



Durable Change for Impact at Scale

Global Philanthropic Collaborative for Just and Inclusive Systems

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Our core work is to pool \$ to fund durable impact at scale

Pooled philanthropic resources

- **\$870+M from 57 donors** around the world so far
- Managed by a predominantly **Global South-based team**
- Re-granted to **Global South NGOs and CSOs** working on health, education, livelihoods, climate, & women's leadership

➔ For **durable** impact **at scale**

*A world where **all people** can live **fulfilling lives**, where **systems & societies** are **just and inclusive**, **gender equitable**, and **all women** can exercise **power, agency, and leadership** at all levels.*

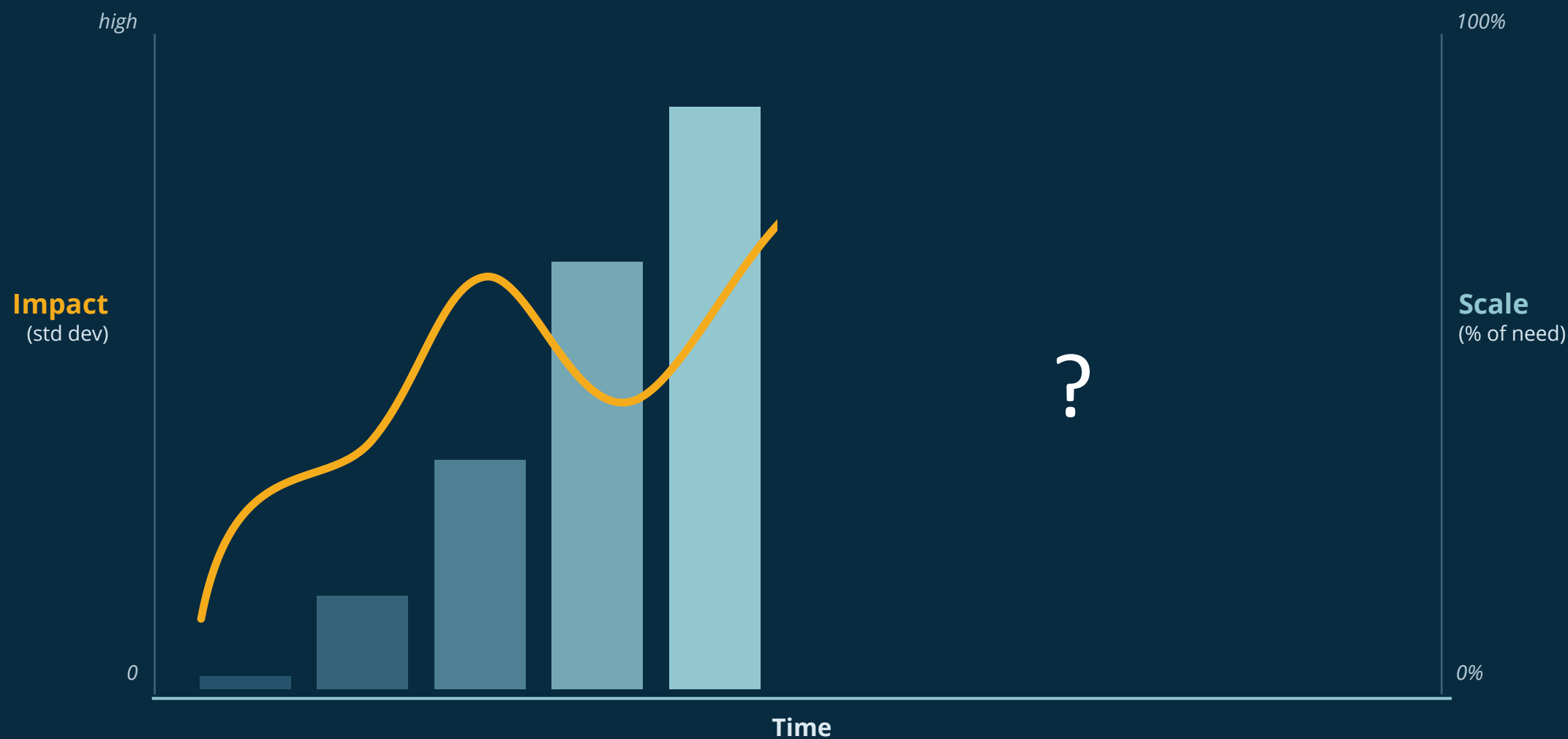
Goal (3-part) for every grant:

