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# UNFPA Innovation Strategy

## 2030

**Innovating for Rights and Choices:  
By, For and With Women and  
Young People**

January 2025

# Executive summary

“Without innovation, we cannot overcome the challenges of our time. What is important is to ensure that innovation works for all and not only for a few.”

**António Guterres,**  
United Nations Secretary-General

As the United Nations grapples with increasingly urgent global challenges, developing new and innovative solutions is more critical than ever.

For UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, the world we imagine is one where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled. We strive to leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind.

Innovation is essential for UNFPA to deliver at the scale and pace needed to realize the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and achieve **our three transformative results**: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030. These efforts align with the strategic vision of **the United Nations “UN 2.0”** and its Quintet of Change.

UNFPA recognizes that advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and ensuring rights and choices for all requires a bold and innovative approach.

Through innovation **by, for and with women and young people in all their diversity**, UNFPA aims to equalize opportunities for women and girls and **ensure rights and choices for all**. Together, we #DisruptInequality.

UNFPA is committed to a rights-based, inclusive, and gender-equitable approach, ensuring no one is left behind. At UNFPA, innovation applies beyond technology, encompassing behavioural change and systems-level solutions for lasting social impact.

The strategy focuses on the entire innovation lifecycle: nurturing promising ideas, testing successful solutions, including system innovations and scaling them for maximum impact. It provides a strategic roadmap for planning and delivering UNFPA programmes in its programme countries.

Collaboration is at the heart of UNFPA’s innovation vision. Partnerships with innovators, communities, civil society, the private sector, the research and knowledge-generation community, and United Nations agencies create a global movement for change.



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UNFPA recognizes that a strong internal culture of innovation is essential. This means encouraging measured risks, celebrating learning from successes and failures, and prioritizing knowledge-sharing across the organization. By strengthening staff capability, cultivating risk-informed operational agility and establishing a robust knowledge management system, UNFPA is well-positioned to drive innovation safely and effectively.

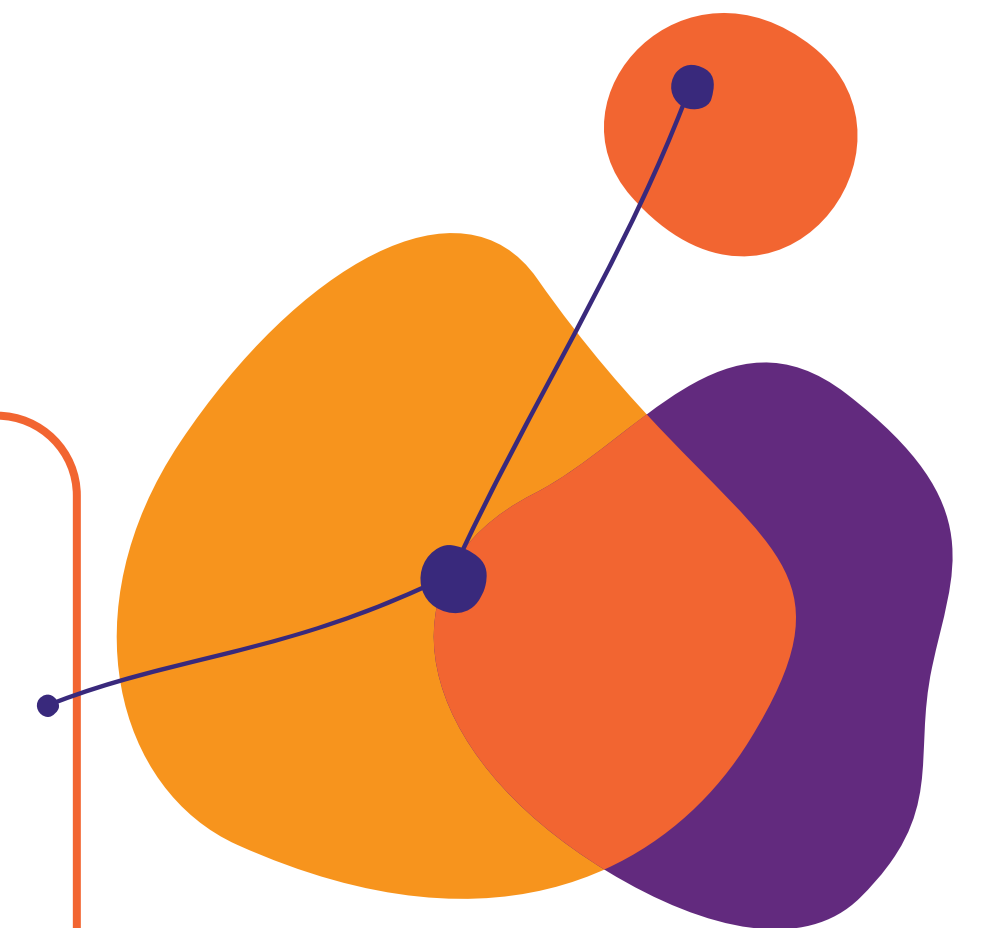
UNFPA delivers development and humanitarian programmes in complex and fragile contexts, seeking ambitious results and using innovative approaches to address the needs of women and young people. We navigate heightened contextual risks to make effective progress against rapidly evolving programmatic goals. Many opportunities arise from ongoing innovations that can be leveraged to achieve breakthrough results.

Scaling proven innovations are critical to maximizing their reach and impact. An evidence-driven and human rights-based approach identifies the most effective solutions, while strong partnerships facilitate knowledge exchange and resource mobilization. By nurturing local innovations with global potential, UNFPA can ensure that impactful solutions reach those furthest behind.

Through this comprehensive strategy, UNFPA is committed to harnessing innovation as a powerful tool for change. By fostering a collaborative, agile and learning environment, UNFPA aims to empower women and young people globally, ensuring their rights and choices become a reality.

“To disrupt inequality and realize the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to remove the barriers between women and girls and their rights and choices. UNFPA collaborates with partners to support digital, social and financial innovations – investments that can transform lives.”

**Dr. Natalia Kanem**  
Executive Director  
UNFPA



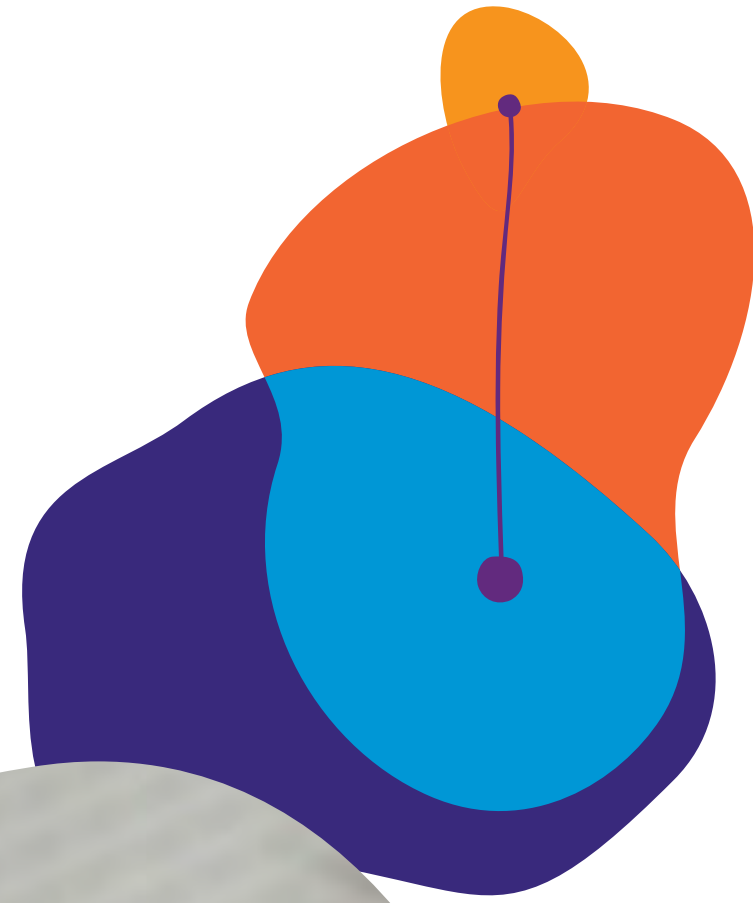
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# Acronyms

- AI** artificial intelligence
- APP** application
- CPD** Country Programme Documents
- ICPD** International Conference on Population and Development
- SRHR** sexual and reproductive health and rights

# I. Vision



Innovation is essential for UNFPA to deliver at the scale and pace needed to realize the **ICPD Programme of Action** and achieve our three transformative results by 2030. To be fit-for-purpose in complex development, humanitarian and conflict contexts, UNFPA commits to harnessing innovation to meet tomorrow's challenges, boost its impact, especially for those furthest behind, and leverage opportunities, social capital, funding and technology. UNFPA champions innovations by, for and with women and young people to equalize their opportunities and ensure rights and choices for all.

As the United Nations faces a multitude of pressing issues, the need for preparedness and the ability to create new and inventive solutions is more urgent than ever. In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, we must “Be bold, be revolutionary – and disrupt – because without innovation, there is no way we can overcome the challenges of our times.”

In 2014, UNFPA prioritized “promoting innovation and creativity” to foster experimentation, support creativity and drive innovative activities across key areas of its work. This strategy builds on previous efforts to mainstream innovation by collaboratively creating innovative solutions with partners, scaling up successful innovations, forging partnerships with innovators from both public and private sectors, and establishing a culture of innovation that has yielded considerable progress.

To fulfil the promise of the ICPD Programme of Action and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, UNFPA recognizes the need to accelerate its actions and adopt innovative approaches. UNFPA is expanding its focus on innovation beyond technology, to encompass social norms, behaviour and systems, aiming to achieve social impact through social innovation.

## How do we define innovation?

“We can do things differently, and we can do different things. Innovation is not only the most sophisticated technologies, sometimes it is the simplest of things.”

**António Guterres,**  
United Nations Secretary-General



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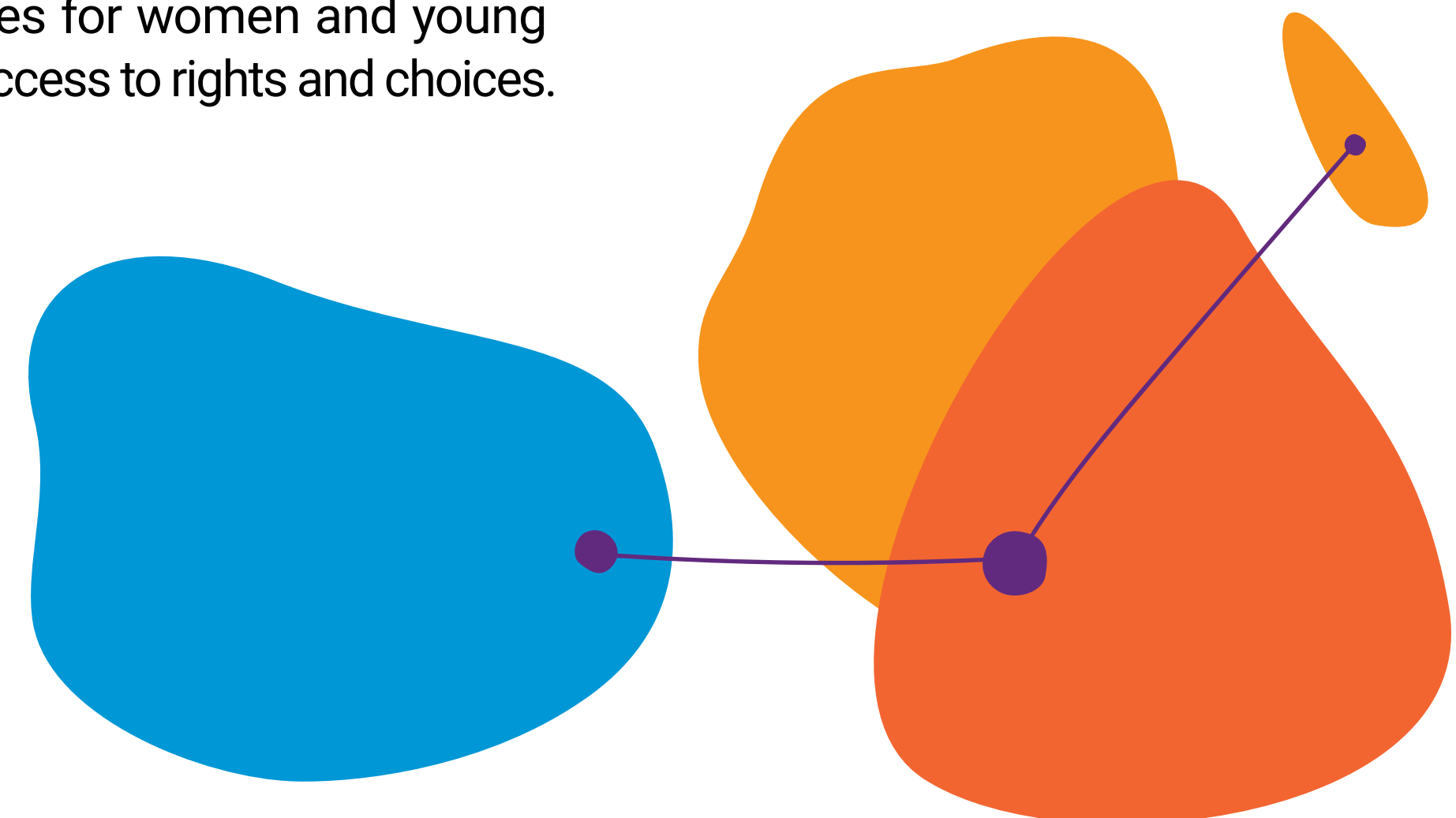
The **UNFPA Strategic Plan**, 2022–2025, identifies six accelerators for achieving our three transformative results:

- **Human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches;**
- **Innovation and digitalization;**
- **Partnerships, South-South and triangular cooperation, and financing;**
- **Data and evidence;**
- **Leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first;**
- **Resilience and adaptation, and complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts.**

For each accelerator, the goal is to achieve transformative outcomes for women and young people while unlocking access to rights and choices.

Harnessing innovation is central to transforming UNFPA’s impact by uncovering and implementing more effective solutions. For UNFPA, making a positive impact at scale – at the national level, across countries and regions – is only possible if the organization innovates at scale, together with strategic partners.

The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 integrates innovation across all outputs, including policy and accountability, quality of care and services, gender and social norms, population change and data, humanitarian action, and adolescents and young people. Innovative solutions help to find new ways to address megatrends that are shaping the future of our societies – income inequality, climate change, demographic shifts, technological progress, and urbanization – ensuring that the interdependence with the three transformative goals of UNFPA are integrated and addressed.



## II. Goal and purpose



### Goal

UNFPA's Global Innovation Strategy is anchored in the principle of innovation by, for and with women and young people in all their diversity. UNFPA aims to equalize opportunities for women and young people to ensure rights and choices for all — standing together to break down the barriers that hold development and progress back.

UNFPA is prioritizing investments in women-led innovations, ensuring access to funding and financing, capacity-building, knowledge resources and an ecosystem of mentors and experts. In particular, expanding opportunities for designing and scaling women-centric innovations, facilitating the

development of products and services that address the health and well-being of women and young people and address challenges that affect the lives of women in low- and middle-income countries.

Through funding, global and local advocacy, and technical support, UNFPA keeps women's priorities central to the development of innovative solutions — enabling women's full participation in the design, deployment and evaluation of innovations in science, technology and financing solutions, with human rights at the core.

