

# Designing a Youth-centred Journey to the Future

A YOUTH FORESIGHT PLAYBOOK



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# What is a Youth Foresight Playbook?

Young people have been a driving force for change throughout history. It makes sense that they should also be deeply involved in imagining the future – their future, our future, the future of the planet. In fact, young people have a right to be part of any conversation about the future they will inherit. And they need to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Far too often, however, young people are left out of critical discussions about the future, often due to a lack of access, skills and tools for engagement. This represents a significant gap in the resources and knowledge required for young people to meaningfully participate in shaping future strategies.

*Designing a Youth-centred Journey to the Future: A Youth Foresight Playbook*, this document you have in your hand, is meant to fill that gap. It is a tool for encouraging the safe and meaningful engagement of young people in foresight processes. It is a living, breathing online resource that UNICEF Innocenti will continue to build on as it learns more about how to engage young people safely and ethically in conversations about the future.

It was created for foresight practitioners, youth-focused and youth-led organizations, as well as think tanks and United Nations agencies. But it could also be valuable for other groups, including young people themselves.

The ultimate goal of this playbook is to inspire young people – and those who work with young people – to not only embrace foresight methods and tools but to make them accessible, thereby fostering a collaborative environment where youth are engaged as equal partners in shaping all our futures.



## A record of youth achievement

The wisdom in this Youth Foresight Playbook comes, in part, from the UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight experience with its Youth Foresight Fellowship Programme, a participatory effort to meaningfully engage young people in foresight research. More particularly, however, the approaches outlined in this playbook are based on the direct experience of a particular group of young people: the UNICEF Youth Foresight Fellows. This group of nine young people from around the world were recruited by UNICEF in 2022 to work closely with the UNICEF team for six months, contributing to research and strategy through foresight.

Enabled by foresight and Meaningful Youth Engagement approaches, the fellows achieved much. In addition to extensive research, the fellows:

- Organized participatory foresight workshops for over 85 young people, UNICEF staff and partners gathered from over 23 different countries
- Contributed insights from these workshops to the UNICEF Innocenti report, [Prospects for Children in the Polycrisis: A 2023 global outlook](#)
- Designed a toolkit [Our Future Pledge: An agenda for futures by youth](#) to provide young people with a comprehensive jargon-free guide on exploring alternate futures
- Designed and launched the [#OurFuturePledge social media campaign](#) to promote youth inclusion in foresight
- Engaged with United Nations leaders at high-profile events to discuss the role of youth in foresight

The insights from these achievements form the backbone of this playbook.

## In this playbook

Part I of the Youth Foresight Playbook starts by introducing the concept of foresight and explains UNICEF's commitment and approach to engaging young people in research and strategy through foresight. Next it explains the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Journey in Seven Steps. The next section provides some critical insights from the Fellows on the participatory workshops they held in 2022.

Part II of the playbook consists of 12 worksheets that offer tasks and activities that you can use to engage young people in foresight.

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## Before you start








Before you start down the youth foresight path, it is critical to remember that participatory foresight research processes can touch upon sensitive and at times challenging subjects. Careful consideration of the context and young people's best interests is required. This consideration should be supported by robust ethics and safeguarding policies and practices appropriate to the project being undertaken.

UNICEF offers a [Child Safeguarding online course](#), available to both UNICEF personnel and external organizations, to understand and meet UNICEF child safeguarding expectations. Additionally, the [UNICEF Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis](#) and [Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Business](#) may provide valuable insight and support.

Discussions among youth engagement practitioners and young people frequently highlight the need for greater consideration of young people's mental health and psychosocial well-being when planning, implementing and monitoring participation processes. [Young People's Participation and Mental Health. A protocol for practitioners](#) encourages reflection and critical thinking around how to do one's best in terms of ensuring the safe and meaningful participation of young people while also protecting their mental health and helping to put safeguarding systems and supports in place.



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# Part I: Youth foresight

Part I of the Youth Foresight Playbook offers a quick introduction to foresight in general, with a focus on youth foresight. It dips into a little history of foresight at the United Nations before explaining the vision and principles that guide UNICEF Innocenti’s approach.

This part also describes more about the Youth Foresight Fellows and their experience designing and leading a virtual participatory foresight workshop at UNICEF. It documents the philosophy, principles, systems and processes that enabled the delivery of this important youth-led work.

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# Introduction to foresight

Strategic foresight or foresight is a systematic way of examining and exploring possible, probable and preferred futures. Maree Conway's detailed definition of these terms is helpful here:

- **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>1</sup>

## What is youth foresight?

Youth foresight refers to the same systematic way of imagining possible futures and informing decision making, but with a particular focus on the perspectives and needs of young people. Youth foresight can be used in policymaking, planning and decision making processes at the local, national and international levels to inform future strategies, programmes and investments that will impact the lives of young people.

For the sake of this playbook, we use the term 'foresight' to encompass foresight, strategic foresight and youth foresight.

Youth inclusion in foresight is important for many reasons.

1. **Different perspectives:** Young people today have grown up in a very different world from adults, developing different experiences and views. Engaging them can bring fresh perspectives, identifying emerging issues and potential futures that may be missed by older generations.
2. **Innovation:** Young people are growing up in a time of rapid technological innovation and social change. This equips young people well to identify emerging issues that may greatly shape the future.

<sup>1</sup> Conway, M. (2015) 'Foresight: an introduction', Thinking Futures, Melbourne, Australia, <<http://thinkingfutures.net/wpcontent/uploads/TFRefGuideForesight1.pdf>>, p. 2.



- 3. Inclusion:** Foresight processes are always enriched by inclusion. Futures must represent a diversity of perspectives that exist within society, helping to develop more robust and equitable future strategies.
- 4. Capacity development:** Foresight is about preparing for the future. It is our duty to ensure that present and future generations are prepared to address the challenges and opportunities of the future.

With that said, meaningfully engaging youth in foresight is no easy task. Young people have diverse needs, interests and perspectives, and their inclusion can trigger uncomfortable discussions around critical and sometimes controversial topics. For organizations especially, it may mean overcoming institutional barriers to create such spaces. Also, their inclusion will likely demand resources, including time, finance and expertise, which you may find challenging to mobilize.

These are learning journeys that will undoubtedly require a willingness to engage with complex and uncomfortable ideas, take risks and be accountable. But by doing so, you will benefit from the perspectives, insights and energy for change that young people bring, and present and future generations may cultivate the creativity and adaptability necessary to tackle the world's most pressing problems.

## A brief history

While foresight was once the exclusive domain of a few individuals or groups, advances in technology, communication and education have made it easier for people from all walks of life to engage. Foresight is becoming increasingly democratized over time, and we expect that trend to continue – hopefully with the help of this playbook!

Foresight has long been used across the United Nations to navigate an uncertain and rapidly changing global landscape and achieve its mission of creating a better world for all. System-wide adoption has begun to pick up pace in recent years:

### Foresight at the United Nations

1. Foresight purportedly emerged as a field of study and an area of practice following World War II, initially in industrial and military sectors.
2. Fast-forward to 2015, the United Nations used scenario planning and other foresight methods to inform the design and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This included 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030 based on a forward-looking vision of a more sustainable and equitable future.
3. In 2020, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Member States pledged to strengthen global governance for the sake of present and coming generations, requesting that the Secretary-General report back with recommendations to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges.





4. The Secretary General’s Our Common Agenda report was launched on 10 September 2021 and looks ahead to the next 25 years, representing the Secretary-General’s vision for the future of global cooperation.
5. In 2024, this will culminate in a Summit of the Future, a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance cooperation on critical present and future challenges.

### Foresight at UNICEF

UNICEF is not new to foresight, but efforts have generally been dispersed across different parts of the organization. For example, *The Child in 2030* was published in 2016 and focused on five global megatrends that could significantly impact the future of children. In the same year, UNICEF produced a [toolkit](#) introducing foresight to adolescents, understanding the intrinsic value of co-creation with young people in conducting future-oriented exercises.

UNICEF Innocenti acknowledges that our foresight work is made unique and valuable in the world through a Meaningful Youth Engagement approach. To continue this important work, the office is committed to strengthening its network of young foresight practitioners and fostering close collaboration with youth from diverse backgrounds. Through this collaborative effort, we aim to shine a light on the future challenges and opportunities young people anticipate, while giving them a platform to share alternative perspectives and achieve their preferred futures.

Engaging the most disadvantaged young people in this work is critical to UNICEF’s mission, as it offers an unparalleled depth of insight into the most pressing issues faced by these vulnerable groups, thereby fostering inclusivity and equity in the design of future-oriented solutions. By actively seeking their contributions and giving them an equal voice, we not only empower them but also enrich our understanding of diverse experiences and unique challenges, ultimately driving the creation of impactful policies and interventions that respond effectively to the complex realities of all young people.

### Youth foresight and UNICEF Innocenti

UNICEF Innocenti envisions a world where young people are fully engaged in decision-making processes that affect their lives and futures. Through evidence-based and ethical practices, young people’s expertise, experiences, perspectives and needs are valued and integrated into UNICEF Innocenti’s work across research, foresight and convening.

