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# Applying **FORESIGHT** and **ALTERNATIVE FUTURES** to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework



# Applying foresight and alternative futures to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)<sup>1</sup>

A paper commissioned by the UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO) as part of the UNDAF innovations facility

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## **Introduction**

How can the UN Development Assistance Frameworks process make better use of foresight?

This scanning report answers that question with examples of foresight and other public sector innovations to improve multi-year strategic planning. It is based on consultations with development professionals (both within and outside the UN), and the author's own knowledge of strategic planning and foresight practices.

It also includes key case studies from UN in-country teams (Lao PDR, Montenegro and Rwanda) who have experimented in different ways with foresight techniques in their UNDAF planning process.

This paper explores:

- The case for foresight in strategic planning;
- Methodologies for emergent strategic planning;
- Recent developments in the current strategic planning context in the UN;
- UN case-studies of foresight implementation in Lao PDR, Montenegro and Rwanda, and a comparator non-UN case-study of Wales;
- The potential within the UN system for using strategic foresight and other good innovative practices; and
- Recommendations on integrating foresight into the UNDAF review.

Resources for further reading and a full glossary of foresight terminology are included at the end of this document.

## **1. Methodology**

This paper is based on a desk review of UN planning guidelines<sup>3</sup> and material and over twenty interviews with UN strategy experts, development sector experts and UN Country

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<sup>3</sup> The planning guidelines analysed were: 'How to Prepare an UNDAF (Parts I & II): Guidelines for UN Country Teams', January 2010.

Teams (UNCTs). This research additionally provided specific guidance and recommendations for adapting the UNDAF process, which are detailed in a separate paper.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with three types of people, with three viewpoints in mind:

- 1) UN agency strategy and foresight experts, who were able to share their perspectives and reference best practice from different parts of the UN system.
- 2) Development sector experts with innovation mandates (including foresight and planning in some cases) from outside the UN, who could provide experienced opinion on what the sector is doing.
- 3) Four UNCTs, who could provide practical insight into realities, challenges and benefits of introducing strategic foresight methods into planning processes. Three of these UNCTs provided the case studies included later in this report (Montenegro, Rwanda and Lao PDR).

By no means is this a representative sample of opinions within the UN, or the development sector; however, it was enough to identify key emerging themes from stakeholders in the UNDAF process that warrant further exploration. To gain as honest an insight as possible, interviewees were promised anonymity in this report.

Interview templates are included in Appendix 3.

## **2. Recent developments in Emergent Strategic Planning**

### **2.1 Definitions**

“Strategic foresight” or “foresight” (used synonymously in this paper) is a systematic way to examine alternative “futures”.

Maree Conway provides a comprehensive definition of these terms:

***Foresight:*** *the capacity to think systematically about the future to inform decision making today. It is a cognitive capacity that we need to develop as individuals, as organisations and as a society. In individuals, it is usually an unconscious capacity and needs to be surfaced to be used in any meaningful way to inform decision-making.*

***Strategic foresight:*** *an organisational foresight capacity that informs the development of strategy, the development of which happens when there is a critical mass of foresight aware individuals in organisations.*

***Futures:*** *the broad academic and professional field now developing globally as well as research, methods and tools that are available to us to use to develop a foresight capacity<sup>4</sup>.*

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<sup>4</sup> Conway, M (2015) 'Foresight: an introduction', Thinking Futures: <http://thinkingfutures.net/wp-content/uploads/TFRefGuideForesight1.pdf>, p2.

In the tradition of the great futures teacher Jim Dator, of the Futures School, University of Hawaii, we explicitly use the term “futures” in the plural, to emphasise possible alternative and multiple futures rather than a single monolithic future<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.2 The case for foresight

Strategic foresight is critical to effective strategic planning, and is essential in moving past linear problem-solving approaches. Instead of attempting to provide solutions for challenges as they are currently manifested, strategic foresight encourages decision makers to explore the likely nature of the challenge in the futures. When implementing strategic foresight, decision makers must consider the external environment, from different perspectives, and think systematically about the context and shape of their policy issue in alternative/multiple futures.

We cannot access hard data about what may happen in the future, but foresight processes help overcome this to answer a strategic question: “Where are we now and where do we want to get to?” Using foresight, individuals and organisations ensure that thinking about the future is not based on ‘blue-skies’ or invented creative thinking, but is systematic, rigorous, explicit and evidence-based.

Strategic foresight is therefore an integral part of the strategy process that helps decision makers to understand complexity, build resilience, set direction and then implement policies. However, without including an explicit step for foresight in a strategic planning process, we risk falling into three cognitive traps:

- 1) Internal-focus: focusing intently on internal organisational features and overlooking external environmental changes.
- 2) Premature convergence: quickly agreeing the shape of the futures (and appropriate response) due to group dynamics. This happens as a result of groups having similar points of view, and therefore blind spots, and also (whether consciously or unconsciously) wanting to agree.
- 3) Uncertainty: either deciding the future is too uncertain to make any plans for, so it is better to just muddle through; or, assuming that tomorrow will be like today.

In summary, Strategic foresight is about building comfort with decision-making under conditions of uncertainty.

## 2.3 Recent changes in foresight methodology: moving from linear to emergent approaches

Thinking about the future systematically is, and always has been, a key part of the strategic planning process (though often observed in the absence). Over the past 30 years, two key different traditions in strategic planning have been influential. These approaches are represented by Michael Porter and Henry Mintzberg respectively<sup>6</sup>. Porter’s approach can be summarised as building on the traditional approach which is more “command and control” focused (where businesses lead strategic planning processes from the centre and from the top-down). Whereas Mintzberg’s centres on “emergent” methods (where the process of strategic development is more adaptive to environmental realities over time, and where the

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/>

<sup>6</sup> Mintzberg, H. co-authored with J.Jorgensen, Emergent Strategy for Public Policy, 1987 Canadian Public Administration 30(2): 214-229

agency for decision-making is more distributed across the business). These insights are equally valid for the policy-making process, whether in local communities or at the multilateral level.

As our world has become more complex and systemic, there has been a gradual shift to build the benefits of Mintzberg's approach into the rigorous, analytical and centralised strategic planning process as typified by Porter. There has also been a growing awareness of the failure of policies based on linear thinking, and the limits of any central authority to make and implement effective decisions. This shift away from hierarchical control toward a more participative approach is largely attributable to technology enabling instantaneous and low-cost connectivity, the rise of multiple actors that can influence decisions, as well as recognition of the interconnectedness and complexity of global environment. As such, Mintzberg's approach recognises ideas and processes emerge, that information comes from multiple levels of an organisation and that plans are adaptive, iterative and "culture" based.

An adaptive, participative approach can result in better outcomes in complex environments and in the face of complex problems<sup>7</sup>. David Snowden's *Cynefin* decision-making framework provides an explanation of why this is the case. In the operational context of a complex systems, leaders "need to probe first, then sense, and then respond"<sup>8</sup>.

