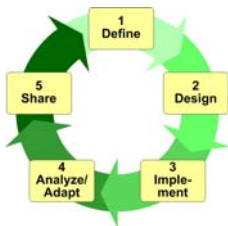




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# Basic Guidance for Step 1.4 Situation Analysis

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**Resources for Implementing the WWF Standards**

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This document is intended as a guidance resource to support the implementation of the *WWF Standards of Conservation Project and Programme Management*. Although each step in these *Standards* must be completed, the level of detail depends on the circumstances of individual projects and programmes. Accordingly, each team will have to decide whether and to what level of detail they want to apply the guidance in this document.

This document may change over time; the most recent version can be accessed at:

<https://intranet.panda.org/documents/folder.cfm?uFolderID=60977>

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# Situation Analysis

## What is a Situation Analysis?

Before you even begin to think about what you should do to protect biodiversity at your site, you need to have a clear understanding of what is happening there. A situation analysis is a process that will help you and your project team create together a common understanding of your project's context – including the biological environment and the social, economic, political, and institutional systems that affect the biodiversity targets you want to conserve. This practice is one that is sometimes overlooked – at least explicitly – in conservation projects, yet it is one of the most important steps to consider. By understanding the biological and human context, you will have a better chance of developing appropriate goals and objectives and designing strategic activities that will help you achieve them. The challenge here is to make your logic explicit without spending too much time on trying to develop a perfect model of reality.

A situation analysis involves an analysis of the key factors affecting your targets including direct threats, indirect threats and opportunities, and enabling conditions. Each factor can typically be linked to one or more stakeholders, those individuals, groups, or institutions that have an interest in or will be affected by your project's activities.

## Why a Situation Analysis Is Important

Without a clear understanding of what is happening at your site, it is nearly impossible to develop goals, objectives, and strategic activities that make sense for your site's conditions. In addition, often times, project teams *think* they have a shared understanding of their project's context and what the main threats and opportunities are. In going through a formal process to document underlying assumptions about the project's context, however, project teams often find they have somewhat different perceptions of the same situation. For example, biologists tend to focus on the biological aspects of the site whereas development organizations tend to focus on the socioeconomic factors. A situation analysis helps all project team members come to a common understanding of your site's context, its critical threats, and the underlying factors (indirect threats and opportunities) you should be considering in your project planning.

## When to Use a Situation Analysis

A situation analysis should be one of the first steps your project team undertakes. It is the main undertaking in Step 1.4 of the WWF Standards, but it is something you will use throughout the life of your project. In particular, your situation analysis will be useful in developing and implementing your action and monitoring plans.

### **Box 1. What is the Relationship between a Situation Analysis and a Stakeholder Analysis?**

Numerous publications and guides talk about the importance of doing situation and/or stakeholder analyses and offer methods and tools for doing them. But, you may be asking yourself whether there is a difference between these and a need to do both. In actuality, these are two different but related processes.

- 1) Situation Analysis** – An analysis of the factors (direct threats, underlying causes, and opportunities) affecting your conservation targets at your project site. This is essentially an analysis of the context, independent of the specific stakeholders. This analysis can show the situation both:
  - a) Before your project begins
  - b) While your project is choosing which specific strategies to implement
- 2) Stakeholder Analysis** – An analysis of the people and organizations who will be influenced by, have an impact on, or will help implement conservation actions at your project site. This analysis can be subdivided into the following questions:
  - a) Who should participate in your project team?
  - b) Who are the key actors that potentially influence and/or have a stake in what happens to biodiversity at your project site and thus need to be considered in your situation analysis? (note that this part of a stakeholder analysis overlaps with a situation analysis)
  - c) Who are the key actors that can potentially influence whether any strategy you plan to undertake will be effective?
  - d) Can stakeholder participation in the project design and monitoring serve as a conservation strategy in and of itself?
  - e) Who are the key audiences for the results of your project (this is also known as an “audience analysis”)?

## **How to Develop and Use a Situation Analysis**

As part of your analysis of the situation, you should describe the relationships between targets, direct threats, indirect threats, opportunities, and associated stakeholders. This description can be in text form or in a diagrammatic illustration of these relationships. Either way, a good situation analysis shows quite clearly the context in which your project will take place and illustrates the cause-and-effect relationships that you and your team assume exists within the project area. In other words, the analysis helps articulate the core assumptions inherent in your project, and to communicate the intentions and expected impacts of your actions to other people outside of your project.

Two helpful methods for completing a situation analysis are conceptual modelling and brainstorming. Your team should feel free to modify or adapt these methods as you see fit – or to substitute other methods that you find more useful.

**Method #1: Conceptual Model (Box-and-Arrow Diagram)**

This method involves using boxes and arrows to represent factors and the links between them (for more complete guidance on this method, see [Basic Guidance on Conceptual Models](#)).

