
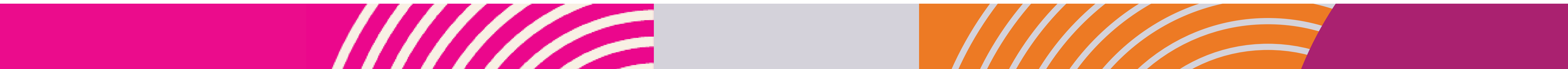


PART 3: VISION AND ROLES
**REIMAGINING
THE INGO**

TIM  Transforming INGO
Models for Equity



INTROSPECTION TO ACTION

TIME is a collaboration-based initiative that seeks to explore how SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) international NGOs can and should rethink how they operate and contribute to equitable development.



Phase 1

COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING

In 2022 we asked the question “what are the current relationship dynamics between SRHR INGOs and CSOs working in sub-Saharan Africa?” [The answers](#) told us that while INGOs will continue to be relevant, they also will need to change.



Phase 2

BUILDING SRHR INGO CONSENSUS

In response, in 2023 18 SRHR INGOs came together to go through a process of introspection. Recognizing that change is required across multiple levels, we developed a model and established three working groups to identify actions that INGOs could take to respond to CSO input and to operationalize LLD.



Phase 3

TRANSFORMING TOGETHER

The next step is to return to our CSO partners and funders and begin a proactive dialogue around whether these changes will in fact shift power to local entities while ensuring that INGO operating models are relevant, sustainable, and legitimate. We hope that in turn this will lead to a sector-wide transformation process that is well resourced and that allows for practical action to shift power, agency, and ownership.

CHANGE MODEL

TIME is a practical test in operationalizing transformation within a complex system. Three working groups explored complementary and interconnected elements of change at different levels. Each working group identified a core change that needs to happen at the individual, organizational, or sector level respectively for transformation to occur. They then worked together to develop practical frameworks and tools.



SECTOR: VISION

SRHR INGOs need a **vision of the role INGOs should play in advancing the field of SRHR** to be more equitable, resilient, and accountable.

ORGANIZATION: ROADMAP

SRHR INGOs need an **adaptable, multi-dimensional roadmap to provide guidance and direction** for organizations seeking to transform how they work for greater equity.

INDIVIDUAL: CORE CONCEPTS

SRHR INGO leaders and practitioners need a **common language to be able to discuss and debate the core concepts of why and how they must change** for greater equity.

METHODOLOGY

Over the course of six months, CEOs and leaders met to answer the question “what will the future look like for SRHR INGOs?”

The goal was to outline a collective vision for how SRHR INGOs could operate in today’s changing ecosystem. This included alignment around the roles that INGOs should play in a reimagined global health sector that is more equitable, resilient, and accountable.

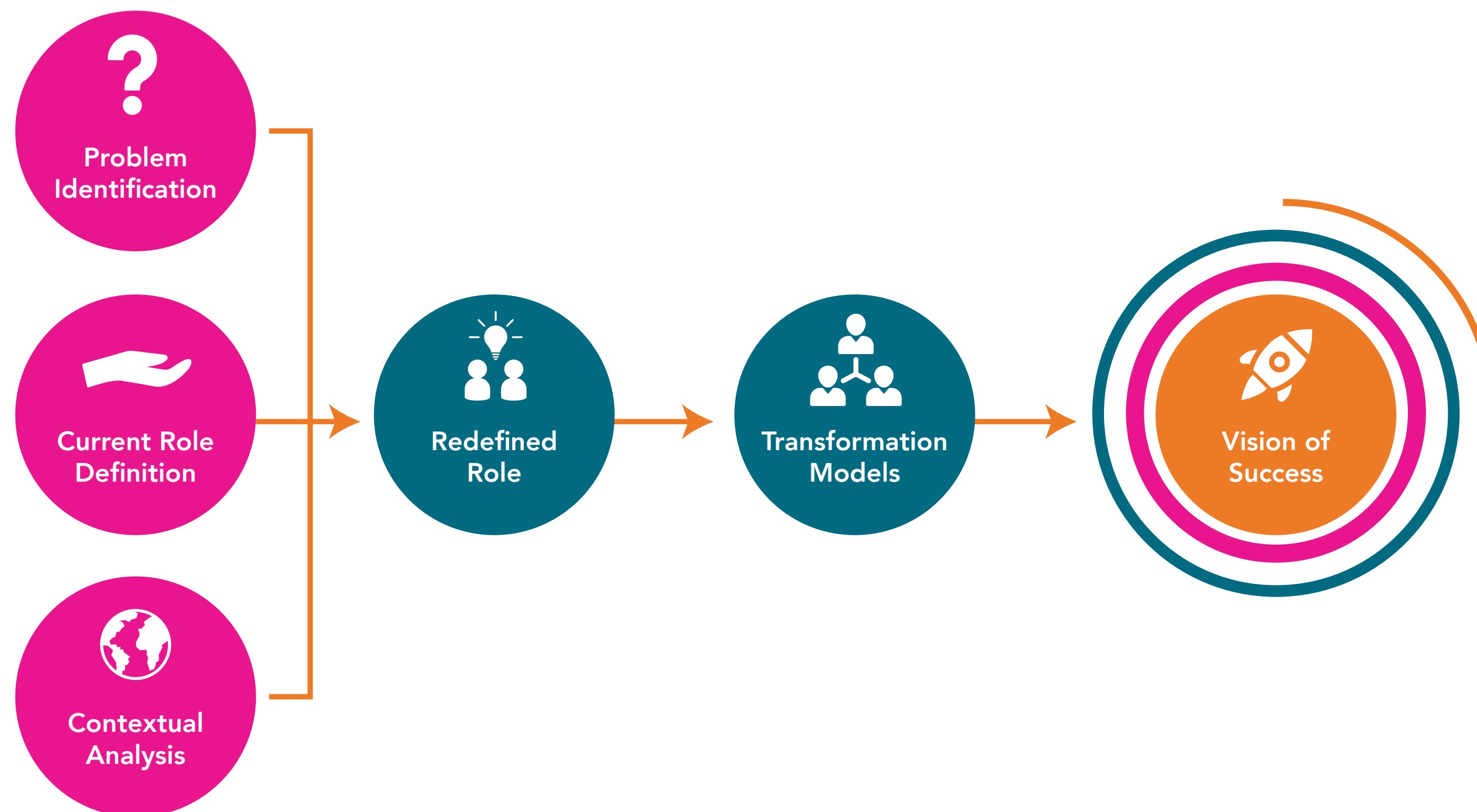
The group:

1. Gained understanding of the current context by:

- Considering the political, economic, social, and environmental conditions development actors are operating within that will impact the future development ecosystem.
- Identifying 8 roles where INGOs have traditionally provided value.

2. Imagined a vision of the future 10 years from now, which served as a guidepost for considering scenarios and decisions.

3. Explored ways forward, including reimagined roles and organization transformation models.



Note: Reimagining roles and ways of working in an ever-changing development ecosystem is an ongoing, iterative process. This document reflects the work of a committed working group that met from May-November 2023 and serves as a starting point for introspection, discussion, and action in partnership with actors across the SRHR space.

