

# RBAP Strategic Foresight Week 2022

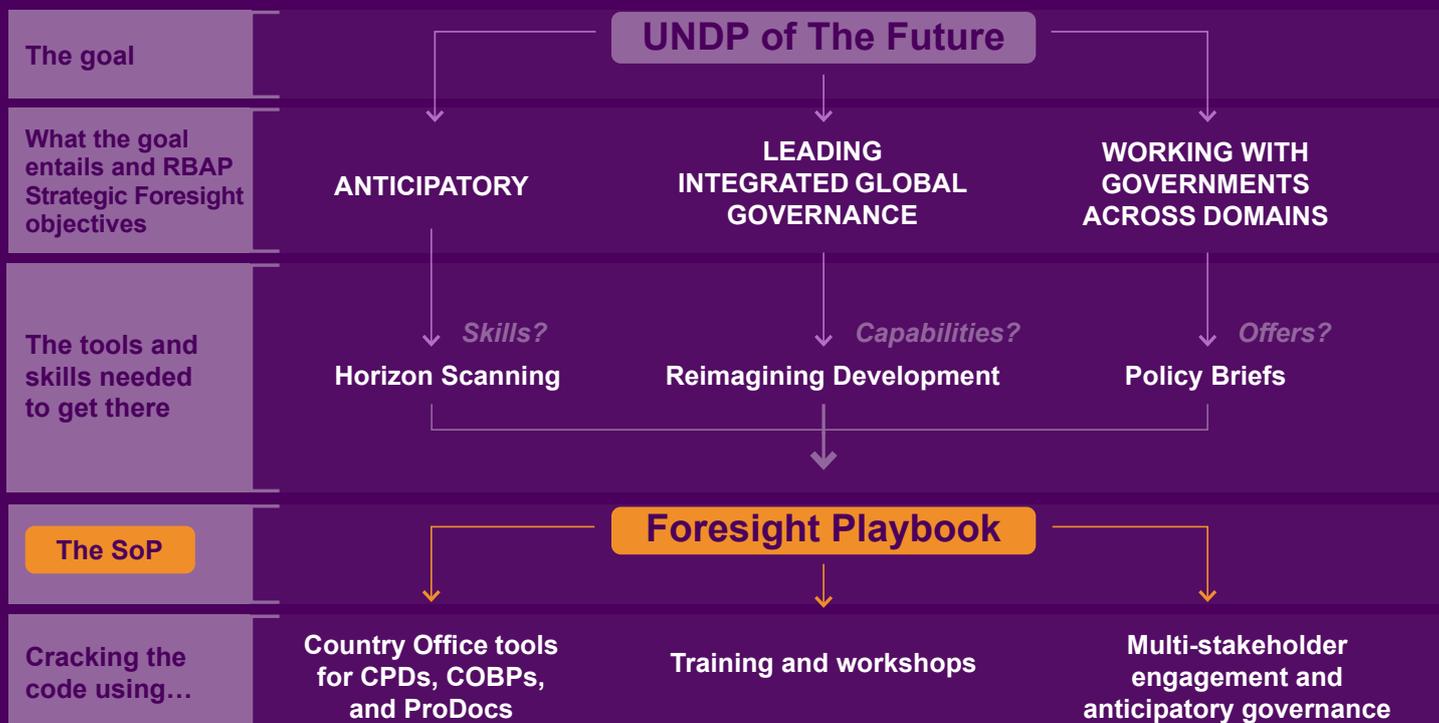
Reimagining ways to  
Decide, Design and Deliver.

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## STRATEGIC FORESIGHT PLAYBOOK KEY ELEMENTS SUMMARY | 17 January 2022

### INTRODUCTION



The need to deal with rising levels of uncertainties in development design and delivery involves transitioning from existing approaches to building capabilities that help us to anticipate changes, explore alternative pathways, manage complexities and improve our capacity to deal with shocks and radical changes, and to build inclusive futures.

This demands becoming an anticipatory and future-focused organisation - that focuses on building long-term and future-preparedness capabilities, and that is agile in its strategy, programming and delivery. The foresight playbook will provide one of the foundational pieces on which a future-focused UNDP is anchored. It will provide the materials, resources and tools that can help to build foresight and anticipatory decision making capabilities of UNDP COs and units, and their partners, towards the ends of designing and delivering programmes that are futures-relevant and positions UNDP as a future-oriented development organisation.

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### **1. Introduction/Context- why foresight and anticipatory policy? Towards futures informed programming**

Development futures are increasingly uncertain. Rising climate risks, post-COVID system shifts, increasing inequalities, and the political instabilities/upheavals that come with them heighten the degree of uncertainty that development organisations like UNDP have to deal with, throw up new risks and opportunities, and create demand for new areas of development interventions that UNDP (and development organisations) is/are called to address.