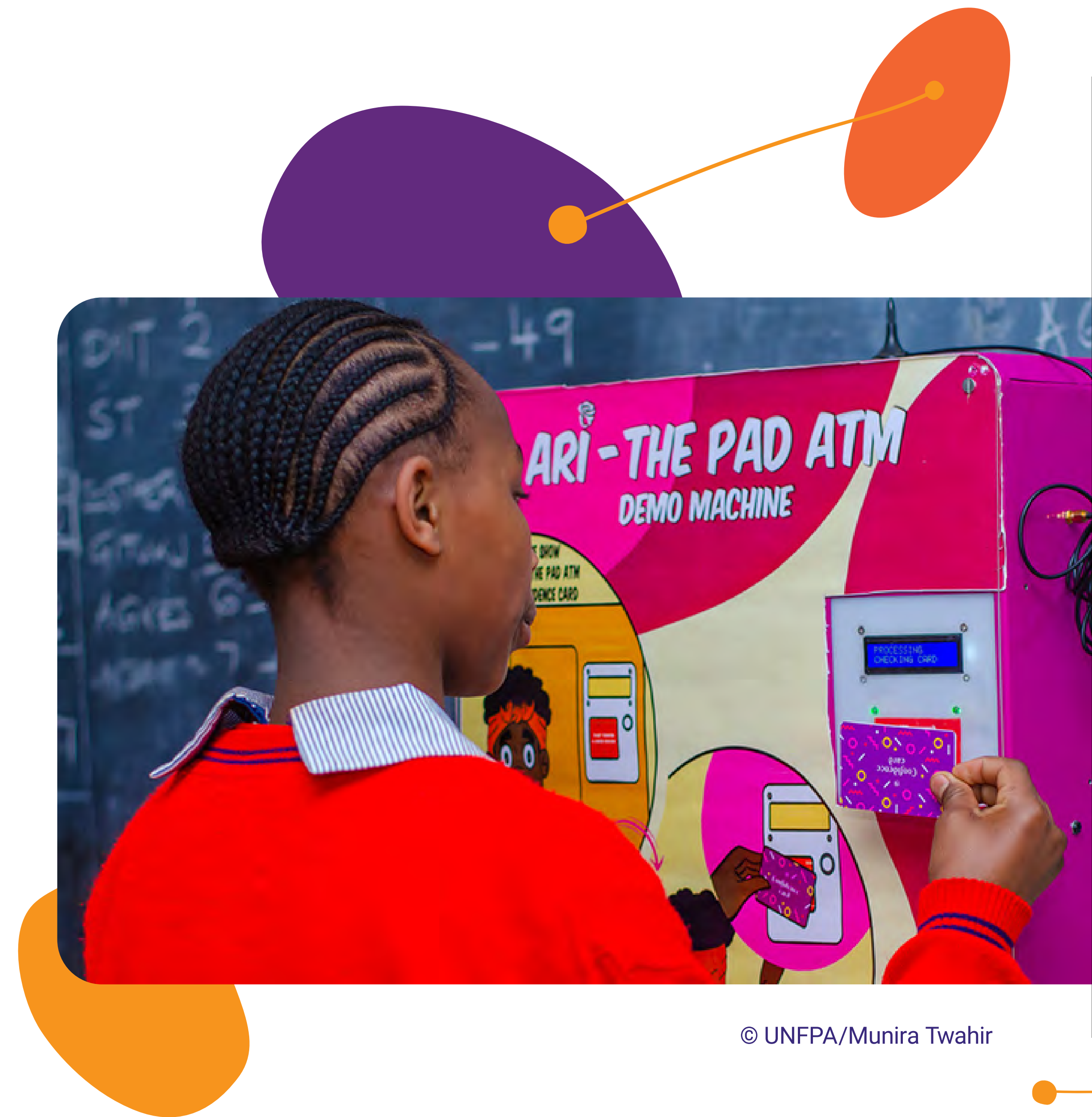


## INNOVATION BY WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Through the UNFPA innovation challenges, competitive funding opportunities for innovators and social enterprises based in UNFPA programme countries, the Equalizer Accelerator Fund has invested US\$1.5 million, supporting 34 women-led and youth-led social enterprises and teams with seed grants and capacity-building solutions addressing gender-based violence and SRHR of women and girls. The supported innovations reached over 600,000 women and girls in the UNFPA programme countries, catalysing meaningful, equitable and sustainable advancements in sexual and reproductive health.

For instance, in Nigeria, the 4HerPower Challenge supports the women-led Medtracka, an artificial intelligence (AI)

powered mobile app that helps close the gender equity gap in accessing quality healthcare. Tailored for women and girls, it connects them online to gynaecologists, mental health therapists and counsellors, enabling easier access to diagnostic kits, medicine and personal care items. To date, it has reached over 8,000 young people and distributed more than 4,000 sexual and reproductive health products. In Bolivia, the women-led SELF-DISCOVER[ED] solution aims to raise awareness among Indigenous and first-generation students about their rights to combat teen pregnancy rates and sexual abuse. In Kenya, women-led Ari The Pad ATM installed over 42 dispensers in schools across Nairobi and Kiambu counties, providing over 10,000 sanitary pads to hundreds of students.



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## INNOVATION FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

UNFPA supports innovations addressing the health and well-being of women and young people, prioritizing efforts to end unmet needs for family planning, preventable maternal deaths and gender-based violence. We remove barriers for women and girls to exercise their right to sexual and reproductive health.

Through its regional and country teams, UNFPA supports a broad range of innovative solutions. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Using drones to deliver blood products and reproductive health commodities in Botswana and Benin.**
- **The low-tech menstrual tracker watch, IMMI, in Moldova.**
- **Training traditional birth attendants and registering births in Indigenous communities in Colombia (Partera Vital).**
- **Supporting AI-enabled platforms that provide healthcare professionals with direct and instant access to evidence-based, up-to-date clinical guidelines on basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care, as well as family planning (e.g., Safe Delivery App), and offering young people quality information on SRHR (e.g., JustAsk!).**
- **Platforms to support survivors and those at risk of gender-based violence (Plataforma Mulher Segura, SafeYOU, Amaali App).**

## INNOVATION WITH WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A substantial body of evidence suggests a lack of gender equity in the design and development of science, technology and financial solutions across sectors, including healthcare, well-being and education. The lack of women's inclusion results in gender-blind products and a gap in women-centric solutions. In a world where technology and science have the power to shape our future, we must ensure that women and girls in all their diversity are not only statistically visible but also actively engaged in the design and development of solutions.

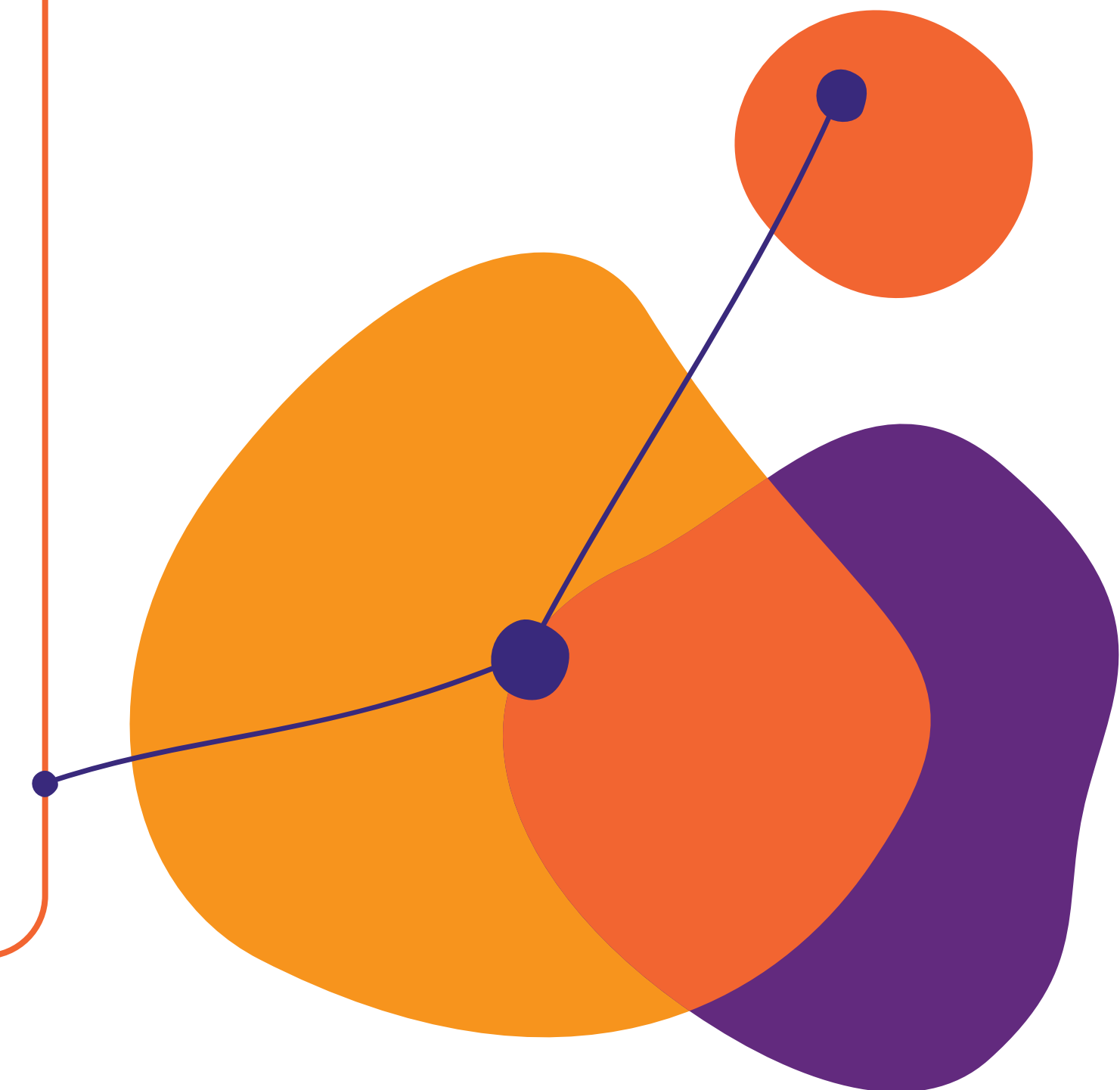
UNFPA established the Equity 2030 Alliance to accelerate actions to normalize gender equity in science, technology and financing solutions by introducing data-driven evidence and strategies. UNFPA is leveraging its convening power to bring together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors to amplify the global power of its members to disrupt the current status quo and build gender-transformative science and technology solutions.

We believe our joint actions and advocacy lead to an inclusive, sustainable and gender-equitable future, where women's and girls' voices are heard, their needs are met and the potential of young people is fulfilled. An equitable future can only be achieved if advances in science and technology include and address the needs of all.

We must be **#EquitableByDesign**.



## EQUITY 2030 ALLIANCE





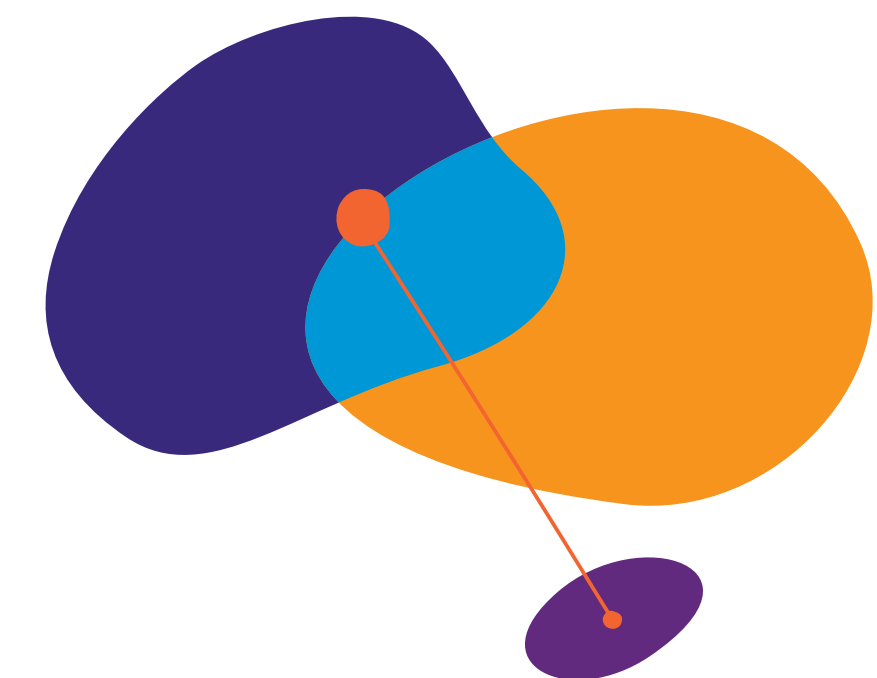
## Purpose

UNFPA is committed to cultivating innovation and organizational change to ensure it is future-fit and well-positioned to foster a dynamic environment where innovation and transformative ideas thrive. We aim to achieve our purpose by leveraging opportunities, social capital, funding and technology and through the following objectives:

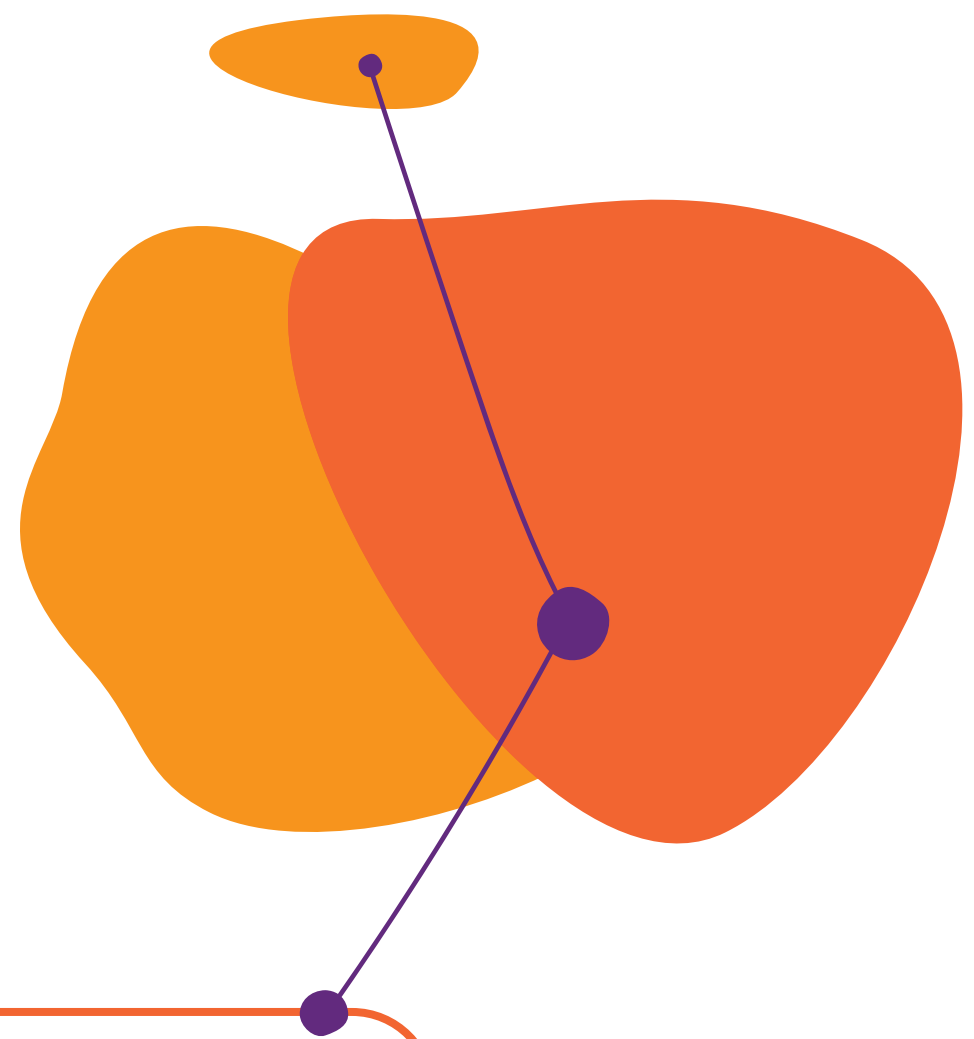
- **Strengthening the corporate innovation architecture and capabilities:** ensuring our innovation framework is robust and agile to meet the dynamic demands of our work.
- **Scaling up innovations that have proven safe, effective and impactful:** identifying and amplifying innovations with significant potential, particularly for marginalized populations.
- **Forming new partnerships and connecting with relevant innovation ecosystems:** collaborating with diverse stakeholders to broaden our innovation

ecosystem and access new resources and expertise.

