

# Visioning Better Futures

An addendum to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN)  
Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management

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This addendum *Visioning Better Futures*, is an update to the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) Socioeconomic Manual for Coral Reef Management (Bunce et al. 2000).

#### Technical advice and guidance

The Global SocMon initiative ([www.socmon.org](http://www.socmon.org)) can provide technical advice, guidance and share experiences on applying the Vision Tree tool. Contact Peter Edwards at [peter.edwards@noaa.gov](mailto:peter.edwards@noaa.gov) for further information.

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Copies of *Visioning Better Futures* can be downloaded from the global SocMon website ([www.socmon.org](http://www.socmon.org)).

#### Comments and feedback

Comments on this addendum and feedback on how it was applied would be most appreciated. Please send to Maria Pena at [maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu](mailto:maria.pena@cavehill.uwi.edu).

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#### Disclaimer

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## Visioning Better Futures: The vision tree

The Socio-economic Monitoring for Coastal Management (SocMon) methodology provides a mixed set of tools and methods for data collection ranging from the quantitative (e.g. surveys) to the qualitative (key informant interviews, focus groups and visualization techniques). Visualization techniques are powerful means for collecting and displaying data. Their utility in displaying data is one of their greatest strengths for communicating the results of SocMon. They offer alternative visualization of socio-economic data that may be more useful for decision-making. The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) SocMon Manual (Bunce et al. 2000) describes a suite of these techniques (see pages 113-144) for application. This GCRMN SocMon methodological update identifies the *Vision Tree* as another useful participatory visualization technique. The tool is fully described using a similar format to that of visualization techniques highlighted in the GCRMN SocMon Manual.

### Definition

Much like the decision tree (see GCRMN SocMon manual pages 131-132), the vision tree is a visual representation of the current situation or issues facing stakeholders and the community of interest. However, unlike the decision tree - which aids in the analysis of factors influencing decisions - vision trees help stakeholders to reflect and articulate individual statements of where they would like to be in the future. The individual vision statements are grouped to build a common stakeholder or community vision. Visioning further includes the steps they have to take to reach their **VISION** or goal.

### Purpose

- Helps people to think about the situation in which they would like to be in the future. This is a starting point of any process for livelihood development or management of natural resources.
- Helps people challenge the present status by “envisioning” better futures.
- Encourages people to think and build on stakeholder and community strengths that can be harnessed to improve the conditions of their group or their village.
- Identifies stakeholder or community strengths and supporting factors that can help tackle the problem.
- Provides a focus for developing a plan of action to reach the vision.

### Requirements

1. A facilitator to encourage people to develop visions that are challenging and based on peoples’ strengths and past successes rather than their problems and weaknesses.
2. Flip chart paper with the outline of a tree including leaves, trunk and roots
3. Coloured cards for people to record their individual statements. This makes clustering of similar and different statements easier.
4. Coloured markers for both the drawing of the tree as well as labelling different parts of the tree.
5. A volunteer to record visions of any illiterate participants.

## Suggested approach

Facilitators introduce the vision tree (Figure 1) and describe how this represents what the participants have and how they would like it to grow. See Box 1 for symbolic meanings for each part of a vision tree. Through facilitation participants are encouraged to develop a 'vision' for the future, i.e. those conditions they aspire to. An example of a visioning exercise is provided in Box 2, pages 4-5, to reinforce the process described below.