Having a clear understanding of the current ecosystem organizations helps leaders forecast the future and identify areas for transformation. In the Visions working group, INGO CEOs and leaders built out a picture of their current operating environment, and their position within it by conducting a contextual analysis and outlining their current role in the overall SRHR ecosystem.

We know what the problem is

Many individual INGOs are already evaluating their strategy and relevance against the external environment, but we also need to go through a rigorous evaluation process at the sector level.

We know our current role and value in the ecosystem

INGOs currently:

- Act as critical connectors, building bridges between and across actors and geographies
- Do resource mobilization for ourselves and for the sector, attracting resources to our field
- Are generators and sharers of evidence, data, and research that make programs better
- Deliver health services and products
- Strengthen capacity of local organizations, health providers, and programmatic approaches
- Advocate at the global, national, state, and local level
- Implement project and programs
- Act as an intermediary of money and risk between funders and local organizations

We can predict changes to our environment

POLITICAL: Resources are and will continue to be diverted to emergent issues (refugees, climate, war). Tensions within global health will increase due to competing resources. Rising powers will shift the globe from a unipolar to multi-polar system, with rise of authoritarianism, polarization and division, and weakening of democracies around the world.

SOCIAL: Growing voice of youth in global decision-making. More accountability and transparency culture. Increased aversion to working with US/European/UK partners. Backlash and opposition to progressive politics continues to accelerate.

ECONOMIC: Seismic forces wield outsized power on what, who, how things get funded. There are shrinking funds generally, and for SRHR specifically. More money is moving to local institutions and the INGO space is shrinking. Donors need help with volume of awards. Countries are getting richer.

ENVIRONMENTAL: Broader contextual factors include conflict, climate change, aging populations, migration patterns, recurring pandemic, shifts away from the global north, technological innovation, and misinformation / disinformation continues.

We know we must change

- **We all have a role to play, and we must evolve together.** The global SRHR sector is one that requires unity – across all stakeholders – international, local and everything in between. We are all part of one global community, committed to a common cause.
- **The roles INGOs currently play will continue to be necessary, but the nature of who and what is done must shift.** SRHR INGOs play a critical role in the overall SRHR landscape and while we must do more to shift power and ownership, we must also ensure that there continues to be a healthy, inclusive and robust SRHR ecosystem. Together with local partners, we need to define pathways to successfully transfer leadership, roles and responsibilities so that we are set-up for a sustainable future.
- **Incremental change, in time, can be transformational change.** What we look like now, is not what we should look like in five years, and then again in ten. We must be agile and adaptive to meet an ever-changing world.
- **INGOs will need to transform their operating models and current organizational structures.** This may mean changing our focus, rightsizing our operations, forming new strategic alliances, consolidating, or sunseting.
- **Transformation can only happen when people and organizations change, and power paradigms have been challenged at every level.** While INGO introspection was necessary to get to this point, we now need to support a truly global conversation about how best to facilitate sector-wide transformation.

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

Organizations will not be able to act their way into the future if they don't have a clear vision of what is possible, and where they are going.

To that end, the Visions working group engaged in a visioning exercise, imagining what they would like the sector to look like in the future. While this vision of the future is purely hypothetical, the process of its creation did surface themes, values, and scenarios that helped inform discussions and decisions throughout the remaining working group sessions.

Ideal 10-year vision of the future

The silos that have long defined health and development are no more. Only interconnected solutions that seek to address interconnected challenges – including sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and climate justice – are advanced. The scarcity mindset and 'either / or' dichotomy is supplanted by a vision of abundance and 'both and'. Community – not competition – prevades. No organization is the be all or do all. Coalition and mutual aid underpin delivery of interconnected solutions.

Local expertise and proximate decision-making, paired with global connectivity and reach, drive development, and accelerate impact both within and across borders. Actors across the ecosystem are right-sized and resourced. Transnational networks that connect local organizations across every region are the backbone of a lasting, global defense against the

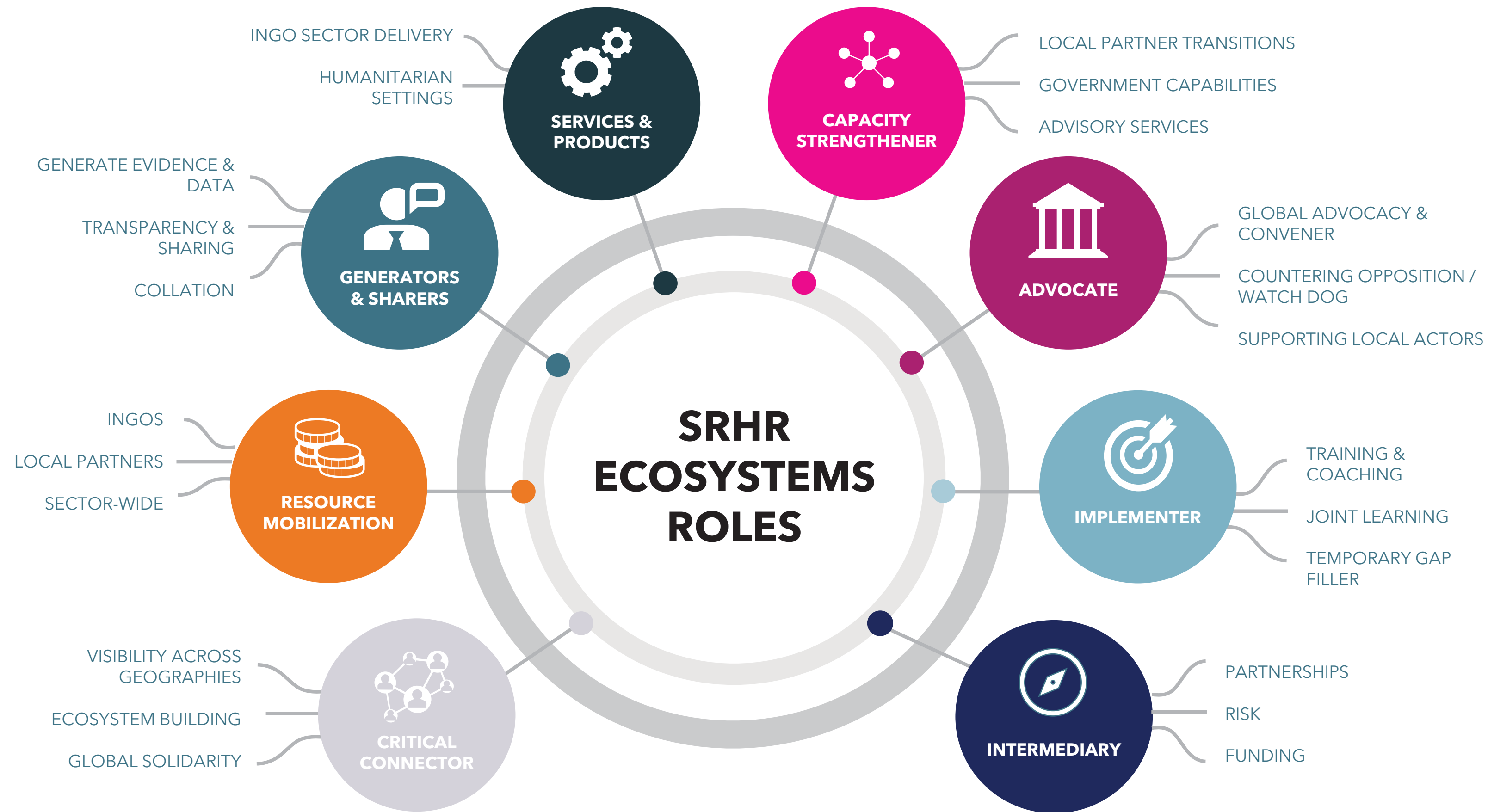
joint forces undermining gender equality and SRHR everywhere. Health and social systems have prioritized the voices, concerns, and needs of those traditionally excluded from power, appreciating a system that works for them is more likely to work for everyone.