This vision leads to high-quality and relevant research and analysis that generates effective platforms for young people to lead global discourse and create positive change in their communities and beyond. This vision also means that our shared strategies and goals are future-oriented, ensuring that we are always working towards a better future that is inclusive, just and equitable for everyone now and in the future, especially for children and young people.

Including young people in shaping the future requires resources and opportunities that encourage them. UNICEF Innocenti is now undertaking this work, continually learning from the process and sharing insights.

A significant step on this mission was taken by the establishment of a UNICEF Youth Foresight Fellowship Programme.

# Youth Foresight Fellowship Programme

UNICEF Innocenti set out to deliver on a vision of foresight that involved young people, starting with a fellowship for young foresight practitioners around the world.

The Fellows not only engaged in foresight exercises that contributed to a major UNICEF Innocenti publication, but their experience and insight have created a body of knowledge and guidance that is the backbone of this Youth Foresight Playbook.

UNICEF Innocenti established a cross-functional Youth Foresight Team with youth participation, foresight, policy, facilitation, partnerships and communications skills. The team first established a set of key principles to prioritize a youth-centred approach and ensure Meaningful Youth Engagement from the start.

The programme started with 10 principles for Meaningful Youth Engagement and ultimately led to the articulation of a journey of seven steps. These principles were developed based on UNICEF evidence for effective and ethical [participation of adolescents](#). They also drew on the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team's many years of experience working with young people. This was an iterative process that saw the team engaged in weekly discussions and strategizing to ensure that each step of the fellowship programme and its work aligned with these principles, keeping us on track and in check.

- 1. Respect:** Young people are treated with respect, and their opinions, experiences and contributions are valued both now and in the future.
- 2. Participation:** Young people are given meaningful opportunities to participate as equal partners in decision-making processes that will impact their lives and the world they will inherit, including planning, implementing and, where possible, evaluating programmes and policies.
- 3. Ownership:** Young people are supported to take ownership of the issues that affect them, encouraging them to become agents of change not just during but beyond our programmes.
- 4. Collaboration:** Young people collaborate with adults, recognizing the importance of intergenerational partnerships to achieve meaningful and sustainable change for the benefit of present and future generations.
- 5. Experimentation:** Young people are given and give themselves permission to work through trial and error, free from the pressure to produce results.
- 6. Transparency:** Young people are kept informed about decision-making processes and the outcomes of their engagement, recognizing that engaging young people as equal partners requires honesty and openness about the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.



7. **Accountability:** Young people are given the opportunity to hold decision makers accountable and have their voices heard and acted upon.
8. **Flexibility:** Young people take part in a flexible and adaptable process to meet the needs and preferences of different youth in different contexts, acknowledging that the future is unpredictable, and the needs and preferences of young people may change over time.
9. **Skills-building:** Young people gain opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.
10. **Compensation:** Young people are paid for their work and given recognition for their contributions, encouraging diversity and inclusivity of participation, addressing economic inequality and enhancing programme sustainability.

These principles often boiled down to the question of how we might make foresight more youth-centred. This question, and the act of iteratively asking it, drew from the principle in human-centred design to meet your target audience where they are at, engaging them to co-create solutions, as they are closer to the challenges and have a unique view of critical barriers and enabling factors. We would often decide to bring our implementation options and challenges to fellows for them to help us decide and inform how best to go about a certain stream of work.

Though created for the Youth Foresight Fellowship Programme, these principles were soon extended to the Innocenti Youth Network, whom we engaged as participants in the youth-led foresight research.

## The fellows

With the principles in place, UNICEF Innocenti recruited a group of nine young foresight practitioners and launched the first cohort of [UNICEF Youth Foresight Fellows](#).

Over six months, the fellows worked with UNICEF Innocenti to design and facilitate a comprehensive foresight research process that contributed to the [Prospects for Children](#) report, which provides an annual in-depth analysis of trends and events impacting the rights and well-being of children across the globe.

The fellows also designed and produced [Our Future Pledge: An agenda for futures by youth](#), employing a human-centred design approach and highlighting the fellows' vision for the futures young people see for themselves – and how foresight approaches can help policymakers, multilateral institutions and young people think more strategically about these potential futures.

Guided by the tenth principle, the fellows selected within the programme were paid, given the considerable time requirement and their substantive contribution to UNICEF work. Young people who participated in the youth foresight workshops were not compensated monetarily and instead received a participation certificate and were referenced as contributors in the publication of [Prospects for Children](#). It was our responsibility as an organization to ensure all young people we work with are engaged ethically and safely.



## Seven-step journey

As a result of the programme, UNICEF Innocenti was able to articulate a seven-step journey that led to its creation. By describing each step, sharing our experience and providing accompanying worksheets (included in Part II), we hope to inspire you to embark on your own youth foresight journey.

### 1. Define programme objectives:

Clearly define the purpose and goals of the programme.

### 2. Identify target participants:

Determine your target audience, including specific age groups, geographies, expertise or fields of study.

### 3. Determine programme duration and format:

Decide on programme duration, considering your own capacity, resources and objectives.

### 4. Establish partnerships:

Develop partnerships with relevant organizations and key stakeholders to provide any additional resources, opportunities or exposure necessary to achieve your objectives.

### 5. Develop a learning plan:

Create a learning plan that aligns with the programme objectives, ensuring it is relevant to your target participants.

### 6. Plan for evaluation:

Create a plan for evaluating the programme and assessing impact.

### 7. Provide ongoing support and follow-up:

Ensure young people receive ongoing support during and after the programme.

## Step 1: Define programme objectives

### Tip

It is important to co-create shared goals and visions for the project *with* young people to ensure both their buy-in and its relevance to their needs. If you are pre-recruitment, manage internal expectations by building in some flexibility to the initial design to allow young people to contribute once they are on board.

To ensure your programme is born well, clearly define your purpose and goals from the outset. This should set up a strong foundation for the programme and set the direction for all subsequent activities. It involves finding internal agreement among team members and key stakeholders, ensuring everyone is working towards a common goal and increasing your likelihood of success.

Ask yourself: what is your context, what are your challenges, and how can youth foresight make a difference? Once you have defined your objectives and goals, develop terms of reference that articulate and clarify the objectives, the opportunity for young people, the expectations from your organization and the expectations from young people. You could use the [UNICEFYouth Foresight Fellows Terms of Reference](#) as inspiration.

**In our case:** Our team started with the objective of meaningfully engaging young people in the design of the [UNICEF Innocenti Prospects for Children](#) report, going beyond traditional participatory approaches to create a report that really speaks to young people's lived experiences and future aspirations. We employed youth foresight for this purpose.

However, it was our Meaningful Youth Engagement principles that propelled us to go beyond asking young people to contribute to a product that UNICEF would ultimately retain editorial control of. We wanted to give them opportunities to build their foresight capabilities and take ownership of the issues that affect them by creating and shaping their own campaigns and product.

Our programme objectives were to produce:

1. A youth-led global trends analysis with young people that contributes youth perspectives to the UNICEF outlook report
2. A strategic foresight process to inform a youth-led compendium with findings based on their work inside and outside UNICEF
3. A playbook to capture and share lessons from this work in the intersection of Meaningful Youth Engagement and strategic foresight.

## Step 2: Identify target participants

### Tip

Do make sure you are up front and clear with young people who express an interest in your programme. It is our responsibility to honour the hard work that young people put into applying for a programme, by responding as promptly as possible and offering alternative engagement options to accommodate young people's diverse needs and contexts.

**Determine your target audience, including specific age groups, geographies, expertise or fields of study. Consider how you will reach potential participants and how you will ensure diversity and inclusivity in the selection process.** The human-centred design principle of meeting your strategic audience 'where they are at' can be very helpful here.

Perhaps you are looking to engage a diverse group of young people with no foresight experience, using various methods and tools to enable them to anticipate potential future challenges and opportunities. Or maybe you would like the process to be as youth-led as possible, building a team of young foresight practitioners with skills in trend analysis, scenario planning, data analytics or communication. Or you could do both, as we did.

It is important to acknowledge that young people who have foresight experience often hail from privileged segments of society, bringing with them a certain set of perspectives on the present and future. By broadening our inclusion to young people without prior foresight experience, we democratize the envisioning of the future. This active engagement validates the voices of youth from all backgrounds, affirming their power to shape the future, and it underscores the belief that all young people, regardless of their socioeconomic status or prior experience, hold invaluable insights that are critical for crafting a future that is truly inclusive and sustainable.

**In our case:** To achieve our objectives, we determined that a gender-balanced group of participants should come from all around the world, be aged 15–30 and, crucially, possess pre-existing foresight experience to draw upon. Youth without foresight experience would be introduced to foresight through participation in the Youth Foresight Circle. We also felt it was fair and effective for selection to be conducted through a competitive process.

1. The team posted the opportunity on LinkedIn, and we encouraged the futures and foresight community to help share it with their networks.
2. We received close to 1,200 applications (a strong signal of interest in foresight from young people) over a period of two weeks and conducted a thorough review and shortlisting process, which, complemented by interviews, allowed us to select the cohort of fellows. Making foresight experience a prerequisite significantly reduced the pool to around 200.
3. Those without foresight experience who were not shortlisted to become fellows were given the opportunity to join the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Network and to be part of the youth foresight research. In total, 70 fellowship applicants joined the youth-led foresight workshops later in the programme. Certificates and personalized social media assets helped increase their sense of ownership.
4. Interviews played a key role in establishing a first contact and to get a sense of the background of each applicant and what level of engagement and commitment would work for them. We used this opportunity to calibrate and clarify expectations, which we then used to adapt our timelines and planning.

