



Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard *Project Requirements*

First Draft, 2 January 2018

Contents

1	1 Introduction	3
2	1.1 Version and Update Schedule.....	3
3	1.2 Scope of the SD VISta Program.....	3
4	1.3 Language	4
5	2 Project Design.....	4
6	2.1 Project Goals, Design and Long-term Viability	4
7	2.2 Stakeholder Engagement	6
8	2.3 Management Capacity.....	9
9	2.4 Legal Status and Rights	9
10	3 Benefits for People and Prosperity.....	11
11	3.1 Stakeholders at Project Start.....	12
12	3.2 Impact on Stakeholders.....	12
13	3.3 Monitoring of Impact on Stakeholders	13
14	4 Benefits for the Planet.....	13
15	4.1 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services at Project Start.....	13
16	4.2 Impact on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services.....	14
17	4.3 Monitoring of Impact on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services	14
18	5 Claims and Assets	15
19	5.1 OPTIONAL: SD VISta Claims.....	15
20	5.2 OPTIONAL: SD VISta Assets.....	15
21	5.3 Claims and Assets from Other Programs	16
22	6 Validation and Verification Requirements for the Project	17
23	7 Glossary.....	17

1	8 References.....	20
2	9 Acknowledgements.....	22
3	SD VSta Standard Development Advisory Committee	22
4	Appendix 1. Guidance.....	23
5		
6		

1 Introduction

The Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard (SD VISTa) is a global standard managed by VCS for projects that generate verifiable *sustainable development benefits*. SD VISTa projects must demonstrate how they will advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and deliver *benefits for people, their prosperity and the planet*, in accordance with the United Nations' 2015 resolution *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (hereafter referred to as the *2030 Agenda*).

The two principal documents of the SD VISTa Program are the *SD VISTa Program Guide* and the *SD VISTa Project Requirements*. The *SD VISTa Program Guide* describes the rules and requirements governing the SD VISTa Program and further describes the constituent parts of the program such as the project registration process, the VCS registry system, the methodology approval process and the accreditation requirements for validation/verification bodies. The document *SD VISTa Project Requirements* provides the requirements for developing projects as well as the requirements for validation, monitoring and verification of projects and related claims and assets. The *SD VISTa Program Guide*¹ should be read before using the *SD VISTa Project Requirements*.

This Section 1 sets out general information about the SD VISTa Program. Sections 2-5 are requirements for project design and implementation. Section 6 sets out requirements of the validation and verification process.

1.1 Version and Update Schedule

All information about version control under the SD VISTa Program is contained in the *SD VISTa Program Guide*.

This document will be updated from time-to-time and readers shall ensure that they are using the most current version of the document. The next review and potential update of this document is scheduled for 2020. Where external documents are referenced, and such documents are updated, the most recent version of the document shall be used.

1.2 Scope of the SD VISTa Program

The SD VISTa Program sets out rules and requirements for the transparent and credible design, implementation and verification of sustainable development projects. It applies to any kind of project that aims to deliver sustainable development benefits. Example project types include, but are not limited to, the following: *agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU)*, ecosystem-based adaptation, energy efficiency, food security, health care, housing, cooking technologies, infrastructure, renewable energy, sustainable livelihoods, transportation, water access and women's empowerment.

Projects that demonstrate compliance with the optional requirements bracketed and designated **M/VG** in this document prove that their beneficiaries include at least one marginalized and/or vulnerable group.

The scope of the SD VISTa Program does not include creation of credits for GHG emission reductions and removals (ERR), or cover carbon footprint assessments or carbon neutrality claims. These credits and claims may be generated by using another program, such as the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) for GHG ERRs, concurrently with SD VISTa. The concurrent application of SD VISTa and the VCS will be facilitated through combined templates and validation/verification procedures. VCS would also welcome opportunities to work with other programs on similar streamlining.

¹ The *SD VISTa Program Guide* is still under development. It will be open for review during the second SD VISTa public consultation period, which is planned for mid-2018.

1 1.3 Language

2 1.3.1 The operating language of the SD VISTa Program is English. SD VISTa Program documents may be
3 translated into other languages to facilitate local use. However, the English versions of SD VISTa Program
4 documents, and the interpretation of same, shall take precedence over any other language translations.

5 1.3.2 The project description, validation report, monitoring report, verification report and all other
6 documentation (including any and all appendices) required under the SD VISTa Program shall be written
7 in English. For projects located in countries for which English is not a widely used language among
8 project *stakeholders*², the project proponent shall develop at least a summary of the project description
9 and/or monitoring report in a relevant local or regional language. This shall be the same summary
10 disseminated to project stakeholders (as described in Section 2.2.1).

11 2 Project Design

12 This section is for the demonstration of the project's objectives and plans for achieving them,
13 including stakeholder engagement and rights.

14 2.1 Project Goals, Design and Long-term Viability

15 *Concept*

16 The project has clear sustainable development objectives and is designed to meet these objectives.
17 Opportunities and threats are identified and managed to generate and maintain project benefits within
18 and beyond the life of the project.

19 *Indicators*

20 Project Overview

21 2.1.1 Identify and provide contact details for the project proponent(s).

22 2.1.2 Define the project's sustainable development objective(s).

23 2.1.3 Identify at least one Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target for which the project will
24 demonstrate positive *impact*.

25 2.1.4 Provide one or more *causal chains* to map the cause-and-effect relationships resulting from the
26 project's activities. These chains shall describe the project's outputs, outcomes and impacts (intended
27 and unintended) for people, their prosperity and the planet.

28 2.1.4.1 Activities intended to generate the project's predicted sustainable development benefits,
29 including the SDG Target(s) identified in Section 2.1.3, shall be monitored (and this monitoring
30 described in Section 3.3 and/or 4.3, as appropriate). If the project will generate an SD VISTa
31 asset, the asset creation process shall be included in the causal chain(s).

32 2.1.4.2 All potentially negative outputs, outcomes and impacts described in the causal chain(s)
33 shall be monitored (and this monitoring described in Section 3.3 and/or 4.3, as appropriate) and
34 mitigated (per Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 and/or 4.2.3 and 4.2.4, as appropriate).

35 Note: If the causal chain(s) do not indicate any significant negative or positive impacts of *project activities*
36 on stakeholders, the project is exempted from the requirements of Section 3 (Benefits for People and

² Throughout the SD VISTa Program, unless otherwise specified, the term 'stakeholder' means those stakeholders in the geographic vicinity of the project who could potentially be affected by project activities. Other potentially interested stakeholders—e.g. local or international NGOs—are identified as such.

1 Prosperity). If causal chain(s) do not indicate any significant negative or positive impacts of project
 2 activities for *natural capital* and *ecosystem services*, the project is exempted from the requirements of
 3 Section 4 (Benefits for the Planet). The project proponent shall demonstrate that project activities have
 4 generated net positive impacts by meeting the requirements of Section 3 or Section 4 or both.

5 2.1.5 Provide a map specifying the project location as follows:

6 2.1.5.1 Project location for non-AFOLU projects shall be specified by a single geodetic coordinate.
 7 Where there are multiple *project activity instances*, the following applies:

- 8 a. Where it is reasonable to do so, a geodetic coordinate shall be provided for each instance
 9 and provided in a KML file; or
- 10 b. Where there are a large number project activity instances (e.g., for cookstoves or energy
 11 efficient light bulb distribution), at least one geodetic coordinate shall be provided, together
 12 with sufficient additional geographic information (with respect to the location of the instances)
 13 to enable appropriate sampling by the *validation/verification body*.

14 2.1.5.2 Project location for grouped projects shall be specified using geodetic polygons to delineate
 15 the project's geographic area or areas and provided in a KML file.

16 2.1.5.3 Project location for AFOLU projects shall be specified using geodetic polygons to delineate
 17 the geographic area of each AFOLU project activity and provided in a KML file.

18 2.1.6 If the project's sustainable development benefits will be experienced outside the project location (as
 19 identified in Section 2.1.5), those areas shall be specified by impact using geodetic polygons to delineate
 20 the geographic area and provided in a KML file.

21 2.1.7 Define the *project start date* and *project lifetime*, and, if the project will generate one or more SD
 22 VISTa assets, define and justify a chosen *crediting period*. Define an implementation schedule, indicating
 23 key dates and milestones in the project's development.

