Stage 2: Understanding the situation and identifying opportunities

Stage 2 (Steps 2-4) describes a **stakeholder-inclusive assessment process** to 1) understand the situation and the issues related to ecosystem services, 2) identify the opportunities for improving the situation towards more sustainable behaviours, and 3) select suitable policy and financing instruments.

Stage 2 can also be used as a **scoping exercise** for understanding the extent to which policy and financing instruments might be useful in a particular setting. If the opportunities seem worth pursuing, the results of the scoping could be the basis for a funding proposal to conduct a more integrative process and to develop an instrument.

Step 2: Scoping the context and stakeholders

Once the team is ready to begin the work, a solid understanding of the context is required. This step involves characterising the stakeholders, the socioeconomic and biophysical situation, current threats to ecosystems, and issues to be addressed. Its expected outputs are:

- *A stakeholder analysis and a stakeholder engagement strategy*
- *Initial contact with stakeholders*
- *A comprehensive understanding of the local context.*

Task 2 A. Stakeholder analysis and stakeholder engagement strategy

What this task is about

Once you are organised, one of the first tasks is to identify who the key stakeholders are in relation to the issue or challenge being addressed. You will then need to contact them and plan how to engage them in subsequent steps of the process. Relevant stakeholders typically include individuals, groups and organisations within the territory who make decisions about it or influence its status, and/or who are impacted by (or indeed impact upon) the challenge or issue being addressed. Examples are:

- Conservation authorities (e.g. national park department, watershed management)
- Local government authorities (e.g. at district level) and local or regional representatives of national authorities (e.g. the environment ministry).
- Representatives of villages or communities, including indigenous groups
- Representatives of important economic sectors with an interest in or an influence on the territory (agriculture, tourism, industry, etc.)
- Locally active NGOs or conservation groups
- Local universities or research centres
- Other important interest groups with a relation to the territory or issues at stake

It is crucial to understand the stakeholders' **current attitude to conservation**, so it will be necessary to consider their interests, issues and concerns, including local culture. It is also useful to understand relationships between the different stakeholders. **Understanding conflicts** is particularly important. Reducing conflicts can be an objective in itself, but existing conflicts need to be taken into account during the engagement process. For instance, be careful if you invite conflicting parties to a joint workshop, since it may hinder constructive discussion and progress. On the other hand, you should also be aware of **existing cooperation and collaboration**, where people are already organised or working together. Such collaboration can be crucial to a successful process and to the design and implementation of policy and financing instruments.

Be aware of - and avoid – conflicts!

Pre-existing conflicts play a subtle but important role in Thailand that is difficult for outsiders to comprehend. For instance, there is a traditional political divide between 'red shirt' and 'yellow shirt' parties. If an important supporter of the project is known to be on one side, stakeholders on the other may keep their distance. ECO-BEST's strategy was to focus all debates strictly on improving the common good and on specific ecological issues, and to avoid any political debate.

A stakeholder-inclusive process has many merits, but you need to take into account the local situation, conflictive relationships and also limits to resources, etc. Therefore, it is crucial to consider whether to involve a particular stakeholder or not – and if so, why and when.

How to go about Task 2 A

With your team, particularly its members with local knowledge, first make a list of all relevant stakeholders. The Stakeholder Mapping Table in Template 2A proposes one way of summarising and documenting the most important aspects of the **stakeholder analysis**. Feel free to add columns to the table if you can think of important additional aspects. You may also prefer another form of visualization.

There are a many tools for summarizing and visualising stakeholder information!

It can be time-consuming to complete the identification of stakeholders and their engagement. You may not be able to identify all of them at once but only through an iterative process, where you keep redefining those who are important. Your mapping table can be continuously updated.