Joint investment in technology solutions and local communities have repaired social networks and reestablished broken trust among people, processes, and systems, with young-people in the lead.

Impact rules above brand or bureaucracy. Transformation is because people/organizations changed, not just changed out, and power paradigms have been challenged at every level.

A sector reformed is a world eventually remade.

THE ROLES



These eight roles represent key components of the SRHR ecosystem that are required for sector-wide impact. Currently, they often rely on international organizations to be fulfilled, but increasingly these roles can be shifted and shared with local actors to increase impact and build a stronger community.

The future requires a more agile ecosystem that is working as one – where roles can be filled by the most suitable actor and organization in each context. This means that INGOs and CSOs must find new and innovative ways of working together that are increasingly agile. Roles can and should adapt over time, new roles may emerge, and the INGO contribution may further decrease or increase as the environment changes. Critically, however, INGOs must respond to local contexts and needs and place local partners at the forefront wherever possible, providing support where they can and living into equitable development principles to improve SRHR outcomes.

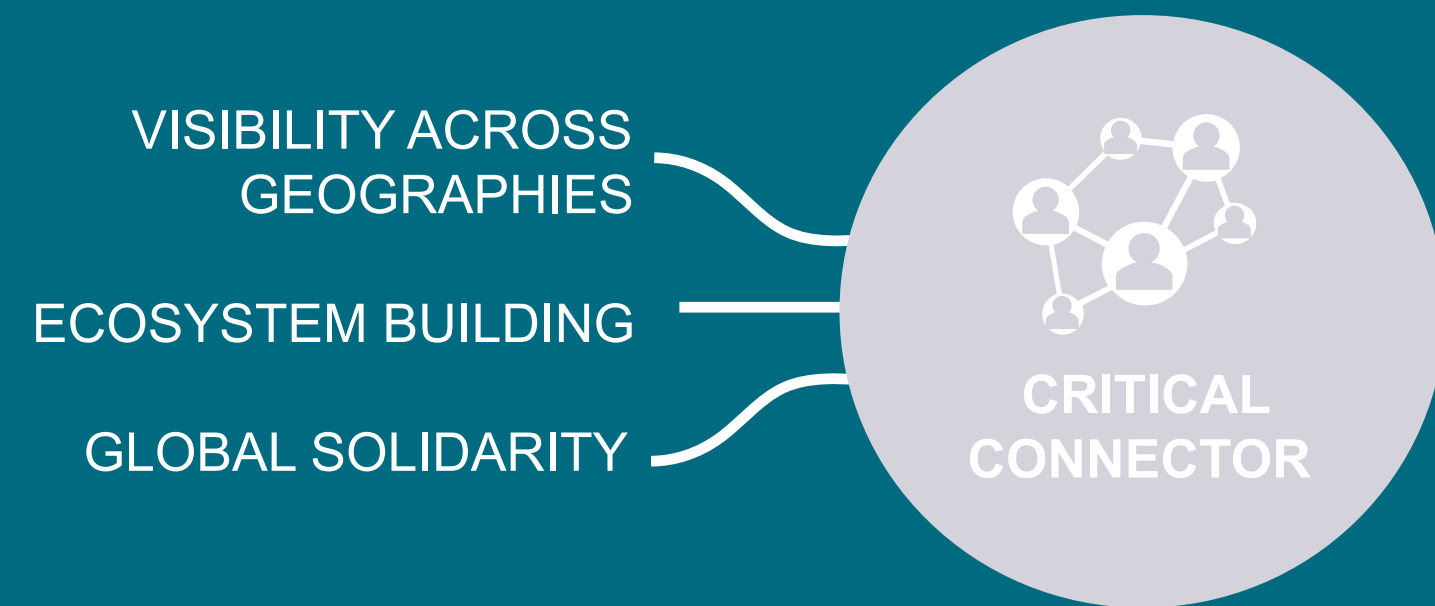
Note: Prior to one working group session, the resource [The Nine Roles that Intermediaries Can Play in International Cooperation](#) by Peace Direct was shared as a reference document. We appreciate where there is overlap with the nine roles presented there and acknowledge that there are some differences in the SRHR context, as represented in the framework above.

FUTURE SRHR INGO ROLES

In response to a rapidly evolving global health and development landscape and the push towards locally led development, leaders from SRHR INGOs identified eight key roles that will continue to be critical to the overall SRHR ecosystem. These roles will evolve over time, with INGOs becoming increasingly relevant in some areas, while decreasingly relevant in others – giving way to local actors as funding shifts towards organizations based in impact geographies.

Role	INGO Relevance	What will change?
Critical Connector	Increased Relevance	The global SRHR movement will need to be strengthened, with local actors more informed and driving agendas. The role of the INGO will be more distributed and multi-directional, breaking down artificial barriers between geographies and across actors.
Intermediary	Increased Relevance	For financial resources, limited risk tolerance will continue to be a concern among top donors. INGOs will likely continue to play a critical role in risk sharing but must base this role in equitable partnerships that put local actors in the lead.
Resource Mobilizer	Continued Relevance	Increasing and competing development priorities and pressure for more domestic resources will require all actors to take a more coordinated approach to resource mobilization at the donor and domestic level.
Capacity Strengthenener	Continued Relevance	Demand and need for capacity strengthening will decrease as organizations' technical areas are strengthened. INGOs may continue to provide advisory support to help local partners with successful transition and long-term sustainability, such as governance, financial systems, and MLE.
Advocate	Continued Relevance	Global, regional and national level ecosystems will be strengthened with a more diverse set of actors that are better able to reach key decision-makers. INGOs will continue to play a role in donor geographies, contributing to global movement-building, and responding to global opposition.
Generator & Sharer	Reduced Relevance	The ability for countries to share data will be improved with the digitalization of health systems, with data that is country-owned, more transparently shared, and collated at the local level by local actors. INGOs will continue to play a role in global collation, but data gathering and analysis will be conducted locally.
Service & Product Provider	Reduced Relevance	Capacity in countries and regions for service delivery will continue to increase limiting the need for the INGO in many settings. However, INGOs will continue to play a key role in new product and service delivery innovations and rollout-out, including biomedical advancements, and direct service and product provision from INGOs will remain steady in humanitarian settings and in countries that require a safety net.
Implementer	Reduced Relevance	Countries and local actors will have more desire to expand their role in the direction, design and implementation of programs. Implementation will fall to local actors, with INGO playing only highly targeted technical roles as requested by local partners.