1. **Durable** change (in systems)
2. At the **scale of the problem**
3. That delivers **concrete improvements in people's lives** (inclusive & equitable!) and **women's power/agency**

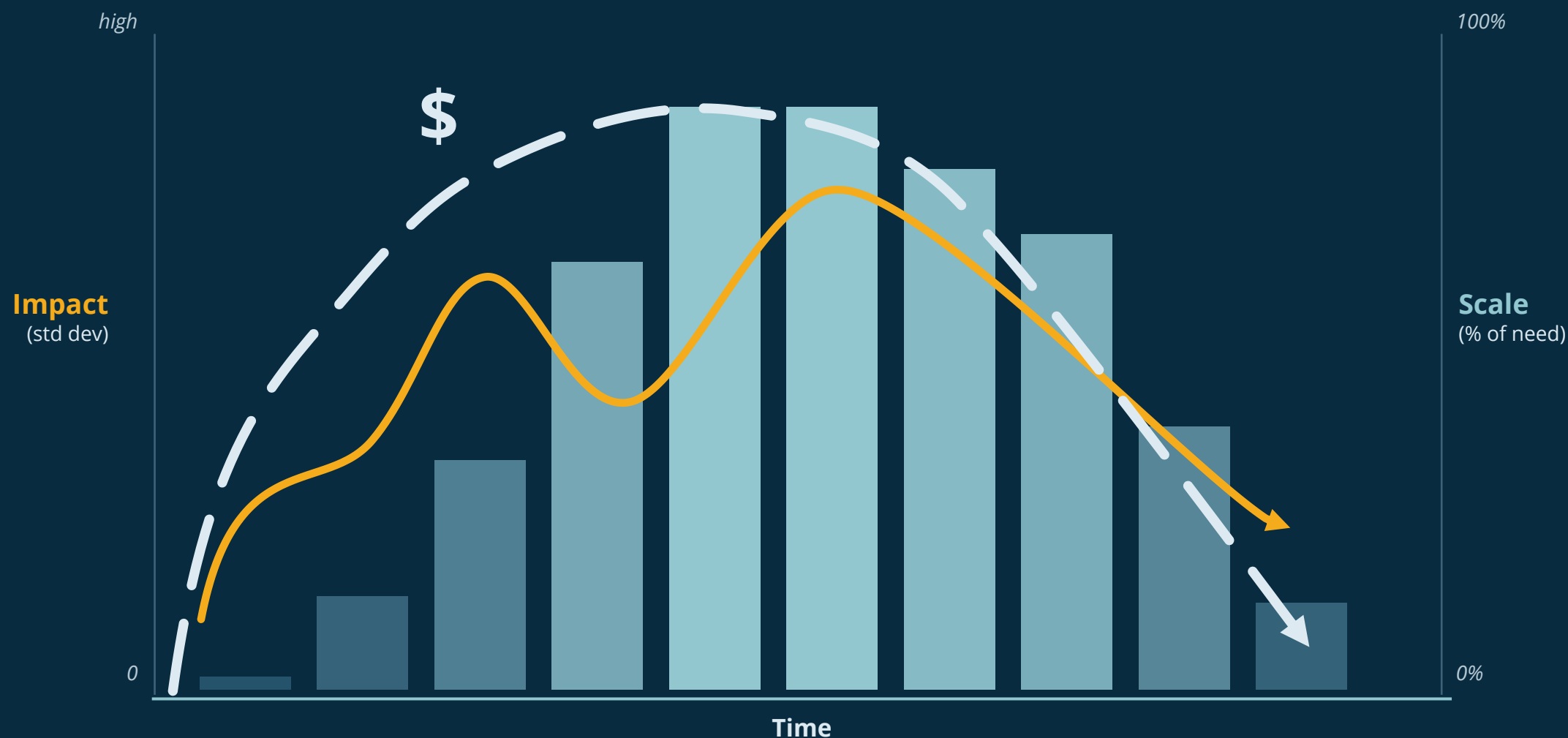