Template 2A: Stakeholder Mapping Table (Examples from Bu Phram, Thailand)

Stakeholder name/group	Attitude to the relevant conservation goals	Conflicts with other stakeholders [with whom, in what sense?]	Collaboration with other stakeholders [with whom, in what sense?]	Current status of engagement and person(s) to contact
Thap Lan National Park management	By mandate interested in stopping encroachment and improving eco- logical corridor	Conflicts with illegal construction, illegal hunting, rose-wood cutting, and park encroachers.	With agricultural district officer, wildlife conservation NGOs (e.g. Freeland), and National World Heritage Committee.	Strongly engaged Mr. V. (NP Superintendent)
Thap Lan National Park Advisory Committee (PAC)	Collaboration with park administration, interest in conflict resolution, members from key interest groups	Individual PAC members have conflict s with villages (e.g. Mr M – see below)	Highway expansion is in favoured by most PAC members, as it expects to help reduce road accidents and traffic jams in the holiday season.	Engaged by invitation of NP management. Mr. M. (PAC chairperson)
Political leaders of Sub-district Administration Organization (SAO) (10 villages)	Tension around land use within official park boundaries.	Concerns due to unclear land tenure; limitation from park authority in constructing of infrastructures (e.g. solid waste landfill, paved road, etc.)	Collaboration with Royal Irrigation Office (to provide investment fund for dredging the Thap Lan reservoir) and with provincial development authority (budget to install restrooms and other facilities).	Partly engaged – still 'wait and see' attitude but willing to collaborate Mr T. (Head of SAO Charter)
Mr M. (owner of shopping, hotel, and cattle farm complex, just opposite the NP headquarters)	General interest in conservation (PAC chairman), but uses land intensively and unsustainably. His estate has secure tenure (no official overlap with NP land); would benefit from tourism activity and conflict resolution.	Imported cows and horses in the farm increase risk in vector disease transmission to native wildlife population. Conflict potential with local farmers and villagers on water quantity and quality due to the untreated wastewater from the farm.	Good collaboration with Thap Lan NP as PAC chair- person. Provides jobs opportunities for villagers. Land prices increased after his investment – this was first seen as a positive effect, but it incentivises farmers and land occupiers to illegally sell their usage rights.	Contact with Lan leave collectors. Need more direct visits to the producers Mr S and Mrs M. (producers that have been awarded OTOP support).
Lan Handicraft Enterprises	Interest in restoration of Lan palm to use leaves as raw materials for handicraft product (domestic and international clients asked for traceable system to document sustainable harvesting.	Harvesting the Lan Leaves inside Tap Lan and Khao Yai NPs was legally prohibited. In practice in more than 20 years (but no written form), only registered villagers were given a permission to cut and sell the Lan leaves for in-village handicrafts.	Product development supported by expanding to domestic and international fairs (by Department of Export Promotion and Department of Industrial Pro- motion); some producers receive support from OTOP entrepreneur scheme.	Contact with Lan leave collectors. Need more direct visits to the producers. Mr S and Mrs M. (producers that have been awarded OTOP support).

Template 2A: Stakeholder Mapping Table (Examples from Bu Phram, Thailand)

Stakeholder name/group	Attitude to the relevant conservation goals	Conflicts with other stakeholders [with whom, in what sense?]	Collaboration with other stakeholders [with whom, in what sense?]	Current status of engagement and person(s) to contact
Thap Lan Buddhism Temple at Village 1	Species protection is generally in line with Buddhism. In 2013-14, the temple helped save deer in Village No. 1. Premises of the temple located at key site next to the elevated part of Highway 304.	None – promising as a neutral supporting body.	Very good relationships with villagers; supported by community.	Direct visit to the Monks and official invitation from TL-NP. Not yet engaged. Need to identify.

As described above, consider carefully how to **contact and engage** the stakeholders appropriately. It may not be a good idea simply to invite them all to the first workshop and expect high attendance and general interest. Rather, stakeholders should be targeted individually, using existing local networks and taking account of local customs. For local decision makers and opinion leaders in particular (e.g. village heads) it might make sense to introduce the study and generate their interest and support before such a workshop. Personal meetings or small group meetings could be used to distribute concise information in the local language. This could help stakeholders to understand the study, which they could then disseminate to their local networks. You could also present the information during workshops organised by others. Reflection and discussion within the team will help to find the best approach.

A role-play simulation of a stakeholder discussion can be instructive!

