

# Issues in Natural Resource Management

*Issue 2 - April 2004*

## ***Situation Analysis - Experiences and lessons learned in the ICD Programme***

### ***The Role of a Situation Analysis in Conservation***

by Kirsten Schuyt

#### The Importance of Socioeconomics in Conservation

Conservation is not solely in the realm of natural scientists - social scientists, development experts, civil society groups and others are playing increasingly important roles in conservation activities. More and more, understanding the socioeconomic situation is recognized as an essential part of conservation. The term 'socioeconomic' generally refers to social, economic and policy factors - in conservation, this often means factors other than biology and ecology. At a micro scale, it involves such issues as livelihood needs and concerns of local people as well as local level institutions. At a more macro scale, it includes issues such as poverty reduction policies, national debt and terms of trade. Many conservationists have realized that integrating social science with biology and ecology is indispensable for conservation to succeed. The next step, however, is understanding how to integrate an understanding of the socioeconomic situation with biological and ecological knowledge so that effective conservation strategies can be derived.

#### What is a Situation Analysis?

Within the DGIS-WWF Programme *Improving Conservation and Development within Ecoregions*, the term 'Situation Analysis' refers to building an understanding of social, economic and policy issues as part of conservation planning and strategy development. It involves applying a selected range of appropriate socioeconomic tools to understand conservation threats and opportunities, stakeholder interests and needs. The outcome of a Situation Analysis is a set of strategic interventions for the most effective means to implement ecoregion conservation at broad scales (ecosystem, ecoregion, landscape), to be set against biological targets and visions.

### ***Application of Situation Analysis Processes in the WWF-DGIS Project***

Under the DGIS-WWF Programme, two Situation Analysis processes have so far been carried out: one for the Greater Annamites ecoregion in Vietnam and Lao PDR (or the Greater Truong Son ecoregion) and another for the Copperbelt landscape of biological importance in the Miombo ecoregion in Southern Africa. Each of these processes will be explained in more depth in the following two sections, in which lessons learned from these two processes will be a key focus. A third Situation Analysis process is currently being planned for the Kasungu landscape of biological importance in Malawi.

#### **The Greater Annamites Ecoregion in Vietnam and Lao PDR**

by Mike Baltzer, Nguyen Thi Dao, James Hardcastle & Kirsten Schuyt

Building an understanding of the socioeconomic situation through a Situation Analysis was one part of a process to develop a Conservation Plan for the Greater Annamites Ecoregion. This Conservation Plan will guide the implementation of activities to achieve the 50-year Vision for the Greater Annamites.

The Greater Annamites ecoregion lies in both Vietnam and Lao PDR. For political reasons, however, it was not possible to carry out one analysis covering both countries. Therefore, although mutually informed, the Situation Analysis processes in each country were relatively separate.

The main tool applied in the Situation Analysis was the Root Causes Analysis, developed by the WWF-MPO (Macroeconomics for Sustainable Development Programme), which identifies the threats and their root causes of biodiversity loss. This was complemented by a better understanding of conservation opportunities. The general Situation Analysis process was structured as follows:

- (1) collection of existing socioeconomic information on the Annamites;
- (2) stakeholder workshop on threats and opportunities;
- (3) validation of key threats and opportunities by local researchers;
- (4) integration of the key threats and opportunities in the strategic planning process.

After a very rough literature review was carried out, approximately 60 people attended a workshop, which included participants from governments of both Vietnam and Lao PDR, as well as representatives from Vietnam research institutes, WWF and other NGOs. The objectives of the workshop were: (1) to introduce the Greater Annamites Action Plan Process to the different stakeholders; (2) to identify key issues (threats and opportunities) as input to the Situation Analysis; and (3) to familiarize researchers and participants with the Situation Analysis approach and methodologies. The workshop was organized as a relatively high-profile event. Following the workshop, local Vietnamese researchers validated the outcomes (conservation threats and opportunities) using existing literature and interviews and summarized the results in a Situation Analysis report.

