



**Sustainable Development
Verified Impact Standard**
A VERRA STANDARD

Program Definitions

ABOUT VERRA



Verra supports climate action and sustainable development through the development and management of standards, tools and programs that credibly, transparently and robustly assess environmental and social impacts, and drive funding for sustaining and scaling up these benefits. As a mission-driven, non-profit (NGO) organization, Verra works in any arena where we see a need for clear standards, a role for market-driven mechanisms and an opportunity to achieve environmental and social good.

Verra manages a number of global standards frameworks designed to drive finance towards activities that mitigate climate change and promote sustainable development, including the [Verified Carbon Standard \(VCS\) Program](#) and its [Jurisdictional and Nested REDD+ framework \(JNR\)](#), the [Verra California Offset Project Registry \(OPR\)](#), the [Climate, Community & Biodiversity \(CCB\) Standards](#) and the [Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard \(SD VISta\)](#). Verra is also developing new standards frameworks, including the [Landscape Standard](#), which will promote and measure sustainability outcomes across landscapes. Finally, Verra is one of the implementing partners of the [Initiative for Climate Action Transparency \(ICAT\)](#), which helps countries assess the impacts of their climate actions and supports greater transparency, effectiveness, trust and ambition in climate policies worldwide.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides the definitions for terms used in the SD VISTa Program documents. Note that defined terms in the SD VISTa Program documents, in common with ISO convention, are used without capital first letters.

This document will be updated from time to time and readers shall ensure that they are using the most current version of the document.

2 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Accession Representation [SD VISTa Accession Representation]

The deed issued by the project proponent, and an acceding entity, made in respect of an acceding entity joining a project as project proponent, and which is prepared using the *SD VISTa Deed of Accession in Respect of Registration Deed of Representation Template*

Adaptive Management

A systematic approach for improving resource management by learning from management outcomes

Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU)

The sectoral scope that covers sustainable development benefits from project or program activities in the agriculture, forestry, and other land use/land use change sectors¹

Assessment

The process of validation or verification by a Verra-approved VVB or project design evaluation or project implementation evaluation by a Verra-approved IEE

Assessor

A person who conducts validation or verification on behalf of a Verra-approved VVB or an IEE approved by Verra to conduct project design evaluation or project implementation evaluation

Baseline Scenario

The events or conditions most likely to occur in the absence of project activities

¹ Adapted from Eggleston, S., Buendia, L., Miwa, K., Ngara, T., and Tanage, K. (eds.), 2006. *2006 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories Volume 1* (available at <https://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/2006gl/vol1.html>).

Benefits for People, their Prosperity and the Planet

Benefits for people are defined as alleviation of poverty and hunger and enhancements to dignity, equality or healthy environment resulting from project activities during the project lifetime. Benefits for people's prosperity are defined as increases in prosperity or life fulfillment or advances in economic, social and technological progress in harmony with nature resulting from project activities during the project lifetime. Benefits for the planet are defined as protection of the planet from degradation by maintenance or enhancement of natural resources and ecosystem services resulting from project activities during the project lifetime. These benefits should be defined and/or affirmed as part of a stakeholder consultation process.

Causal Chain

A conceptual diagram tracing the process by which an activity leads to positive and negative impact(s) through a series of interlinked logical and sequential stages of cause-and-effect relationships

Commercially Sensitive Information

Trade secrets, financial, commercial, scientific, technical or other information whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in a material financial loss or gain, prejudice the outcome of contractual or other negotiations or otherwise damage or enrich the person or entity to which the information relates

Complaint

An objection to a decision taken by Verra or an aspect of how it operates the SD VISTa Program, or a claim that the SD VISTa rules have had an unfair, inadvertent or unintentional adverse effect

Crediting Period

The time period for which the SD VISTa assets generated by the project are eligible for issuance

Customary Rights

Patterns of long-standing community lands, territories, and resource usage in accordance with Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' customary laws, values, customs, and traditions, including seasonal or cyclical use, rather than formal legal title to lands, territories and resources issued by the state²

Deemed Estimates Method

A method of quantifying the change resulting from an activity or set of activities where the change is estimated directly without separately defining and estimating baseline and project scenarios (sometimes called a "deemed savings" or "unit savings" approach)³

² World Bank, 2013. *Operational Manual, OP 4.10 – Indigenous Peoples* (available at <https://policies.worldbank.org/sites/ppf3/PPFDocuments/090224b0822f89d5.pdf>).