The “typical” trajectory: a social-impact effort may ‘scale up’, and have strong ‘impact’...

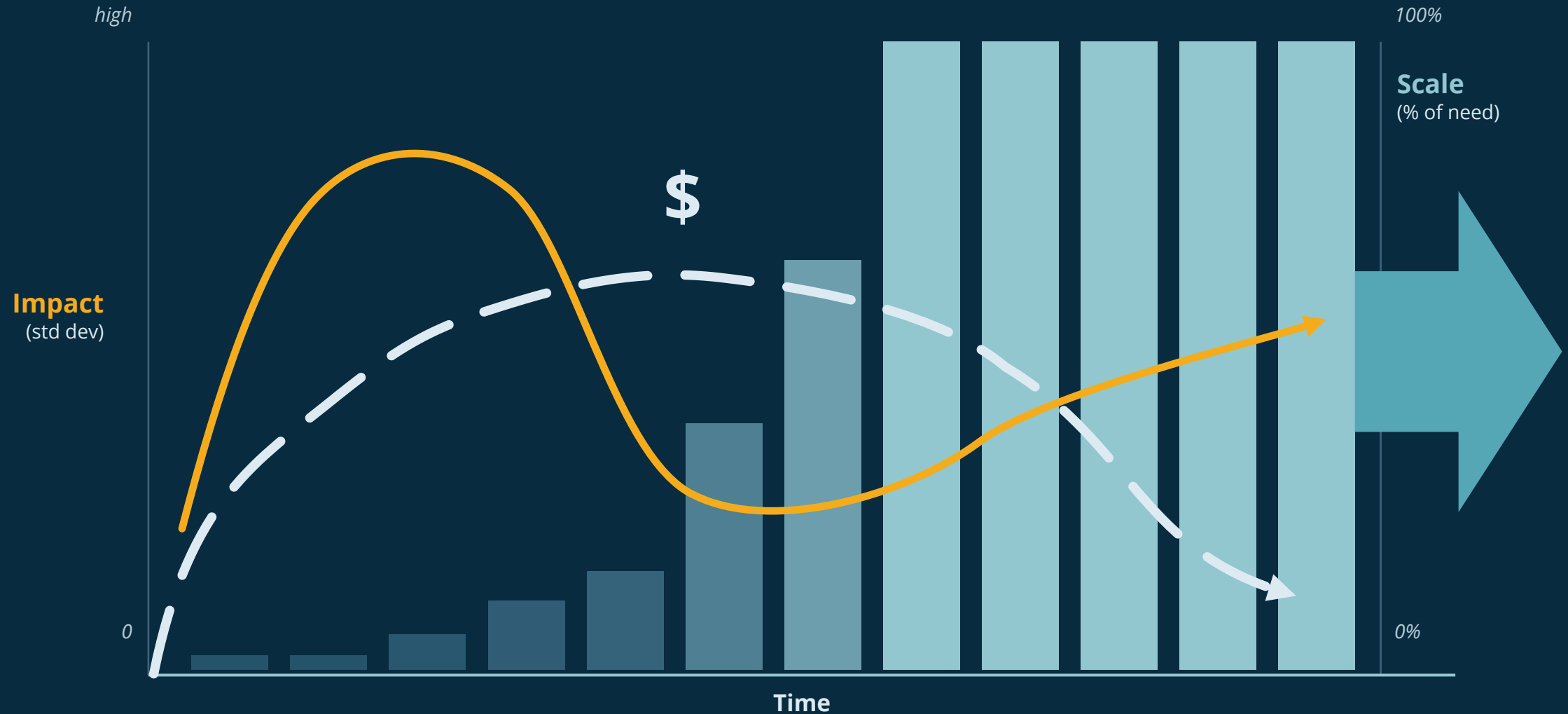
Impact per person, and the share of need served, over the life of an effort