The Situation Analysis process in Lao PDR was much smaller-scale than the process in Vietnam. The initial stages of the Situation Analysis process in Lao PDR was characterized by round-table brainstorm discussions between the WWF team members and local Lao PDR consultants to identify key conservation issues. The role of the WWF team lay in articulating their information needs and structuring the general Situation Analysis process, while the local consultants guided the contents of the Situation Analysis in terms of issues, information needs, and possibilities. These initial discussions therefore set a framework for analysis that was to be carried out by local consultants primarily in the capital Vientiane and if possible in the field if government permission could be secured. Following these discussions, the Lao PDR consultants carried out more in-depth research on the issues identified in these initial discussions, which were written up in reports.

The lessons from the Situation Analysis in the Annamites are presented in the first column of Figure 1 and are further explained below:

- *Need for a clear definition and understanding of socio-economic needs*  
To make sure that the Situation Analysis contains the right combination of socioeconomic tools, it is important that the specific socioeconomic needs in the countries are clearly understood and articulated. This must be based on an assessment and subsequent identification of gaps in available socioeconomic data as well as a clear definition of what the required socioeconomic information will be used for.
- *Need for a clear definition and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different team members*  
In a Situation Analysis a team will be set up, which requires good coordination. To avoid confusion and

unnecessary complexity in the Situation Analysis process, it is important that the different team members understand their relative responsibilities and that these roles are clearly delineated. Who will guide the general process? Who is responsible for coordinating the more in-depth analyses after the workshop? What is expected from the local researchers? Who will provide what type of technical support?

- *Importance of a multidisciplinary local research team*  
The local research team that carries out the more in-depth analyses must be multidisciplinary. This means the team members represent a range of expertise and work together, interpreting the information according to their specific expertise. This avoids a narrow view on one specific issue.
- *The importance of realistic timing*  
To address, analyze and understand the socioeconomic needs, a realistic time frame must be allocated to undertake the Situation Analysis. Influences such as institutional deadlines, government negotiation for approval and participation, local circumstances and so on must be realistically assessed and factored into the planning of the Situation Analysis process. This also means that the institutions behind the Situation Analysis process (including donors and WWF) must take the time required for this process into account as well.
- *Need for a clear and flexible process*  
The Situation Analysis process, in meeting the different socioeconomic information needs, can easily be perceived as a confusing and complex process. At the same time, there is no blue-print on how to best carry out a Situation Analysis as its structure is very dependent on local needs and circumstances. The challenge, therefore, is to strive for a process that is clear and understandable to those involved on the one hand, yet does not fall into the trap of becoming too rigid and inflexible for it to be adapted to local circumstances on the other.
- *Need for demand-driven socioeconomic process*  
The basis for socioeconomic support in the Situation Analysis must be the needs as identified by the field staff that best know the local situation and socioeconomic needs. What is needed is a clear statement on socioeconomic demand from the field, followed by a search for expertise to supply this to the field. This search must be met by an allocation of resources to the field.
- *Need for local long-term capacity building*  
Since the Situation Analysis can be a relatively long and complex process, the need for socioeconomic support in the field was felt to be structural as opposed to short-term.

This raises the issue of making use of local capacity as much as possible and increasing long-term capacity for socioeconomic support in the region where this is lacking or insufficient. Short-term, international expertise can be sought to support the broader planning process and to fill in the gaps.

- *Necessity to prioritize data collection and analysis*  
A Situation Analysis can result in the collection of huge amounts of data. However, vast amounts of written analysis is useless in a design process if those designing the conservation plan cannot use the information effectively. Therefore, it is important to begin the Situation Analysis process by scoping and prioritizing key issues so that further work can be focused on these priorities. One way to approach this is to draft the contents of the final conservation plan and ask questions about what information is needed to fulfil the plan.
- *Need for a clear fit into the wider conservation planning process*

The Situation Analysis is one component in WWF's ecoregion planning and strategizing process and those demanding the socioeconomic information need to clearly define how and where the analysis supports this process from the start. In addition, if technical experts and stakeholders involved in the situation analysis process are also key members of the wider planning process, there will be increased ownership and a deeper reflection of findings in the final plan and strategic goals.