³ Adapted from Rich, D., Bhatia, P., Finnegan, J., Levin, K., and Mitra, A., 2014. *Policy and Action Standard* (available at https://wriorg.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Policy_and_Action_Standard.pdf).

Defensible Methodological Approach (for Greenhouse Gas Accounting)

An approach that includes procedures for delineating the conditions under which the methodological approach can be applied: defining the project boundary including any greenhouse gas (GHG) sources, sinks and reservoirs; conservatively estimating baseline GHG emission reductions and removals (ERRs) (including leakage); monitoring GHG ERRs over the project lifetime and that follows the principles of relevance, completeness, consistency, transparency and conservativeness

Design Evaluation Report [SD VISTA Design Evaluation Report]

The written report of evaluation prepared by an IEE in accordance with the SD VISTA rules

Double Counting

The scenario under which a singular sustainable development benefit is monetized separately by two different entities or where a singular sustainable development benefit is sold to multiple buyers

Greenhouse Gas Sink

A net repository of greenhouse gas from the atmosphere, with more greenhouse gas flowing into it than is flowing out of it

Greenhouse Gas Source

A net generator of greenhouse gas to the atmosphere, with less greenhouse gas flowing into it than is flowing out of it

Ecosystem Services

The benefits people obtain from ecosystems. Ecosystem services include provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fiber; regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes and water quality; cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic and spiritual benefits; and supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis and nutrient cycling.⁴

Effective Consultation

A process by which the project proponent uses socially and culturally appropriate methods to enable transparent sharing of information with stakeholders and their meaningful participation in decision-making, dispute resolution and/or other subjects of consultation

Ex-ante assessment (validation or project design evaluation)

Assessment of project design

Ex-post assessment (verification or project implementation evaluation)

Assessment of ongoing implementation of a project and the monitored results of project activities

⁴ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. *Ecosystems and Human Well-being*. Synthesis. Island Press, Washington, DC (available at <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf>).

Grouped Project

A project to which additional instances of the project activity, which meet pre-established eligibility criteria, may be added subsequent to a project's ex-ante assessment

Impact

Any result of the project activities that itself lasts beyond the project lifetime or leads to another outcome or impact of equal or longer duration. In the context of SD VISTa, impacts include benefits, costs and risks, including those that are direct and indirect, those related to social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects, those related to human rights and those related to rights to lands territories and resources.

Implementation Evaluation Report [SD VISTa Implementation Evaluation Report]

The written report of the evaluation prepared by the IEE in accordance with the SD VISTa rules

Independent Evaluation Expert (IEE)

An individual or organization approved by Verra to act as an assessor in respect of providing IEE services in accordance with the SD VISTa rules

Indigenous Peoples

Per the International Labour Organization *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention*:

- (a) tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose registered
- (b) is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;
- (c) peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions⁵

Interested Stakeholder

Any person, group of persons, or entity that has shown an interest, or is known to have an interest, in the activities of the project but that will not be materially affected by those activities (similar to the Forest Stewardship Council term "global stakeholder")⁶

Issuance Representation [SD VISTa Issuance Representation]

The unilateral representation issued by the project proponent at each SD VISTa asset issuance request, made in respect of a specific type of sustainable development benefits generated by the project, and which is prepared using the *SD VISTa Issuance Deed of Representation Template*

⁵ International Labour Organization, 1989. *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169): Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* (available at http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314).

⁶ Forest Stewardship Council, 2016. *FSC Glossary of Terms*. Bonn (available at <https://ic.fsc.org/en/document-center/id/60>).

Listing [SD VISTa Listing]

The initial posting of the project and its documentation on the Verra project database

Listing Representation [SD VISTa Listing Representation]

The unilateral representation issued by the project proponent at the time of the project listing request, made in respect of the project, and which is prepared using the *SD VISTa Listing Representation Template*

Local Laws

All norms given by organisms of government whose jurisdiction is less than the national level (e.g., departmental, municipal and customary norms)

Marginalized and/or Vulnerable Groups

See "Marginalized People or Groups" and "Vulnerable People or Groups"

Marginalized People or Groups

Those people and groups unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life (also called socially excluded people or groups)⁷

Materiality

The concept applied to determine if errors, omissions and misstatements in information could affect the net sustainable development impact assertion and influence decisions resulting from it

