A two-dimensional outcome pathway model for Research for Development (R4D) programs

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The CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food is an innovative research for development program that aims for resilient social and ecological systems through better water management for food production. It brings together a broad range of scientists, development specialists, policy makers, and communities to address priority development challenges in six major river basins (Fig. 1). Each basin research program is a coherent set of research for development (R4D) projects that work along integrated outcome pathways.

To help successfully meet the basin program goal, a theory of change is specified that makes explicit the cause and effect logic by which research is expected to achieve developmental outcomes.

This poster aims to present a different way of developing an outcome pathway model for research for development programs with a broad range of partnership at various scales, and where scientists work directly with the stakeholders.

How is theory of change made explicit?

The CPWF makes the project and program theory of change explicit by specifying outcome pathways that depict the changes in knowledge, attitude, skills (KAS), and practice (P) by an actor group. This logic is laid out in tabular form, in which each row is a pathway. Each row spells out how research activities should result to changes in KAS and P in target actor groups. These changes are the outcomes produced by a project or program. The table that explicitly shows the outcomes of a project or program intervention is called the outcome logic model.

Why make expected outcomes explicit?

An outcome logic model provides the hypotheses that are tested during the project monitoring stage. It helps the project team members to communicate what change their project is trying to bring about. The use of a logic model in program evaluation is by no means new. CPWF logic modeling has a strong actor-orientation, viz-a-viz the commonly used LogFrame.

How do we develop an outcome pathway model?

Given time and resources, the best way to develop an outcome logic model is through participatory impact pathway analysis (PIPA). PIPA is a project management approach in which project staff, key stakeholders and project beneficiaries construct the project’s impact pathway together. The PIPA Process is a sequence of workshop activities and corresponding outputs (Fig. 2). This is a facilitated workshop, with time for focus group discussion, planning, and presentation of outputs to other projects for possible integration (Fig. 3).

Paradigm shift

In the first phase of the CPWF (2004-2008), projects were designed with their outcome logic model as a linear model starting from inputs to activities to outputs and then outcomes. Outputs and outcomes are linked by intermediate outcomes from the scaling-up and scaling-out processes (Fig. 4). The project team developed their model without any particular expectation on how changes in one actor group, at a scale level may influence change in another actor group working at a different scale.

In Phase 2, the CPWF revised the outcome pathway to a two-dimensional logic model, with institutional scale as the second dimension. The two-dimensional outcome pathway model consists of interdependent outcome pathways on at least three scale levels: farm, community, and landscape approaches to rainwater management of rainwater and saline water environments in Vietnam and Bangladesh – a project funded by the Challenge Program on Water and Food.

How is the CPWF adopting this model in Phase 2?

The Basin Development Challenge Programs in CPWF Phase 2 use the framework mentioned to plan for wide-scale and sustainable adoption of technologies. Each program is composed of three to four interrelated projects, with one or two projects dealing with community-level change and policy advocacy.

References