Addressing these new/emerging development demands (or needs) will require anticipating them, including anticipating and building the capabilities needed to deliver effective interventions, even before the needs arise. This requires a UNDP that is future focused/anticipatory in its outlook - particularly its strategic plans and programming. Essentially, the foresight playbook will provide one of the core foundation pieces on which a future-focused UNDP is anchored. The playbook will help to build the foresight and anticipatory decision making capabilities of UNDP staff in a democratised way that ensures everyone has access to the materials and resources to improve their anticipation capability, and to understand when to use specific foresight tools in strategy and programme design and delivery.

### 3 key takeaways

- Addressing new development demands requires a UNDP that is anticipatory in its outlook - especially in strategy/programme design and development.
- The foresight playbook is one of the foundational pieces required to build the internal capabilities needed for a future-focused, anticipatory UNDP.
- The playbook provides access to materials to improve the anticipation capability of UNDP personnel to use foresight for strategy/programme design and delivery.

## 2. What is Foresight & anticipatory governance?

Foresight is the discipline of exploring the future to anticipate changes, develop possible transition pathways and to withstand shocks, to “help us act in the present to shape the future we want”.

Embedding foresight to improve anticipatory decision making is fundamentally a risk-and-opportunity management approach, so that we can effectively see, manage, and respond to short and long-term risk signals. By doing so effectively, business units will be able to:

- Navigate uncertainty, and mitigate current and future strategic risks
- Use this data and understanding to inform current and future decision making
- Clarify what UNDP positions and relevance would be in the event of the escalation or mutation of certain trends, signals or shocks.

The purpose of foresight is not to predict events, but to offer strategic early warning of events (that could be either positive opportunities or negative shocks) that may be hidden, or around the corner, and to test our planning assumptions. As governments and multilateral organisations do not have infinite resources, and must hedge their bets in deciding on major policies and investments, it is essential to capture, understand and better prepare for emerging global, regional, and local fragilities and opportunities, using systematic analysis, accurate indicators and measures. This, in turn, could influence structure, business models, risk appetite, financing, collaborations, culture and operational agility.

### 3 key takeaways

- Foresight is a systematic way of exploring the future to anticipate changes and develop actions to minimising anticipated risks or maximising opportunities.
- Foresight helps us to act in the present to shape the future that we want.
- To be truly future-fit, an organisation or team must build the capability to effectively anticipate the future and use the insights to inform strategy, policy and programme design and delivery.

## 3. When do we use foresight?

Foresight use within the UNDP can range from its application at the macro strategy level for strategic decisions by senior leadership on the direction of the COs (e.g., COBP, IWPs, CPDs) to using it to produce new pipeline programming at prodoc stages, to integrating foresight methods into currently running projects, or even creating foresight and anticipatory governance offers for governments.

For instance, some of the key areas where foresight tools can be used within the UNDP programming cycle design stage (formulation phase) include:



## Creating pipeline programmes and projects

- Scanning to identify and collate the emerging issues of change and risks that are relevant to UNDP core functions and strategic priorities.
- Scenarios to explore the plausible future states of the emerging issues in combination with other critical uncertainties.
- Analysis to explore strategic intervention choices available/open to UNDP in different future states.

## Engaging stakeholders

- Driver mapping to have a macro-view of the system or the issue of interest for which an intervention is to be developed, and then determine the relevant stakeholders along the line of the different driver category.
- Futures triangle to determine the drivers that are pulls, pushes and barriers to a particular project/intervention.
- Causal Layered Analysis to map competing views of the future and the underlying worldviews.

## Assessing risks

- Futures wheel or implications analysis to explore the direct and indirect impacts/risks of emerging issues and drivers of change
- Manoa scenarios to explore the colliding impacts – including risks and opportunities – of the different issues, trends and interventions that are going on concurrently

## 3 key takeaways

- Becoming an anticipatory UNDP involves intentionally designing strategies to apply foresight and anticipatory decision making tools to programming and decision making.
- Foresight can be applied within the UNDP in designing strategic plans, informing selection of new pipeline programming at prodoc stages, exploring direct and indirect impacts of current projects, assessing programme risks and opportunities, and in creating anticipatory governance offers to governments and partners.
- In addition, it can be used to explore emerging issues in the UNDP signature solutions and to adapt strategies and programmes working towards effectively addressing them.

## 4. How to use Foresight? (The Modules)

# How do we integrate foresight into our work?

**Pre-analysis modules** focus on defining the scope and boundaries of a foresight process; stakeholder mapping and selection that ensures diversity and inclusion (answering the question whose future or whose vision of the future is being accommodated?); defining time horizon.