24 Stakeholder Identification

25 2.1.8 Explain the process of stakeholder identification and analysis used to identify all *stakeholder groups*
 26 that could potentially be affected by the project.

27 2.1.9 List the stakeholder groups identified using the process explained in 2.1.6. All project stakeholders
 28 must be part of at least one stakeholder group. [M/VG: Clearly identify at least one marginalized and/or
 29 vulnerable group from among the project's stakeholders.]

30 Threat Management and Long-term Viability

31 2.1.10 Identify likely natural and human-induced threats to the expected sustainable development
 32 benefits during the project lifetime and outline measures needed and taken to mitigate these
 33 threats. Include shorter and longer term threats (those within the project lifetime and beyond the project
 34 lifetime, respectively), threats related to continued stakeholder willingness to participate in the project,
 35 threats related to the ability to adapt to climate change and climate variability, etc.

36 2.1.11 Describe the measures needed and taken to maintain and enhance the sustainable development
 37 benefits beyond the project lifetime.

38 2.1.12 Demonstrate that the financial mechanisms utilized by the project, including actual and projected
 39 revenues from sustainable development claims, units or other sources, provide an adequate flow of funds
 40 for project implementation to achieve the project's sustainable development benefits.

41 Grouped Projects

42 Sections 2.1.13-2.1.15 only apply to grouped projects. Grouped projects are projects structured to
 43 facilitate the expansion of a project activity subsequent to project validation. Validation is based upon the

1 initial project activity instances identified in the project description. The project description sets out the
 2 geographic areas within which new project activity instances may be developed and the eligibility criteria
 3 for their inclusion. New instances meeting these pre-established criteria may then be added to the project
 4 subsequent to project validation, as set out in the sections below.

5 2.1.13 Clearly define one or more geographic areas within which project activity instances may be
 6 developed and stakeholders that may affect or be affected by the project. Identify any new land area(s)
 7 and stakeholders that have been included in the project since the last SD VISTa validation or verification.

8 2.1.14 Specify the eligibility criteria and process for project expansion under the grouped project.
 9 Demonstrate that these have been met for any new land area(s) and stakeholder groups that have been
 10 included in the project since the last SD VISTa validation or verification.

11 These eligibility criteria shall ensure that new project activity instances:

- 12 a. Adopt the project activities specified in the project description.
- 13 b. Implement the project activities in the same manner as specified in the project description.
- 14 c. Are subject to the same scenarios at project start with respect to stakeholders and natural capital
 15 and ecosystem services as determined for initial project instance(s).
- 16 d. Are subject to the same processes for stakeholder engagement described in Section 2.2.
- 17 e. Are subject to the same processes for respect for rights to lands, territories and resources--
 18 including free, prior and informed consent--described in Section 2.5.
- 19 f. Have similar monitoring elements.

20 2.1.15 Establish *scalability limits*, if applicable, and describe measures needed and taken to address any
 21 threats to sustainable development benefits if the project expands beyond those limits.

22 **2.2 Stakeholder Engagement**

23 *Concept*

24 Project stakeholders are involved in the project on an ongoing basis through full and *effective consultation*
 25 and participation, including access to information, participation in decision-making and implementation,
 26 and free, prior and informed consent. Timely and adequate information is accessible in a language and
 27 manner understood by each stakeholder group. Effective and timely consultations are conducted with all
 28 relevant stakeholders and participation is ensured, as appropriate, of those who want to be involved.

29 Effective feedback and grievance redress procedures are established.

30 Best practices are adopted for worker relations and safety.

31 *Indicators*

32 Access to Information

33 2.2.1 Describe how full project documentation, including project description and monitoring reports as
 34 they become available, has been made accessible to all stakeholders. [M/VG: Special attention should be
 35 paid to providing access to full project documentation by those that are vulnerable and marginalized].
 36 Describe how summary project documentation (including how to access full documentation) has been
 37 actively disseminated to all stakeholder groups in relevant local or regional languages and how widely
 38 publicized information meetings have been held with all stakeholder groups.

39 2.2.1.1 Summary documentation disseminated to stakeholders prior to validation shall include at
 40 least the information in 2.1.

41 2.2.1.2 Summary documentation disseminated to stakeholders prior to verification shall at least
 42 include information on monitoring results showing the following:

- 1 • That the project has delivered net positive impacts for people or their prosperity (Section
- 2 3) and/or for the planet (Section 4).
- 3 • If the project has not generated net positive impacts in Section 3 or Section 4, that it has
- 4 done no harm in the section where it did not achieve net positive impact.
- 5 • The project's contributions to the SDG Target(s) identified in Section 2.1.3.

6 2.2.2 Explain how relevant and adequate information about potential costs, risks and benefits to all
7 stakeholders has been provided to them in a form they understand and in a timely manner prior to any
8 decision they may be asked to make with respect to participation in the project.

9 Costs, risks and benefits to all stakeholder groups should be identified using a participatory and
10 transparent process. All assessment of costs, risks and benefits shall include those that are direct and
11 indirect and include those related to social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects and to human
12 rights and rights to lands territories and resources. Costs include those related to responsibilities and also
13 opportunity costs.

14 2.2.3 Describe the measures taken, and communications methods used, to explain to project
15 stakeholders the process for SD VISTa validation and/or verification by an independent
16 validation/verification body, providing them with timely information about the validation/verification body's
17 site visit before the site visit occurs and facilitating direct and independent communication between them
18 or their representatives and the validation/verification body.

19 Consultation

20 2.2.4 Describe how project stakeholders, including all stakeholder groups, have influenced project design
21 and implementation through effective consultation, particularly with a view to optimizing benefits for
22 *marginalized and/or vulnerable groups* if relevant, and respecting local customs, values and institutions.

23 2.2.4.1 Project proponents shall document consultations and indicate if and how the project
24 design and implementation has been revised based on such input. [M/VG: Consultations with at
25 least one marginalized and/or vulnerable group shall be documented.]

26 2.2.4.2 A plan shall be developed and implemented to continue communication and consultation
27 between the project proponents and all stakeholder groups about the project and its impacts to
28 facilitate *adaptive management* throughout the life of the project. [M/VG: A communication and
29 consultation plan for marginalized and/or vulnerable groups in particular shall be identified and
30 implemented.]

31 2.2.5 Demonstrate that all consultations and participatory processes have been undertaken
32 with stakeholders directly or through their legitimate representatives, ensuring adequate levels of
33 information sharing with the members of the groups.

34 Participation in Decision-making and Implementation

35 2.2.6 Describe the measures needed and taken to enable effective participation, as appropriate, of all
36 stakeholder groups that want and need to be involved in project design, implementation, monitoring and
37 evaluation throughout the project lifetime, and describe how they have been implemented in a culturally
38 appropriate and gender sensitive manner.

39 Anti-Discrimination

40 2.2.7 Describe the measures needed and taken to ensure that the project proponent and all other entities
41 involved in project design and implementation are not involved or complicit in any form of discrimination
42 or sexual harassment with respect to the project.

1 Grievance Redress Procedure

2 2.2.8 Demonstrate that a clear feedback and grievance redress procedure has been established to
3 address disputes with stakeholders that may arise during project planning, implementation and evaluation
4 with respect but not limited to, free, prior and informed consent, rights to lands, territories and resources,
5 benefit sharing, participation, discrimination and sexual harassment.

6 The feedback and grievance redress procedure shall include a process for receiving, hearing, responding
7 to and attempting to resolve grievances within a reasonable time period. The feedback and grievance
8 redress procedure shall take into account traditional methods that stakeholders use to resolve conflicts.

9 The feedback and grievance redress procedure shall have three stages with reasonable time limits for
10 each of the following stages:

- 11 a. The project proponent shall attempt to amicably resolve all grievances and provide a written
12 response to the grievances in a manner that is culturally appropriate.
- 13 b. Any grievances that are not resolved by amicable negotiations shall be referred to mediation by a
14 neutral third party.
- 15 c. Any grievances that are not resolved through mediation shall be referred either to a) arbitration, to
16 the extent allowed by the laws of the relevant jurisdiction or b) competent courts in the relevant
17 jurisdiction, without prejudice to a party's ability to submit the grievance to a competent
18 supranational adjudicatory body, if any.