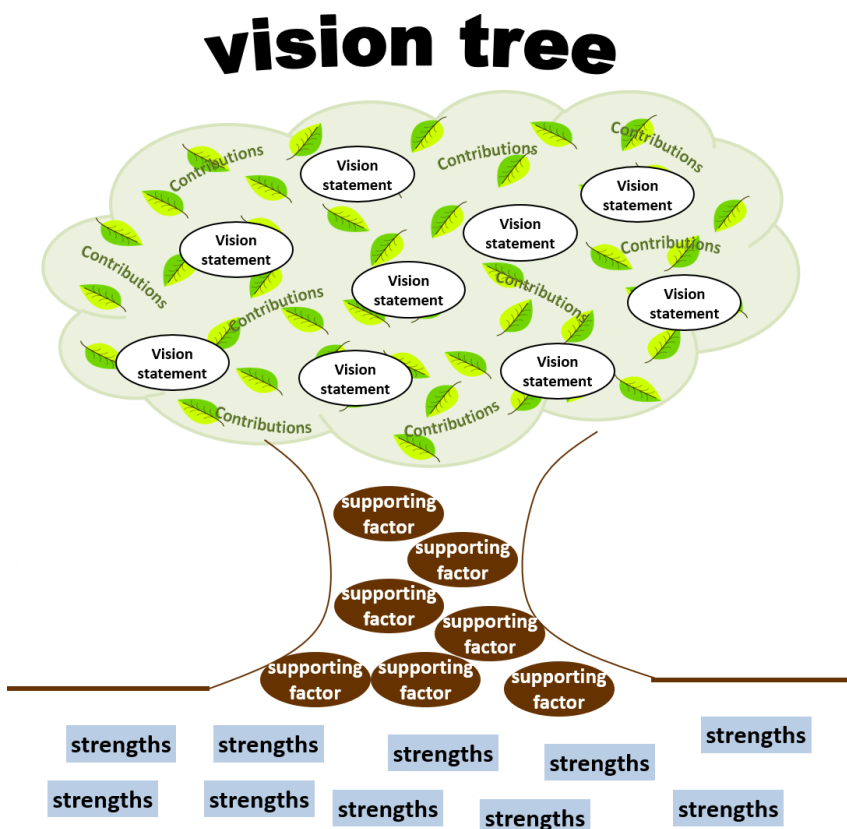


Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of a vision tree

### Box 1: Vision tree parts and their meanings

- The roots represent the strengths of the participants and the community in which they live.
- The trunk shows the conditions or supporting factors that can enable success towards achieving the vision.
- The fruit of the tree represent the visions of the participants. Some of them can be achieved individually, some will need group action and others can be achieved when the whole community gets involved.
- The leaves on the trees are the various contributions

The visioning process has three stages:

### Uncovering strengths and potential within the participant group

- Start the exercise focusing on something positive. Ask participants to think about their happy moments or successes (e.g. a new job, an award, marriage proposal, birth of a child, formalization of a group etc.). Give them time to think and relive the moment. Ask them to reflect about what were the enabling factors that provided for that happy moment.
- As participants recount their stories, facilitators should elicit and record 1) individual strengths that are highlighted, 2) strengths of friends, neighbours and associated groups, and 3) the conditions or factors that helped bring about the success.
- Draw a root for each strength and label strengths on each root. Individual and community strengths include age, gender, education level, skills, natural resource status, community cohesion, participation in management etc.

### Identifying visions

- Determine a context or issue of focus for the vision tree. Allow the participants to arrive at a consensus for focal context rather than having a predetermined one.

- Explain that the aim of the exercise will be on developing one vision, and identifying the enabling factors to arrive at the vision.
- Distribute cards and markers to each participant and ask them to write down an individual vision.
- Draw an outline of a large tree canopy and paste the individual statement cards as fruits of the tree.
- Discuss each vision statement with the participant group and then cluster vision statements with a common theme.
- Discuss how visions can be achieved by contributing factors. These can be based on strengths and enabling factors at the individual, group and community level.

### Identifying the contributions towards achieving visions.

- In this step, participants are facilitated to analyze the elements that would contribute to that future state including their own strengths and potential.
- Draw an outline of a large tree trunk and have participants label it with the enabling or supporting factors that would create an environment to achieving the vision.
- These can include but are not limited to governance arrangements and institutions, political support, perceptions, enthusiasm, schools, banks, social networks, good infrastructure such as roads etc. Governance arrangements and institutions that would permit achieving the vision include, but are not limited to, ways in which natural resource use are managed, enabling legislation, and the specific opportunities for changes in livelihoods, management or governance resulting from the realization of the vision.

### Strengths

- Simple to conduct and easy to understand;
- Provides clarity of the situation at hand;
- Provides a useful and easily understood structure for analysis by both the assessment team and participants;
- Provides a voice to people's aspirations and hopes through the development, presentation and celebration of people's visions; and
- Creates joint learning as the facilitating team and participants begin to discover their own hidden talents and strengths through the visioning process.