## Step 3: Determine programme duration and format

### Tip

Before rolling out the full programme, consider running a short pilot to test your proposed format and duration. Use the feedback from young people for refinement, and be prepared to adjust the programme's duration and format to better suit young people's needs and enhance their learning experience.

**Decide on programme duration and format, considering your own capacity, resources and objectives.** Determine whether the programme will be online, in-person or hybrid. You could also consider a range of modalities to engage young people, including:

- 1. Establishing a youth advisory group** that could work with you and your team to provide advice and guidance at every step in the programme life cycle. This could mean organizing monthly or quarterly meetings where young people are brought together to provide advice, insights and feedback on issues that affect them.
- 2. Building a youth sensing network** that allows young people from around the world to share how they see the future. They could gather data through surveys, interviews, focus groups or social media analysis, or they could analyse and interpret data you have collected, identifying patterns, themes and emerging trends that could impact the future. Note that primary data collection or analysis of sensitive secondary analysis would require appropriate ethics clearances and appropriate support to obtain them.
- 3. Creating an intergenerational mentorship programme** where individuals from different generations are paired to learn from each other and contribute insights to your project, creating a space for collaboration, knowledge-sharing and two-way learning between people of different ages, with the goal of enhancing the foresight process.

**In our case:** We decided to go for a fellowship programme model. Typically, fellowships are offered to individuals who have completed their undergraduate or graduate education and wish to engage in research, professional development or another form of advanced study. They can vary in duration from a few months to a few years and tend to offer financial support and other benefits such as access to resources, mentorship and networking opportunities.

We chose this approach because we recognized the need for a longer-term and deeper engagement to achieve our institutional and engagement objectives. To contribute to a United Nations report and create their own foresight product, we estimated the fellowship would take six months.

Consequently, the programme required considerable capacity and resourcing from our team. It was our responsibility to organize and facilitate weekly meetings, establish youth-friendly communication channels, and provide one-on-one mentoring and skills-building support where necessary.

## Step 4: Establish partnerships

### Tip

The young people who are interested in your foresight programme will likely have developed their own partnership networks that you can jointly leverage. Doing this well and in a highly collaborative manner is part of the process of engaging young people as equal partners and as partnership builders.

**Develop partnerships with relevant organizations and key stakeholders to provide any additional resources, opportunities or exposure necessary to achieve your programme objectives.**

There are some fantastic youth-centred organizations operating inside and outside the foresight space that you could potentially reach out to for support in several areas (*please see the 'Resources and opportunities' section*). For example:

- 1. If you do not have access to youth networks**, or networks with specific experience or expertise, prioritize building partnerships with organizations that have invested in building youth networks. There is no need to start from scratch.
- 2. If you do not know how to engage young people in foresight** without using too much jargon and potentially going over their heads, prioritize building partnerships with organizations that have established best practices in foresight training for youth.
- 3. If your research goals require additional resources**, prioritize partnerships with organizations that share your objectives to get the funding you need.

**In our case:** We partnered with [UN Global Pulse](#), which provided funding through the Government of Finland. Having a team packed with futurists meant we could also benefit from their advice and guidance and their connections to other teams organizing their own youth foresight experiments. We leveraged our partnership with US think tank [The Atlantic Council](#), which attended workshops and contributed its own foresight research on topics relevant to children and youth. We benefited greatly from knowledge-sharing conversations and access to youth networks with [Teach the Future](#) and the [School of International Futures](#). We were also happy for the fellows to lead the outreach process for their social media campaign and the product launch of [Our Future Pledge](#).



# Step 5: Develop a learning plan

**Tip**  
**Meaningful Youth Engagement** is about learning from young people: what are their issues of primary concern, what makes an engaging and effective programme, which skills do they wish to develop, and how do they see their own future evolving? Consider developing a learning plan, not just for youth participants but for you and your organization.

**Create a learning plan that aligns with the programme objectives, ensuring it is relevant and up to date with the latest trends and best practices in the field. This is important for the young people you work with and for you.**

From a foresight perspective, your learning plan could focus on several areas:

1. **Futures literacy:** Any young person, with or without foresight experience, will likely benefit from a learning plan that strengthens their anticipatory capacity or futures literacy – i.e. their ability to critically reflect on the futures being created for them – so that they can actively create their preferred futures.
2. **Facilitation:** Some young foresight practitioners may have been exposed to certain methods and tools, but not all. Some may have participated in foresight workshops but have not had the chance to facilitate themselves. Learn about their level of experience and consider a learning plan that provides opportunities for them to learn facilitation by doing.
3. **Research:** Some young foresight practitioners may have taken part in foresight workshops but have never conducted an emerging issues analysis. Consider a learning plan around how to safely and ethically collect and analyse data from various sources to identify drivers of change and emerging issues, including, where necessary, how to obtain appropriate approvals, based on your objectives and their learning needs and wishes.

**In our case:** We recruited young foresight practitioners with a range of different experience levels and knowledge. Those with more experience in foresight methods and tools took responsibility for designing the workshop. When they chose 200-Year Present, Futures Wheel and Scenario Planning as youth-friendly methods to achieve their goals, fellows were offered the chance to practise using the tools over the course of two online workshops, which they accepted. Some of the training was conducted by fellows themselves, while some was facilitated by the UNICEF Youth Foresight Team. As time went by, fellows identified additional learning needs such as project management, design thinking and understanding UNICEF work more broadly.

To ensure that we learned from the fellows, we structured our meetings and engagements to be inclusive, interactive and cooperative. This involved consistently providing opportunities for young people to offer feedback, participate in decision-making and steer the campaign towards issues that mattered most to them. For example, we used human-centred design to engage fellows in the design of their own product, inviting them to establish their own objectives, identify strategic audiences, develop their field research questions, target audience personas, capture insights and ideate. This meant that not only were fellows in control of the design process, but they captured insights that were immensely valuable to UNICEF’s own work and thinking.

# Step 6: Plan for evaluation

**Tip**  
Engaging young people in the evaluation process helps them to develop valuable skills in project management and planning while ensuring that the evaluation is more aligned with the programme's goals and objectives. Young people are also often better positioned to create research questions that resonate with their peers, using a language and format that is more relatable. Lastly, it can foster a greater sense of ownership and engagement in the programme.

**Create a plan for evaluating the programme and assessing impact. This could include identifying indicators and methods for data capture, including focus group discussions and surveys with participants and key stakeholders before and after the programme.**

Evaluation should be a crucial part of any foresight programme, particularly due to the increased demand for accountability and a need to justify the value of futures work to donors and stakeholders. To ensure such initiatives remain relevant and responsive in a changing world, foresight demands rigour. However, foresight programmes are challenging to evaluate because their long-term impact and effectiveness are often intangible and not immediately measurable, and embrace uncertainty over prediction. Moreover, conducting effective and robust evaluations is a skill and can be highly resource-intensive, whether you are focusing on quantitative or qualitative methods, which may explain why it is often neglected. Fundamentally, you are what you measure, so consider your objectives and frame your evaluation around that. For example:

1. You may wish to measure young people's futures literacy before and after your foresight programme. The paper [How Futures Literate Are You? Exploratory research on how to operationalize and measure futures literacy](#) focuses on the development of a method to measure the effects of UNESCO Futures Literacy Labs.
2. Or you may wish to explore how exposure to foresight enhanced optimism about the future and agency. The article [Re-evaluating the Foresight Styles Assessment: A measurement of futures competency for university students](#) explores this approach and shares a history of evaluation in foresight.
3. A great place to start is the [APF Foresight Evaluation Task Force Report](#). Drawing on the broad and deep expertise of 24 Task Force members – foresight practitioners, evaluators, and corporate and public sector representatives – the report provides insights into evaluating the quality of foresight and its impacts.

**In our case:** Our primary focus for the evaluation was on the programme itself, particularly young people's experience of participating in and leading foresight spaces and whether that enhanced their sense of optimism and agency.

One of our big milestones was the youth-led participatory foresight workshop. We invited the fellows to design their own feedback form asking various questions to assess how participants felt about the workshop in terms of format and duration, coordination and content organization. The feedback form was intentionally distributed alongside the certificate form to increase the response rate and gather valuable feedback.

The UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team also wished to understand the impact participatory foresight could have on behaviour. We developed a survey template for 'Retrospectives' asking respondents what they would start doing, stop doing and continue doing more following the workshop.

The team was fortunate to pilot this youth foresight programme while the organization was developing its broader youth engagement and foresight strategies. Lessons learned from the evaluation informed various levels of that work.



## Step 7: Provide ongoing support and follow-up

**Ensure young people receive ongoing support and follow-up during and after the programme, providing access to resources and networks to sustain and strengthen their foresight practice, as well as opportunities for continued learning and development.**

**In our case:** From the outset, we scheduled weekly meetings and established an online project management platform to keep close communication with the fellows. Weekly calls allowed the team to identify gaps and needs, while keeping the fellows accountable to deadlines. We ensured that each call included some time for personal sharing and social bonding, creating a safe space that encouraged youth engagement and participation.

