The Scaling Ingredients Framework

IPA Innovations for Poverty Action

A practical tool for moving evidence-based interventions to sustainable impact at scale

The Challenge: From Evidence to Impact at Scale

The development sector has achieved an evidence revolution — over 10,000 impact evaluations now catalogue what works to improve lives. Yet only a small fraction of rigorously tested interventions have achieved impact at scale. Too often, promising programs stall at the pilot stage or collapse when initial funding ends.

Producing rigorous evidence is necessary — but not sufficient. Moving from pilot to lasting, large-scale impact requires navigating a complex set of challenges: adapting to new contexts, building organizational capacity, securing sustainable funding, and cultivating the right policy environment.

The Scaling Ingredients Framework

Developed by IPA based on practical experience and the latest scaling literature, the Scaling Ingredients Framework breaks down the complexities of the scaling process into six essential elements. Together, they provide a structured lens for assessing an intervention's readiness for scale, identify gaps and make concrete investments to strengthen the foundations for sustained impact.

The six ingredients operate across four interconnected levels:

Purpose	Relevant problem or need
Model	Evidence & feasibility
Implementer	Capacity to deliver
Ecosystem	Policy & stakeholder alignment

THE SIX SCALING INGREDIENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT AT SCALE

1 RELEVANT PROBLEM OR NEED

A clearly diagnosed problem with identified root causes, affected population, and alignment with policy priorities — setting the right ambition for scale.

2 EVIDENCE OF COST - EFFECTIVENESS

Rigorous evidence that the model achieves intended outcomes cost-effectively compared to alternatives, with a clear Theory of Change and defined core components.

3 IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY

The model is adapted, simplified, and tested for the target context, maintaining fidelity to core components while fitting cultural and operational realities.

4 IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

The implementing organization has the human resources, systems and protocols to deliver with fidelity at the intended scale.

5 BUSINESS OR FUNDING MODEL

Full costs of delivery are covered by a sustainable source — whether market-based revenues or government budgets — with a clear and credible pathway.

6 FAVORABLE ECOSYSTEM

The broader policy and institutional environment supports scaling through aligned ´policy frameworks and regulations, stakeholder buy-in, and engaged champions.

How the framework is used

FOR FUNDERS

- Decide whether and how to invest in a scaling effort
- Compare opportunities across a portfolio and identify where catalytic support is needed
- Set expectations for partners and track scaling progress

FOR IMPLEMENTERS

- Design interventions with scaling in mind from the start
- Assess where gaps exist and prioritize investments to strengthen scalability and sustainability
- Communicate credibly with funders and government partners

How IPA Can Help

IPA brings a unique combination of methodological rigor, grounded local presence, and cross-functional expertise to help partners move proven interventions toward sustainable impact at scale. We apply the Scaling Ingredients Framework to ensure resources are directed where they matter most.

Identifying the right solution

Leveraging global evidence and local context to select the most cost-effective intervention.

Diagnosing readiness for scale

Assessing which ingredients are in place and where investment is needed.

Adapting & optimizing interventions

Refining, simplifying, and codifying programs for new contexts while preserving effectiveness.

Strengthening implementation capacity

Building skills, systems, and monitoring practices for sustained delivery at scale.

Developing sustainable funding pathways

Identifying funding pathways, estimating costs, and engaging the right funders.

Fostering enabling ecosystems

Convening stakeholders, embedding interventions into policy frameworks, nurturing champions.

Our Impact

Ghana: Differentiated Learning

IPA built implementation capacity within the Ghana Education Service, integrating monitoring tools into national systems. Now reaching 2.4M learners across 10,000+ schools — with plans to expand to 6,000 more.

Kenya: Becoming One

Adapting a couples IPV prevention program from Uganda, IPA is co-designing culturally-fitted materials, new delivery models, and M&E systems to support faithful replication in a new context.

Rwanda: STARS

IPA helped embed a pay-for-performance teacher incentive model into Rwanda's national Foundational Learning Strategy, positioning it for nationwide scale-up in 2025.

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a research and policy nonprofit that discovers and advances what works to improve the lives of people living in poverty. With a network of partners and researchers, we design and test innovative solutions, support our partners to generate and use data and evidence, and help bring proven approaches to scale across the globe. Our well-established partnerships in the countries where we work, and a strong understanding of local contexts, enable us to conduct high-quality research. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact hundreds of millions of individuals worldwide.

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