19 2.2.9 The feedback and grievance redress procedure shall be publicized and accessible to all project
20 stakeholders, including any *interested stakeholder*. Grievances and project responses, including any
21 redress, shall be documented and made publicly available.

22 Worker Relations

23 2.2.10 Describe measures needed and taken to provide orientation and training for the project's *workers*
24 and relevant individual stakeholders with an objective of building locally useful skills and knowledge to
25 increase local participation in project implementation. These capacity building efforts should target a wide
26 range of people from among the stakeholders. Identify how training is passed on to new workers when
27 there is staff turnover, so that local capacity will not be lost. [M/VG: Special attention shall be given to
28 marginalized and/or vulnerable people.]

29 2.2.11 Demonstrate that stakeholders are given an equal opportunity to fill all work positions (including
30 management) if the job requirements are met. Explain how workers are selected for positions. [M/VG:
31 Describe the measures needed and taken to ensure that members of marginalized and/or vulnerable
32 groups are given a fair chance to fill positions for which they can be trained.]

33 2.2.12 Submit a list of all relevant laws and regulations covering worker's rights in the host
34 country. Describe measures needed and taken to inform workers about their rights. Provide assurance
35 that the project meets or exceeds all applicable laws and/or regulations covering worker rights and, where
36 relevant, demonstrate how compliance is achieved. Project proponents shall demonstrate conformity with
37 and uphold the principles and rights of work addressed in the Core Labour Conventions of
38 the International Labour Organization (ILO)³; this may be done at least in part by demonstrating the
39 degree to which ILO requirements are addressed in national and regional regulations.

³ The ILO Core Labour conventions are the [Forced Labour Convention, 1930 \(No. 29\)](#), [Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 \(No. 87\)](#), [Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No. 98\)](#), [Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No. 100\)](#), [Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 \(No. 105\)](#), [Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#), [Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#) and the [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No. 182\)](#).

1 2.2.13 Comprehensively assess situations and occupations that might arise through the implementation
 2 of the project and pose a substantial risk to worker or other stakeholder safety. Describe measures
 3 needed and taken to inform workers and relevant stakeholders of risks and to explain how to minimize
 4 such risks. Where worker or stakeholder safety cannot be guaranteed, project proponents shall show how
 5 the risks are minimized using best work practices in line with stakeholders' culture and customary
 6 practices.

7 **2.3 Management Capacity**

8 *Concept*

9 The project has adequate human and financial resources for effective implementation.

10 *Indicators*

11 2.3.1 Describe the project's governance structures and roles and responsibilities of all the entities
 12 involved in project design and implementation. For grouped projects, identify any new entities involved in
 13 the project since the last SD VISTa validation or verification.

14 2.3.2 Document key technical skills required to implement the project successfully, including stakeholder
 15 engagement, natural capital and ecosystem services assessment and management and, if appropriate,
 16 measurement and monitoring skills for the project-specific claim(s) and asset(s).

17 2.3.3 Document the management team's expertise and prior experience implementing this type and scale
 18 of project. If relevant experience is lacking, the proponents shall either demonstrate how other
 19 organizations are partnered with to support the project or they have a recruitment strategy to fill the gaps.

20 2.3.4 Document the financial health of the implementing organization(s).

21 2.3.5 Provide assurance that the project proponent and any of the other entities involved in project design
 22 and implementation are not involved in or are not complicit in any form of corruption such as bribery,
 23 embezzlement, fraud, favoritism, cronyism, nepotism, extortion, and collusion, and describe any
 24 measures needed and taken to be able to provide this assurance.

25 **2.4 Legal Status and Rights**

26 *Concept*

27 The project is based on an internationally accepted legal framework, complies with relevant statutory and
 28 customary requirements and has necessary approvals from the appropriate national, sub-national (e.g.
 29 state), local and indigenous authorities.

30 The project recognizes, respects and supports rights to lands, territories and resources, including the
 31 statutory and *customary rights of Indigenous Peoples* and others within its stakeholders. The free, prior
 32 and informed consent (as described in Section 2.4.2) of relevant *property rights holders* has been
 33 obtained at every stage of the project.

34 Project activities do not lead to involuntary removal or relocation of property rights holders from their
 35 lands or territories and do not force them to relocate activities important to their culture or livelihood. Any
 36 proposed removal or relocation occurs only after obtaining free, prior and informed consent from the
 37 relevant property rights holders.

38 *Indicators*

39 Respect for Rights to Lands, Territories and Resources and Free, Prior and Informed Consent

40 2.4.1 Describe and map statutory and customary tenure/use/access/management rights to lands,
 41 territories and resources affected by project activities including individual and collective rights and
 42 including overlapping or conflicting rights. If applicable, describe measures needed and taken by the

1 project to help to secure statutory rights. Demonstrate that all *property rights* are recognized, respected
 2 and supported.

3 2.4.2 Demonstrate with documented consultations and agreements that:

4 2.4.2.1 The project will not encroach uninvited on private property, community property, or
 5 government property.

6 2.4.2.2 The free, prior and informed consent has been obtained of those whose property rights
 7 are affected by the project through a transparent, agreed process.

8 Free, Prior and Informed Consent is defined as:

- 9 a. Free means no coercion, intimidation, manipulation, threat and bribery;
- 10 b. Prior means sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities
 11 and respecting the time requirements of their decision-making processes;
- 12 c. Informed means that information is provided that covers (at least) the following aspects:
 13 i. The nature, size, pace, reversibility and scope of any proposed project or activity;
 14 ii. The reason/s or purpose of the project and/or activity;
 15 iii. The duration of the above;
 16 iv. The locality of areas that will be affected;
 17 v. A preliminary assessment of the likely economic, social, cultural and
 18 environmental impact, including potential risks and fair and equitable benefit
 19 sharing in a context that respects the precautionary principle;
 20 vi. Personnel likely to be involved in the execution of the proposed project (including
 21 Indigenous Peoples, private sector staff, research institutions, government
 22 employees and others); and
 23 vii. Procedures that the project may entail.
- 24 d. Consent means that there is the option of withholding consent and that the parties have
 25 reasonably understood that option.

26 Collective rights holders shall be able to participate through their own freely chosen
 27 representatives or institutions following a transparent process for obtaining their Free, Prior and
 28 Informed Consent that they have defined.

29 2.4.2.3 Appropriate restitution or compensation has been allocated to any parties whose lands
 30 have been or will be affected by the project.

31 2.4.3 Demonstrate that project activities do not lead to involuntary removal or relocation of property rights
 32 holders from their lands or territories and do not force property rights holders to relocate activities
 33 important to their culture or livelihood. If any relocation of habitation or activities important to their culture
 34 or livelihood is undertaken within the terms of an agreement, the project proponents shall demonstrate
 35 that the agreement was made with the free, prior and informed consent of those concerned and includes
 36 provisions for just and fair compensation.

37 2.4.4 Identify any illegal activities taking place (e.g. illegal logging) that could affect the project's
 38 sustainable development impacts and describe measures needed and taken to mitigate or reduce these
 39 activities so that project benefits are not derived from illegal activities.

40 2.4.5 Identify any ongoing or unresolved conflicts or disputes over rights to lands, territories and
 41 resources and also any disputes that were resolved during the last ten years, or last twenty years where
 42 such records exist. If applicable, describe measures needed and taken to resolve conflicts or disputes.
 43 Demonstrate that no activity is undertaken by the project that could prejudice the outcome of an
 44 unresolved dispute over lands, territories and resources affected by project activities.

1 Legal Status

2 2.4.6 Submit a list of all national, sub-national and *local laws* and regulations in the host country that are
3 relevant to the project activities. Provide assurance that the project is complying with these and, where
4 relevant, demonstrate how compliance is achieved.

5 2.4.7 Document that the project has approval from the appropriate authorities, including the established
6 formal and/or traditional authorities customarily required by stakeholders.

7 2.4.8 Demonstrate by providing one or more of the following types of evidence that the project
8 proponent(s) has the unconditional, undisputed and unencumbered ability to claim that the project will or
9 did generate or cause the project's sustainable development benefits:

10 2.4.8.1 *Project ownership* arising or granted under statute, regulation or decree by a competent
11 authority.

12 2.4.8.2 Project ownership arising under law.

13 2.4.8.3 Project ownership arising by virtue of a statutory, property or contractual right in the plant,
14 equipment or process that generates sustainable development benefits (where the project
15 proponent has not been divested of such project ownership).