- *Need for a structured process for opportunities assessment*  
Within the Situation Analysis process, the need for understanding existing conservation opportunities in addition to threats was identified. An opportunity was defined as an existing or potential favorable and advantageous combination of circumstances for conservation. However, no clear process for opportunities assessment existed and searching for existing approaches elsewhere failed. There is a need to develop a more structured process for opportunities assessment.

### Situation Analysis in the Miombo Ecoregion in Southern Africa by Davison Gumbo & Kirsten Schuyt

The Situation Analysis process in the Miombo was applied as part of a wider process of strategy building and subsequent implementation of conservation strategies in the Copperbelt in Zambia. For the past two years, the Miombo Ecoregion Programme in the WWF-Southern Africa Regional Programme Office has been developing a biodiversity conservation agenda for ten countries that make up the Miombo Ecoregion. The most significant output to date has been the delineation of twenty-six Areas of Biological Significance (ABS), priority landscapes that have become the center of conservation effort in the ecoregion. To bolster this strategy, Situation Analyses have to be carried out for each of the ABSs. To date one has been carried out in the Copperbelt landscape in Zambia and another is planned for the Kasungu landscape in Malawi.

Application of the Situation Analysis in the Copperbelt area had the advantage of building on the process that had recently been carried out in the Annamites. Therefore, lessons learned from the Annamites process were incorporated in the planning process.

To prepare for the Situation Analysis, several discussions were held between the WWF Miombo team and the WWF team of technical experts. The aim of these discussions was to come up with:

- (1) a framework for the Situation Analysis process for the Copperbelt;
- (2) identification of key people to involve in the Situation Analysis;
- (3) developing a rough time frame for the Situation Analysis process.

An important and distinct characteristic of the Situation Analysis process in the Copperbelt was that it was structured to have a 'snowball effect' on other landscapes within the Miombo. The Situation Analysis process was initiated by a workshop in the Copperbelt to which several researchers of the second landscape (Kasungu) were also invited. This allowed these researchers to (1) learn about the Situation Analysis process, and (2) learn about issues facing the Copperbelt. Based on these experiences, the researchers could then work together with the WWF Miombo team to

prepare the Situation Analysis in the Kasungu. Researchers from a third area would then be invited to participate in the Kasungu process for the same reasons. This way, capacity and ownership of the process would be built locally in the Miombo.

The general Situation Analysis process was similar to the process in the Annamites:

- (1) cataloging existing information;
- (2) workshop on threats and opportunities;
- (3) rapid assessments.

The outcomes of this process would be used as a basis to develop conservation strategies for the Copperbelt.

After a consultant was hired to catalogue existing socioeconomic information on the Copperbelt, approximately 20-30 stakeholders and experts of the Copperbelt were invited to a 2-day workshop. As part of the workshop, stakeholders and experts as well as the international WWF and WWF Miombo teams were invited to a field trip into the Copperbelt, during which they were briefly introduced to the different issues. This turned out to be very fruitful and informed their perspectives on issues during the subsequent workshop. The first day of the workshop was dedicated to brainstorming on conservation threats, built on the Root Causes framework, while the second day was used to brainstorm on existing conservation opportunities. In addition to deriving threats and

opportunities, a goal of the workshop was to engage with local level agencies and communities and to create partnerships. A multidisciplinary team of Zambian researchers from the Copperbelt, also present during both the workshop and the field trip, carried out the subsequent rapid assessments. The outcomes have been written up in reports and form the basis for conservation work in the Copperbelt area.

