



# Transitioning Well: *Building Sustainable Solutions*

VillageReach’s mission is to transform health care delivery to reach everyone. Our solutions are designed to improve equity and access to primary health care for the most under-reached people.

Once we prove a solution’s impact, our approach is to transition its management and/or operation to the government. We believe that this approach provides the greatest chance for a solution to achieve sustained impact at scale.

By transitioning solutions from VillageReach to another party we can also focus our resources on solving other pressing health problems.

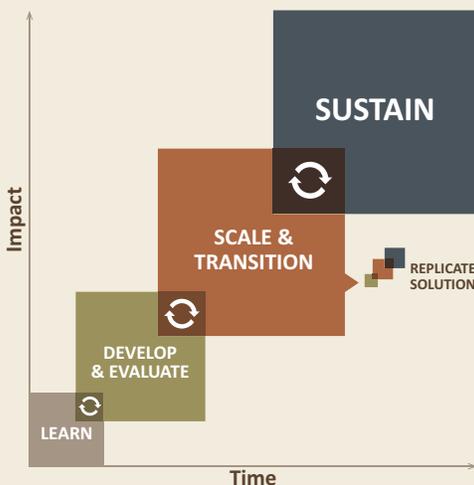
We define transition as the process of integrating a solution into existing public health care systems. Other terms used to describe this process are adoption, scaling up or institutionalization. As part of a transition, a government may decide the private sector or another partner should manage or operate part or all of a solution that it owns.

VillageReach launched an initiative called Transitioning Well in 2019 to guide our approach and engage stakeholders in transitioning solutions. The initiative supports one of our organizational goals: to be a global leader in radical collaboration with governments and the private sector to scale and sustain equitable primary health care delivery solutions.

At the center of this initiative are deep partnerships, where solutions are co-created with government and in alignment with government priorities.

This document provides an overview of Transitioning Well and how VillageReach is working to enable successful transitions.

## The VillageReach Approach



## BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

VillageReach encounters several barriers in successful transition of its solutions. We also have heard many of these challenges echoed in interviews with funders, social impact organizations, government officials and other stakeholders. These common barriers stand out:

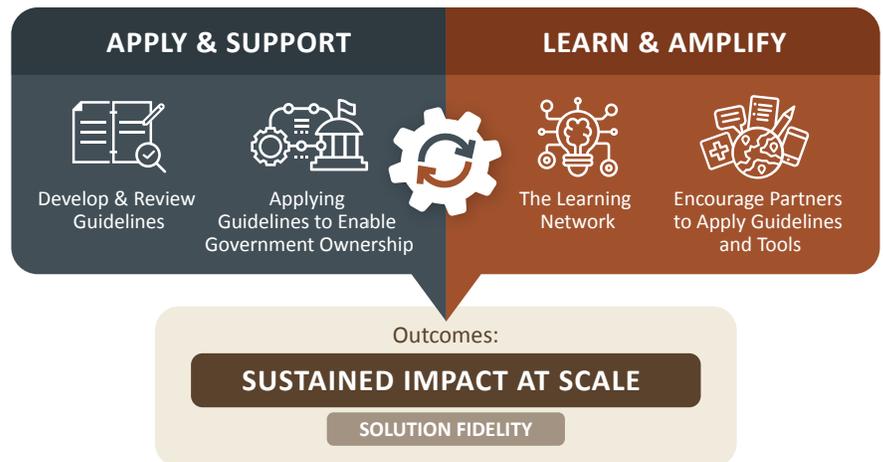
- **Government priorities are not front and center:** Government participation is necessary during solution design and throughout implementation. When social impact organizations design solutions without an understanding of government health priorities, policies and structures, there is a lower probability the solution will transition.
- **No clear path to sustainability:** Many social impact organizations, including VillageReach, own, manage and operate solutions for many years. Although a notion exists that government should be the eventual owner, often there's not a clear plan to end support and transition.
- **Lack of understanding of costs and financial structures:** All parties need to understand the operational costs of a solution to successfully manage or operate it. Yet social impact organizations are not always able to define or share core solution elements and their costs. Further, social impact organizations and funders do not always understand government mechanisms for planning, financing and disbursing funds. Timelines that do not align with government fiscal and strategic planning cycles inhibit transition.
- **Misaligned expectations regarding time and resources:** Funders and multilateral organizations do not always provide the necessary time, flexibility and resources that social impact organizations and governments need for successful transition.