*Leaders who try to impose order in a complex context will fail, but those who set the stage, step back a bit, allow patterns to emerge, and determine which ones are desirable will succeed. They will discern many opportunities for innovation, creativity, and new business models.*<sup>9</sup>

In a volatile, uncertain world where *emergent* strategic planning processes are increasingly useful, foresight is an important skill to master. We will never be able to predict the futures; however, foresight can provide us with principles for exploring the behaviour of a system. Furthermore, foresight helps us explore multiple alternatives and develop the ability to respond and adapt.

When a government leads policy-making processes in an emergent way, it is acting as a system steward. System stewardship<sup>10</sup> allows governments to effectively respond to opportunities and risks, as it enables them to act as a platform within a wider network. Foresight - the process of thinking about the future collectively and systematically - is a key part of this.

The transition to system stewardship from 'command and control' requires governments to become more accountable and open, coherent and future-focused. To make the shift, governments must build institutional and behavioural capabilities to undertake strategic foresight in order to take the longer-term into account. This transition requires a re-evaluation of the skills, capabilities and leadership that politicians and officials need. It is possible, however, and has begun in many emerging and developed countries, including in Mintzberg's birthplace of Canada<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Oxfam's guide to Systems Thinking provides useful detail on navigating complex environments: [Bowman, K. et al \(2015\) Systems Thinking - An introduction for Oxfam Programme Staff.](#)

<sup>8</sup> Snowden, D and Boone, M (2007) 'A Leader's Framework for Decision Making', [Harvard Business Review](#)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Further detail on system stewardship and transitioning to this framework is detailed in: [Tully, C. \(2015\) Stewardship of the Future. Using Strategic Foresight in 21st Century Governance. Singapore: United Nations Development Programme Global Centre for Public Service Excellence](#)

<sup>11</sup> Further detail on this shift is included in: [Policy Horizons Canada \(2012\), 'Driving Policy on a Shifting Terrain: Understanding the Changing Policy Environment Amid 21st-Century Complexity'](#)

The shift in approach to how organisations (private sector, governments and civil society) develop strategy has led to a new generation in foresight methodology. The key defining characteristics of these emergent, participative foresight approaches are detailed below.

## 2.4 Key aspects of what a good emergent strategic planning process looks like

An effective emergent strategic planning process has the following components:

- 1. Examination of strategic context.** This involves analysing trends and drivers of possible futures contexts, challenging received wisdom (e.g. that trends will continue, although also extremely important to understand the systemic drivers of the past) and examining interdependencies. This needs to be done along different time horizons, e.g. one year, five years and 15 years, so it can inform but not be captured by budget and operational planning decisions.
- 2. Open engagement of a wide set of views.** This should especially include vulnerable and extremely poor citizens (i.e. the key “beneficiaries” of policy design). It is essential to look at a set of issues with Multiple Lenses. Diversity and alternative perspectives are necessary for effective understanding and identification of weak signals, as well as developing common knowledge and ownership. These dialogues and relationships should form the basis of future scanning and adjustment of policies on an ongoing basis. And also form the basis for joint implementation.
- 3. Identification of possible alternative futures and trends.** This includes trends that are desired or otherwise, that can be highlighted either through complete pictures of scenarios or snapshots. Organisations must monitor shocks, risks, opportunities, assumptions and identify alternative outcomes in an *adaptive* way.
- 4. Building on policy implications.** This involves reviewing what genuine strategic alternatives look like, and understanding common resilient postures, assets and capabilities that enable resilience as well as push for certain desired outcomes.
- 5. Adaptive approach to implementing, monitoring and a risk-friendly approach to evaluation.** This entails building the institutional capacity to learn and adapt.

### ***Implications for monitoring through Results-Based Management***

*“RBM requires the identification of critical assumptions about the programme environment and risk assessments, clearly defined accountabilities and indicators for results, and performance monitoring and reporting.”*

(United Nations Development Group, How to Prepare an UNDAF (Part II): Guidelines for UN Country Teams, January 2010, p6)

Results-Based Management (RBM) is used by UNCTs for strategic management. However, as any organisation moves to using a more adaptive and emergent strategic planning approach, methods for measuring and evaluation must change too. RBM is only effective if the indicators measured as a proxy for results are the correct ones.

Therefore, it must be preceded by a strategic analysis that sets up the correct indicators; this means fewer operational/ tactical indicators and more systemic, lead indicators that look forward and outwards. In addition, a process for monitoring changing and growing opportunities is also necessary.

Reviewing and monitoring should be done in real-time (as far as possible) with data on assumptions, risks and success. Leaders should reward trying of different alternatives and have budgets structured for Learning & Development and innovation. Organisations should be able to track the value of an adaptive approach over time by being alert. And monitoring what flexibility and responsiveness has enabled them to pick up and do.

## 2.5 Growing interest in foresight

In recent years within the development and public sectors, interest in strategic foresight approaches has grown. This is not surprising: under conditions of complexity and high volatility, organisations, including governments, need a way to navigate uncertainty and manage alternatives in order to be prepared for the futures (given there is no hard data).

Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a gradual increase in awareness of the value of complexity theory and design thinking to policy-making. This, combined with new forms of technology and better understanding of cognitive science, has led to the adoption of rapid and adaptive approaches into foresight methodology. This presents policymakers with a new policy toolkit<sup>12</sup>.

Foresight approaches fit in with and complement a growth in interest (also driven by complexity and design thinking) around rapid and adaptive programming approaches which are *emergent* (examples in Table 1)<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 1: Examples of emergent techniques**

**Co-creation:** working together with different groups of people to explore ideas and solutions.

**Rapid creation:** Creating models or sketches to test ideas and spot problems, as an effective way to navigate and test hypotheses and ideas in complex or rapidly changing environments.

**Feedback loops:** scenarios of alternative futures that produce circular causalities. Emergent strategic planning includes alternative policies and short, non-traditional feedback loops.

**Sense-making:** a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (e.g. among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively.

**Innovation labs:** a space and set of protocols for engaging young people, technologists, private sector, and civil society.

**Ongoing scanning:** exploring the external environment to better understand the nature and pace of change in that environment, and identify potential opportunities, challenges, and likely future developments relevant to your organisation.

A major risk facing the strategic planning community as we look to integrate strategic foresight more closely into planning approaches is that it is embedded into a strategy process that is too centralised, unrepresentative and disconnected. The UN has a significant, and unique, role to play in ensuring wider participation is integrated into strategic

<sup>12</sup> Examples of emerging policy levers can be found in [Policy Horizons Canada \(2012\), 'Understanding the Changing Policy Environment Amid 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Complexity', p8.](#)

<sup>13</sup> Further examples of emergent techniques are available in: [UNDP GCPSE \(2014\), 'Foresight: The Manual', United Nations.](#)

planning processes, whether of specific Sustainable Development Goals, of countries, of regions, or globally.

The growth of interest in strategic foresight in planning by governments needs to be encouraged to be emergent rather than “command and control”, so it can enable effective decision-making for the government itself and deliver for citizens. In order to effectively respond to opportunities and risks, governments need to become system stewards who make decisions with a wider network.