- 1) Assemble your project team. Plan to spend at least a few hours together – ideally an entire day.
- 2) Put the scope of your project area on a card and put it at the far right-hand side or the top centre of your workspace (e.g., large flip chart sheets taped together, a white board, a chalk board, etc.).
- 3) Put each of your biodiversity targets on a card and arrange them near the project scope card. If you have species targets that are nested within habitat targets, you may wish to show this relationship (e.g., migratory fish in the river). You may also want to show relationships between different targets (e.g., upland forest affecting downstream wetlands).
- 4) Identify one of the most important direct threats to your targets and write it on a card (you may wish to use a different colour than the one used for your biodiversity targets). Put this card on your workspace and use arrows to connect it to the biodiversity targets that it directly affects. Repeat this process for the other main threats at your site – do not try to include every single threat though; just focus on the main ones.
- 5) For each direct threat, work with your team to brainstorm additional factors (indirect threats and/or opportunities) that lie behind the direct threat. For each factor, you may also want to list the relevant actor/stakeholder who is responsible for the factor and/or the motivation for their action (on the front or back of each card). Put each factor on a card, put each card on your workspace, and then show the relationship to other cards.
- 6) As you work, you may have to rearrange, add, delete, or combine cards. Try not to get hung up in any one section of the model, but instead to create an overarching picture of the situation. If there are uncertainties, you can note them using question marks and try to reconcile them later through further inquiry.
- 7) You may wish to add additional threats and the factors behind them. You may also show the stresses between a threat and biodiversity target if necessary to show the logic connecting a threat to a biodiversity target.
- 8) At the end of the meeting, capture what you have done in a small sketch or using a computer flow-chart program (e.g. MS Visio or the drawing feature of MS Word). You may also want to develop brief text paragraphs describing each part of the model. These will provide detail that will be useful to describing your model to others who did not participate, as well as for formally documenting group discussions and decisions.
- 9) Discuss with your group your confidence level in the different portions of the model and which stakeholders or other experts you might need to consult to vet different sections of your model. Make assignments as necessary.
- 10) Consult with stakeholders and other experts and then reconvene with your team to discuss how you might change your model based on this input.

**Method #2: Brainstorming**

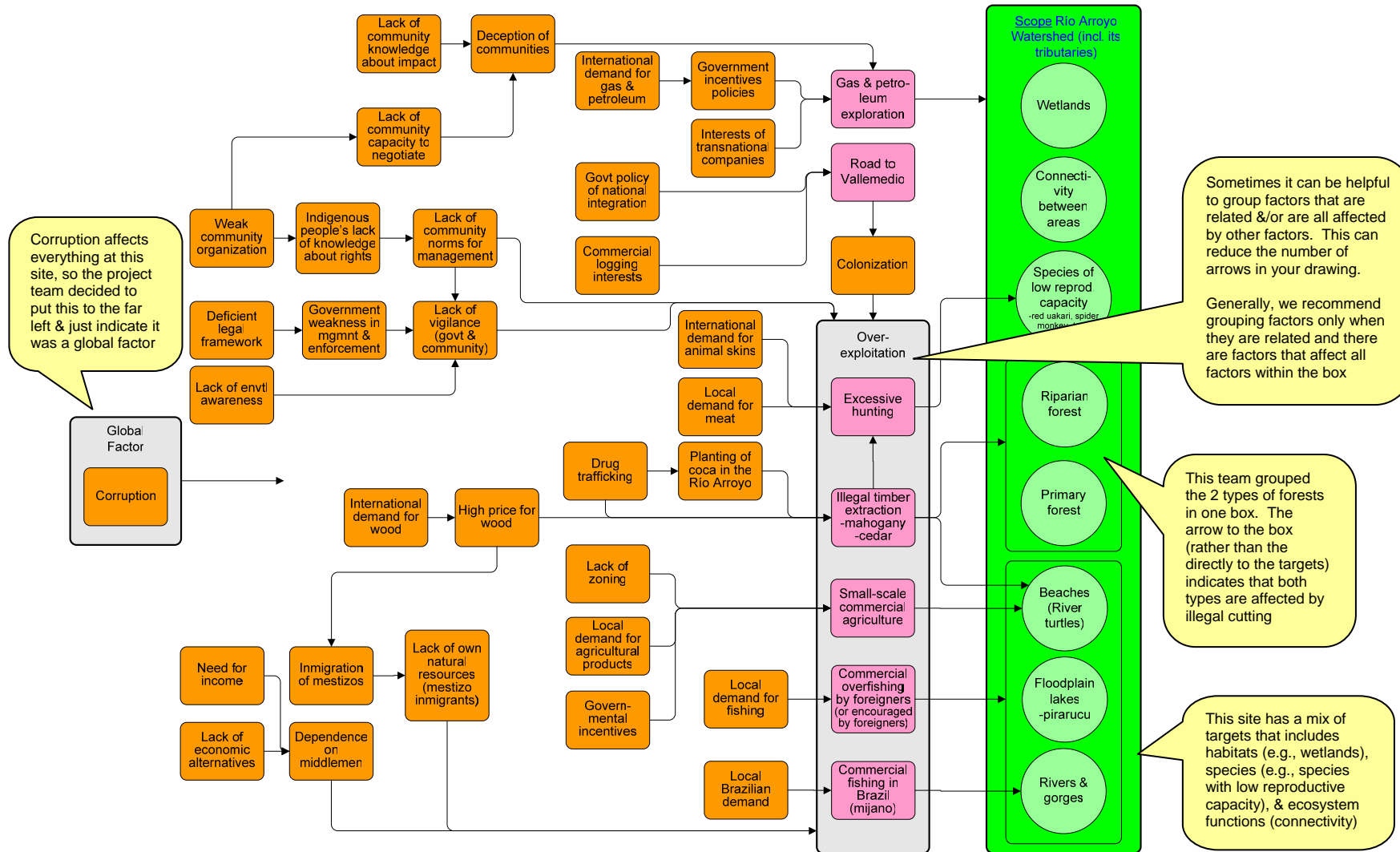
This method involves making lists of factors and using narrative text to describe them and their links to other factors and your biodiversity targets.

