BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

BirdLife Project Toolkit

Guidelines for BirdLife International Partners on planning, implementing and communicating conservation projects

hatch by BirdLife

Foreword

This resource forms part of a range of tools developed under **Hatch**, a BirdLife Partnership initiative which supports the performance and impact of civil society organisations around the world. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership. Together, we are 115 organisations – one per country or territory – and growing, with 10 million members and supporters, over 4,000 local conservation groups and 8,000 staff.

BirdLife's vision is a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony. We are driven by our belief that local people, working for nature in their own places and connected nationally and internationally through our global Partnership, are the key to sustaining all life on this planet. This unique local-to-global approach delivers high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

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Acknowledgments

We are extremely grateful to the following individuals and organisations for their contribution in conceptualising, reviewing and providing examples for the development of this toolkit:

Tiburtius Hani (Burung Indonesia), Ayuwat Jearwattanakanok (Bird Conservation Society of Thailand), Matt Jeffery (Audubon), Caroline Pridham (BirdLife Global Secretariat), Luitzen Santman (Vogelbescherming Nederland), Carol Stork (BirdLife Global Secretariat), Samantha Vine (BirdLife Australia), Kim Wheeler (Vogelbescherming Nederland), Itala Yepez (BirdLife Global Secretariat)

Production of this toolkit was funded by the MAVA Foundation

Layout and design by Millerdesign

BirdLife Project Toolkit

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Contents

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Introduction

What is this toolkit for?

The BirdLife Project Toolkit is a resource intended to support BirdLife Partners plan, implement, evaluate and communicate conservation projects.

Most conservation challenges are complex, where the best solution to a problem is not always know and, even when it is, applying that solution often requires multiple individuals, organisations and other stakeholders collaborating and working together.

This toolkit aims to help BirdLife Partners and project teams deal with and manage this complexity. Providing a set of flexible methods and tools to identify solutions to conservation problems and implement these in way that will maximise impact, collaboration and learning.

How to use this toolkit?

Every conservation project is different. So, although the BirdLife Project Toolkit is presented as a cycle of sequential steps, it is not intended to act as a rigid framework that every project will use in the same way. Instead, this toolkit forms a collection of useful guidance, methods and information that BirdLife Partners can use and modify according to their specific needs and requirements.

See the **Decision Tree** on page 9.

How has this toolkit been developed?

This toolkit has been developed using a range of materials already being used by BirdLife Partners and has been extensively reviewed by a test group of Partner and Global Secretariat staff.

Much of the guidance in this toolkit is based on the **Conservation Standards (formerly Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation)** adapted for a BirdLife audience. This open source, adaptable framework is already being applied by a number of BirdLife Partners, providing an existing community of practice to draw from within the BirdLife network, while also enabling Partners to benefit from and contribute to the experience, capacity and resources of the wider Conservation Standards community outside the BirdLife Partnership.

In keeping with a philosophy of continuous learning and adaptive management, the guidance in this toolkit is under continuous review and will be subject to regular updates, additions and adaptations to ensure it adequately meets the needs of BirdLife Partners and project teams.

See **Appendix B** for a full list of resources used in the development of this toolkit.

Look out for boxes with Tips, Examples and Specific Considerations

Tip

Example:

Specific Considerations for projects involving multiple BirdLife Partners

Key Principles

This section outlines some of the key principles that underpin good project design, implementation, evaluation and communication. As you develop and implement your project it is useful to keep these in mind and refer back to them as needed.

Focus on change

Above all, conservation action centres around trying to bring about **change**. For example, change relating to a particular species, a site, a landscape, or elements of human behaviour and wellbeing.

When planning and implementing your project it can be useful to keep this in mind, as most of the fundamental questions tackled during the different stages of any project revolve around defining, working towards and measuring this change. For example:

- What change are we trying to bring about?
- What do we need to do to bring about this change?
- How will we know whether we have achieved this change?

Suitability & Feasibility

Before any detailed planning of the project's activities, it is important to have a good grasp of the **suitability** and **feasibility** of the project and of the **capacities** of those involved.

For example, do all Partners have the required level of skills or capacity that will be required to implement the project? Is this an area where BirdLife can lead or is collaboration with others required?

Ask the right questions

Much of effective project planning, implementation and communication revolves around asking the **right questions** at the **right time**. This toolkit aims to provide a flexible framework that will help you to answer those questions.

As well as those listed above, examples of particularly useful questions that this toolkit can help you answer include:

- Do we have all the information we need to inform our decision-making?
- Is our approach working, do we need to change anything?
- Will achieving our short-term objectives result in the long-term goals we are trying to achieve?
- How does our work overlap with others working on the same/similar targets?

Contact the **BirdLife Global Secretariat** for more guidance and support on assessing organisational capacity and capacity building opportunities

Tapping into the power of the BirdLife Partnership (Local to Global)

Sometimes tackling a conservation challenge may only require action in relation to a **single site**, while other challenges may occur at the **regional** and/or **global** level and tackling them effectively requires collaboration with others working outside the scope of your project team and/or organisation.

This toolkit is designed to reflect BirdLife's **local-global** approach to conservation. In addition to aiding Partners to design and implement their own projects, it aims to help BirdLife Partners work **more effectively in collaboration** with each other and with the BirdLife Global Secretariat.

Example:

Scope of conservation challenge	Example	How can this toolkit help?
Local	Single forest site threatened by agriculture	How to design and implement a standalone conservation project targeting the species/ site of interest
Regional	Illegal killing of birds along a migration flyway	How to work with other BirdLife Partners, the BirdLife Global Secretariat and other relevant collaborators within the confines of a project/ initiative
Global	Climate Change	How to work with other BirdLife Partners, the BirdLife Global Secretariat and other relevant collaborators to effectively input into global efforts to address the climate emergency

For collaborative projects involving multiple BirdLife Partners:

This toolkit contains additional guidance for ensuring these projects function effectively. This guidance is intended to help these projects meet the following conditions:

Common Agenda - All Partners have a shared vision for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it **(Steps 1&2)**

Shared Measurement - Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all Partners, ensuring activities remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable **(Step 2)**

Linked, Supporting Activities - Partner activities should be differentiated enough to meet specific needs and contexts, while still working as a series of coordinated, linked activities that support each other **(Step 3)**

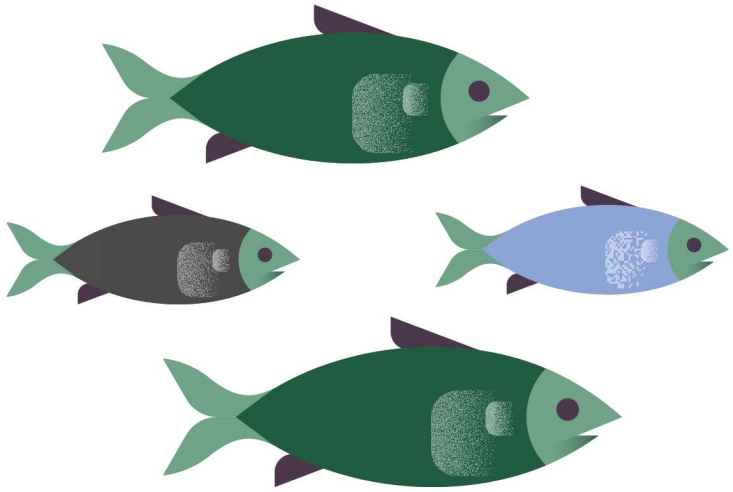
Continuous Communication - Consistent and open communication between Partners to build trust, achieve common objectives, and maintain common motivation **(Steps 3 & 4)**

Partnership Support – Making the most of the skills, capacity and resources within the BirdLife Partnership to achieve and manage collective impact **(All Steps)**

Build a Learning Environment

The guidance outlined in this toolkit will be most effective if applied within a working environment **which promotes learning and adaptive management**.

This means that you, your team, and all project partners should be regularly reflecting, seeking and providing feedback during each stage of the project cycle.



This feedback can be formal or informal and might come from project team members or other staff members in a participating organisation. Alternatively, feedback might come from external mechanisms, such as evaluations, which assess a project against its own stated goals and objectives, or audits, which assess a project against a set of common process standards.

Building a learning environment can be challenging but is well worth the time and effort involved. Key features include:

- Leaders and donors who understand the need to allocate scarce resources from immediate action to the long-term work of evidence-based conservation and adaptive management
- Enabling practitioners to take some chances and question the conventional wisdom related to specific conservation tools and strategies
- Providing project teams with the institutional security that innovation and questioning of assumptions are valued in their organisations
- Being open to outside opinions that can provide fresh and insightful perspectives
- Having the organisational tools and processes in place to capture and disseminate learning
- Willingness to share both **successes and failures** with other practitioners across the Partnership – to create true communities of practice.

See conservation action as a continuous (circular) process

In the BirdLife Project Toolkit, we present conservation action as a **4-step cycle** (see following page) where teams can enter at the step that is most appropriate for their situation.

For example, a team starting up a new project might go through **Steps 1 (Assess)** and **2 (Plan)** fairly quickly (perhaps over a 4-5 day workshop) to sketch out the basic plan for their project. They may then circle back and fill in the details over the next few months while they are also beginning work in **Step 3 (Implement)**. The team might then conduct its first analyses of progress after 6-12 months and use this work to develop their first communications outputs in **Step 4 (Learn/Communicate)**.

Meanwhile, those who have been implementing a project for some time, may enter the cycle at a later stage, where they want to understand whether what they have been doing is working. Over time, they may go back to earlier steps, revisit decisions and assumptions, and make them more explicit.

Completing the project cycle involves repeatedly going through the different steps to determine if you need to revisit elements of the project, decide whether any new factors or relationships need to be addressed or whether your stakeholder and/or their interests have changed and you need to change part of your approach (e.g. by adding a new activity) to meet these.

All this will help you transform traditional project management into true evidence-based conservation and adaptive management.

Tip

As shown in this cycle, once you complete **Step 4**, you return to **Step 1**. This is not meant to put you and your project team in an endless loop of work. Instead, it is to remind you that effective conservation action is a dynamic process that requires constant learning and improvement over time.

Similarly, at several points in this toolkit there are reminders to check /review progress and/or to revisit work done in previous steps. This does not mean that you need to set up a new series of meetings to review all these elements separately, instead these are meant to remind you to continuously revisit key questions and processes throughout implementation, as part of a continuous cycle of analysis and learning.

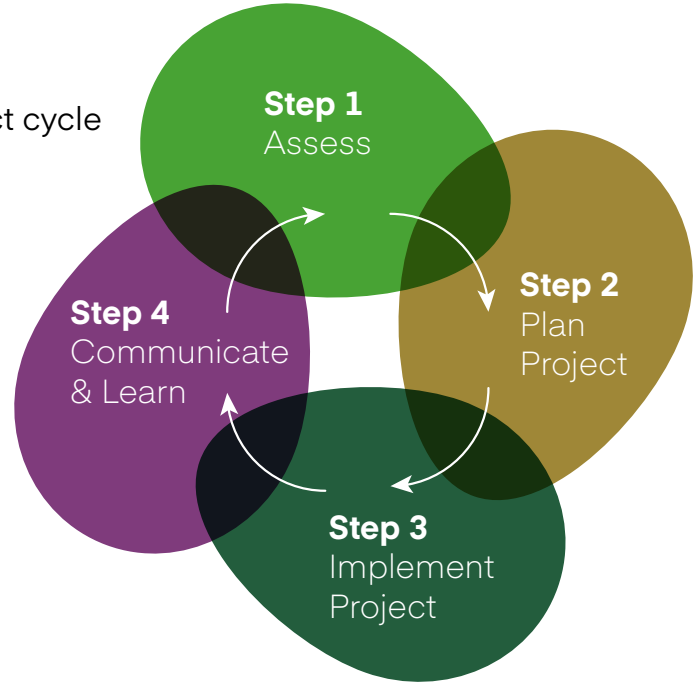
Introduction to the Project Cycle

Where do I start?
Ideally you would start at the beginning with a new project, and work through the guidance in Steps 1 and 2 before moving into Implementation.

I've already started?
If the project is already underway, it is equally possible to "move" into the cycle according to stage the project is at, and then gradually build up project information over time as needed.

I need help with just one stage
If you are looking for some guidance in relation to a particular task (e.g. developing a project monitoring plan or a template for a project budget) then you can use the contents section to quickly identify guidance to help you complete this task.

The project cycle



Decision Tree

I'm starting from scratch

Go to Step 1 ASSESS

I have clearly identified my targets and the challenge to be addressed

Go to Step 2 PLAN

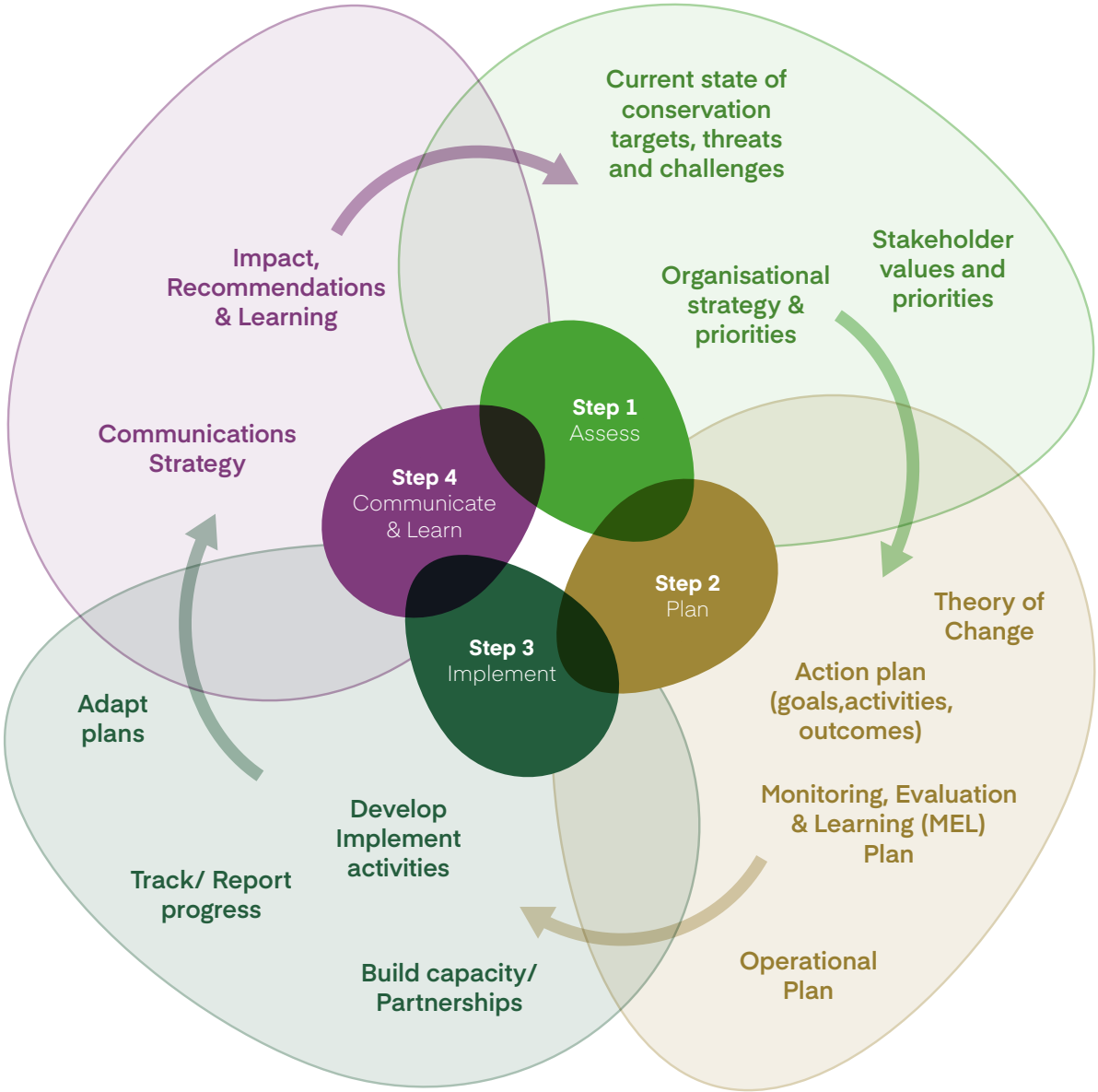
I have developed my project plan and am ready to or have started implementation

Go to Step 3 Implement

I have completed my project's activities and need to plan next steps

Go to Step 4 Learn/Communicate

The main outputs of each stage of the Project Cycle



Different Plans

The project development process often results in a number of different "plans"

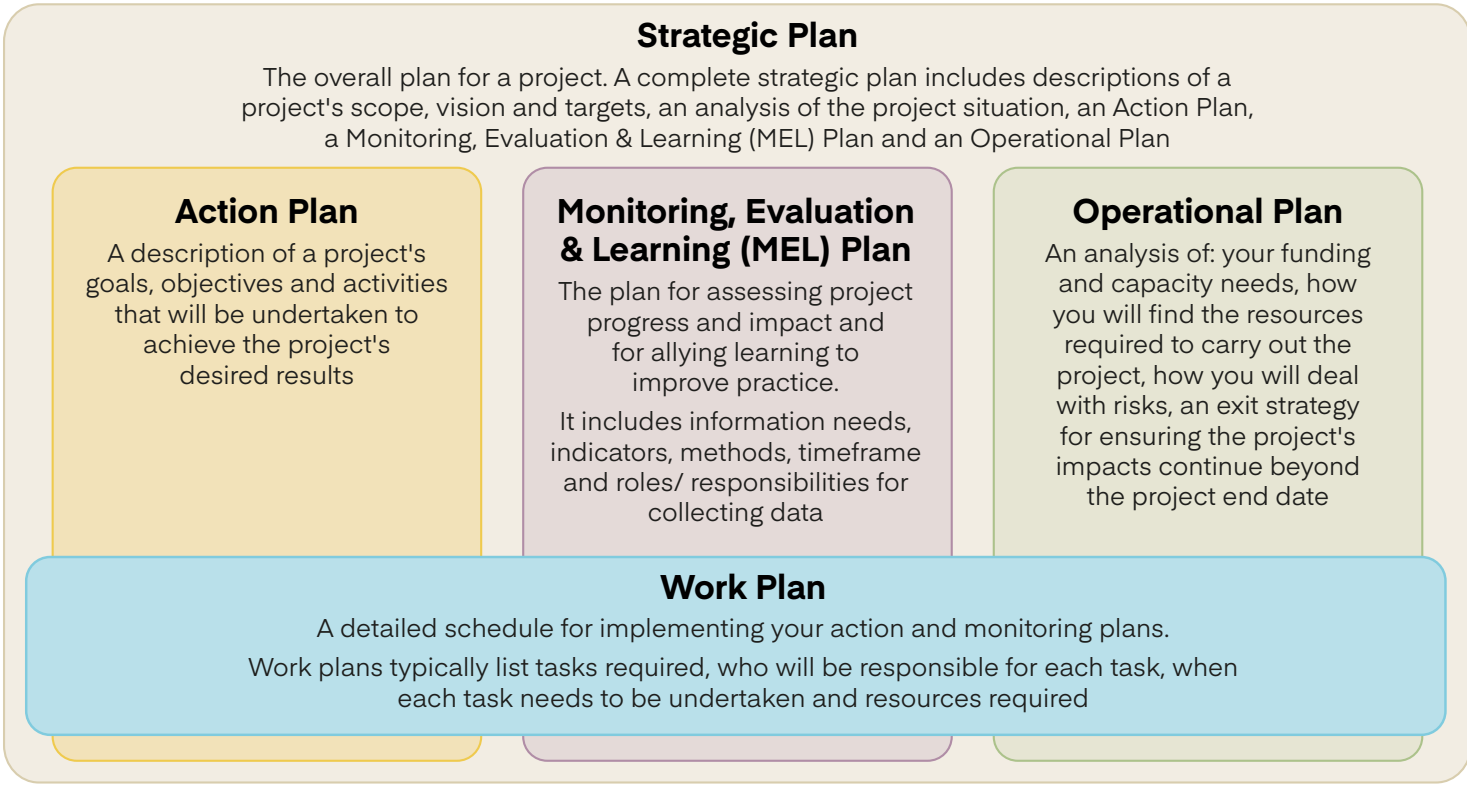
This toolkit uses the following definitions:

Action Plan – Describes the short, medium and long term change you are trying to bring about and the activities you will carry out to achieve these

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) plan – Describes your strategy for knowing whether change is taking place

Operational plan – Describes what resources (funding, skills, capacity etc.) are needed to bring about this change

Work plan – Describes the day-to-day schedule of tasks that the team will carry out to implement your action and monitoring plans



Before you begin

Set the project team

A project is ultimately designed and implemented by a group of individuals who make up the project team.

Team members usually include individuals from the leading organisation's staff, as well as from other key Partners.

One team member typically serves as the project leader, responsible for the overall project coordination and moving the team forward.

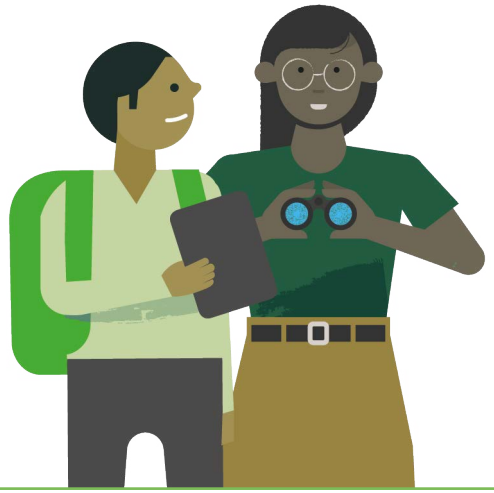
Key Activities/Outputs

- Selection of initial project team, including project leader, core members, and advisory members
- Identification of existing skills among team members and key gaps that need to be filled
- Designation of roles and responsibilities Whether the project is being implemented by a single organisation or in collaboration with other partners, you should be clear about who is on the team and what the **roles and responsibilities** of each member are. Another key point is to recognize and make use of **existing skills and experience and identify gaps** to ensure that the project moves forward with the best available knowledge.