It is therefore paramount to underline the *emergent* quality of strategic planning that is necessary for 21st century environments – i.e. **participative, externally- and future-focused, adaptive/iterative, and systemic** (i.e. aware of interdependencies)<sup>14</sup>. This is why SDG16 on “building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions” is such a critical goal.

### 2.5.1 Foresight resources to consult

Interest and innovative experimentation is on the rise, therefore there are various resources and examples of foresight and emergent strategic planning practice available.

The reports and toolkits in Table 2 provide ideas on methodology, insight on trends and will be useful to help think about how to integrate foresight into planning design. The first four documents form an interesting three hour introduction to foresight. The two toolkits are useful to consult. The latter in particular contains interesting design-based approaches.

**Table 2: Useful resources for foresight**

Bingley, K. (2014) [A Review of Strategic Foresight in International Development](#).

Green, D. (2015) [Fit for the Future? Development trends and the role of international NGOs](#)

Frey, T. (2011) [12 Laws of the Future](#).

Tully, C. (2015) [Stewardship of the Future. Using Strategic Foresight in 21st Century Governance](#).

**Toolkits:**

[UNDP GCPSE Foresight Manual](#)

Carleton, T, Cockayne, W and Tahvanainen (2013) [Playbook for strategic foresight and innovation](#)

Appendix 2 of this report includes additional various links and readings for the five following categories:

**A. Foresight as a governance capacity issue among developing countries:** a series of texts examines how foresight could be integrated into the governance structures (including planning, public service, at different layers of public sector), e.g. UNDP GCPSE.

**B. Using foresight for development outcomes:** reports examining future trends in specific sectors, impact of new technology, or the future of countries or regions. These can be particularly useful for understanding wider work already done on issues and for nesting strategies within a wider context, possibly regional or sector-based, e.g. Future of food, future of Africa.

<sup>14</sup> Full definitions of these terms are included in the glossary (Appendix 1)



**C. Developments in complexity and emergent practice in the development space:** a set of reports examining how some of the wider theoretical conversations about innovations in methodology have affected the field, e.g. “Systems thinking – an introduction for Oxfam Programme staff”.

**D. Similar approaches in emergent planning in international relations and wider foreign policy:** for context, a couple of reports looking at innovations in emergent planning and foresight practice being used in international relations and developed countries, e.g. “Driving Policy on a Shifting Terrain: Understanding the Changing Policy Environment Amid 21st-Century Complexity”.

**E. Innovative practice and methods: new ways to do foresight** – a list of resources and methods that are cheap (e.g. interactive sessions), that are rapid (e.g. creative world building) using prototyping (e.g. medical).

### 2.5.2 Examples and Indicators of growing interest in foresight

Some of the indicators of growing interest in foresight include:

- New government units, structures, councils, ombudsmen being established in various countries of different types (including [OECD](#), [BRICs](#) and [LDCs](#)), and across Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa ([Future Generations Commissioner for Wales](#));
- New courses and syllabi for public administration schools and wider education, including in emerging BRICS institutions (see [International Development and Public Policy Alliance](#) of BRICS);
- Incorporation of foresight into models and methods of public sector reform and the growing use of the approach in International Institutions and thinktanks on governance (including in [OECD](#), [WEF](#), [UNDP's GCPSE](#), [INTOSAI](#) who are exploring the role of the national audit function driving longer-term thinking – see the [US's GAO](#) strapline “*From Oversight, to Insight, to Foresight*” etc);
- Growing use of foresight processes, capacity-building and visions by regional and international institutions in order to support their member-governments at the national level, and also to explore different views about the future among their members (e.g. [ASEAN2035](#), [AU2063](#), [ECLAC conference: “America Latina y el Caribe: visions del Mundo, miradas continentales”](#));
- [Greater public discourse](#) among political and business leaders about need for resilience, anticipation and flexibility in the face of uncertainty and different possible scenarios;
- Growth in cross-cutting (or whole-of-government) approaches in governments. In OECD countries, most of which left “5 year plans” behind decades ago, there is a revitalised interest in “[National Strategic Narratives](#)”. Increasingly, mechanisms for national security approaches rely on different instruments from across domestic and foreign policy toolkits and look to the shape of emerging trends, threats and opportunities. In emerging economies, development planning processes are increasingly moving from the control of a single ministry (of Planning or Finance) to a more cross-departmental approach, embedded in a wider and longer-term understanding of the international context, in some cases more flexible, participative and iterative (Costa Rica, Wales, Colombia, Scotland, Finland, Tunisia, Malaysia,

Indonesia, Rwanda, Mexico, Canada have innovated recently in the configurations of their centre of government strategic planning processes);

- The South-South collaboration aspect to growth in foresight practice at a government level, both on specific projects and also in sharing capability and building capacity. Many Asian countries are leading on this: Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea are reaching out to Gulf, African and Latin American countries and regional institutions (e.g. ECLAC, [Blue Ocean Strategy](#)). There is also increased contribution to and leadership of international governance networks on foresight (e.g. [India's Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council](#) hosting the [Global Foresight Organisations Network](#) 2015 conference, followed by China next year).

There are caveats to this growth in interest, however, since it is not an uncomplicated development. Effort and resources on foresight projects and capability-building are not always productive if they are misunderstood or misused. Proper implementation of foresight pays dividends, but this requires committed strategizing and design in order to have the desired impact.

Careful design and understanding of context is critical to effective strategic planning and should not be overlooked. If old-style approaches and tools that are inwards-focused and disregard external context are applied, then organisations and institutions will see little value for money. Institutional innovations aimed at protecting the notion of thinking about the future in a systemic way often do not survive crises, austerity drives or the need to deliver results yesterday.

### **3. The UN strategic planning context**

#### **3.1 What is working and what is not**

Montenegro (included as a country case study in section 3) was referenced several times as having good strategic planning processes, as were UNICEF and UNAIDS: particularly UNICEF's Innovation Hubs and [citizen engagement](#), and UNAIDS' joint programming.

However, it is clear that the interagency process has bureaucratic and political constraints. If interagency processes and relationships can be reformed, strategic planning can be effectively implemented. It is therefore encouraging that there is an imperative to transform how the country teams work at a national level (and the wider enabling ecosystem of regional and global processes).

#### **Planning processes**

Interviewees from both within and outside the UN shared similar views on strategic planning processes: that they are well-defined and with extensive guidelines. Nevertheless, they take an administrative, budget-focused approach that takes insufficient consideration of the changing external context.

*"[processes are] related to budgets and don't in any substantive way rethink either the planning frame or developmental context"*

Numerous participants highlighted how planning processes are closely tied with budgeting, and relate to budget cycles; therefore, when it comes to RBM and monitoring and evaluation, although theoretically processes could be

comprehensive and systemic, in reality it becomes more about justifying budget continuity.

When it comes to futures thinking, interviewees stated that plans are not based on where countries will be in five to ten years' time. Furthermore, plans are heavily formulated, which means agencies do not have the flexibility to be responsive to changing circumstances.

Although some positive examples – for example, Macedonia – were referenced, on the whole there was very little mention of participative or inclusive planning processes. Some participants highlighted such closed planning as a limitation.