- 1) Assemble your project team. Plan to spend at least a few hours together – ideally an entire day.
- 2) Identify one of the most important direct threats to your biodiversity targets. Write down the biodiversity target(s) that this threat affects.
- 3) Work with your team to brainstorm additional factors (indirect threats and/or opportunities) that lie behind the direct threat. For each factor, you may also want to list the relevant actor/stakeholder who is responsible for the factor and/or the motivation for their action.
- 4) Repeat the process for your other major direct threats. Try not to get hung up too long on any one page – if there are uncertainties, you can just note them for further inquiry.
- 5) At the end of the meeting, ensure that one or two people are assigned to take each page and write a text paragraph or two describing the relationship between the factors, threats, and biodiversity targets.
- 6) Discuss with your group your confidence level in the different portions of your analysis and which stakeholders or other experts you might need to consult to vet different assumptions. Make assignments as necessary.
- 7) Consult with stakeholders and other experts and then reconvene with your team to discuss how you might change your assumptions based on this input.

**Examples****Method #1: Conceptual Model**

On the following page is an example of a real-world conceptual model, adapted from a model developed by a WWF project team. This project was site-based and had several conservation targets. For an example of a species-based conceptual model, please see [Basic Guidance on Conceptual Models](#).

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Tropical Forests



**Method #2: Brainstorming**

The following example is based on the tropical forest site, portrayed in Figure 1. For simplicity's sake, we present only a portion of what the narrative text might look like. Your team should use a similar process for each direct threat.

**Direct threat:** Illegal timber extraction (mahogany and cedar)

**Biodiversity targets affected:** Riparian forests; Primary forest; and Beaches (rivers and turtles)

**Indirect threats and other factors influencing critical threat:**

- International demand for wood has resulted in high prices for wood, directly leading to more illegal extraction.
- High price of wood has also caused mestizos to migrate to the area. These mestizos do not have their own resources and are exploiting timber (and other resources) without regard to how they should be managed to ensure they are available over the longer term.
- A need for income and a lack of economic alternatives has prompted people to extract timber illegally (either directly or through middlemen).
- Drug trafficking in the area has led to the planting of coca and the cutting of trees.
- Weak community organization and capacity means that indigenous peoples are not knowledgeable about their rights, and they lack the capacity for developing sound community norms for managing their resources. This has resulted in an inability to control the illegal extraction of timber in their communities.
- A deficient legal framework has resulted in governmental weakness in management and enforcement; this, combined with a lack of environmental awareness on the part of both governments and communities has led to an overall lack of vigilance and an inability to control illegal timber extraction.
- The governmental policy of national integration and commercial logging interests have resulted in discussions to build a road to Vallemedio. If this road is built, this will lead to colonization of the area and an expansion into forested areas through illegal clearing of these areas.

Note: In the brainstorming method, your project team might choose to describe in more detail the relationships bulleted above. How detailed you make this exercise depends on how you want to use the information and to whom you will be presenting it. If the information provides sufficient detail for your project team to identify areas for your strategic activities, you may not need further detail. If you are presenting this to a donor or an external audience, you may choose to write this up as a more detailed narrative.



## References

Some good, more detailed sources on conducting a situation analysis include:

Conservation Measures Partnership. 2005. Taxonomy of Direct Threats. Website available at <http://fosonline.org/CMP/Tax/browse.cfm?TaxID=DirectThreats>.

Margoluis, Richard, and Nick Salafsky. 1998. [Measures of Success: Designing, Managing, and Monitoring Conservation and Development Projects](#). Chapter 3. Island Press, Washington, D.C.

PPM&E Resource Portal. Source: <http://www.iac.wur.nl/ppme/index.php>. [Web site with a lot of links to good M&E resources, methods, and tools – some of which would be helpful for a situation analysis].

World Conservation Union M&E Initiative. 1999. Situation Analysis: An IUCN Approach and Method for Strategic Analysis & Planning. World Conservation Union, Gland, Switzerland.