EXPLORING GOVERNANCE MODELS TO BETTER PREPARE FOR AND SHAPE THE FUTURE IN THE PACIFIC
Seeding future-fit governance in the Pacific

The Context

Governance today is often ill-equipped to deal with complexity and long-term risks.

Globally

- **Complexity**: Sense of urgency, yet time needed to go beyond surface analyses
- **Risk management**: Short political timelines = Long-term risks on the back burner
- **Response capabilities**: Perpetually in crisis response mode (more reactive than proactive)

**Pacific Island countries**

- **Climate at the core**: Intimately familiar with complex risk, but lack of shared space/structure to envision and plan for different futures
- **Prioritization challenges**: Stretched fiscal space + Competing priorities = Constraints to meaningful & contextually-specific risk analysis in policy design
- **Untapped traditional wisdom**: Opportunity for institutions to become more anticipatory by marrying traditional governance with foresight

Our Response

It is against this landscape that the UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji, with the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) Strategy, Partnerships and Policy (SPP) unit and Accelerator Lab, is working with governments, civil society and regional organizations in the Pacific to explore alternative modes of decision-making that enable more anticipatory and future-fit governance for development.

- **Short-sighted Reactive Siloed responses**: Means of responding to complex, interconnected development challenges
- **Anticipatory Longer-term Systems-oriented**
What do we mean by future-fit governance?

Traditional decision-making
Determining actions based on fixed, linear ideas of what might happen

Strategic foresight
A means to open up the space of inquiry / basis from which we make decisions

Anticipatory decision-making
Turning insights about what might happen into action, and continuously learning from the outcomes

Anticipatory governance
Building the institutions and structures that allow/enable us to act on the basis of many possible futures
### Pathways for transformation in the Pacific

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<th>Current dynamics/gaps</th>
<th>Desired (anticipatory) pathways</th>
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<td><strong>Weight/economic value given to the future and emergent risk factors</strong></td>
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<td>Investments in present vs. future</td>
<td>Immediate results rewarded over long-term change and risk preparedness</td>
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<td><strong>Untapped data</strong></td>
<td><strong>Investment in data interpretation and appropriation (new/unknown, emotion/intuition)</strong></td>
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<td>Limited/weak data and participation – gap in analysis and sharing</td>
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<td><strong>Governance transformation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Institutions providing safeguards and boundaries to culturally effective and inclusive decision-making processes</strong></td>
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<td>Institutional façade masking actual decision-making processes</td>
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<td><strong>Collective intelligence</strong></td>
<td><strong>New dynamic brought by new questions and facilitation techniques that empower stakeholders to imagine and contribute to shaping their future</strong></td>
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<td>Expensive consultation processes that struggle to/do not engage on visualising inclusive Pacific futures</td>
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The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Vanuatu is producing foresight briefs attached to its five-year strategic plan. The so-called foresight briefs are policy briefs that include the description of several future scenarios and an analysis of different trends and risks that could impact the implementation of their strategy.

Working on the foresight briefs has helped decision makers in charge of youth programmes to shift their mindsets and identify trends — such as changes related to the circular economy and global low-technology groups — that would enable the whole country to benefit from a more connected youth population.

Why we must talk about the future in the Pacific:
- Rising sea levels will cause hundreds of thousands of islanders to be displaced in the next decades.
- Non-communicable diseases are already reducing life expectancy in most Pacific countries.
- And, most importantly, very few positive scenarios have been articulated for the future.

Future-fit Vanuatu:
Foresight briefs with the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Bring open source technologies to Vanuatu

Danger
With debt levels and poverty at historical highs, Fiji does not have the luxury to massively invest in health reforms. But rising levels of obesity and diabetes means the cost of inaction becomes higher every year.

Using anticipatory governance approaches means creating the capacity for the Ministry of Health to look for and seize every opportunity for action. This is reflected in its proposed governance structures for the new non-communicable disease (NCD) strategy.
Using scenario tools, the network of civil society representatives from 21 Pacific Island countries and territories shifted their imagined futures from "we’re working to get ourselves out of a job," to "we actually want to be valued and actively participate in policy dialogues in the long term." Articulating their desired futures enabled them to start designing the digital tools to realise this vision.

PIANGO visualized a future in which CSOs can leverage technology to realize robust, real-time consultation mechanisms.
A framework to guide the journey forward

**Policy / strategy development**

**WHY**
Be intentional (about risks, bias, inclusivity)

**HOW**
- Scenario planning
- Back-casting (identify new actions)
- Foresight briefs (inspire policy directions)

**RELEVANT FOR**
- Policy design support
- Create shared vision
- Unpack complex risks, elevate marginalized voices

**Core governance**

**WHY**
Delimit opportunities for change (agility/adaptation)

Create institutional space, platform, capacity for futures analysis

**HOW**
- Futures-informed coordination, financing, M&E exploration
- Future of governance research & dialogue

**Implementation support**

**WHY**
Learn & adapt across project lifecycle

**HOW**
- Horizon scanning (future risks & opportunities)
- Implications analyses

**RELEVANT FOR**
- Projects at risk of siloed approach
- Correct course
- Mobilise additional funding

**Capacity building**

**WHY**
Build the foresight muscle

**HOW**
- Action learning: applying foresight methods
- Anticipatory governance courses

**RELEVANT FOR**
- Situational analyses for policy/projects
- Regional knowledge partnerships
- Inspire cross-sector collaborations

**Thought leadership**

**WHY**
Articulate possible futures
Identify trends

**HOW**
- Foresight studies / policy briefs
- Subject expert convenings with decision-makers
- Regional fora / megatrends discourse

**RELEVANT FOR**
- Situational analyses for policy / projects
- Regional knowledge partnerships
- Inspire cross-sector collaborations