But without **durability**, we get a “**flash in the pan**” that ends when donor funding runs out



Durable change for impact at scale looks more like this...impact at scale **persists** long after donor funding winds down



Notes: timeline is a very loose, rough illustration of a general path, not a year-by-year picture. Brighter bars indicate stronger implementation quality, which takes time to improve.

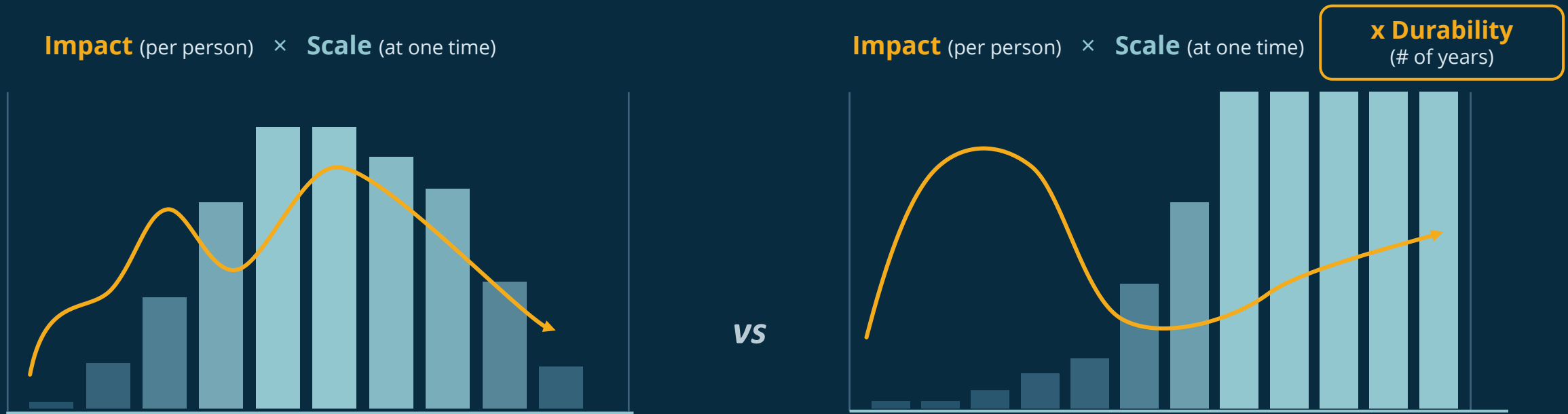
Durable change for impact at scale maximizes **all three parts** of the equation

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Total} & & & & & & \\ \text{impact} & = & \text{Impact} & \times & \text{Scale} & \times & \text{Durability} \\ & & \text{effect per person} & & \text{\# of people} & & \text{\# of years} \\ & & & & \text{at one time} & & \end{array}$$

Each component makes a key contribution to total impact — and many of us focus overwhelmingly on the first

WHY DURABILITY MATTERS

Historically, our sector has focused *predominantly* on **impact per person** (“effect size”), and in some cases also scale – but **durability** has **not often received equal priority**



*This fundamental choice shapes much of donors' structures, processes, requirements, and ways of working — with **profound implications for change leaders***

Why does durability matter so much? Consider two examples:

Impact	×	Scale	×	Durability	=	Total impact
effect per person		# of people at one time		# of years		impact units