### **Relationships and resources**

Interviewees stated that the relationship between UN agencies is often one of competition rather than coordination. One participant described how, during UNDAF planning, agencies are “heavily armoured” to stand their ground. Agencies operate in silos, with different mandates, donors and counterparts, so it’s unsurprising that they find it difficult to act as one when it comes to strategic thinking. However, this also impacts their relationship with governments; each agency has a separate innovation unit. If these units were strategically connected then the government would be able to commit to more substantive exploration of new approaches.

*“I am not sure that the process has to change - it’s the politics involved and fighting for resources. You could have the best process in the world and it still wouldn’t work if you don’t address the resources issue”*

One participant highlighted that, due to UN structure, UNDAFs cannot surpass “closed box” thinking, as everything has to be relevant to an agency’s mandate. Even if “out of the box” thinking is encourage, it’s not accessible to people who are preoccupied with fulfilling their respective mandates.

This underlines a deeper set of issues around needing to promote true interagency engagement. If battling over resources is the number one priority of the agencies, and it is impossible to move beyond this concern, then the process of thinking about the future collectively cannot be done effectively. One interviewee suggested that resourcing should be separated from strategising, creating two arenas: one where agencies go to think together, and another where they go to fight.

### **Embedding into SDGs**

The SDGs are a major development within the UN strategic planning context. However, many interviewees were concerned about implementation of the SDG framework into the UNDAF process. One participant highlighted that the SDGs could end up reinforcing a more administrative approach due to the way they are formulated around targets and budgets. Another participant proposed that developing local capacity to understand local conditions is key to monitoring SDG progress.

It is unreasonable to expect every country to do a deep planning process for each of the SDGs; some SDGs may need some extra work on them in-country, but this cannot be done for all of them. With this in mind, country teams were very conscious of balancing the necessity to think deeply about priority issues, but also think systemically and not overwork the partners involved. There was a fear expressed that the teams will spend too long in “planning stasis”: developing plans rather than implementing them.

As long as there are multiple strategic narratives, there will be neither institutional, strategic or policy coherence at a national level. This must be reconciled. The UN needs to continue to focus on Government plans, connect them to SDG indicators and spot gaps. At the

moment, there is a massive risk of reframing NDP priorities and strategies into SDGs, and pushing an agenda onto countries.

### 3.2 Case studies

This section details case studies from three UN Country Teams (Rwanda, Lao PDR and Montenegro) as well as additional case study from Wales. The final example of Wales is included because it presents a compelling example of nation-level, government-led strategic planning.

#### **Rwanda: Foresight as technical assistance**

The government asked UNDP and GCPSE for technical support on foresight to support innovative public policy development. This manifested as a three-day workshop in November 2014, attended by 50 participants.

Participants were all senior policy people: civil servants, governors of provinces and mayors, and institutions that were strategic stakeholders for the government (for example: the development board). Only one other UN agency other than UNDP participated.

The workshop demonstrated the concept and tools of strategic foresight and its value on the process of urban and rural planning and development planning.

The President's office provided strong support and interest among all participants. As a consequence, the government has made commitments that they have already started to implement:

- 1) To apply the model to influence and change traditional planning processes in the big cities outside Kigali (they have started doing this – see this [video](#) for feedback one year later)
- 2) To start an innovation fund to spur government working together and whole-of-government approach to encourage longer-term thinking and collective planning. This was included in the government's recent annual budget.

#### **Learnings:**

- UNDP having the funds and skills to be able to respond to government's requests for assistance opens new opportunities.
- Foresight is a valuable tool for the UNCT to support the priorities of the Government in a more innovative and less traditional way – use it to support government good practice. However, resources are needed to be able to respond quickly to Government interest to support ongoing work (e.g. in the secondary cities). If this cannot be done immediately, then opportunities with government are lost.
- Innovation has to be treated as a process, not a one-off event. The UNCT needs to follow through and have the resources to do so.
- Government partnership and buy-in makes all the difference in terms of impact

#### **Lao PDR: Foresight for widening engagement**

Through the UNDAF Design Innovation Facility, the UNCT in Lao PDR is supporting the engagement of citizen experts, including civil society (so-called Non-Profit Associations) and other partners, in its planning. This is done through a combination of crowdsourcing, consultations and micro-grants as described below.

#### **FutureScaper:**

[FutureScaper](#) is a cloud-based collective intelligence platform that helps organisations to crowdsource strategic conversations. The UNCT in Lao PDR used *FutureScaper* to gain wider input on development planning in addition the usual stakeholder involvement. The aim was to engage the UN country team (all staff), International Development Partners, Civil Society, Government, and Public at Large to explore existing development issues and build scenarios around them for the Lao PDR to 2021.

The project (launched in May 2015 and still ongoing) has so far gained 200 responses, just under half from UN staff. As [the analysis](#) shows, insights of common concerns around corruption, political will and governance heavily influenced development of the country. However, it was a challenge to sensitively communicate responses to the government.

**Vulnerability studies:**

The UNCT in Lao PDR commissioned CSO research on vulnerable groups via micro-grants. The purpose was to gain new insights and alternative data on particularly vulnerable groups by engaging local CSOs, thus going beyond usual suspects, as the UN has so far rarely engaged them for the country analysis. This approach was valuable: strong insights were gathered and CSOs capacity was built.

**Wider CSO consultations:**

The UNCT brought 70 CSOs from across the country to participate in face-to-face dialogue on the new UNDAF as well as the next National Plan. This helped the UNCT engage with a wider group outside the capital and define clear steps towards enhancing the space for the civil society operation in the country and improve collaboration with UN.

**Learnings:**

- Due to sensitivity of government, there is limited civic engagement in strategic planning, which triggered the UNCT's need to use innovative tools to generate feedback. This is especially the case with ethnic minorities.
- Dissemination can be an implementation challenge, particularly when it comes to getting the message out and creating incentives to participate. Despite government support, unexpected obstacles can arise (e.g. sending out the link in letter form).
- The focus has been on engaging with new and interesting stakeholders rather than following a predefined process. Having the money to do this, outreach has been redesigned for efficiency, e.g. four meetings are being merged into one.
- A key success factor was the capacity within the UN Resident Coordinator's office to lead this activity and drive interagency efforts.

**Montenegro: participative UNDAF processes**

Montenegro UNCT became a 'Delivering as One' country in 2009. They have a close relationship with the Government, and there is strong government ownership of the UNDAF.

UN inter-agency relationships in Montenegro are strong, transparent and open. There are a small number of resident agencies, all with strong mandates in relation to the government, so competition is limited (there are no examples of competition for funds). The office environment (single, open plan building) supports a joint working approach. Each agency has a strong understanding of what others do, which forms a strong foundation for working on joint objectives.

**Designing a new UNDAF**

For their 2015 UNDAF, Montenegro used foresight to create a light touch, forward-looking process that engaged unusual stakeholders (citizens and non-experts). In order to include diverse voices in its new five-year strategic plan, UN Montenegro developed an "enhanced survey tool", a participatory instrument and organised foresight workshops with different groups of citizens including youth, experts from academia, NGOs, employment and student associations.