- **Expanding communities and culture for innovation:** cultivating a culture of adaptability, creativity and experimentation to respond effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities, while building an ecosystem of impact-driven social innovators. This includes influencing key stakeholders to ensure that designs are rights-based, safe, inclusive, equitable and women-friendly..
- **Strengthening and leveraging financing for innovation:** exploring innovative funding and financing models to support and scale impactful innovations.



# III. Guiding principles



## United Nations Innovation Principles

-  Design with the user
-  Use open standards, open data, open source and open innovation
-  Understand the existing ecosystem
-  Reuse and improve
-  Design for scale
-  Do no harm
-  Build for sustainability
-  Be collaborative
-  Be data driven

Adhering to overall United Nations Innovation Principles, UNFPA’s Innovation Strategy amplifies women-led and youth-led, women-centred, gender-equitable approaches to innovation, anchored in the following guiding principles:

1. **Alignment with global initiatives:** the strategy embarks on innovation in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN 2.0, and the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022–2025. It embraces the leveraging of partnerships, facilitating knowledge-sharing, North-South, South-South and triangular, regional and international cooperation for science, culture, technology and innovation.
2. **Alignment with UNFPA Strategic Plan:** the strategy builds on UNFPA’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and aims to inform the Strategic Plan 2026–2029. The strategy demonstrates the impact of innovation across all six outputs and six accelerators of the current Strategic Plan.

3. **Harnessing the power of frontier technologies:** the strategy builds on a proactive approach to pilot and implement safe, ethical and rights-based frontier technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of UNFPA’s programming and operations. UNFPA closely collaborates with other United Nations entities to ensure that AI is developed and utilized in a manner that respects human rights and upholds ethical standards, based on Principles for the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in the United Nations System.
4. **Rights-based, gender-equitable and women-centric:** the strategy emphasizes ethical, inclusive, women-centric and gender-equitable innovative solutions.



## Innovation

Cultivating innovation skills and culture is about fostering environments that encourage creativity, risk-taking and continuous learning. It goes beyond simple problem-solving – it's about viewing challenges as opportunities for groundbreaking ideas and solutions.



5. **Participatory and needs-driven:** the strategy recognizes the diversity of geographical and population groups' needs, different levels of harnessing science and innovation, priorities and capacities and focuses on a participatory and needs-driven approach, ensuring the innovations are co-created, adapted to and informed by the local, national and regional contexts, responding to the needs of vulnerable and furthest left-behind populations, and securing ownership at a national level. UNFPA aims to ensure that innovations are connected to identified key bottlenecks at all levels, prioritizing solutions that are geared towards reaching the furthest left behind.
6. **Aimed at impact and sustainability:** the strategy prioritizes innovations that demonstrate the biggest potential for impact and sustainability, ensuring integration of socioeconomic dimensions through analysis, impact assessments and monitoring, and evaluation. Innovation at UNFPA is not limited to new solutions and technologies but also to expand upon those that already exist to strengthen existing approaches and offer new ways to use that which we have learned from one another.
7. **Opportunity-driven and risk-informed:** the strategy builds on harnessing opportunities yet staying informed by identified risks and smart, shared risk management.
8. **Collaboration, partnerships and innovation ecosystem:** the strategy expands and deepens the role of global, regional and country partnership and collaboration to drive scale and sustainability of innovative solutions, building the innovative ecosystem and positioning UNFPA among leading actors to drive women-centric and gender-equitable innovations to better fulfil UNFPA's mission and mandate.
9. **Safety by design:** the strategy affirms that safety, security and privacy are embedded into technology at the point of design to prevent and mitigate harm to users, including those most marginalized. Influencing industry standards to enforce systems of safety by design is paramount in ensuring equitable access to and use of innovations in technology.
10. **Data privacy:** data privacy is of utmost importance for UNFPA. It is a fundamental human right that concerns us all, in our private lives as well as in our work lives, as individuals and as an organization. UNFPA handles any shared information with the utmost care and security and does not use it in ways other than as outlined in its privacy policy, in any site-specific policies, or in ways to which the user has explicitly consented. UNFPA employs a range of techniques and security measures to protect the information maintained on our system from loss, misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, alteration or destruction. UNFPA emphasizes the need to minimize users' data-collection to the essential minimum required, and for not sharing this information with third parties.

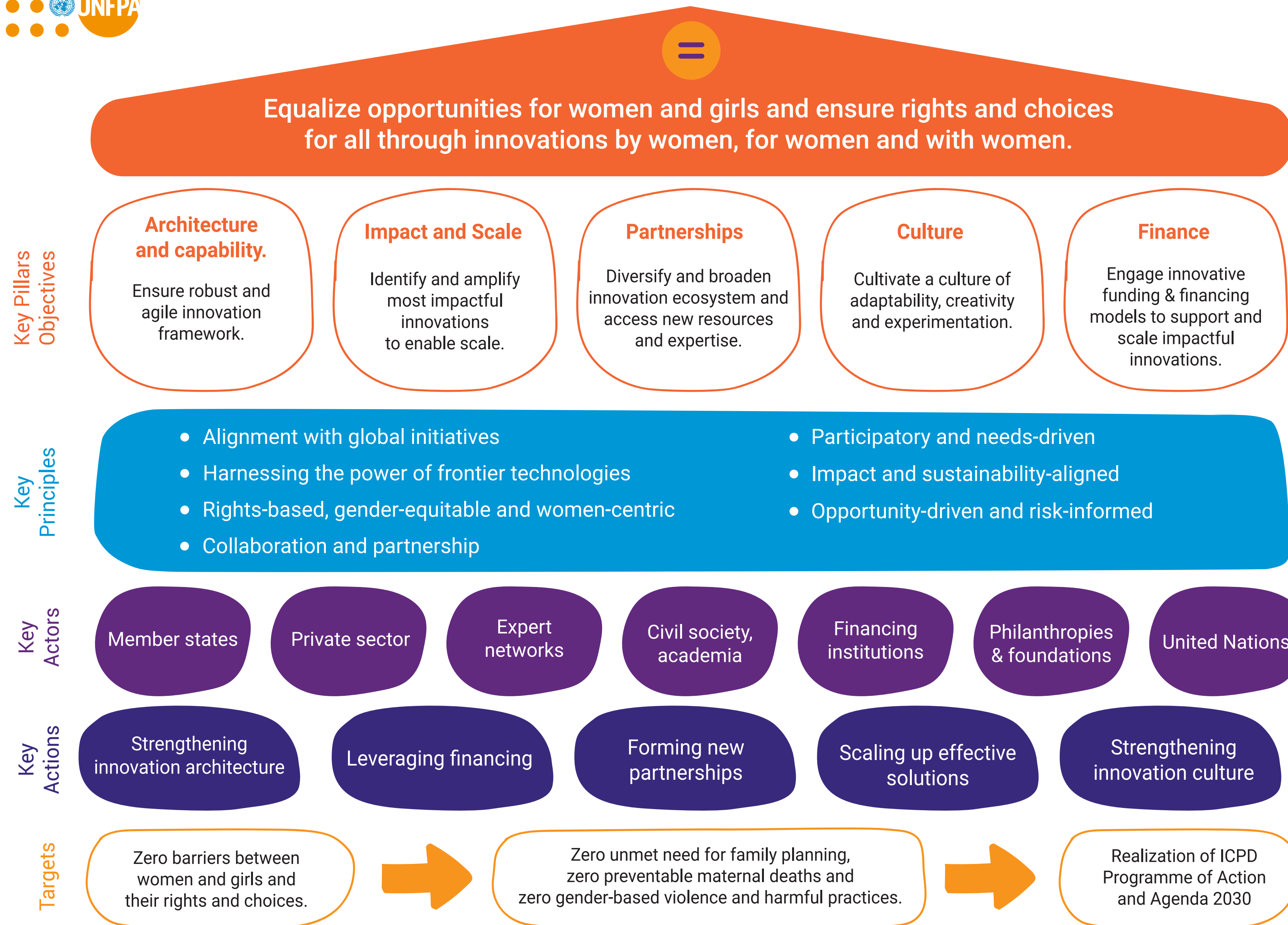
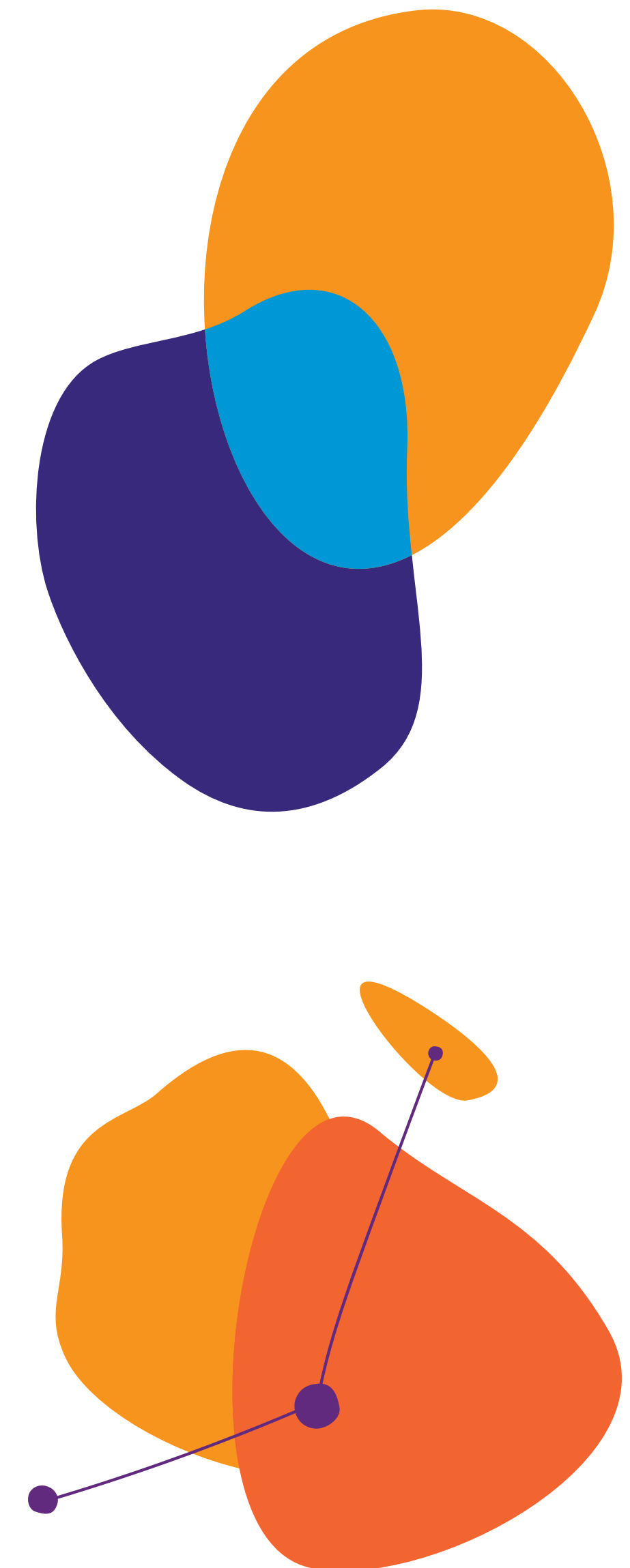
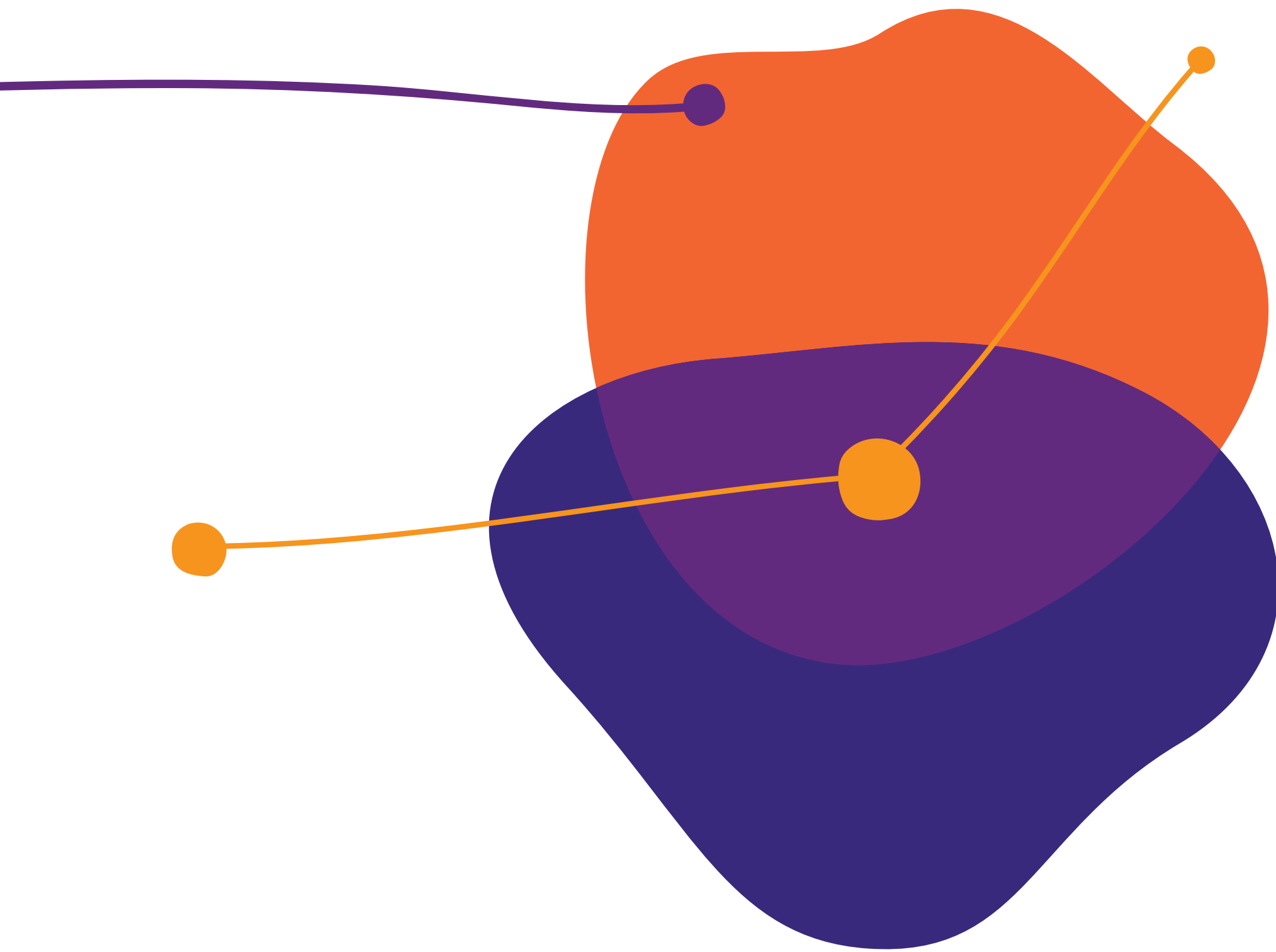


Figure 1. UNFPA Innovation Strategy Framework



# IV. Theory of change



UNFPA enables, facilitates and accelerates innovations by, for and with women and young people in all their diversity. At the heart of UNFPA’s mission is the strategic deployment of innovation as a critical enabler to realize its transformative goals, contributing significantly to the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

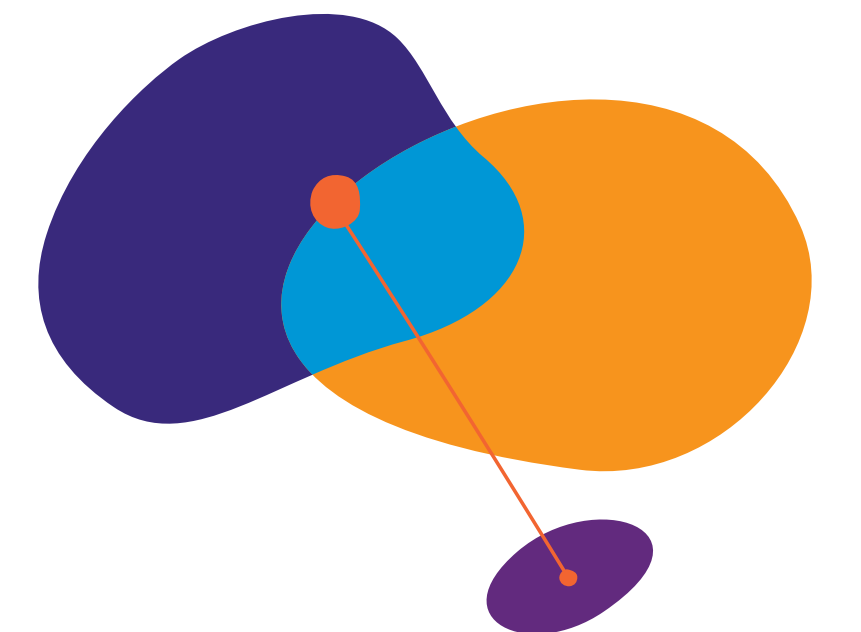
Recognizing the diversity in challenges, needs and capacities across countries – particularly in infrastructure, education and technical capabilities – UNFPA acknowledges the necessity for a coordinated effort among various actors. This effort positions UNFPA as a pivotal entity, providing global public goods, knowledge, guidance and policy coherence.

