

Foresight approaches in global public health

A practical guide for WHO staff



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ISBN 978-92-4-004839-3 (electronic version)

ISBN 978-92-4-004840-9 (print version)

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Suggested citation. Foresight approaches in global public health: a practical guide for WHO staff. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

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Design and layout by Green Ink, UK

Contents

Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Using this document	vii
Who is this document for?	vii
Why should you use this document?	vii
How should this document be used?	vii
Glossary	viii
Executive summary	xi
Introduction	1
WHO context	2
What is foresight?	3
Mental biases and shortcuts	4
What value does foresight add to our work?	5
Foresight in WHO context	6
Core foresight activities in WHO	7
Start using foresight – simple steps	10
Quick start guide	16
Foresight in WHO – examples	19
Global health foresight	19
Information network for epidemics and foresight for infectious hazards	20
Foresight for health system transformation	22
Innovation	24
Annex Inventory of methods	25
Framing the issue and the context of change	26
Heightening awareness of change	27
Evaluating implications and impacts	28
Exploring alternative futures	29
Articulating preferred futures	30
Creating change	31

Foreword



Science and technology are moving at an ever-increasing pace, offering endless possibilities for global health. To engage with new developments and stay ahead of scientific and technological advances, we must proactively identify, anticipate, and prepare for issues that hold great potential and challenges for global health.

WHO's Science Division provides global leadership in translating the latest science, evidence, innovation and digital solutions to improve health and health equity for all. This is reflected in WHO's 13th Programme of Work (2019–2023)

...WHO's normative guidance will be informed by developments at the frontier of new scientific disciplines such as genomics, epigenetics, gene editing, artificial intelligence, and big data, all of which pose transformational opportunities but also risks to global health.

The tools and techniques described in this document are designed to enable technical and operational teams to engage actively with change, open spaces for discussion, leverage expertise to formulate a vision and take the necessary steps to realize that vision. In this way, tools and techniques described in this document provide staff with the opportunity to participate and to contribute meaningfully to the content of new policy initiatives and to provide feedback on implementation.

This document aims to set futures-thinking in motion, from asking simple questions to setting up larger projects. It is important to recognize that, although there are global trends, needs, challenges and requirements are local, highly diverse and context dependent. In order for foresight approaches to be useful, they must be sensitive to different needs, contexts and perspectives.

Foresight is not just tools but also the ambition to position ourselves to be better prepared, to engage with challenges proactively, to respond better, to guide developments for the benefit of global public health and to throw light on areas that need more focus to move forward and catalyse innovation, especially in areas of need that are frequently neglected.

Foresight is meant to be ambitious, to provoke imagination, to think beyond today's reality to a better tomorrow and to take active steps to get there.

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Acknowledgements

The WHO Research for Health Department thanks the many individuals who contributed to development of this document.

This guide for WHO staff was developed by the Emerging Technologies, Research Prioritization and Support Unit, in particular by Wendy Schultz (consultant), Kai Ilchmann, Marion Laumonier and Anna Laura Ross.

The development was guided by an informal review group. WHO expresses its sincere appreciation to all members of this group (in alphabetical order):

Alexandre Caldas, UN Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya

Evelyn Gitau, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya

Peter Glenday, School of International Futures, Sidcup, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Aarathi Krishnan, UN Development Programme, New York, United States of America

Vivian Lin, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China

Seema Gail Parkash, Centre for Strategic Futures, Singapore

Samuel Ujewe, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Ottawa, Canada

This publication benefitted from technical contributions and advice from colleagues at WHO: Louise Agersnap, Fanette Brandalac, Amy Louise Cawthorne, Matthew Keks, Katherine Littler, Margaux Manoua Mathis, Garrett Livingston Mehl, Roberta Pesce, Hanna Phelan, Soatiana Cathycia Rajatonirina, Vasee Moorthy, Nahoko Shindo and Emmanuelle Tuerlings.

The document was developed and produced with funding from Global Affairs Canada.

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