This environment purportedly helped fellows feel confident in sharing feedback and proposing new ideas, which the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team members followed up on, providing support that aligned with the organization's capacity. Additionally, the fellows and Youth Foresight Team members engaged in mentorship and coaching. These optional one-on-one calls centred on their experience of taking part in the programme and expanded to topics such as career development in the foresight and development sectors.

All seven steps put fellows in the position to design and lead their own participatory youth foresight workshop.

# Youth foresight workshops

One of the key components of the Fellows' research centred on participatory foresight workshops, which fellows titled the Youth Foresight Circle. The fellows designed and led foresight workshops for over 85 people, including youth, UNICEF staff and partners from 23 countries.

These workshops provided critical inputs to Prospects for Children. But they also led to some key learnings that can provide guidance for young people and those who work with them to take on their own foresight journeys.

This section of the Youth Foresight Playbook takes you inside the Youth Foresight Circle. Based on their experience, the Fellows identified key elements of a successful workshop, which included:

- Creating an engaging environment for young people
- Identifying and analysing key issues
- Feedback gathering and analysis.

These elements are outlined below with quotes from the Fellows included.

## Creating an engaging environment for young people

Ensuring the success of the workshop depended on one critical factor: making sure that young participants from around the world felt comfortable, valued and respected. This was no small feat in a virtual space, where the presence of adults can sometimes pose challenges due to cultural norms around ageism and deference.

Through intentional and inclusive design of the following elements, fellows were able to break down barriers and foster a sense of belonging among the participants.

1. **Safeguarding:** Fellows were invited to research and create their own online youth safeguarding strategy: a set of policies, procedures and guidelines designed to protect young people from harm and ensure their well-being. This work was reviewed by the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team. Their work helped to inform the entire engagement strategy before, during and after the workshop. Here are some words of inspiration on the process from Jacob, who led the process:

**Jacob Ellis – United Kingdom:** *“Safeguarding was about creating a welcoming and inclusive space for participants, staff, and fellows. Leading the safeguarding approach gave me a sense of appreciation and ownership. At the time of writing it, my country (Wales) was marking the anniversary of the tragedy of Aberfan in 1966 when a coal tip slipped and buried a group of children and teachers – a dramatic failure of incompetence and lack of safeguarding attention. It’s a scenario that was deeply engrained in my mind as I developed our approach.”*



2. **Communications:** Fellows made sure that participants were clear on what they had signed up for prior to the workshop by sending participants learning packs and digital assets that included profile photo frames for social media as well as materials and tools to prepare themselves to take ownership of the process. They were also reminded that they did not need to come as experts, but as themselves, thereby making their views and contributions authentic, enhancing the credibility of insights shared and empowering them to contribute more fully. As Ricardo explains:

**Ricardo Pineda – Honduras:** *“Frequently remind youth to speak on behalf of their own experiences, to connect more with their personal convictions rather than academic or professional knowledge. It is very insightful to gather these personal perspectives, and for them to communicate in the same way as they would to other youth.”*

3. **Safe space:** To create a safe space where participants are encouraged to share personal experiences, they must be supported to exercise the right to not engage on any question that makes them uncomfortable. Fellows chose an experienced moderator from among them whose job would be to ensure participants felt relaxed and engaged. The task fell to Ijun, who shares her approach:

**Ijun Kim – Republic of Korea:** *“I tried to dissolve the barrier between facilitator and participant by reiterating that everyone has equal ownership of the conversation. I also intentionally used simple language to ensure participants who were not fluent in English or were unfamiliar with the topics felt like they belonged.”*

4. **Building futures literacy:** Fellows chose activities that would help participants ease into the process while building their futures literacy. One activity chosen was 200-Year Present, which involves imagining the present moment as encompassing the previous 100 years of history and the next 100 years of the future. Try the activity out yourself on Worksheet 9. Fisayo, who recommended the activity, explains her rationale:

**Fisayo Oyewale – Nigeria:** *“Starting with a simple exercise that can be easily understood and enjoyed by all participants, regardless of their prior knowledge of foresight, was important to me. By reflecting on the past and present, and anticipating the future, participants can begin to develop a sense of how the world is changing and how they might want to shape it.”*

## Identifying and analysing key issues

Fellows had to identify key issues for children and youth globally, and which foresight approaches, methods and tools would be most effective to analyse them.

- 1. Youth-friendly methods and tools:** To ensure that the workshop was accessible to young participants, it was essential to choose methods and tools for analysis that were youth-friendly and ensure that the fellows leading the workshop were capable of facilitating. There were many approaches fellows could have taken, potentially using contemporary methodologies such as gamification, art, storytelling or role-play to help young people unlock new ideas and insights that may not emerge through more traditional methods. However, fellows leaned on their experience, choosing tools they had experienced and facilitated first-hand.

**Nourhan Badr El-Din – Egypt:** *“I had the pleasure to take part in designing the foresight workshop tools and facilitating part of the workshop itself. It seems both empowering and challenging to create foresight awareness and bring safe space for youth from around the world at the same time.”*

- 2. Facilitation support:** To analyse all seven key issues effectively, it was decided that seven breakout rooms would need to be created, with a fellow facilitating in each room. Participants who had voted for their most important issues were placed in the corresponding room. Fellows who were not so well acquainted with the methods and tools chosen received a training session from more experienced fellows and the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team. Fellows were also provided with a facilitation guide, designed by fellows themselves, that included scripts, tips and tricks. Asra shares her experience and key takeaways:

**Asra Memon – Pakistan:** *“Facilitating a breakout activity can be nerve-wracking, yet incredibly exciting. It requires an openness to learn and the ability to be intentionally cognizant of ideas that may differ from yours. It demands probing into what’s different and unheard of.”*

- 3. The Futures Wheel:** Once the fellows identified emerging issues that could potentially disrupt the lives of children and youth, they utilized a foresight tool known as the Futures Wheel to analyse the potential second-order and third-order impacts. The Futures Wheel is a versatile tool that allows participants to explore a range of potential outcomes and consequences of emerging issues or events. Learn how to facilitate the Futures Wheel in Worksheet 10.
- 4. Scenarios:** Scenario planning is a foresight tool used to explore possible futures and anticipate potential challenges and opportunities. Scenarios provide a structured and systematic way to explore and understand potential future developments and their implications. Learn how to facilitate scenarios in Worksheet 11. Iman explains what makes scenarios so valuable:

**Iman Bashir – Kenya:** *It is important to encourage a healthy dose of absurdity in the audience's thinking. The best part about asking young people to be ridiculous is that they have great imaginations. Encourage this side by making sure the environment is a safe space to speak without fear of ridicule."*

- 5. Backcasting:** Lastly, it was crucial for fellows to give participants an idea of what their next steps might be after the workshop to achieve their preferred future scenario. For this they chose backcasting, a tool that accepts the preferred future as accomplished and invites participants to create a timeline of what happened from the future back to the present. You can facilitate a backcasting exercise using Worksheet 12. Fisayo again shares why backcasting was crucial:

**Fisayo Oyewale – Nigeria:** *"In any foresight exercise, the primary question that guides my design process is – so what? Have they been empowered? What is their takeaway? To answer these questions and leave the participants with a sense of agency, they need to see themselves in the futures that they have envisioned. This is what 'backcasting' helps you achieve!"*





## Feedback gathering and analysis

After the workshop, we sent out a thank you note with links to register for the final certificate and provide feedback. Fellows joined a focus group discussion with the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team to review the feedback, analyse it and synthesize key lessons learned, producing a small workshop report that was internally disseminated for future workshops.

### Opportunities

1. Many participants voluntarily connected with each other on LinkedIn to share their thoughts and continue discussions online after the workshop. Some also proactively followed up with the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team on feedback, questions and potential future opportunities for further engagement. Their enthusiasm inspired the UNICEF Innocenti Youth Foresight Team not only to increase investment in long-term engagement channels but also to explore diverse opportunities with different partners.

**Deona Julary – United States of America:** *“Analysing the lessons learned after any workshop is crucial. Since this was the first-time youth have led a workshop of this kind with UNICEF, synthesizing both the positive and negative outcomes was important, including assessing young people’s interest in different tools ... and on trends they believed to be important.”*

2. The responsibility of designing and facilitating their own foresight workshop was a significant task for the fellows, and it prompted many of them to reflect deeply. This challenge inspired some of them to consider pushing back against traditional approaches to youth engagement and embrace innovative participatory strategies. Joshua explains:

**Joshua Steib – Germany:** *“Too often, we approach these workshops with a preconceived notion of what the future should look like, based on our own biases, experiences and values. But if we truly want to engage the minds of the next generation, we must be willing to challenge our assumptions and adopt a more open and flexible mindset.”*



# Lessons learned

The six months that UNICEF Innocenti worked with the Fellows also provided a myriad of lessons about Meaningful Youth Engagement and foresight. Here are the highlights.