To actualize our strategy’s vision, UNFPA aims to ensure all countries can access the innovations needed to overcome the complex barriers inhibiting women’s and young people’s rights and choices. The vision requires fostering an enabling environment to build capacity, facilitating knowledge sharing, and curating knowledge to support innovation. This vision mandates a globally gender-equitable, inclusive and sustainable

approach, actively involving marginalized and left-behind populations in developing and using innovation across all contexts.

Progress in accelerating UNFPA’s transformative results through innovation is hindered by several challenges, including but not limited to underinvestment in research, development and innovation; limited accessibility and uptake of innovations; gaps in evidence-based decision-making; and gender equity gaps in the design of technological, scientific and investment solutions. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving our three transformative results by 2030: ending the unmet need for family planning, preventing maternal deaths and eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices.

This requires not only accelerating progress but also transforming our operational approach to be more innovation driven.







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Innovation is integrated into the guidelines for developing Country Programme Documents (CPDs). The programmes are required to be developed through a robust theory of change process, applying the critical steps of unpacking the core problems, identifying root causes, exploring innovative solutions and conducting a proper prioritization process involving all stakeholders. UNFPA programme countries are required to provide a framework for reflecting and adapting based on evidence and experience to inform innovation and improvement during the implementation stage of the CPDs.

Sexual and reproductive health issues remain the leading cause of death and disability among women and girls in low- and middle-income countries, where investment in women’s health research and innovation are particularly lacking. A substantial body of evidence points to gender blindness in technology design across sectors, underscoring the need for gender-equitable solutions to drive equality and economic growth. There is an urgent need to ensure a multi-sectoral approach to building rights-based, ethical, inclusive and gender-equitable technological innovations.

To bridge the gap between existing research, innovations and their accessibility and uptake at the local level, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and to close the gender equity gap in access to technology, UNFPA is committed to harnessing innovation to accelerate the achievement of the three transformative results by 2030. Our approach includes strengthening our innovation architecture, scaling effective solutions, forming new partnerships, leveraging financing and expanding our innovation culture to amplify women-led and youth-led, women-centred and gender-equitable approaches.

By shifting from merely implementing to strategically managing innovation, and moving from isolated efforts to a cohesive, “Think Different” organizational mindset, UNFPA is taking the necessary steps to build the capabilities required to effectively deliver on these priorities.

## Challenges

- Advancements in sexual and reproductive health and rights are stagnated.
- Women-led, youth-led and women-centric innovations are underinvested.
- Gender equitable design of innovative solutions are not normalized.
- Capacity to design and implement innovations is limited.
- Accesibility of innovations, as well as adaption in local context is suboptimal.
- Risks associated with uncertain outcomes, resources and political environment are restrictive.

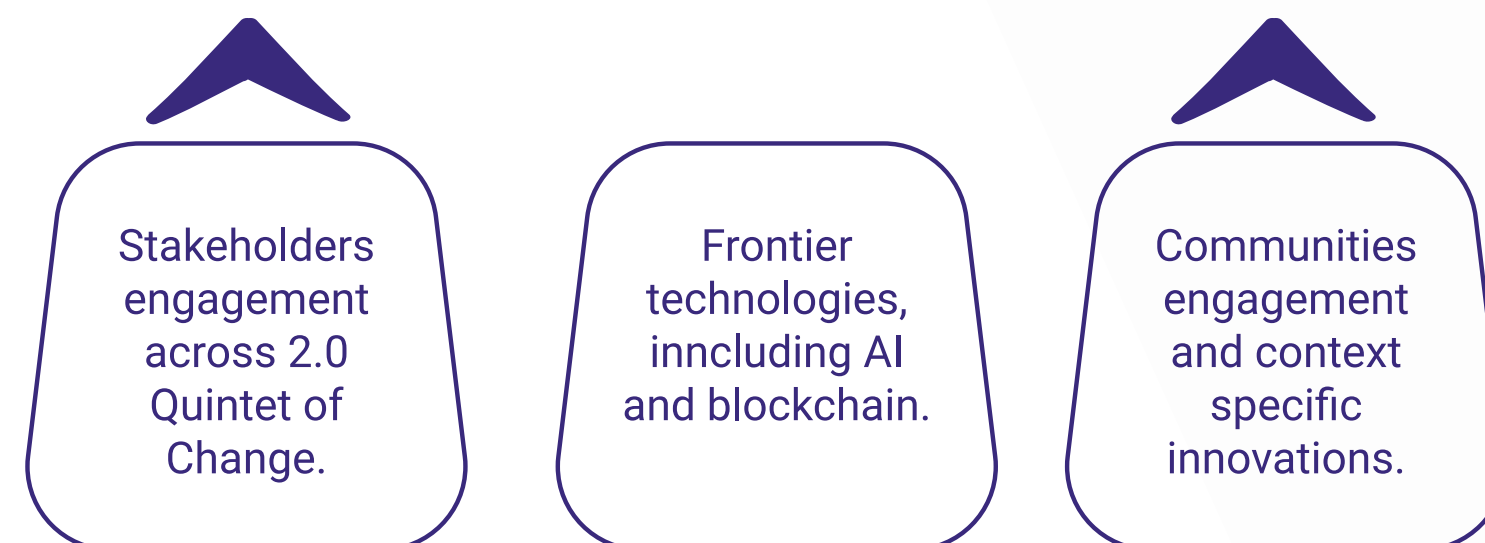
## Enablers



### Strategic actions

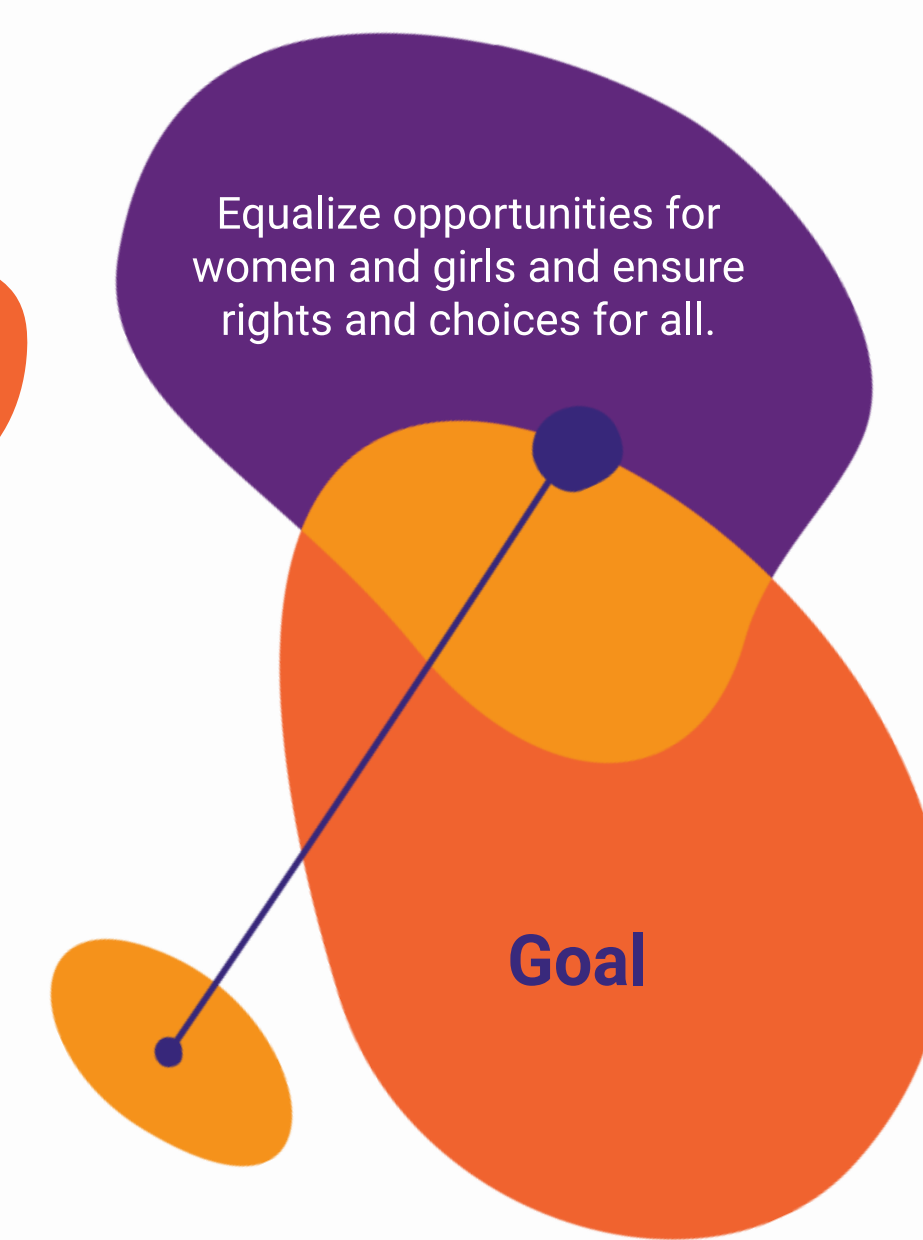
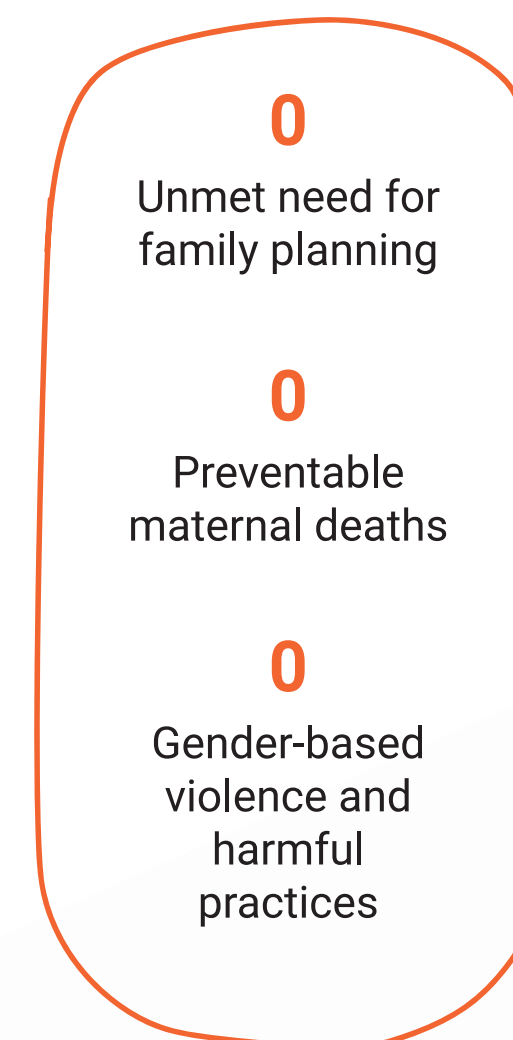


Advancing innovations by, for and with women and young people through rights-based, gender-equitable and women-centric innovations.



## Enablers

## Outcome

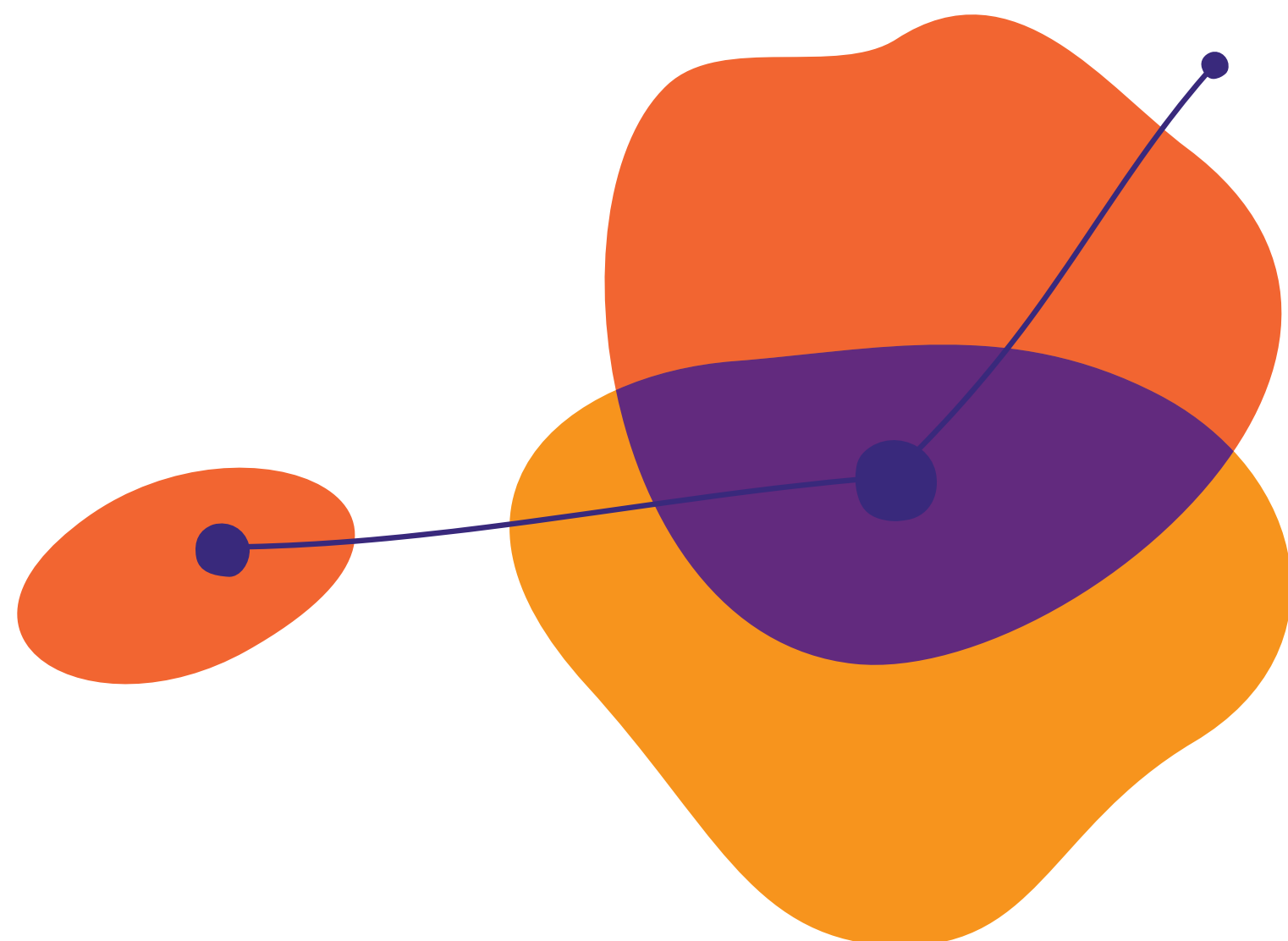


This strategic emphasis on innovation positions UNFPA to meet tomorrow's challenges, capitalizing on opportunities to make a lasting impact on the lives of women and girls globally.