Some members may be part of the team through all stages of the project cycle, while others may only join the team for part of the time. For example, some team members may be brought on primarily to participate in the planning or implementation phases, while others may leave/join the team as an adaptation to changing conditions. In addition to the project team, you may also need to identify one or more advisors to whom the core team can turn for honest feedback, guidance and support if needed.

Step 1 Assess

What are you trying to change?



Main outputs from this step

Situation Analysis including:

Clearly defined Project Scope, Targets & Vision Statement

Identification & Ranking of Direct Threats

Analysis of Drivers, Indirect Threats and Opportunities

Stakeholder analysis

Situation Analysis

Above all, conservation action centres around trying to bring about **change**.

To guide and assist you in deciding how to bring about your desired change, the most useful first step is usually to assess the environment, situation and context that you are trying to bring about change in. This will help you to identify/clarify the project's targets (in relation to both biodiversity and people), the project's scope (e.g. local, national, global), all the factors, threats and drivers impacting these targets as well as opportunities, key stakeholders and their priorities.

The steps outlined in this section all constitute parts of a **Situation Analysis.**

Why is a Situation Analysis useful?

A Situation Analysis is a process that will help you and your project team create a common understanding of your project's context, the problems you need to address and describe the relationships among the social, economic, political, and institutional systems and associated stakeholders that affect the conservation targets you want to conserve

Without this step, there is a risk that the solutions you implement will not be appropriate for the underlying problems that need to be addressed. For example, key threats might be missed, a solution which worked well elsewhere might be inappropriate for the project in question or the project may miss key stakeholders whose involvement would increase the project's chances of success.

What does a Situation Analysis Involve?

Depending upon the scale of the project and the resources available, a situation analysis can be an in-depth formal review of existing evidence and study of the area/ problem or a less formal description based on input from those familiar with the area/problem.

There are several ways of carrying out a situation analysis, this toolkit illustrates the process though the construction of a flow diagram (sometimes referred to as a **Situation** or **Conceptual Model**). These diagrams are particularly useful for illustrating the main cause-and effect relationships between the targets, threats and the factors/stakeholders driving these.

While this is the most common way to capture all this context, including your project scope, targets, threats, opportunities and key stakeholders you can adapt this process and its outputs to suit your particular requirements, e.g. as a table or as a written summary.

Tip

It is important to balance simplicity with the level of detail needed to inform your planning. Rather than something that captures absolutely every factor that may potentially affect your targets you should aim to produce an analysis that captures all the most important details yet be simple enough to guide effective planning.

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

One of the most important requirements for projects which involve Partners working together is for all of them to share a **common agenda**, where all Partners have a shared understanding of the problem and agree a joint approach to solving it.

Developing a situation analysis is a key opportunity to start building this common agenda, as if there is no agreement of the problem being addressed, then the group is much more likely to drift apart.

Different Partners may have very different perspectives or face quite different challenges at the local/site level. So, when doing your situation analysis, you could either do this on your own at a national level first, and then reach out to other Partners or the Global Secretariat to repeat/build on the exercise for the regional/global level. Alternatively, you could carry out a regional assessment with your other project Partners then apply this to your own national/local context.

However you do it, bringing all perspectives together and understanding how all these elements interact at a regional/global level will result in a stronger overall analysis and form a much more useful basis for subsequent steps.

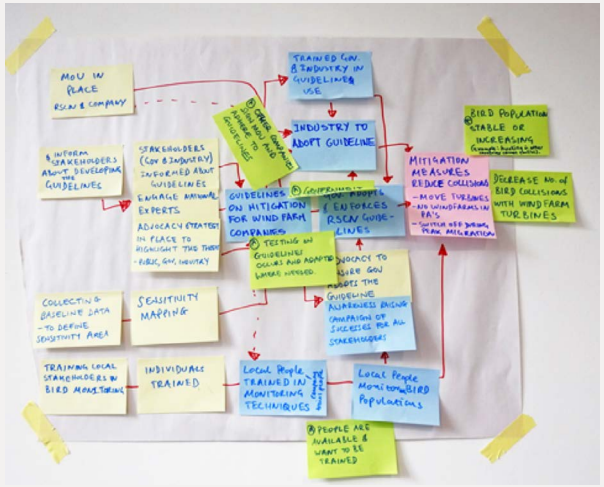
Constructing Situation Analysis (and Theory of Change) Diagrams

Many of the steps involved in this toolkit centre on the development of flow diagrams (diagrams made up of boxes and arrows). Many teams find these useful at it allows them to lay out their thinking in a physical format that can be moved around, added to and provide a physical output that can be shared with others and further refined at a later stage.

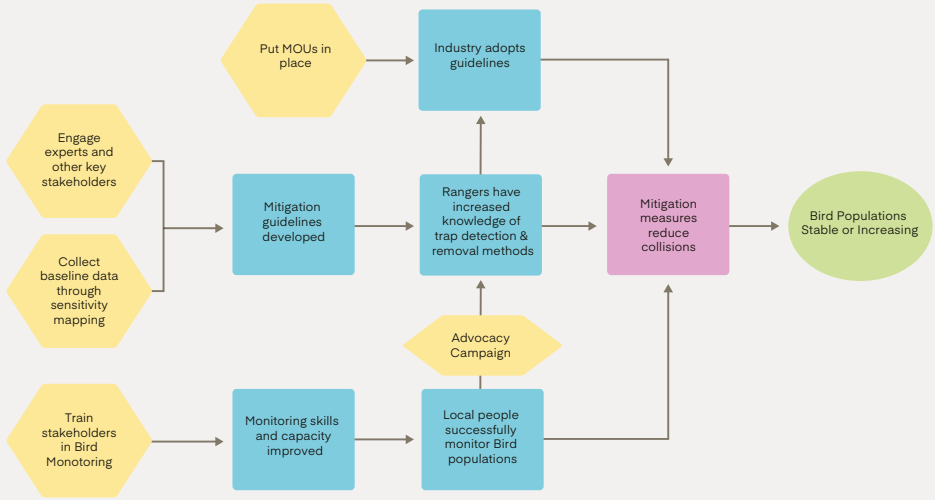
Traditionally, most teams develop a situation analysis/theory of change with all the main project stakeholders in a workshop, for example using coloured card or sticky notes on the wall/floor of an office/conference room, but the process can be carried out with stakeholders individually if that's not possible. You can then use a software programme like powerpoint or **Miradi** to summarise the final outputs, or you could simply prepare a written summary depending on what you and your team find most useful.

Increasingly collaborative online tools are becoming available that can be used to carry out a situation analysis and/or theory of change exercise where participants are not all in the same room. **Miradi Share** is one such tool developed specifically for the Conservation Standards community, although many other collaborative tools exist that can be used for this purpose.

Example:



Initial draft developed during stakeholder workshop



Summarised version produced afterwards and revisited throughout project

Identify Project Scope, Targets & Vision

Overview

Before you begin thinking about any activities, you need to be clear about what change you are trying to bring about. This centres around:

1) Identifying the **project scope** (the place, target or theme that you are ultimately trying to impact).

2) Identifying the **specific targets** within that scope that the project will attempt to influence.

Why is this important?

Without clear boundaries, there may be confusion between staff and stakeholders as to where the project ends. Clearly defining the project's scope, targets and articulating these in a clear **vision statement** then creates a common starting point for discussion about more specific goals, outcomes and activities.

Tip: Make a clear distinction between a "project" and a "funding grant"

Often the term "project" is used to refer to a collection of activities delivered in relation to an amount of funding provided by a single donor. While this may be appropriate for some projects with a single donor, in many cases it is more useful to think of your project (or programme) in terms of a wider package of work which will have several funding grants contributing to it. For example, a grassland rehabilitation project may have a habitat restoration element, a community outreach element and a policy & advocacy element, all of which are funded by separate donors.

So, when initially defining your project scope and targets (and completing subsequent steps), try to focus on defining these at the level of the overall project/ initiative. Then, when you get to the stage of developing specific funding proposals, you will be able to use this overview to identify the most important elements to prioritise and to demonstrate/monitor how these fit into this wider body of work.

Scope

The project's scope describes the broad **place**, **species/ecosystem** or **thematic area** that the project is trying to impact.

The aim of setting the scope is not to describe everything the project is trying to change, but instead set the boundary/ limits that the project will attempt to achieve change within.

Example:

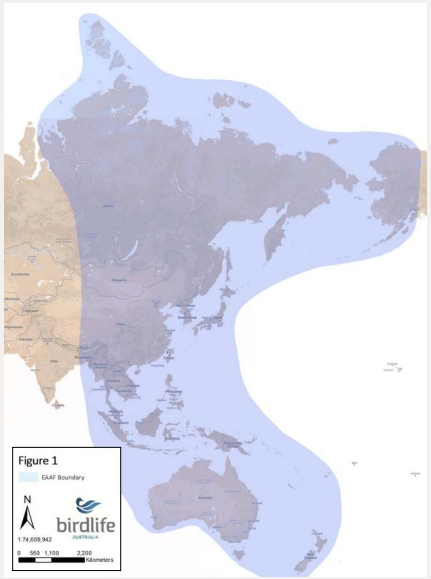
Pak Thale IBA (Local)	Coastal Wetlands in Thailand (National)	East Asian-Australasian Flyway (Regional/ Global)

Example place/species scopes

The scope of **place and species/ecosystem** based projects are usually relatively simple to define and can often be described in geographic terms (i.e. on a map). For example, a common example for BirdLife projects might be a migration flyway, a specific IBA or the geographic range of a particular species or taxa.

The scope of **thematic based projects** can be more challenging to define as they typically focus on efforts to address specific threats, opportunities, or enabling conditions. Examples could include reducing the trade in captive songbirds, developing the capacity of local conservation groups or raising awareness of children.

Example:



Two examples of place-based scope (Migration Flyway & Stopover site)

Targets

Within the project's scope each project will usually identify a limited number of conservation targets.

These targets are the specific, tangible things that the project is working to influence that represent the ultimate, long-term aims of the project. These are extremely important as they form the basis for setting goals, selecting actions, and measuring effectiveness.

Targets might include the following (note projects may include targets that fall into several of the categories below)

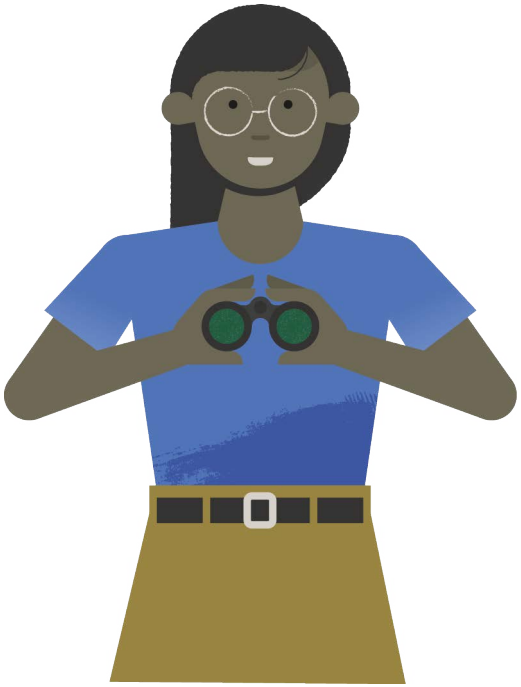
Type of target	Description	Examples
Species targets	One or more specific species of animal or plant	Critically Endangered Bird Species
Site/place-based targets	One or more specific sites or other closely connected geographic units	Specific IBA/KBAs
Ecosystems/Wider landscape targets	Wider network of interconnected sites or wider landscape that share certain characteristics	Fragmented Forest Landscape
People targets	Individuals or groups of people that the project is trying to influence in some way	Local communities living within or adjacent to a KBA

Example:

Scope & targets

Vision

When defining your project scope and targets, it can also be useful to come up with a clear and common **vision** for the project. Your vision should provide a clear and brief summary of the desired state or ultimate condition the project team members and your partners are trying to achieve.



For most conservation projects, the vision will describe the desired state of the biodiversity of the project area, although it will often reference stakeholder interests, with this forming a key part of your project's overarching narrative.

Why develop a vision statement?

Developing a vision statement enables the project team members to discuss and agree on what the broad purpose of their project will be. Although this should be a relatively easy task in many conservation projects, it becomes particularly important in multi-Partner/ stakeholder efforts in which the different Partners may have quite different ideas of what they would like to accomplish.

Examples:

Examples of vision statements from BirdLife projects/initiatives:

"Healthy and viable populations of migratory shorebirds remain distributed across their range and in a diversity of habitats throughout the East Asian-Australasian Flyway."

"Priority sites for forest biodiversity within two strategic corridors of the Atlantic Forests of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay are protected and restored through sustainable approaches, and, collaborations developed for mobilising large-scale Atlantic Forest restoration in the long-term."

"Build a strong, effective and sustainable network of national BirdLife Partners in every country in the world"

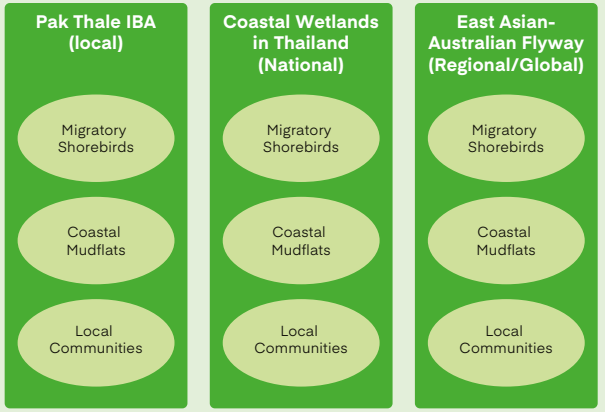
Considerations for multi-Partner projects

Often within a collaborative BirdLife project there will be a need to define the overall project scope which outlines the overall area that the project is trying to influence (e.g. a migratory flyway). Then, each of the project Partners will also need to identify the scope that they are trying to influence in relation to the work that they will be focusing on, which will often have a national or local focus.

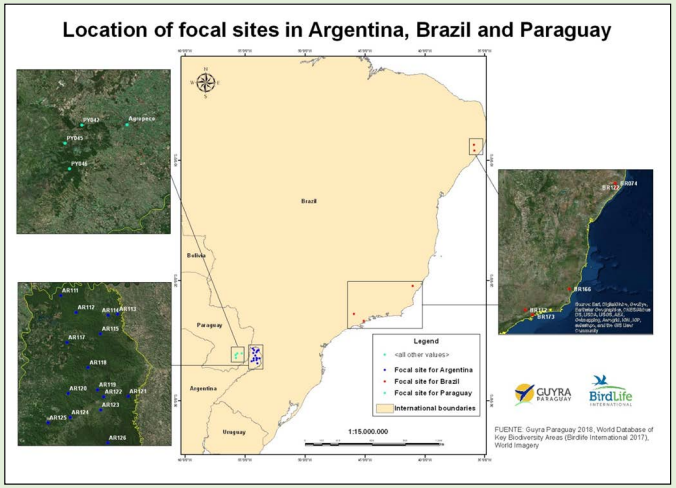
Frequently within such projects, while the scope is adjusted, the targets will remain more or less the same (although some Partners may focus on a sub-set of the overall project targets).

When doing this, be sure to communicate and compare your work with the other Partners involved to ensure that the scopes and targets defined a local/national levels are aligned with the overall scope and targets of the wider project.

Three examples which have the same targets, but increasing the scope from local to national to global:



Example of overall project scope (Mata Atlantica/Atlantic Forest) and targets (focal sites) across a multi-Partner project.



Identify Key Threats

Once you've settled on your targets, you should use the available evidence to identify the **most important (key) threats** or pressures affecting these targets and what/who is causing these.

Identifying key threats involves:

1. Identifying the **direct threats** currently impacting the project targets

2. Ranking and prioritising the **direct threats** that the project will seek to address

3. Identifying **drivers/indirect threats** and other factors influencing your conservation target(s)

What constitutes a direct threat?

Direct threats are factors that are currently having a negative impact on your chosen target(s). Threats most often relate to some form of human activity that are immediately affecting a conservation target (e.g. unsustainable fishing, unsustainable hunting, oil drilling, construction of roads, industrial wastewater, or introduction of invasive species).

Direct threats can also describe natural phenomena altered by human activities (e.g., increase in extreme storm events or increased evaporation due to global climate change) or in rare cases, natural phenomena whose impact is increased by other human activities (e.g., a potential hurricane that threatens the last remaining population of a Critically Endangered songbird).

Tip:

Where appropriate, it can be helpful to map the area affected by a particular threat (e.g. map of your target area showing intensity of hunting pressure relative to human settlements). Doing this can help you identify key threats, as well as the drivers behind them.

Tip:

The term "pressure" may be helpful in cases where the term "threat" may not be well-received by stakeholders whose actions or professions might be identified as a "threat" (e.g., ranchers or loggers). It is also helpful to use adjectives such as "unsustainable" or "illegal" to clarify the nature of the threat (e.g., unsustainable ranching).

See **CMP's Conservation Threats Classification** for a full list of potential threats.

In identifying threats, it is important to try to specify who is driving the threat e.g. illegal fishers, poachers, specific companies or government agencies.

You may want to combine or split some threats depending on whether the groups driving it are the same. For example, you might split "illegal hunting" into "illegal hunting by local communities for subsistence" and "illegal hunting by tourists for sport". Being explicit about who is driving a specific threat is extremely useful for informing your later discussions on how you plan to address this threat.

Prioritise Direct Threats

As part of your situation analysis, it is often necessary to prioritize the threats that affect your conservation targets so that you can concentrate your actions where they are most needed. You can do this simply by having a discussion among the project team or by using a more structured approach like the one described in this section.

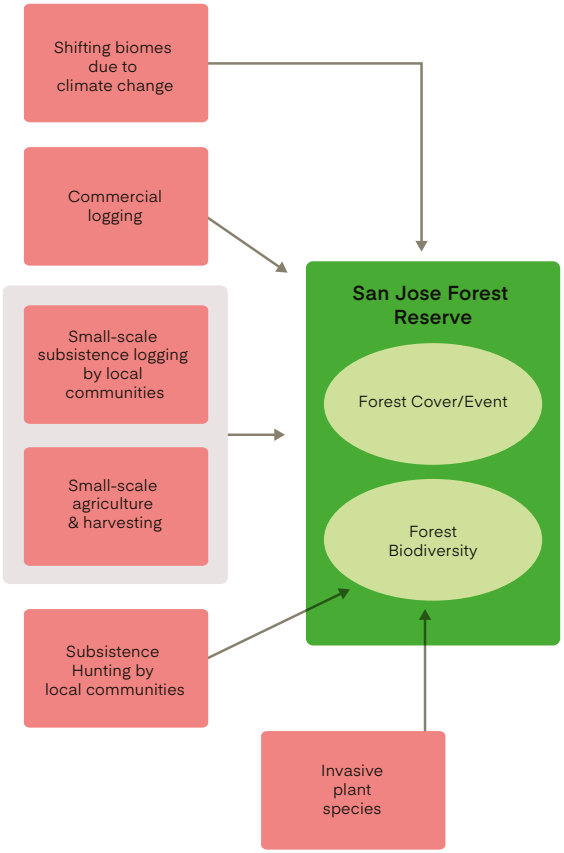
Threat rating

You can use a number of threat rating and ranking tools to help you prioritize threats. Most tools assess the extent of the threat and the severity of its impacts on the conservation targets. Taken together, these two criteria assess overall threat magnitude. Other frequently used criteria include permanence/ irreversibility and urgency.

Some common options for prioritizing threats include: an absolute rating of each threat as it affects different conservation targets, a stress-based rating which assesses the effect of stresses (altered key attributes) on targets and the contribution of different threats to the stresses, and a relative ranking which compares different threats to one another.

Tip:

Try to consider the entire suite of direct threats and not limit your analysis to the threats your team or organisation has the expertise or resources to anticipate and address.