**Participatory processes**

Citizens were invited to engage in an online foresight game where they had to identify SDG issues. Within four days, 700 people had already replied, and social media helped promote involvement. Offline workshops were also held, where vulnerable youth played games in order to identify different sets of issues and think about futures up to 2021 and 2030.

The outcomes of these sessions were relayed to senior decision-makers and captured in planning documents. Representatives of government also explored preferred and likely futures of Montenegro and its possible development and human rights directions. Foresight and backcasting were used during strategic planning meetings with representatives of national institutions, such as the Government, Parliament and Ombudsperson's office.

These collaborative foresight methods were valuable; bringing civil society voices into policy processes can be difficult. Foresight methods transformed creative dialogue, imagination and critical reflection on what might lie ahead into actionable insights that are integral to good governance and sustainable development. Foresight was a successful tool for getting people to talk to others (across areas) and identify linkages between areas of change.

After positive experience from this UNDAF process, UN Montenegro are introducing the use of foresight in strategic planning of a new national youth strategy.

**Lessons learned:**

- When there are skeptics in the office, there can be an aversion to new processes and new vocabulary (e.g. backcasting, destructive innovators). Strong leaders are needed to address this skepticism, show validity, advocate for foresight and encourage teams to move on. Leaders must also be prepared for the fact that advantages may not be immediately measurable or as expected.
- The quality of discussions must be considered for outcome targets
- Leadership teams are more enabled to make decisions and lead processes.

**Further resources for Montenegro:**

[Webstory – Foresight: Spotting the Future in Montenegro](#)

[Video – Foresight: Spotting the Future in Montenegro](#)

[Report - Hack to the Future: New Voices for UN Montenegro's Next 5-year Plan](#)

[Blog - Preparing for the Future\(s\): Foresight, Citizens' Insights and Serious Games](#)

[Photo gallery – Foresight workshop with young people of Montenegro](#)

**Wales: Foresight implemented into planning and legislation**

Although this is not a UN Country Team case study, it is an example of a maximalist approach to country-level, government-led strategic planning<sup>1</sup>.

In 1999, the government recognised its duty to promote sustainable development and created a strategic framework for delivering it. However, this ran parallel to the central government programme and was not embedded, and therefore not strong.

In civil society and the political class, there was a growing awareness of a need to build in structures for longer-term decision-making for development amongst short-term timetables.

The 2012 government decided to change that, and committed to put the development planning process at the heart of government. On the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the Welsh National Assembly voted in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#). The Act includes a number of mechanisms that improve long-term decision-making, including regular five-year reporting, community engagement, a Future Generations Commissioner as a statutory function, 40 indicators that are long-term measures of progress and future trends reporting.

It is critical to recognise that this comes in the context of devolution (the Assembly was created in 1998). Wales was engaged in public and cross-party debate about the kind of nation it was, and the kind of values it held. The community of Wales could therefore develop a common view of its purpose, including its responsibility to the rest of the world.

**Lessons Learnt:**

- The consultative process e.g. “the world we want” exercise is critical to get input
- Links to the UN have been important contextually to help the citizens understand what the purpose is
- Sub-national regions and devolved regions are able to lead on innovative processes.
- There were two key factors to the success of this:
  1. A strong, activist civil society network at the local and national levels
  2. Strong political leadership (and especially one senior champion) to drive this approach.

## **4. Recommendations**

### **4.1 Key insights and recommendations for UNCTs and Agencies**

*“If the UN is to meet the SDGs, it is critically important to engage in strategic foresight.”  
– UN strategy expert*

There are four ways that foresight or futures-based exercises can help UNCT efforts:

- I. **Help Governments develop a technical skill that they value and ask for (e.g. Rwanda)** There is a real opportunity to join up and do this with other UN agencies, to sensitise awareness of value of these exercises. According to GCPSE, there is demand from many governments around this issue, including around the future of public services. SDG16 - “effective, accountable and inclusive institutions” – creates an opportunity to develop a specific UN offer for this intervention point.
- II. **Engage with external stakeholders to deep-dive on an issue or look across a wider set of issues to explore inter-linkages between policy areas (e.g. Lao PDR)** If there are particular issues (e.g. water or gender) that have been identified as key to a NDP, there may be interest in discussing possible drivers of change out to 10-15 years, identify opportunities and risks and identify the new roles different stakeholders, and their assets (especially business, “new” development actors), could play in spotting opportunities for investment and models for sustainability, in order to coordinate transformative action behind a priority agenda. These kinds of discussions could be held regionally, e.g. examining trends on technology, SDG6 or youth.
- III. **Drive internal efficiencies in sharing resources and prioritising** This is a less comprehensive use of foresight in strategic planning: using foresight or conversations about the future in ad-hoc or specific intervention points to help improve decision-making. There are a variety of discrete points where a futures approach could be used to sense-check, broaden horizons or improve decision-making in a contained way. Examples include:
  - To identify tangible opportunities in the future, risks/opportunities/blackswans for current programmes;
  - To gently promote joint strategic thinking – developing a common vision and then conducting joint backcasting (what do I do, you do and what WE have to do together jointly), bridging strategic thinking to programming conversation;
  - To encourage a light first step in a change process – trying to find common ground in the future that you can base collective action in the present from. It would be a safe conversation, removed from resourcing negotiations, based around principles and content, to create a first common basis of discussion and joint scanning; and
  - To sense-check and identify gaps during the wider planning process – e.g. is there anything important we have missed that we are not doing, understanding the wide span of issues that might impact what UN agencies does, SDGs and UNDAF programme and areas of national priorities.

Some agencies are already doing this, at the country level and regionally, both in wider internal strategic planning and in engaging certain key stakeholders (e.g. Youth and UNICEF, UNAIDS). The value for doing this is to use limited resources better and leverage the technical assistance that UN prides itself on.

- IV. Lead an internal conversation about the role of the UN, i.e. change management**
- Various interviewees discussed the importance of developing an UNDAF that is commensurate with the resources that the UN can hope to lever – rather than planning for a budget which will never be achieved. Given the changing ecosystem of development actors and resources, the role of the UN may be changing. Foresight exercises could help different parts of the UNCT explore what that looks like in-country.

These four approaches are supportive of wider capacity-building goals that the UN conducts in-country. They support consensus-building, use of information for accountability, catalyse support of technology and innovation, and provide international good practice.

#### **4.2 General takeaways for implementing foresight effectively:**

- Foresight can add value at any part of the process; what matters is the genuine demand for learning from the insights these exercises can provide. It is better to over-deliver on small pieces than embark on overcomplicated process.
- Impact must be at the centre of any foresight process. The focus must be on gaining better insights rather than following a set process. The design of a foresight activity or exercise will therefore always depend on the cycle, UNCT, context and culture. The context seems to be particularly important in terms of the relationship between UN and government, since a close and interdependent relationship seems to mean more scope for greater scale and ambition. And a smaller number of UN agencies seems to make for easier coordination.
- Resources, training and development guidance are needed to ensure that people with the confidence to design effective processes are involved.
- Communicating the insights from these approaches is an important stage that needs time and resources. Processes that capture insights and share how that has influenced decisions, how it is important for different stakeholders are necessary.