Figure 2. UNFPA Innovation Strategy Theory of change



# V. Innovation architecture, capabilities and culture

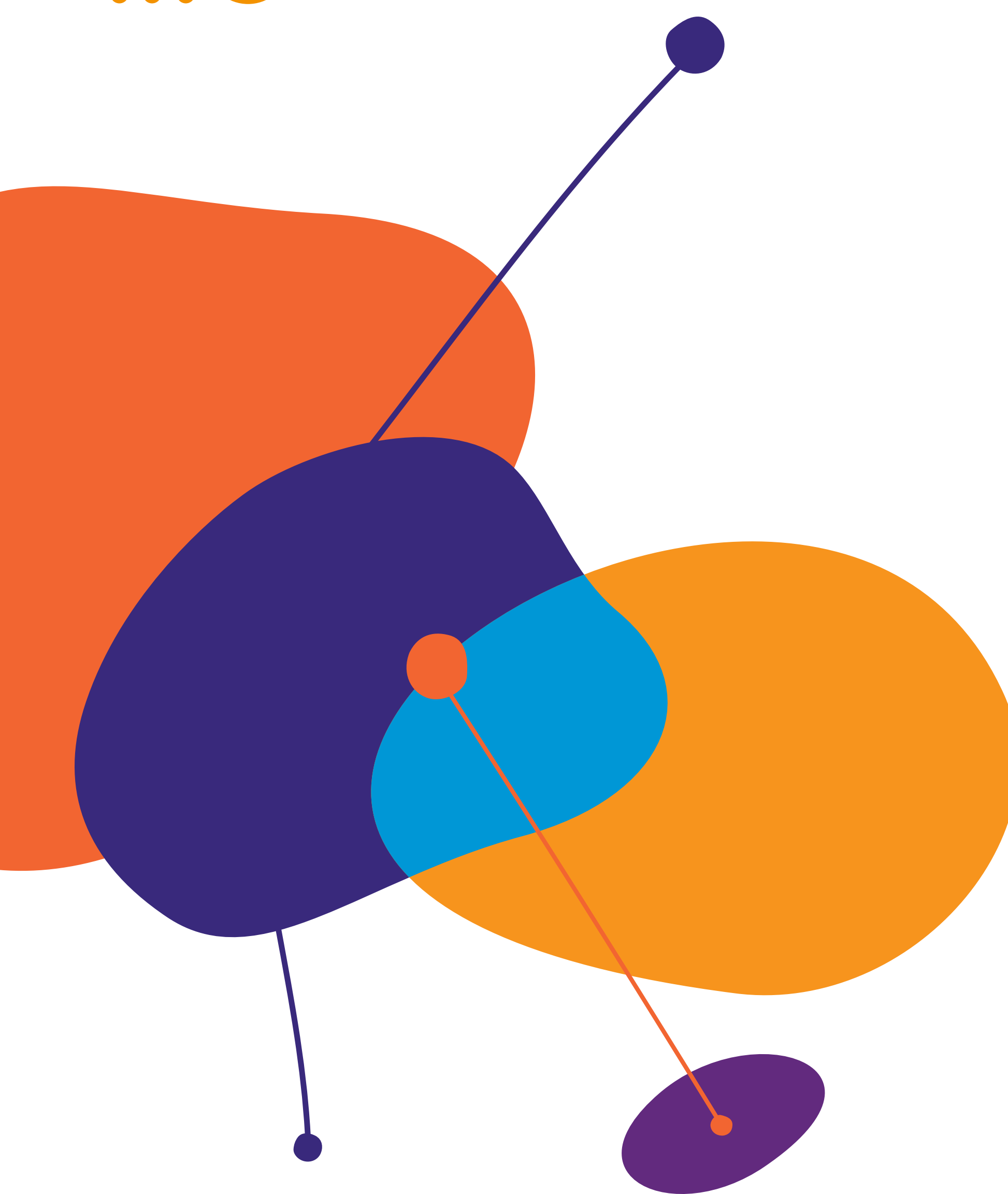


UNFPA places communities and a culture of innovation at the centre of its efforts, committing to a robust and agile innovation framework that meets the dynamic demands of its mandate. UNFPA fosters a culture that encourages forward thinking, calculated risk-taking, creative thinking, open spaces for innovative ideas and continuous iteration, a collaborative mindset and learning from failures. The organization integrates foresight and scenario planning into its agile infrastructure and programming and encourages innovative country programmes that seek effectiveness in creating a positive impact for our constituencies.

UNFPA supports the community of innovators designing for and with women and young people, focusing on female-led and youth-led innovations. A participatory and needs-driven approach places user-centric and, specifically, women-centric innovations at the centre, adapting to diverse contexts. While acknowledging that innovations encompass not just technological advances but also changes in social norms and political-economic systems for broader impact, UNFPA recognizes the importance of leveraging and integrating frontier technologies and

rights-based, equitable and inclusive technological innovations. These innovations must adhere to the principles of “do no harm,” inclusive decision-making, safety by design, data minimization, data privacy and protection and a user-centric approach. Innovation at UNFPA recognizes digitalization and data-driven insights as essential for developing new products and services and enhancing operational efficiencies. However, amidst this digital transformation, ensuring robust data safety practices is paramount to safeguard privacy, maintain trust and mitigate risks. UNFPA has adopted a holistic approach to data-collection, storage, processing and disposal to protect sensitive information from unauthorized access, breaches or misuse.

UNFPA harnesses collective expertise and insights, leveraging teamwork and knowledge networks by facilitating collaboration, promoting knowledge exchange and fostering a supportive, diverse and inclusive ecosystem for innovation, as well as communities of practice among stakeholders.



UNFPA mainstreams innovation efforts across programmes, making innovation part of its identity. By embedding innovation as a core component of its programming, operations, planning, implementation and evaluation of all initiatives, UNFPA fosters a culture of continuous improvement, adaptability and creativity. This enhances its ability to address complex challenges and achieve sustainable impact in SRHR.

As an essential enabler of this innovative culture, UNFPA creates incentives and opportunities to stimulate creativity and experimentation. This includes recognizing and rewarding innovative contributions, accepting risk as an integral part of innovation, fostering results-focused and cross-disciplinary collaborations, and providing platforms for idea generation and exploration. By nurturing an environment where innovation is valued and encouraged, and where failure is seen as a learning opportunity, UNFPA unleashes the full potential of its workforce to drive transformative change and effectively addresses the evolving needs of the populations it serves, even in the most challenging contexts.

UNFPA acquires future-ready talent, ties development to innovation, and drives organizational performance improvement. It creates demand-driven systems to deploy this talent optimally, unleashing the full potential of its workforce to drive transformative change and effectively address the evolving needs of the populations it serves.

In the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, innovation is recognized as one of six accelerators for achieving key transformative goals. It is closely interlinked with other accelerators, such as human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches, digitalization, partnerships (including South-South and triangular cooperation), financing, data and evidence, leaving no one behind (especially reaching the furthest behind first), resilience and adaptation, as well as complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts. The accelerating effect of innovation extends across key outputs of the Strategic Plan, including addressing the quality of care and services, gender and social norms, population change and data, humanitarian action and the needs of adolescents and youth.

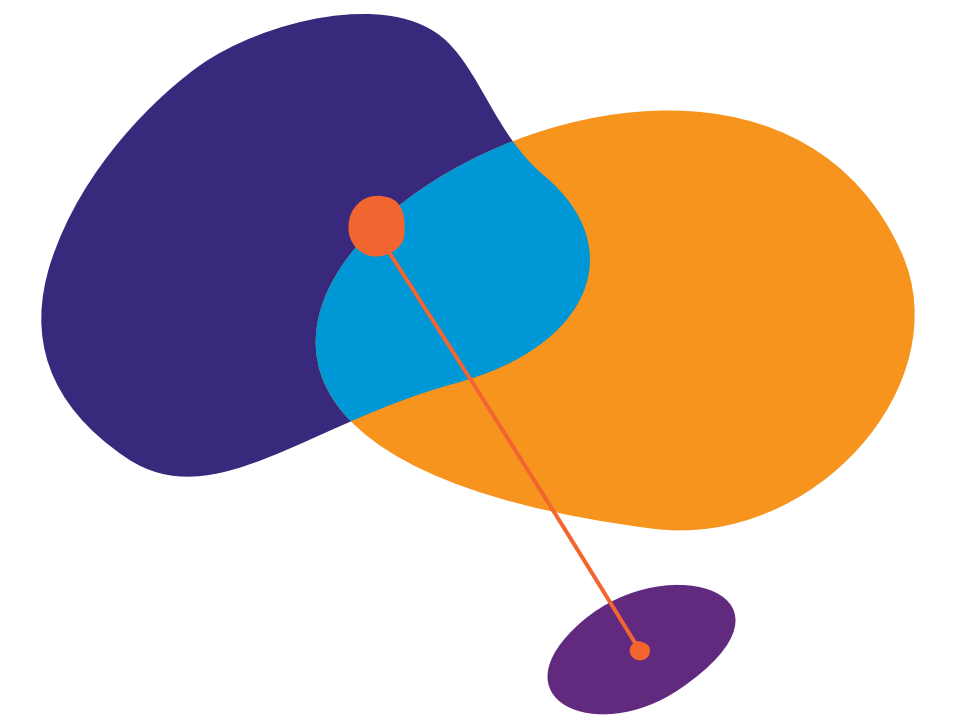


Everyone has a role to play in advancing innovation. At UNFPA, innovation is supported by a network of champions, specialists and focal points, along with the broader community within and beyond the organization. This network supports innovation processes in every business unit, providing guidance and tools, sharing best practices and facilitating partnerships to bolster innovative initiatives in regional and country offices.

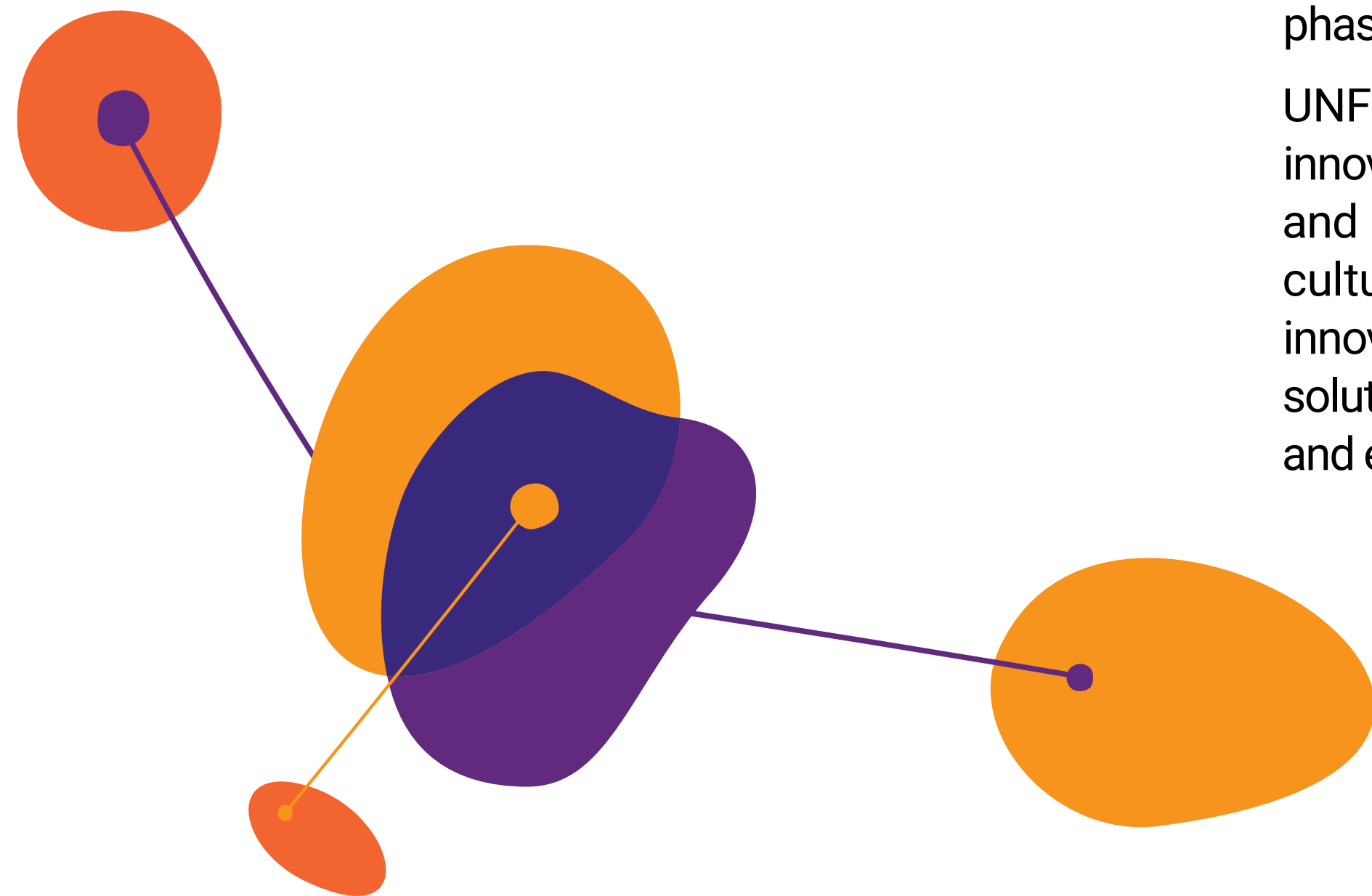
This fosters an enabling environment that promotes capacity-building, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing while encouraging both internal and external

collaboration. Through its Equalizer Accelerator Fund, UNFPA invests in innovations by, for and with women and young people. The fund helps scale innovative solutions that disrupt inequalities, focusing on areas aligned with UNFPA's mandate.

By strengthening its innovation culture, architecture and capabilities, UNFPA positions itself as a more agile and responsive organization, ready to tackle emerging challenges and deliver measurable results.



# VI. Path to scale impactful innovations



UNFPA’s path to scale is driven by the transformative power of innovation and collaborative efforts to effectively meet local and global needs, fostering the adoption of impactful solutions nationally, regionally and globally.

UNFPA works with a diverse spectrum of partners, including the public and private sectors, to incubate innovations for priority areas and leverage UNFPA’s convening voice for advocacy and social change, including at a systems level.

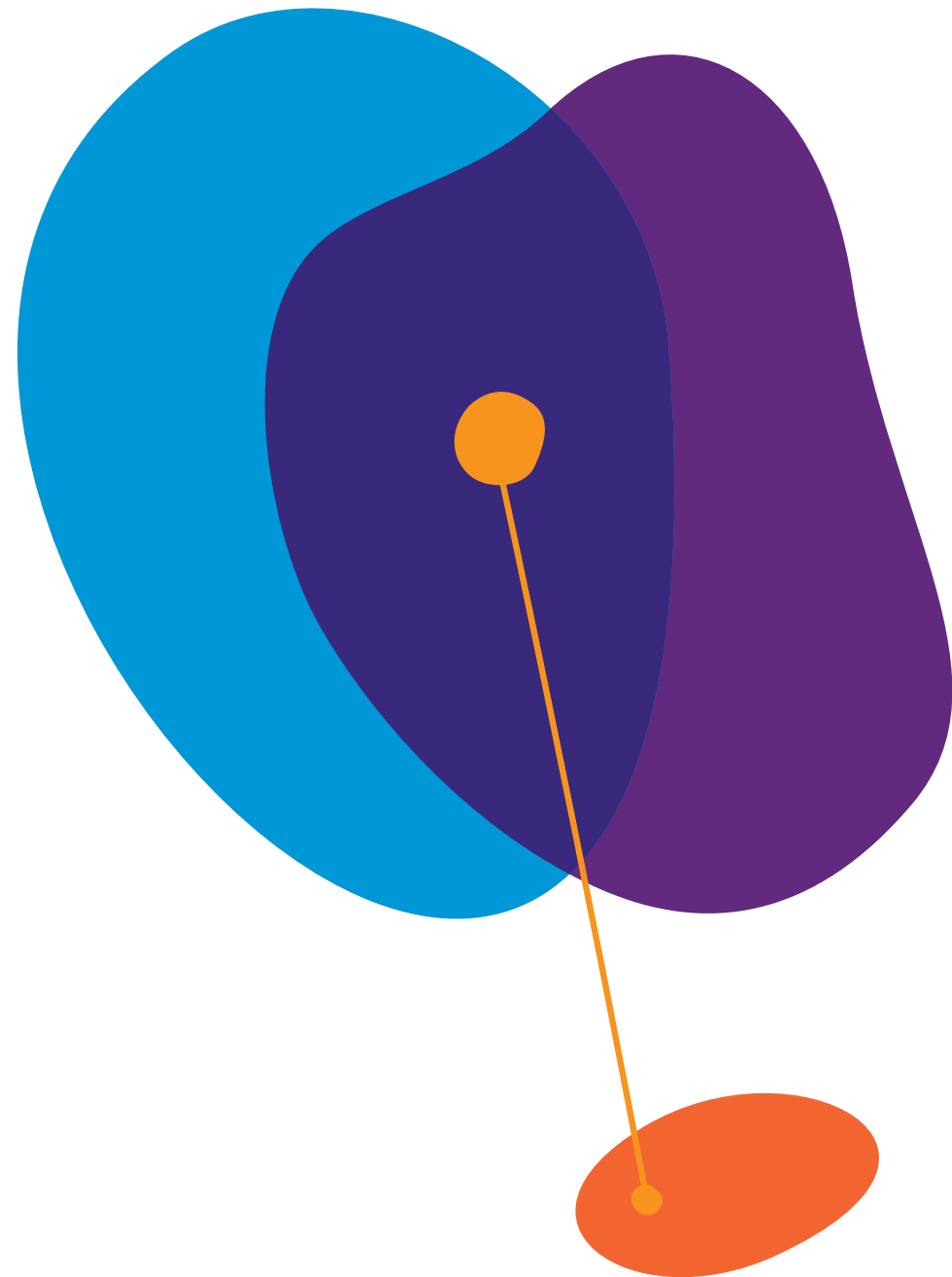
Overall, UNFPA’s path to scale is aligned with the approach outlined by **the UN Innovation Network** in its Innovation Toolkits. It encompasses the design and development phase; the pilot phase; the acceleration phase and the scaling innovation phase.