## Why young people love futures and foresight

- 1. Creating safe spaces:** Foresight processes can be highly effective at creating safe spaces for youth inclusion in development and policymaking processes, including dialogues around sensitive topics. Working towards a long time-horizon can move participants beyond present challenges and conflicts, refocusing them on our shared futures, and opening new and unforeseen opportunities.
- 2. An antidote to ageism:** In certain cultures, whether consciously or not, young people's opinions are not valued, let alone sought. Ageism can be harmful, limiting opportunities for young people to contribute to society and make meaningful change. But alternative and differing opinions are crucial in foresight processes to help mitigate groupthink, enhance decision-making, and navigate uncertainty and complexity.
- 3. Natural change seekers:** Thinking critically and creatively about the world around them comes naturally to young people. They are less weighed down by the past and are much more open to change. Seeking change in the world can be important for identity development, helping them to develop a sense of purpose, identity and social connections, while also addressing important social and environmental issues.
- 4. Personal futures:** In a rapidly changing world, foresight has both professional and personal application. For many fellows, their futures literacy had reportedly been helpful when navigating events outside their control in their personal lives, such as COVID-19. It encouraged them to critically reflect on the futures being created for them and opened the door to creating their own more empowering narratives and futures. Here we move from strategic to transformative foresight.
- 5. Finding hope:** After interviewing both the fellows with whom we worked for six months and the participants of the Youth Foresight Circle with whom we worked for 10 hours, we found that the words 'optimism' and 'hope' consistently surfaced when they were asked how foresight made them feel, far surpassing any other responses. These are key components of resilience, a trait young people the world over will certainly need to overcome long-term challenges.

## Foresight for action

- 6. So what?** Many young people feel a deep sense of urgency to address social and environmental issues, particularly those that threaten to compromise their futures. Every opportunity to engage in a participatory futures process is an opportunity to create change. When that opportunity is seemingly squandered, young people can grow frustrated. Always consider how to transition your foresight process into action planning so that participants are given the agency to shape outcomes instead of becoming victims of them. Always imagine a young person asking you “So what?”. If you are not satisfied with your answer, go back to the drawing board.

## Governance structure

- **The role of convener:** Being a convener in a youth-led programme requires a careful balance. It is crucial to understand that not all aspects of the programme need to be led by young people. The programme’s governance structure should facilitate discussions on the most suitable methods for engaging young people in specific contexts, ensuring that the programme remains youth-centred. Regardless of the situation or capacity, young people will inevitably require guidance, support and expertise to lead the programme effectively. The organization also retains overall responsibility for ensuring ethical and safeguarding principles and practice across the project – including in engagement with the young people led or facilitated by those participating directly in the programme.
- **Experiment** with collaborative design processes such as human-centred design that empower young people to design both overarching and specific programme elements.
- **Delegate** leadership responsibility to execute the delivery of key work streams to one or two young people. This ensures they are clear on what they must lead on and that all participants feel a sense of responsibility and accountability.
- Ensure you have an **open-door policy** and open channels of communication in place so that young people feel comfortable requesting support from you if needed.
- Finding the right governance structure for a diverse group of young people working on a part-time basis will always be a work in progress. It is important to **stay nimble** and responsive to their needs, adapting on the fly.

## Upskilling needs

**No matter their age, futurists need to be lifelong learners!** Whether you are working with experienced young foresight practitioners or novices, developing a learning plan is important to ensure they are set up to succeed. Consider incorporating activities and spaces into your programme that support young people on their foresight journey to:

- Anticipate emerging issues, challenges and opportunities that may arise in the future
- Stay informed about the latest developments in the field
- See the bigger picture to understand the complex interconnections between different systems
- Analyse and evaluate information from a variety of sources to identify reliable data and insights
- Communicate complex ideas and insights clearly and effectively to different audiences
- Be creative and able to generate new ideas, perspectives, and solutions to complex problems
- Collaborate with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to develop solutions to complex challenges that are inclusive and equitable.

# Resources and opportunities

The work of the Youth Foresight Fellowship Programme and its youth contributors has taught UNICEF Innocenti some exciting lessons. Most importantly, we learned that engaging young people in foresight not only helps us anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities, but it can build young people's sense of agency and responsibility, encouraging them to become active and engaged citizens who think about the long-term impacts of decisions and commit to building a better, more sustainable and equitable world for future generations.

UNICEF Innocenti is seeking to model, standardize and systematize Meaningful Youth Engagement across research, foresight and convening. Building and sustaining a global youth network will enable UNICEF to connect with young people wherever they are and to work together to achieve shared goals and aspirations.

The network will serve as a platform for young people around the world, helping them to:

1. Identify issues that are most pertinent to children and youth now and in the future
2. Elevate their voice and agency as they work to deliver positive impact in their community
3. Have opportunities to inform UNICEF strategies, agendas and work.

We invite any young person interested in this agenda to sign up to the UNICEF Innocenti [Youth Network mailing list](#).

There are some great organizations out there providing resources and opportunities for young people to learn and practise foresight. Having spoken to many young foresight practitioners around the world, the following resources and opportunities stood out the most. We want to shine a light on their efforts and hopefully encourage you to take action.

- **Teach the Future** (TTF) is a non-profit organization that teaches futures-thinking skills to students and educators around the world and inspires young people to influence their futures. Its aspiration is that every student is prepared to navigate an uncertain world and has the agency to imagine and create their preferred future. **We love:**
  - Free and paid resources in the [Teach the Future Library](#)
  - Every year on 1 March, TTF co-organizes a 24-hour intergenerational [conversation about futures](#), which you can take part in
  - You can also join [Discord](#) for conversations, opportunities and more.

- **School of International Futures (SOIF)** an organization that specializes in futures thinking and strategic foresight to help governments, organizations and individuals navigate complex global challenges and opportunities. **We love:**
  - The Next Generation Foresight Practitioners Network, a global community of early career foresight professionals who apply for awards annually and can win grants, mentorships, training workshops and more.
- **UNESCO** champions futures literacy as an essential competency for the twenty-first century. **We love:**
  - Futures Literacy Labs (FLLs) are global and well loved by young people we spoke to. UNESCO periodically launches open calls for applications to join the labs, so keep an eye out on the website and social media. FLLs are usually organized by National Commissions in different countries. You can also contact the National Commission for UNESCO in your country to inquire about any ongoing or upcoming FLLs that you could participate in.
- **Journal of Futures Studies (JFS)** is a globally oriented, transdisciplinary, refereed journal that is developing high-quality, futures-oriented research and thinking. **We love:**
  - JFS gives free access to articles and essays from futurists around the world, and we love how open it is to young foresight practitioners to submit works for publishing, which can be an important step in the futurist’s journey.

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## Part II: Worksheets

Part II of the Youth Engagement Playbook is a series of 12 worksheets that can help young people and those who work with them to establish their own youth foresight programme. The worksheets set out activities that help define objectives, identify participants and establish partners – among many others. It also includes foresight exercises that can help young people think about their futures and the future of their worlds.

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## Worksheet 1

# Applying the 10 principles of Meaningful Youth Engagement

Before designing your programme, start as you mean to go on by familiarizing yourself with and aligning on the key principles for Meaningful Youth Engagement.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** An open mind!



**Time:** 60 minutes (but this is an iterative process that you will likely come back to)



**Participants:** Seek to engage all the key stakeholders you can. This could be just your core team, but it would be a richer process to engage partners and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers, sticky notes and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool, would be ideal for knowledge-sharing and collaboration. But all you need is good conversation



**Outcome:** Awareness of and alignment on Meaningful Youth Engagement as a priority for the programme, as well as some potential programme design ideas

### Brainstorm

Using pens and sticky notes, brainstorm all the ways your programme could achieve the principles by answering the questions below.

1. **Respect:** How can your programme ensure that young people are treated with respect and that their opinions, experiences and contributions are valued, not only in the present but also in the future?
2. **Participation:** How can your programme provide meaningful opportunities for young people to participate as equal partners in decision-making processes?
3. **Ownership:** How does your programme support young people in taking ownership of the issues that affect them, thus encouraging them to become agents of change, not only during the programme but also beyond it?

4. **Collaboration:** In what ways does your programme enable young people to collaborate with adults, underlining the importance of intergenerational partnerships?
5. **Experimentation:** How does your programme create the enabling conditions for young people to experiment, to embrace uncertainty, without the pressure of finding the 'right' answer?
6. **Transparency:** How does your programme maintain transparency by keeping young people informed about decision-making processes and the outcomes of their engagement?
7. **Accountability:** How does your programme provide opportunities for young people to hold decision makers accountable and to ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon?
8. **Flexibility:** How is your programme designed to be flexible and adaptable to meet the varying needs and preferences of different young people in different contexts?
9. **Skills-building:** How does your programme create opportunities for young people to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to thrive?
10. **Compensation:** How does your programme ensure that young people are adequately compensated for their work or recognized for their contributions?

## Decide

Now decide collectively which approaches to employ, considering your capacity. You can keep returning to this list to stay on track and be accountable to young people over the course of your programme.

## Iterative process

Repeatedly ask yourself how you can make the programme more youth-centred, gradually strengthening your programme until it meets your objectives and the needs of young people.