#### **4.3 In the UNDAF process:**

*“Foresight encourages agencies to think more holistically when planning across issues and into the longer-term”  
- UN strategy expert*

The key to implementing the following “no-brainers” is to select support that minimises barriers and helps encourage key decision-makers to take the risk:

- For the Country Analysis, use platforms that encourage outreach, both online and in-person
- The Country Analysis should be done on the basis of future trends, not reviewing past five years (UNDG I, 2010, 9) and systemically and capture assumptions. It is worth considering doing this as an ongoing scan rather than a one-off exercise, with oversight of this joint thinking activity to be done by a cross-agency group.
- Establish a requirement for the strategic prioritization exercise (including comparative advantage inputs into the results matrix) to be on a gap analysis, of not just current situation but future trends - priorities and outcomes and risks.
- This could then lead to a form of strategic navigation that is visited by the steering group on a regular basis. Risk management and monitoring must be of the assumptions, strategic shocks and potential shocks, not just of operational risks. It is therefore a forward-looking process that collectively looks out to possible trends as well as reporting



past performance.

## **Conclusion**

This paper presents a case for the use of foresight in developing planning. It includes case studies, insight on the current strategic planning context within the UN and provides a multitude of tools and resources for implementing strategic foresight within UN processes (more of which are detailed in the resources list, found in the Appendix 2).

The UN currently faces a challenge: integrating foresight as a necessary step in the UNDAF process without making it a tick-box exercise. The resources and tools included in this paper can be implemented to improve processes and introduce strategic foresight into UNDAF; however, the interview insights should also be taken into consideration. The key challenge is providing the resources and mandate to encourage innovation, whilst avoiding the pitfalls of creating more burdens that limits staff agency or falling prey to stresses due to resource constraints and competition.

## **Appendix 1: Glossary**

This glossary is an amalgamation from different sources. Sources are cited below definitions.

- **Active Listening**

In order to minimise the risk of miscommunication and misunderstandings, it is vital for people to engage in 'active listening'. Active listening denotes the willingness and ability to listen actively to what the interactional partner is saying, to check whether a message has been understood correctly, to check whether one understands the other's messages correctly, and to clarify meaning where required.

([https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/globalpeople/competency/communication/activelisten/](https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/globalpeople/competency/communication/activelisten/))

- **Adaptive**

Specifically have the capacity to learn from experience and adapt to new scenarios. They are able to self-organise in order to adapt to changes, and develop strategies, which in retrospect are coherent. For instance, societies are complex adaptive systems, with norms and practices that constantly evolve in response to the interactions and experiences of their constituent members.

- **Backcasting**

Defines a desirable future and then works backwards to identify major events and decision that generated the future, to allow organisations to consider what actions, policies and programs are needed today that will connect the future to the present. Backcasting reminds participants that the future is not linear, and can have many alternative outcomes depending on decisions made and the impact of external events on an organisation.

Examples

Visioning and Backcasting for UK Transport Policy [case study and methodology review]

Project Göteborg 2050 [case study of backcasting sustainable Swedish city]

Retrofit 2050 [backcasting urban-scale retrofitting of UK cities]

([http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE\\_ForesightManual\\_online.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE_ForesightManual_online.pdf))

- **Bricolage Planning Approach**

Similar to effectuation, improvisation/bricolage were introduced as being opposite to planning and also do not rely on predictions of the future. Bricolage means that entrepreneurs make do by recombining readily available resources for new purposes. However, bricolage does not always imply improvisation. Bricolage can also occur in the implementation of pre-determined plans. It is possible that entrepreneurs have a pre-existing plan, which specifies the use of bricolage to accomplish the goal. In the case, behaviour following a design-precedes-execution (planning) approach includes the strategy of bricolage. Baker provides the example of planning to go on a hiking trip and intending to make a campfire with whatever materials are at hand at the camp.

(Mumford, M. D., & Frese, M. (2015) *The Psychology of Planning in Organizations: Research and Applications*. Routledge: London)

- **Emergent Planning Approach**

When complex results arise from a combination of simple causes. An idea much liked by chaos theorists, who like to build simple computer models and imply that reality is equally predictable. Though this may work for (e.g) predicting the shape of ants' nests, it doesn't work for human society, partly because of reflexivity.

Emerging issue analysis (EIA) is similar to environmental scanning, but tries to pick up trends much earlier in their lifespan - hence the name "emerging issues". Futurist Graham Molitor has written a lot about this. The key to EIA is to find precursors: people, places, organizations, and writing that is ahead of the rest of the world. One of Molitor's main findings is that new ideas often begin at the fringes of society, and slowly work their way toward the mainstream.

(<http://www.globalforesight.org/glossary>)

- **Externally-focused**

Outside-in thinking: technique that broadens thinking by looking at an issue from an external perspective.

(<http://www.shapingtomorrow.com/media-centre/pf-ch11.pdf>)

- **Feedback Loops**

Strategic foresight produces scenarios of alternative futures, agile strategies with sets of alternative policies, and short, non-traditional feedback loops. Many bureaucratic structures and procedures do not allow for the kind of adaptability and flexibility required for implementation of action plans derived from foresight (e.g. budget cycles, work plans with strictly sequenced deliverables, long-term evaluation strategies etc.)

([http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE\\_ForesightManual\\_online.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE_ForesightManual_online.pdf))

- **Forward-focused**

Forward-focused planning establishes immediate and imminent future foresight. Foresight exercises sometimes struggle to get beyond 'the future' and move on to 'futures', fail to produce new, transformative insights, and leave people and organisations stuck in the 'old' approach of producing the 'used future'. Hence, forward focused foresight activities need extensive preparation, including development of non-directive illustrations of 'futures' thinking, selection of methods that emphasise and stimulate creativity (e.g. 'games', 'wild cards', etc.), and identification of strategies that ensures an 'equal playing field'.

([http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE\\_ForesightManual\\_online.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE_ForesightManual_online.pdf))

- **Future-focused**

Focus on the future or visioning is method for determining a compelling vision of a preferred future. Visioning a desirable future is the first step in creating a powerful strategy to achieve a particular purpose. Clarifying a vision is one of the most powerful mechanisms for engaging a team, organisation or community and getting them excited to push forward into new territory. A successfully designed product, service or policy should intentionally impact the thoughts and behaviours of society and culture, and serve as an example of the mindset and values of its creators. Creating that clear vision is a precursor to planning for the future, and a key to creating the conditions to mobilise a group of collaborators around a common goal.

(<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity->

[development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE ForesightManual online.pdf](#)

- **Innovation Labs**

A lab is a space and set of protocols for engaging young people, technologists, private sector, and civil society in problem-solving.

[\(http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/Innovation\\_Labs\\_A\\_Do-It-Yourself\\_Guide.pdf\)](#)

- **Iterative**

Instead of focusing on pinning down all the parameters of a problem before embarking on a solution, design thinking advocates a more cyclical approach, allowing the facts of a problem to be uncovered progressively, with prototype solutions that can be continually improved.