Example Direct Threats (including who is driving the threat, where relevant)

Threats/Targets	Coastal Obligates	Habitat Generalists	Inland Species	Snipes	Internationally & Nationally Significant Sites	Internationally & Nationally Staging Sites	Summary Threat Rating
Infrastructure / coastal development in staging and stop-over areas	Very High	High	Low	Low	N/A	Very High	Very High
Chronic pollution	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Acute Pollution	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Hunting	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Harvesting of shorebird prey	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Fisheries by-catch	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Infrastructure / coastal development in Australia	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	N/A	High
Anthropogenic disturbance	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Altered hydrological regimes	Medium	High	High	High	High	Medium	High
Invasive Species	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Climate variability & change	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Summary Threat Rating	High	High	High	High	High	High	High

Risk matrix for threats to migratory shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF)

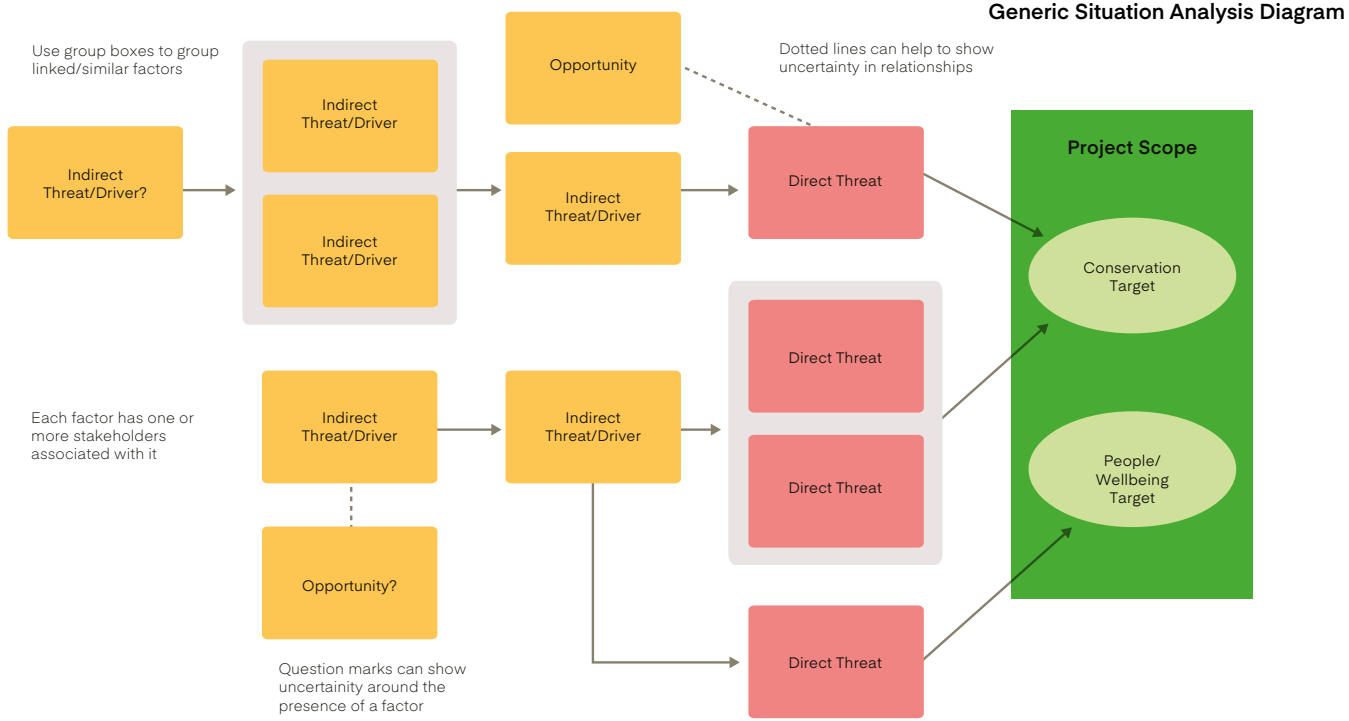
Identify drivers/indirect threats and other factors influencing your conservation target(s)

Once you have identified and prioritised the critical threats affecting your target(s), you can review available evidence to identify the **key factors** driving these direct threats or otherwise impacting your conservation targets.

These factors include **indirect threats** (also known as root causes or drivers), **opportunities**, and **enabling conditions** (see glossary for definitions).

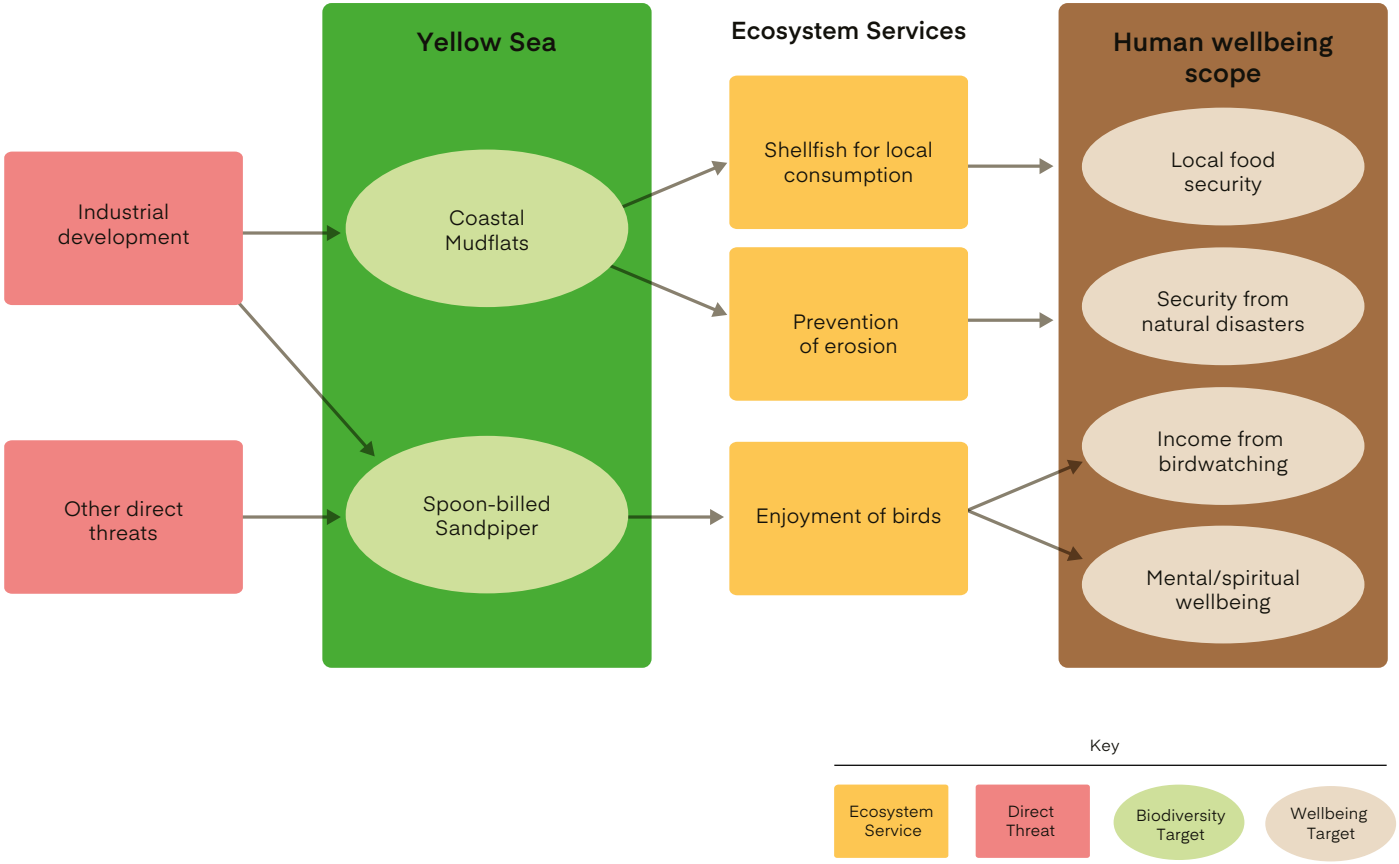
These factors can range in scale from local to global. Wherever possible, try to identify the stakeholder groups responsible for these key factors. For example, individuals, groups, or institutions that can influence the natural resources of the project area and/or that may be affected by project activities and have something to gain or lose.

Generic Situation Analysis Diagram



Incorporating wellbeing and ecosystem services

If relevant you can also incorporate an analysis of ecosystem services and how these impact any identified human wellbeing targets.



Assess Project Stakeholders

Having a good understanding of the stakeholders involved is an important part of a situation analysis. A **stakeholder analysis** can help clarify and differentiate the key stakeholders, their roles, primary interests, level of influence, and opportunity for engagement. A good stakeholder analysis also forms a useful starting point for brainstorming activities.

Who is a project stakeholder?

The term "stakeholders" covers people and organisations who affect and/or are affected by the project; stakeholders can be directly or indirectly involved in the project. It is important to consider both powerful and influential stakeholders and those that might be disadvantaged or marginalized. For example, in a project seeking to designate an area as protected, important stakeholders would include the project team, officials responsible for protected area designation and people living in and around the proposed protected area who are not targeted directly by the project but will be affected by its results.

When analysing stakeholders, try to identify which stakeholders are likely to be important strategic partners for the project. You should also consider how the process might influence the representation and engagement of different stakeholders in decision-making and how that might ultimately affect their well-being.

Why is assessing stakeholders important?

Ultimately, all projects depend on selecting stakeholders that they can work with towards goals that will reduce or reverse the threats to their key conservation targets.

A stakeholder analysis can help a project or programme identify:

- The interests of all stakeholders who may affect or be affected by the programme/ project
- Potential conflicts or risks that could jeopardise the initiative
- Opportunities and relationships that can be built on during implementation
- Groups that should be encouraged to participate in different stages of the project
- Appropriate strategies and approaches for stakeholder engagement
- Ways to reduce negative impacts on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups

Stakeholder participation:

- Gives people some say over how projects or policies may affect their lives
- Is essential for sustainability
- Generates a sense of ownership if initiated early in the development process
- Provides opportunities for learning for both the project team and stakeholders themselves
- Builds capacity and enhances responsibility

Using a stakeholder analysis to inform your overall situation analysis

Once complete you can use your stakeholder analysis to select target audiences whose behaviour you want to affect in some way. Whether you want to influence policymaking, corporate practice, or consumer choices, all involve attitude and/or behaviour change. You can also use your stakeholder analysis to revisit your project team and determine whether any of the stakeholders identified should be included as part of the project team.

Key considerations for completing a Situation Analysis

- Try to conduct your situation analysis together as a team to make sure that your analysis generally represents the team's understanding of the situation you are trying to impact.
- Think about the level of detail required. For example, a situation analysis for a large-scale project looking to assess threats & drivers at a regional/global level will often need to be less specific than a model for a project that needs to assess threats & drivers at a small-scale/local level.
- Try to ensure your analysis is based, as much as possible, on existing evidence. Take note of how much evidence exists for the connections you make between the different elements. Evidence for these linkages may come from different sources (e.g. published literature, data from researchers, expert opinion, or assumptions based on the experience of stakeholders). Likewise, the evidence may differ in strength of inference, from certain to unknown.
- Don't just focus on what you already understand. Keep track of what you do not know (i.e. knowledge gaps or conflicting evidence) and what might require further research/analysis which might need to be included in your project activities.
- If your analysis includes human well-being targets, you should show how these human well-being aspects are influenced by the status of conservation targets and associated ecosystem services (see example diagram)
- Try to ground truth or field test your analysis and map with key stakeholders and Partners inside and outside the project team to make sure that they reflect a shared understanding of the situation. Keep in mind that you may need to present the relationship between your conservation targets and human well-being targets in alternative ways in order for your diagram to resonate with different audiences.
- Another important consideration is how/ whether the potential project fits into the priorities of your organisation and the wider BirdLife Partnership.
- BirdLife's **Strategic Operational Planning Guide** (located on Hatch) contains a dedicated factsheet for assessing alignment with organisational priorities.
- While this toolkit centres around developing a **Situation Analysis** there are a number of other tools that use a similar approach and generate similar outputs. For example, a **Problem Tree** is an exercise, usually carried out as a precursor to completing a Logical Framework, which is similarly used to assess the main factors influencing a potential target and identify a course of action.

For guidance on how to complete a **Problem Tree** refer to BirdLife's manual on **Institutional Fundraising for Conservation Projects**

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

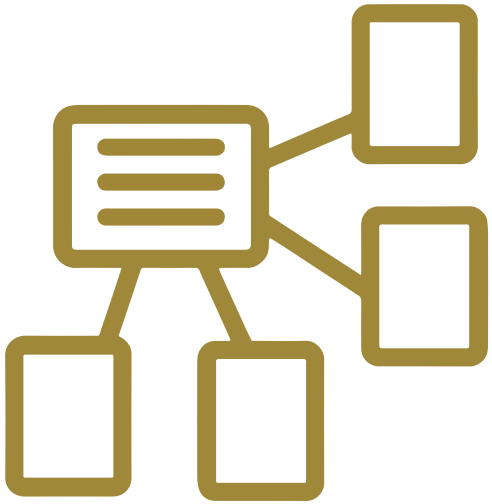
Some threats/drivers may be specific to particular sites or countries while others may be relevant at wider/regional scales. So, when assessing threats and drivers in multi-Partner projects is can be useful for Partners to analyse these at the local/national level first, then meet to compare notes and decide which threats/drivers that are best dealt with through local intervention and the threats/ drivers that require a collaborative, regional approach.

Step 1 Checklist

All Projects	
Does the project have:	
Clearly identified scope and conservation targets?	Y/N
A clear vision/mission statement?	Y/N
Identified and prioritised list of direct threats affecting the project target(s)?	Y/N
Analysis of drivers, indirect threats and other factors?	Y/N
Project stakeholders identified and analysed?	Y/N
Multi-Partner Projects	
Do all Partners have a common understanding of targets/scope/threats etc?	Y/N
Are targets/scope/threats uniform across all Partners or is a disaggregated approach needed?	Y/N

Step 2 Plan

Main outputs of this step



Theory of Change
Describing goals, outcomes, activities and underlying assumptions

Action Plan
Outlining specific objectives and actions needed to achieve goals/outcomes

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan
Outlining indicators, methods, timeframe and roles/responsibilities

Operational Plan
Outlining high level workplan and budget, capacity needs and gaps, potential risks and mitigation strategies and sustainability plan/exit strategy

Theory of Change

An extremely useful way to approach this step is to base your planning around the development of a **theory of change**.

Overview

A theory of change is a planning tool that helps to show how the project's **actions/activities** will bring about the project's **long term goals**, the intermediate steps in between (**short – medium term outcomes**) and any important **assumptions** that may affect the project's ability to achieve these changes.

Developing a good theory of change involves the following steps:

- Identify Goals
- Identify the activities you will use to achieve your goals
- Show how your activities will achieve your goals (your theory of change)
- Test logic and identify key assumptions/risks

A useful way to think about a theory of change is that the "**change**" part represents the change that you are trying to bring about and the "**theory**" part represents your theory of how this change will be achieved.

Theory of **Change**

The **theory** of how you will bring about that change

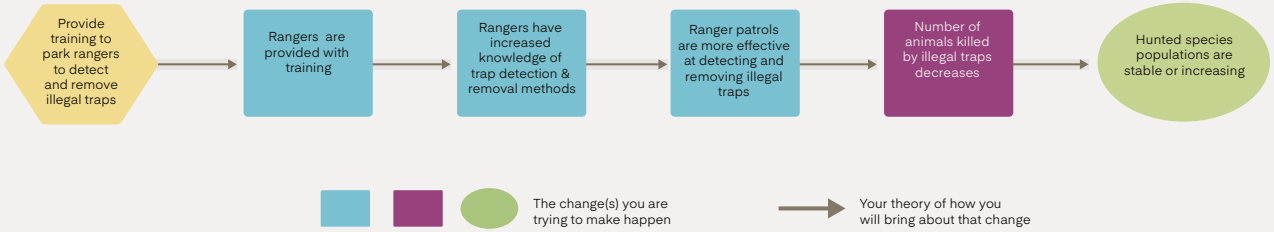
The **change** you are trying to make happen

Tip: Test it

It is important to emphasise the "theory" part of a theory of change. Often a theory of change is developed at the outset of a project and is then not revisited or subjected to any further analysis.

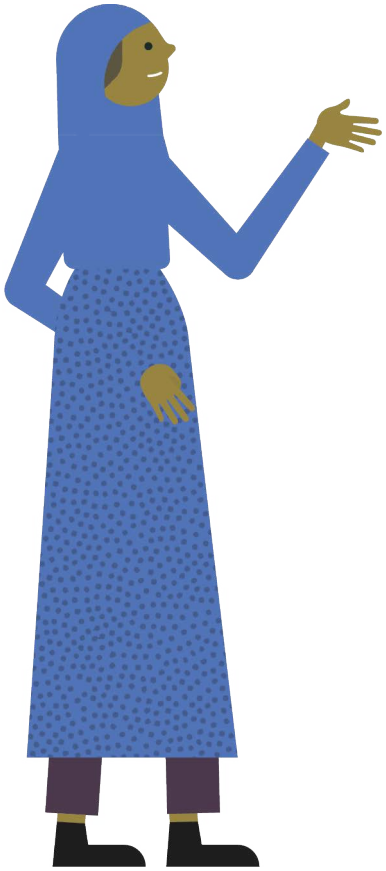
However, just like any other theory, the main reason for developing a theory of change is so it can be **tested**. Therefore, the most useful theories of change are constantly revisited during planning and implementation, providing the team with a framework for adapting and modifying the project over time.

As a theory of change is usually represented as a flow diagram you can also think of the "change" part as being represented by the text boxes with the "theory" part being represented by the arrows connecting these (see page 16 for guidance on developing/ constructing Theory of Change Diagrams).



How does a theory of change relate other planning tools such as Logical Frameworks?

In addition to Theory of Change there are numerous other planning tools which serve the same or similar purpose, for example you may hear of Results Chains, Logic Models and Logical Frameworks (Logframes) all being used for this purpose.



Although this guidance refers primarily to Theory of Change we would encourage you not to spend too much time worrying about the difference between these different tools. All these tools use a very similar underlying process and all provide a useful framework for showing how the project will bring about change, which then forms a useful basis for setting goals, objectives, developing the project's MEL plan and for assessing and communicating progress and impact.

For guidance on how to prepare and complete a Logical Framework refer to BirdLife's manual: **Institutional Fundraising for Conservation Projects**

Considerations for multi-partner projects

For collaborative projects, the development of a Theory of Change (or equivalent) forms another key step in building a **common agenda** between the project partners. As with your situation analysis, multi-partner projects may find it most useful to develop an over-arching theory of change for the project first, which each partner then adapts to their local/national context. When doing this it is important to share and compare your work with the other project partners and revisit the project's over-arching theory of change, both to ensure that all elements of the projects remain aligned and to gain useful feedback and input from your project partners.

Theory of Change Terminology

Many frameworks, organisations and donors use terms like goals, outcomes, results and activities, strategies, actions etc. interchangeably and the way these terms are used in one organisation may differ from how a term is used by another, which can be confusing.

For example, in the BirdLife Project Toolkit, we use the term **activity** to refer to packages of work carried out in pursuit of common goals (e.g. an education campaign, tree planting, anti-poaching patrols etc), however other resources (including the Open/Conservation Standards) use the term **strategy** to refer to this. On other occasions, the term strategy may be used to refer to the over-arching strategic plan for a project or organisation.

As with most of the definitions in this toolkit, we advise you not to spend too much time worrying about the difference between these terms. Instead, focus on ensuring that all involved in the project have a common understanding of what a particular definition is representing within a specific context.

Further reading

Refer to the glossary at the end of the toolkit for more information on how these terms are applied here, however feel free to use these terms in the way that makes most sense for you.

Identify Project Goals

Goals describe the **tangible, long-term change** that you want to bring about in relation to your project's targets and should represent the desired status of those targets over the long term. For example, if your targets are Vultures and Local Communities within a particular protected area then your goals should describe the long-term change(s) you are trying to bring about in relation to these targets e.g. "Vulture populations in and around the target site are stable or increasing" and "local communities targeted by the project are better able to meet their basic needs".

Key considerations

- Ideally, your project goals should fit within and contribute to broader program and/or organisational goals.
- Where possible and relevant, your team should also consider the opportunity to align your goals (and objectives – discussed later) with broader national, regional, and/or international efforts (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals, CBD Targets) and specify how your project intends to contribute to these wider efforts. You shouldn't force this connection but rather look for opportunities where there is overlap and potential for alignment.
- If your project has human well-being targets and, by extension, intends to improve human well-being, it is often appropriate to set goals for these as well. Make sure that the goal reflects elements of wellbeing that can be influenced by the project's actions (e.g. linked to status of biodiversity targets and/or ecosystem services). For example, a conservation team would probably not have human well-being goals related to decreasing cholesterol levels, even though this is important for human health. It may, however, have human well-being goals related to access to food sources because, for example, the conserved biological targets are improving crop pollination services.

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Identify Project Goals (continued)

Tip: – Think SMART

Many project teams use the "**SMART**" criteria for guidance in setting goals (and objectives)

S — Specific
Clearly defined so that all people involved in the project have the same understanding of what the terms in the goal or objective mean

M — Measurable
Definable in relation to some standard scale (numbers, percentage, fractions, or all/nothing states)

A — Achievable
Practical and appropriate within the context of the project site and in light of the political, social, and financial context (especially relevant to objectives; goals may be more aspirational)

R — Results-Oriented
Represents necessary changes in target condition, threat reduction, and/or other key expected results

T — Time-Limited
Achievable within a specific period of time, generally 1-10 years for an objective and 10-20 years for a goal

In practice, developing a goal that meets these SMART criteria involves coming up with a goal whose wording contains the following two elements:

Clear Timeframe

Clearly defined state that the aproject will try to achieve

Example:

"**By 2030**, the forest corridor linking the remaining forest fragments of Lama Forest IBA is **at least 5 km wide and remains unfragmented**"

Then, once you are happy with the wording, have a discussion among the team (and any other relevant stakeholders) around whether the goal provides a specific enough description of what the project is trying to achieve and whether the goal can realistically be achieved, revising the goal if necessary.

Identify the activities you will use to achieve your goals

Once you determine the long-term changes you ultimately want to accomplish (your goals), the next step is to decide what you will do to try and bring about this change (your activities).

In any given situation there are often multiple ways you could intervene. Because most projects have limited time and resources it is usually necessary to invest some time in identifying the activities that will give you the best chance of achieving your goals.