CRITICAL CONNECTOR



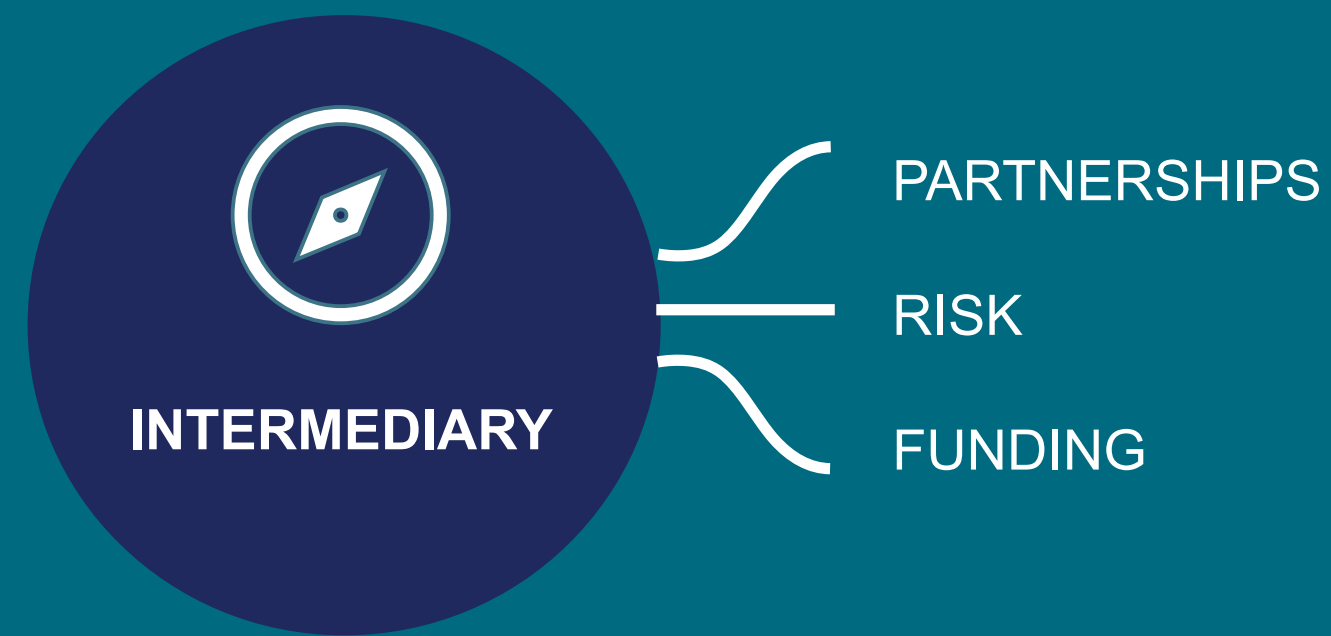
INCREASED RELEVANCE

Connector roles will always be a critical function in the broader SRHR ecosystem. Fragmentation within the SRHR sector, as well as global development writ large, highlights the need for organizations to find ways to breakdown silos, elevate local voices, and coordinate across actors.

INGOs have long played a role in ensuring linkages across geographies, building critical ecosystems to support programmatic outcomes and creating the environment for global solidarity. This role, however, has often been centralized to a handful of organizations – either those with broad geographic footprints, UN agencies, or global convenors.

In a future world with increased interconnectedness and acknowledgement of the value all stakeholders bring, connector roles will be played by organizations all over the world, in multi-directional ways. The INGO model (with work and nodes occurring in many geographies and issue areas) is set up to be a connector, and this is a role INGOs could continue to grow, particularly as the broader ecosystem expands globally. This includes creating opportunities for locally-led convenings that allow for collective action, reflection, and exchange at multiple levels (local, regional, and global).

INTERMEDIARY



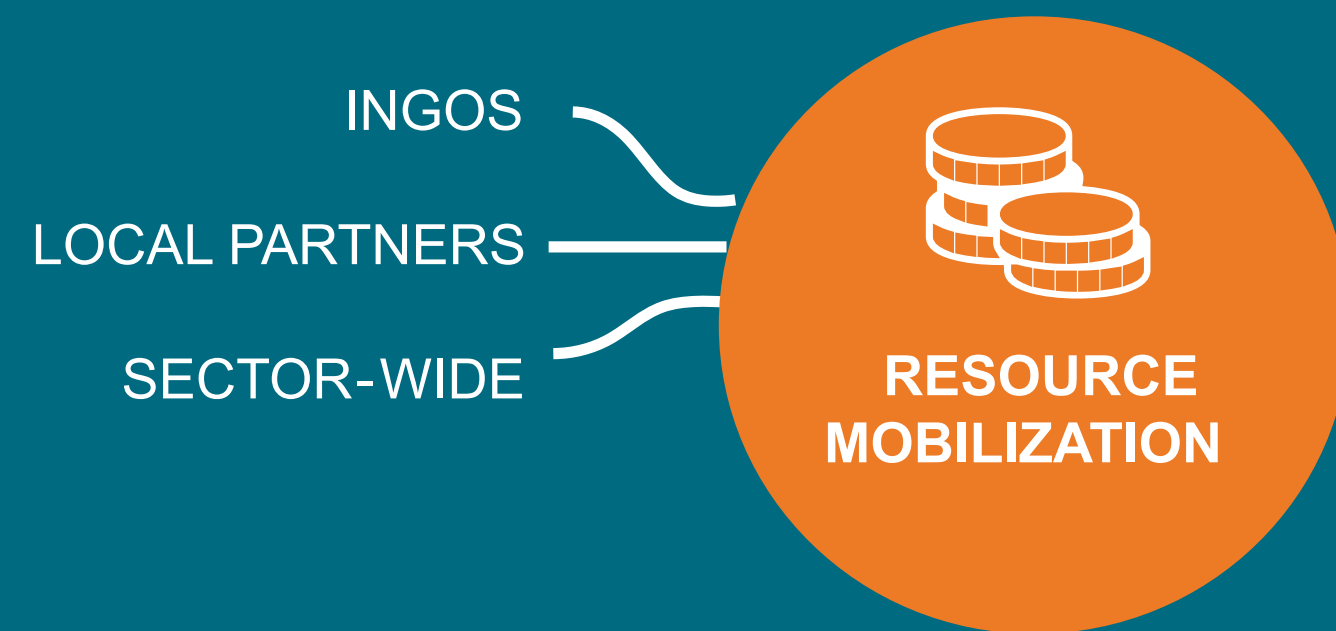
**INCREASED
RELEVANCE**

As the shift towards more locally-led development continues, the role of the intermediary is likely to increase in the short- to mid-term. In the past, INGOs have served as a funding and program intermediary to partners to reduce and/or mitigate potential perceived risk from the donor. Partnerships were often transactional, focused on meeting specific outcomes as defined by outside actors. INGOs were responsible for reporting on highly-burdensome donor requirements and funding flow to local entities was limited.