16 2.4.8.4 Project ownership arising by virtue of a statutory, property or contractual right in the land,
17 vegetation or conservational or management process that generates sustainable development
18 benefits (where the project proponent has not been divested of such project ownership).

19 2.54.8.5 An enforceable and irrevocable agreement with the holder of the statutory, property or
20 contractual right in the plant, equipment or process that generates sustainable development
21 benefits which vests project ownership in the project proponent.

22 2.4.8.6 An enforceable and irrevocable agreement with the holder of the statutory, property or
23 contractual right in the land, vegetation or conservational or management process that
24 generates sustainable development benefits which vests project ownership in the project
25 proponent.

26 2.4.8.7 Project ownership arising from the implementation or enforcement of laws, statutes or
27 regulatory frameworks that require activities be undertaken or incentivize activities that generate
28 sustainable development benefits.

29 **3 Benefits for People and Prosperity**

30 This section is for the demonstration of a project's impacts on all stakeholders. [M/VG: Stakeholders
31 include at least one marginalized and/or vulnerable group.] If no outcomes or impacts primarily related to
32 stakeholders have been identified in the project's causal chain(s) or by stakeholders (through ongoing
33 communication and consultation, per Section 2.2.4.2), Section 3 does not apply.

34 Note: If the project has no significant negative or positive impacts on stakeholders, the project shall
35 demonstrate that it has generated net positive impacts for natural capital and/or ecosystem services using
36 Section 4 Benefits for the Planet.

37 For this section, project proponents must choose to demonstrate net benefits by using either the *scenario*
38 *method* or the *deemed estimates method* (see the Guidance for this section for more information about
39 these methods).

1 **3.1 Stakeholders at Project Start**

2 *Concept*

3 Original conditions of stakeholder *well-being* and, optionally, expected changes under the *without-project*
4 *scenario* are described.

5 *Indicators*

6 3.1.1 Describe stakeholders (listed in Section 2.1.7) at the start of the project and significant changes
7 in stakeholder groups in the past, including stakeholder well-being information and any community
8 characteristics. Describe the social, economic and cultural diversity within and between the stakeholder
9 groups and the interactions between stakeholder groups.

10 3.1.2 If using the scenario method for quantifying the impact of project activities, describe the expected
11 changes in stakeholder well-being under the without-project scenario. Include a without-project scenario
12 for all SDG Targets identified in Section 2.1.3 associated with people or their prosperity and any
13 stakeholder well-being impacts that will be used as *SD VISTa claims* or *SD VISTa assets* (as identified in
14 Section 5.2.1 or 5.3.2).

15 **3.2 Impact on Stakeholders**

16 *Concept*

17 The project generates net positive impacts on or does no harm to the well-being of any stakeholder
18 group.

19 *Indicators*

20 3.2.1 Use appropriate methodologies to assess the impacts, including expected and actual, direct and
21 indirect benefits, costs and threats, on each of the stakeholder groups identified in Section 2.1.6 resulting
22 from project activities under the *with-project scenario*. The assessment of the type and magnitude of
23 impacts shall include changes in stakeholder well-being due to project activities and an evaluation of
24 impacts by the affected groups.

25 3.2.1.1 This assessment shall be based on clearly defined and defensible assumptions.

26 3.2.1.2 The evaluation of well-being changes shall at least include changes that are based on
27 activities that comply with statutory laws or conform with customary rights.

28 3.2.1.3 This assessment shall include any SDG Target(s) associated with people and their
29 prosperity identified in Section 2.1.3 and any stakeholder well-being impacts that will be used as
30 SD VISTa claims or assets.

31 3.2.2 Describe measures needed and taken to mitigate any negative impacts on stakeholder groups
32 consistent with the precautionary principle.

33 3.2.3 Demonstrate that the net stakeholder well-being impacts of the project are positive for all
34 stakeholder groups. An exception may be made if a stakeholder group is not significantly affected by, or
35 participating in, the project, in which case, net well-being impacts must not be negative for that group.

36 Note: If using the scenario method, net benefit should be demonstrated by comparing the projected or
37 present situation with stakeholders' anticipated well-being conditions under the without-
38 project development scenario. If using the deemed estimates method, estimate the impact by multiplying
39 the number of activities implemented by the project by deemed estimate values that represent the change
40 per activity taken (such values will be different for different activities).

1 **3.3 Monitoring of Impact on Stakeholders**

2 *Concept*

3 Stakeholder impact monitoring assesses changes in stakeholder well-being resulting from project
4 activities for all stakeholder groups.

5 *Indicators*

6 3.3.1 Develop and implement a monitoring plan that identifies the stakeholder groups to be monitored, the
7 types of measurements, the sampling methods and the frequency of monitoring and reporting. Monitoring
8 variables shall be directly linked to the project's objectives for stakeholder groups and to expected
9 outputs, outcomes and impacts (negative and positive) identified in the project's causal chain related to
10 the well-being of stakeholders (described in Section 2.1.4). Monitoring shall assess differentiated impacts,
11 including any benefits, costs and risks, for each of the stakeholder groups and shall include an evaluation
12 by the affected stakeholders.

13 The monitoring plan shall be designed to collect data sufficient to demonstrate the impact of project
14 activities on any SDG Target(s) associated with people and their prosperity identified in Section 2.1.3 and
15 any impacts on stakeholder well-being that will be used as SD VISTa claims or assets.

16 3.3.2 Disseminate the monitoring plan, and any results of monitoring undertaken in accordance with the
17 monitoring plan, ensuring that they are made publicly available on the internet and summaries are
18 communicated to stakeholders through appropriate means.

19 **4 Benefits for the Planet**

20 This section is for the demonstration of a project's impacts on natural capital and ecosystem services. If
21 no outcomes or impacts primarily related to natural capital or ecosystem services have been identified in
22 the project's causal chain(s) or by stakeholders (through ongoing communication and consultation, per
23 Section 2.2.4.2), Section 4 does not apply.

24 Note: If the project has no significant negative or positive impacts on natural capital or ecosystem
25 services, the project shall demonstrate that it has generated net positive impacts for stakeholders by
26 using Section 3 Benefits for People and Prosperity.

27 For this section, project proponents must choose to demonstrate net benefits by using either the scenario
28 method or the deemed estimates method (see the guidance for Section 3 Benefits for People and
29 Prosperity for more information about these methods).

30 **4.1 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services at Project Start**

31 *Concept*

32 Original natural capital and ecosystem services to be affected by the project and, optionally, expected
33 changes under the without-project scenario are described.

34 *Indicators*

35 4.1.1 Describe natural capital and ecosystem services at the start of the project in areas
36 potentially affected by the project and possible threats to these natural capital and ecosystem services
37 using appropriate methodologies.

38 4.1.2 If using the scenario method for quantifying the impact of project activities, describe how natural
39 capital and ecosystem services conditions potentially affected by the project would be affected in the
40 without-project scenario. Include the without-project scenario for all SDG Targets identified in Section

1 2.1.3 associated with the planet and any natural capital and ecosystem services impacts that will be used
2 as SD VISTa claims or assets (as identified in Section 5.2.1 or 5.3.2).

3 **4.2 Impact on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services**

4 *Concept*

5 The project generates net positive impacts on or does no harm to natural capital and ecosystem services.

6 *Indicators*

7 4.2.1 Use appropriate methodologies to estimate changes in natural capital and ecosystem services,
8 including assessment of expected and actual, positive and negative, direct and indirect impacts, resulting
9 from project activities under the with-project scenario.

10 4.2.1.1 This estimate shall be based on clearly defined and defensible assumptions.

11 4.2.1.2 This estimate shall include any SDG Target(s) associated with the planet identified in
12 Section 2.1.3 and any natural capital and ecosystem services impacts that will be used as SD
13 VISTa claims or assets.

14 4.2.2 Demonstrate that the project's net impacts on natural capital and ecosystem services in directly
15 affected areas are positive.

16 Note: If using the scenario method, net benefit should be demonstrated by comparing the projected or
17 present situation with stakeholders' anticipated well-being conditions under the without-
18 project development scenario. If using the deemed estimates method, estimate the impact by multiplying
19 the number of activities implemented by the project by deemed estimate values that represent the change
20 per activity taken (such values will be different for different activities).