Methodology

A specific set of criteria and procedures, which apply to specific project activities, for identifying the project boundary, determining the baseline scenario, demonstrating additionality (if an asset is being used for offsetting purposes), quantifying net sustainable development impacts, and specifying monitoring procedures

Methodology Deviation

A deviation from the criteria and procedures for monitoring or measurement set out in an SD VISTa-approved methodology applied to the project

Methodology Revision

A revision to the criteria and procedures of an existing SD VISTa-approved methodology

Monitoring Report [SD VISTa Monitoring Report]

The document that records data to allow the assessment of the sustainable development benefits, SD VISTa claims and SD VISTa assets generated by the project during a given time period in accordance with the monitoring plan set out in the project description, and which is prepared using the *SD VISTa*

⁷ Definition adapted from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016. *Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development Report on the World Social Situation 2016*. ST/ESA/362 (available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/report-on-the-world-social-situation-rwss-social-policy-and-development-division/rwss2016.html>).

Monitoring Report Template or a Verra-approved template for projects conducting monitoring concurrently for SD VISta and another program

Natural Capital

Earth's systems, geological resources and ecosystem stocks, including climate and hydrological systems, mineral and energy resources, land, soil resources, timber resources, aquatic resources, biological resources other than timber and aquatic resources, water resources (surface, groundwater and soil water resources), and ecosystem assets (including, but not limited to, assets that provide regulating and cultural services)⁸

Precautionary Principle

Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent social or environmental harm⁹

Project Activity

The specific set of technologies, measures and/or outcomes that alter the conditions that exist at the start of the project and which result in sustainable development benefits

Project Activity Instance

A particular set of implemented technologies and/or measures that constitute the minimum unit of activity necessary to comply with the criteria and procedures applicable to the project activity under the methodology applied to the project

Project Boundary

Identifies the spheres of influence (both primary and secondary, intended and unintended) where project activities must be assessed to identify and determine positive benefit

Project Description [SD VISta Project Description]

The document that describes the project's sustainable development activities and that uses either the *SD VISta Project Description Template* or a Verra-approved project description template for projects to meet both SD VISta and another program's rules

Project Description Deviation [SD VISta Project Description Deviation]

A deviation from the project design, procedures and other specifications set out in the project description

Project Documents

The documents required to list and assess a project, as set out in the *SD VISta Program Guide*

⁸ Adapted from The London Group, 2014. *Towards a definition of Natural Capital*. New Delhi (available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envaccounting/londongroup/meeting21/Towards%20a%20definition%20of%20Natural%20Capital%20-%202nd%20draft.pdf>).

⁹ Adapted from United Nations, 1992. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Rio de Janeiro (available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>).

Project Lifetime

The time period over which project activities are implemented; starts on the project start date; for those projects developing SD VSta assets, ends on the end date of the last crediting period

Project Ownership

The legal right to control and operate the project activities

Project Proponent

The individual or organization that has overall control and responsibility for the project, or an individual or organization that together with others, each of which is also a project proponent, has overall control or responsibility for the project. The entity(s) that can demonstrate project ownership in respect of the project.

Project Scenario

The events or conditions most likely to occur in the presence of project activities

Project Start Date

The date on which activities that lead to the generation of sustainable development, benefits are implemented

Property Rights

Statutory and customary tenure/use/access/management rights to lands, territories and resources

Property Rights Holders

Entities that have individual or collective property rights

Reasonable Level of Assurance

A degree of assurance whereby the validator or verifier provides a reasonable, but not absolute, level of assurance that the responsible party's sustainable development benefit assertion is materially correct

Registration [SD VSta Registration]

The formal acceptance by Verra of a validated project under the SD VSta Program

Registration Representation [SD VSta Registration Representation]

The unilateral representation issued by the project proponent at the time of the project registration request, made in respect of the project, and which is prepared using the *SD VSta Registration Deed of Representation Template*

Renewable Energy Certificate (REC)

A market-based instrument that represents the property rights to the environmental, social and other non-power attributes of renewable electricity generation; issued when one megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity is generated and delivered to the electricity grid from a renewable energy resource

Retirement

The permanent removal of an SD VISTa asset from circulation in the Verra registry system

Scenario Method

A comparison of a baseline scenario with a project scenario where separate baseline and project scenarios are defined and estimated

SD VISTa Asset

A unit issued by and held in the Verra registry representing the right of an accountholder in whose account the unit is recorded to trade or retire the achievement of an environmental or social benefit. Recordation of an SD VISTa asset in the Verra registry account of the holder is prima facie evidence of that holder's entitlement to that SD VISTa asset.