Implementation roles are already shifting to local partners and will continue to do so. The INGO role as a fiduciary agent or fund manager will likely continue, particularly until donors have less risk aversion, but it is anticipated that this role will also shift over time as direct funding increases.

In the meantime, INGOs will continue to play a role in mitigating risk, helping translate and respond to complex donor requests, and advising donors on how to simplify systems requirements to better meet the needs of local actors. All of this, however, must be based on a more deliberate approach to equitable partnerships between INGOs and CSOs to ensure that local actors are in the lead, meaningfully engaged, and properly supported with significant, long-term resources.

RESOURCE MOBILIZER



CONTINUED RELEVANCE

Resource mobilization efforts have traditionally fallen to INGOs, focused on increasing donor commitments and financing for SRHR overall, as well as to specific, proven interventions, such as family planning. INGOs within donor geographies have a unique position with donor governments and can directly engage as a constituent, while helping to shape foreign policy that impacts the overall enabling environment.

Increasingly, resource mobilization must be done at the local level, both due to increased decentralization by donors towards bi-lateral awards, but also to increase domestic resourcing from public, private and philanthropic sectors within local contexts.

INGOs should continue to raise money and generate commitment from donor resources, while transferring knowledge and expertise to local entities to improve their ability to diversify funding sources for SRHR.

Resource mobilization is a skillset that has been honed over decades. In a future world where global health funding is increasingly scarce, INGOs should also leverage their expertise to advocate for resources for integrated and cross-cutting solutions. Furthermore, INGOs that are in resource rich countries have a role to steer global resources towards last mile efforts.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENER



With a growing recognition that country agency has been undermined because of entrenched beliefs and practices that donors and INGOs have regarding local capacity, a critical mindset shift is needed across the SRHR ecosystem to meaningfully move power towards local organizations.

INGOs have long played a role in technical assistance provision to governments and other local entities, whereby international organizations provide targeted assistance to partners with a particular capacity or training gap. At times, this approach has weakened country leadership, with international actors driving agendas, designing and implementing programs, and evaluating outcomes with limited input from local partners.

Capacity strengthening efforts will continue to be necessary – but ‘capacity’ must be envisioned as bi-directional and the power to decide what capacity means and define who has it must also be re-evaluated. Furthermore, capacity strengthening efforts should be based on long-term sustainability that reinforces increased local ownership at all levels, and INGOs should change their structures, approaches and resources to align to a locally-defined vision.

In time, the role of strengthening the capacity of local organizations and governments will shift to local and regional organizations to drive greater impact. In short, strengthening efforts will need to move away from short-term, technical skills building to long-term, organizational capacity and ecosystem strengthening.

ADVOCATE



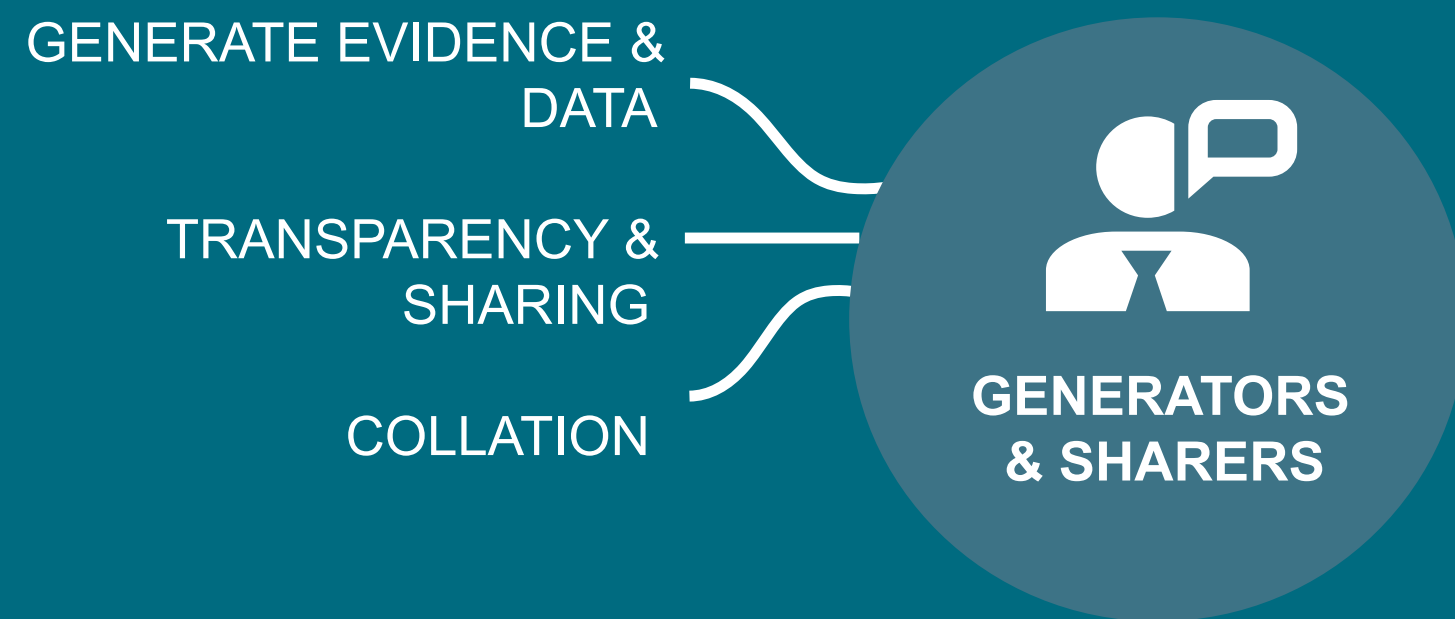
CONTINUED RELEVANCE

Advocacy is a role that is required at all levels, from the sub-national to the global. It also requires coordination across these levels to ensure strong, aligned messaging that is delivered to the right decision-maker by the right voice. This means that we all have a role to play in developing and delivering strong advocacy campaigns.

Historically, advocacy agendas have often been developed and executed with international organizations in the lead, serving as a global convener and ensuring that SRHR remained relevant to global actors through global campaigns. Many also set-up advocacy operations in countries that pushed evidenced-based interventions, as well as donor priorities. Sometimes serving as diplomat or watchdog, INGOs have also played an important role in transparency and accountability and often were seen as a credible voice/partner to governments.

Going forward, local organizations will increasingly advocate with local governments on local issues and should use local priorities to drive global agenda setting. International organizations will continue to have a role to play as advocates with bilateral and multilaterals organizations where they are co-located, responding to global opposition, providing backstopping to local entities, and serving as a watchdog in countries where civic space is shrinking. Going forward, INGOs must continue to make considerable space for local partners – elevating and amplifying the voices of local actors and engaging in platforms within and across geographies as an equal partner.