### Weaknesses

- Requires an experienced facilitator;
- Requires literacy among participants; and
- Requires additional support when participants are not fully literate

### Next steps

To move the vision forward, follow-up steps would require the development of:

- an implementing strategy, and
- an informing and influencing plan.

## Box 2: Visioning in Vidataltivu, Sri Lanka

As part of a SocMon South Asia study, a vision tree exercise was facilitated at Vidataltivu, Northern Province, Sri Lanka in May 2015. This is a village recovering from three decades of civil war (1983 to 2009). The educated and “better-off” families have migrated from the village. Only the people who had spent the majority of their lives in refugee camps and on-the-move returned to the village when peace prevailed in 2009. Thirty-three members from the community representing, the Women’s Self Help Group, Fisheries Cooperative Society, youth group leaders and community leaders took part in the exercise.

The facilitator began the exercise by asking participants to reflect upon what was the biggest achievement and joyful moment during the last five years for them as a village community. Vidataltivu was one of the worst affected villages during the war, and at the time of the workshop, the community still had not fully recovered from the damage, both mentally and physically. After taking considerable time to reflect and discuss the memorable achievement or moment, participants responded in the following manner:

*“We are still alive and resettled in our birth place – this is something to be joyful about. During the war period we had to constantly run, leaving all our belongings behind, never knowing if we would be alive to see our home again. Sometimes hiding with rebellion groups, when caught by the military, we were placed in open jails (refugee camps).”*

It was tough for the facilitator to move forward with the visioning process as the participants began to relive the memories of their experiences during the war. There was a chilled silence as gloom descended upon the room. Still they were able to emerge to the present and find a reason to smile. Shared difficulties also build social resilience. The facilitator asked them to envision what state they would like to be ten years from the present by requesting that each of them write down their vision for the future on one of the blank fruits on a tree drawn on flipchart paper (Figure 2). Once the vision statements were articulated, the community was asked to identify and label their strengths on the roots of the tree. Finally, supporting factors that could help achieve their vision were identified and labeled on the tree trunk (Table 1). After the tree was developed, a community planning process to build consensus for change was initiated.



**Figure 2: The visioning process. Left: the facilitator taking participants through the visioning exercise. Right: participants writing their visions as fruits on the tree**

The individual visions were discussed and common elements were used to group and prioritize them. On deeper analysis of the supporting factors within the village, the group was able to list the individuals, institutions and government departments in the village that could provide support and contribute towards achieving the vision. This exercise helped participants realize that the supporting factors and institutions they had listed as strengths, were in fact not functioning but existed in name only. They again despaired that nothing was possible.



The agreed upon vision after discussion was the protection of coastal and marine resources for enhancing livelihoods. All of the households in the village depended on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods. These resources have to be managed and used judiciously. However, the FCS that was identified as the institution responsible for governing the marine resources was ineffective and was not functioning at the time. Therefore, the immediate vision and priority of the group became the activation of the FCS. However, participants did not know how to go about doing this especially as there were few educated men in the village. One of the facilitating team members gave the example of the FCS in her own and neighbouring villages. They were managed by women with high school education, were solvent and had a voice in the fisheries department.

As a result of the SocMon exercise in Vidaltivu, the community is on the way to achieving their shared vision. The FCS has been activated with support from the Fisheries Department and the Vidaltivu lagoon has been declared as Special Area Management (SAM) site and receives special protection in Sri Lanka.

