



# The Crucial Role of Foresight Scenarios in Policy Making

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In today's world, where global health issues are getting more and more complex, it's more important than ever to use foresight scenarios in policy making. Foresight scenarios are strategic tools that help policymakers prepare for the future by exploring different possible scenarios. One great example of how they can be used is in the development of early warning systems for diseases spread by sand flies, like leishmaniasis, which is a neglected tropical disease that poses a significant health risk in many parts of the world.

## **Understanding Foresight Scenarios:**

Foresight scenarios are a way of looking at what might happen in the future to inform decision-making processes. These scenarios are not predictions but rather plausible narratives or stories that consider different variables and their potential impacts.

By envisioning multiple futures, policymakers can identify risks, see where there might be opportunities, and come up with the best way to tackle new challenges.

## **The Case of Leishmaniasis:**

Leishmaniasis is a parasitic disease transmitted by the bite of infected female sand flies. It manifests in various ways, ranging from cutaneous (skin) lesions to visceral (internal organ) infections, that can be deadly if untreated. By improving our understanding of climate-disease relationships, we can enhance preparedness and minimize harm to communities at risk of sand fly-borne diseases.

## **What are Early Warning Systems?**

Early warning systems (EWS) are integrated systems that monitor, forecast and address hazards. They are critical tools for managing and reducing the impact of leishmaniasis.

These systems rely getting data in a timely manner, analysing it, and sharing it so that outbreaks can be predicted and responses can be made quickly. However, the effectiveness of EWS can be significantly enhanced through the integration of foresight scenarios.

### **Benefits of Foresight Scenarios in EWS for sand fly-borne diseases:**

There are some of the advantages of using foresight scenarios in EWS for sand fly-borne diseases, namely:

1. Anticipating Outbreaks: Foresight scenarios can help us predict when there might be an outbreak of leishmaniasis by looking at factors like climate change, migration patterns, and socio-economic conditions. For instance, rising temperatures and improper disposal of garbage and waste can expand the habitat of sand flies, increasing the risk of transmission.

2. Resource Allocation: By exploring different future scenarios, policymakers can better allocate resources to areas most likely to be affected.

This proactive approach makes sure that healthcare facilities, medical supplies, and trained personnel are available where they are needed most. So, at the national, regional, and local levels, scenarios enhance planning capacity, inform strategic public policy decisions, and guide major capital investments.

3. Policy Development: Foresight helps policymakers to identify new opportunities and challenges before they arise. Foresight scenarios provide a robust foundation for policymakers to develop policies that are resilient to future uncertainties, since they help policymakers to explore alternatives in a structured way, especially in uncertainty environments. Policies can be designed to tackle not only the current state of leishmaniasis but also potential future challenges, such as the emergence of drug-resistant strains.

4. Policy Innovation: Foresight encourages fresh thinking about the best policies to address future developments.

5. Community Engagement: Getting communities involved in creating foresight scenarios helps them feel like they have a stake in the process and are ready for what's ahead. Local knowledge and insights can be invaluable in creating realistic and effective scenarios that reflect the lived experiences of those most at risk.

6. International Collaboration: Leishmaniasis does not respect borders, and it is important the existence of an international cooperation. Foresight scenarios can facilitate collaboration by highlighting shared risks and encouraging joint efforts in surveillance, research, and response strategies.

**Key message:**

Foresight scenarios empower policymakers to make informed decisions, deal with uncertainty, and prepare for different possible futures.

Using foresight scenarios in policy making, especially in the context of early warning systems for leishmaniasis, is a great example of a forward-thinking approach to global health challenges. By anticipating future risks and opportunities, policymakers can develop more effective, resilient, and more inclusive strategies to fight this disease. As we face an uncertain future, its becoming clear that foresight scenarios are a valuable way to protect public health and ensure reliability and trust in science.

Investing in these strategic tools now will pave the way for a healthier, more prepared future.

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