



Embarking on our Journey to Futures Thinking



(l to r) Ronald Mora Castillo, Ghazi Yehia, Moetapele Letshwenyo at the second Futures Literacy Lab
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Do you ever think about the future? Is the Pope Catholic?! Perhaps the more nuanced question is, ‘What do the futures in your head look like?’

We all think about the future or anticipate it in some way. Even mindfulness practitioners slip into imagining actions taking place ‘later than now’.

Try a thought experiment: with all that you know and see today, project yourself into some time later than now – five minutes, a month, 10 years, 30 years, 100 years from now. You have likely anticipated changes – perhaps extraordinary or idealised changes, or maybe only that tomorrow will look like today, but a lot warmer.

Most of the time, we play out these thought experiments alone or with a few others. Rarely do we have an opportunity to collectively imagine multiple futures and question how we might use our insights about them today. Over 20 colleagues across the Organisation came together to do just that in our first-ever Futures Literacy Laboratory (FLL) on the ‘Futures of Climate Response, 2040’. Some staff members wrote about [their experience](#), noting the creative yet challenging approach of the laboratory to shift their thinking away from an anthropocentric future to an animal-dominated one.

‘With a shift in the power balance between humans and animals, people in day-to-day life learn to listen to what nature is saying, devoting more time to understanding how it operates and what our place is, not just in this animal–human society, but in the overall biosphere’. María Eugenia Chimenti, Buenos Aires office and Basilio Valdehuesa, Tokyo office



Participants came up with several ideas and reflections to address how the Organisation might adapt or respond to today's climate crisis. For example, we should consider where to insert messages about environmental considerations while managing animal health and welfare. Or we could investigate and understand more about the nexus between animal health, greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, we could work on establishing a corporate social responsibility strategy to reduce our carbon footprint, taking into consideration a travel policy, how we manage waste, including e-waste, and other environmental impacts of the Organisation's digital transformation.



The DG providing opening remarks to participants of the second Futures Literacy Lab © J. Polchar

More recently in October of last year, another [FLL on the Futures of Collaboration, Partnership and Multilateralism](#) was held in person with colleagues from across the Organisation. The futures studied at this lab helped us launch discussions and create opportunities for change and transformation. The question was raised on what WOAHA should consider doing to remain relevant and useful.

Background on our futures journey

Are you wondering why WOAHA is working so closely with futures methods? Interest in foresight has grown significantly as organisations better appreciate that embracing uncertainty and analysing multiple futures are perhaps the most important capacities needed to steer a course through the 21st century.

The first time staff, along with many of our Members, were exposed to foresight methodologies and futures thinking was during the development and presentation of the [technical item](#) at the 87th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates in 2019. It was entitled, 'How External Factors (e.g., climate change, conflicts, socioeconomics, trading patterns) Will Impact Veterinary Services and the Adaptations Required'. The ensuing [resolution](#) identified several WOAHA-led interventions including training in foresight methods and futures thinking approaches.

Therein lies the first challenge for our Organisation in supporting its Members. However, before we consider offering them training workshops that integrate foresight methodologies, we should first build some in-house capacity in this area. It is in our best interest to do so, as futures thinking aims to render our Organisation—and its staff—more resilient and relevant over time.

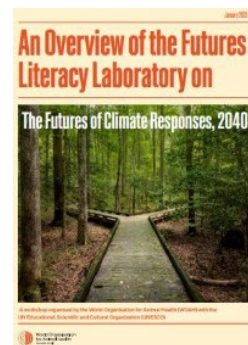
Are you interested in experimenting with Futures Literacy?

This April, a masterclass on Futures Literacy will be held for anyone who is interested – the objective is to unpack the theory and practice 'using the future' and Futures Literacy for strategy, policy development, team building, etc.

Contact Tianna Brand, Foresight Advisor (t.brand@woah.org)

More information:

Learn more about the first Futures Literacy Laboratory from the [overview](#).



We wish to thank Tianna Brand for submitting this article to *In-house Times*.

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