# Transitioning Well Initiative

The Transitioning Well initiative has two main focus areas:

- 1 **Apply & Support** - building a supportive organizational structure at VillageReach to transition solutions to government; and
- 2 **Learn & Amplify** - engaging stakeholders for mutual learning and iteration on best practices.

We believe that the activities in these two areas will help more solutions sustain impact at scale.



## APPLY & SUPPORT

Building a supportive organizational structure for transition requires VillageReach to incorporate transition-related activities into its solution design, implementation and evaluation phases of work. Partnering with government stakeholders from solution design is essential. This means designing the solution with government, and identifying with government the appropriate partner(s) to manage or operate the solution long term.

Another important part of building this structure is training key individuals. VillageReach developed role descriptions for two key positions essential to this process based on our experience to date: the Transition Lead, who is responsible for managing transition activities with the government and relevant partners, and the Transition Coach, who supports the Transition Lead in applying guidelines.

We also developed guidelines to use with our government partners and related stakeholders. We started testing them internally on our own solutions over the past year and will continue to refine them over time as we capture more lessons and share them with others.

VillageReach's transition process is organized into three stages: (1) Define and Begin to Implement, (2) Implement and Plan for Transition, and (3) Transition and Sustain. The transition process is not always linear so iteration is required. See appendix for more details on the guidelines that are referenced.

## STAGE 1

### Define and Begin to Implement the Solution

- Co-develop a solution with government based on a problem identified as a priority by government.
- Develop a **Solution Description** that defines the scope of the solution.
- Begin solution implementation – in this case it may be on a small scale, e.g., in one province or district.
- Develop a **Solution Toolkit** containing the elements needed to operate the solution long term.
- Conduct an impact evaluation to assess whether the initial solution is effective.
- Conduct a costing study to understand the operational costs.

## STAGE 2

### Continue Implementation and Plan for Transition

- Continue solution implementation while planning for transition.
- Set key directions on timing, funding and roles and responsibilities as part of a **Transition Strategy**. Formalize in an agreement with government.
  - Evaluate solution maturity and the context influencing solution success via the **Transition Readiness Assessment (TRA)**. This is based on dimensions outlined in our [transition to government framework](#). We recommend conducting the TRA multiple times throughout the transition process to adapt to changing solution maturity and context.
    - Re-evaluate costs at this point.
  - Define the actions and timing for transition based on TRA results through a **Transition Plan**.
- Develop and implement a **Skills Development Plan** to build the skills needed for long term impactful operation of the solution.
- Develop an **Evaluation and Adaptation Plan** to measure Key Performance Indicators and the transition process.

## STAGE 3

### Transition and Sustain the Solution

- Continue solution implementation and activities defined in the Transition Plan.
- Conduct formal handover to government.
- Refine the **Evaluation and Adaptation Plan** and evaluate the transition with the government partner.

The government may identify a need for ongoing external resources to support the solution after transition. Following a transition, we recommend that funders support a final evaluation, commissioned by the new solution owners and/or managers, to gauge to what extent a solution has maintained impact and quality post transition.



## LEARN & AMPLIFY



Integrating solutions into the public sector is complex and requires deep collaboration, yet practical tools and examples are few and not well understood. VillageReach and its partner Spring Impact, with the support of a coalition of funders, are spearheading development of a Learning Network to begin to address this. The intent is to help source, develop, test and share best practices to improve the way solutions transition to government. VillageReach's existing guidelines will support this effort.

Our landscape research with dozens of stakeholders revealed that realizing more successful transitions requires a shift in deeply-entrenched power dynamics between funders, governments and social impact organizations.

VillageReach, Spring Impact and Devex co-hosted a [virtual event](#) during Skoll World Forum in April 2020 to highlight government perspectives, which are not always at the fore. During the event, government leaders from Cameroon, Ethiopia and Uganda tackled topics like how to seek alignment and build trust, the need to develop champions and engage leaders across ministries and the importance of proving impact.