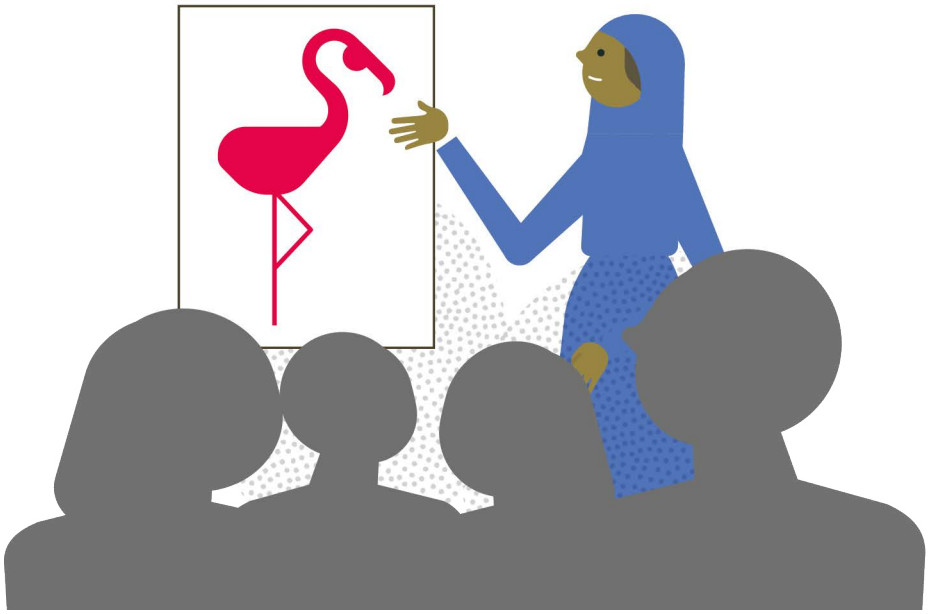
If you have completed a **situation analysis** (see **Step 1 – Assess**) then you can use this to identify the key points that you need to intervene and the activities required to do so.

Tip: Intervention

In theory, any point in a situation analysis offers an opportunity for intervention

In some cases, the most obvious intervention point is the direct threat itself (e.g., reducing the introduction of an invasive species) or the conservation target (e.g., ecosystem restoration).

In other cases, it will be more appropriate to intervene on an indirect threat or opportunity that is part of a chain of factors affecting a direct threat (e.g., influencing policy or promoting good management practices).



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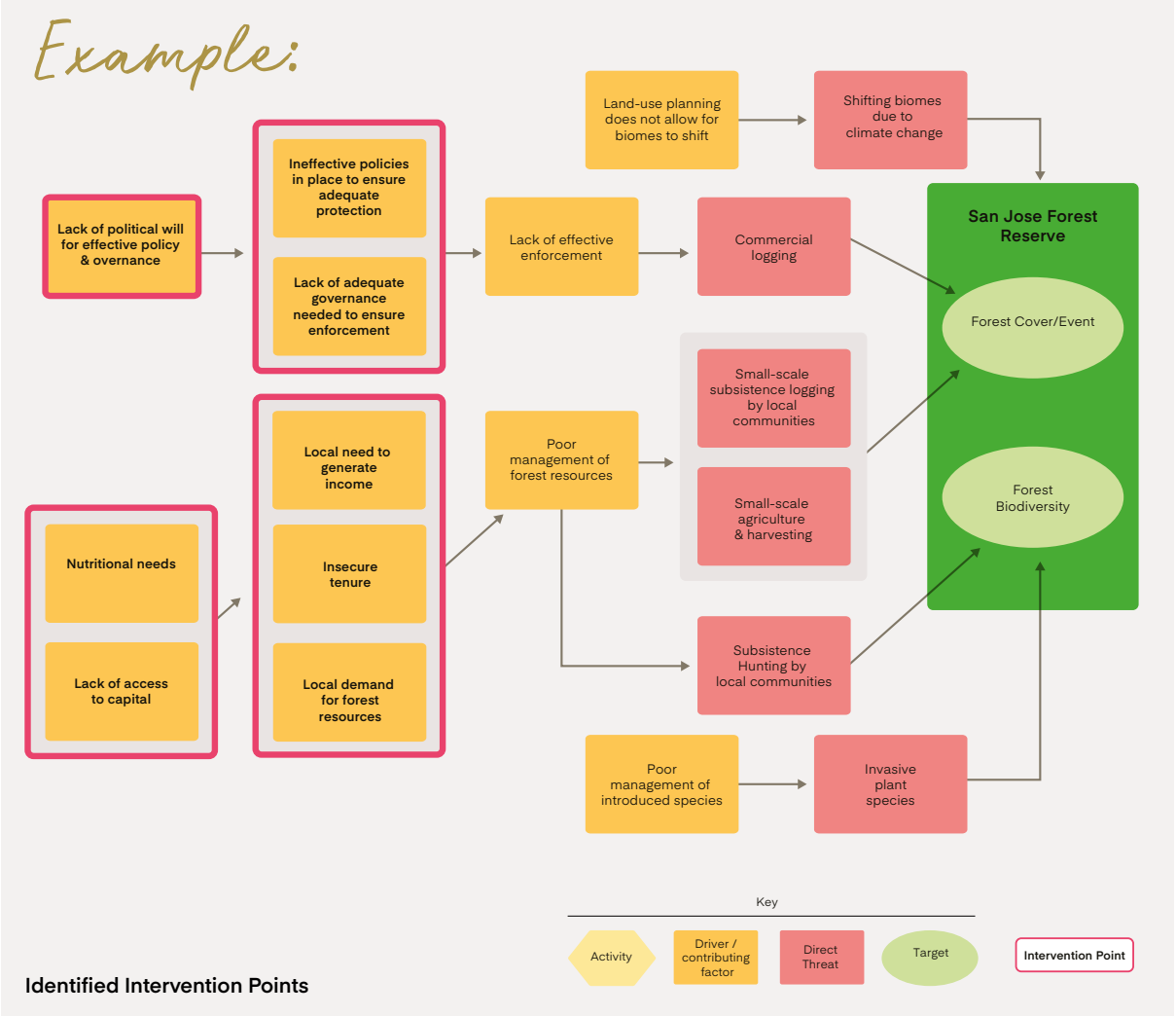
Identifying Intervention Points

Review all threats/drivers/ opportunities identified in the situation analysis and, using available evidence, identify which ones are likely to impact the target the most and represent good opportunities for achieving project goals.

Key considerations when doing this include the contribution addressing critical threats, your ability to influence multiple threats/drivers, and urgency of addressing a particular threat or driver.



Identified Intervention Points

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Select Activities

Once you have decided where you will intervene, the next step is to identify the activities you will intervene with.

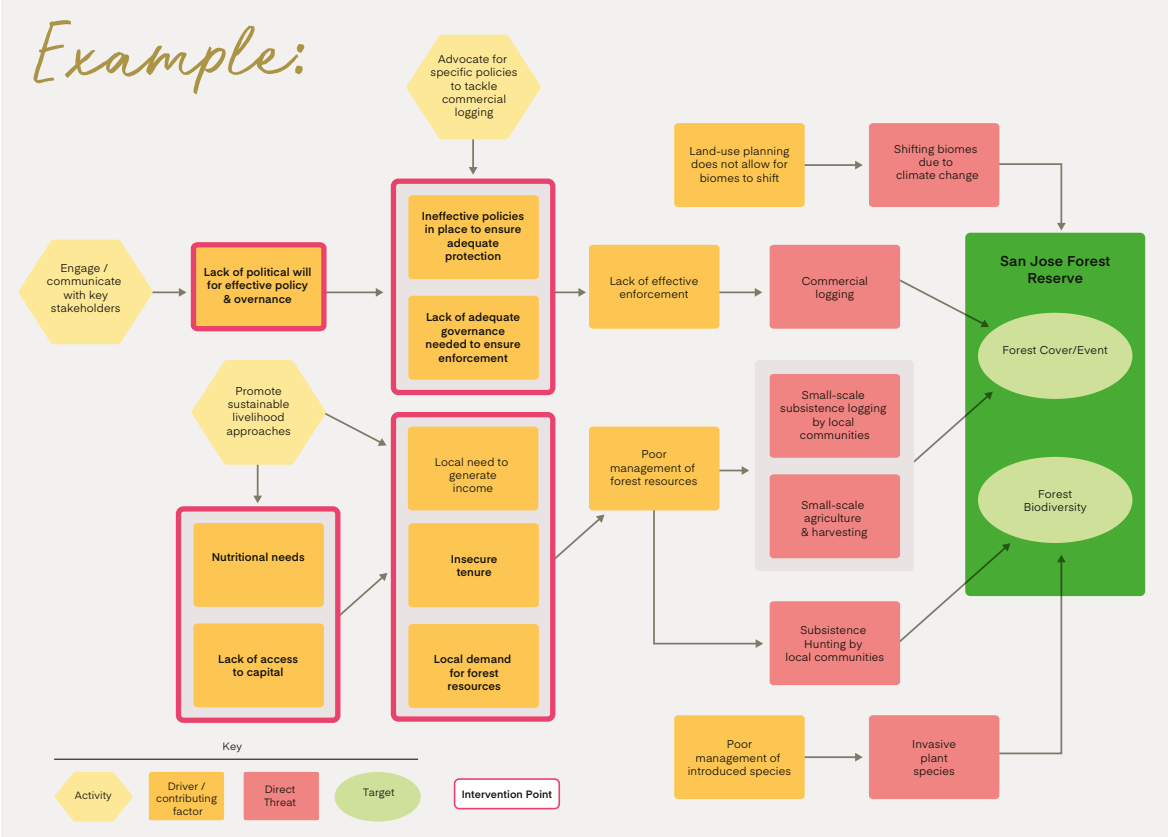
Activities can comprise a set of one or more actions with a common focus that work together to achieve specific goals and objectives.

Activities can include a broad array of actions, such as habitat restoration, land protection, influencing policy, or community outreach (see **CMP's Conservation Actions Classification** for more examples).

Working from your **Situation Analysis**, you can generate a list of potential activities and select those with the greatest potential (based on the best available evidence) to achieve your project's goals and objectives.

Identifying appropriate and feasible activities is generally a three-part process that includes:

- **Researching existing activities** - Investigating how others have attempted to intervene in similar situations or with a similar target audience and whether those succeeded or failed and why.
- **Generating new activities** - Incorporates what a team learned in its situation analysis and research to work creatively to develop a range of potential solutions
- **Selecting the most appropriate activities based on the previous two steps** - Taking your knowledge regarding potential activities and narrow down the best set from among the alternatives by applying one or more selection methods



Situation Analysis with Key Intervention Points (in bold) with activities identified

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Select Activities

Key considerations

- The activities that you decide to take forward should meet the following criteria:
  - **Linked** – Works with other activities in the project to make progress towards the project's overall goals
  - **Focused** – Outlines specific courses of action that need to be carried out
  - **Feasible** – Able to be carried out with the time, resources and capacity available
  - **Appropriate** – Will work in the specific cultural, social, and biological conditions required by the project
- Activity selection is about making constrained choices. In a world of limited resources, a project team needs to decide and communicate which activities it will undertake and which it will NOT undertake.
- If the evidence is more mixed or not available, it might be necessary to pilot an activity and use monitoring/ adaptive management to determine its effectiveness for your context.

Tip: Ensure appropriate safeguards are in place

A final but important consideration is ensuring that your project has appropriate **social and environmental safeguards in place**. This involves assessing potential adverse social and environmental effects of your activities, taking into consideration the dignity, human rights, traditional knowledge, land and resource ownership, and cultural heritage and practices of affected groups, as well as unintended environmental consequences. While it is good practice to review social and environmental safeguards throughout the project cycle, it is especially important in the activity design phase, as activities may need adaptations or considerations to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential negative effects. Contact the Hatch team at the **BirdLife Global Secretariat** for more information and a number of **resources and policies on Social Safeguards** which you may find useful.

Considerations for multi-Partner Projects

When identifying activities, as well as reviewing the knowledge and skills present within the project Partners, consider also whether others within the BirdLife Partnership may have the skills or experience to help. For example in relation to understanding whether a particular activity is more/less likely to succeed in a given situation or in helping to train staff or fill other capacity gaps.

Hatch provides a number of opportunities for engaging with other BirdLife Partners including dedicated **communities of practice** around particular types of conservation action. Contact the **Hatch team** at the **BirdLife Global Secretariat** for more information

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Tip: More Detailed Approaches to Activity Selection

Activity selection takes place at several steps within the planning process, as well as at different scales. Early on, you may be trying to quickly evaluate and narrow down a long list of brainstormed activities to address a particular threat so only need to do an initial assessment of each potential activity.

Later, however, you may be trying to determine your final activities and may wish to carry out a more intensive and careful comparison of potential activities. There are a number of different decision-support tools to help a team assemble a portfolio of activities from a list of options. Some of the most common approaches include:

- Descriptive Comparisons (e.g., pros-cons table) – Describing the strengths and weaknesses of each potential activity, often in relation to a situation analysis, some set of criteria, and/or each other.
- Criteria-Based Comparisons (e.g., absolute or relative ranking tables, consequences tables) – Rating each potential activity across a set of criteria. Typical criteria might include potential impact, riskiness, feasibility (financial, technical, moral), fit, and gap. Your team could apply these criteria using a relative ranking, categorical rating, or cardinal rating. You may choose to weight some criteria more than others.
- Constrained-Choice Comparisons (e.g., dot / point-based voting or knock-off tables) – Selecting a portfolio of activities using a specific limiting factor or constraint, such as total amount of funds or time available.
- Quantitative Model-Based Comparisons (e.g., linear programming) – Establishing a set of algorithms that help determine the optimal strategies/activities, given defined parameters and constraints. Your team should determine the appropriate approach or combination of approaches for your context.

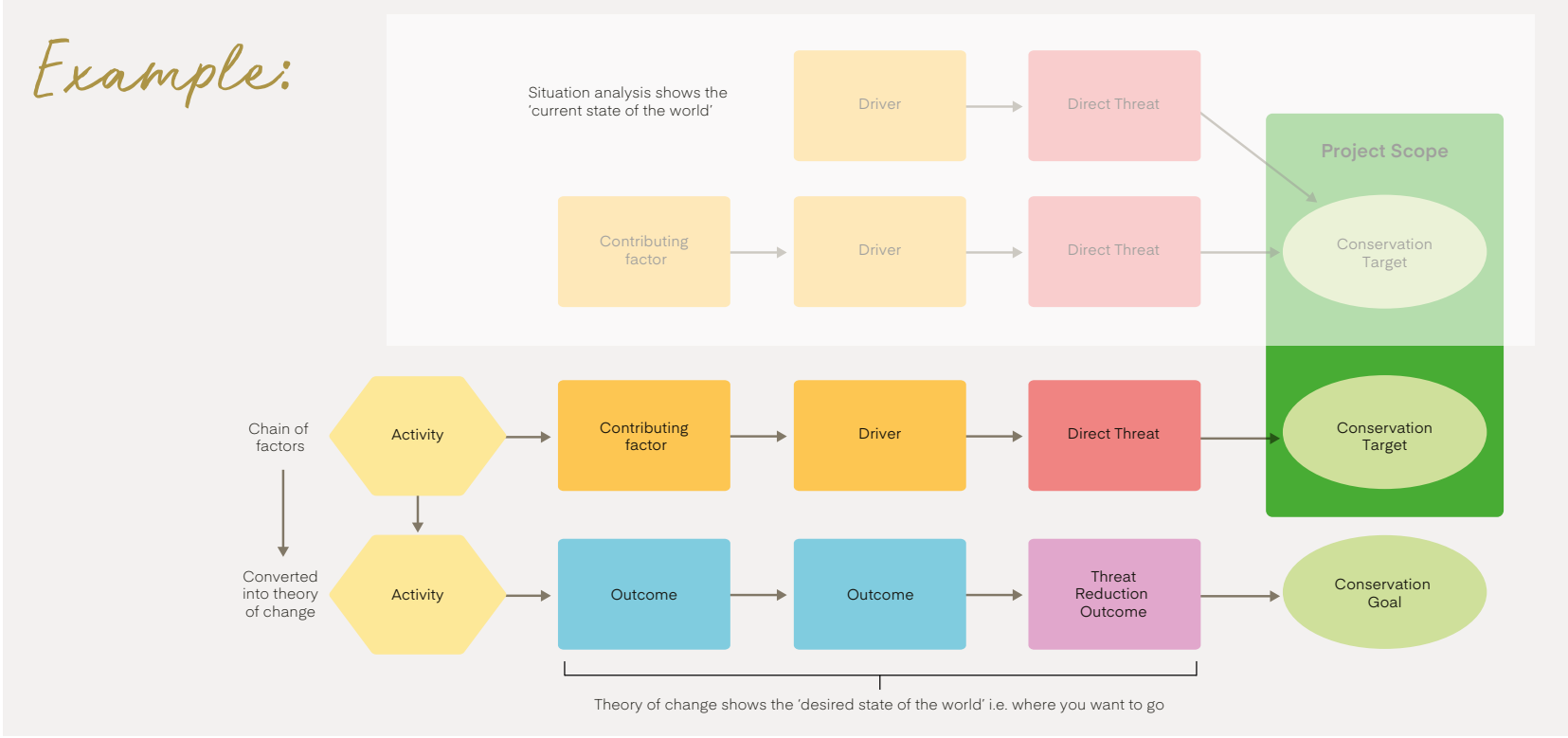
Show how your activities will achieve your long-term goals (your theory of change)

Once your team has selected activities, you should set out how you think each activity will help you achieve both intermediate results and longer-term conservation and human wellbeing goals. This is your **theory of change**, which can be expressed in text, diagrammatic, or other forms.

While a theory of change can look however you want it to look, they are most often shown as flow diagrams of boxes and arrows (sometimes called Results Chains) which can then be supplemented with a short narrative description. See page 16 for more guidance on constructing theory of change diagrams.

Ultimately, you want your theory of change to explicitly show how your activities aim to help you achieve your overall goals. You can make your theory of change as detailed as you want/ need it to be. For example, it can be useful to include specific tasks/actions that make up each activity as part of your main diagram. Including these can help demonstrate how you are going to move from one outcome to the next.

Example:



Test logic and identify key assumptions/risks

A key component of developing a theory if change is to test the logic, to ensure that it is reasonable to assume that achieving one outcome in a linked sequence will result the achievement of the next.

There are two main types of assumptions that are identified during the development of a theory of change.

The first are the assumptions that underpin each of the links in your theory of change. For example, the project carrying out training on trap removal methods makes the assumption that increased **knowledge** of trap detection/ removal methods will result in more effective patrols. A key part of testing the logic is to assess whether this assumption describes something that is likely to happen in practice.

One of the best ways to do this is to use the **"if-then" approach**. As a project team, read out the chain the team have put together starting at actions and working through to short-medium and long-term change.

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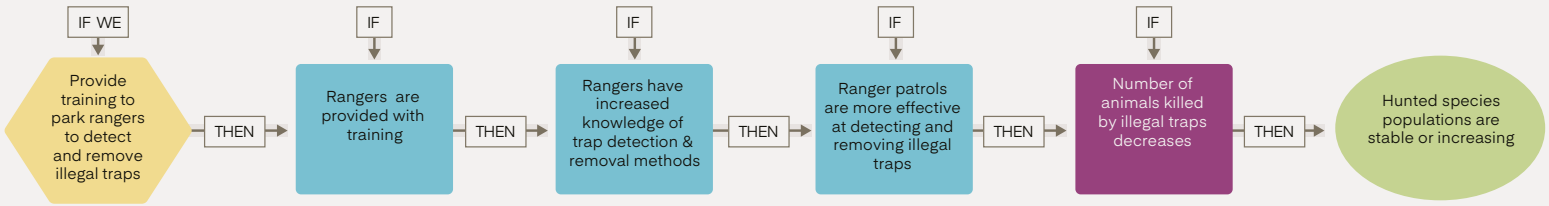
Example:

IF rangers are provided with training, **THEN** rangers will have increased capability to detect and remove snares

IF rangers have increased capability to detect and remove snares, **THEN** ranger patrols will be more effective at detecting and removing illegal traps. and so on...



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Test logic and identify key assumptions/risks

As you are reading this through, pause at each step to address anything that doesn't make sense or where there are gaps/leaps of faith in the logic, for example by adding/linking with additional activities or recording where more information is needed to understand whether a particular activity will be sufficient to achieve the desired outcome.

You should also use this process to identify and record the second type of key assumption which relate to **external factors** that the project does not have control over, but that may influence the project's results. For example, in order for training to be successful, park rangers need to have sufficient resources to carry out their work (e.g. equipment, salary). These kinds of assumptions are particularly important to consider as there will often be a large number of external factors that could potentially influence the project's outcomes/impacts and identifying these as early as possible will help you identify whether any represent significant **risks** to the project, which can then be incorporated into your planning.

Eventually the whole chain should have a logical "flow" which makes sense when read through, where there is a reasonable degree of certainty that each link in the chain is realistically achievable and where you have identified any additional factors that could affect whether the change described can be achieved.

Tip: Pre-mortem exercise

Many teams struggle to narrow down the list of all factors that that could potentially affect the outcome of the project to a more specific list of those that are critical to the success or failure of the project, and therefore need to be incorporated into your project planning.

A pre-mortem is an extremely useful exercise that can help with this.

Pre-mortem instructions:

Step 1: Ask participants (e.g. the project team and/or other stakeholders present) to close their eyes and spend 2-3 minutes imagining that the project that you are developing has failed, this failure could relate to the entire project or a specific element of it.

