



## HOW-TO GUIDE:

# SITUATION MODELS

A **situation model** is a visual representation of a project’s context (“how we think the world currently works”). It is a diagram that maps out the observed and presumed causal relationships that are believed to influence one or more of the project’s **targets** using a series of boxes and arrows.

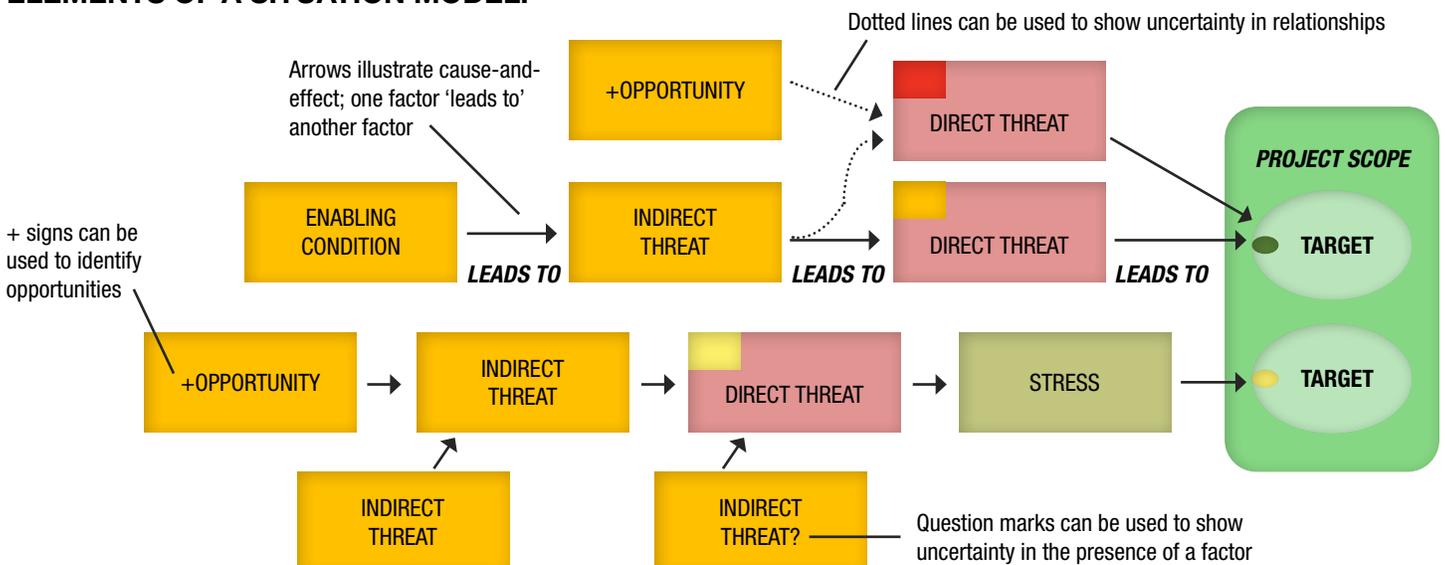
Situation models provide a foundation for good strategic planning. By documenting the **direct threats** that are affecting **targets** and the factors influencing **direct threats**, project teams are well-positioned to identify key points of intervention (“where to act”) and develop well-informed strategies.

A situation model is developed as part of Step 1: Assess.

## CONSERVATION STANDARDS PROCESS WHEEL:



## ELEMENTS OF A SITUATION MODEL:



The inset ovals on the project **targets** express the viability status – or health – of the **targets** (Very Good | Good | Fair | Poor). Similarly, the inset boxes on the **direct threats** convey the threat rating (Very High | High | Medium | Low).



## BUILDING A SITUATION MODEL:

Situation models are built from right to left.

1. Define **project scope**.
2. Identify and rate **targets**.
3. Define and rate **direct threats**.
4. If necessary, add **stresses**.
5. Add **indirect threats, opportunities** and **enabling conditions**. For each threat, consider what is causing the threat, who is involved and why.
6. Add arrows to illustrate the relationship between factors.
7. Discuss and document discussions and evidence.
8. Use and revise **situation model**.

### KEY TERMS:

**Project scope:** the broad geographic or thematic focus of a project.

**Target:** within the **project scope**, the ecosystems, species and cultural values on which the project or program is focused.

**Direct threat:** A human-induced action or event that directly degrades one or more **targets** (see [CMP-IUCN standardized classification](#)).