Another finding from our landscape research was the strong desire to move beyond principles to providing practical guidance. We are building on what we've heard from governments and other Learning Network participants to develop a tool that outlines the journey of government solution adoption. It will establish shared language to describe the journey, indicate guidelines for successful partnership and set a contextual framework for other Learning Network activities and outputs.

The Learning Network is aligning with several partners and coalitions including Bertha Centre at the University of Cape Town, Catalyst 2030, ExpandNet, the International Development Innovation Alliance, Million Lives Club, Skoll Foundation and Vitol Foundation. Over time, we aim to gain acceptance of practices that create a more enabling environment for transitioning solutions to government. We expect the Learning Network eventually to be managed from sub-Saharan Africa to better support government stakeholders there.

We believe that if the journey to government adoption is well understood by all, power can be more evenly distributed among key stakeholders and result in more sustainable health solutions in sub-Saharan Africa. And with more sustainable health solutions, governments can better support the health needs of their populations, reaching the people who need them most.



Join the [Learning Network](#) for access to guidelines, tools and information.

For questions regarding our Transitioning Well initiative please email [transitioningwell@villagereach.org](mailto:transitioningwell@villagereach.org)

## APPLY & SUPPORT

### STAGE 1: DEFINE AND BEGIN TO IMPLEMENT THE SOLUTION

<b>Solution Description</b>	This guideline helps stakeholders identify the core elements needed to operate a solution. It provides instructions on how to define the solution scope and its elements, and how to create and validate the solution description. VillageReach recommends developing a solution description at the beginning of stage one of program implementation.
<b>Solution Toolkit</b>	This guideline covers instructions for how to create a solution toolkit that ensures all operational staff have the required knowledge for effective solution implementation. A solution toolkit ensures that individuals responsible for each part of the solution can easily access standard operating procedures, reference materials and tools needed to carry out activities that sustain solution fidelity and impact.

### STAGE 2: CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT SOLUTION AND PLAN FOR TRANSITION

<b>Transition Strategy</b>	This guideline helps solution owners and partners identify and document the goals and vision for transition. It helps align the solution team and government or receiving partner around roles and responsibilities for solution operation, resources, expected geographical coverage of the solution at the point of transition, risks and mitigating factors and timing of transition.
<b>Transition Readiness Assessment (TRA) Guideline</b>	The TRA guideline helps stakeholders understand when and how to assess the readiness of a solution to transition using the TRA tool. It also details how the assessment should be completed, and the stakeholders who should participate in the process.
<b>Transition Readiness Assessment Tool</b>	This tool accompanies the TRA guideline. It provides a detailed description of the seven critical dimensions outlined in the transition to government theoretical framework and how to assess each dimension. The tool helps stakeholders assess the context surrounding the solution, such as the enabling political, economic and social environments. It also includes factors more directly related to the implementation and management of the solution including solution design, resource availability, financial management, government strategy, policy and regulations and organization. The TRA findings allow stakeholders to identify which dimensions require support and action to improve solution readiness for transition. The necessary action items identified by the TRA should be detailed in the Transition Plan.
<b>Transition Plan</b>	This guideline aids stakeholders to develop, update and maintain a Transition Plan. It includes required actions and associated timelines to address any issues identified through the TRA.
<b>Skills Development Plan</b>	This guideline helps stakeholders design a plan that develops or enhances the necessary skills for the entity managing or operating the solution post transition. This plan assumes that with the right skills, solution impact and fidelity can be maintained over time.

### STAGE 3: TRANSITION AND SUSTAIN THE SOLUTION

<b>Evaluation and Adaptation Plan</b>	This guideline provides stakeholders with direction on how to monitor solution key performance indicators throughout a transition, as well as how to evaluate solution fidelity and impact post transition. It also evaluates the transition process itself, highlighting the role of contextual factors, facilitators, challenges and lessons learned for future solutions' transition to government. (The plan is developed in Stage 2 and carried out and refined in Stage 3.)
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## LEARN & AMPLIFY

<b>Journey to Government Adoption Tool</b>	Developed in partnership with Spring Impact, this tool establishes shared language to describe the journey of solution adoption by government, indicates guidance for successful partnerships and sets a contextual framework for other tools and best practices to be developed and tested by Learning Network participants.
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