Step 2: Ask participants to open their eyes and to list the reasons for failure that they pictured

Step 3: Make a note of all the reasons for failure put forward by participants and use these to inform a discussion around the most significant risks/assumptions that could affect the project, whether any action could be taken and/or incorporated into your monitoring.

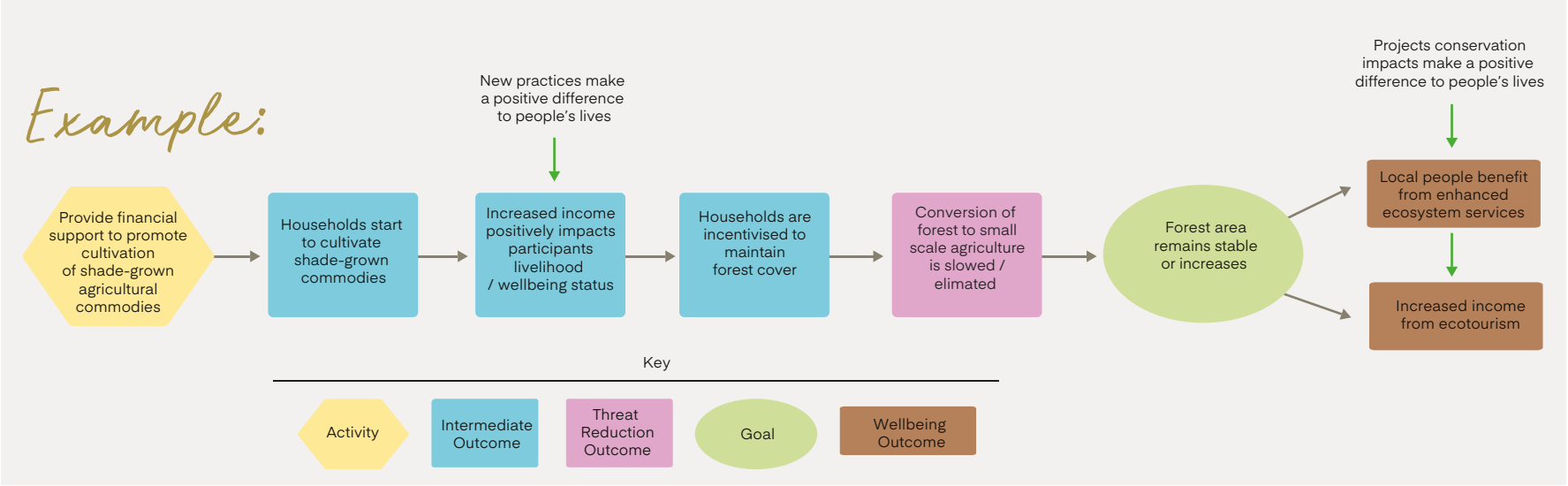
Incorporating Wellbeing Outcomes

If your team identified human well-being targets, you can also use your Theory of Change to show how your actions, outcomes and impacts also contribute to human well-being.

Wellbeing is best thought of as **the difference a project makes to people's lives**. In the context of a project plan or theory of change it is useful to be clear about when your conservation actions are contributing to human wellbeing targets via ecosystem services and when they are contributing as a direct (and necessary) mechanism to impact conservation targets.

It is easy to get these mixed up. As a guide, changes in people's wellbeing as a mechanism for conservation means that the changes in people's lives are linked to some form of **behaviour change** which subsequently impacts conservation. Whereas articulating changes to wellbeing as a target are not necessarily attached to any behaviour change and are often achieved **as a consequence of the project's impacts on biodiversity**, for example through subsequent impacts on **ecosystem services**.

This distinction is important for when you get to developing your monitoring approach as the latter only requires you to measure the difference the project has made to people's lives, whereas the former involves measuring whether any change in wellbeing resulted in subsequent behaviour change.



Common challenges & tips for developing useful theories of change

Challenge: Balancing detail with usability

A key challenge in developing a theory of change is balancing the need for simplicity, to ensure readability and usability, with the need for sufficient detail to match the complexity of the real-world situation it is meant to describe. Failure to balance these two requirements can result in a theory of change that is either too simplistic to guide meaningful planning/MEL etc. or something that is too complex to be of any use to those involved in the project.

Solution:

One solution to this is to capture certain specific details and context alongside the main theory of change diagram in the form of notes or supplementary text.

While many people like flow diagrams (boxes and arrows); a sizable proportion of people struggle with interpreting them and prefer a narrative description. Including both, where each component of the theory of change is accompanied by some descriptive text, can be particularly useful in helping team members and other stakeholders to develop a common understanding of each ToC component. For example, writing 3-4 paragraphs describing a Target will create a strong foundation for reference during the life of the project. Similarly, a few paragraphs describing an activity/action will avoid later confusion about exactly what work the action entails and what it is trying to achieve. Also, if the first paragraph is well-written, it can be easily re-used in a wide variety of reports and documents, such as funding applications and website stories.

This descriptive text does not have to be incorporated into the main theory of change diagram, but can be presented side by side or as an annex that can be referred to as needed depending on the task and the audience.

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Common challenges & tips for developing useful theories of change

Challenge:
Articulating your contribution to a broader goal

(or one that will only be achieved beyond the lifetime of the project?)

Solution:

Results chains/theories of change can be used to show the specific work of the project, as well as longer-term outcomes that may be beyond the ability of the project to influence, perhaps due to timeframes or capacity limitations.

For example, some projects may hope to achieve tangible change in the status of their conservation targets, while others may only intend to get as far as achieving a reduction in threats (e.g., reduced likelihood of electrocution) or even an intermediate result (e.g., policymakers enact laws requiring power companies to apply mitigation measures). In these latter cases, the ultimate threat reduction and/or conservation result may be implied or inferred, rather than exact, with the theory of change helping to place the project's tangible results within this wider context.

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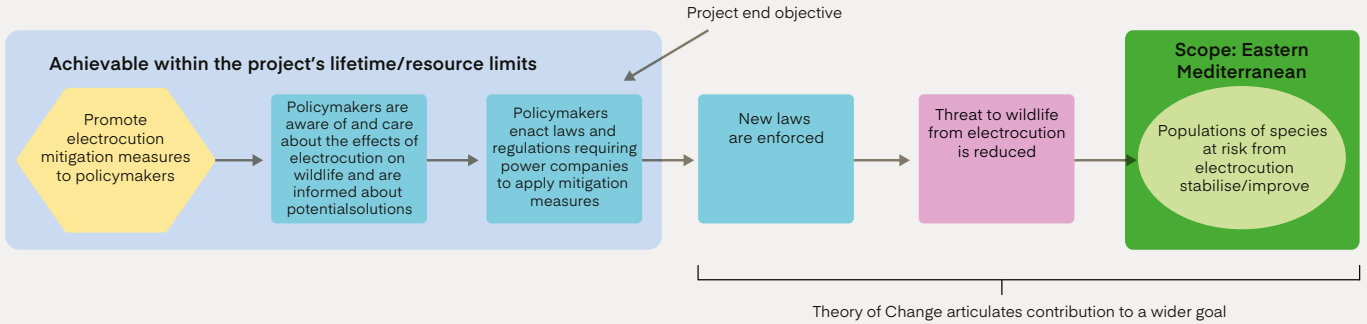
Example:



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Common challenges & tips for developing useful theories of change

Challenge:
Ensure they are based on evidence

One potential pitfall in articulating your theory of change is in ensuring that the logic makes sense and is not just a series of aspirational boxes which make sense when read aloud but which lack any grounding in reality.

While the results and assumptions in your theories of change should be based on existing evidence, some assumptions may lack evidence. As such, your team may have considerable uncertainty about whether your expected results can be achieved and if there are potential risks of undesirable outcomes. It is important to identify these evidence gaps as information needs and prioritize them for research, monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Solution:

Carrying out a thorough situation analysis, using this as the basis for your theory of change and making significant use of the if-then approach to test your theory of change with as many project stakeholders as you can, will significantly help in ensuring that your theory of change provides a useful basis for planning action on the ground.

Challenge:
Make sure your theory of change is an "active resource"

One which is constantly revisited, checked & updated etc.

Solution:

As highlighted at the beginning of this section, your theory of change will be most useful if you treat it primarily as a "theory" that is there to be tested. It is therefore important to build points into the project where the team revisits and re-examines your theory of change, checks that it is still valid or whether any changes are necessary.

Set Project Objectives

Objectives are formal statements of the outcomes (or intermediate results in your results chains) that you believe are necessary to attain your goals.

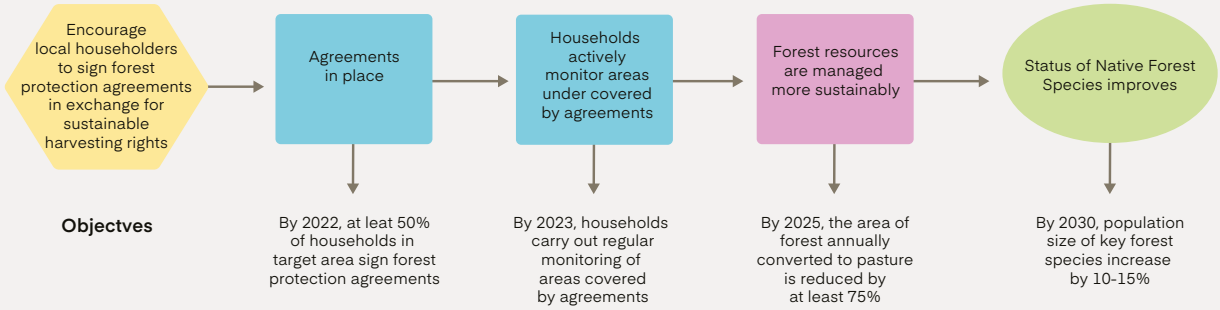
While the outcomes in a theory of change are usually written in general terms (e.g. awareness raised, capacity built, threats reduced etc) your objectives should be **much more specific and describe exactly the changes you will try to bring about to achieve these outcomes**.
A good objective should specify the change you are trying to bring about, relevant stakeholders, any targeted behaviour and the timeline for change to be achieved (e.g. by 2020, local authorities adopt resolution outlawing trade in endangered songbirds).

Objectives specify the changes in the direct/ indirect threats and opportunities that your team assumes are necessary to achieve in the short and medium term. Where your outcomes are relevant to or dependent upon specific actors, your associated objectives should be clear about the actors and the desired behaviours.

Example:

Each objective should have:

- **An exact, clearly defined state** that the project wants to achieve
- **A clear timeframe** for achieving the objective



Objectives based on the project's Theory of Change

Key considerations for setting objectives

- It is generally good practice to have an objective for every direct threat (unless this is outside your ability to control). This direct threat objective (and its desired future value) should be informed by the goal you set for your conservation target.
- Use existing information to develop your objectives. Where available, it is helpful to understand current or baseline conditions to determine how much change is needed.
- It will be important to work through each objective to define what is appropriate and to ensure that the criteria for good objectives are met. This is often an iterative process that requires revisiting and clarifying objectives over time, as more information becomes available, refining your activities to achieve these objectives and/or refining your associated theories of change.
- Where appropriate and available, use theoretical models, expert input, and other available evidence to set the numeric value in your objectives (and goals).
- Clarify how much change you need to achieve to see conservation results. Ideally, you should challenge yourself to work backwards from your goal and/or intermediate results to determine how much of each preceding objective you need to keep the chain progressing.
- Understand the connection and influence of other objectives and strategies. Your objectives in a single chain should flow logically from one another. Also, keep in mind that other activities (reflected in different chains) might be contributing to shared results. Thus, an objective may need to reflect the influence of multiple activities.

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

For multi-Partner projects you need to ensure that objectives set at local/national level are aligned with the project's overarching regional/global objectives. A useful way to do this is to gather the team together and review objectives set at local/national level against the project's over-arching theory of change, asking the question **"if the project Partners achieve all objectives set at local/national level, will we have achieved the corresponding overarching regional/global objective(s)?"**.

Formal Action Plan: Compile Goals, Objectives and Actions

Once completed you can then compile your goals, objectives and activities into a formal action plan.

Note, your action plan should be focused on high level strategies/activities. The specific tasks that you will need to undertake will be set out in more detail as you develop your workplan **(see Step 3)**

Goal(s): By 2030, at least 80% of fisheries in the northern bioregion and 25% in the western bioregion support healthy populations of seabirds				
Objective(s): By 2023, all fishing boats in the long-line fishery that have been trained in the use of alternative fishing techniques are using the new, sustainable fishing techniques and gear				
Activity: Promotion of sustainable fishing techniques				
Tasks	Person responsible for doing	Person responsible for monitoring	Date to be done	Comments
Task 1. Analyse what technologies long-line fisheries will need to meet the requirements of target markets	Ana	Ana	January 2021	
Task 2. Train the fishermen in the identified technologies	Jaime	Jaime	January – June 2021	First a pilot phase. Eventually expand, if successful
Task 3. Assess progress to date and make go/no go decision	Ana & Jamie	Jamie	June 2021	

Develop a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning plan

A good monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan will help you track progress toward your goals and objectives, evaluate impact and key assumptions, and capture evidence and learning to help you improve, adapt and communicate your results.

Developing your MEL plan should also assist you in identifying the resources needed for implementation, help develop a timeline for data collection and analysis, and identify potential risks to consider.

You should view the development of your MEL plan as an integral part of your planning. Many teams leave developing their MEL plan until the end of planning or sometimes even towards the end of implementation, however the earlier you start the stronger this component of the project will be.

Steps for developing a good MEL plan

When developing your MEL plan it can be useful to break this down into the following steps

- Review project plan
- Identify/refine project indicators (what you will measure)
- Determine how you will collect and analyse the information required

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

Another key requirement for collaborative, multi-Partner projects is to ensure a system of **shared measurement**. This involves developing a common system for collecting data and measuring results around the project's agreed objectives and goals.

It is important to focus on both the **"measurement"** and the **"shared"** elements of this, as all project Partners need to commit to the way they will measure their progress and success, which includes the indicators, the methods for measuring them, and the methods for analysing the results.

While some of the detailed work of developing the MEL plan can be developed by a sub-set of the team, the group as a whole needs to understand and own the project's high-level indicators, understand how any data they collect will contribute to measuring these and regularly review the results being measured so that actions can be continually aligned.

Further reading

BirdLife manages a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit (PRISM) which contains guidance on key MEL principles, a step-by-step guide for designing and implementing an evaluation and detailed methods for collecting and analysing evaluation data. PRISM can be downloaded free from **www.conservationevaluation.org**

Terminology

The terms Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning are often used interchangeably, which can be confusing.

One way to think about this is that the **Monitoring** element involves collecting information relating to the project, **Evaluation** involves examining this information to make judgements and gain knowledge about the project and the **Learning** element involves applying this knowledge in some way (for example by adapting practice or communicating impact).

Another way to think about it is that if conservation action centres around bringing about **change**, then fundamentally your project's monitoring, evaluation and learning is about asking **questions** to measure this **change.**

Specifically, your MEL plan should enable you to answer the following:

- What change has happened?
- Was any of this change the result of the project?
- What do these changes mean for the project's overall goal?
- Does anything need to be changed/ adapted?

Tip: Apply learning

Remember that change can be positive or negative and can be intended or unintended. Drawing reliable conclusions about the project's impact and capturing and applying learning typically requires you to look at all these types of change, not just whether you achieved the things you wanted to.

Review project plan (what are you trying to do?)

Start by reviewing your situation analysis (if you developed one), theory of change, goals and objectives.

In particular, try to consider any potential gaps or uncertainties in your action plan/theory of change. For example, if there are any important factors outside your control that could have an important influence on your ability to achieve a particular outcome (e.g., political situation or market forces) or whether one of the links in your theory of change is relatively uncertain because you are applying a new/untested approach. Identifying these at this stage will be very useful when it comes to deciding how you focus MEL effort.

Tip: Be flexible

Although developing an MEL plan is typically undertaken after the development of a theory of change/action plan, it is good practice to allow some flexibility to revisit and refine these based on the discussions you have while developing your MEL plan.

Often discussions around how you will measure change will help to highlight whether your approach to achieving that change makes sense in the first place. So, ensuring that this is a two-way process will typically result in both a stronger action plan/theory of change and a stronger MEL plan.

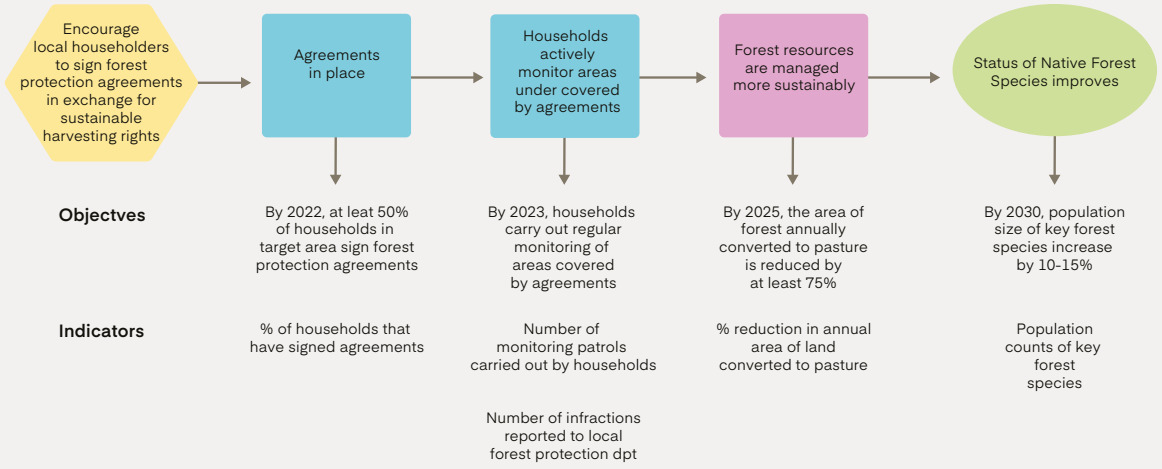
Identify some potential indicators for your Goals/Objectives

Developing an MEL plan is often based around the identification and measurement of **Indicators**. An indicator is **a specific unit of measurement (e.g. number of seabirds caught as bycatch) which provides a reliable indication of whether a particular change has taken place.**

Some objectives may only require a single indicator while for others it may be more appropriate to develop a range of indicators which together provide a measure of whether the overall outcome has been achieved.

Indicators can be **quantitative** or **qualitative**. Quantitative indicators provide numerical data (numbers or answers to closed questions) while qualitative indicators provide non-numerical data (observations, answers to open questions, written, audio, visual or video evidence). Teams often prioritise developing quantitative indicators, however, qualitative indicators (for example the underlying reasons, opinions and motivations behind a change in participant behaviour) can provide extremely useful insights and information that can't be captured by quantitative indicators, Increasingly, many evaluations collect both quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure both whether change has occurred and to investigate how/why it occurred.

If you have already identified a set of SMART objectives and goals then a good starting point is to identify indicators which will measure whether these have been achieved:



Considerations for multi-Partner projects

A collaborative project will typically develop a set of high-level indicators, which will then require each project Partner to develop their own set of locally appropriate indicators. As with your objectives it is important to continually check these locally appropriate indicators against the project's over-arching indicators and compare with those developed by the other Partners to ensure that these are all in alignment

Review audiences and their information needs

In any project, there is usually a very large number of things that could be measured. The challenge for most teams is to narrow their focus to the aspects of the project where evaluation will provide the most useful information, while still being feasible to carry out.

While coming up with indicators based on a set of SMART objectives is often relatively straightforward, it is often worth spending some time assessing your indicators to ensure that your MEL plan will provide you with all the information you need and/or to make sure that you will be able to measure these in practice.

When developing your MEL plan an extremely useful exercise is to review the project's key evaluation stakeholders and their information needs.
Consider the following two questions (you can also refer back to your **Stakeholder Analysis** if you did one):

- Which groups/individuals are most likely to be affected by the project
- Which groups/individuals are most likely to make decisions about the project?

Typically, your key evaluation stakeholders will include the **project team/implementing organisation**, the **project donor(s)** and other **key stakeholders** whose involvement is crucial to the success of the project.
Try to consider each of these and, in turn, identify what they want to know in relation to the project, and how they will use this information.

You can then compare your indicators to these needs to see whether they will capture the information needed to address these.

For example:

Audience	What do they want to know?	How will they use the evaluation results?
Project Team	Which elements of the project did/ didn't go well?	Modifying the project Demonstrating results
Project Donor	Was the project a success?	External communications
Local Communities	What was the project's impact on community member's lives?	Determining whether to continue engagement with the project/ implementing organisation
Local Government Department	Did the project align with/help deliver any of the department's own objectives?	Informing management/policy decisions

Clarify the underlying question(s)

When developing/checking your indicators another extremely useful exercise is to spend some time clarifying and prioritising the **underlying questions** that the indicators need to answer.

Using your theory of change, objectives and goals as a starting point, brainstorm some potential evaluation questions. A useful way to do this is to turn each of the **assumptions** in the theory of change into **questions**. As a reminder, your assumptions are typically represented by the links between different activities/outcomes etc, plus any external assumptions relating to factors that could potentially influence project results.

Next, as a team, prioritise these questions both in terms of their importance in meeting the information needs of your stakeholders and in terms of the feasibility of collecting and analysing the data required.

Criteria for assessing feasibility include:

Available time - Many long-term outcomes (such as changes in conservation status) can take a long time for results to show, so you need to ensure that the outcome you are evaluating will be measurable within the time available.