21 4.2.3 Describe measures needed and taken to mitigate negative impacts on natural capital and
22 ecosystem services consistent with the precautionary principle.

23 4.2.4 Evaluate any unmitigated negative impacts on natural capital and ecosystem services indirectly
24 affected by the project and compare them with benefits of the project for natural capital and ecosystem
25 services it directly affects. Justify and demonstrate that the net effect of the project on natural capital and
26 ecosystem services is positive.

27 4.2.5 If relevant, describe possible adverse effects of *alien species* used by the project on the region's
28 environment, including impacts on *native species* and disease introduction or facilitation. Justify any use
29 of alien species over native species.

30 4.2.6 If relevant, describe the possible adverse effects of, and justify the use of, fertilizers, chemical
31 pesticides, biological control agents and other inputs used for the project.

32 4.2.7 If relevant, describe the process for identifying, classifying and managing all waste products and
33 pollution resulting from project activities.

34 **4.3 Monitoring of Impact on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services**

35 *Concept*

36 Natural capital and ecosystem services impact monitoring assesses the changes in natural capital and
37 ecosystem services resulting from project activities directly and indirectly affected by project activities.

38 *Indicators*

39 4.3.1 Develop and implement a monitoring plan that identifies natural capital and ecosystem services
40 variables to be monitored, the areas to be monitored, the sampling methods and the frequency of

1 monitoring and reporting. Monitoring variables shall be directly linked to the project's natural capital and
 2 ecosystem services objectives and to expected activities, outcomes and impacts (negative and positive)
 3 identified in the project's causal chain related to natural capital and ecosystem services (described in
 4 Section 2.1.4).

5 The monitoring plan shall be designed to collect data sufficient to demonstrate the impact of project
 6 activities on any SDG Target(s) associated with the planet identified in Section 2.1.3 and any natural
 7 capital and ecosystem services impacts that will be used as SD VISTa claims or assets.

8 4.3.3 Disseminate the monitoring plan and the results of monitoring, ensuring that they are made publicly
 9 available on the internet and summaries are communicated to stakeholders through appropriate means.

10 5 Claims and Assets

11 Projects that earn validation and verification to SD VISTa may also make claims on individual elements of
 12 sustainable development and generate, register and transact related social and environmental assets.

13 5.1 OPTIONAL: SD VISTa Claims

14 An SD VISTa claim is a user-defined statement about a specific sustainable development benefit validated
 15 and verified by an SD VISTa-accredited auditor. Such claims are noted along with the project's SD VISTa
 16 validated or verified status in the validation/verification body's report and statement.

17 SD VISTa claim(s) shall be verified at each verification audit.

18 *Concept*

19 An SD VISTa claim can be established for any net positive sustainable development impact directly
 20 resulting from project design and implementation. The claim(s) and its/their justification are identified by
 21 project proponents in the project design description.

22 *Indicators*

23 5.1.1 Identify any distinct benefits to people and their prosperity (associated with Section 3) or the planet
 24 (associated with Section 4) intended for use as claims.

25 5.1.2 Justify claims by demonstrating clear attribution of the benefit described in the claim to the project's
 26 monitored outputs, outcomes and impacts, referring to actions taken and data collected to meet the
 27 requirements of Sections 3 and 4 of this document as appropriate.

28 5.1.3 To make a general claim of net positive greenhouse gas mitigation impact, the project should use
 29 the [forthcoming] SD VISTa Climate Module. No credit for GHG emission reductions and removals (ERR),
 30 carbon footprint assessment or carbon neutrality can be claimed as the result of using the SD VISTa
 31 Climate Module. See Section 5.3 for requirements on creating GHG ERR credits using established
 32 programs such as the Verified Carbon Standard.

33 5.2 OPTIONAL: SD VISTa Assets

34 An SD VISTa asset is a user-defined environmental or social unit that is recorded on and, if desired,
 35 transacted through the VCS registry system. SD VISTa assets may be sold and/or retired. All assets
 36 associated with SD VISTa shall be generated using a methodology approved by VCS. Details on the SD
 37 VISTa methodology approval process can be found in the *SD VISTa Program Guide*. Approved
 38 methodologies are [will be] available on the VCS website.

39 An account of SD VISTa assets shall be verified at one or more audits.

1 Note: Requirements for the SD VISTa methodology development and approval process will be set out in
 2 the *SD VISTa Program Guide*. Such methodologies will be developed by users and be approved
 3 according to a set of criteria. VCS aims to support the development of methodologies for a broad
 4 spectrum of assets, but where it makes sense will encourage the use and expansion, revision and/or
 5 consolidation of existing methodologies in order to avoid proliferation of methodologies with only minor
 6 differences, and to promote coalescence around broadly accepted asset types.

7 *Concept*

8 An SD VISTa asset is generated and documented using a methodology that has been approved for use
 9 with SD VISTa by VCS. The asset and justification for its creation are identified by project proponents in
 10 the project description.

11 *Indicators*

12 5.2.1 For user-defined assets with no existing methodology, set out a methodology and apply for approval
 13 according to the criteria and procedure described in the *SD VISTa Program Guide*. The methodology must
 14 be approved prior to the project's validation.

15 5.2.2 Provide the title and version number of the VCS-approved methodology for quantification of an SD
 16 VISTa asset applied to the project.

17 5.2.3 Demonstrate and justify how the project activities meet each of the methodology's applicability
 18 conditions. Address each applicability condition separately.

19 5.2.4 Describe and justify any methodology deviations. Include evidence to demonstrate the following:

- 20 • The deviation will not negatively impact the conservativeness of the quantification of the benefit
 21 being quantified.
- 22 • The deviation relates only to the criteria and procedures for monitoring or measurement, and
 23 does not relate to any other part of the methodology.

24 5.2.5 Demonstrate how the methodology has been adhered to as relevant in project design and
 25 implementation, referring to actions taken and data collected to meet the requirements of Sections 3 and
 26 4 of this document as appropriate.

27 **5.3 Claims and Assets from Other Programs**

28 *Concept*

29 The project identifies any claims or assets it has generated under programs other than SD VISTa. Assets
 30 created using SD VISTa cannot be double counted with those created under other programs.

31 *Indicators*

32 5.3.1 Indicate whether the project has been registered or is seeking registration under any other program
 33 related to its sustainable development benefits (e.g., the Verified Carbon Standard, the Climate,
 34 Community & Biodiversity Standards, the W+ Standard, etc.). Where the project has been registered
 35 under another program, provide its identification number and status under that program. If no registration
 36 exists or will exist, Sections 5.3.2-5.3.4 do not apply.

37 5.3.2 Indicate whether the project has been rejected by, attempted certification unsuccessfully or
 38 withdrawn from any other programs. Where any of these situations has occurred, provide the relevant
 39 information, including the reason(s) for the rejection and justification of eligibility under the SD VISTa
 40 Program.

41 5.3.3 Indicate whether the project will be or has issued credits under any other program that will use the
 42 SD VISTa label.

1 5.3.4 Where claims and assets generated by the project under other programs cover the same or similar
 2 benefits as SD VISTa claims and SD VISTa assets, the relationship between such benefits shall be
 3 explained. For example, where a wind power project makes an SD VISTa claim about its contribution to
 4 SDG Target 7.2 (increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix) and
 5 generates Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) under the Verified Carbon Standard, it shall explain how the SD
 6 VISTa claim and the VCUs are related.

7 5.3.5 Specify how double counting of assets created under other programs with SD VISTa claims and SD
 8 VISTa assets is avoided, particularly for offsets or for assets that may be used in a compliance
 9 mechanism.

10 5.3.6 All assets for which an SD VISTa label exists shall be designated by that label. For example,
 11 where a project generates VCUs under the Verified Carbon Standard for a period of time completely
 12 encompassed within a period for which that project has been verified to SD VISTa, those VCUs must be
 13 designated by the SD VISTa label.⁴

14 6 Validation and Verification Requirements for the Project

15 The SD VISTa certification process involves two steps: validation and verification. Validation is the
 16 independent assessment of the project by a validation/verification body that determines whether the
 17 project complies with the SD VISTa rules. Verification is the periodic ex-post independent assessment by
 18 a validation/verification body, conducted in accordance with the SD VISTa rules, of the sustainable
 19 development outcomes and impacts that have occurred as a result of the project during the monitoring
 20 period. Validation and verification may be undertaken concurrently.