When you plan a stakeholder workshop, it can be an instructive exercise to simulate stakeholder discussions in a role-play fashion within your team. Allocate the roles of key stakeholders and the role of facilitator or moderator, and do a trial with the questions or exercises you have in mind. A lot can be learned from this simulation. How would different stakeholders react? What are the challenges to communicate concepts or issues? Could conflicts arise and how can they be avoided or dealt with? Would facilitation by a "neutral" outsider or a professional facilitator be an advantage?

Task 2 B. Scoping the environmental situation

What this task is about

A solid understanding of the local context is crucial for making appropriate analyses and choices. The broad goal of environmental scoping is to describe the current status of the natural environment in the study site, to provide a general background to where the work is taking place. Scoping also serves to investigate or flag particular topics, conditions or concerns which relate specifically to the objectives and issues being addressed. You need to give careful thought to align the focus and boundaries of the environmental scoping with the specific management issues. While it is useful to paint a broad picture in order to set the scene, scoping exercises sometimes try to cover too much detail. To include every aspect of the land, resources, biodiversity and biophysical conditions is rarely necessary or useful. Of primary interest are the environmental endowments and conditions which affect peoples' livelihoods and economic opportunities, and which are affected by them. In addition, already existing plans, measures and policies for conservation should be understood.

Use the momentum of existing policies and windows of opportunity!

In Bu Phram (Thailand), the goal was to improve the ecological conditions of a corridor between two national parks, in order to maintain the UNESCO WHS status of 'outstanding universal value'. National plans and high-level political support for improving the wildlife corridor helped to generate momentum for the ECO-BEST project.

How to go about Task 2 B

It is sensible for the team to compile a checklist of exactly what information to collect in the environmental scoping, and decide who will gather it and how. The checklist in Template 2 B/C raises questions to address. Environmental or biophysical experts on the team will be mainly responsible for undertaking the environmental scoping, but they should seek input from other members. There are various ways to collect data. Where time, money and staff capacity are limited, it may be done as a desk review or based only on secondary sources (for example through literature review, compilation of existing GIS data and/or expert consultation). In most cases, however, it should also be possible to conduct a brief field study. Unless the area is very large, or the issues being addressed are highly complex, two to three days would usually be sufficient for this. As well as observation, rapid surveys and mapping, collation of statistics and other methods of data collection, dialogue should be initiated with key stakeholders and experts on site. Face-to-face meetings not only provide data on the topics listed above but are an effective way to inform stakeholders about the scoping exercise, and to encourage their buy-in to the process and their input.

It is also important to coordinate the environmental scoping closely with the socio-economic scoping described below in Task 2C. Ideally, perform them simultaneously.

Template 2B&2C: Checklist for important local information

Environmental context	
Environmental conditions	
What are the general environmental conditions of the area of interest? • Land use, land cover and habitat types • Other natural features (hydrological, geological, etc.) • Habitats and species with special conservation significance • Current and historical trends in land use/cover • Current and historical trends in land, air and water quality • Location of environmental hotspots, sensitive or threatened areas.	
Pressures on and threats to ecosystem conservation	
What are the main pressures on and threats to ecosystem conservation? • What are their causes (e.g. impacts of particular economic activities)? • To what extents are the causalities (scientifically) verified (e.g. contamination through pesticides)?	
Existing conservation activities	
What conservation activities are already in place? • What are the main objectives and measures of already existing conservation plans? • Are the objectives appropriate and are the measures being implemented? If not, what are the barriers?	

Template 2B&2C: Checklist for important local information

Political, institutional and policy context	
Political institutions	
• What influential political institutions are there and who leads them (formally and informally)? • Who is in charge at local level, in particular of environmental management? • Which organisational structures govern environmental protection and ecosystem conservation?	
Policy instruments	
• Are there important national or international policies that influence local development and conservation objectives? • What is the local system of land tenure, ownership - both formal and de facto? (property rights, resource use rights) • Which policy instruments for ecosystem conservation exist already? Legal instruments (conservation laws, protected areas, land use restriction, etc.) Economic instruments (payments, tax reductions, etc.)	