## Worksheet 2

# Defining programme objectives

This worksheet will help you to establish clear programme objectives from the start, sharing the why and the how. For a youth foresight programme in particular, young people face unique challenges, such as limited experience, limited general knowledge across a range of topics, and potential power imbalances. Well-defined objectives provide a framework to address these challenges in the programme's design.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** Review and align on the principles of Meaningful Youth Engagement



**Time:** 60 minutes (but this is an iterative process that you will likely come back to)



**Participants:** Seek to engage all the key stakeholders you can. This could be just your core team, but it would be a richer process to engage partners and youth participants, if possible, at this stage



**Materials needed:** Markers, sticky notes and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool, would be ideal



**Outcome:** A set of robust programme objectives

### Brainstorm

Brainstorm as many objectives as you can, and then, with your prompt questions as a guide, refine and align on three or four of them.

- 1. What is the broad aim of your programme?** Write as many as you can.
- 2. Can you be SMART?** Is each objective Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound?
- 3. Are you aligned with your organizational values and goals?** If you are working within an organization, this exercise can help secure support and resources.
- 4. Where should you prioritize and focus?** Identify the three or four most critical objectives that will have the most significant impact on the programme's success. Focus on these priorities, while remaining flexible to adapt and modify them as needed.

## Worksheet 3

# Identify target participants

This worksheet will help you to identify target participants, including specific age groups, geographies, expertise or fields of study. It will help you figure out how to reach them and how to ensure diversity and inclusivity in the selection process.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** Make sure you are clear on your programme objectives



**Time:** 30 minutes



**Participants:** You can do this on your own or with your team, but young people and partners will be very helpful at answering the prompt questions below



**Materials needed:** Markers, sticky notes and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool, would be ideal



**Outcome:** Your primary target participants solidified!

### Identifying your target participants

By asking yourself these questions, you can gain a better understanding of your target participants and their specific characteristics, needs and challenges. Let's get started!

1. **How do the target participants relate to your goals and objectives?**
2. **What are the relevant demographic factors to consider**, such as age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background or education level? How will these influence programme design and outcomes?
3. **What level of skills, expertise or experience is required or desired for the programme?** **How can the programme ensure that it is inclusive** and represents diverse perspectives, backgrounds and experiences? Young people are not one homogenous group, after all.
4. **Is the programme targeting participants from a specific geographic area?** How does this impact design and implementation?

5. **What barriers might exist for participants, such as language, physical accessibility or digital literacy? How can the programme reduce those barriers?**
6. **Are there any stakeholders who should be involved in the programme or consulted during the participation identification process? Would building a partnership with a youth organization or a university be helpful?**
7. **How will you reach out to your target participants, and how will you manage the responses you receive?**

## Remember

When engaging children and young people, it is essential to design and plan a safeguarding strategy. Some useful resources include: [Child Safeguarding online course](#), the [UNICEF Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis](#) and [Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Business](#).



## Worksheet 4

# Determine programme duration and format

This worksheet will help you to decide on your programme duration and format, considering your capacity, resources and objectives.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** Make sure you are clear on your programme objectives and target participants



**Time:** 30 minutes



**Participants:** You can do this on your own or with your team



**Materials needed:** A pen, paper and open minds!



**Outcome:** Your programme has truly taken shape

### Design programme duration and format

1. Review your programme objectives to ensure the duration and format are designed to meet these goals.
2. Assess your target participants considering their needs, preferences, skills and availability to ensure the programme is accessible and relevant.
3. Analyse the content and activities you plan to include to estimate the time required. Make sure you allocate enough time for design, delivery and wrap-up.
4. Consider how to find balance between intensity and flexibility. Maintaining momentum can be challenging over long periods. Young people may require breaks and opportunities for reflection and learning. Factor these considerations into your timeline.
5. Explore different formats such as workshops, seminars, online courses or blended learning. Consider the range of modalities included in the playbook, such as establishing a youth advisory group, a sensing network or an intergenerational mentorship programme.
6. Consider piloting the programme with a small group of participants to test duration and format. Gather feedback and refine before looking to scale.

## Worksheet 5

# Establish partnerships

This worksheet will help you think through how to develop partnerships with relevant organizations and stakeholders that may be able to support your programme.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** Make sure you are clear on your programme objectives, target participants, and programme duration and format, while still being nimble enough to adapt to opportunities that may arise in dialogue with partners



**Time:** 30 minutes



**Participants:** Engage your core team and youth participants if possible!



**Materials needed:** Markers, sticky notes and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool, would be ideal



**Outcome:** A collection of potential partnerships to support your programme in the areas where you need them

### Brainstorm partnerships

1. **Think through what additional support you might need** to achieve your objectives.
2. **Note down who your ideal potential partners would be** to provide that support.
3. **Map out what partnership networks you already have** that you can leverage.
4. **Consider whether you know anyone you could speak to** who might be willing to help you reach out to potential partners.
5. **Figure out the most effective way to do outreach** and whether you will need a slide presentation or a terms of reference statement. Then reach out!

## Worksheet 6

# Develop a learning plan

The purpose of this worksheet is to help you design a learning plan to support your strategic foresight work, your team and your participants. A learning plan is a structured road map that outlines what you and your key stakeholders wish to learn, why this is important and how you plan to achieve it.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** Make sure you are clear on your programme objectives, target participants, programme duration and format, and the capacity of your partners



**Time:** 30 minutes



**Participants:** Engage your core team and youth participants.



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool



**Outcome:** A learning plan that supports your foresight work as well as your team's and participants' learning journeys

### Develop a learning plan

- 1. Map out what skills you, your team, your youth participants and partners already have,** particularly when it comes to foresight and project management, that can help you achieve your objectives.
- 2. Map out the gaps in knowledge that you will need to fill** to achieve your objectives.
- 3. Think through how to fill these gaps.** Can you or your team provide training? Can any of your youth participants share their existing knowledge? Are there any free foresight events, webinars or training programmes you can leverage? Or can you reach out to any foresight learning platforms and request support?
- 4. Provisionally map out slots for capacity development in your programme timeline.**

## Worksheet 7

# Plan for evaluation

The purpose of this worksheet is to help you plan to evaluate your programme. Identifying what success looks like at this early stage will give you much-needed clarity on how to design your programme, where to assign resources, and how to communicate the impact of your programme to key stakeholders. So, get your team together and start planning!

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** Make sure you are clear on your programme objectives, target participants, programme duration and format, and learning plan



**Time:** 60 minutes



**Participants:** Engage your core team and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool



**Outcome:** A plan for how you will measure success

### Plan for evaluation

- 1. Come up with some key performance indicators (KPIs)** made up of specific, measurable indicators that can be used to assess the success of your programme. These could include, for example, improvement in foresight skills, openness to alternative futures, or optimism about the future.
- 2. Consider how you will capture participant feedback** and how you will integrate it into the programme. Are there structured ways such as surveys, interviews or focus group discussions for participants to provide feedback on the programme?
- 3. Think through the tangible impact of the programme**, such as how many people have been reached, what the changes in their behaviour, knowledge or skills are, and how this translates in to future preparedness.
- 4. Map out the potential long-term effects** of the programme on participants, their communities and society more broadly. How might you track these effects over the long term?

## Worksheet 8

# Provide ongoing support and follow-up

This worksheet will help you strategize how you will support youth participants both during and after the programme. So, grab your materials and let's get started!

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** You have established your youth participants