UNFPA emphasizes cost-effective approaches to innovation, maximizing the use of existing solutions and minimizing duplication of efforts. To foster a culture of collaboration and efficiency within its innovation strategy, where possible and when such solutions already exist, UNFPA prioritizes leveraging and enhancing existing technologies and knowledge,

encouraging the sharing of lessons learned, building upon and adapting current solutions rather than developing new ones from scratch when such solutions already exist. This approach enables iterative learning and adaptation, ensuring solutions evolve based on shared practices, real-time feedback and needs.

Throughout the innovation lifecycle, UNFPA keeps innovations by, for, and with women and young people in focus.

**Accelerating investments in innovations by, for and with women and young people:** UNFPA champions innovation to improve the health and well-being of women and young people, emphasizing SRHR and choices for all. It prioritizes the entire innovation life cycle, from ideation to scale-up. UNFPA sources, supports and funds promising female-led, youth-led, innovations and led by a vulnerable and marginalized group with global scalability, leveraging its network for the identification of these innovations.



The path to scale is informed by evidence-based decisions and the strategic use of data in scaling innovations. This includes investments in innovations in policy and accountability, quality of care and services, gender and social norms, population change and data, humanitarian action, and programmes for adolescents and youth. Aligned with the key accelerators of UNFPA’s Strategic Plan, UNFPA recognizes the impact of innovation across human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches.

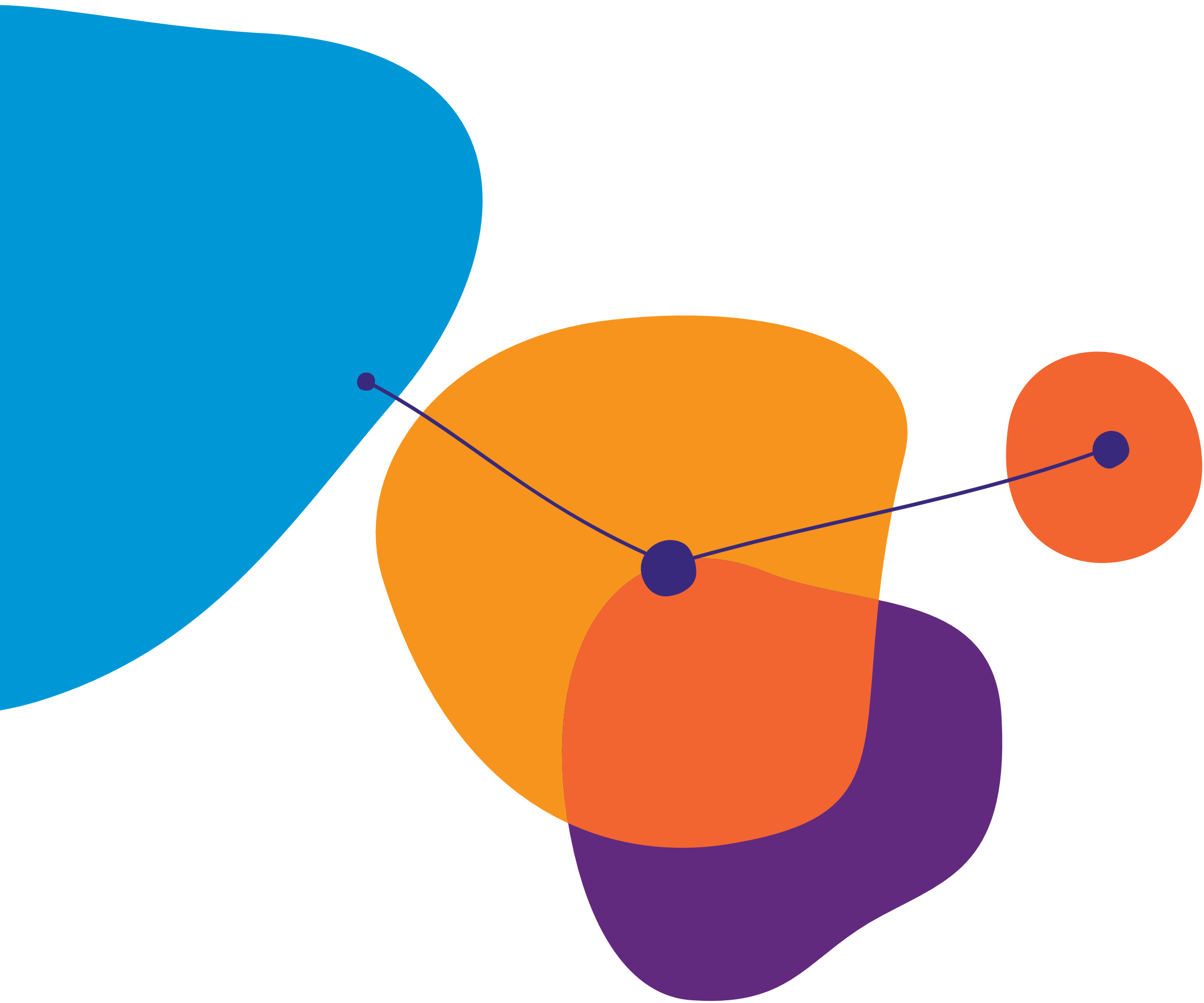
To effectively harness innovations on the ground and achieve greater efficiency in using financial and technical resources, UNFPA will explore and deploy advanced and emerging technologies and define a systematic approach to evaluate and scale up those which are successful.

**Advancing women-centric innovation:** UNFPA is shifting the narrative of underfunded research and innovations in women’s health and well-being. It supports funding and financing women and youth-led solutions, collaborating with industry and academia to develop scalable and cost-efficient solutions tailored to women’s health – particularly sexual and reproductive health.

The strategy aligns with UNFPA’s “Financing the ICPD Agenda: Implementing the Strategic Plan’s Shift from “Funding to Financing” strategy. It leverages UNFPA’s innovative financing mechanism of the Strategic Investment Facility, providing catalytic funding that incentivizes countries to design and scale up interventions that engage public-private partnerships, to enhance country office initiatives that contribute to this shift from funding to financing.

**Ensuring innovations are designed with women as part of the design at all stages:** UNFPA mobilizes global efforts to close gender equity gaps in the design of technology, science and financing solutions. It brings together diverse stakeholders to ensure a more inclusive, rights-based and gender-equitable design of solutions. UNFPA and its partners are redesigning the world to ensure it is designed for women and young people in all their diversity, addressing their needs and ensuring their voices are heard.

**Scaling up innovations from global to local and local to global:** UNFPA adopts a multifaceted strategy for scaling the most impactful innovations, specifically those that consider women and young people in every aspect of their design. These innovations adhere to the “Architecture Module: Pilot to Scale” outlined in the inter-agency agreed **UN Innovation Toolkit**.



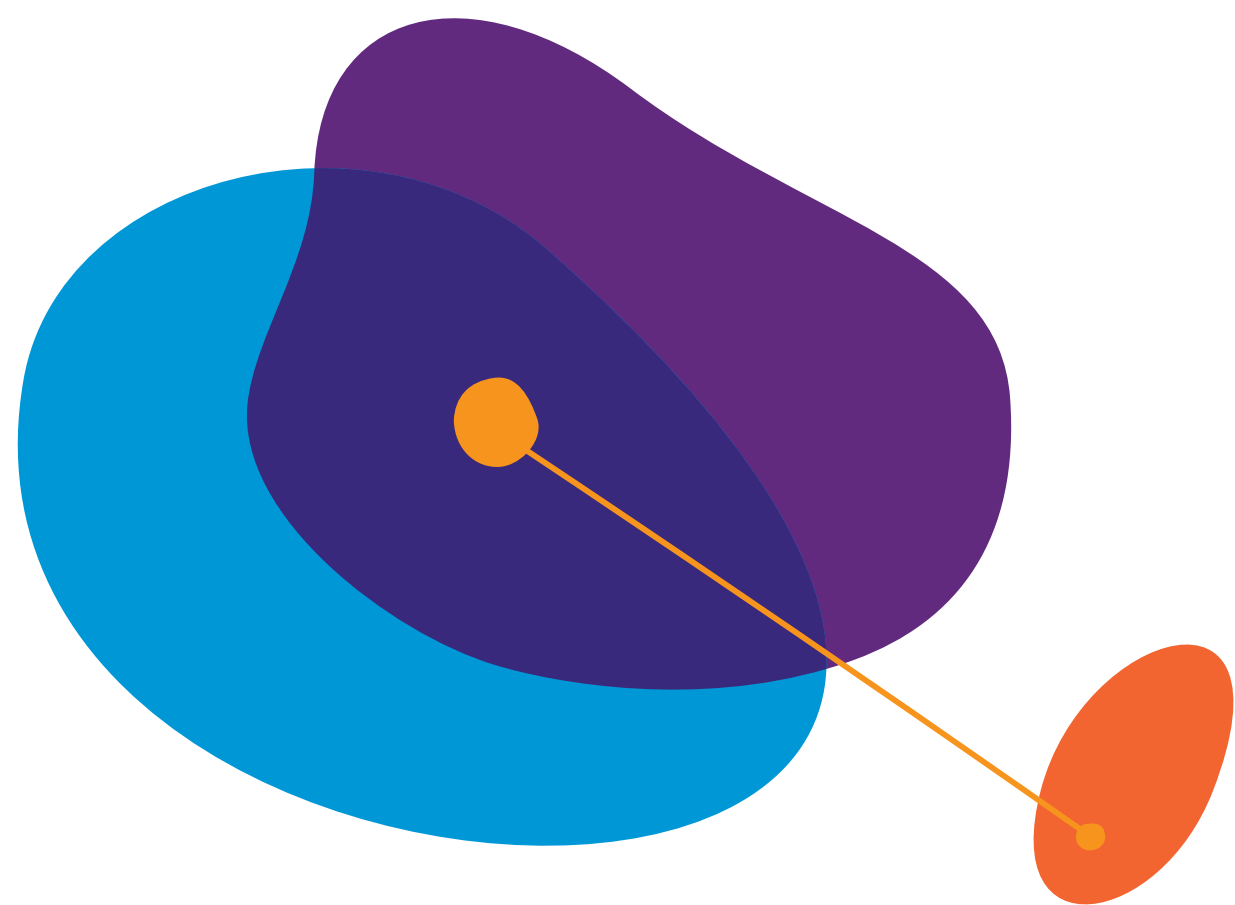
UNFPA leverages the expertise of its country offices to connect innovative solutions to the challenges faced by the most vulnerable and furthest behind populations in development, fragile and humanitarian contexts. It also identifies local innovations with global potential for impact, fostering partnerships for knowledge exchange and resource mobilization, and utilizing data-driven approaches to scale solutions effectively. Simultaneously, successful innovations and partnerships introduced globally are localized and regionalized. South-South and triangular cooperation demonstrate the pivotal role regional and country offices play in ensuring knowledge, technology and human resource exchange.

UNFPA offers various mechanisms to help innovations transition from funding to

financing, exploring new models to support programmatic goals. It also leverages a network of professionals to support the design, implementation and scaling of initiatives.

UNFPA amplifies its convening power to expand reach and impact through advocacy and collaboration with partners, aligning their approaches with UNFPA and United Nations principles. This includes stakeholder engagement, particularly in areas across the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change. UNFPA engages a network of field-based and global professionals from both development-oriented and private sector industries, specializing in innovation and technology, to support the design, implementation and scaling of initiatives across UNFPA's thematic areas.





### Design

- Asses global and local trends
- Identify opportunities for impact
- Scan for similar existing solutions to avoid duplication
- Identify key enablers
- Envision path to scale
- Design new innovation or expand upon an existing one.

### Pilot

- Test functionality, engagement and support
- Develop training programmes
- Analyze associated costs
- Establish a baseline to measure the conditions at the begining of pilot to inform future evaluation

### Accelerate

- Identify most impactful interventions(s)
- Determine geography and/or population for scaled implementation
- Identify resources needed
- Identify key stakeholders
- Develop scaling roadmap

### Scale

- Engage financing mechanisms
- Scale with or via partners
- Share knowledge and best practices

