

Participatory Impact Pathway Analysis: A Practical Method for Project Planning and Evaluation



Participatory impact pathway analysis (PIPA) is a practical planning and evaluation approach developed for use with complex research-for-development activities. PIPA is initiated with the conduct of a participatory workshop where stakeholders make explicit their project's impact pathways (that is, the assumptions and hypotheses about how their project will achieve an impact,

also known as "theory of change"). An online manual on PIPA is found on boru.pbworks.com/w/page/13774903/Frontpage.

PIPA improves evaluation by helping managers and staff to formalize their project's impact pathways and to monitor progress, encouraging reflection, learning and adjustment along the way.

Steps in the PIPA workshop

Construction of problem trees

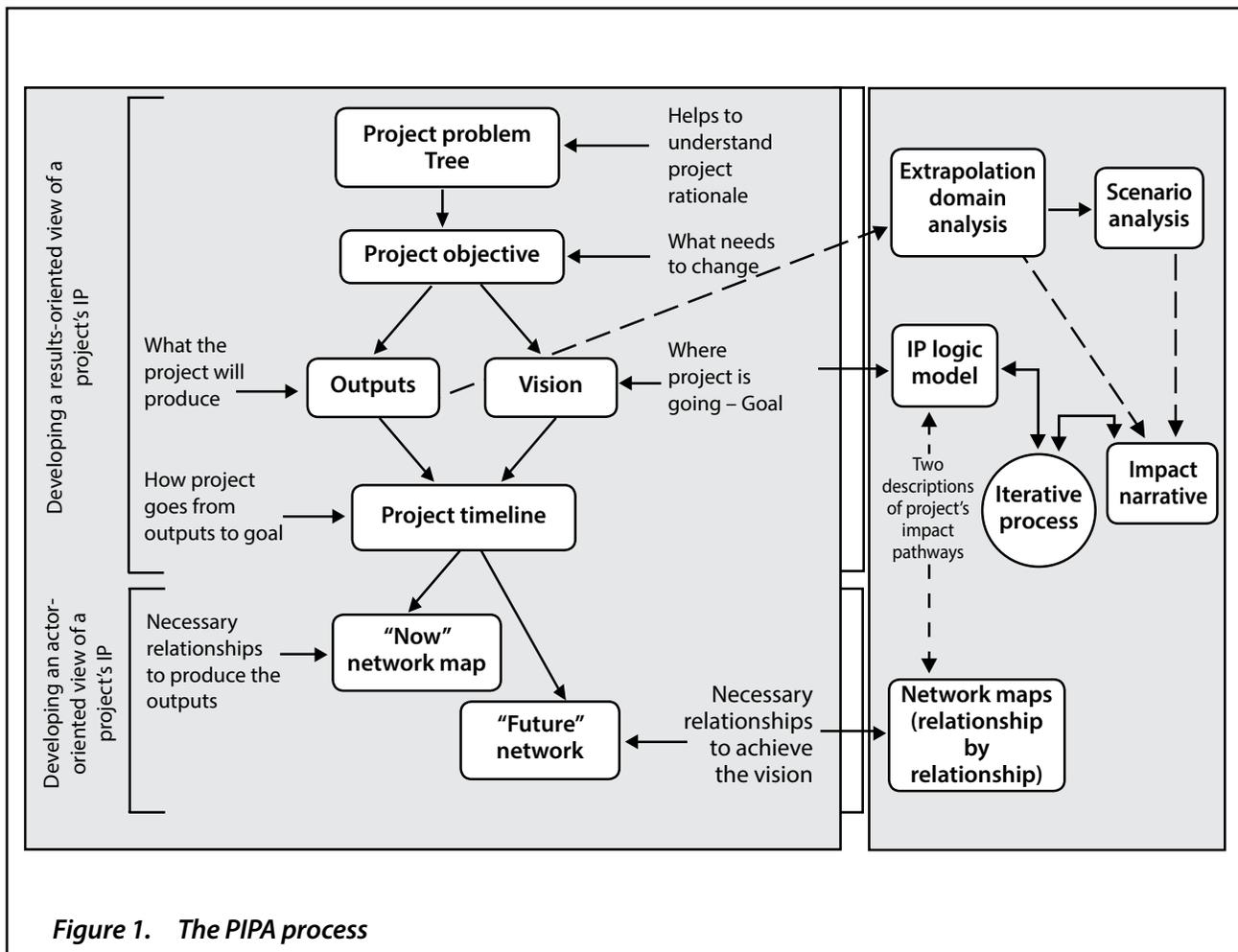
Participants begin by clarifying the cause-and-effect logic of their projects by drawing a problem tree that begins with the identification of problems the project could potentially address and ends with problems that the project will directly address. When working with several projects from the same program, presentations of problem trees help participants better understand each other's aims, a prerequisite for successful program integration.