21 A validation audit will cover the requirements in this document related to the project's design. A
 22 verification audit will assess those requirements related to the project's ongoing implementation and the
 23 monitored results of project activities. Some requirements will be assessed only at validation, others only
 24 at verification. Some requirements will be assessed at both validation and verification, such as a project's
 25 communications with stakeholders.

26 Note: The final version of this document will identify specifically which requirements are to be assessed at
 27 validation, verification or both.

28 Additional requirements with respect to validation and verification are set out in the *SD VISTa Program*
 29 *Guide* and shall be adhered to.

30 7 Glossary

31 **Adaptive Management:** A systematic approach for improving resource management by learning from
 32 management outcomes

33 **Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU):** The sectoral scope that covers sustainable
 34 development benefits from project or program activities in the agriculture, forestry, and other land
 35 use/land use change sectors (adapted from the [2006 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)
 36 [Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories](#), where it describes a category of activities which
 37 contribute to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions)

38 **Alien Species:** A species, subspecies, or lower taxon occurring outside of its natural past or present
 39 distribution (i.e. outside the range it occupies naturally or could not occupy without direct or indirect

⁴ Further information on labeling will be provided in the *SD VISTa Program Guide*.

- 1 introduction or care by humans); includes any part, gametes or propagule of such species that might
2 survive and subsequently reproduce (definition from the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and IUCN)
- 3 **Benefits for People, their Prosperity and the Planet:** Benefits for people are defined as alleviation of
4 poverty and hunger and enhancements to dignity, equality or healthy environment resulting from project
5 activities. Benefits for people's prosperity are defined as increases in prosperity or life fulfillment or
6 advances in economic, social and technological progress in harmony with nature resulting from project
7 activities. Benefits for the planet are defined as protection of the planet from degradation by maintenance
8 or enhancement of natural resources and ecosystem services resulting from project activities.
- 9 **Causal Chain:** A conceptual diagram tracing the process by which an activity leads to positive and
10 negative impact(s) through a series of interlinked logical and sequential stages of cause-and-effect
11 relationships
- 12 **Crediting Period:** The time period for which the SD VISta assets generated by the project are eligible for
13 issuance
- 14 **Customary Rights:** Patterns of long-standing community lands, territories and resource usage in
15 accordance with Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' customary laws, values, customs and
16 traditions, including seasonal or cyclical use, rather than formal legal title to lands, territories and
17 resources issued by the State
- 18 **Deemed Estimates Method:** A method of quantifying the change resulting from an activity or set of
19 activities where the change is estimated directly without separately defining and estimating baseline and
20 policy scenarios (sometimes called a "deemed savings" or "unit savings" approach)
- 21 **Ecosystem Services:** The benefits people obtain from ecosystems. Ecosystem services include
22 provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fiber; regulating services that affect climate, floods,
23 disease, wastes and water quality; cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic and spiritual
24 benefits; and supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling (definition
25 from the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#)).
- 26 **Effective Consultation:** A process by which the project proponent uses socially and culturally
27 appropriate methods to enable transparent sharing of information with stakeholders and their meaningful
28 participation in decision making, dispute resolution and/or other subjects of consultation
- 29 **Impact:** Any result of the project activities that itself lasts beyond the project lifetime or leads to another
30 outcome or impact of equal or longer duration. In the context of SD VISta, impacts include benefits, costs
31 and risks, including those that are direct and indirect, those related to social, cultural, environmental and
32 economic aspects, those related to human rights and those related to rights to lands territories and
33 resources.
- 34 **Indigenous Peoples:** (a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic
35 conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated
36 wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; (b) peoples in
37 independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations
38 which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of
39 conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their
40 legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. (Definition
41 of peoples to whom the [International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 \(No. 169\)](#) applies.)
- 42
- 43 **Interested Stakeholder:** Any person, group of persons, or entity that has shown an interest, or is known
44 to have an interest, in the activities of the project but that will not be materially affected by those activities
45 (adapted from the [FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms](#))
- 46 **Local Laws:** All norms given by organisms of government whose jurisdiction is less than the national level
47 (e.g. departmental, municipal and customary norms)

- 1 **Marginalized and/or Vulnerable Groups:** See "Marginalized People or Groups" and "Vulnerable People
2 or Groups"
- 3 **Marginalized People or Groups:** Those people and groups unable to participate fully in economic,
4 social, political and cultural life (also called socially excluded people or groups) (definition adapted from
5 [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#))
- 6 **Native Species:** A species, subspecies, or lower taxon, occurring within its natural range (past or
7 present) and dispersal potential (i.e. within the range it occupies naturally or could occupy without direct
8 or indirect introduction or care by humans) (definition from [IUCN](#))
- 9 **Natural Capital:** Earth's systems, geological resources and ecosystem stocks, including climate and
10 hydrological systems, mineral and energy resources, land, soil resources, timber resources, aquatic
11 resources, biological resources other than timber and aquatic resources, water resources (surface,
12 groundwater and soil water resources), and ecosystem assets (including, but not limited to, assets that
13 provide regulating and cultural services) (definition adapted from [The London Group](#))
- 14 **Project Activity:** The specific set of technologies, measures and/or outcomes that alter the conditions
15 that exist at the start of the project and which result in sustainable development benefits
- 16 **Project Activity Instance:** A particular set of implemented technologies and/or measures that constitute
17 the minimum unit of activity necessary to comply with the criteria and procedures applicable to the project
18 activity under the methodology applied to the project
- 19 **Project Lifetime:** The time period over which project activities are implemented; starts on the project start
20 date
- 21 **Project Ownership:** The legal right to control and operate the project activities
- 22 **Project Proponent:** The individual or organization that has overall control and responsibility for the
23 project, or an individual or organization that together with others, each of which is also a project
24 proponent, has overall control or responsibility for the project. The entity(s) that can demonstrate project
25 ownership in respect of the project.
- 26 **Project Start Date:** The date on which activities that lead to the generation of sustainable development
27 benefits are implemented
- 28 **Property Rights:** Statutory and customary tenure/use/access/management rights to lands, territories and
29 resources
- 30 **Property Rights Holders:** Entities that have individual or collective property rights
- 31 **Scalability Limit:** The scale beyond which, if new project activities are added, the project may not
32 benefits deliver benefits to people, prosperity and/or the planet, such as capacity limits, economic and
33 managerial constraints, and thresholds for project expansion beyond which there may be negative
34 impacts on people, prosperity or planet
- 35 **Scenario Method:** A comparison of a without-project scenario with a with-project scenario where
36 separate without- and with-project scenarios are defined and estimated
- 37 **SD VISTa Asset:** A user-defined environmental or social unit that is generated according to a validated
38 SD VISTa methodology, verified by an accredited auditor, recorded and, if desired, transacted on the VCS
39 registry system
- 40 **SD VISTa Claim:** A user-defined statement about a specific sustainable development benefit validated
41 and verified by an accredited auditor
- 42 **SDG Indicator:** An indicator for any Sustainable Development Goal Target that is any of the following: 1)
43 Approved as part of the global indicator framework, accessible at

1 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>; 2) approved as part of a regional or national indicator
2 framework; or 3) approved by VCS. VCS-approved SDG Indicators are listed on the VCS website

3 **Stakeholder:** Any person who can potentially be affected by the project. In identification of stakeholders,
4 it is permitted to consider significance of user populations and how deeply affected they may be by the
5 project such that distant or intermittent user groups who will be affected in very limited ways by the project
6 need not be defined as stakeholders. Note: Any reference in these requirements to stakeholders that
7 does not explicitly refer to interested stakeholders is limited to this group of potentially affected
8 stakeholders.

9 **Stakeholder Group:** Groups whose members derive similar income, livelihood, well-being and/or cultural
10 values from the project and whose values are different from those of other groups; such as Indigenous
11 Peoples, women, youth or other social, cultural and economic groups. Every individual stakeholder must
12 belong to at least one stakeholder group.

13 **Sustainable Development Benefits:** A project's benefits for people, for their prosperity and for the
14 planet

15 **Validation/Verification Body:** An organization approved by the VCS to act as a validation/verification
16 body in respect of providing validation and/or verification services in accordance with the SD VISTa rules
17 and requirements

18 **Vulnerable People or Groups:** Those people and groups who lack ability to anticipate, cope with, resist
19 and recover from stresses or shocks due to physical, social, economic and environmental factors or
20 processes (definition adapted from [World Health Organization](#) (Wisner and Adams), [United Nations Office](#)
21 [of Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards *Program Definitions*).

