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HOW-TO GUIDE 1: SUMMARY

Developing Situation Models in USAID Biodiversity Programming

Biodiversity How-To Guide 1 describes what a situation model is and how to build one. A situation model is a graphic representation of a context or problem analysis. It is a diagram that uses a series of boxes and arrows to succinctly represent a set of observed or presumed causal relationships among factors that impact one or more biodiversity focal interests. Situation models are useful tools for biodiversity program design teams, as they provide a way to work together to build and agree upon a model that represents a common understanding of what they want to conserve (biodiversity focal interests) and the various factors influencing those biodiversity focal interests, both negatively and positively. This common understanding provides the foundation for good strategic planning.

BUILDING A SITUATION MODEL

Step 0: Assemble team
Step 1: Define biodiversity program scope
Step 2: Define biodiversity focal interests
Step 3: Identify ecosystem services and human well-being interests
Step 4: Define and rate direct threats
Step 5: Define and add drivers (constraints and opportunities)
Step 6: Discuss, complete, and document model
Step 7: Use and revise the situation model

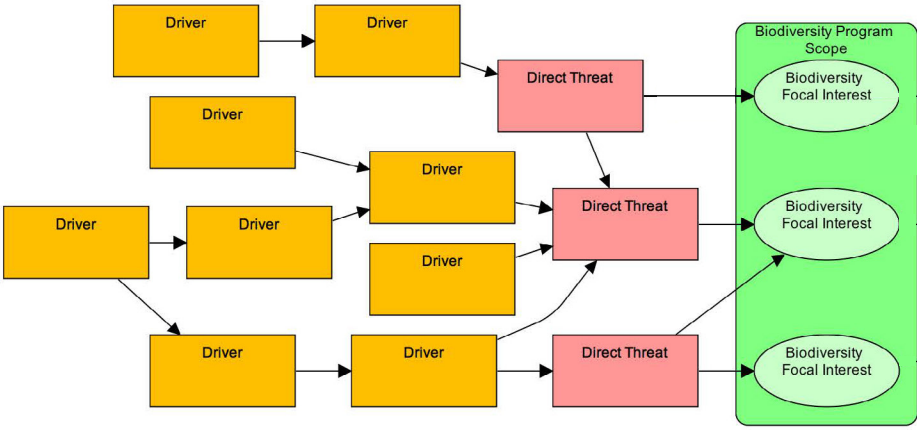
KEY TERMS

Situation Model: A diagram or graphic representation of the context or problem analysis that portrays:

- The program's biodiversity focal interests
- The major forces that are influencing the biodiversity focal interests
- The causal relationships among those forces

Context or Problem Analysis: A process that helps design teams create a common understanding of the program's context and the factors that affect the program's biodiversity focal interests.

CORE COMPONENTS



Biodiversity Program Scope: Definition of the broad parameters or rough boundaries (geographic or thematic) for where or on what a program will focus.

Biodiversity Focal Interest: An element of biodiversity (species, habitat, and/or ecosystem), within the defined scope, on which a program has chosen to focus.

Direct Threat: A human action or unsustainable use that immediately degrades one or more biodiversity focal interests.

Driver: A constraint, opportunity, or other important variable that positively or negatively influences direct threats.

- **Constraint Driver:** A factor that contributes to direct threats and is often an entry point for conservation actions. Also called a "root cause" or "indirect threat."
- **Opportunity Driver:** A factor that potentially has a positive effect on biodiversity interests, directly or indirectly; often an entry point for conservation.

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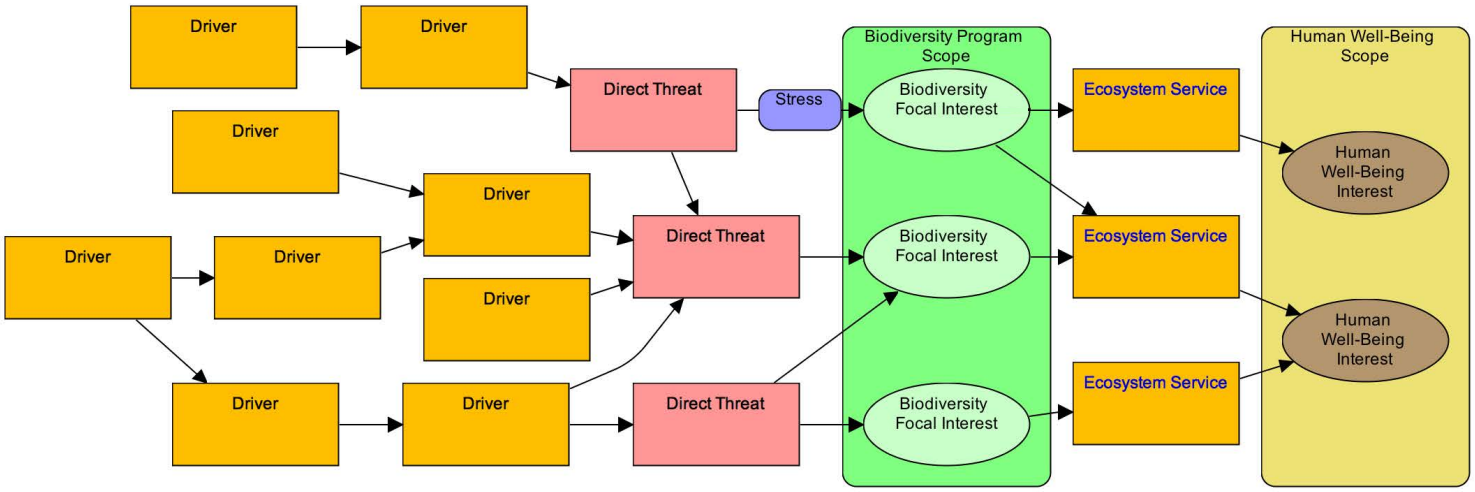
COMPLEMENTARY SITUATION MODEL COMPONENTS



Stress: An altered key ecological attribute of biodiversity focal interest. In many cases, a stress is the biophysical way in which a direct threat impacts a biodiversity focal interest.
Ecosystem Service: Service that functioning ecosystems, species, and habitats provide and that can benefit people.
Human Well-Being Interest: In the context of biodiversity conservation, those components of human well-being affected by the status of biodiversity focal interests.

DESIGN TIPS

1. Design team members should proactively identify and develop a plan to fill information gaps
2. Ensure the scope is informed by the Biodiversity Policy and uses CDCS Results Framework language
3. Ensure biodiversity focal interests are clear and discrete
4. Focus on priority threats
5. Avoid mixing proposed solutions into this model
6. Complement the situation model with narrative explanations
7. Document discussion highlights and decisions
8. Keep it simple: Retain a manageable balance of relevant factors and key causal relationships

USES

- To organize and document the thinking of the design team
- To identify additional assessments needed to complete the context or problem analysis
- As a communication tool with stakeholders
- To inform design of projects and activities
- To inform procurement of mechanisms
- To assist program adaptive management
- To develop the theories of change and strategic approaches needed to address the problem

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How-To Guide 1: Developing Situation Models in USAID Biodiversity Programming
How-To Guide 2: Using Results Chains to Depict Theories of Change in USAID Biodiversity Programming
How-To Guide 3: Defining Outcomes and Indicators for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning in USAID Biodiversity Programming
USAID Biodiversity Policy (2014)
USAID ADS Chapter 201: Program Cycle Operational Policy (2016)
USAID Biodiversity Handbook (2015)
Conservation Measures Partnership: www.conservationmeasures.org
Miradi: www.miradi.org

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