**Stress:** An impaired aspect of a **target** that results directly or indirectly from human actions.

**Indirect threat:** A driver of **direct threats**.

**+Opportunity:** A factor that potentially has a positive effect on one or more **targets**, either directly or indirectly.

**Enabling condition:** a broad or high-level context that allows a threat to occur.

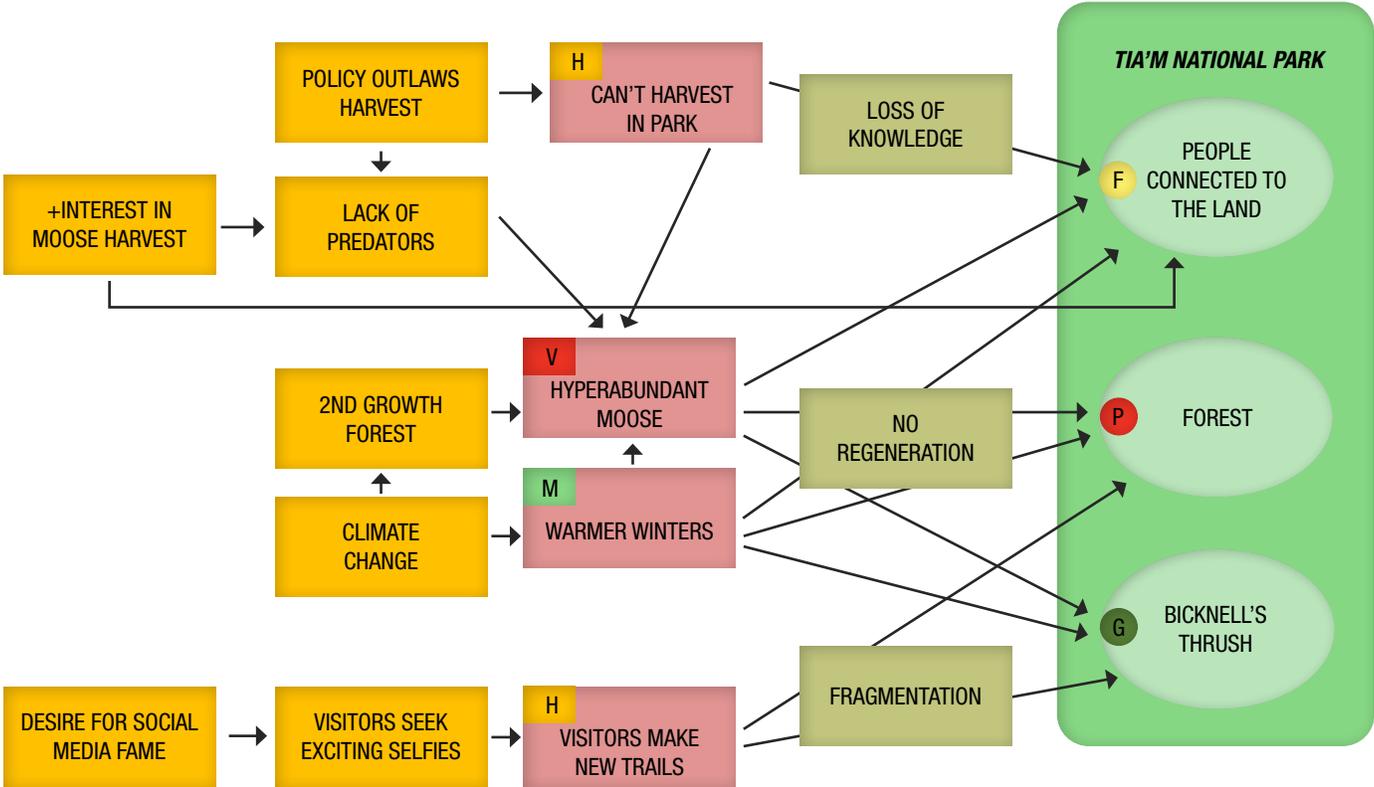
**Contributing factor:** a generic term for **indirect threats, opportunities** and **enabling conditions**.

# ★ BENEFITS OF A SITUATION MODEL:

A situation model helps to:

1. Evaluate the factors that are driving problems.
2. Identify key interest groups and partners.
3. Identify knowledge gaps.
4. Articulate a team's understanding of the project context and to document that understanding and evidence.
5. Highlight points of intervention ("where to act").
6. Develop well-informed strategies.

## EXAMPLE SITUATION MODEL:



For additional examples, see 'shared projects' on [Miradi Share](#).



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