The lessons from the Situation Analysis in the Copperbelt are presented in the third column of Figure 1 and are further explained below:

- *Need for understanding the landscape and its stakeholders*

In addition to a thorough literature research, it is necessary to clearly understand the social and institutional situation in the geographical area, including a knowledge of other ongoing development Programmes established in the area, prior to organizing a Situation Analysis workshop. This informs the organizers of the workshop about what format for the workshop is most useful, who to invite and what some of the major issues in the area are. Also, a thorough stakeholder analysis is required before carrying out a workshop to know exactly which stakeholders to invite and to understand the stakeholder inter-relationships.

- *Need for alternatives to a workshop setting*

Following from the first bullet point, alternatives to workshops to kick off Situation Analysis processes must be sought. The process of developing key threats and opportunities, levels at which they operate and linkages among them is complex. With time constraints and large numbers of people in a workshop setting, it can be difficult to go through this process clearly and with a level of specificity sufficient to provide guidance to the rest of the process. Instead of a workshop, a small, multidisciplinary research team could undertake the Situation Analysis process. Workshops could be used for building stakeholder relations and negotiation on strategic conservation interventions.

- *Need for an annotated bibliography*

Linked to the first bullet point, it is important to have a clear picture of what type of socioeconomic information is already available. This needs to be documented in an annotated bibliography. Making a literature list is not enough - summaries of documents need to be made. This

process then needs to identify the key information gaps on which the remaining Situation Analysis process should focus and should inform the planning of the entire Situation Analysis process.

- *Need for demand-driven process*

As in the Annamites, the Situation Analysis process in the Miombo was a reaction to availability of skills within the network as opposed to a reaction to socioeconomic needs in the field. What is needed is a clearer analysis and statement on demand on the one hand, followed by a search for expertise to supply this on the other hand. This must be met by an allocation of resources to the field.

- *Need for local long-term capacity building*

As in the Annamites, the socioeconomic support during the Situation Analysis was short-term, while the need for this support in the field was felt to be more structural. This raises the issue of making use of local capacity as much as possible and increasing capacity for socio-economic support in the ecoregions where this is lacking or insufficient.

- *Necessity to make objectives of a Situation Analysis clear to stakeholders*

It is important that all stakeholders involved understand the Situation Analysis process and what will be done with the outcomes from the start. This will also avoid raising false hopes. What are WWF's intentions and role in the Situation Analysis? What will be the role of the different stakeholders in the follow-up to the Situation Analysis? What will WWF's role be? What will be done with the outcomes of the process - if proposals for funding are to be written, how will the different stakeholders be involved?

- *Need to clearly articulate conservation objectives*

A Situation Analysis builds a better understanding of the socioeconomic situation as part of a process of developing conservation strategies. Therefore, the socioeconomic conservation needs must be directly linked to conservation objectives. What is it we want to conserve? These objectives must be clearly articulated by those demanding the socioeconomic information and must guide the Situation Analysis process. One way to approach this is to draft the contents of the final conservation plan and ask questions about what socioeconomic information is needed to fulfil the plan.