GENERATOR & SHARER



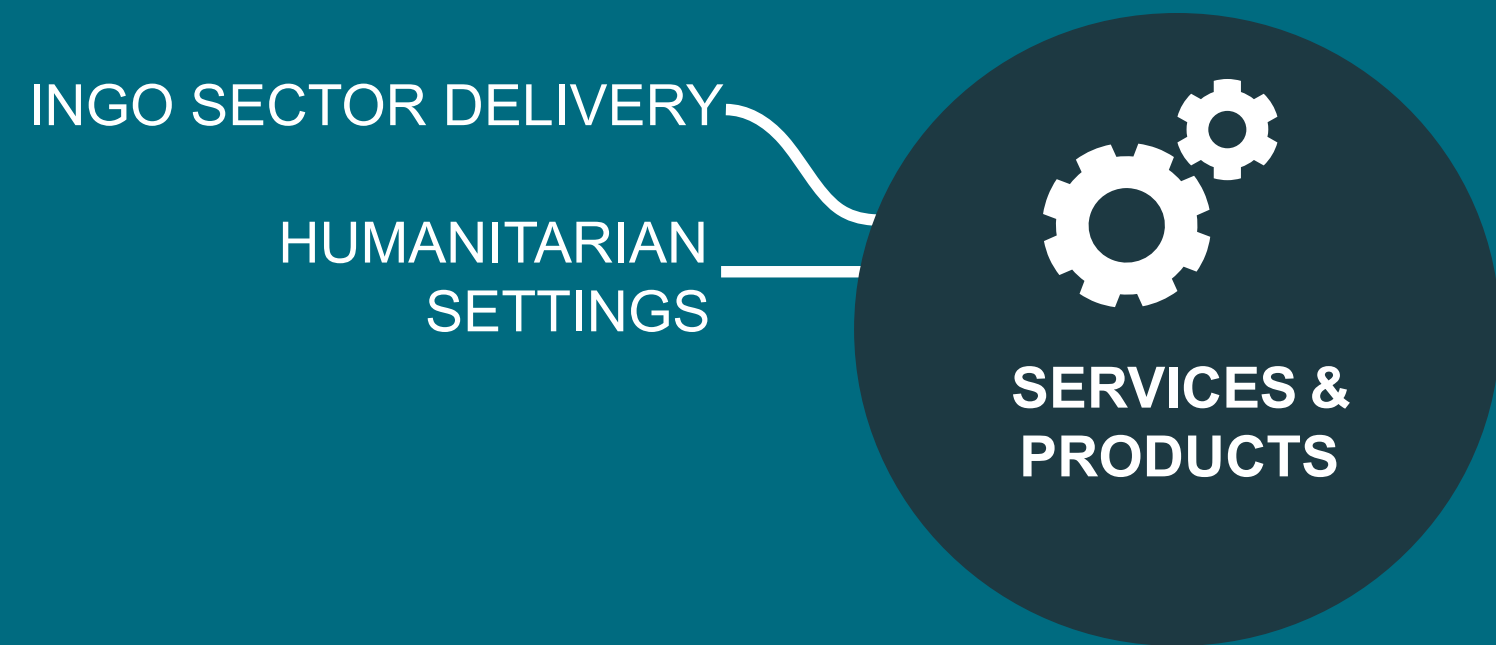
**REDUCED
RELEVANCE**

The generation and use of evidence is critical to how we tackle global problems. Expertise can be found throughout the world and the sharing of learning and knowledge is how our field advances.

INGOs have long played a role in evidence generation, translation, sharing and learning. However, this role has often been controlled by international organizations who have defined and driven study design, data collection, and global dissemination, including determining what 'success' looks like and playing a leading role in program evaluation.

In the future, INGO roles as generators will reduce, so that local expertise shapes and drives the research process. Instead, INGOs can leveraging the unique space they hold as entities with broad reach and, in some cases, as a trusted intermediary between governments and civil society, to share information and knowledge across countries and bolster local actors. In addition, INGOs should focus on looking across interconnected solutions that might otherwise go unrecognized.

SERVICES & PRODUCTS



**REDUCED
RELEVANCE**

Service delivery and product access in the public, private, and non-profit sector is critical to the way in which individuals' access SRHR services.

In the past, parallel systems have been created to address singular health issues versus taking a more integrated approach, and public health systems were sometimes bypassed. INGOs often led health systems strengthening programs alongside governments, which were transferred over time, and local actors were often placed in subcontracting roles with little control or input beyond specific program deliverables.

Going forward, the delivery of SRHR products and services will be increasingly proximate and locally-led, better integrated into primary health care systems and increasingly prioritized by entrepreneurs and the private sector. The INGO as technical lead will decrease, making way for a more supportive role to local partners by responding to what local actors need and want.

Some INGOs will continue to lead commercial, social enterprise approach and, where challenges exist – such as in humanitarian settings – will play a crucial role in gap-filling where they are often uniquely positioned to handle a large amount of risk.



IMPLEMENTER



Direct implementation of donor programs will continue as part of the broader health and development landscape, but the historical structure with an INGO leading an award and subcontracting to local entities to serve in a subordinate role will flip in time -- with local entities in the lead, subcontracting to INGOs for specific deliverables or for highly-technical requirements.

The reimagined role of implementer could encompass many of the other roles outlined above, but with the intention that those roles are temporary, and that they are grounded in principles of equitable partnerships, with local voices in the lead.

Here, INGOs play a supportive role with the ultimate objective of local partner success.

As local orgs increasingly take on prime roles, with INGOs acting as subs, the nature of partnerships will be a clear example of changing roles.

Notably, in some settings, INGOs will continue to function as a safety net (humanitarian settings), as this function will be hard to localize within contextual constraints.