**Time:** 30 minutes



**Participants:** Engage your core team and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool



**Outcome:** A clear and well-communicated support strategy for youth participants during and after the programme

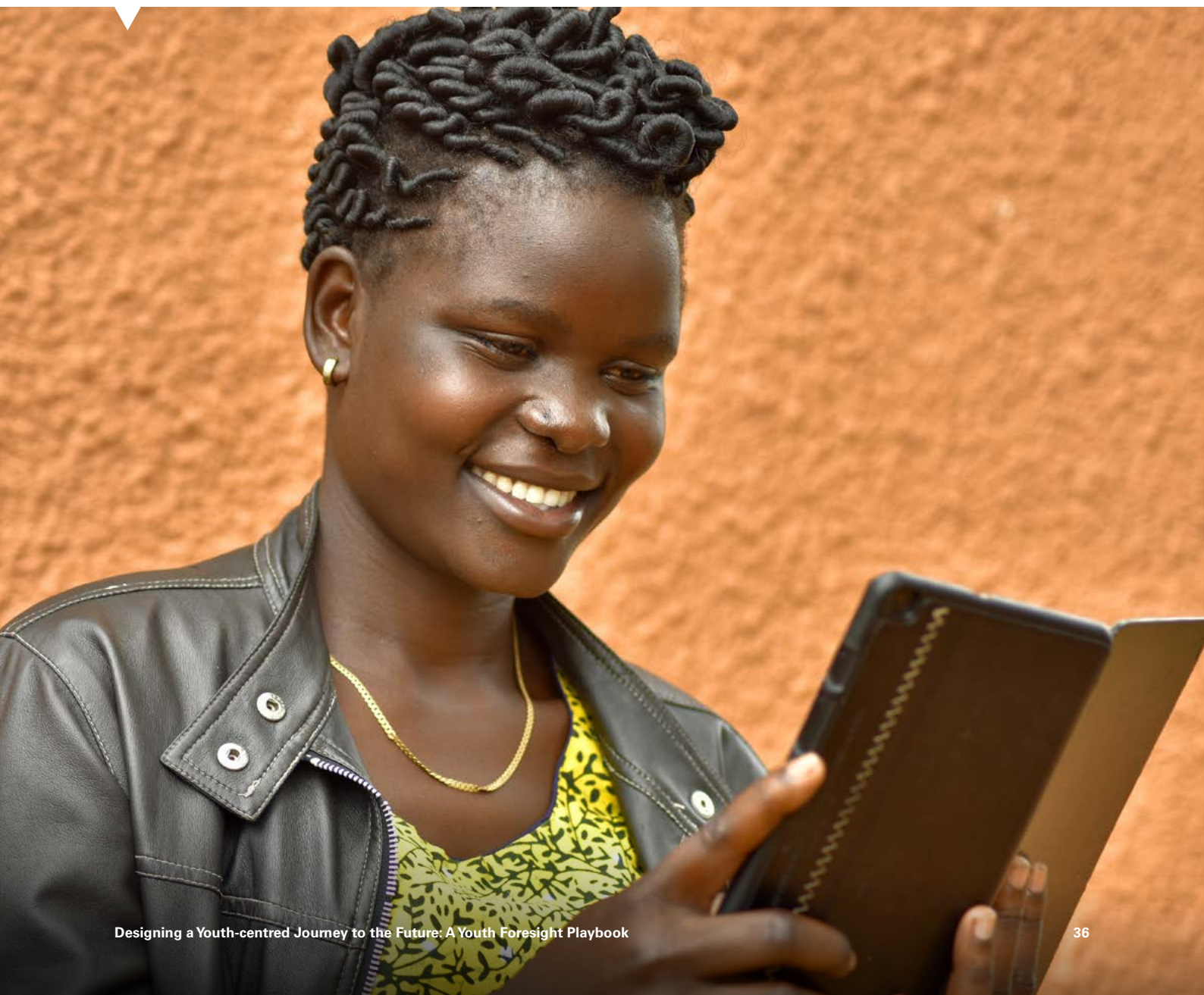
### Design your support strategy

- 1. Think through what communication channels you will maintain with participants** during the programme and after it ends. Consider project management channels, email newsletters, social media groups, regular check-in calls, webinars, etc.
- 2. Create a schedule of regular meetings** with youth participants that ensures you are building social bonds, capturing feedback and providing support.
- 3. Consider whether you have the capacity to create or facilitate mentoring opportunities for the participants**, with programme leaders or mentors in the community.
- 4. Map out what resources you can provide for participants to continue their learning after the programme ends.** These could include books, online courses, videos or articles related to foresight.



5. **List any ongoing projects or activities that participants can contribute to after the programme ends.**
6. **Do you have the capacity to develop and maintain an alumni network for the programme over the long term that could provide ongoing support, mentorship and opportunities for participants?**
7. **Think through what support you could provide to youth-led initiatives or projects that participants start as a result of the programme.**

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## Worksheet 9

# 200-Year Present

This worksheet will introduce you to the 200-Year Present exercise, a participatory process that can build capacity for long-term thinking. This exercise will focus on the past, present and future of children and youth.

A 200-Year Present is a useful exercise created by Elise Boulding, one of the great peace scholars, futurists and activists of the twentieth century, that reminds us we are in the middle of history, rather than at the beginning or end. It provides a long-term perspective and eases participants into their futures journey.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** You have your youth participants



**Time:** 30–120 minutes



**Participants:** You, your team and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool

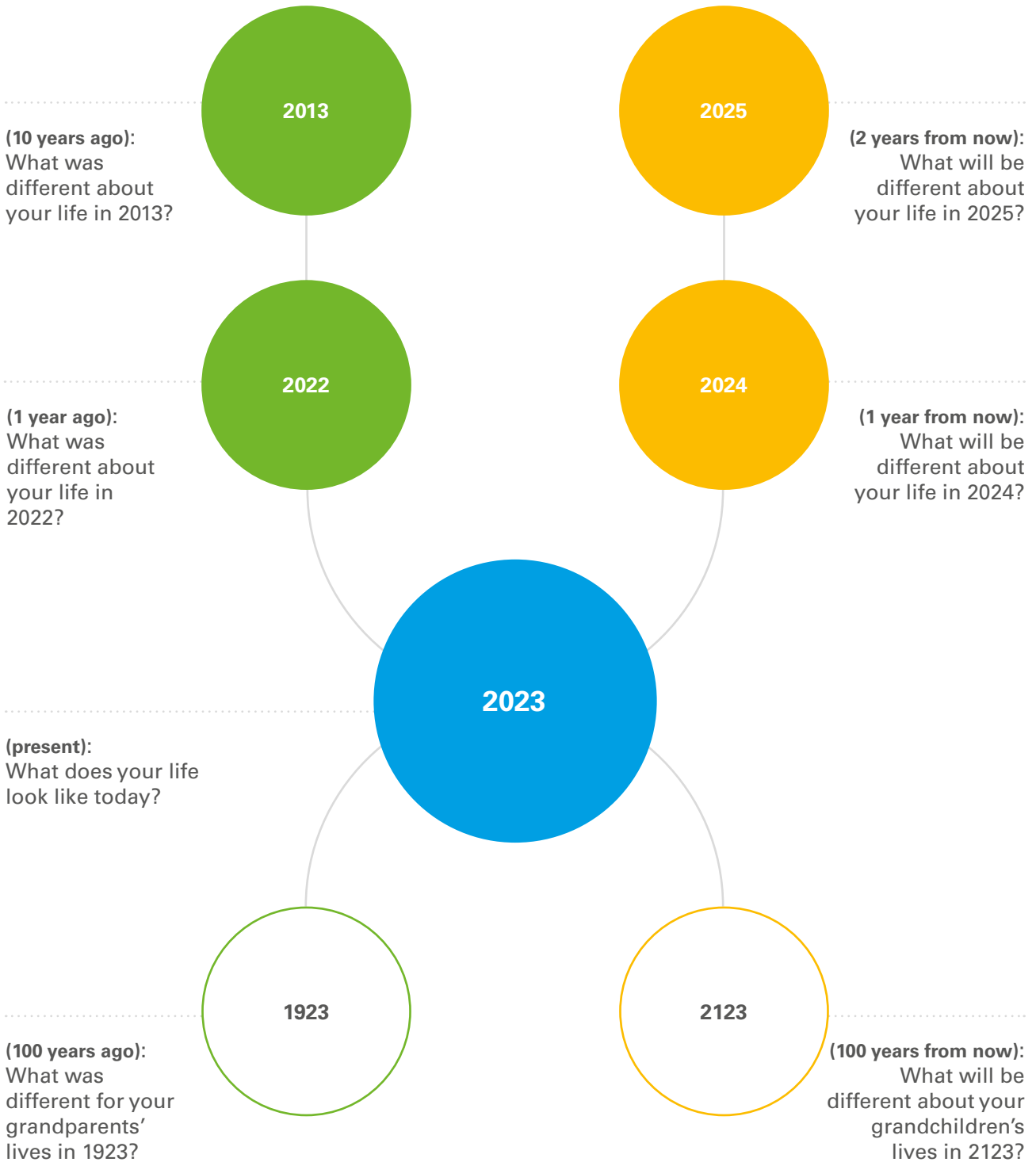


**Outcome:** Foster holistic, long-term thinking that takes into account the past, present and future, encouraging a greater sense of responsibility and awareness of our actions

### Facilitation guide

- 1. Journey to the past:** Ask participants to step into a 'time machine' that will take them 100 years back in time. Here, you can discuss significant events, achievements and challenges that occurred during that time. Help them realize that the world they live in is built on the successes and failures of the past.
- 2. Back to the present:** Returning to the present, discuss how the events from the past have shaped their current reality. Help them understand that they are a bridge between the past and the future.
- 3. Journey to the future:** Then invite them to time travel 100 years into the future. Discuss the potential advances we could make in technology, culture, society and the environment, and how the decisions we make today will impact this future.
- 4. Relevance and application:** Discuss how participants can use this perspective in their everyday lives. For example, they could consider how their actions today might impact children and youth tomorrow.

**Example of a 200-Year Present table**  
 Created by the UNICEFYouth Foresight Fellows



## Worksheet 10

# The Futures Wheel

The purpose of the worksheet is to introduce you to the Futures Wheel and to help you use it with young people.

