIST

A checklist of typical questions could include:

- ▶ Awareness: Are they aware of the problem/opportunity (how/why)? Do they see the problem/opportunity in the same way you do?
- ▶ Understanding: Do they recognize and value the benefits that might arise if the problem were overcome or the opportunity taken up (how/why)?
- ▶ Information awareness: Are they aware that the information exists (how/why)?
- ▶ Information access: What information resources currently exist and are easily accessible, and which resources are accessed (how/why)?
- ▶ Incentives: Are there incentives to change behavior and take on the research results (how/why)?
- ▶ Capacity: Do they have the skills and knowledge to use/apply the results or other necessary tools (how/why)?
- ▶ Acceptability: Is it culturally and politically accepted that they change their behavior, practices or activities in this way (how/why)?
- ▶ Resource availability: Are the expected actions affordable and possible given existing resources (how/why)?
- ▶ Other environmental factors: Are there any other political, economic, social, technological, environmental or legal factors that will affect the steps taken to influence the target audience?

Never assume you or even other stakeholder groups know all the answers. Research is highly likely to be needed to be able to fully understand and answer these questions.

D) Segment and prioritize the target groups/people

Are there selected groups/people that are best to initially target for uptake? These may include: early adopters, more influential people, groups who will lead to greater impact if they uptake, etc.

E) Select the approaches and tools/activities for the uptake strategy for each targeted group/person

A CHECKLIST of the approaches and the required tools, activities, channels and products are listed in Appendix A.

This is just as important for the selected uptake points after the project has finished. What is left behind and who should be collaborated with at earlier stages to help increase the chances of the uptake of the research results after the life of the project is important. The same process for developing the uptake strategy is used for both before and after the project life.

The project team needs to determine who they can realistically influence or assist and identify the products and tools that can be left behind that are appropriately customized to the target users, and how to ensure they are known about and accessible.

Examples of components of an uptake strategy for sections of the impact pathway post the project timeline may include:

- capitalizing firstly on 'existing-known' contacts and partnerships;
- developing an ambassador system with key partners;
- training the trainers;
- rewriting information created and repackage it into base-information for the different players further along the impact pathway; and
- leaving information behind that is promoted, easily accessible to the 'different' players along the impact pathway.

STEP 5: Collate the strategies

This requires aligning where there are overlaps (e.g. common target groups) and potential for coordinating activities, aligning similar products or cross promoting.

STEP 6: Revisit regularly: Set up a process for further detailing, and development of, the strategies and plans

As the project progresses more information is known about the likely research results as well as the environment (social, political, cultural etc). The impact pathway and uptake strategy should be regularly revisited (e.g. 6 monthly) and checked and detailed further.

STEP 7: Develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan

The M&E plan for the uptake strategy should be integrated into the project's M&E plan.

STEP 8: Develop an implementation plan

This will be the implementation of the uptake strategies, M&E and actions to further develop the strategies.

The implementation plan should include:

- ▶ who is responsible for different products, tools and activities to be created;
- ▶ when each part will be carried out; and
- ▶ the costs involved and source of the required financial resources.

A format like Table A can be used.

Table A: Strategy and Action Table

What is to be Achieved: e.g., Increase awareness and understanding of the need for investment in Agricultural Water Management (AWM).

Who does/decides on this: e.g., Development donors

Understanding (of what is needed for each target group/person to act and what is stopping them from acting):

Segmented/prioritized target group/person	Uptake strategy	M&E	Implementation (Who, When, Costs)
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	- ...	-	-
World Bank	- ...		
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	- ...		



KEY POINTERS

There are a few rules to follow to have the most effective uptake strategy that maximizes the probability of achieving impact:

- ❖ **The key question to ask** is not, 'How will we disseminate information?', but, '**what will it take to get uptake?**' Whether it is capacity building, lobbying, relationship building, involvement, information dissemination, media coverage and/or awareness raising, etc.
- ❖ **Have an uptake 'strategy'**, not just a number of products, tools or activities. There needs to be a strategy - with the selection of products, tools and activities that are most appropriate and work together to complement and build on each other to help achieve the end goal.
- ❖ **Follow a 'structured' methodology** for developing the uptake strategy. The structured process presented in this paper is based on an impact pathway and specific steps that have to be followed to develop the uptake strategy. This reduces the chances of missing one of the key links in the chain and plans ahead for the required resources.
- ❖ Assess the marketing and communications needed to develop the uptake strategy as **another discipline** in a multidisciplinary approach and have an experienced marketing and communications person as **part of the project team**.
- ❖ **Marketing and communications requires research too**
Understanding the impact pathway and the different human-related environmental conditions (e.g., political, social, cultural, etc.) and how best to package appropriate materials, work with targeted players along the impact pathway, influence them, etc., requires market research.
- ❖ **Carry out the 'uptake' from the start of the project work**
'Uptake' should not be seen as something carried out at the end of the project. Not only should it be planned early on, but it should also be carried out from the start of the proposal development stage and continue while the research is being conducted and after the research is completed.
- ❖ **Schedule time for this**
The project deadline needs to cater for the research activities and also for the uptake activities including market research, writing of materials, promotion of the materials, giving presentations, etc.
- ❖ **Budget this** into the project
The time, money and expertise required to develop and implement an uptake strategy needs to be built into the project proposal.

Appendix A

Checklist of the Uptake Strategy Approaches and the Tools, Activities, Channels and Products

A. Internal communications

To maximize the effectiveness of any external strategy, there must be a supportive internal communications strategy. How communications will be undertaken and facilitated within the research team and the direct stakeholders of the research team (e.g., steering committee, donors, partner organizations) is important.

This includes developing and facilitating, for example:

- a knowledge sharing environment;
- an impact culture;
- a platform for sharing information;
- information projects;
- channels for distributing information; and
- champions and leaders for motivating staff and providing a vision and direction.

B. Involve stakeholders – take a participatory approach

Relationship building and involvement is one of the keys to success of the project, during and after the lifetime of the project.

Just as it is commonly recognized that research should be designed and carried out in a participatory way, so too should an uptake strategy. Involving stakeholders (i.e., players along the impact pathway) in the development of the uptake strategy can result in a better strategy and also a more effective implementation of the strategy.

These stakeholders are likely to be broader than those involved in the research work, as they will include players further along the impact pathway and intermediaries. New stakeholders that can be involved, or involved in a different way, may vary widely, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development agencies, supermarkets, government extension officers, government communication teams, donors' communications teams, etc.

The research partners should still be involved in the uptake strategy—the uptake strategy must not be separated from the research.

How to involve stakeholders

Not all stakeholders can be an integral part of the project team and be deeply involved in the project, nor will they all want to be.

Working out the best relationships with different stakeholders is part of developing the strategy. This should be determined based on a number of factors including:

- ▶ what will lead to a better and more successful uptake strategy;

- ▶ which stakeholders are willing to contribute and what will be a workable environment for the whole project team;
- ▶ taking into consideration the scientific team and the changed dynamics of different team compilations in different forums; and
- ▶ being careful to keep the integrity and independence of the scientific work both in reality and by perception.

C. Relationship building and management

- Participatory research
- Involvement of stakeholders
- Develop a list of contacts early on
- Select key influential people
- Select key influential organizations
- Develop Alumni, Partnerships, Ambassadors, Friends of the project or topic

D. Capacity building

- Curriculum development
- Training of trainers
- Training materials
- Internships
- Fellowships

E. Information and communications

- Key messages defined
- Networks and associations: involved or capitalized on as a channel for information or communications
- Publications (printed and electronic form) and their distribution and promotion:
 - Scientific publications (manuals, monographs, conference proceedings, etc.)
 - Syntheses, Booklets, Summaries
 - Farm management notes
 - Newsletters
 - Journal articles
- Translations
- Multimedia/web/e-products:
 - CD/DVD
 - Web pages or site (e.g., themed section on IWMI website)
 - Information/links on other sites
 - Database
 - E-subscriptions
 - RSS feeds
- E-Interactive initiatives:
 - e-forum
 - Listserv discussion groups
 - Blogs, wikis
 - Email conferencing
 - Special interactive section on the website

- Promotional materials:
 - Book reviews
 - Interviews, quotes or images
 - Flyers
 - Bookmarks
 - Calendars
 - Posters (scientific and promotional)
 - Displays
 - Articles in magazines/newsletters
- Media:
 - Mass media
 - International, regional, local media
 - Testimonials
 - TV, radio, newspaper
 - Media releases
 - Interviews
- Letter to editor
 - Public service announcements
- Promotional activities:
 - Launch
 - Other events
 - Local theatre
 - Music
 - Direct marketing (letters/emails)
- Activities:
 - Field or market visits
 - Demonstrations
 - Seminar/workshop/conference (organized or be present at)
 - Booth at events
 - Presentations
 - Personal discussions
 - Competitions
 - Open days