[\(http://www.csf.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/csf-csc foresight--a-glossary.pdf\)](#)

- **Ongoing Scanning (Horizon scanning)**

Environmental or Horizon Scanning is the art of systematically exploring the external environment to (1) better understand the nature and pace of change in that environment, and (2) identify potential opportunities, challenges, and likely future developments relevant to your organisation. Environmental Scanning is not about making predictions but about exploring new, strange and weird ideas, as well as persistent challenges and trends today.

[\(http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE ForesightManual online.pdf\)](#)

- **Participative**

Participatory Foresight, like Strategic Foresight, has been around for a while. Its broad aim is aspirational, its method emphatically inclusive and democratic and its application increasingly varied. It has important links with the shift of emphasis to distributed knowledge, the explosive growth of networks flows beyond traditional types of association, and the proliferation of enabling technologies.

Participatory and inclusive foresight methods create spaces for dialogue and negotiations between a broad spectrum of stakeholders, perspectives and futures and taps into the distributed, often tacit, knowledge 'in the room'.

[\(http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE ForesightManual online.pdf\)](#)

- **Rapid Prototyping**

The process of creating models (for objects) or early sketches of a policy. This can help to test ideas and spot potential problems so that subsequent prototypes come closer to addressing the issues at hand. Following an iterative approach, the rapid prototyping component of design thinking allows for quick adaptation in uncertain environments and continual improvement. In the context of governance, experimentation and related processes such as rapid prototyping can help policymakers better anticipate the future.

[\(http://www.csf.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/csf-csc foresight--a-glossary.pdf\)](#)

- **Real-time Monitoring**

Continuous (or on-going) observation of certain aspects of something. Using tools to determine the organisation's progress towards particular futures, e.g., through the

identification and monitoring of indicators, signposts and milestones in real time.  
(<http://www.shapingtomorrow.com/media-centre/pf-ch11.pdf>)

- **Sense-making**

Sense-making is the ability or attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation. More exactly, sense-making is the process of creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order to make decisions. It is “a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively

(<http://cognitive-edge.com/blog/what-is-sense-making/>)

- **Situation Room**

A room that is a microcosm where external factors can be excluded. Most useful in situations that involve the interaction of multiple “behavioural” or “human” entities. It helps to simulate the effects of individual actions on a system as a whole. It can help to account for the fact that human individuals behave in ways that are not entirely rational or consistent, and which are subject to cognitive biases.

(<http://www.csf.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/csf-csc-foresight--a-glossary.pdf>)

Example:

[Global Climate Change Situation Room, Millennium Project](#)

- **Systemic**

Relating to or affecting the whole of a system, rather than just some parts of it. Note: System thinking is a fundamental perspective (or paradigm) of Futures Studies; it is the lens through which futures thinkers view the world. Examples of use/reference: “The concept of vulnerability and of resilience imposes a system thinking frame based on acknowledgement of the interdependencies between drivers, feedback loops and non-linear trends. Vulnerability and resilience of agri-food system can have multiple sources, and these sources may interact to generate unexpected responses.”

(<http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/315951/Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf>)

- **Workshopping**

Enables a group of people to develop new ideas or solutions of social problems.

(<http://www.shapingtomorrow.com/media-centre/pf-ch11.pdf>)

## **Appendix 2: Resource List**

### **Introduction into foresight: four resources to read about futures**

- Bingley, K. (2014) A Review of Strategic Foresight in International Development. Institute of Development Studies: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/a-review-of-strategic-foresight-in-international-development>
- Frey, T. (2011) 12 Laws of the Future. Futurist Speaker: <http://www.futuristspeaker.com/2011/02/12-laws-of-the-future/>
- Green, D. (2015) Fit for the Future? Development trends and the role of international NGOs. GB: Oxfam: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/fit-for-the-future-development-trends-and-the-role-of-international-ngos-556585>
- Tully, C. (2015) Stewardship of the Future. Using Strategic Foresight in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Governance. Singapore: United Nations Development Programme Global Centre for Public Service Excellence: [http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE\\_Stewardship-Foresight2015.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/capacity-development/English/Singapore%20Centre/GCPSE_Stewardship-Foresight2015.pdf)

### **Five Resource Categories:**

1. Foresight as a **Governance Capacity** issue among Developing Countries
2. Using Foresight for **Development** Outcomes
3. Developments in **Complexity and Emergent Practice** in the Development space
4. Emergent Planning in **International Relations** and wider Foreign Policy
5. Examples of **Techniques and Resources**

### **1. Governance Capability**

Cornforth, J., Fenn, I., Ullah, F. (2014) Stakeholders Forum - Sustained 2030. Germany: Sustained:

[http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/Sustained2030\\_Web.pdf](http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/Sustained2030_Web.pdf)

Dreyer, I. & Stang, G. (2014) Foresight in Governments – findings from ESPAS survey. European Union Institute for Security Studies:

[http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/Yearbook/2.1\\_Foresight\\_in\\_governments.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/Yearbook/2.1_Foresight_in_governments.pdf)

Van de Pol, P. et al (2014) Foresight as a Strategic Long-Term Planning Tool for Developing Countries. United Nations Development Programme:

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/global-centre-for-public-service-excellence/Foresight/>

Kahane, Adam (2012) *Transformative Scenario Planning: Working Together to Change the Future*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler

### **2. Development Outcomes**

#### **2.1 Development Sector**

Bingley, K. (2014) Using Foresight to cope with Uncertainty. Institute of Development Studies: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/using-foresight-to-cope-with-uncertainty>

Bingley, K. (2014) A Review of Strategic Foresight in International Development. Institute of Development Studies: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/a-review-of-strategic-foresight-in-international-development>

Green, D. (2015) Fit for the Future? Development trends and the role of international NGOs. GB: Oxfam: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/fit-for-the-future-development-trends-and-the-role-of-international-ngos-556585>

Bond (2015) Tomorrow's World: How Might Megatrends in Development Affect the Future Roles of UK-based INGOs? Bond.org: [https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/publications/Tomorrows World 230215.pdf](https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/publications/Tomorrows_World_230215.pdf)

## 2.2 **Geographic Focus**

Schünemann, J. (2014) Why Strategic Foresight matters for Africa. Institute for Security Studies: [https://www.issafrica.org/uploads/AF12\\_9Oct2014.pdf](https://www.issafrica.org/uploads/AF12_9Oct2014.pdf)

Latin America and the Caribbean 2030: World Visions, Continental Views. CEPAL: <http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/ilpes/noticias/paginas/5/54035/P54035.xml&xsl=/ilpes/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/ilpes/tpl/top-bottom.xsl#.VmwqakqLTIW>

## 2.3 **Specific Resources**

- Institute of Development Studies – Tomorrow Today Horizon Scanning Programme. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/project/tomorrow-today> Topics covered include: Non-communicable diseases and development; Where next for Social Protection; Political Economy of Low Carbon Investment in China and India; Big Data and Development; Edible Insects and the Future of Food; Exploring the Potential and Limits of the Resilience Agenda in Urban Development Planning; International security and the Implications for Development; Practice, Power, Knowledge and Information and Communication Technologies