22 **Well-being:** People's experience of the quality of their lives and may include social, economic,
23 psychological, spiritual, and medical dimensions. The improvement of well-being may include providing
24 opportunity, ensuring and enhancing security and empowerment.

25 **With-Project Scenario:** The events or conditions most likely to occur in the presence of
26 project activities

27 **Without-Project Scenario:** The events or conditions most likely to occur in the absence of project
28 activities

29 **Workers:** People directly working on project activities in return for compensation (financial or otherwise),
30 including employees, contracted workers, sub-contracted workers and any other stakeholders that are
31 paid to carry out project-related work

32 8 References

33 Brundtland, G. H. et al., World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. *Our Common*
34 *Future*. Available at <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>.

35 Convention on Biological Diversity. *Glossary of Terms*. Available
36 at <https://www.cbd.int/invasive/terms.shtml>.

37 FAO. 2012. *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and*
38 *Forests in the Context of National Security*. Rome. Available
39 at <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/activities/vgg/en/>.

40 FAO, Action Against Hunger, Action Aid, IFRC and World Vision International. 2016 *Free Prior and*
41 *Informed Consent Manual*. Available at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

- 1 Forest Stewardship Council. 2016. *FSC Glossary of Terms*. Bonn. Available
2 at <https://ic.fsc.org/en/document-center>.
- 3 Initiative for Climate Action Transparency. 2017. *Sustainable Development Guidance*. Available
4 at [http://www.climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ICAT-Sustainable-](http://www.climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ICAT-Sustainable-Development-Guidance-First-Draft-26-JUL-2017.pdf)
5 [Development-Guidance-First-Draft-26-JUL-2017.pdf](http://www.climateactiontransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ICAT-Sustainable-Development-Guidance-First-Draft-26-JUL-2017.pdf).
- 6 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Rapporteurship on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
7 2013. *Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation and initial contact in the Americas: Recommendations for*
8 *the full respect of their human rights*. Available at [https://www.iwgia.org/images/documents/popular-](https://www.iwgia.org/images/documents/popular-publications/report-indigenous-peoples-voluntary-isolation.pdf)
9 [publications/report-indigenous-peoples-voluntary-isolation.pdf](https://www.iwgia.org/images/documents/popular-publications/report-indigenous-peoples-voluntary-isolation.pdf).
- 10 International Labour Organization. 1989. *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169):*
11 *Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries*. Available at
12 http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314
- 13 IPCC. 2006. *Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories*. Available at: [http://www.ipcc-](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl)
14 [nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl).
- 15 IUCN. 2017. *IUCN Red List Glossary: Version 2017-3*. Available
16 at <http://www.iucnredlist.org/initiatives/mammals/description/glossary>.
- 17 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. 2005. *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press,
18 Washington, DC. Available
19 at <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf>.
- 20 London Group, The. 2014. *Towards a definition of Natural Capital*. New Delhi. Available at:
21 [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/londongroup/meeting21/Towards%20a%20definition%20of%20](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/londongroup/meeting21/Towards%20a%20definition%20of%20Natural%20Capital%20-%202nd%20draft.pdf)
22 [0Natural%20Capital%20-%202nd%20draft.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/londongroup/meeting21/Towards%20a%20definition%20of%20Natural%20Capital%20-%202nd%20draft.pdf).
- 23 Richards, M. and Panfil, S.N. 2011. *Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for*
24 *REDD+ Projects: Part 1 – Core Guidance for Project Proponents*. Climate, Community & Biodiversity
25 Alliance, Forest Trends, Fauna & Flora International and Rainforest Alliance. Washington, DC. Available
26 at: <http://www.v-c-s.org/project/ccbprogram/guidance/>.
- 27 Transparency International. 2012. *Keeping REDD+ Clean: A Step-by-Step Guide to Preventing*
28 *Corruption*. Available
29 at http://issuu.com/transparencyinternational/docs/2012_keepingreddclean_en?e=2496456/1427494.
- 30 United Nations. 1992. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Rio de Janeiro. Available
31 at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>.
- 32 United Nations. 2007. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Available
33 at http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.
- 34 United Nations. 2015. *A/RES/70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable*
35 *Development*. Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.
- 36 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2016. *Leaving no one behind: the imperative*
37 *of inclusive development Report on the World Social Situation 2016*. ST/ESA/362. Available at
38 [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/report-on-the-world-social-situation-rwss-social-policy-and-](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/report-on-the-world-social-situation-rwss-social-policy-and-development-division/rwss2016.html)
39 [development-division/rwss2016.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/report-on-the-world-social-situation-rwss-social-policy-and-development-division/rwss2016.html).
- 40 United Nations Human Rights Council. 2011. *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human*
41 *Rights*. Available at [https://business-humanrights.org/en/un-guiding-principles/text-of-the-un-guiding-](https://business-humanrights.org/en/un-guiding-principles/text-of-the-un-guiding-principles)
42 [principles](https://business-humanrights.org/en/un-guiding-principles/text-of-the-un-guiding-principles).
- 43 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. 2017. *Terminology*. Available
44 at <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology>.

- 1 Wisner, B. and J. Adams eds. 2002. Environmental health in emergencies and disasters: A practical
2 guide. World Health Organization. Available
3 at http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/hygiene/emergencies/em2002intro.pdf.
- 4 World Bank 2013. *Operational Manual, OP 4.10 – Indigenous Peoples*. Available
5 at <https://policies.worldbank.org/sites/ppf3/PPFDocuments/090224b0822f89d5.pdf>.

6 9 Acknowledgements

7 VCS is grateful to the [Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance](#) (CCBA) for its leadership in the design
8 and implementation of multiple benefit project standards. The CCBA originated the Climate, Community &
9 Biodiversity Standards, the framework on which SD VISTa is based. The CCBA's director, Joanna Durbin,
10 also provided significant input to this document.

11 **SD VISTa Standard Development Advisory Committee**

12 **Edwin Aalders**, DNV GL

13 **Beto Borges**, Forest Trends

14 **Javier Castro**, TUV SUD Industrie Service GmbH

15 **John Drexhage**, VCS Board

16 **Charles Ehrhart**

17 **Eduardo Ferreira**, World Bank

18 **Emma Knott**, Ecosphere Capital Partners LLP

19 **Anna Lehman**, Climate Policy and Investment Advisory

20 **Ben Massie**, Natural Capital Partners

21 **Swapan Mehra**, IORA Ecological Solutions

22 **Priscilla Miranda**, Mexican Agency of International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID)

23 **Tom Morton**, Climate Care

24 **Marcos Neto**, UNDP Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development

25 **Femi Oye**, SME FUNDS

26 **Gareth Phillips**, African Development Bank

27 **Ndivhuho Raphulu**, National Cleaner Production Centre of South Africa (NCPC-SA)

28 **Ash Sharma**, NAMA Facility/DANIDA

29 **Alyson Slater**, GRI

30 **Massamba Thioye**, UNFCCC

1 Appendix 1. Guidance

2 Sections that do not have specific guidance are not included in this appendix.

3 **2.1 Project Goals, Design and Long-term Viability**

4 **2.1.4**

5 The causal chain(s) shall be validated not only at the initial validation but on each verification to ensure
6 that all potential project impacts are considered and, if necessary, monitored. For guidance on developing
7 causal chains, see the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency's draft *Sustainable Development*
8 *Guidance*.

9 **2.1.6**

10 Stakeholder identification and analysis should include an assessment of rights, interests and relevance to
11 the project for each stakeholder group. The *Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for*
12 *REDD+ Projects: Part 1 – Core Guidance for Project Proponents* can be used for guidance on
13 stakeholder identification and analysis.

14 **2.1.7**

15 The number of appropriate stakeholder groups will depend on the size and complexity of communities
16 affected by the project. Marginalized and vulnerable groups are not mutually exclusive; some individuals
17 may belong to multiple groups.

