Launch of Joint Report by the UN Futures Lab/Global Hub and International Science Council on "Futures Thinking and Strategic Foresight in Action: Insights from the Global South"

Tuesday, 6 May 2025, 10:00am – 11:15am EST, Zoom

Organized by: UN Futures Lab/Global Hub and the International Science Council (ISC)

SUMMARY

Background of the event, including connection with the theme of the 2025 STI Forum

As global risks grow more complex and change accelerates, innovative and forward-looking approaches are increasingly important for effective policymaking and decision-making. In this context, the **UN Futures Lab/Global Hub** and the **International Science Council (ISC)** co-hosted a virtual side event to launch their joint report on "**Futures Thinking and Strategic Foresight in Action: Insights from the Global South**". Recognizing that there is no-one-size-fits all approach, the report features 14 case studies, eight practical typologies of impact, and six key recommendations for inclusive foresight.

Through an interactive exchange with case-study representatives, experts, and participants the event showcased how inclusive, participatory and science-informed foresight can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and community-led transformative action.

Key issues discussed

- **Behavioural and emotional dimensions:** Emotional and cognitive biases, belief systems, and institutional cultures influence how foresight is perceived and applied. Emotional competencies like empathy, compassion, emotional regulation, and critical enquiry help build trust and foster inclusive futures thinking.
- **Inclusive and accessible design:** Culturally grounded, multilingual, and creatively designed processes – such as visualizations – can broaden engagement and improve understanding.

- **Adapting to complexity and change:** Foresight approaches need to be iterative and adaptable to reflect multidimensional challenges and avoid overly simplified models that reduce credibility.
- **Building futures literacy:** Age-appropriate, participatory methods can nurture long-term thinking, critical inquiry, and civic engagement from a young age.
- **Recommendations in practice:** Among the report's six key recommendations[1], participants identified two as the most frequently applied: (i) Embed inclusive participation and long-term thinking at all levels, and (ii) invest decisively in collaborations between scientists, policymakers, and communities to drive faster, real-world impact.

Key recommendations for action

Complementing the six key recommendations for inclusive foresight included in the report, the discussion highlighted the following actions:

- **Diversify foresight approaches and applications:** There is no one-size fit all approach to foresight. Approaches should reflect varied applications, stakeholders, and context.
- **Strengthen science-policy-society collaboration:** Policymakers and other stakeholders need to invest in better connecting science, policy, and society to foster meaningful engagement.
- **Integrate behavioural science and cognitive insights:** Understanding how mindsets, past experiences and biases shape engagement, communication, and decision-making is critical to designing effective, transformative foresight processes.
- **Ensure inclusive participation through better data and design:** Strengthening networks and access to data is foundational to participation and community collective action.
- **Invest in inclusive capacity building:** Developing emotional resiliency, empathy, compassion, and critical enquiry in education is vital to equipping individuals and institutions to navigate complexity and drive sustainable change.

The report is available at: https://un-futureslab.org/project/futures-thinking-and-strategic-foresight-in-action-insights-from-the-global-south/

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[1] The six key recommendations for inclusive foresight are: (i) Exercise bold leadership to shift mindsets and challenge the status quo, (ii) invest decisively in collaborations between scientists, policymakers, and communities to drive faster, real-world impact, (iii) leverage contextual insights and behavioural science to enhance foresight, (iv) embed inclusive participation and long-term thinking at all levels, (v) build systematic foresight capacity and ensure impact measurement, (vi) strengthen networks, data access, and evidence-based adaptation.