1

0.5

std dev

×

2 million

children / year

×

5

years

=

5M

2

0.25

std dev

×

2 million

children / year

×

15

years

=

7.5M

Why does durability matter so much? **Now even more realistic(!)**

Impact	×	Scale	×	Durability	=	Total impact
effect per person		# of people at one time		# of years		impact units

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0.5

std dev

×

1 million

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2.5M

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std dev

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2 million

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×

15

years

=

7.5M

Why does durability matter so much? ROI is usually MUCH greater for durable change

	Impact	×	Scale	×	Durability	=	Total impact
	effect per person		# of people at one time		# of years		impact units
1	0.5 std dev	×	1 million children / year	×	5 years	=	2.5M
2	0.25 std dev	×	2 million children / year	×	15 years	=	7.5M

Typically, Example 1 required *more* philanthropy. But even if total philanthropic spending were equal, Example 2 is **3x more cost-effective** per unit of impact!

Unpacking the three parts of the equation reveals key dimensions of each

Impact

effect per person

- **"Size" of effect**
(e.g., standard deviation)
- **Importance of effect**
(e.g., preventing gender-based violence)
- **Equity of effect size**
(i.e., size of effect for different populations)
- **Longevity of effect in a person's life**
(e.g., persistence of literacy gains)

Scale

of people at one time

- **Reach** *(vs. scale of need)*
- **Inclusion**

Durability (at scale!)

of years the system produces impact at scale

- **Operationally / technically durable**
- **Financially durable**
- **Politically durable**
- **Durability of "ownership" and motivation by key actors!**
- **Durability of shifts in norms and mental models**



A DIFFERENT TYPE OF WORK

Achieving **durable change for impact at scale** is a different type of work

For durability, the end result must be:

- Truly embedded in and owned by the “system” itself — seen as **their own** work and priority, not outsiders’
- Durable over time, including transitions at all levels — with the incentives and constituencies to keep it in place (and ideally, keep improving it)
- Locally sustainable — not reliant on donor funding forever
- Designed for the realities of the system, at scale — finances, human resources, technical capacity, diversity, etc.
- Embedding “just-enough” key data & processes to enable good decisions and continuous improvement — which the system can actually handle

To achieve **durable impact at scale**, change leaders & funders embrace a few key principles

To achieve the end result...

- Truly embedded in and owned by the “system” itself — see as their own work, not outsiders’
- Durable over time, including transitions at all levels
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- Embedding “just-enough” key data & processes to enable continuous improvement



...a set of common characteristics emerges across success stories

- **Long-term perspective and persistence**
 - 7–15 years (or longer) is typical — not a 3–4 year “project”*
- **Committed local leaders with patience, standing, & agency**
 - The work and strategies are theirs (not international funders’)
- **Strategic patience & flexibility — play the long game**
 - Go at the pace of government (at times slow, at others fast)
 - Help the system “do for itself” — don’t do for them
 - Adjust to emergent challenges; plans evolve, the end goal stays fixed
- **Won’t be perfect throughout — the key is continuous improvement**
 - Quality & “effect size” will likely dip, especially in rapid scale-up by gov’t
- **Low-ego, no-logo, “servant leader” approach**
 - Put gov’t and system actors in the spotlight — the end goal over attribution

Some closing reflections

- **For some contexts / goals, this work may not be a near-term possibility**
- **Different types of durable change work has different trajectories, e.g.,**
 - Improve how an existing system is doing its existing work (e.g., literacy in school)
 - Expand the scope / coverage of an existing system (e.g., add CHWs to health sys)
 - Build a new system where one does not really exist (e.g., build ECD/Care system)
- **Additional, follow-on impact opportunities often emerge over time**
 - Light-touch support for continuous improvement efforts for some years
 - Efforts to improve other parts of the value chain / system to deepen impact
 - Support for additional geographies (states/countries) to make the change(s)
- **Durable change at scale is only impactful if it is equitable & inclusive!**
- **For all these reasons, the donor funding required and most impactful over time is *very context and situation-dependent***

