

VISION FOR CHANGE

Objective: The objective of this component is to develop a coherent vision for systems change that can clearly guide all project activities, and that all team members can articulate.

Overview: Our vision for systems change is the foundation for all project activities. Having a vision ensures that project activities are intentionally contributing to systems change and not only immediate results. While many projects have a high-level theory of change, these often do not clearly show what in the system is changing or how the system will work differently to generate the development impact in the long-term. This vision for systems change connects three key elements:

- i) the impact for the groups/people we want to achieve,
- ii) the broader system(s) (and its functions) we aim to influence, and
- iii) the specific changes we seek to make.

First, focus on the **impact** you hope to achieve for people (and the planet). Start by understanding their lives, aspirations and conditions. You should engage with them to create a shared vision of meaningful change that reflects their priorities, instead of imposing outside ideas. Remember, there are different people who have different needs and preferences, so it's important to consider inclusivity and relevance.

Next, identify the **systems** that create these conditions. Our goal is to shift the systems that shape the conditions in people's lives. Often, more than one system is involved, and these systems can overlap or exist within others (e.g., working on the input supply system as part of the larger agriculture system). These connections often reveal effective areas to drive change.

From there, prioritize **changes** – key conditions or parts of the system that, if changed, can spark broader transformations in the system. This prioritization requires understanding of how the system works, including its internal dynamics and how outside pressures—like social, political, environmental, and technological trends—create opportunities for change. These outcomes often involve shifts in relationships, resources, power, and decision-making.

Next, look for entry points for **intervention** by finding people or actors already working on solutions within the system. It's usually harder to create something entirely new ("greenfield") than to build on the energy and ideas already in motion. These partners, often working on the edges of the system, become key allies and starting points for influencing change.

Frequency & Use Case

The team should conduct this exercise during the inception phase and repeat it during annual work planning.

The technical lead and COP should 'own' the Vision for Change, but also actively encourage the entire team to feel invested in achieving this vision, ensuring alignment at all levels of the project.

The final Vision for Change can be included in the summary section of each annual report and workplan. It is also used to communicate the vision to stakeholders.

Finally, think of this not as a final step but as the starting point. Always design interventions to be flexible and adaptable, rather than fixed solutions. Test, learn, and adjust as you go, ensuring your approach aligns with the system's changing dynamics and responds to early signs of change. This way, you can amplify what works, pivot from what does not, and constantly improve to better align with people's needs and the realities of the system.

Framing: Articulating a vision for systems change requires thinking about and understanding change at multiple levels. We will explain what we mean for each level in the following table:

Level	Description	Timeframe	Certainty	Key Focus
Impact-Level	Refers to meaningful, long-term improvements in people’s lives—changes that matter most to them.	Long-term (5-10+ years)	Have clear goals but recognize the pathways to achieve them are uncertain.	The system should leave a legacy that is Impactful (meaningful to people), Scalable (growing to benefit many), Sustainable (lasting over time), Resilient (adapting to challenges), and Inclusive (benefiting systemically or historically excluded groups).
Systems-Level	Focuses on how the system could function differently to achieve the desired development impact.	Medium- to long-term (3-10 years)	Understanding of systems to change, but uncertainty about feasibility in context.	Identify priority systems that are most likely to generate impact. Define key metrics to track progress and assess whether systemic changes contribute to development impacts.
Change-Level	Certain parts of the system must change for the system as a whole to function differently.	Medium-term (3-7 years)	Some certainty about required changes, but uncertainty about their broader influence.	Define 3-5 changes representing key parts of the system you aim to influence. Use qualitative evidence to measure progress of change, revisiting and adapting as interventions evolve.
Intervention-Level	Interventions aim to influence changes and shift how the system operates to achieve impact.	Short-term (1-2+ years)	Low certainty—how to change a system must be discovered through pilots and learning.	Design interventions to test how the system operates (discovery) and achieve measurable outcomes. Use partnership agreements and results chains to learn and adapt. Remain flexible to adapt to feedback and early signals of change.

Illustrative Example: Below is an illustrative example of the USAID Transforming Market Systems (TMS) Activity’s Vision for Change for the tourism system. (Note, the project had multiple visions for change for the different systems it was aiming to influence.)

IMPACT: *What is the development impact we want the system to achieve?*

The desired impact is to position Honduras as an international tourism destination, driving a 10% increase in international visitation and unlocking significant economic benefits. This growth will fuel visitor spending and create over 10,000 formal, higher-paying jobs, with a strong focus on women in hospitality and related sectors. Beyond economic gains, the growth of the tourism sector will diversify and strengthen the resilience of the Honduran economy, reducing reliance on agriculture and traditional industries. By fostering local recreational options, the goal is also to enhance the overall quality of life for Hondurans, inspiring pride and providing meaningful alternatives to migration.