**REDUCED
RELEVANCE**

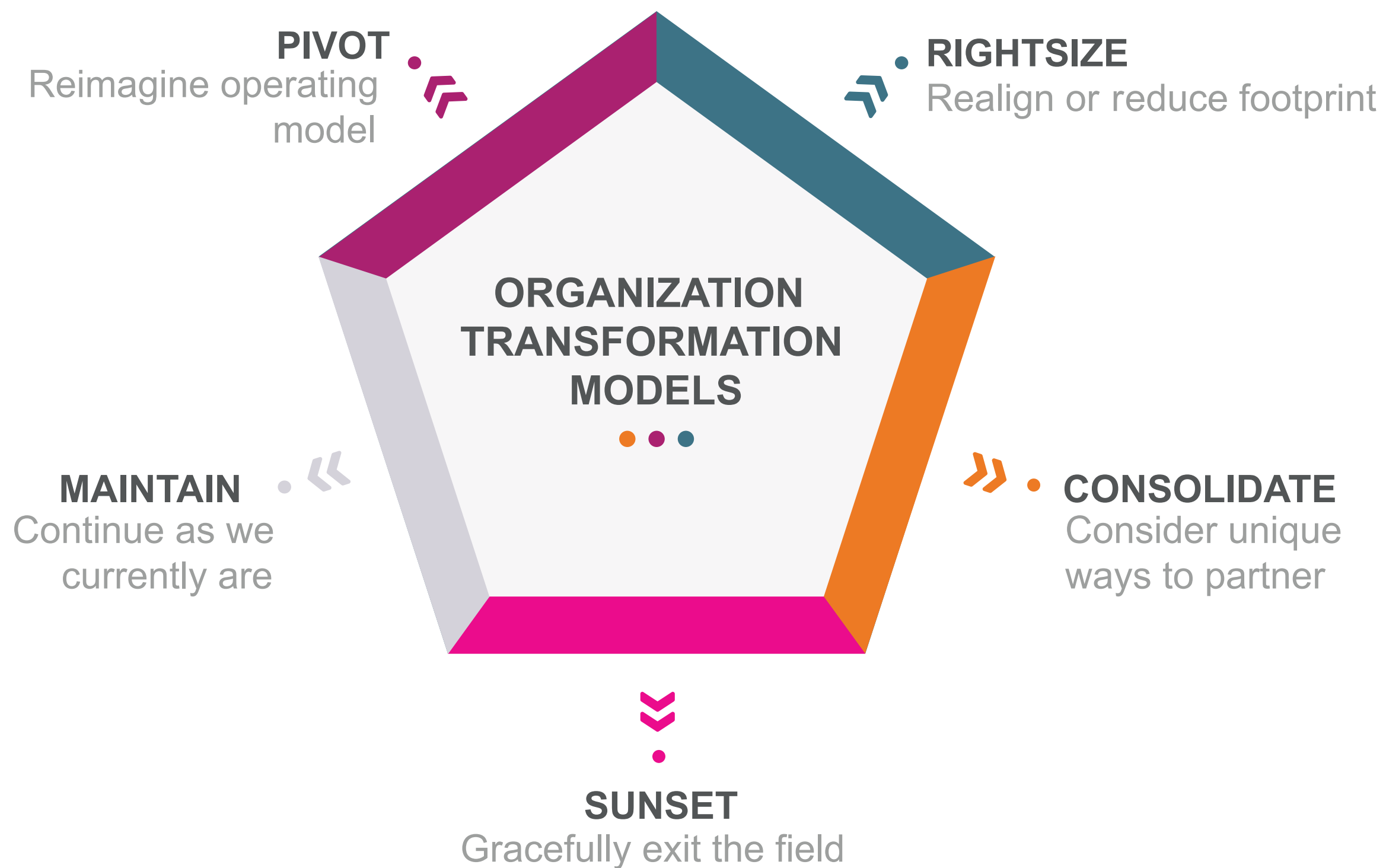


MOVING FROM TALK TO ACTION

During the working group discussions, it became clear that moving from talk to action would require real structural changes that can't be done in a vacuum. Future TIME work will explore what it will take more deeply. For now, here are some nascent thoughts on what needs to change to make the shift from existing INGO roles to future INGO roles a reality...

- 1. Changes to INGO business and operating structures.** Changes to INGO roles will require changes to organizational structures and cost models to support the shift. INGOs will also need to be built to have the flexibility to be responsive to individual country contexts and needs. In one example, as INGOs increasingly shift to sub roles, there will need to be corresponding shifts to organizational footprints, staffing, etc. to remain competitive. Each organization will need to ask themselves "how do we organize ourselves to meet these changing roles?"
- 2. Changes to how the work is funded.** Some of the areas where INGOs will add substantial, legitimate value- such as acting as connectors, conveners, and resource mobilizers for SRHR funding - are not currently funded directly.
- 3. Aligned change processes with CSOs, funders, and governments.** The goal of locally led development must be to shift power and rebuild healthier systems, not move or replicate unhealthy dynamics to a new set of actors. To avoid this scenario, there needs to be some level of agreement, alignment, and coordination amongst all key stakeholders on how the SRHR sector transforms. Some examples of what this might look like:
 - An intentional increase of regional organizations to act as intermediaries of funding and risk
 - Increased absorptive capacity of local organizations to spend larger volumes of money
 - Equitable, long-term partnerships

ORGANIZATION TRANSFORMATION OPTIONS



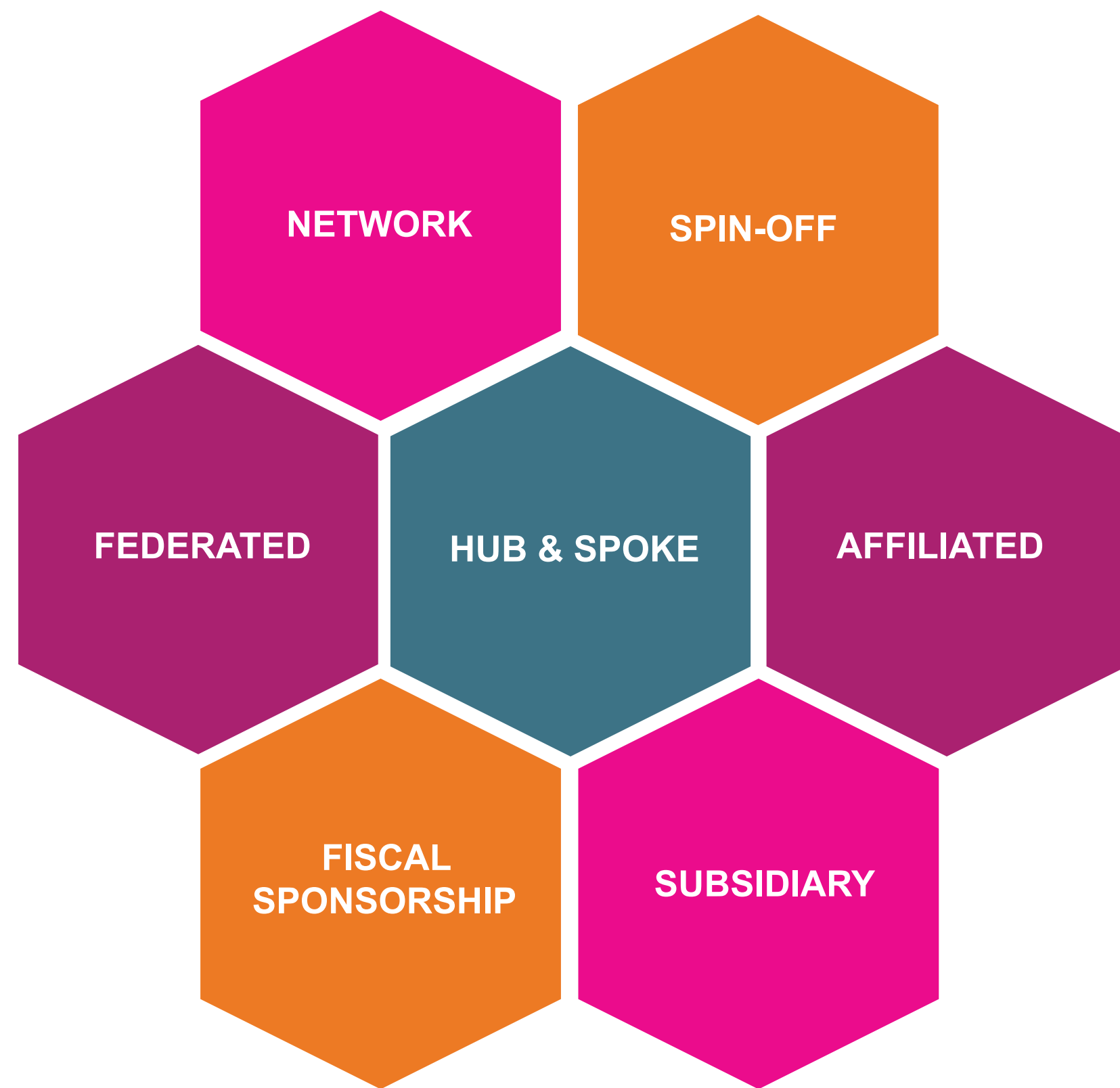
CONSIDERATIONS

Organizations are exploring the possibility of alternative operating structures that can advance locally-led development goals, while promoting long-term sustainability and elevating local and INGO equitable partnership approaches.