Template 2B&2C: Checklist for important local information

Political, institutional and policy context	
Development and conservation	
• Which local, regional or sectoral development plans and policies are relevant for conservation? (e.g. policies for regional economic, agricultural or infrastructure development, "perverse" subsidies with negative effects on biodiversity conservation) • What local political support is there for biodiversity conservation? • Which international, national and local actors are involved in conservation? • Are there currently any conflicts over policies or laws?+	
Windows of Opportunity	
• Are there currently any "windows of opportunity" to improve environmental policies? (e.g., formulation of a sustainable development plan, ongoing policy reform, public debate)	

Template 2B&2C: Checklist for important local information

Socio-economic and cultural context	
Socio-economic potential	
• Current level of development and infrastructure and development potential in the area • Current land use (including potential environmental impacts) • Sources of income and employment (economic sectors, main activities) • Important public and private investments • Distribution of wealth and income across the population (including the poverty line)	
Cultural characteristics	
• Cultural characteristics of the local population (demography, language, class structure, ethnicity, religion, relevant traditions) • Education (literacy level, school system) • Status of community involvement - Is it participatory? Are women, minorities, poor people, et al. represented? Are there networks to assist communication and stakeholder coordination?	
Perception and knowledge	
• How do people perceive their environment and what is their attitude towards conservation measures? Which conservation measures are contested and by whom? • Is there important traditional knowledge of natural resource use? Who has the rights of access to traditional knowledge and its application?	

Task 2 C. Understanding institutions, laws, policies, economic and social conditions

What this task is about

It is important to gather information on the social, economic, political, legal and cultural conditions of the area early on – but don't spend too much time collecting all possible data and making over-complex analyses. The key challenge is to filter and target the information in response to specific needs. Much of the information will be readily available, for instance from previous projects or initiatives in the area.

It is important to understand that policies made at national and provincial level affect conservation and livelihood outcomes at local level. Your project or initiative may impact on these policies but in most cases you cannot count on changing them. Higher level policies are an important part of the regulatory framework within which you have to operate.

It is also very important to consider competition with current or future income-generating interventions that require local people's attention, time and effort.

Understand complementary and competing programmes!

In Pang-Mao (Thailand), a government rural development programme had allocated several million Baht for both research and development of agriculture activities that directly benefit farming families. For farmers, income from ecosystem services opportunities would very likely be a minor additional benefit within a heavily subsidised policy on agriculture extension and conventional environment activities.

How to go about Task 2 C

The process here is similar to Task 2B, and information for both steps can be gathered in parallel. The two last parts of Template 2 B/C present checklists with questions to be addressed for compiling and structuring an important local information sheet. Of course, this database is flexible and can be updated when new or more specific information arises: for instance, during stakeholder workshops or expert consultations. Note that the sub-questions and bullet points in the different sections are meant to provide guidance, but not all need to be answered separately. If it seems useful to contract external consultants to analyse the local context, then the checklist can serve as guidance in formulating terms of reference (ToRs).

A document with the context information can also serve to inform others!

The document on local information can also be useful in sharing relevant information with others, such as new team members or experts, and is a quick and efficient way of helping them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context.

Selected references and further guidance for Step 2

Guidance on stakeholder analysis, integration, and communication

The Community Tool Box (2014) provides comprehensive information for identifying and analysing stakeholders and their interests (Task 2A).

URL:
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/encouraging-involvement/identify-stakeholders/main

The Frogleaps (2013) tool "Understanding your target audiences" can help better understand stakeholders' behaviour, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes (Task 2A).

URL: http://www.frogleaps.org/tools/Tool_Understanding_target_audiences.pdf

Chapter 2 of the 'Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development' (UNDP, 2009) helps to plan effective and active stakeholder engagement and provides useful methods (Task 2A).

URL: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/ch2-2.html

The guideline 'Stakeholder collaboration – Building bridges for conservation' by WWF (2000) explains the principles of stakeholder collaboration for conservation, introduces a range of tools, and reports on case studies (Task 2A).

URL: www.panda.org/downloads/ecoregions/collaboration.pdf

The handbook on 'Participatory Rural Appraisal for Community Forest Management. Tools and Techniques' by the Asia Forest Network (2002) offers an overview of methods and tools to engage stakeholders and develop a joint understanding of the relevant issues around natural resources use (Task 2B & 2C)

URL: http://www.iapad.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/pub20.pdf