### Monitor

- Manage risks
- Adapt as needed
- Assess
- Further scale

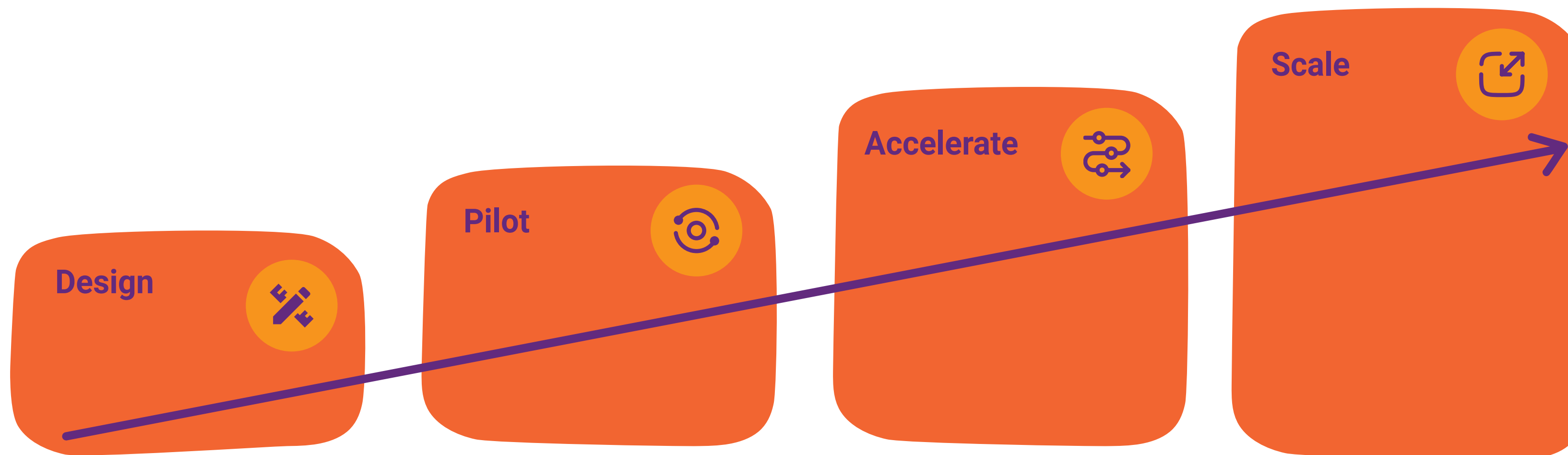
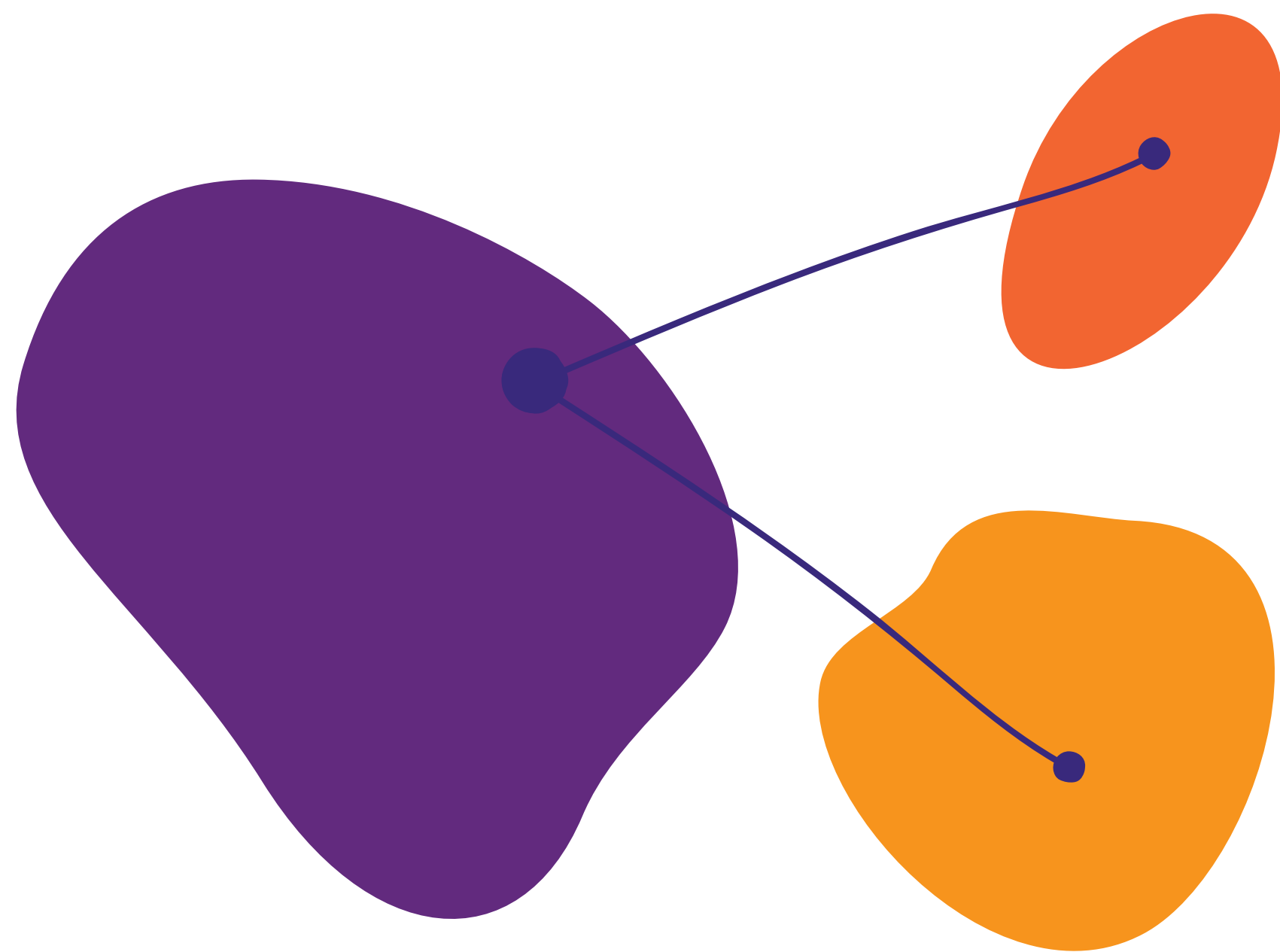


Figure 3. Innovation path to scale model

**Advancing innovation by, for and with women and young people through rights-based, gender-equitable and women-centric innovations**

# VII. Partnership and innovation ecosystem



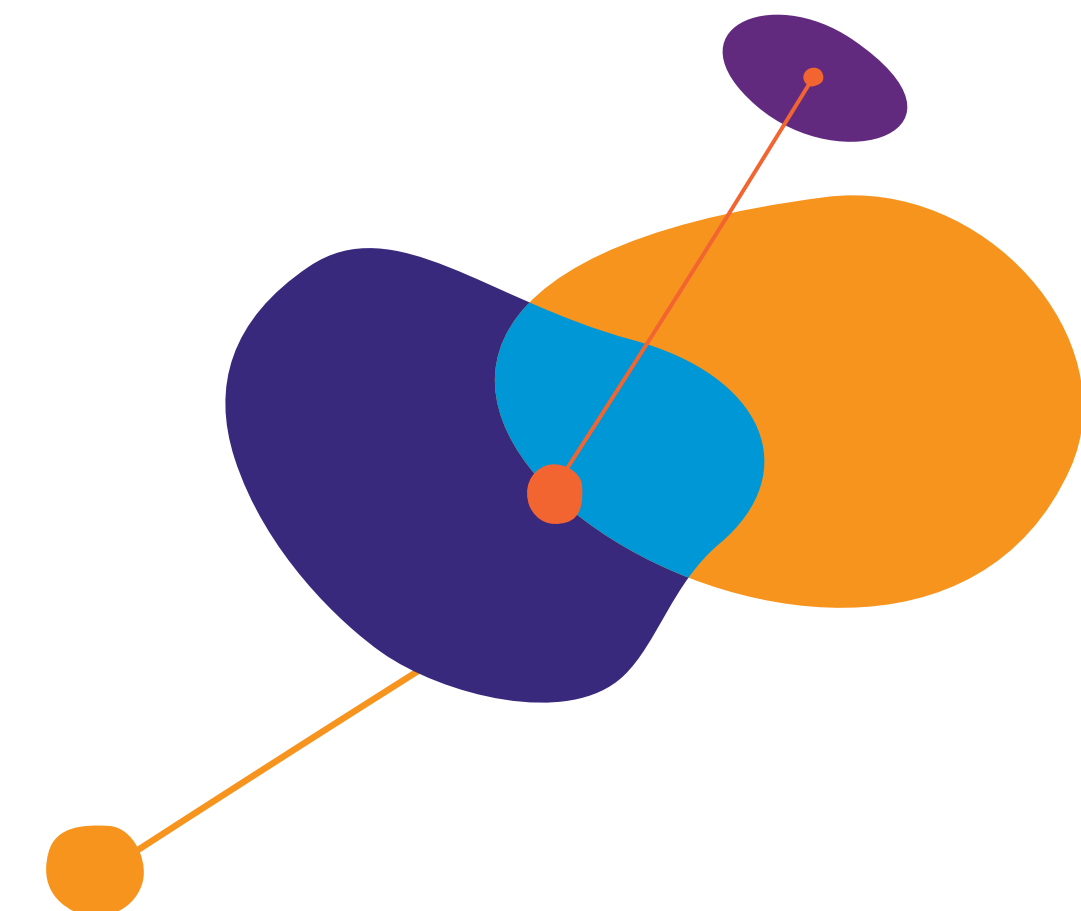
UNFPA prioritizes collaboration across a broad spectrum of stakeholders to catalyse and scale impactful innovations in sexual and reproductive health and gender equality. It applies a multifaceted approach to innovation, acting as a catalyst, enabler, convener and facilitator. Through this, UNFPA harnesses the power of innovation to address emerging challenges, boosts its impact and ensures rights and choices for all, especially those furthest behind.

**Catalyst:** using the expertise of various **strategic partners**, including young innovators, community groups, the private sector, academia and United Nations agencies, UNFPA aligns innovation ecosystem building with corporate efforts. UNFPA uses the combined strength of these partnerships to co-create innovative solutions that accelerate impact and improve operational processes.

**Enabler:** from identifying challenges and making catalytic investments, UNFPA, through strategic collaborations, creates an enabling environment to scale innovations that ensure SRHR and promote gender equality and equity across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. These efforts focus on

facilitating and fostering local innovations with global potential, harnessing the power of partnerships for knowledge exchange, mobilizing resources and employing data-driven strategies to maximize the impact of these innovations.

**Convener:** understanding that no single organization or government can tackle these complex issues alone, UNFPA, using its convening power, seeks to build coalitions around innovative solutions that can leapfrog traditional barriers, mobilizing private sector contributions, academic partnerships and collaborations with foundations and philanthropies.



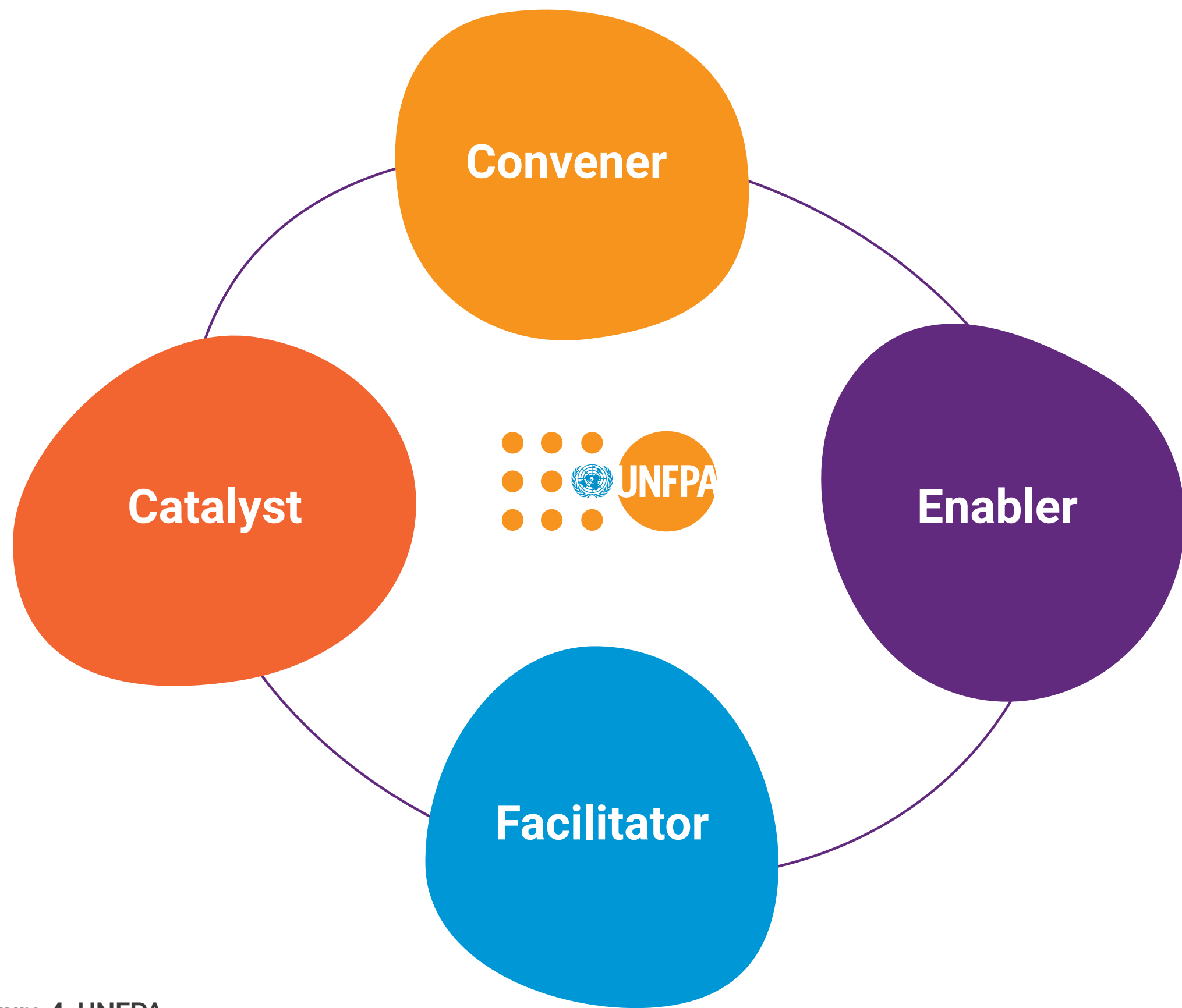


Figure 4. UNFPA within the innovation ecosystem

We believe in the power of community. Striking a balance between country relevance, community-driven approaches and scalability within the context of our mandate is essential. We conduct needs assessments and engage with stakeholders to tailor innovation initiatives to address country-specific needs, cultural sensitivities, policy frameworks and healthcare infrastructure. We continue to collaborate with local communities in the design and implementation, co-creating tailored innovation interventions that meet their needs and build on existing community trust.

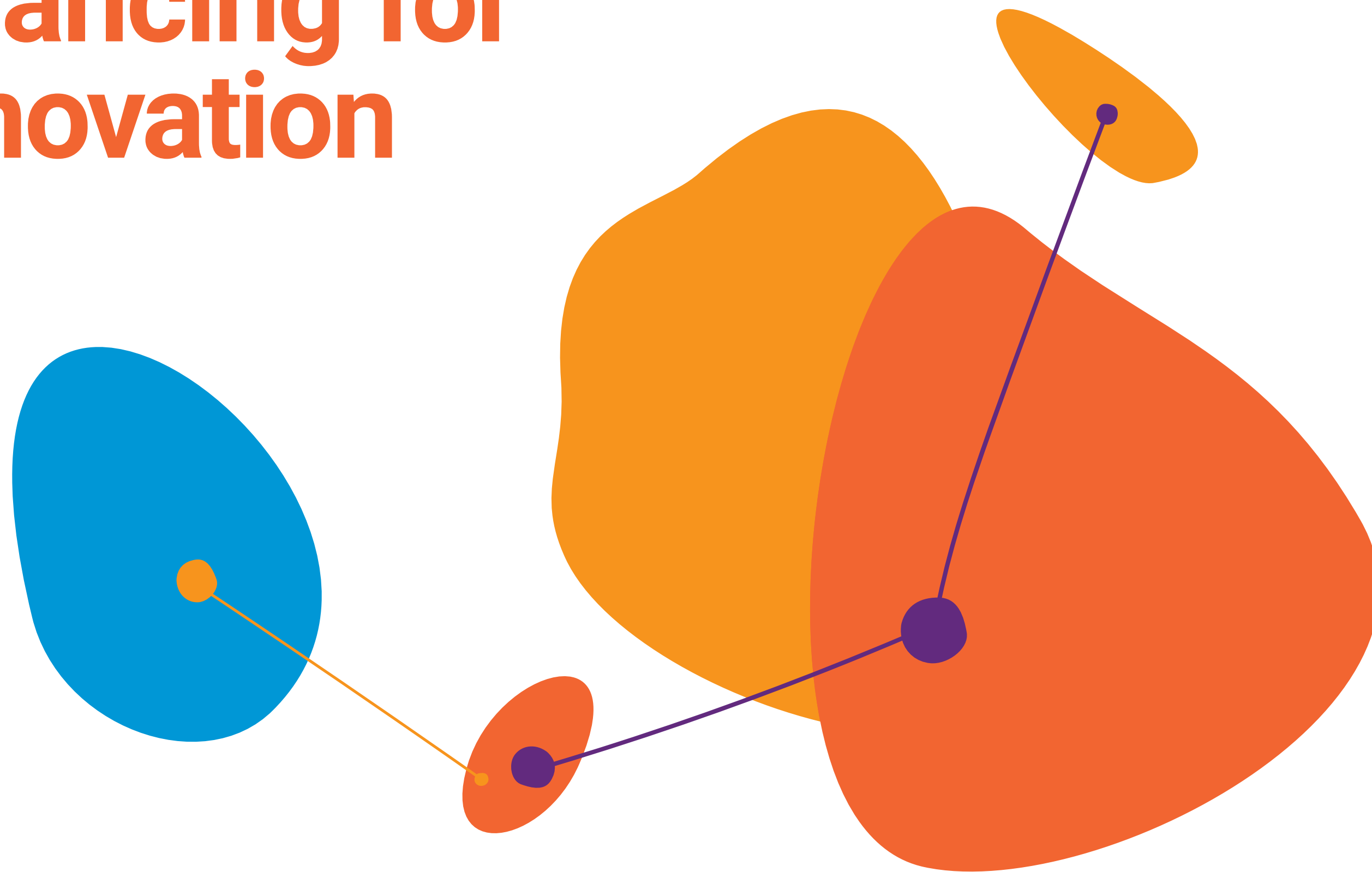
**Facilitator:** Recognizing the multifaceted nature of these challenges, UNFPA is committed to uniting diverse partners to develop solutions that transcend traditional barriers to health, education and empowerment of women and young people.