The Futures Wheel is like a mind map. You begin with an emerging issue, event or disruption at the centre and link from there to implications or consequences. This helps us to anticipate future challenges and opportunities.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** You have your youth participants



**Time:** 60–180 minutes



**Participants:** You, your team and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool

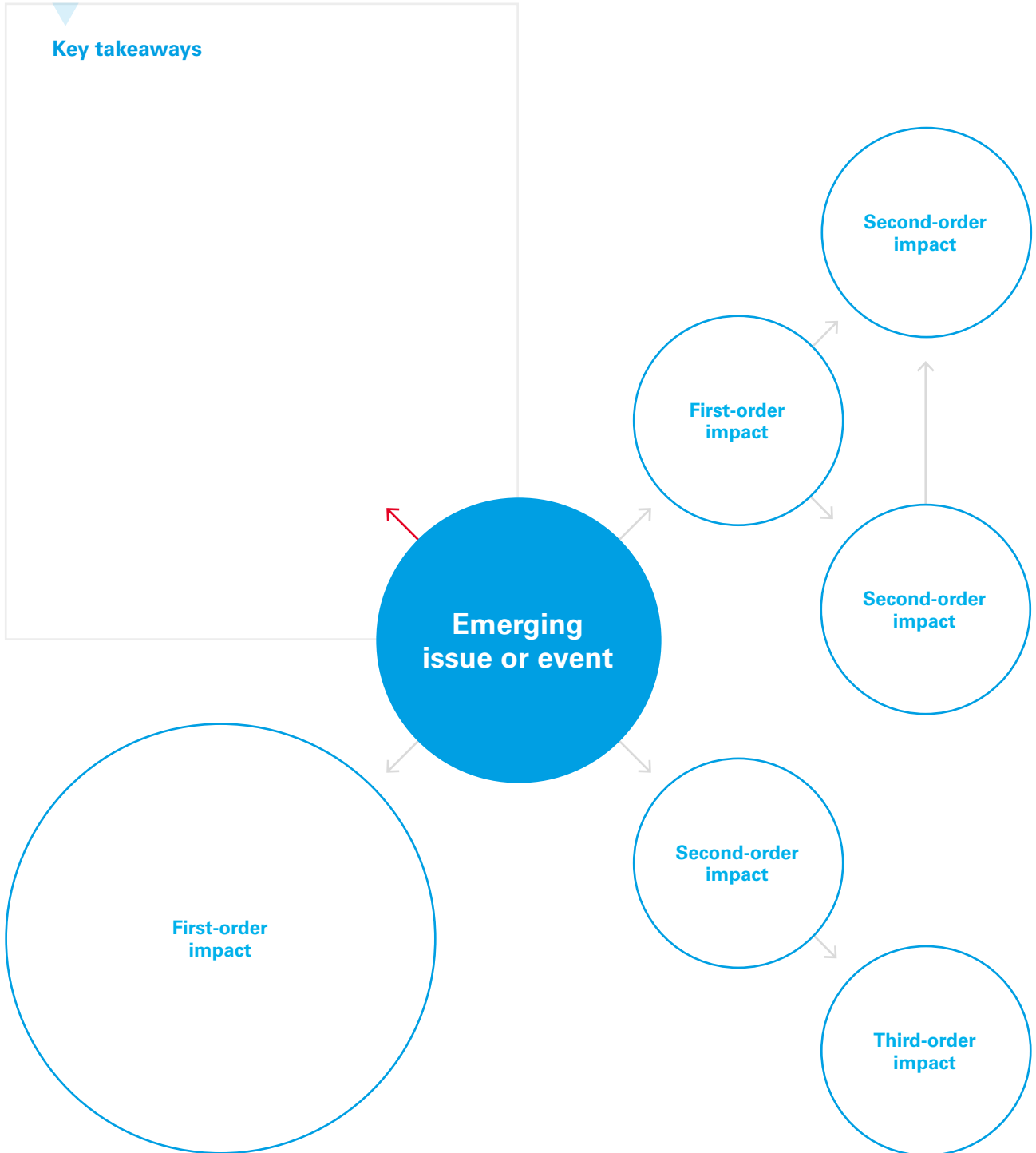


**Outcome:** An analysis of the potential implications of emerging issues or events for children and youth

### Facilitation guide

- 1. Identify the central topic/event:** This is the event whose potential impacts you want to explore. It is the starting point of the Futures Wheel. Try to let young people choose this to ensure it centres on an issue they care about.
- 2. First-order consequences:** These are the direct consequences that could result from the event. They are directly connected to the centre of the wheel. Suggest that they come up with positive and negative consequences for children and youth to ensure your wheel is well rounded.
- 3. Second-order consequences and beyond:** These are the outcomes that result from the first-order consequences, the impacts of the impacts. They move further away from the centre of the wheel. If the group is doing well, you can create third-order consequences too.
- 4. Discuss results:** After the group has completed the Futures Wheel, discuss the different outcomes they have identified for children and youth. Discuss how participants can apply the Futures Wheel in their lives, such as in choosing a university or a job, or for a social issue they care about.

**Example of a Futures Wheel template**



# Worksheet 11

## Scenarios

The purpose of the worksheet is to introduce you to scenario planning and how to do it with young people.

Scenarios are like a game of ‘What if?’. We cannot predict the future, so instead we create alternative futures and explore the implications of them.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** You have youth participants, you have conducted foresight research to map out emerging issues and trends, and you have a year in mind – say in 10–20 years



**Time:** 90–180 minutes



**Participants:** You, your team and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool



**Outcome:** Alternative future pathways to better anticipate and prepare for change

### Facilitation guide

**Identify emerging issues and trends:** Consider the ‘winds’ that might blow you in different directions on your journey – these are emerging issues and trends that could affect children and youth, which could come from the 200-Year Present or the Futures Wheel.

**Craft your scenarios:** Imagine what might happen if they took different paths at each fork in the road. These are plausible stories that can help the group think about different future possibilities.

**Creative presentation:** Could the group present their stories in a creative way, perhaps through role-play, art and design, music or soundscape? This will make the scenarios more immersive, fun and accessible.

**Discuss and reflect:** What might it be like to live in each scenario? What are the challenges and opportunities for children and youth? How close is the scenario to their preferred futures? What actions could they take today to prepare for or influence these potential futures?

**Review:** Reiterate the importance of scenario planning in providing tools to navigate an uncertain future, such as preparing for different weather conditions before setting out on a journey. By considering different scenarios, we can better prepare for whatever the future holds.

Learn more about how to create scenarios with [Our Future Pledge](#), a guide created by young people for young people.



### Example of a scenario planning template

<b>Business as usual</b>
<b>Worst case</b>
<b>Best case</b>
<b>Outlier</b>

## Worksheet 12

# Backcasting

The purpose of this worksheet is to introduce you to backcasting and help you do it with young people.

Backcasting is a bit like describing a journey. First, you decide where you want to go without quite knowing how to get there. Once you are at your destination, you can more easily clarify the steps you took to get there, motivated by the feeling the journey is complete already, rather than overwhelmed by the journey ahead.

### Preparation



**Prerequisites:** You have your youth participants, and you have developed a preferred vision of the future



**Time:** 30–60 minutes



**Participants:** You, your team and youth participants



**Materials needed:** Markers and flip chart paper, or an online whiteboarding tool



**Outcome:** An actionable pathway towards your preferred future and a sense of agency

### Example of a backcasting template



2023    2024    2025    2026    2027    2028    2029    2030    2035    2040



## Facilitation guide

- 1. Vision of the future:** Start by creating a vision for the future of children and youth and the child rights agenda, your destination, ideally through scenario planning.
- 2. Current state:** Once you have your destination, ask the group to imagine themselves there, 20 years from now. Congratulations! What does it look like?
- 3. Pathway to the future:** Now plot the route, starting from the future and working backwards. Create a timeline from today to 20 years from now. What events took place, and in what years?
- 4. Identify obstacles:** On any journey, there are likely to be obstacles. What events almost prevented you from achieving this future? What events or strategies overcame them?
- 5. Personal futures:** What did each of the participants do to help achieve this future? What role did everyone play? This builds agency and a personal futures pathway forward.
- 6. Discuss and reflect:** Have the group discuss the backcasting. How does the timeline make them feel? Is there anything they have missed? What makes them excited about this pathway forward? Discuss how participants can use backcasting in their lives, for example when setting personal goals or planning a project.



# In closing

Thank you for taking the time to read the UNICEFYouth Foresight Playbook. Our aim in sharing our experience of meaningfully engaging young people in foresight is to inspire and empower others to embark on their own youth foresight journey. We hope yours begins now! If you found the information contained within this playbook valuable, we would appreciate it if you shared it with someone else. Together, we can create a ripple effect.

Youth foresight can play a crucial role in equipping young people to anticipate and prepare for the future. These skills are essential in today's rapidly changing world – the twenty-first-century skills that few talk about. With young people's natural curiosity, critical-thinking skills and the drive to make a difference, equipping them with a deep understanding of the trends, patterns and forces that shape our world can enable them to become proactive and empowered agents of change. By learning the lessons and spreading the messages contained in this playbook, we can unleash the potential of young people worldwide and enable them to actively shape the future through foresight.

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## About us

**UNICEF** works in the world's toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents — and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere. Across 190 countries and territories, we do whatever it takes to help children survive, thrive and fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. And we never give up.

**UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight** tackles the questions of greatest importance for children, both current and emerging. It drives change through research and foresight on a wide range of child rights issues, sparking global discourse and actively engaging young people in its work.

UNICEF Innocenti equips thought leaders and decision makers with the evidence they need to build a better, safer world for children. The office undertakes research on unresolved and emerging issues, using primary and secondary data, that represents the voices of children and families themselves. It uses foresight to set the agenda for children, including horizon scanning, trends analysis and scenario development. The office produces a diverse and dynamic library of high-level reports, analyses and policy papers, and provides a platform for debate and advocacy on a wide range of child rights issues.

UNICEF Innocenti provides, for every child, answers to their most pressing concerns.

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**UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight**

Via degli Alfani 58

50121 Florence, Italy

Tel: (+39) 055 20 330

Email: [innocenti@unicef.org](mailto:innocenti@unicef.org)

Social media: @UNICEFInnocenti on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube

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