18 **2.2 Stakeholder Engagement**

19 **2.2.4**

20 Effective consultation requires project proponents to inform and engage broadly with stakeholders using
21 socially and culturally appropriate methods to enable meaningful influence on the subject of consultation.
22 Consultations must be gender and inter-generationally sensitive with special attention to
23 vulnerable and/or marginalized people and must be conducted at mutually agreed locations and through
24 representatives who are designated by the groups themselves in accordance with their own procedures.
25 Different approaches may be appropriate for different stakeholder groups.

26 Stakeholders potentially affected by the project must have an opportunity to evaluate impacts and raise
27 concerns about potential negative impacts, express desired outcomes and provide input on the project
28 design including the theory of change, both before the project design is finalized and during
29 implementation. Consultations must include participatory identification of ecosystem services important
30 for stakeholders, for example through participatory mapping. Consultations must also include an
31 evaluation of the type and magnitude of impacts resulting from project activities (Section 3.2.1).
32 Consultations must also include a participatory design of feedback and grievance redress procedures
33 (Section 2.3.8).

34 In cases where it is unclear whether a project will be implemented or not, it is acceptable to start with
35 preliminary consultations, provided there are plans for appropriate full consultations before the start of the
36 project. Where conformance with the SD VISTa rules is being applied to a project already
37 under implementation, project proponents must either provide documentation of appropriate consultations
38 during the project design phase or demonstrate how more recent consultations have been effective in
39 evaluating stakeholder benefits and adapting project design and implementation to optimize stakeholder
40 benefits and respect local customs.

41 **2.2.7**

42 Discrimination may include but is not limited to that based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or
43 other habits.

1 **2.3 Management Capacity**

2 **2.3.3**

3 Transparency International's *Keeping REDD+ Clean: A Step-by-Step Guide to Preventing Corruption* can
4 be used as guidance for this criterion.

5 **2.4 Legal Status and Rights**

6 *Concept*

7 Project proponents must adhere to the United Nations' Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework, as
8 outlined in the document *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*.

9 Article 10 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* sets out Indigenous Peoples' right to
10 free, prior and informed consent regarding relocation and compensation.

11 Customary rights are defined per the World Bank Operational Manual *OP 4.10 – Indigenous*
12 *Peoples* as patterns of long-standing community lands, territories and resource usage in accordance with
13 Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' customary laws, values, customs and traditions, including
14 seasonal or cyclical use, rather than formal legal title to lands, territories and resources issued by the
15 State.

16 **2.4.2.1**

17 Community property includes lands, territories and resources to which communities have collective rights
18 (either customary or statutory). Customary collective rights include traditional ownership, occupation or
19 other use or acquisition whether or not such ownership has been formally recorded.

20 **2.4.2.2**

21 For guidance on FPIC, please see the manual *Free Prior and Informed Consent: An indigenous peoples'*
22 *right and a good practice for local communities*.

23 It is important to note that consultation is not the same as consent. Free, prior and informed consent is
24 the decision made by a stakeholder group following a consultation. A project proponent must receive
25 affirmative consent from the relevant property rights holders prior to commencing with project activities.

26 If non-contacted peoples are located or believed to be located in the project area, their right to remain in
27 isolation should be respected in accordance with local, national and international laws and
28 recommendations. Unless invited to make contact, implementing entities should not engage in any
29 activities that may impact these populations, including project activities. There should be a buffer zone
30 between the project area and the area in which indigenous populations living in voluntary isolation reside,
31 or are believed to reside. See the report *Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact in*
32 *the Americas* for recommendations on respecting the human rights of people in that situation.

33 **2.4.2.3**

34 Compensation should include both the financial and non-financial costs of the loss of land (e.g., loss
35 of culture or loss of business opportunity).

36 **2.4.3**

37 Article 28 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* indicates that unless otherwise
38 agreed upon, compensation should be in the form of lands, territories or resources equivalent in quality,
39 size and legal status to those taken. When such compensation is not available, monetary compensation
40 is appropriate. This principle is consistent Article 16 of the International Labour Organization's *Indigenous*
41 *and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169): Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in*
42 *Independent Countries*.

1 **2.4.4**

2 If the project enables previously illegal activities to become legal by means of appropriate laws and other
3 means, benefits from these activities may be considered for the net benefit analysis in Sections 3.2 and
4 4.2.

5 **2.4.5**

6 According to Principle 25.1 of the FAO's *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure*,
7 "all parties should take steps to prevent and eliminate issues of tenure of land, fisheries and forests as a
8 cause of conflict and should ensure that aspects of tenure are addressed before, during and after conflict,
9 including in situations of occupation where parties should act in accordance with applicable international
10 humanitarian law".

11 **3 Benefits for People and Prosperity**12 **Scenario Method**

13 Using the scenario method, users quantify the impact of a project activity by comparing two scenarios:

- 14 • The *without-project scenario*, which represents the events or conditions most likely to occur in the
15 absence of the policy or action (or package of policies and actions) being assessed; and
- 16 • The *with-project scenario*, which represents the events or conditions most likely to occur in the
17 presence of the policy or action (or package of policies and actions) being assessed.

18 **Deemed Estimates Method**

19 The deemed estimates method (sometimes called a "deemed savings" or "unit savings" approach) is a
20 simplified variation of the scenario method. This method involves calculating the impact of a policy or
21 action without separately defining and estimating baseline and policy scenarios and comparing the two.
22 This method may be appropriate for certain common or homogeneous policies and actions where
23 deemed estimate values are reliable or in cases where the scenario method is not practical.

24 Table 1. Examples of the scenario and deemed estimates method

Method	Activity	Process for establishing impact
Scenario method	REDD+ project	Use a projection of deforestation over the next 20 years and compare that with projected/actual deforestation taking into account project activities
Deemed estimates method	Retrofit of urban apartment buildings with clean energy	Count number of houses/buildings/facilities with access to clean energy to be installed/resulting from the project

25

26 For more guidance on options for estimating project impacts, see the Initiative for Climate Action
27 Transparency's draft [Sustainable Development Guidance](#) (from which the above text was adapted).

1 **3.1 Stakeholders at Project Start**

2 **3.1.1**

3 Community characteristics may include shared language, mythology, history, culture, livelihood systems,
4 traditional authority structures, institutions, practices, values, relationships with specific sites of historical,
5 cultural or spiritual significance, relationships with natural resources, or the customary institutions and
6 rules governing the use of resources and sites.

7 **3.2 Impact on Stakeholders**

8 **3.2.1**

9 [Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment \(SBIA\) Manual for REDD+ Projects: Part 1 – Core Guidance](#)
10 [for Project Proponents](#) is recommended for guidance on appropriate methodologies.

11 Evaluation by the affected stakeholder groups can be undertaken through a documented opportunity for
12 feedback from communities and their stakeholder groups as part of a participatory rural appraisal,
13 community meetings or some other process.

14 **3.2.2**

15 The precautionary principle originated in the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#). That document states "in
16 order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according
17 to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific
18 certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental
19 degradation".

20 **3.3 Monitoring of Impact on Stakeholders**

21 **3.3.1**

22 Potential stakeholder variables to be monitored may include but are not limited to: income, employment
23 generation, health, market access, schools, food security and education.

24 **3.3.2**

25 Guidance will be provided to support monitoring within specific stakeholder groups as dictated by the
26 *SDG Indicator*. E.g., to meet the Target 2.3, Double the productivity and incomes of small-scale food
27 producers, a project would need to monitor the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers
28 among its stakeholders.

29 **4 Benefits for the Planet**

30 See Guidance for Section 3.

31 **4.1 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services Planet at Project Start**

32 **4.1.1**

33 See Guidance for Section 3.2.1.

34 **4.2 Impact on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services**

35 **4.2.6**

36 The process of identifying, classifying and managing all waste products resulting from project activities
37 may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1 • Methods of collecting, storing, moving, treating and disposing of animal, plant, food processing,
2 municipal and industrial wastes
- 3 • Development of products from waste materials, including biofuels
- 4 • Engineering and analysis of projected and existing waste disposal systems and pesticide
5 containers
- 6 • Recycling pre- and post-consumer wastes
- 7 • Improved methods for mitigating environmental impacts and biosecurity risks from agricultural,
8 forestry, municipal and industrial wastes, etc.

9 **4.3 Monitoring of Impact on Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services**

10 **4.3.1**

11 Potential variables may include but are not limited to: species abundance; population size, range, trends
12 and diversity; habitat area, quality and diversity; landscape connectivity; and forest fragmentation.