Visioning

Participants describe a vision of project success 5 or more years in the future in terms of who is doing what differently, how project outputs will scale out and who will benefit.

Developing a network perspective

PIPA balances the cause-and-effect logic of the problem tree with a network perspective, in which impact results from interactions between actors are drawn within what is referred to as an 'innovation system'. These interactions are modeled by drawing



network maps that show important relationships between actors. Participants draw a 'now' network map showing current key relationships between stakeholders and a 'future' network map showing how stakeholders need to link together to achieve the project's vision.

Participants then devise strategies to bring these changes about. The influence and attitude of actors are explicitly considered.

Defining the outcomes logic model

The two descriptions of a project's impact pathways are integrated in the outcomes logic model. This model describes in table format (see Table 1) how stakeholders (i.e., next users, end users, politically-important actors and project implementers) should act differently if the project is to achieve its vision. Each row describes changes in a particular actor's knowledge, attitude, skills (KAS) and practice, and strategies to bring these changes about. The strategies include research to develop project outputs with next users and end users who subsequently employ them.

The Impact Logic Model

After the workshop, participants may wish to go one step further and discuss how changes described in the outcomes logic model might eventually lead to social, economic and environmental impacts. In this case, the facilitators use workshop outputs to construct a first draft of an impact logic model (see in figure 2). An impact narrative should also be written explaining the underlying logic, assumptions and networks involved.

Monitoring and evaluation

1. During the PIPA workshop, participants develop a vision for their project and describe the impact pathways (in the form of an outcomes logic model) to achieve that vision. The project then implements strategies, which lead to changes in KAS and practices of the participants involved. Project Monitoring and Evaluation staff derive indicators to measure progress towards these outcomes.

<i>Table 1. Expected changes and strategies to achieve project vision</i>			
Actor (or group of actors who are expected to change in the same way)	Changes in practice required to achieve project's vision	Changes in KAS' required to support this change	Project strategies to bring about these changes in KAS