Some of these changes will have to happen at the individual organizational level, while others might be best operationalized through joint ventures among INGOs and/or with CSO partners (e.g., structure models). These individual organizational decisions will have sector-wide effects and, if not done thoughtfully, could have unintended consequences (e.g. proliferation of INGO spin-offs, unhealthy competition within countries).

We know that INGOs will be fewer, smaller, and more fully focused on supporting local entities, serving in more advisory capacities, and INGOs will need to be able to integrate into multiple issues areas to maintain relevance. This will likely result in a need to focus on **Pivots** or **Consolidation**.

PIVOT: REIMAGE OPERATING MODELS

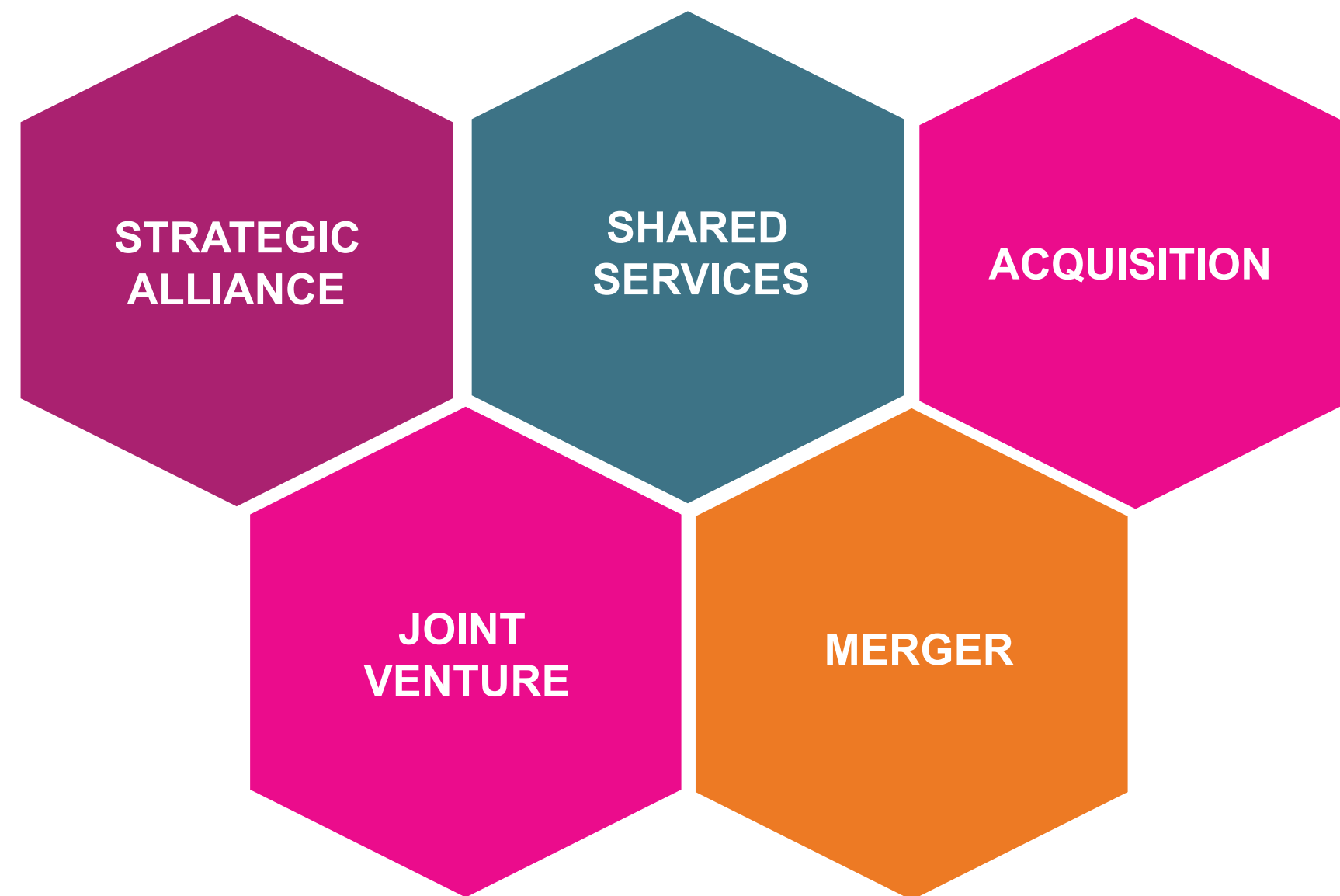


CONSIDERATIONS

As organizations reimagine their roles and business models, many will seek to realign their operating models to be fit for purpose.

Each structure will have its own unique benefits and constraints to consider. While more structures and hybrid variations will undoubtedly emerge, these models represent the most common options at present.

CONSOLIDATE: SECTOR-WIDE PARTNERSHIP MODELS



CONSIDERATIONS

Along with shifts each independent organization might make, the sector must begin to consider strategic partnerships that would enhance our impact, create efficiencies, and better meet the needs of the SRHR community. New models could emerge that align CSOs, INGOs and funders in innovative ways, helping to reduce unhealthy competition, respond to resource contractions, and better position SRHR as a critical component to global agendas in the years to come.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

INDIVIDUALS

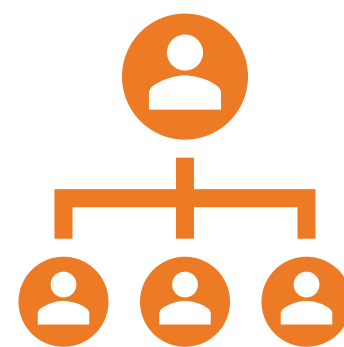
Start the conversation about what this means for your organization with your team or leadership.



ORGANIZATIONS

Commit to having discussions about your vision and approach for operationalizing locally led development across your global operations, including with country staff and partners.

Advocate for more deliberate and coordinated funding mechanisms.



FUNDERS

Support and participate in sector-wide initiatives that are thoughtful and deliberate in their approach to advancing locally led development.



TIME PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS



Ibis Reproductive Health



EngenderHealth





TIM Transforming INGO Models for Equity

For questions or comments contact Kim Kucinkas at kim.kucinkas@humentum.org

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