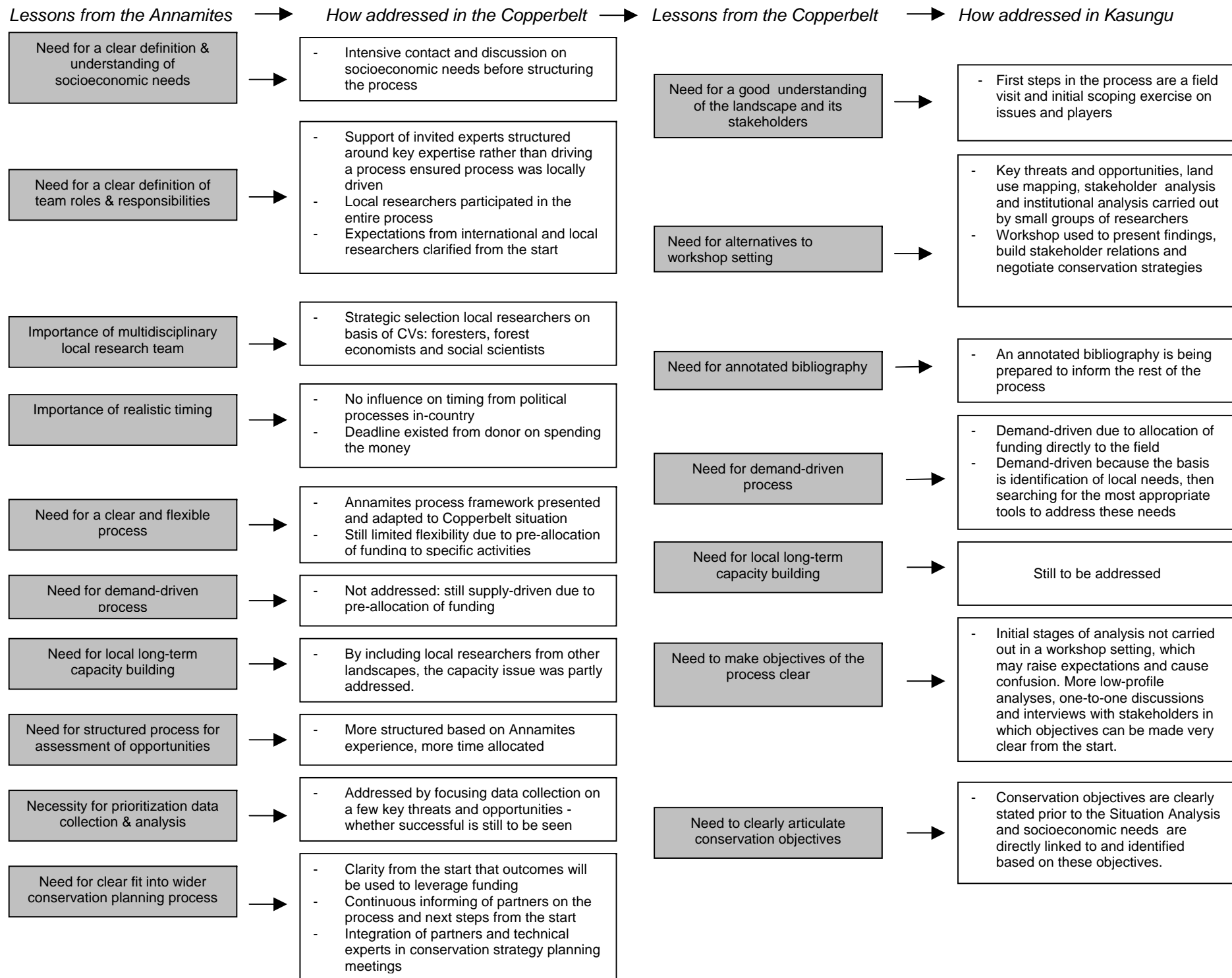


Figure 1

**Conclusion: Situation Analysis as an Iterative and Flexible Process** - by Kirsten Schuyt

Based on our experience with Situation Analysis processes within the WWF-DGIS Programme, the key to an effective Situation Analysis process is *flexibility* and *learning* in planning, structuring and application. An iterative and flexible approach across different geographical regions ensures the Situation Analysis process is continuously adapted and improved according to (1) local circumstances and realities; and (2) lessons learned and experience.

For example, within the WWF-DGIS Programme, the Situation Analysis process for the Annamites ecoregion served as a pilot and lessons learned from this process were derived and applied to construct the process in the Copperbelt landscape in combination with adjustments to meet local needs and circumstances. This meant the process in the Copperbelt was different than the process in the Annamites (see Figure 1). For example:

- *The importance of a multidisciplinary local research team:* in the Copperbelt process this lesson was addressed by strategically selecting local researchers on basis of their CVs (foresters, forest economists and social scientists);
- *Need for local long-term capacity building in the region:* this lesson was partly addressed in the Copperbelt by inviting local researchers from other landscapes to the Situation Analysis process, thereby building their understanding of the Situation Analysis process and allowing them to adapt the process for application in their landscape.