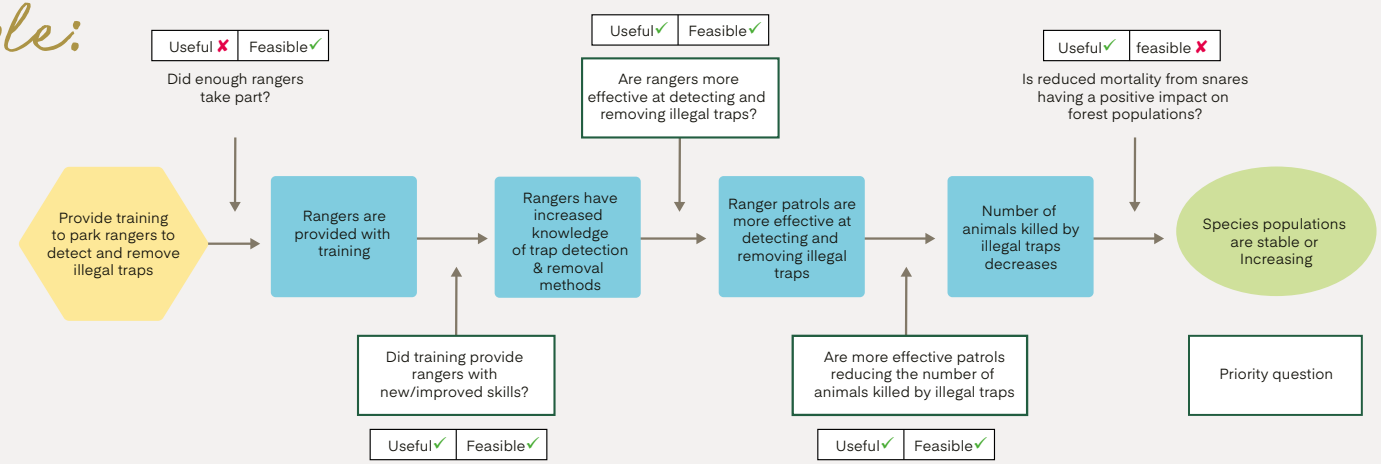
Available data - If necessary data are not already available then you need to be able to collect these data over the course of the project

Available resources - Ensure that your plans are realistic in light of the time, skills and resources available to the project.

The PRISM Toolkit contains an **evaluation feasibility checklist** that can help you with this.

You can then review your indicators to ensure that they will provide the information needed to answer all of your priority questions and information needs and whether they will be feasible to measure in practice. If not, then you can adjust your list of indicators accordingly so that all of these are covered.

Example:



Example questions identified and prioritised based on a theory of change

Tip: Try to distinguish change brought about by the project from change brought about by other factors

In any area where a project is implemented, changes will take place over time. Some of these changes will have occurred because of the project, while other changes may have nothing to do with the project and would have happened regardless of whether the project took place.

Therefore, the most useful evaluation questions are often not **"did this happen?"** but **"did this lead to this?"** and **"what other factors were relevant?"**

For example, an indicator which aims to answer the question **"has the number of Vultures killed by poisoning decreased?"** only measures whether change has occurred.

Whereas an indicator which aims to answer the question **"has the number of vultures killed by poisoning decreased as a result of the work carried out by the project?"** requires you to distinguish between change resulting of the project's actions, and change brought about by external factors. This information is typically much more useful both for demonstrating impact and for capturing learning.

In the example below, comparing data from the target site with data from a suitable control site (e.g. another National Park within the same region) will help the team to identify whether any observed change is specific to the target site (and therefore more likely to have been brought about by the project) or part of a broader change.

Similarly focusing on **percentage**, rather than numbers, will help indicate whether any observed change in the number of poisoned Vultures is due to a change in rates of poisoning or simply because there are more/ less Vultures present.

While finding a suitable control site might not be possible in many situations there are many other ways you can work to distinguish between project and non-project factors. For example, asking key stakeholders to list the most significant changes that have occurred since the project began, and then separating the changes that came about as a result of the project's actions from those that did not.

Refer to the PRISM Tookit for more information

Objective	Evaluation Question	What is being measured?	Indicator(s)
By 2025, the number of Vultures killed by poisoning at target site is reduced by 75%	Has the number of Vultures killed by poisoning decreased at the target site?	Whether change has occurred	Number of Vultures killed annually by poison at target site

Objective	Evaluation Question	What is being measured?	Indicator(s)
By 2025 the number of Vultures killed by poisoning at target site is reduced by 75%	Has the number of Vultures poisoned reduced as a result of the work carried out by the project?	How and why has change occurred	**Percentage** of resident Vulture populations killed annually by poison **at target site and control site(s)**

What data do you need to collect (and how will you collect it)?

As you develop your indicators, you will need to decide how you will collect the data required.

For example, conducting wildlife survey transects, downloading satellite imagery on land use patterns or conducting key informant interviews to measure changes in people's attitudes and practices.

For some indicators, you might be able to obtain the data you need from existing sources. For example, one method for getting data about a given fish population might be to download harvesting records posted by a government agency on the Internet.

In many instances, however, your team will be responsible for collecting and analysing at least a sub-set of the project's monitoring data. In some cases, you might also hire someone to conduct an external evaluation of your project.

As with identifying indicators, selecting methods involves finding a balance between usefulness and feasibility. Sometimes a single method is all that is needed while other times you may need to collect data from a number of different sources to capture different perspectives of change. For example, quantitative information on the amount of income generated by a particular project activity could be supplemented with qualitative information on the difference this income has made to people's lives (e.g. are they more/less able to meet their basic needs as a result)

Further reading

The PRISM toolkit contains detailed step-by-step instructions for collecting and analysing evaluation data. Specifically, the toolkit contains dedicated methods and guidance for evaluating change relating to:

Awareness and Attitudes

Capacity Development

Livelihoods & Governance

Policy

Species & Habitat Management

Develop a plan for who does what/when/how and what it will cost

Your MEL plan should also specify roughly how, when and where data will be collected, and who will collect it.

Outcome	Objective(s)	Indicator(s)	Data Collection Method(s)	Who?	Timeframe	Estimated Costs	Risks/ Assumptions
Habitat at managed section of project site is improved for shorebirds	By 2022, the number and diversity of shorebirds utilising Salt Pans managed by the project increases	Frequency and diversity of shorebird populations at both managed salt pans and neighbouring salt pans	Shorebird Survey	Local bird surveyor	Weekly - During winter months Baseline data to be collected March 2021	Salary of local surveyor ($20/ day for 30 days)	Other than those managed by the project, environmental conditions do not significantly affect shorebird numbers or behaviour
	By 2022, key indicators of habitat quality in Salt Pans managed by the project improve	Salinity levels of managed salt pans and neighbouring unmanaged salt pans Abundance and diversity of invertebrates at both managed salt pans and neighbouring salt pans	Habitat surveys (salinity, invertebrate diversity etc)	PhD Researcher	Baseline survey - June 2021 Follow-up survey - June 2022	Stipend for researcher ($20/ day for 10 days data collection + 5 days analysis and reporting)	Other than those managed by the project, environmental conditions are similar at survey times

Extract from a BirdLife Project MEL Plan

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Develop a plan for who does what/when/how and what it will cost

You should also outline the costs/resources required and any risks/assumptions that may affect your ability to collect the information required. Make sure you budget accordingly and communicate this information to any project donors and other relevant stakeholders.

As part of this process, you should again assess whether your chosen indicators are feasible to measure with the time, resources and capacity available to you, whether you need to further adjust your indicators or take additional steps to address any gaps. For example, in the project outlined on the previous page, the team identified that they did not have sufficient expertise to carry out invertebrate surveys so they established a partnership with a PhD student from a local university who agreed to collect and analyse this information on behalf of the project.

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

For collaborative projects it is particularly important to consider the needs of **all** members of the project team, particularly when the project contains a mixture of staff working at local-national-global scales.

Often a collaborative project's MEL Plan is based primarily around the project's high-level indicators. However, the majority of data is often provided by those working at the local level. If the project's MEL plan does not take into account the needs and capacities of all involved then this can result in the MEL plan failing because the project's high level indicators hold little relevance and/or are not feasible for those tasked with collecting the data at local level.

Involving the whole project team in the development of your MEL plan and ensuring that it will provide useful information for all those involved will help generate the incentive and motivation required to implement it effectively.

Prepare an Operational Plan

Along with your Action and Monitoring Plans, the **Operational Plan** forms the third part of your overall Strategic Plan.

It sets out how you will work in practice to implement your action and monitoring plans – it will help you assess what your capacity needs are, how you will find the resources required to carry out the project, how you will deal with risks, and how you will ensure the project's impacts continue beyond the project end date.

An Operational Plan does not normally exist as a single standalone plan; rather the key components outlined on the following page are often carried out separately and integrated with the other parts of your Strategic Plan. For example, the first two components (analysis of funding and analysis of capacity/resource needs) will often form the basis for a (high-level) work plan and budget, both of which are covered more thoroughly in **Step 3**.

The level of detail of your operational plan will vary, depending on the size and complexity of your project. Small projects may only briefly cover each of these topics, whereas large, complex ones might have an extensive and formal treatment of each

Considerations for multi-partner projects

Developing your Operational Plan is also a good opportunity to review the composition of your team. In particular, it is a good time to consider whether it would add value to bring in any additional Partners into the project, either to contribute to delivery of the project's activities (if appropriate) or to provide additional technical or material support.

Hatch provides a number of resources and opportunities for making connections with other **BirdLife Partners**. Contact the Hatch Team at the BirdLife Global Secretariat for more information.

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Key components of an operational plan

The key components of an operational plan should include:

Analysis of funding required to implement your project and an accounting of your current and potential sources of these funds. To identify the funding required, your team should develop broad estimates of the likely costs required to implement your project's activities, your MEL plan and share results more broadly. Your theories of change and the main implementation and monitoring activities you identified in them can provide you with a good framework for making those broad estimates.

Analysis of the human capacity, skills, and other non-financial resources required to implement your project and what you need to do to develop those resources. As before, you can use your theories of change and activities to develop high-level time estimates and to identify the skills required to implement your strategies and the associated monitoring. You may also want to refer back to your early work on identifying your team and the key skills and skill gaps within your team. **Hatch** also contains a number of resources for assessing capacity which you may find useful.

Analysis of potential risks for your project and how they can be addressed. A potential risk is an uncertain event or condition which, if it occurs, has a negative effect on at least one project element (e.g., time, cost, scope, or quality). Risk can be divided into programmatic risks that affect your situation (e.g., political instability, drought) and operational risks that affect your ability to implement the project (e.g., change in organisational leadership, limited capacity of Partners). A risk assessment should rate both the probability of the risk factor occurring and the impact or severity of the risk factor if it does occur.

The purpose of a risk assessment is to identify issues that could negatively impact the project's ability to implement key strategies effectively and/or achieve conservation goals, and to identify additional strategies necessary to mitigate or avoid those risks. A risk assessment template (defined by your organisation, if relevant) is useful to document and rate your risks and thus prioritize your efforts and re-rate the risks as your project evolves. See also section on identifying risks and assumptions.

Exit strategy to clarify how long your project will last and how you will ensure the sustainability of your project's achievements beyond your team's involvement. While we include this element as part of an operational plan, it is important to consider sustainability and exit options at the start of your project. Doing so helps ensure that associated actions are included in your work plans and can be adapted as your project evolves. Ignoring these factors can lead to unrealistic expectations among the project team and stakeholders, which can become increasingly difficult to manage over time.

Secure Funding

Once you have developed your operational plan, you will most likely need to identify potential funding sources and develop and submit proposals to those potential donors.

Most projects will require several years of financial resources, so fundraising will often be an ongoing process as you move through different iterations of the project cycle.

In addition to using the strategic plan to inform funding proposals, you can incorporate ongoing results and learning gained into your proposals and reports to show progress, learning, and adaptation to donors. This also provides an opportunity to help donors understand the value of supporting efforts that use this project cycle approach – from the strategic decision making that informs the design and planning to the critical thinking and reflection that go into the monitoring, analysis, and adaptation.

Ideally, you would seek and acquire funding for your highest priority activities from the start. In reality, you may need to adjust to opportunities and constraints and may find that your initial funding focuses on some medium- or lower-priority strategies. That's fine, as long as you do not lose sight of your high-priority strategies, and you work to implement them as soon as is feasible.

Refer to BirdLife's manual on **Institutional Fundraising for Conservation Projects** for more information.

Tip: Develop a work plan

When submitting a proposal you will typically need to provide a work-plan detailing the activities the funding will cover and an associated budget. While some projects may be covered by a single funding award. in most cases a particular award will cover a sub-set of activities within a wider body of work. It is therefore highly recommended that you develop an over-arching work-plan and budget for the overall project first, and then use this to develop the workplans and budgets for specific funding proposals, rather than the other way around.

See **Step 3** for more information on workplans and budgets.

Step 2 Checklist

General	
Does the project have:	
Clearly defined goals, outcomes & activities (ideally set out in a Theory of Change)?	Y/N
A clear set of achievable, measurable objectives?	Y/N
A clear action plan summarising goals, outcomes, activities & objectives?	Y/N
A monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan outlining useful/feasible indicators and means of measuring them?	Y/N
An operational plan comprising assessment of funding needs, capacity/resource requirements, potential risks and strategies for dealing with these?	Y/N
Multi-Partner Projects	
Common understanding of the problem and agreed joint approach to solving it?	Y/N
Appropriate, locally defined goals, objectives and indicators which are also adequately aligned with the project's over-arching goals, objectives & indicators?	Y/N
Agreed system of shared measurement, involving a common system for collecting data and measuring results around the project's agreed objectives and goals?	Y/N

Step 3 Implementation

Main outputs from this step

Detailed Workplan showing tasks/ activities, roles/ responsibilities, and timelines

Project budget

Agreed Structure for project management, decision-making, accountability, communication, and MEL among project team members/ Partners

Regular Progress Reports

Periodic Analysis and (where necessary) **adaptations** to the project

Overview

This step involves developing and implementing specific work plans while ensuring sufficient resources, capacity and collaboration with any relevant Partners and stakeholders. In many respects, this is the most important step in the entire process, as this is where you put all of the planning efforts you conducted in the previous steps into action.

As your team implements the project, you will likely go through **Step 3** (and all steps) multiple times, going around the loop to adapt your plans and continue implementation.

Where relevant, this work should be done within the context of your implementing organisation's policies, procedures and decision-making processes for approving work plans and budgets.

Develop Detailed Work Plans

In the previous steps, your team developed your action, MEL, and operational plans. In this step, these general plans need to be turned into more specific ones for implementation.

The first part of this step is to develop a series of work plans, with your project team and collaborators, which outline:

- The **specific activities** and **tasks** required to implement the activities laid out in your action and MEL plans. Make sure to include tasks related to operational functions (e.g., attending weekly staff meetings) as well as those related to key deliverables.
- A **timeline** showing when each task will be undertaken and the order that activity and tasks will be carried out
- Who will be **responsible** and who will be **accountable** for completing each activity and task.

You can record your work plan in a table, a Gantt chart, and/or a project calendar. As your project moves along, you should revisit the project deliverables and assumptions and update the work plan, again focusing on the more detailed activities for the next few months or so.

Getting the level of detail right in your work plan

While the main elements included in your work plan will generally remain the same, the level of detail may vary depending on where you are in the project cycle and what the work plan will be used for.

For example, most projects develop a **high-level workplan** and **budget** which provides an overarching summary of the project's main activities, associated tasks, roles and responsibilities and general estimates for anticipated costs over the length of the project. The main purpose of this high-level workplan being to inform discussions around planning, allocation of resources between activities/ partners and to inform the development of funding proposals.

Then, once you are closer to the point of starting implementation, it will be necessary to develop more specific **short-term work plans** covering the next few months or, at most, year. The main purpose of this more detailed work-plan will be to ensure that all team members have a clear understanding of the work they need to undertake, to guide implementation and to provide a reference for monitoring progress.

Your organisation might have guidance for the timeframe to be covered by your work plans, but generally, you should develop detailed work plans for the next 3-12 months, with higher-level information for the longer term. As time moves on, you can take your higher-level estimates and refine them into more specific estimates. Your detailed work plan should provide you with the basis for developing a project timeline or calendar. It is important to develop your timeline so that all project team members budget their time according to the project needs. Your work plan will also help you identify which team members might have time and which are overbooked. This information will also be important for developing your project budget.

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

Another key requirement for collaborative projects is to try and ensure that the project work plans operate as a series of **coordinated, linked activities that support each other**. This means that each partner takes on the specific activities at which they excel, in a way that supports the work of the other Partners involved.

The whole project team should work to ensure that each partner has the capacity (in terms of skills, knowledge, resources) to do the assigned work, and, if not, collectively work out how the capacity can be provided or the work reassigned.

While it might not be necessary for everyone to see the detailed workplans of each partner, the high-level activities and deliverables should be collated in one agreed work plan to provide understanding and to track progress.

Projects often take multiple years to produce worthwhile results, so any initial enthusiasm can fade if you don't work to maintain relationships between partners, for example through informal social gatherings and regular formal reviews of progress.

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Develop your Project Budget

Once you have set out your tasks and activities, the next step is to determine the resources you will need, which are then set out in the project's budget.

By this stage you should be able to work from your initial analysis of funding that you carried out as part of your **Operational Plan**. Then, using the information set out in your workplan, develop a more refined estimate of costs for specific activities and the project's broader goals and objectives.

Wherever possible you should try to work closely with the finance or accounting staff in your organisation to develop your project budget. For many projects, the most expensive resource will be staff time. In addition, you should consider what other major expenses (e.g., physical infrastructure, vehicles, research costs) are needed. You will also want to consider the related functions or additional resources the project might require, ranging from monitoring and management expenses to administrative or logistical support and budget for these accordingly.

Your project budget is something that will need to be continuously revisited and revised throughout the project. So when developing the initial budget, it can be useful to identify any areas which are most likely to require adjustment. For example, where material costs are based on rough estimates.

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

Be aware that project costs may differ between locations and countries, so when developing and managing the budget for a collaborative project ensure that you remain in close contact with the finance and accounting staff of each Partner involved in the project to ensure that activities are appropriately costed and resourced.

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Develop your Project Budget (continued)

Example Workplan & Budget: Spreadsheet Gantt Chart

This format can be laid out in a spreadsheet or text document. Additional columns/features can be added as required.

For example, if using a spreadsheet, you could add filters to allow you to sort the data to quickly estimate the cost of a task or sort all tasks assigned to an individual and calculate the allocation of that person's time.

Activities/Tasks/Item	Number of days/units					Project Expenses (USD)					
	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Total	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Total	Category
ACTIVITY A: PROMOTION OF ALTERNATIVE FISHING TECHNIQUES	15	17	5	-	37	975	1375	360	-	**2710**	-
Task A.1 Outreach workshops with stakeholders	15	5	3	-	23	975	295	180	-	**1450**	-
Jaime	15	5	2	-	22	525	175	70	-	770	Staff Costs
Ana	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	65	-	65	Staff Costs
Travel Expenses for workshops	-	-	-	-	-	450	120	45	-	615	Travel
Task A.2 Social survey data collection and write up	-	12	2	2	16	-	1080	180	180	**1440**	-
Ana	-	12	2	2	16	-	780	130	130	1040	Staff Costs
Travel costs to field sites	-	-	-	-	0	-	300	50	50	400	Travel
ACTIVITY B: PREPARE AND DISSEMINATE BEST PRACTICE REPORT	-	19	9	15	43	-	965	465	875	**2305**	-
Task B.1: Completion of monitoring report	-	19	9	4	32	-	965	465	400	**1830**	-
Ana	-	10	5	2	17	-	650	325	130	1105	Staff Costs
Jaime	-	9	4	2	15	-	315	140	70	525	Staff Costs
Designer/Printing costs	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	200	200	Materials
Task B.2: Meetings with government officials	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	105	**105**	-
Jaime	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	105	105	Staff Costs
Travel costs for meetings	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	Travel
Task B.3: Other external communications	-	-	-	8	8	-	-	-	370	**370**	-
Ana	-	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	195	195	Staff Costs
Jaime	-	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	175	175	Staff Costs
OTHER COSTS	-	-	-	-	-	520	-	-	-	**1920**	-
Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	120	-	-	-	**120**	-
Printer	-	-	-	-	-	120	-	-	-	120	Materials
Operating costs	-	-	-	-	-	400	600	400	400	**1800**	-
Overhead	-	-	-	-	-	400	600	400	400	1800	Operations

Review and Agree Project Management/ Decision-making Structure

As well as outlining who is responsible (and accountable) for each activity outlined in the workplan you should also review and agree this for more general project functions such as managing finances, coordination and reporting.

Responsible:

The person responsible for doing the day-to-day work to manage or carry out particular activities

Accountable:

The person who makes the final decision in a given situation, or who has sign off authority on things like contracts

Some of this has likely already been covered when you set the project team at the beginning of **Step 1**. However, it is good practice to review this before implementation to ensure that everyone has a common understanding of the project's management structure. This will help to ensure clear decision-making, control of key processes, help to keep the team functioning effectively and ensure that there are no gaps or misunderstandings.

The project's management structure will usually be determined by the internal processes and management structure of the implementing organisation(s). Internal roles are assigned to staff employed by the organisation(s) responsible for delivering the project. External roles are assigned to members of the project team who are not part of the implementing organisation(s) who are brought in to provide additional expertise or funds required to deliver the project. Multiple roles may be assigned to individual staff members.

