

Deeper dive: Should the innovation be scaled?

Innovation often seems to have a logic of its own – from initial idea generation, through development and testing, prototyping and launch. But just because something has been launched successfully doesn't mean it can or should be scaled. There are many questions to explore around this theme:

1. Will it have impact at scale? Perhaps it is a local solution, well-suited to a particular context but which can not easily be extended to different contexts.
2. Is supporting it the best use of our resources? Whilst there may be good aspects for the innovation committing resources to help scale it will inevitably involve an opportunity cost. Are there alternatives which offer better chances of impact?
3. How deep (how important is the problem which the innovation addresses) and wide (how many people face this problem)? It may meet the needs of a small group or be a lower priority issue than some other candidate project. What is the case for supporting moving this particular innovation to scale – are there more pressing or higher impact problems which might take precedence? ?
4. Will this innovation deal with it - or does it need to pivot to scale over the long-term? Even if the problem it addresses is high priority will this innovation in its proposed form have an impact? If not how might it be adapted – pivoted – to better deal with the problem?
5. Are we the right people to scale this? Or is there already something 'out there' in the wider market which might be a better candidate for support? Is there a case for why this should be done with an inside team of UN innovators – or is there something outside which might do the job and an external team who we might be better off supporting?
6. Is it in our mandate – or should we endorse it and recommend/pass it to some other agency better placed for this role?