**Pre-Analysis Modules**

**Core Modules**

**Post Analysis Modules**

**Post-analysis modules** focus on the reporting and strategic communications of foresight processes and analyses; translating foresight output to action through effective engagement with stakeholders; effective evaluation of foresight processes by framing the right questions and using the right indicators; and the sustainability and the institutionalisation of foresight and anticipatory decision making capability building platforms within the UNDP (promoting a structure that enhances the use foresight).

This is the section that focuses on the main foresight on the tools and methods. Different modules that expatiate on core foresight tools/methods and when they can be used within UNDP strategy, policy and programme design and delivery.

The foresight modules have been sub-divided into 3 categories

**a. Pre-Analysis Modules**

Pre-analysis modules focus on defining the scope and boundaries of a foresight process; stakeholder mapping and selection that ensures diversity and inclusion (answering the question whose future or whose vision of the future is being accommodated?); defining time horizon.

**b. Core Modules**

This is the section that focuses on the main foresight on the tools and methods. Different modules that expatiate on core foresight tools/methods and when they can be used within UNDP strategy, policy and programme design and delivery.

**c. Post Analysis Modules**

Post-analysis modules focus on the reporting and strategic communications of foresight processes and analyses; translating foresight output to action through effective engagement with stakeholders; effective evaluation of foresight processes by framing the right questions and using the right indicators; and the sustainability and the institutionalisation of foresight and anticipatory decision making capability building platforms within the UNDP (promoting a structure that enhances the use foresight).

**3 key takeaways**

- Using foresight effectively involves understanding different foresight tools and methods, and building the capacity to use them for the right purpose (what to use them for) and at the right time (when to use them).
- The process of using/doing foresight can be divided into three: pre-analysis (defining the scope and boundary, and stakeholder analysis and selection), Core analysis (main foresight session) and post-analysis (effective communications to spur action, evaluation and institutionalisation).
- While the modules for the main analysis are the most important, leading a successful foresight project/analysis involves understanding and effectively implementing the pre-analysis and post-analysis activities.

## **5. Existing Capacity within the UNDP**

The use of strategic foresight for programming and strategy development is not an entirely new concept within the UNDP and there are existing internal capabilities, including in the Asia-Pacific region.

Here, we look at the existing foresight capacity within the UNDP, including past foresight manuals, what is different about the current foresight offer and the playbook - particularly in making it UNDP-centric and focused on building the strategic foresight capabilities of UNDP personnel towards making UNDP more anticipatory and more future-focused in its offerings and support to governments.

**3 key takeaways**

- Foresight is not entirely a new concept within the UNDP and various levels of internal capacity and resources exist, including a past foresight manual.
- Much of the existing internal capacity resides within Accelerator Labs, with experimentation and exploration teams.
- The playbook brings in added value by contextualising the use of foresight methods to UNDP programme realities, and improving access to foresight capabilities for UNDP personnel through an easy-to-use capability building material.