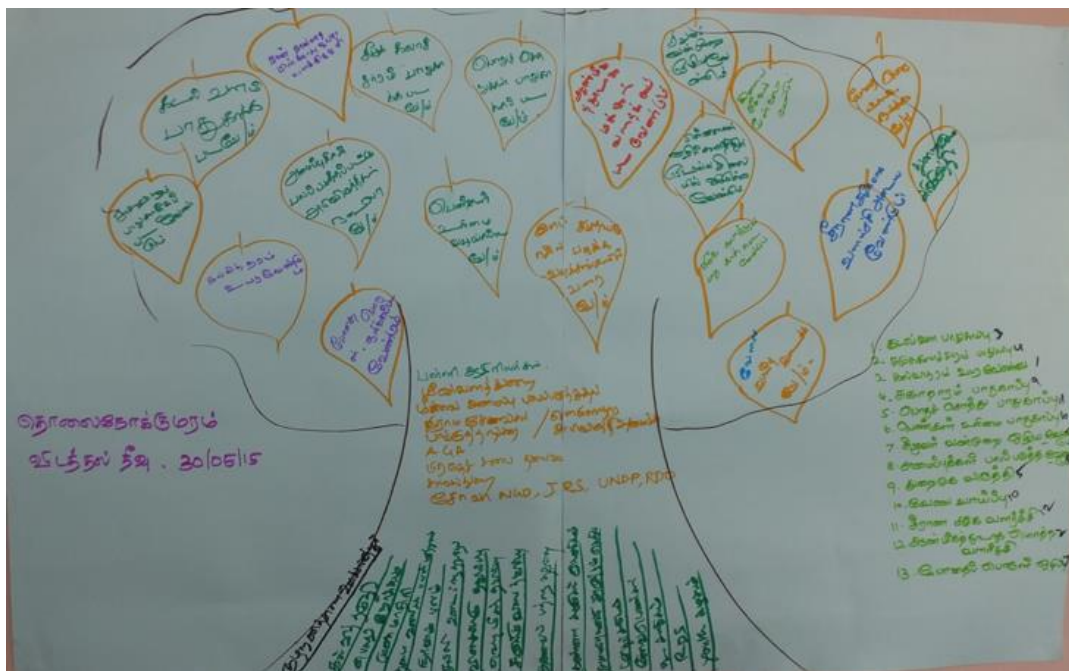


Figure 3: The completed vision tree for Vidaltivu village

Table 1: Vision statements, strengths and supporting factors identified and developed during the visioning exercise

Individual Vision Statement	Consolidated Vision Statement's
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our Coastal and marine resources will be protected</li> <li>2. Common property resources will be protected</li> <li>3. Protecting of socio-cultural roots</li> <li>4. Youth community swill grow along with good habits</li> <li>5. People should grow by obeying god</li> <li>6. Ensure women rights</li> <li>7. Violence against children will be eliminated</li> <li>8. Eradication of substance use</li> <li>9. Health status of the community will be improved</li> <li>10. Standard of education will be better</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protection of marine and coastal resources and common property resource to sustain livelihoods.</li> <li>2. Village institutions will be strengthened for development of the community Protection of socio-cultural roots to ensure women and children's rights</li> </ol>



Individual Vision Statement	Consolidated Vision Statement's
11. Village institutions will be strengthened and development of the community will take place 12. Employment opportunity will be created 13. Development of harbour 14. Continuous social development	3. Overall community development. Village institutions especially the Fisheries Cooperative Society should be strengthened for the development of the community.
Community Stregnths	Supporting Factors
1. Education background 2. The community has a common objective 3. Administrative structure 4. Role model activities 5. Conservation of mangrove area 6. Community has banned unethical fishing – bottom trawling, dynamite fishing, Monofilament net, Kanava pathai by themselves 7. Women sangam (WSHG) is strong 8. Rural Development Society (RDS) 9. Youth club 10. Cooperative Society	1. School teachers 2. Fisheries department 3. Fisheries cooperative Society 4. Gram Sabha 5. Priest 6. Ministry of economic development 7. Police department 8. Predesa Saba 9. AGA 10. Non-Government Organizations 11. JRS 12. United Nations Development Program 13. RDO

## Recommended reading

BOBLME. 2015. Report of the Socio-economic Monitoring (SocMon) training workshop for Mannar, Sri Lanka, 26 May - 1 June 2015, Mannar, Sri Lanka. BOBLME-2015-Socioec-10.

Hoon, V., T. Marirajan and A.R.M. Haleem. 2015. Socioeconomic assessment and monitoring for Vidaltivu, Mannar District, Northern Province, Sri Lanka, CARESS, India/CAD Sri Lanka. 81pp.

IMM. 2008. Sustainable Livelihoods Enhancement and Diversification (SLED): A Manual for Practitioners. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Colombo, Srilanka; CORDIO, Kalmar, Sweden; and ICRAN, Cambridge U.K.

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