Similarly, the Situation Analysis process for the Kasungu landscape will be different than the process in the Copperbelt (see Figure 1). For example:

- *Need for alternatives to a workshop setting:* as opposed to a workshop to initiate the Situation Analysis, analyses of key threats and opportunities, stakeholders and institutions will be

carried out in the Kasungu by small groups of researchers, while a workshop is used to present the findings to key stakeholders, to build stakeholder relations and to negotiate conservation strategies;

- *Need for a demand-driven process:* this lesson is addressed in the Kasungu by allocating money to those demanding the socioeconomic information as opposed to those supplying it, and by using the identification of needs as a basis for selecting socioeconomic tools.

At the same time, some issues are more difficult to resolve. For example, *building long-term socioeconomic capacity in the field* is a key constraint we have faced in the Annamites, in the Copperbelt and are again facing in the Kasungu Situation Analysis process. Although short-term attempts are being made to deal with this issue (for example, by integrating more local researchers in the Situation Analysis process), this issue needs to be addressed over a much longer time frame and in a much broader process than just a Situation Analysis. Serious efforts must be made by all organizations involved in conservation activities to integrate local capacity building in socioeconomics in their conservation Programmes. This means reaching out beyond the institutional borders of the organization itself (such as WWF) to integrating local people in socioeconomic analyses as part of large-scale conservation planning activities.

Mike Baltzer was the Conservation Director of the WWF Indochina Programme Office in Hanoi, Vietnam and is currently the Conservation Director of the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme Office (DCPO) in Vienna, Austria  
 Davison Gumbo is the Miombo Ecoregion Leader with the WWF Southern Africa Regional Programme Office (SARPO) in Harare, Zimbabwe  
 James Hardcastle is the Truong Son Programme Manager of the WWF Indochina Programme Office in Hanoi, Vietnam  
 Nguyen Thi Dao is the Truong Son Programme Manager of the WWF Indochina Programme Office in Hanoi, Vietnam  
 Kirsten Schuyt is a Resource Economist with WWF-International in Gland, Switzerland

**Next issue: The Earth Conservation Toolbox**

*The Earth Conservation Toolbox* is a product under development by the NGO community to support nation states in fulfilling commitments within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD calls on nations to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity through a variety of interventions including appropriate design of protected area systems, effective design and management of conservation areas following ecosystem management principles, implementation of conservation actions, and monitoring and evaluation. The NGO community has committed to the *creation of a conservation toolbox for the Earth's biodiversity* – a guided, user friendly assemblage of methods and approaches for nations to prioritize and plan their biodiversity conservation investments, implement conservation action, and measure conservation progress. The Earth Conservation Toolbox will summarize available tools in an interactive and regularly updated CD / online library with guidance that will help users to locate a range of relevant methodologies and approaches to most effectively and efficiently meet goals within the CBD and conserving the Earth's biological heritage.

Published by the DGIS-ICD Programme based at WWF International  
 For further copies contact: Chantal Page, DGIS-ICD Programme, WWF International,

Avenue du Mont Blanc 27, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland, Tel: +41 22 364 90 16, Fax: +41 22 364 06 40, E-mail: [cpage@wwfint.org](mailto:cpage@wwfint.org)

Design, Layout and Production: Astrid-Tine Bjørvik / Portfolio Logo Design: Erica McShane-Caluzi



*This publication receives outside financing. Citation is encouraged. Short excerpts may be translated and/or reproduced without prior permission, on the condition that the source is indicated. For translation and/or reproduction in whole, WWF International should be notified in advance. Responsibility for the contents and for the opinions expressed rests solely with the authors; this publication does not constitute an endorsement by WWF International or the financier. The material and the geographical designations in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WWF concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*