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Review and Agree Project Management/ Decision-making Structure (continued)

Example roles within a BirdLife Project

Role	Responsible for
Core Project Team	
Project Manager	Day to day management and delivery of the overall project
Project Support	Assisting the project manager in overall project delivery
Partner Lead	Delivery of the specific activities implemented by one of the partners involved in the project
Partner Support	Supporting the partner lead deliver their specific sub-set of project activities
Operations Support	Overseeing operations functioning of the project (e.g. finance, human resources)
Other roles within the implementing organisation(s)	
Senior Management	Ultimately accountable for delivery of the project (and usually line-manages the project manager). Has ultimate decision-making power over developing and changing the Project plan, and any decision to prematurely close the project if needed
Chief Executive	Usually has little involvement at the project level. However, if a risk or issue arises at the project level which impacts on the ability of the organisation to deliver the organisation's vision, mission, or Programme plan, then the CEO may act as decision-making authority on how to proceed
External Roles	
Donor	Providing funds to the project. In some cases, Donors may also provide technical support as well as funds
Supplier	Providing resources to the project. For example, specialist knowledge, technical support or material resources. Their involvement and specific roles/responsibilities are usually set out in some form of contract

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

In collaborative projects, creating and managing collective impact typically requires someone to take on the role of ensuring effective **coordination of all the participating organisations**.

In BirdLife this role will usually be filled by one of the Partner organisations (or the Global Secretariat) with the specific skills and time available to adequately support the whole project, though in some projects this role might be filled by people from several organisations. However this role is carried out, all project Partners need to agree on the structure for ensuring coordination and ensure that those involved have the skills and capacity needed to take on this role.

Implement Project

The next and most important part of **Step 3** is to implement your Work Plan according to schedule and within budget. This includes the activities set out in your action plan and MEL plan.

To move into the implementation phase, it is recommended to have an inception or kick-off meeting for the project team (especially if there are multiple partners and/or new team members). This is an opportunity for team building and to ensure all team members are familiar with the project design, budget allocations, donor contractual conditions, internal policies, and other relevant details.

Aim to hold regular team meetings throughout project implementation. Doing this will help your team to regularly monitor progress, stay connected, and support one another. You can schedule different types of meetings throughout implementation. For example:

Type of meeting	Meeting Objectives	Attendees
Weekly Meeting	Review progress of a specific project activity and plan milestones and tasks for next week	Partner lead, partner Support Staff
Monthly Meeting	To review progress of each activity last month and plan milestones and tasks for next month	Project manager, partner leads, project support staff
Annual Meeting	Review progress against overall project results, milestones, and budget of last year and plan work for next year	Senior Management, Project Manager, partner Leads, Project Support Staff, Operations Support Staff

Another important task is setting up the necessary systems for storage of monitoring data. For very small projects, a simple paper-based system may be all you need. For projects involving multiple people, Partners or running over longer periods of time, this might require working with other departments within your organisation to ensure the data systems you use will successfully interact with existing systems and to identify any adjustments that may be needed. It may be appropriate to include some time and resources in your work plan and budget for setting up these systems.

Creating short, regular **progress reports on implementation** will allow more detailed reflections in the later steps, as well as assist with reporting to donors and supporters. On an annual basis (or more frequently), it is useful to review your progress in the context of the project's overall theory of change. Figures below provide different formats for reporting progress.

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Implement Project

Example Progress Report in Table Format

Activity/Tasks	Progress	Details
ACTIVITY A: PROMOTION OF ALTERNATIVE FISHING TECHNIQUES	On Track	
Task A.1 Development of training/ outreach materials	Completed	Materials developed and being used
Task A.1 Outreach/demonstration workshops with stakeholders	Minor Issues	Initial workshops were only attended by a sub-set of the overall target audience, additional workshops scheduled.
Monitoring Task A.1 Social survey data collection and write up	On-track	Methodology agreed and baseline data collected, next round of data collection scheduled for next quarter
ACTIVITY B: PREPARE AND DISSEMINATE BEST PRACTICE REPORT	Major Issues	
Task B.1: Completion of best practice report	Completed	
Task B.2: Meetings with government officials	Major Issues	So far requests to meet with government officials have been denied
Task B.3: Other external communications	Scheduled	Scheduled to begin in Q3

Considerations for multi-Partner projects

Collaborative projects in particular require a system of **continuous communication** to function effectively. Ensuring all partners meet regularly to openly discuss progress, analysis, successes and challenges will help to ensure coordinated delivery of actions and monitoring, help maintain trust between Partners and promote shared learning between organisations.

Try to make sure that the "right" people are sent to participate in meetings. In particular, the key decision-makers need to stay involved in the project's progress and direction, and not delegate all participation to lower-level staff who can't easily influence results.

Analyse progress & results

Analysis involves transforming your raw monitoring data into useful information and knowledge. Specifically, this step involves analysing your project's results, core assumptions, and relevant operational and financial data, then using the information gained to inform and adapt your work plan(s) as necessary.

Analysis should be carried out at regular intervals throughout the project (not just at the end). It is important to involve the right people in the analyses and/or to share preliminary analyses with them. Analyses should always involve members of the project team, as they will have the deepest understanding of the project. Inputs from other key stakeholders, outside experts, or those with other perspectives are also valuable and can help provide a balanced interpretation of monitoring results.

Prepare Your Data for Analysis

Make sure that your team regularly record, store, process, and back up all important monitoring data, including programmatic, operational, and financial data. This work will be much easier if you check, clean, and code your raw data as you collect them.

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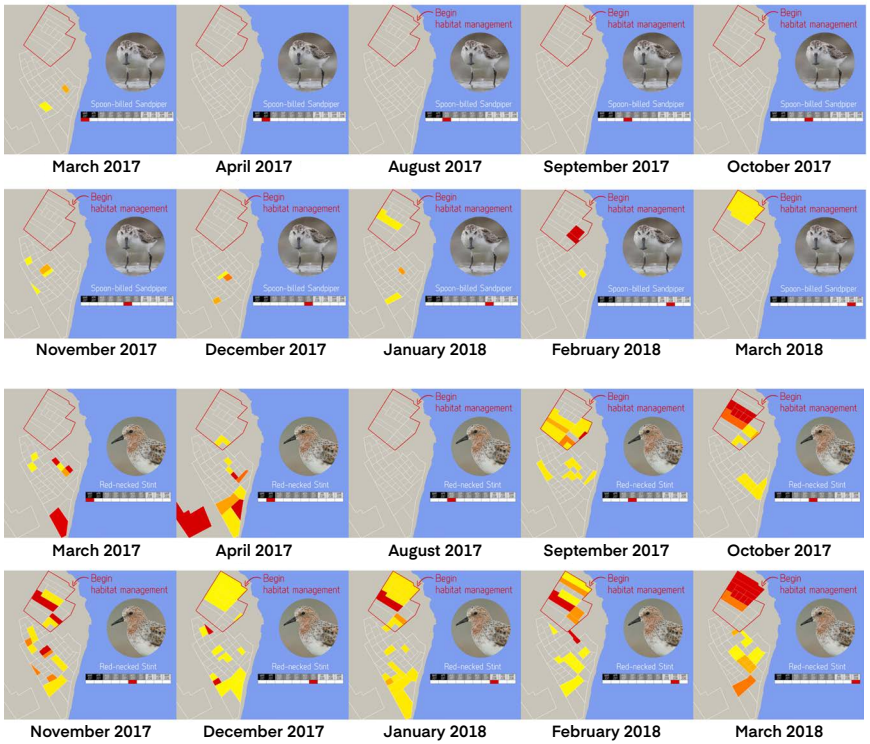
Analyse progress & results (continued)

Analyse Monitoring Data

The levels of complexity in analysis range from very simple and fast (e.g. a before-after comparison of a yes/no questionnaire response) to extremely complex and time-consuming (e.g. detailed statistical analyses combining a mix of quantitative and qualitative data sources).

As with the selection of monitoring methods, you should make sure that your analysis matches the level of detail/complexity required by you and your audiences' information needs. In particular, rather than trying to analyse every bit of information you have gathered, try to prioritise analyses that will provide you with useful information relating to key results and assumptions. This will help you avoid underestimating the time needed for analysis and/or ending up with lots of data that they have not analysed or used.

As well as presenting analysis results using visual tools such as graphs and tables it can also be useful to include a written summary to provide any necessary context or additional details.



Analysis examples:

Density of shorebird selected shorebird species in managed vs unmanaged salt pans

Yellow = low density, Red = high density

Summary

Before habitat management began, all Spoon-billed Sandpipers (CR) were recorded in outside the area being managed by the project. After beginning habitat management, Spoon-billed Sandpipers were initially still observed to favour the active salt pans more than the managed plot. However, beginning in January 2018, their habitat preference began to shift with some birds feeding within the managed plot. Since February 2018, the majority of Spoon-billed Sandpipers have been primarily observed foraging in the managed area. This trend is also being observed in birds with similar feeding habits (Red-necked Stint (NT) shown as example). Even though this species remains common throughout the whole area, since habitat management began, observed density has been consistently higher in the managed plot.

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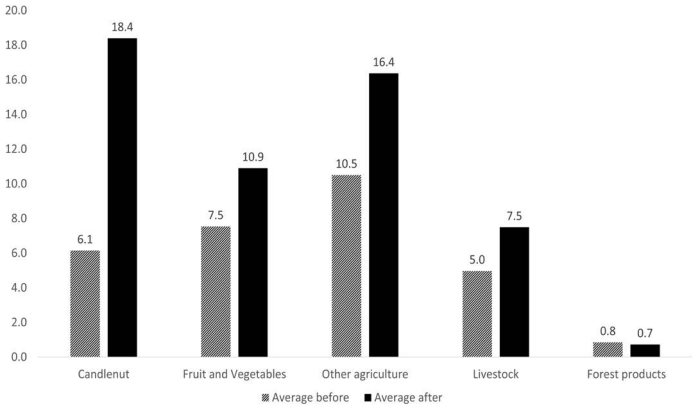
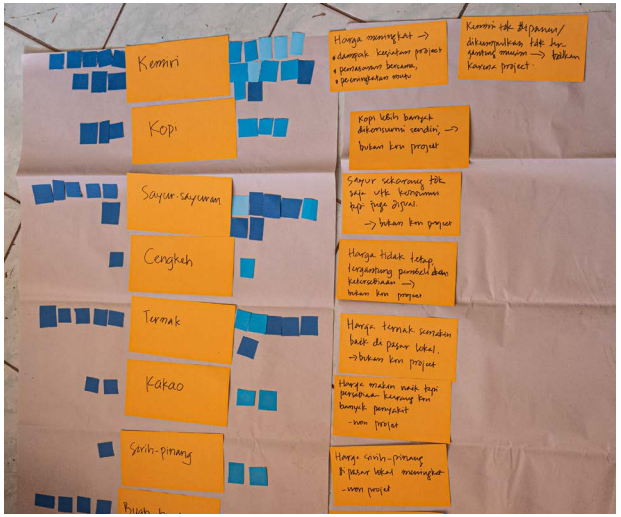
Analysis Examples (continued)



Participatory scoring of the importance of different livelihood assets before and after the first year of the project

Summary

Candlenut is currently ranked as the most important livelihood asset by all groups after one year of the project, compared to before the project where candlenut was ranked as the third most important. Participants have cited the impact of the project's joint marketing initiative (and the increased income it has brought) as he primary factor behind the increase in importance for candlenuts. Participants have attributed increases in the importance of livestock, fruit and vegetables and some other agricultural products (particularly cloves) to improvements in local market prices, which were not the result of the project..



Reflect on Results

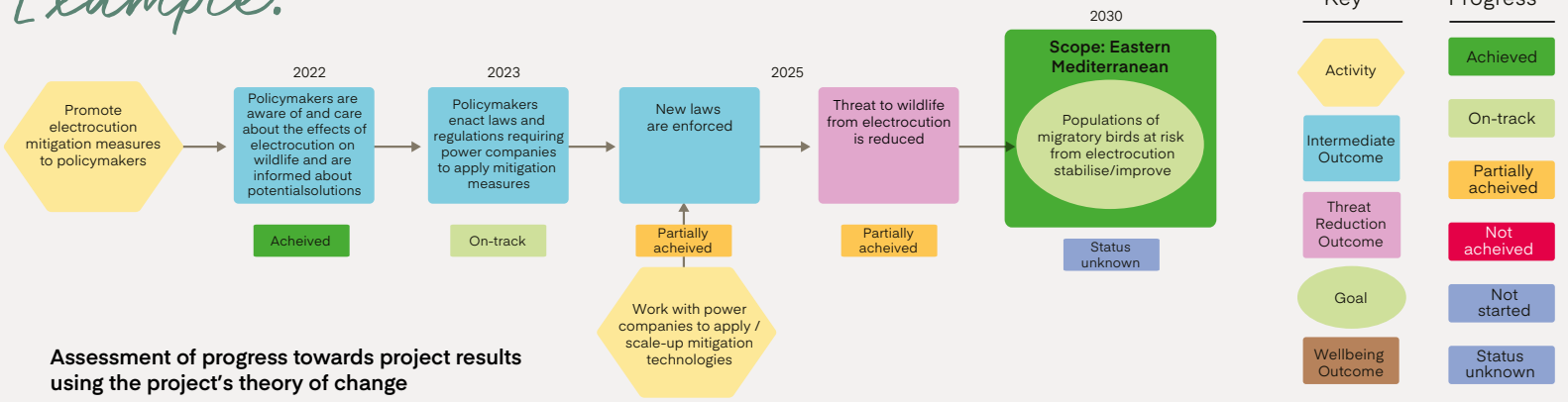
Once you have analysed your monitoring data, the next part of the process is to examine this information to try and determine whether you have achieved your intermediate results, assess whether you are on track to achieve long-term success and to fill any other key knowledge gaps or information needs you identified when developing your MEL plan.

As part of this, you should aim to meet regularly (approximately every 6-12 months) to review and reflect on the project. Key questions that could be addressed during these meetings include:

- Are you on track with implementing your activities? If not, why not? What adjustments should you make?
- Are you achieving the results you expected to achieve? If not, why not? Are there any external factors that are influencing your project's results?
- Have you addressed other priority information needs (for example knowledge gaps or uncertainties identified when developing your theory of change)?
- If you have not addressed those information needs, are they still priorities? And if so, how will you address them in the future?

Doing this regularly will help you maintain a good understanding of what is happening in the project, why certain actions have succeeded or failed and help you to adapt to any changing circumstances.

Example:



Assessment of progress towards project results using the project's theory of change

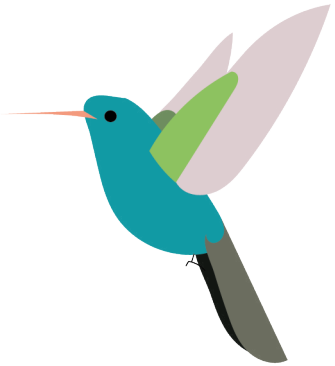
Analyse and Reflect on Capacity, Resources & Team Dynamics

It is also important to consider whether the processes supporting your project are functioning properly.

You may have a perfect strategy and set of activities for addressing the threats affecting your conservation targets, but your team might not be operating efficiently or does not have the administrative or financial support it needs to do its job well.

As part of your on-going analysis you might analyse whether:

- You have sufficient resources (e.g., financial, human, administrative, political) to implement the project?
- You have the right skills among your team members to implement your project well?
- You have the physical infrastructure and equipment (e.g., office space, vehicles, computers) you need to do your job?
- Your project team is operating smoothly (e.g., communications, delegation of responsibilities)?



Analyse and Reflect on Capacity, Resources & Team Dynamics (continued)

Tip – Schedule regular Pause & Reflect Sessions

An extremely useful way to analyse progress and identify potential issues or opportunities is to schedule periodic **Pause and Reflect Sessions** throughout implementation

Pause & Reflect Instructions:

Gather the team and/or a sub-set of relevant project stakeholders and, as a group, work through the following list of questions:

What should have/should be happening? – This could be framed as a general question about the overall project or as a focused question relating to a specific element. The aim here is to review and remind everyone what was set out in the project's theory of change and action/ work-plan(s), both in terms of the outcomes/impacts the project is aiming to achieve and the activities that the project is implementing to achieve these.

What has happened/is happening in practice? – Next, review what has/is happening in practice. For example, whether the project is progressing as expected or whether the particular activities/outcomes are proving difficult to deliver. In the notes try to capture underlying reasons/root causes both in relation to what has gone well (and why) and what has gone less well (and why).

What action (if any) do we need to take? – Use the information provided by the previous questions to inform a discussion on whether any changes need to be made to the project's goals/objectives, activities or any other element of the project's implementation.

The information can be captured as general notes or using a table like the one below:

What should have happened/ should be happening?	What actually happened/is happening?	Reasons / Root Causes		What action do we need to take (if any)
		What has gone well, and why?	What has gone less well, and why?	

To encourage constructive discussion is a good idea to set some ground rules at the outset of the session. For example:.

Do not interrupt teammates

Listen without criticism or judgment to what team members have to say

Focus on underlying reasons/root causes

Explain what constructive action should be taken

Emphasize that results will NOT be used to assess individual performance but to drive collective improvements in practice

Incorporating reflections from other stakeholders

As well as reflections from within the project team it is also extremely useful to incorporate perspectives and recommendations from the project's other key stakeholders.

For example, by asking them to list the most significant changes (positive & negative) that have taken place since the project began and/or asking them for recommendations for improvement.

Stakeholder Group	Positive Change	Negative Change	Recommendations
Female cooperative members	● Increase in commodity prices ● Cut out middlemen's involvement ● New Job Opportunities ● Transparency of prices	● Generated competition between cooperatives and middlemen	● Modern technology is needed to improve harvesting ● Cooperative management need to improve bookkeeping management ● Need training for farmers to produce quality candlenut
Male cooperative members	● Better able to meet basic household needs ● Knowledge enterprises ● New job opportunities ● Easier to obtain credit	● Some conflict between participating and non-participating households	● Need to increase capital for cooperatives ● There is a need for a warehouse ● Need training on business planning
Cooperative Employees (Labourers/ management)	● Increase in income ● New job opportunities ● Annual dividend ● Ensures quality of product	● No negative outcomes	● Need to increase capital for cooperatives ● Cooperative activities need to be socialized to the community ● Training for administrators and field collectors ● Need to include other commodities in joint marketing ● Cooperatives need to develop other businesses, especially the provision of basic needs of community

Adapt your plans as needed

The final part of **Step 3** involves using the knowledge you gained during your analysis to make any necessary adjustments to the project that will improve your ability to reach your goals and objectives.

For example, in some cases you may find that some elements of the project are working well, while in other cases you might identify a need to adjust your action plan, monitoring plan, operational plan, work plan or budget to adapt to changing circumstances or new information. Learning and ideas for improvement may come from internal discussions with your team, findings from formal evaluations or audits, feedback from external stakeholders familiar with your work, and/or research findings relevant to your context.

Example adaptations could include:

- Revisiting your analysis of the most critical threats as a result of new information on the scope or severity of an existing threat or to respond to a new or previously unknown threat.
- Updating activities and work-plans to respond to unforeseen technical and/or logistical challenges
- Adjusting the allocation of project resources to align with changes in project priorities

As you make changes, you should also document the rationale and/or evidence behind them so that others will understand what you learned and why you made these changes. This will also be an important input to **Step 4** (Learn/Communicate).

In addition to adapting your conservation actions, it can be useful to also review and update associated analyses (e.g., your situation analysis, risk assessments, stakeholder assessments). Doing so may help you realize, for example, that you need to add new activities to your work plan to manage new risks or to engage with new stakeholders.

Step 3 Checklist

Step 3 Checklist	
General	
Has the project developed:	
A series of detailed work-plans outlining actions, timelines and responsibilities?	Y/N
Project Budget?	Y/N
Agreed processes and tools for tracking progress, capturing relevant information and learning?	Y/N
Agreed structure and process for analysis progress, learning and for adapting the project as needed?	Y/N
Multi-Partner Projects	
Detailed workplans for each Partner, with the high-level activities and deliverables collated in a unified work plan to provide understanding and to track progress?	Y/N
Assigned responsibility to one of the project Partners (or a group of staff from different Partners) for ensuring coordination between the project Partners?	Y/N
Agreed system of continuous communication, with all Partners meeting regularly to openly discuss progress, analysis, successes and challenges?	Y/N

Step 4 Learn & Communicate

Main outputs from this step

Internal and External **Communication Plans**

Captured **impact** and **learning**

Project reports & other **communication outputs**

Overview

This final step in the project cycle involves sharing impact, learning and project outputs with key internal and external audiences.

It also involves giving and receiving feedback and promoting a learning environment within your team, organisation and with your partners and stakeholders. Lessons from the work you have done will be important inputs guiding your next pass throughout the project cycle. It is also important to promote learning at an institutional level and, more generally, across the wider **BirdLife Partnership**.

Capture Impact & Learning

To a large degree, you will have already generated many results and lessons in **Step 3**, based on the information needs you defined in **Step 2**. Here, it is important that you document those lessons and track unanswered information needs so that they are available in the future to your team, your organisation, and the wider BirdLife Partnership.

One simple option for your team is to use online documents and spreadsheets to store a running list of lessons learned that all project team members can access and edit over time. You could also capture these results and knowledge in a peer-reviewed publication, online data systems, or an informal handwritten log. Effectively capturing this information is often challenging to do in the face of daily work pressures and deadlines, so it is important that your team or organisation provides both **time** and **incentives** to do this work.

Methods for capturing learning

If you use project management software (e.g. Miradi) you can use this to document the evidence the project generates and your lessons learned (i.e. what you've done, what worked, what didn't work, and what you plan to do in the future).