This includes facilitating strategic alliances with diverse stakeholders, including academic institutions, research organizations and technology firms, to tap into their specialized knowledge and capabilities.

By leveraging external resources and expertise and engaging global and local stakeholders, UNFPA enhances the development and implementation of innovative solutions and drives progress towards achieving its transformative objectives in SRHR worldwide.

Crucial to UNFPA’s strategy is working with governments to accelerate the sustainable scaling of innovations, recognizing the pivotal role of public-sector structures and institutions in adopting and implementing these solutions sustainably. This collaboration is essential for achieving long-term, scalable impacts, positioning government actors as primary drivers of innovation’s sustainable scale-up, and ensuring that innovations contribute meaningfully to UNFPA’s transformative goals.

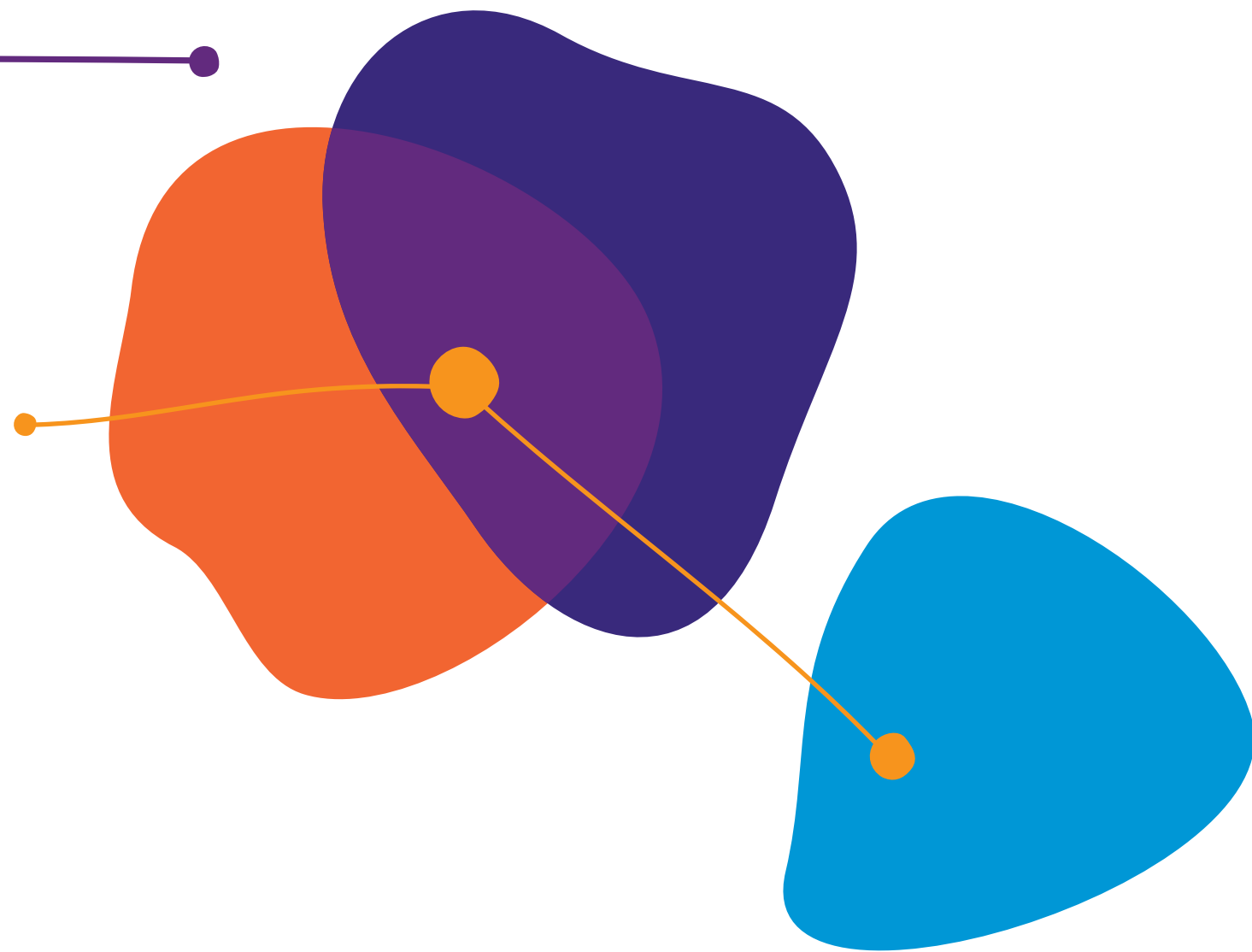
## VIII. Leveraging financing for innovation



**UNFPA's 2022–2025 Resource Mobilization Strategy** stipulates that UNFPA's objective for innovative financing is to develop complementary financing solutions and expand partnerships with public and private sector partners. This includes exploring innovation, alternative finance, and impact investing opportunities in capital markets and impact investing products to enable greater volumes of funding and financing.

This approach includes tapping into diverse funding sources, such as impact investment, social bonds and blended finance mechanisms, to mobilize resources effectively. By embracing innovative funding and financing models, UNFPA aims to catalyse sustainable investment in innovation, driving progress towards achieving its transformative objectives in SRHR worldwide.

# IX. Embracing risk in the innovation context



Development and humanitarian assistance continue to evolve rapidly, and many opportunities arise from leveraging ongoing innovations to achieve breakthrough results. UNFPA works in complex and fragile contexts, where we are expected to navigate higher levels of contextual risk to make effective progress against programmatic goals.

The **Risk Appetite Statement** seeks to ensure that risk management decisions are made with a clear understanding of the level of risk we are willing to accept in pursuit of our mandate, the 2030 agenda, transformative results and the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

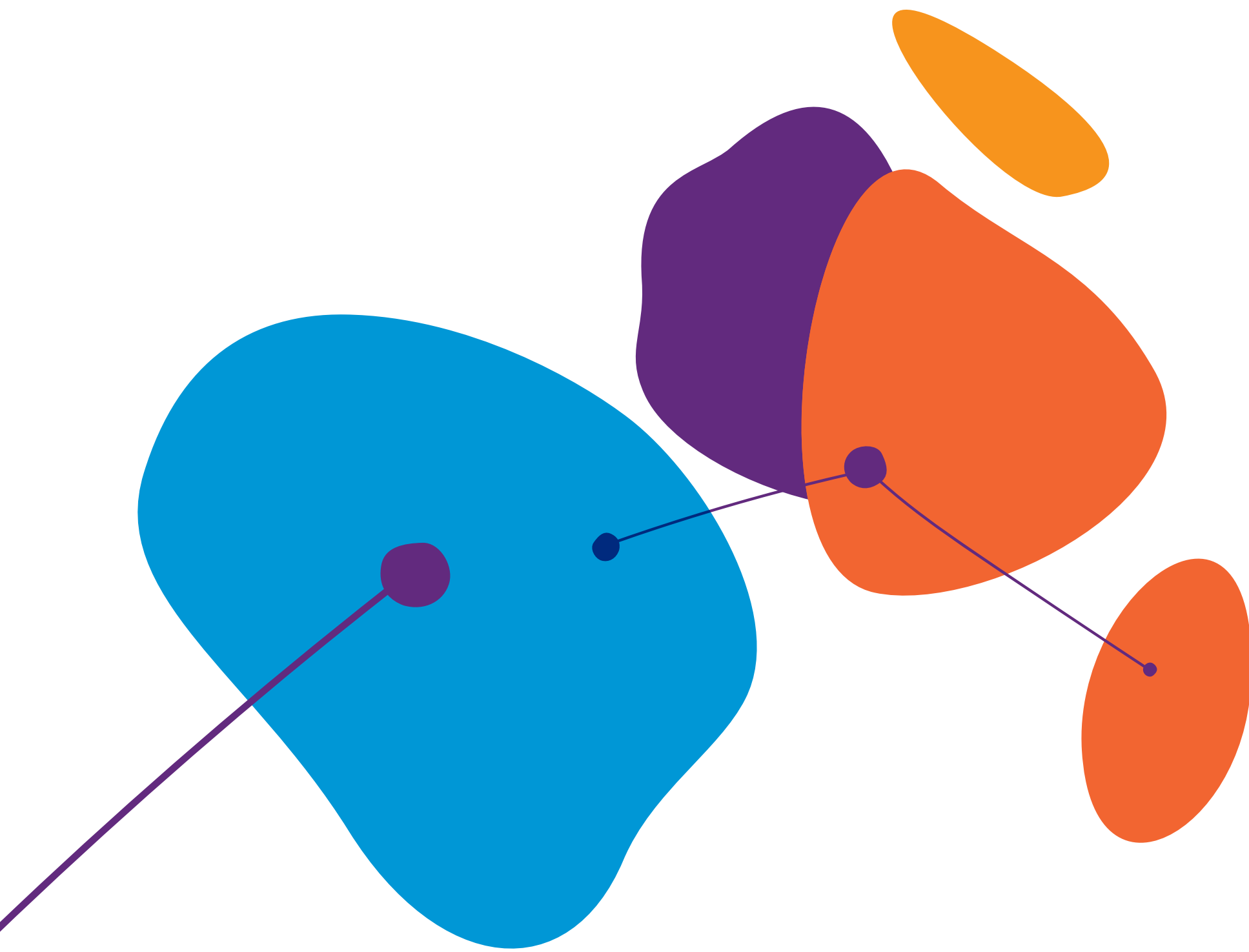
The **Enterprise Risk Management Policy** requires that the risk assessment and response designs for innovation-related risks follow UNFPA’s integrated risk framework and be classified under different components for evaluation through UNFPA’s corporate risk management application.

Overall, the UNFPA innovation portfolio ensures:

- Clear articulation of the likelihood and potential impact of risks related to innovation using corporate risk management application.
- Structured risk response strategies, as guided by the Enterprise Risk Management Policy, include the options of reducing, sharing, accepting and avoiding identified risks where applicable and following consultations on the appropriate design in addition to detailed guidance and continuous risk management support provided.
- Regular updates and transparent reporting to stakeholders on innovation risks encountered and mitigation strategies. We also actively seek feedback from stakeholders on risks to foster accountability and improve communication.

UNFPA is committed to making programmatic decisions by conducting a comprehensive risk analysis, ensuring that we contribute effectively to achieving transformative results. We aim to leverage collective expertise and resources to manage risks effectively and drive meaningful impact through innovation.

# X. Conclusion



UNFPA recognizes innovation as a game-changer and accelerator to realize the ICPD Programme of Action and achieve its three transformative results: zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030.

UNFPA prioritizes a rights-based, gender-equitable and inclusive approach to innovation, engaging vulnerable and marginalized populations, and ensuring new solutions address the deepest inequalities and inequities across all contexts. The innovation strategy emphasizes the need to go beyond technology, focusing on social norms, behaviour change and systems-level innovation for lasting social impact.

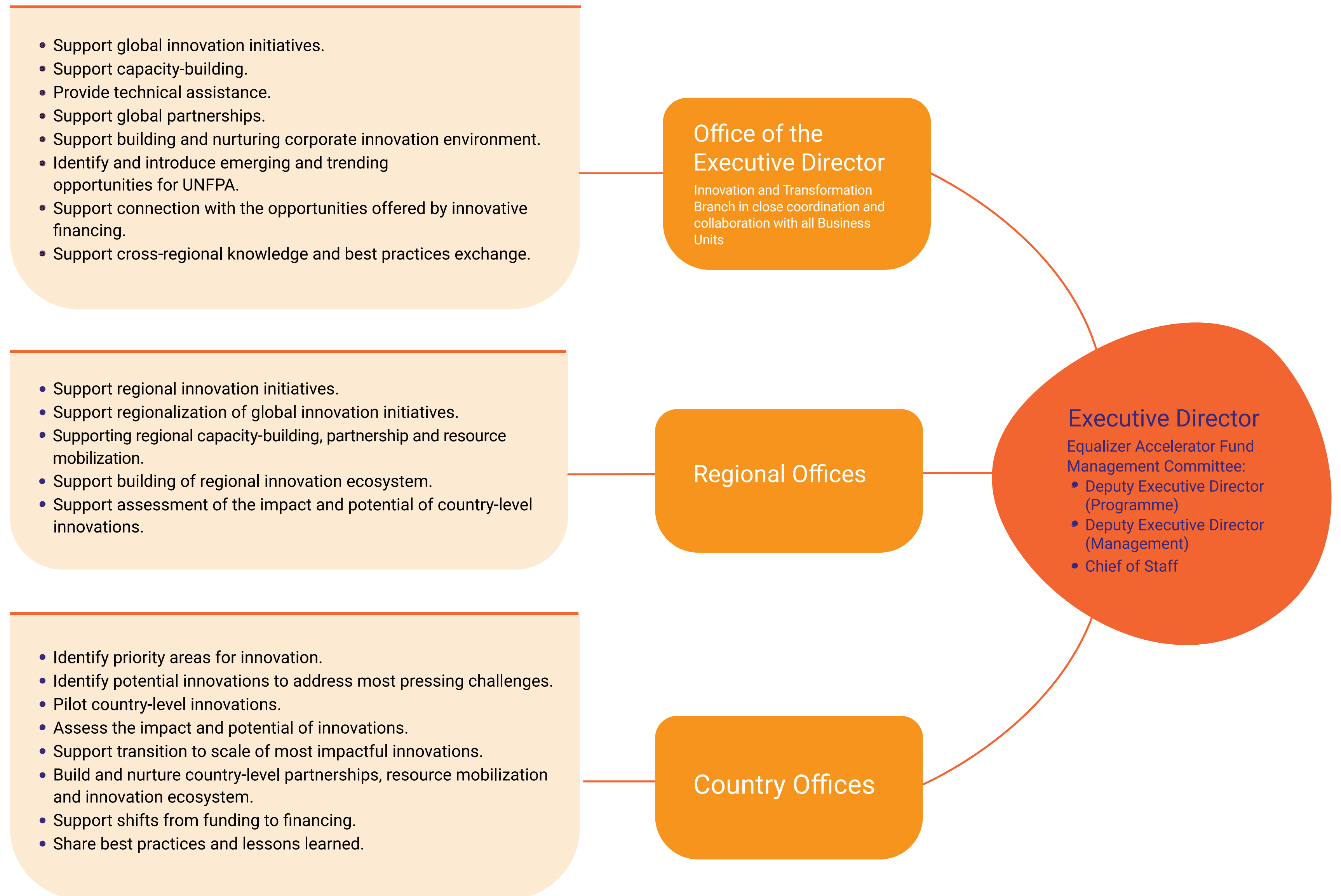
UNFPA champions innovation throughout its entire lifecycle, emphasizing collaboration to identify promising ideas, pilot successful solutions and scale them for maximum impact. Recognizing that innovation encompasses a full cycle, not limited to piloting new technologies but also building upon existing ones, UNFPA leverages collective learning and action. By fostering an innovation ecosystem that connects female and young innovators, community groups, the private sector, academia and United Nations agencies, the strategy aims to create a

global movement for change. UNFPA Knowledge Management tools guide the process of sharing both best practices and lessons learned from failures across regions and business units.

To drive innovation effectively, UNFPA is committed to building internal capacity and culture that embraces calculated risks, celebrates learning from both successes and failures, and prioritizes collaboration and knowledge-sharing. This includes developing staff capacity in innovation management and establishing a robust knowledge management system.

The strategy focuses on systems change and on scaling proven innovations to maximize their reach and impact. This involves a data-driven approach to identifying the most effective solutions and partnerships to facilitate knowledge exchange and resource mobilization. By nurturing local innovations with global potential, UNFPA aims to ensure impactful solutions reach those furthest behind, with an overall goal of empowering women and young people globally, ensuring their rights and choices become a reality.

# Annex Architecture of Innovation @UNFPA





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