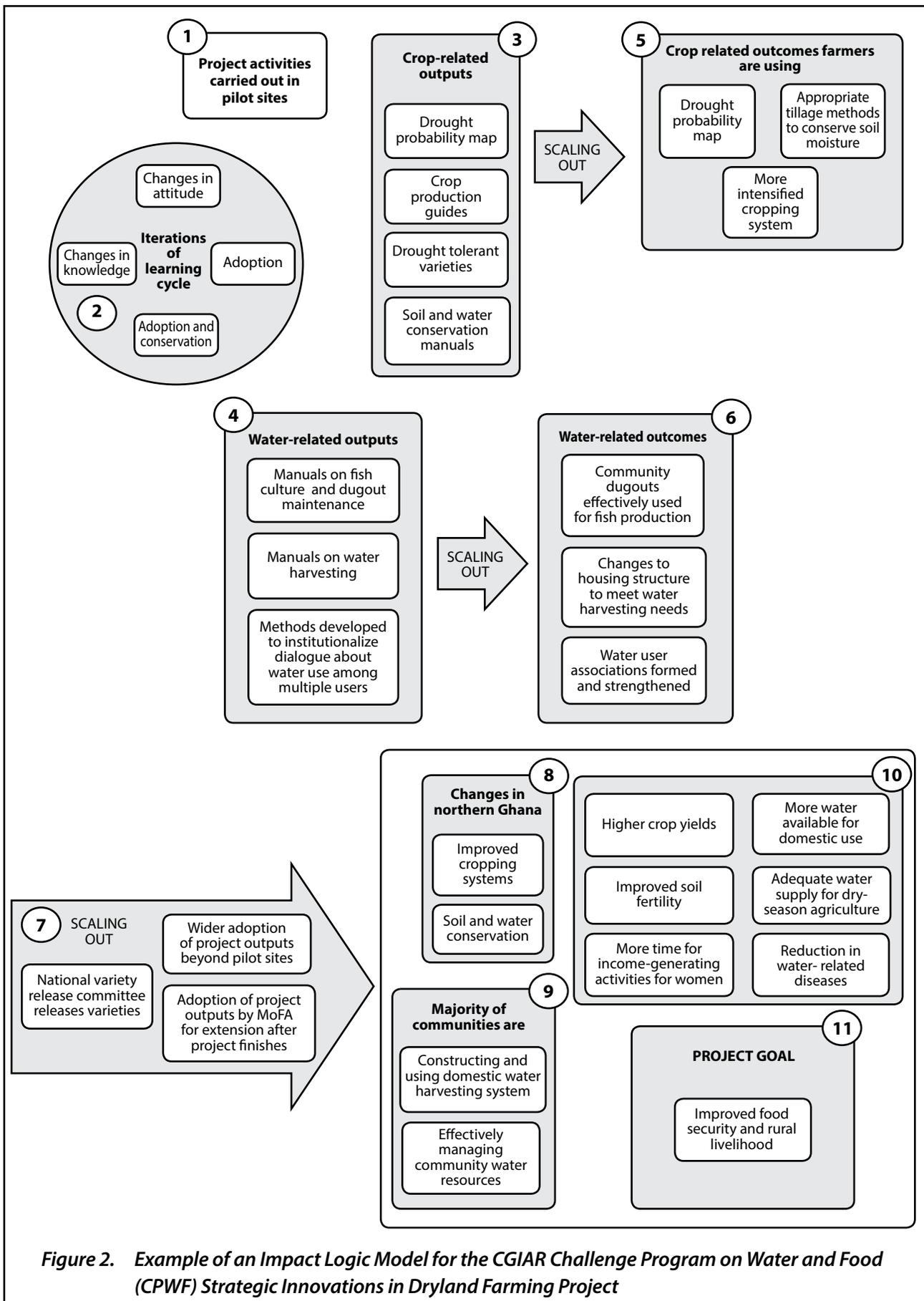


Figure 2. Example of an Impact Logic Model for the CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF) Strategic Innovations in Dryland Farming Project

2. A workshop is held 6 months later to reflect on progress. The vision is modified on basis of what has been learned. The outcomes logic model is revised where necessary and corresponding changes are made to project activities.
3. The process continues. The project may never achieve its vision (visions are generally used to motivate and stretch), but it does achieve real improvements.

Results

PIPA goes beyond the traditional use of logic models and log frames by engaging stakeholders in a structured participatory process, promoting learning and providing a framework for 'action research' on processes of change. The two logic models provide predictions of future impact that can be used in priority setting. They also provide impact hypotheses required for ex-post impact assessment. The specification of impact pathways, using PIPA or outcome mapping, is now a recommended good practice in the CGIAR for monitoring and evaluation and as a precursor activity to ex-post impact assessment.

Conclusion

From an innovation systems perspective, technological change can emerge from the actions of a network of stakeholders, and credit cannot be easily apportioned to individual stakeholders. Project and basin impact pathways show the predictions of the sets of outcomes and interactions that will lead to technological changes, including those outcomes that the project will not influence but are essential for final impact. The inherent complexity of innovation systems means that impact pathways must be viewed as estimations based on existing and imperfect knowledge. These impact pathways must evolve in response to new knowledge and changing circumstances.

Contact Person

Boru Douthwaite (b.douthwaite@cgiar.org)

Partner Organizations

Concordia University, Canada
International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
International Potato Center (CIP)
University of Oxford, UK

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Tag: Impact Assessment

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