If you don't use any project management software you can still record this information using more general tools, word documents and excel, provided all relevant staff/team members know where these are stored and a protocol is in place for tracking these and keeping them up to date.

Having a record of this will help your current project team over the long term and will ensure that new project staff will have a record of what you did and what you learned. Importantly, it will also help the team avoid repeating past mistakes.

Tip – After Action Review

An After-Action Review is a very useful exercise for capturing learning. The exercise essentially follows the same process as a Pause and Reflect Session (see **page 80**), with the main differences being that it takes place at the end of a project (or after a particular event/incident) and that the final questions change to **what did we learn?** and **what should we do next?**

Share learning within the project team/organisation

One of the most significant uses of the information and experience generated by a project is to help your team and others adapt and improve.

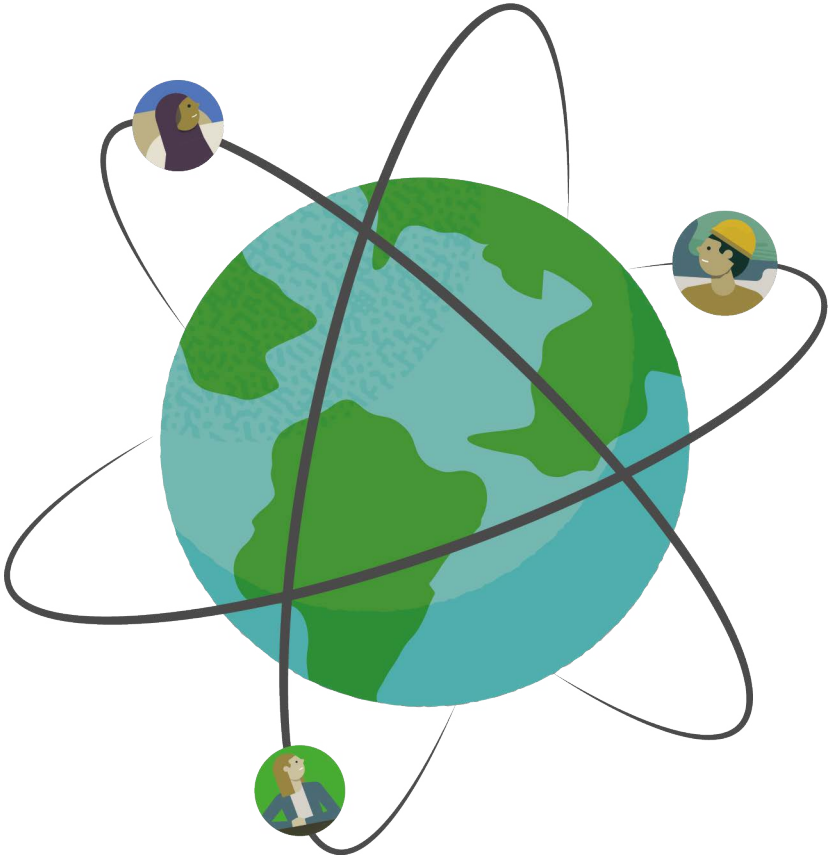
Unlike communicating project outcomes and impacts for external audiences (which is usually done towards the end of the project), communicating learning can be done at any stage of the project cycle.

Potential applications of project results include (among others):

- Providing continuous feedback on project implementation
- Identifying gaps in project implementation
- Eliminating or modifying project actions that are not producing the desired results
- Adding further actions
- Identifying training and technical assistance needs
- Providing support for long-term planning
- Building support for future project actions
- Building support for acquiring resources
- Increasing communication between project stakeholders

Sharing learning beyond your organisation

In **Step 2**, you should have identified your audiences (internal and external) for your project results and their information needs.



To effectively reach your key audiences, you should aim to have a **clear communication strategy**, which outlines the key lessons you wish to communicate and determines the best format to reach each key audience. For instance, you may use informal communications means (e.g., email, phone calls) to regularly share lessons with project staff, project Partners and/or senior management.

When sharing learning, you should aim to provide:

- Clear recommendations (based on your analysis) to the right people
- Necessary details to help support your recommendations and interpret results
- Alternatives and contingencies based on the results

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Can results be shared with other BirdLife Partners and/or the wider conservation community?

In addition to your main project stakeholders, you should give thought to whether your results and learning can be shared with others (particularly others in the BirdLife Partnership) in support of **evidence-based conservation** and building **communities of practice** around certain types of conservation action.

This is particularly relevant for projects that are carrying out:

- Innovative/novel actions
- Actions that have not been applied in a similar setting before
- Evaluation results which produced particularly interesting/unexpected findings

Sharing results and learning outside your project team allows others to learn from your successes and failures, improving how well conservation works overall and enables your project to extend its impact far beyond its particular location or context.

It is particularly important to share the results of projects that did not work as intended, to prevent others from wasting resources on actions that are unlikely to be successful.

As the success of conservation interventions may often be context-specific, having access to information on the effectiveness of a given conservation action puts planners of future projects in a better position to assess the likelihood of that action working for their own project. It also enables actions to be compared, to assess which of them are likely to work best in a given context.

How can I share my results/ learning with the wider conservation community?

There are a range of options for sharing your findings more broadly, including contributing to evidence libraries (e.g. **www.conservationevidence.com**), publishing in scientific journals, posting lessons on your website, sharing learning via social media, and telling your stories at workshops and conferences. Lessons and learning can also be shared via the **Hatch Platform**, please contact the **Hatch team** at the BirdLife Global Secretariat for guidance and support in relation to this.

Tip

As a reminder, you should also look to others in the conservation community as sources of information and learning for your project. Some of the best sources of lessons are the experiences of others.

Communicate Results Externally

For communicating and sharing lessons with your external audiences (e.g., donors, other practitioners, general public), you will probably use more formal communications means, such as dashboards, reports, presentations, videos, academic papers etc..

It is important to evaluate each communication output to determine if it effectively communicates your messages and to learn how you might improve your communications.

Identify requirements

When planning how you will communicate your results it is useful to re-visit your **stakeholder analysis** where you identified the main uses and users of the project's results. You can then design your communication strategy to address each use and each user.

Communicating with donors

A report presented to a funder/ donor will often be one of the main (and in some cases the only) communication outputs of a project. Reporting should not be seen as a box-ticking exercise to fulfil funding requirements. It should instead be seen as an opportunity to communicate your findings to show both what has been achieved and what has been learnt. To get the most out of the reporting process you should aim to maintain communication with your donors, make use of any reporting guidelines/templates, and develop reporting media that will be useful both to you and to the donor. Many projects are reluctant to report results of actions that produce unintended/negative results. However, the overwhelming majority of funders understand that conservation project actions can be subject to a number of external influences, and are typically happy for projects to report unintended negative results, provided that learning can be demonstrated.

Reporting timescales

A common challenge is that reporting timeframes often require teams to report before the project's long-term outcomes and impacts become measurable. In this situation it will be necessary to report on relevant intermediate outcomes and include in your report an explanation of how these act as predictors of outcomes and impacts further along the project's Theory of Change.

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Building a Narrative

When communicating results, your reporting will have a much wider reach if you are able to build a narrative that can be easily understood by audiences who may not be familiar with the project. Key to this is to not just present results, but instead construct a narrative that uses project results to **tell a story**.

For example, a simple narrative can be built using the following questions:

- What change(s) occurred?
- To what extent were any change(s) due to the project?
- What do these results mean in relation to the project's overall aim?
- What should be done next?

Example 1

What change(s) occurred?

Over the course of the project, the number of poaching snares found per patrol went from an average of 3 to 0.5.

To what extent were any change(s) due to the project? An evaluation, which measured the difference between patrols at the project site and a similar area not targeted by the project suggested that the majority of the observed change in the number of snares being found was due to the project's training and outreach work.

What do these results mean in relation to the project's overall aim?

These results are likely to have positive implications for the project's goal of increasing hunted species populations by reducing poaching.

What should be done next?

In light of these results we recommend that the project's actions be scaled up to incorporate similar, neighbouring areas.

Example 2

What change(s) occurred?

Over the course of the project, the perceived impact of Rattan on local livelihoods did not change significantly

To what extent were any change(s) due to the project? A Participatory Impact Assessment found that local people felt that Rattan was growing too slowly to deliver a regular improvement to livelihoods.

What do these results mean in relation to the project's overall aim?

These results mean that using Rattan as a sole incentive is unlikely to deliver the project's overall aim of preventing further deforestation.

What should be done next?

In light of these results we recommend that projects that intend to use Rattan as an incentive for forest protection should either find a way to make Rattan grow faster, e.g. through training on cultivation techniques) or provide additional incentives that delivers a greater perceived benefit to stakeholders.

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Design reporting media

Options for reporting media include:

Type of reporting media	Examples	Key Considerations
Written Materials	Reports, news bulletins, website communications	The most important information should come first, to allow readers to access easily the things they are most interested in. This will often be the findings and recommendations, which should thus appear early in the report. Less crucial details, such as the evaluation background and methodology, belong in an appendix or can even be posted elsewhere (e.g. online) for reference.
Presentations	Posters, Powerpoint, Video	Presentation audiences are likely to be most interested in only a portion of the full project report, such as the key findings or a lesson learnt about particular methods. Therefore, it is usually best to focus the presentation on that portion, while making the full report available to anyone interested.
Creative	Infographics, cartoons, photographic reporting	Presenting your report in a creative manner may be the most effective means to get your information across if the context allows for it. You may consider working with an artist or a graphic recorder to produce creative displays.

Techniques for increasing accessibility:

- Use plain language
- Remove visual elements that don't contribute to the main message
- Use visual techniques to draw attention to certain bits of information
- Use descriptive chart titles to highlight key pieces of information
- Use the one – three – twenty five principle where the report takes the following format: a 1 page outline, a 3 page executive summary and 25 pages to present the findings and methodology.

Deciding what to do next/Completing the cycle

Although communication is presented as the final step in the project cycle, in reality, you will likely go round all the steps presented in this toolkit several times over the lifetime of a project, as you return to and update your initial assessment of the situation (**Step 1**) and various project plans (**Step 2**) based on evidence and learning gained during implementation (**Step 3**) and Learning (**Step 4**).

Questions you might ask when completing the cycle include:

- Should you revisit your vision and conservation targets?
- Are there new factors or relationships that you had not previously considered that you believe should be incorporated into your situation analysis or addressed by a specific goal or objective?
- Have your audiences or their information needs changed? Do you need to change your monitoring plan? Do you need to adapt your operational plan, including any plans to exit the project and build the sustainability of its results?

Above all, remember that the complex nature of most conservation problems means that most projects will not get everything right the first time around, and that completing the project cycle as part of a constant process of monitoring, analysis, learning and adaptation is the most effective way to maximise your chances of success. Even if your project (or elements of it) ultimately fail, having a record of what you did and what you learned will help ensure that you and others can still learn from your experience and to drive improvements in future practice.

Finally, by applying the methods outlined in this toolkit you will gain experience in good project design, implementation and adaptive management. The challenges facing conservation require practitioners and organisations to work together to develop and implement effective, evidence-based solutions. Completing the cycle outlined in this toolkit will not only support you to design and carry out more effective responses to conservation challenges, but facilitate collaboration –both within and beyond the BirdLife Partnership –to positively impact conservation targets on a local to global scale.

Step 4 Checklist

Step 4 Checklist	
General	
Does the project have:	
An internal communications plan/strategy for learning/improving based on project results	Y/N
An external communications plan/strategy for disseminating results to key audiences	Y/N
Multi-Partner elements	
Have relevant results been identified for sharing with the wider BirdLife Partnership	Y/N

Appendices

Appendix A: **Glossary**

Action – A general term used to refer to the work carried out by conservation teams (e.g. habitat protection, species protection/ management/community outreach).

Action Plan – A description of a project's goals, objectives, and activites to address identified threats and make use of opportunities.

Activity – A specific action or set of actions undertaken by project staff and/or partners to achieve specific goals and objectives. A good activity meets the criteria of being: linked, focused, feasible, and appropriate.

Adaptive Management – The continuous incorporation of learning into conservation practice to reduce uncertainty in decision making. Specifically, it is the integration of design, management, and monitoring, evaluation & learning (MEL) to enable practitioners to test key assumptions, evaluate their results, adjust management decisions, and generate learning systematically and efficiently.

Assumption – An explicit statement of what a team assumes is true. One type of assumptions underpins each of the links in a theory of change. A second type of assumption relates to external factors that the project does not have control over, but that may influence the project's results. For example, in order for training to be successful, park rangers need to have sufficient resources to carry out their work (e.g. equipment, salary). These kinds of assumptions are particularly important to consider, as there will often be a large number of factors that could influence the project's outcomes/impacts and identifying these as early as possible will help you identify whether any represent significant risks to the project, which can then be incorporated into your planning.

Audience – Those individuals or groups a project team is trying to reach, be it for communication purposes or to influence a particular behaviour.

Community of Practice – A group of practitioners who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about atopic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

Conceptual Model – Another term for a situation model

Conservation/Biodiversity Target – An element of biodiversity(species, habitat, or ecological system) within a project scope on which a project has chosen to focus.

Critical Threat – Direct threats prioritized as the most important to address.

Direct Threats – Primarily human actions that immediately degrade one or more conservation targets (e.g., illegal logging or unsustainable fishing). They can also be natural phenomena altered by human activities (e.g., increase in extreme storm events due to climate change). Typically tied to one or more stakeholders. (Sometimes referred to as a pressure or source of stress. Compare with indirect threat.)

Driver/Factor – A generic term for an element of a situation model, including direct and indirect threats, and opportunities. It is often advantageous to use this generic term since many factors – for example, tourism– could be both a threat and an opportunity. (See also root causes or drivers).

Ecosystem Service - Services that intact, functioning ecosystems, species, and habitats provide and that can benefit people.

Enabling Condition – A condition that does not directly impact a conservation/human target, but which contributes to the environment needed for that impact to occur. For example, a legal or policy framework being in place to enable on the ground protection, or sufficient capacity/resources being in place to enable direct action on conservation targets to take place.

Evaluation – An assessment of a project or program in relation to its own previously stated goals and objectives. (See monitoring and compare to audit.)

Evidence – Relevant information (data, studies, syntheses, or theory) used to assess one or more assumptions (hypotheses) related to a question of interest.

Evidence Base – The body of all information (data, studies, syntheses, and theory) used to assess a particular set of assumptions.

Evidence-Based Conservation – The explicit use and generation of relevant information in all steps of conservation practice. Specifically, practitioners make decisions and take actions informed by systematic analyses of both their own and the world's previous experiences. Practitioners also document their results and contribute their findings back to the evidence base. The *Conservation Standards* explicitly bring *evidence-based* conservation principles in to conservation practice.

Goal – A formal statement detailing a project's desired, such as the desired future status of a target. A good goal meets the criteria of being *specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented,* and *time-limited* (SMART).

Human Well-being Target - In the context of a conservation project, human well-being targets are those components of human well-being affected by the status of conservation targets. All human well-being targets at a site should collectively represent the array of human well-being needs dependent on the conservation targets.

Impact – The desired future state of a conservation target. A goal is a formal statement of the impact you are trying to achieve.

Indicator – A measurable entity related to a specific information need, such as the status of a target, change in a threat, progress toward an objective, or association between one or more variables. A good indicator meets the criteria of being: *measurable, precise, consistent,* and *sensitive*.

Indirect Threat – A factor identified in an analysis of the project situation that is a driver of direct threats. Often an entry point for conservation actions. For example, logging policies or demand for forest products. (Sometimes called a root cause or underlying cause. Compare with direct threat.)

Information Need – Something that a project team and/or other people must know about a project. These form a useful reference point for for designing an MEL plan.

Intermediate Result – A specific result that a project is working to achieve end route to accomplishing a final goal or objective ("intermediate" typically refers to atemporal dimension).

Intervention – Another word for a specific or targeted activity or set of activities

Intervention Point – Priority factors (threats, opportunities, or targets) within a situation analysis on which a team should focus on when determining how/when to act

Logical Framework (logframe) – A matrix that results from a logical framework analysis that is used to display a project's goals, objectives, and indicators in table form, showing the logic of the project.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) – The periodic collection, evaluation and application of information relative to stated project goals, objectives and other information needs. (See also adaptive management)

MEL Plan – The plan for monitoring your project. It includes information needs, indicators, and methods, timeframe, and roles and responsibilities for collecting data.

Monitoring Method – A specific technique used to collect data to measure an indicator. A good method should meet the criteria of being *accurate, reliable, cost-effective, feasible,* and *appropriate*.

Objective – A formal statement detailing a desired outcome of a project, such as reducing a critical threat. A good objective meets the criteria of being *specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented,* and *time limited* (SMART). If the project is well-conceptualized and -designed, the realization of a project's objectives should lead to the fulfilment of the project's goals and ultimately its vision. (Compare to vision and goal).

Operational Plan – A plan that includes analyses of funding required, human capacity and skills, and other non-financial resources required, risk assessment and mitigation, and estimate of project lifespan and exit strategy.

Opportunity – A factor identified in a situation analysis that potentially has a positive effect on one or more targets, either directly or indirectly. Often an entry point for conservation actions – for example, demand for sustainably harvested timber. (In some senses, the opposite of a threat.)

Outcome – The desired future state of a threat or opportunity factor. An objective is a formal statement of the desired outcome.

Practitioners – All people involved in designing, managing, and monitoring conservation projects and programs.

Pressure – Another term for direct threat.

Primary Interests – What stakeholders ultimately care about or value. Depending on the type of stakeholder, these could be conservation targets or contributing factors (indirect threats and opportunities) in a situation model.

Programme – A group of projects which together aim to achieve a common broad vision. In the interest of simplicity, this document uses the term "project" to represent both projects and programmes since the guidance included in this toolkit applies equally well to both.

Project – A set of actions undertaken by a defined group of practitioners – including managers, researchers, community members, or other stakeholders – to achieve defined goals and objectives. The basic unit of conservation work. (Compare with programme.)

Project Area – The place where the biodiversity of interest to the project is located. It can include one or more conservation areas or areas of biodiversity significance, as identified through ecoregional assessments.

Note that in some cases, project actions may take place outside of the defined project area.

Project Team – A specific core group of practitioners who are responsible for designing, implementing, and monitoring a project. This group can include managers, researchers, operations staff, and other key implementers or stakeholders.

Result – The desired future state of a target or factor. Results include impacts, which are linked to targets and outcomes, which are linked to threats and opportunities.

Results Chain – Another term for a visual diagram of a project's theory of change. A results chain includes core assumptions and the logical sequence linking project interventions to one or more targets.

Risk – A condition under which the project is expected to function but which can cause problems for the project. Often, a condition over which the project has no direct control.

Root Cause – Another term for factor.

Scope – The broad geographic or thematic focus of a project.

Situation Analysis – A process that will help you and your project team create a common understanding of your project's context – including describing the relationships among the biological environment and the social, economic, political, and institutional systems and associated stakeholders that affect the conservation targets you want to conserve. Depending upon the scale of the project and the resources available to it, a situation analysis can be an in-depth formal review of existing evidence and study of the area/problem or a less formal description based on input of those familiar with the area/problem.

Situation Model – Another term for a visual diagram of a situation analysis. A situation model (diagram) represents relationships between key factors identified in a situation analysis believed to impact or lead to one or more conservation targets.

Stakeholder – Any individual, group, or institution that has a vested interest in or can influence the natural resources of the project area and/or that potentially will be affected by project activities and has something to gain or lose if conditions change or stay the same. Stakeholders are all those who need to be considered in achieving project goals and whose participation and support are crucial to its success.

Strategic Plan – The overall plan for a project. A complete strategic plan includes descriptions of a project's scope, vision, and targets; an analysis of project situation, an action plan, a monitoring plan, and an operational plan.

Stress – An impaired aspect of a conservation target that results directly or indirectly from human activities. For example, low population size, reduced river flows, increased sedimentation, and lowered ground water table level.

Audience – A specific group of individuals a project is seeking to influence or inform. A key audience may be those causing or contributing to direct threats (e.g., illegal fishers, commercial farmers, policymakers) and/or they may be those supporting or contributing to a project (e.g., partners, donors, public).

Task – A specific action in a work plan required to implement activities, a monitoring plan, or other components of a strategic plan.

Theory of Change – A theory of change is a planning tool that helps to show how the project's actions/activities will bring about the project's long term goals, the intermediate steps in between (short – medium term outcomes) and any important assumptions that may affect the project's ability to achieve these changes. A theory of change can be expressed as text, as a flow diagram, or other forms.

Threat – A human activity that directly or indirectly degrades one or more targets. Typically tied to one or more stakeholders. (See also direct threat and indirect threat.)

Vision – A description of the desired state or ultimate condition that a project is working to achieve. A complete vision can include a description of the biodiversity of the site and/ or a map of the project area, as well as a summary vision statement.

Work plan – A short-term schedule for implementing an action or monitoring plan. Work plans typically list activities and/or tasks required, responsible individuals, and timing of the activity or task. They often link to budgets showing the money and resources required to implement the work plan.

Appendix B: **Resources**

A list of the primary reference materials used in the development of this toolkit and other useful resources

Open/Conservation Standards Resources

- Conservation Standards (formerly Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation)
- Operationalising the Open Standards
- Open Standards and Collective Impact
- Miradi Software

BirdLife Resources

- PRISM Toolkit
- BirdLife Strategic Operational Planning Guide (located on Hatch)
- Institutional Fundraising for Conservation Projects
- Organisational Development Resources (see Hatch for more information)

Other Resources

- WildTeam Strategy Development for WildLife Conservation
- WildTeam Project Management for WildLife Conservation V4

Together we are BirdLife International

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