SYSTEM: *How might the system work differently to achieve the impact? (Desired State of the System)*

- The tourism system creates and markets unique experiences, as evidenced by positive traveler reviews and repeat visitation. These experiences attract both leisure and business travelers to Honduras, encouraging longer stays and increased spending at local destinations.
- The tourism system successfully grows key segments—Sun and Beach, Nature and Adventure, Culture, and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism— as shown by increased visitation. This diversification creates more economic opportunities via formal, higher-paying jobs, particularly for women.
- The sector fosters coordination among tourism providers, local businesses, and policymakers to ensure a steady flow of tourism-related revenue and management of public funding and destinations.

CHANGE: *What changes outcomes could shift how the system works?*

The following system changes will help the tourism system to function in a fundamentally different way and achieve the impact:

- **Reputation:** Negative perceptions driven by stories of crime and instability must be countered through strategic media efforts, SEO, and improved marketing to shift the narrative and present Honduras as a desirable and safe destination.
- **Attractions:** Current offerings are insufficient to motivate tourists to extend their stays. New experiences—such as cultural, culinary, and adventure-based activities—are needed to better capture and retain tourist interest.

- **Connectivity:** High transportation costs and inconvenient travel options are barriers. The system needs better air travel access, reduced fees, and expanded routes to make visiting Honduran destinations more affordable and accessible.
- **Professionalization:** Professionalization of tourism workforce and services is needed to improve skills in commercializing, event planning, hospitality, and related services through certifications, training platforms, and recruitment initiatives to raise service standards and enhance the overall tourist experience in Honduras.
- **Support Services:** Localized support is needed for women-led tourism enterprises, which are often smaller and more informal than male-led businesses. Tailored financing, business advisory and mentorship can help these businesses formalize, scale, and contribute to a more dynamic tourism sector.

Process & Facilitation Guide:

How do you guide a project team towards developing a Vision for Change, like the tourism example provided above? The approach can depend on factors such as the project, who is facilitating, whether the process is done in-person or online, and the length of time available.

This guide outlines a recommended method, starting with an in-person facilitated workshop to gather initial ideas and encourage team discussion. Following the workshop, the technical team refines and documents the vision for change in a structured worksheet.

Timing: Plan a 90 -120-minute workshop with the team to develop the Vision for Change.

Participants: Include the technical team at minimum. It can also be helpful to include MEL, communications, and even operations teams. Depending on the project, consider inviting the donor and/or other stakeholders in this process.

Materials: Print the Systems Change Outcome Map on a large poster
Provide sticky notes and pens/markers for brainstorming.

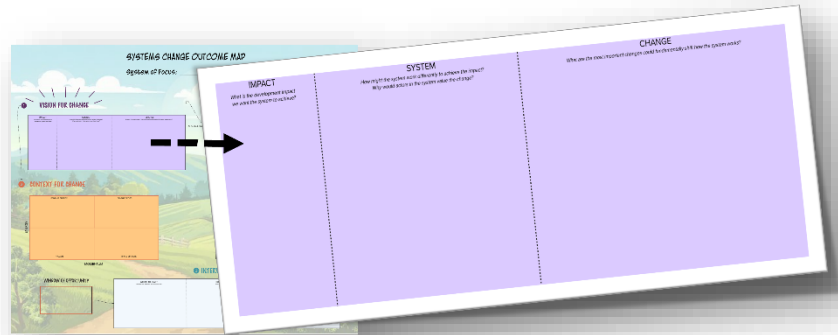
Preparation: For inception phase workshops, ask participants to review the project proposal and/or summaries of formative analyses in advance of the workshop, to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

For implementation-phase workshops, Request participants to, at minimum, review the workplan and/or partnership agreements prior to this session to understand what activities are currently planned and budgeted for, that are meant to contribute to the systems change strategy.

Facilitator(s) should also be prepared to spotlight other ACDI/VOCA project systems change strategies used for similar contexts, for possible inclusion into the vision for change.

1. Introduce the Vision for Change Framework (see image below).

- Explain the purpose of the poster, going section by section, from Impact, System, and Changes. If you are working in multiple systems, use multiple posters.
- Facilitate the discussion, section by section, encouraging participants to write their ideas on sticky notes and put them onto the poster. If preferred, the facilitator can summarize discussion among the team on sticky notes.