## 6. SAMPLE TOOL: Futures Wheel (Implications Analysis)

### Futures Wheel (Implications Analysis)

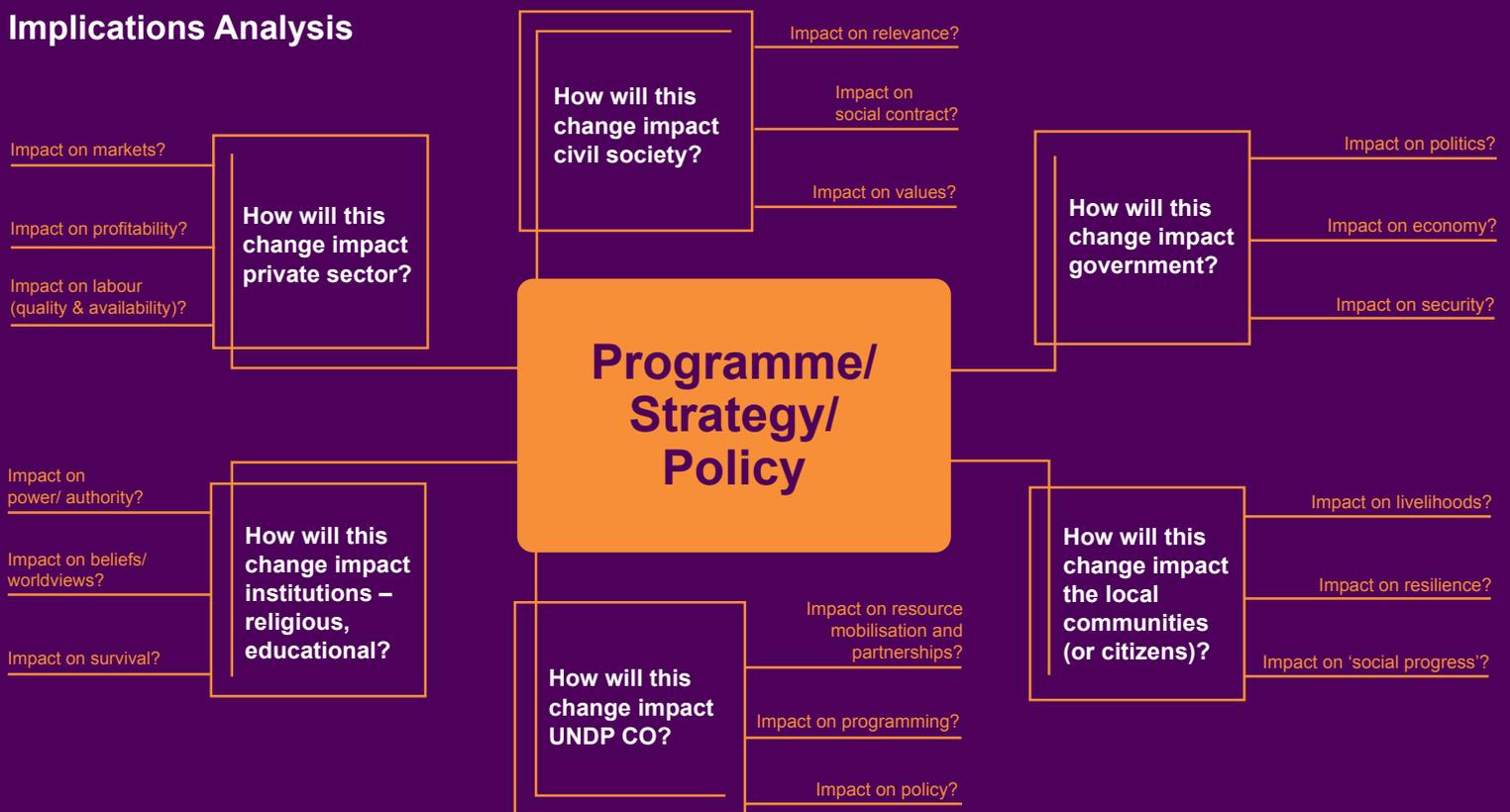
Futures wheel, also implications analysis, is a foresight tool that enables us to systematically explore possible futures by considering a wide variety of critical changes on the horizon.

It is a foresight method that uses structured brainstorming and visualisation to explore the direct and indirect impacts or consequences (first, second and third order impacts etc.) of an event, issue or a trend. It can also be used to explore the impacts of a strategy, policy, or programme.

Futures Wheel can be used to:

- Analyse the direct and indirect impacts of an issue, event, a trend, decision, strategy or programme.
- Produce a visual map of all the potential implications of an event, issue, a trend, decision, strategy, or programme, and foster better anticipation of risks (for anticipatory mitigation) and opportunities (for better utilisation) that may arise from the direct and indirect implications.
- To see the connections between different parts of a complex system

### Implications Analysis



## When to Use Futures Wheel in the UNDP Programming Cycle

Updating and Reviewing multi-year work plan - exploring the potential direct and indirect impacts of a strategy, policy or programme; or the likely implications of an event or emerging issue on the delivery of a programme - and implementation of a policy or strategy.

Risk assessment and management - exploring the potential risks and opportunities associated with the direct and indirect impacts of a strategy, policy or programme, and improving capability to better manage such risks and opportunities.

Defining programmes priorities and partnerships - elaborating risks and opportunities that could impact - promote or impede - the ability of a programme to achieve results and priorities in a more detailed level, and the partnerships needed for effective delivery and sustainability.

### Quick Exercise

Identify and select a trend or event that is expected to influence the work of your CO or unit, or a strategy or programme you are planning to implement.

Select one of these stakeholder profiles - government, civil society, UNDP (with further sub-filter from the lens of internal roles e.g. finance, partnerships, strategic communications etc.). Brainstorm and explore the impacts from the perspective of the stakeholder you have selected.

(Usually, when you are done with the first order impacts, you should explore further out the implications of the impacts you have just brainstormed to come up with the second order impacts, and using the same process explore the third order impacts also.).

### 3 Questions to Consider

What insights did you generate from this exercise?

What do you do in a situation where one of the likely new impacts (direct or indirect) of your strategy, policy or programme has not been previously considered in planning or strategy processes?

How might you prepare for a potential likely impact that might happen in the medium term future but that your CO/program are currently not prepared for?

## 7. Next steps

Over the next three months, we are finalizing the playbook by ensuring the tools can fit within existing UNDP processes.

Should you be interested in being a part of this journey, [please sign up to our Strategic Foresight Playbook Working Group](#) and our team will be in touch.



Find out more about Strategic Foresight Week 2022, including the [AGENDA and CONCEPT NOTE](#).



[Register for the sessions in two clicks](#) (one link for all 5 sessions).



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