Planning for National Development – Exploring the Ws
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Introduction
During the last decades, international development cooperation has moved from a purely economic focus to human-centered approaches emphasizing poverty-reduction and human-rights. In addition, the one-fits-all notion has been replaced by an understanding that all development efforts should reflect special local circumstances. With this new philosophy, many countries are now engaging in visioning processes to formulate their national development strategies. Ideally, these processes should foster country and people’s ownership of the vision, ensure broad-based participation, and help create an enabling policy environment for implementation (Cain, 2003). Some examples of visioning processes being adopted by developing countries are: The World Bank’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), the African Futures National Long Term Perspective Studies (NLTPS), Carter Center’s National Development Strategies (NDS), and the Generon Consulting’s Civic Scenario Projects (CSP).

Method
For the study, the author has used personal experience, an ample body of literature, discussions with development agents engaged in facilitating visioning processes in developing countries, as well as real case scenarios of four countries that are now engaged in visioning and formulating their national development strategy.

Information to be shared
Participants in the round-table discussions will examine the Ws (who, what, why, when, with what, where) of different visioning process, explore their challenges, analyze some of the problems and advantages of each, and discuss possible solutions.

Lessons learned
Some of the lessons learned address questions regarding: Who should be involved in the process, what should be their roles and responsibilities, and how to coordinate them; what methods can ensure broad-based participation, diversity, inclusion, and country ownership of the vision; how can the process help reduce poverty, ensure human rights, and build a strong civil society; what timeframe to follow; where do funding and resources come from; and what are the prospects for process success and implementation of the vision.

Educational importance
Preparing a national development strategy is not a simple process and depends on dynamic and complex socio-economic and political factors. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the process followed for putting together the vision be accepted as legitimate. The analysis of different visioning processes will help both facilitators in development agencies and developing country stakeholders to best articulate, choose, enhance, and implement their own.