2. Use Guiding Questions:

- What "Impact" do we want to achieve? How does this impact contribute to ACDI/VOCA's 4 corporate impact areas? (see guiding questions below)
- How could the system work differently to achieve these impacts?
- How does the system achieve this change (independent of us)?
- How do we see change happening in the system? What is the vision or pathway?
- What aspects of the system are changing (e.g., rules, roles, relationships, processes)?
- Who are the key actors and stakeholders responsible for driving and sustaining the change?



Fair Societies Lens: It is likely that an element of the desired impact regarding fair societies will show up in the "Impact" section. Be sure to envision *how* the system would need to work differently to realize this impact, and which actors could drive and sustain that change? In addition, envision what might be the *most important or most influential changes* that could fundamentally shift how the system works.



Thriving Economies Lens: Be specific about the type of thriving economies we think is important to achieve impact in the system – is it access to finance, job creation, entrepreneurship, etc?



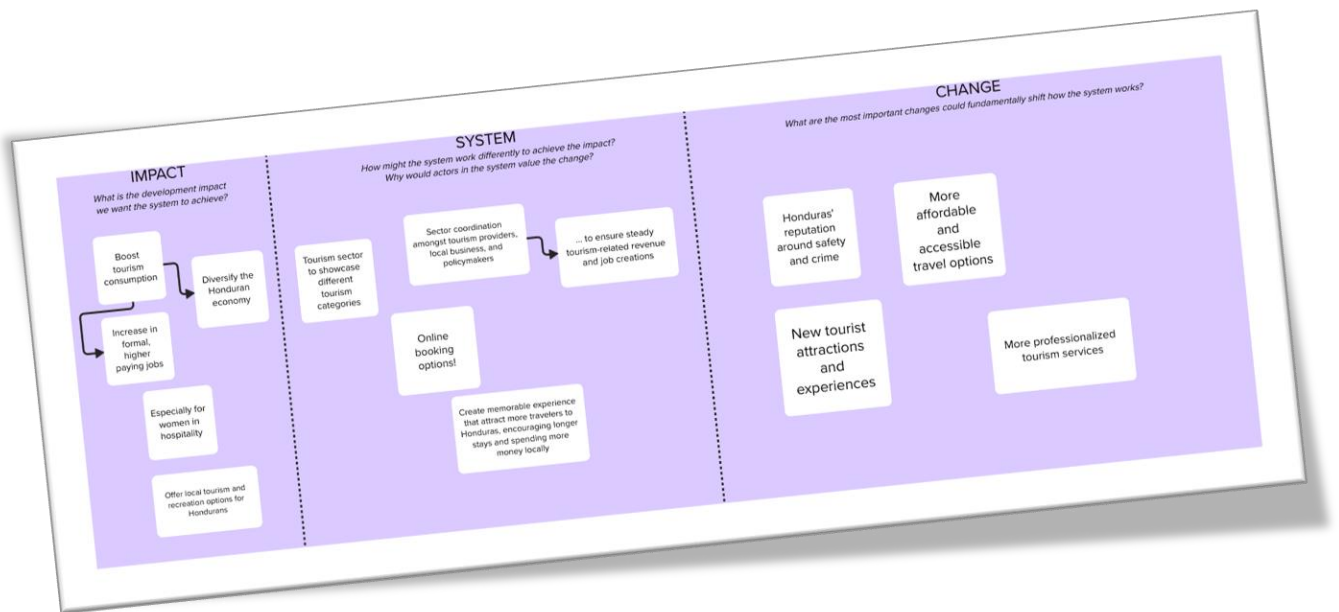
Sustainable Food Systems Lens: Although not reflected in the Honduras TMS tourism example below, many of ACDI/VOCA's projects have systems change outcomes related to food security. As you work through this section, consider how

reliable food supplies relates to the vision for change – is there a focus on improved or more efficient production, improved supply chain management and market access, shifts in food consumption behaviors, etc?



Resilient Communities Lens: Consider how resilience—whether at a household, community, or market system level—is important to the vision for change. Discuss how the system may need to shift and how change may occur to result in increased resilience.

Using the Honduras tourism sector example above, a completed Vision for Change on the poster may look something like this:



3. Task the team with summarizing the Vision for Change in an “elevator pitch”. Key elements that should be included in the elevator pitch are:

- What are the impacts we want to achieve?
- What systems are responsible for generating those impacts?
- What changes are needed for these systems to work better?

Once teams have developed and practiced their pitch, be sure to have them test it out with other members of the project – or even better, with individuals who are not familiar with the detail of the project to see how it is received. You could also hold a Pitch-a-thon to create a competition between different teams working across different components/result areas.

4. Define the Vision for Change. Be sure to capture the vision for change narrative in the Word document worksheet. It will make reporting easier for project teams, and it also will

provide common language that can be used for internal and external communication (including to the donor).