SD VISTa Claim

A user-defined statement about a specific sustainable development benefit assessed by a Verra-approved VVB or IEE

SD VISTa Rules

The rules and requirements set out in the *Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard*, the *SD VISTa Program Guide* and the other SD VISTa Program documents, as such rules and requirements may be updated from time to time (see the Verra website for currently applicable SD VISTa Program documents)

SDG Indicator

An indicator for any Sustainable Development Goal target that is any of the following: 1) approved as part of the global indicator framework;¹⁰ 2) approved as part of a regional or national indicator framework; or 3) approved by Verra

Stakeholder

Any person who can potentially be affected by the project. In identification of stakeholders, it is permitted to consider significance of user populations and how deeply affected they may be by the project such that distant or intermittent user groups who will be affected in very limited ways by the project need not be defined as stakeholders. Any reference in SD VISTa Program documents to stakeholders that does not explicitly refer to interested stakeholders is limited to this group of potentially affected stakeholders.

Stakeholder Group

Groups whose members derive similar income, livelihood, well-being and/or cultural values from the project and whose values are different from those of other groups; such as Indigenous Peoples, women, youth or other social, cultural and economic groups. Every individual stakeholder must belong to at least one stakeholder group, but may belong to more than one.

¹⁰ United Nations, 2017. *Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (A/RES/71/313) (available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>).

Sustainable Development Impact(s)

A project's impacts on people, their prosperity and for the planet; includes both sustainable development benefits and negative consequences for sustainable development

Technical Assessor

An individual responsible for assessing documentation for proposed SD VISTa asset methodologies or methodology revisions

Uncertainty

A parameter associated with the result of measurement that characterizes the dispersion of the values that could be reasonably attributed to the measured amount

Validation Report [SD VISTa Validation Report]

The written report of validation prepared by the VVB in accordance with the SD VISTa rules

Validation Representation [SD VISTa Validation Representation]

The deed issued by the VVB, referencing the validation report to which it relates, containing a unilateral representation that it has validated the project's compliance with the applicable SD VISTa rules, and which is prepared using the *SD VISTa Validation Deed of Representation Template*

Validation/Verification Body (VVB)

An organization approved by Verra to act as a VVB in respect of providing validation and/or verification services in accordance with the SD VISTa rules and requirements

Verification Report [SD VISTa Verification Report]

The written report of the verification prepared by the VVB in accordance with the SD VISTa rules

Verification Representation [SD VISTa Verification Representation]

The deed issued by the VVB, referencing the verification report to which it relates, containing a unilateral representation that it has verified the project's sustainable development benefits, SD VISTa claims and SD VISTa assets in accordance with the applicable SD VISTa rules, and which is prepared using the *SD VISTa Verification Deed of Representation Template*

Verified Carbon Unit

A unit issued by, and held in the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) registry representing the right of an account holder in whose account the unit is recorded to claim the achievement of a GHG emission reduction or removal in an amount of one (1) metric tonne of CO₂ equivalent that has been verified by a VVB in accordance with the VCS rules

Verra Project Database

The database that provides public access to all SD VISTa project and asset information (and serves similar functions for other Verra programs)

Verra Registry

The registry used by Verra that ensures all required SD VISTA project and program documents have been submitted, maintains accounts of SD VISTA assets, issues and ensures the seamless flow of SD VISTA assets between registry accounts, maintains custody and records of SD VISTA assets legal ownership, and ensures that SD VISTA labels are added to Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) as appropriate

Verra Website

The Verra website: www.verra.org

Vulnerable People or Groups

Those people and groups who lack ability to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from stresses or shocks due to physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes¹¹

Well-being

People's experience of the quality of their lives; may include social, economic, psychological, spiritual, and medical dimensions. Improvement of well-being may include providing opportunity and/or ensuring and enhancing security and empowerment.

Workers

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

¹¹ Definition adapted from three sources: Wisner, B., Adams, J. (eds), 2002. *Environmental health in emergencies and disasters: a practical guide* (available at <http://www.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42561>), United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction, 2017. *Terminology* (available at <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology>), and Verra, 2017. *Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standards Program Definitions* (available at <https://verra.org/project/ccb-program/rules-requirements-and-guidance/>).

APPENDIX 1 DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Comment
v1.0	22 Jan 2019	Initial version released under <i>SD V1Sta Version 1.</i>



Standards for a Sustainable Future