## **3. Complexity and Emergent Practice**

Stirling, A. (2014) Emancipating Transformations: From controlling 'the transition' to culturing plural radical progress - STEPS Working Paper 64. Brighton: STEPS Centre <http://steps-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/Transformations.pdf>

Bowman, K. et al (2015) Systems Thinking - An introduction for Oxfam Programme Staff. Oxfam: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/systems-thinking-an-introduction-for-oxfam-programme-staff-579896>

Inglis, K (2015), 'What Co-Creation Looks Like: A Future-Making Primer', Thnk.org: <http://www.thnk.org/2015/03/what-co-creation-looks-like-a-future-making-primer/>

## **4. Strategic Planning in International Relations and in OECD countries**

Oppenheimer, M. (2015) Pivotal Countries, Alternate Futures: Using Scenarios to Manage American Strategy. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Fuerth, L.S. with Evan M.H. Faber (2012), "Anticipatory governance. Practical upgrades" ([http://www.gwu.edu/~igis/assets/docs/working\\_papers/Anticipatory Governance Practical Upgrades.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~igis/assets/docs/working_papers/Anticipatory_Governance_Practical_Upgrades.pdf))

Kershaw, A. & Quattrucci, L. (2015) Citizen-Centered Design: Placing Citizens at the centre of Policy Making. Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/product/citizen-centred-design-placing-citizens-at-the-centre-of-policy-making/ROT269-PDF-ENG>

Policy Horizons Canada (2012), 'Driving Policy on a Shifting Terrain: Understanding the Changing Policy Environment Amid 21st-Century Complexity': <http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/driving-policy-shifting-terrain-21st-century-complexity>

Center for Complex and Strategic Decisions, the prototype center recommended by the Project on National Security Reform for the President of the United States: <http://ccsd.walshcollege.edu/>

## **5. Techniques and Resources**

**Noah Rahford - Futurescaper**

<http://www.futurescaper.com/#about>

**Scott Smith - Rapid World Building**

<http://www.changeist.com/changeism/>

**David Snowdon - Sensemaker**

<http://cognitive-edge.com/sensemaker/>

**Wendy Schulz - Scenario Archetypes - comparing different futures techniques**

<http://www.infinitefutures.com/essays/prez/scenarch/index.htm>

**NESTA**

[www.nesta.org/](http://www.nesta.org/)

**Tom Wells – Speculative Futures and Designs**

<https://futureofageing.blog.gov.uk/author/tom-wells/>

Brown, T. & Martin, R. (2015) Design for Action. Harvard Business Review:

<https://www.ideo.com/images/uploads/news/pdfs/DesignForAction.pdf>



## **Appendix 3: Interview templates**

### **UNCTs**

*Thank you for making the time to be briefly and informally interviewed. I would value the opportunity to hear about your experience using futures-based and other innovative strategic planning techniques – what worked, what could be improved and general lessons learnt that could be applied to the wider UN. Countries are at very different stages of experimentation and adoption, so the questions I will ask you are a guideline.*

1. What is your name and title?
2. Can you tell us a little of the history of the joint UN planning process across the UN system and with the government in your country?
3. What innovations have you introduced under the UNDAF Design Innovation Facility – or beyond? We are looking for new approaches and methods to horizon-scanning or looking at future orientation; multi-stakeholder engagement (citizen and private sector); big data; Political Economy Analysis; M&E and innovation:
  1. What was the challenge – what led you to want to try something new?
  2. What did you introduce?
  3. How did you go about implementing it?
  4. What were some of the obstacles and challenges you faced?
  5. What are your reflections on lessons learnt? In particular, what are the implications for the UNDAF guidelines
4. How well does the UNDAF/SOPS Strategic Planning process work?
  1. Integrated with country analytical process and stakeholder engagement process in roadmap stage
  2. How well does the Planning Matrix work? (Is it effectively linked to government plans? And identifying the right issues? Does it achieve coordination? Does it succeed in accessing and moving around funds? Useful for effective monitoring and evaluation?)
5. As we lead up to SDG implementation, do you have any general comments on how UN strategic planning (including Comparative Advantage assessment) processes might need to change in country? Including regionally and HQ involvement?
6. What are additional trends in strategic planning, innovation, citizen engagement, digitalization that the UN could learn from - among donors (foundations and bi/multilateral), private sector, innovative charities, country governments.
7. What proposals do you have for changes to the UNDAF guidance?

## UN Strategy Experts

*Thank you for making the time to be briefly and informally interviewed. I would value the opportunity to hear about what you think good emergent strategic planning and futures practice looks like – and any noteworthy innovations introduced within the UN.*

1. What is your name and title?
2. How well does the UNDAF/SOPS Strategic Planning process work?
3. As we lead up to SDG implementation, do you have any general comments on how UN strategic planning (including Comparative Advantage assessment) processes might need to change in country? Including regionally and HQ involvement?
4. Do you know of cases of innovative practice led in UN country offices? What are the benefits and what are the challenges of doing so?
5. What are additional trends in strategic planning, innovation, citizen engagement, digitalization that the UN could learn from - among donors (foundations and bi/multilateral), private sector, innovative charities, country governments.
6. Do you have any thoughts on:
  - a) Trends in time frames for public sector strategic plans
  - b) Options and tools for scenario planning to address complex issues in a volatile setting
  - c) Options and tools for engaging citizens in situation assessment and prioritization for national development planning
  - d) Options in Political Economy Analysis
  - e) Trends in results based management, monitoring and evaluation of national level multi-sector plans

Are there any resources or case studies you would like to point to?

What proposals do you have for changes to the UNDAF guidance?

## External Strategy Experts

*I am currently writing a recommendations paper for the UN on how best to apply emergent strategic planning practice, including foresight and alternative futures, to the UN planning processes, primarily the UN Development Assistance Frameworks.*

*As part of this, I am some country case-studies to pull together early learning from UN offices using foresight, speaking to strategy experts within UN agencies and also looking at various organisations' explorations on these issues – including the use of latest trends in strategic planning, innovation, citizen engagement, digitalization, etc.*

1. What is your name and title?
2. Do you know and therefore have any views on the UN planning processes? As we lead up to SDG implementation, how they might need to change in country, including regionally and HQ involvement?
3. What trends are you seeing in strategic planning, innovation, citizen engagement, digitalization among donors (foundations and bi/multilateral), private sector, innovative charities and country governments?
4. Do you know of cases of innovative practice led in UN country offices? What are the benefits and what are the challenges of doing so?
5. Do you have any thoughts on:
  1. Trends in time frames for public sector strategic plans
  2. Options and tools for scenario planning to address complex issues in a volatile setting
  3. Options and tools for engaging citizens in situation assessment and prioritization for national development planning
  4. Options in Political Economy Assessment
  5. Trends in results based management, monitoring and evaluation of national level multi-sector plans
6. Are there any resources or case studies you would like to point to?
7. Do you have any other thoughts on emergent strategic planning processes?