

## Wholistic Worldview Analysis: A multi-dimensional approach to understanding and responding to Community realities:

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***Definition:** Worldview analysis is a participatory tool for understanding a community's perception of what it does to survive and continue with life processes. It is a collation of important Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) information collected in the community for carrying out a participatory needs analysis of the same for development interventions that will impact the community.*

**Specific advantages of the tool:** The tool can be used as the base information for facilitating a participatory Village level development plan. In the past field staff usually faced two major problems in using Participatory tools. These problems have been the struggle of *bringing together the findings of the exercises* and *analyzing the information* to use it as a planning tool in which the community continues to remain an active partner, and in the form of a collated and analyzed depiction of the **survival strategy** of the community. The uniqueness of the WWVA is that it fulfills both these tasks. (The **survival strategy** of a community is the combination of strategies that it employs to survive and thrive in its environment)

The Worldview analysis tool is one that brings together the information collected using PLA exercises, so that it can be analyzed to see what type of development interventions are appropriate for that community. In addition, the tool also enables

the creation of a Wholistic baseline of where the community is at. The Wholistic Worldview Analysis (WWVA) tool was first researched by the author in 1997 in India and subsequently developed and modified in Cambodia, Lao PDR and PR China. The findings from this initial study were shared



A WWVA exercise being facilitated in a community in China

through a series of workshops. Feedback was collected from the participants on the different type of 'field' needs they had for planning, and the tool was then further modified to make it more **user friendly** and **Practical**.

**How community Survival strategies develop:** When a new community aims to establish itself, it develops a survival strategy using the resources it has available to generate a sustainable livelihood for itself. These resources are: the **Natural** capital (land, water, Forests, animals etcetera), the **Social** capital (social networks, social services, etcetera) **Physical** capital (infrastructural modifications and constructions for better utilization of natural resources) the **Financial** (money and assets) and **Human** capital (simple skills, acquired skills, technical skills, Entrepreneurial skills, etcetera). Details of these can be found in the 'IDS/DFID sustainable livelihoods framework' <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/ad688e/ad688e03.htm>>. The initial survival strategy is a very simple one wherein the main dependence is only upon what the community has with itself – the 5 types of Capital mentioned above. In due course of time there is more interaction with those outside the community for them to **sell** their products, and for getting help in the form of **skills** and **services**. This soon gets integrated into the community's survival strategy as it gets more complex. Some of these linkages are empirical (tangible/visible) there are other linkages that are also made with the *supernatural world of gods, spirits and ancestors* which are equally 'real' to the community as their linkages with outsiders. All these together compose the **overall survival strategy** of the community and this is what reflects their **worldview** (how they perceive their world).

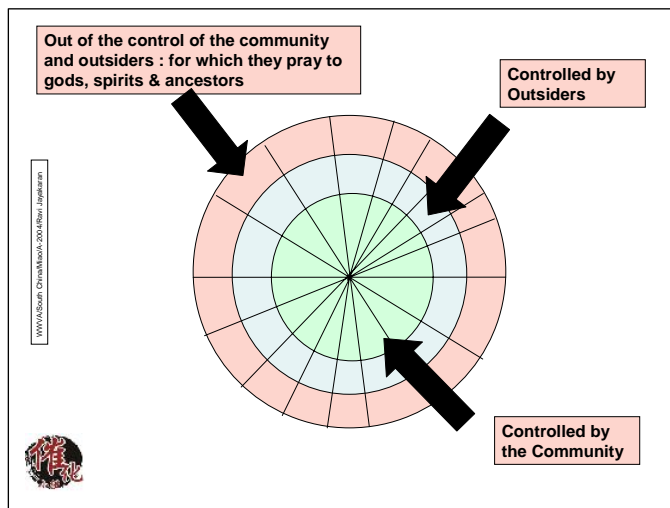
An analysis of the worldview of the community is therefore one way of understanding how the community sees itself and the view by which it perceives the rest of the world. Analyzing worldviews has never been an easy task. When the analyzed information is required for development interventions, it becomes even more complicated. *To achieve sustainable development it is necessary for interventions to be compatible with and in resonance with the community's worldview.* This is what prompted the author to develop a simplified tool for worldview analysis. Once finalized the methodology was also used in Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Kingdoms of Thailand and Cambodia. With its integration using the Ten Seed Technique (TST), it has also become possible to evolve a graphic representative diagram that measures the integration process of the various components of the survival strategy. Details of this methodology can be downloaded from the following web sites:

<<http://www.childsurvival.com/connections/start.cfm#spring2002>>

<[www.fao.org/participation/Ten-Seed%20Technique-Revised.pdf](http://www.fao.org/participation/Ten-Seed%20Technique-Revised.pdf)> (to download the TST e-book)

Through several workshops and discussion groups, this technique has been shared with NGO representatives from several counties in Asia and Eastern Europe. Judging from extensive feedback and follow up of training, the technique can now be stated to be fairly well refined for wider use in the field. It is easy to learn, and practical, and doesn't require people to be highly skilled or technical in order to facilitate it in the villages. This paper seeks to introduce the technique in a simple and straight forward way, with details of what is required to get things started. There is also a detailed description from a field exercise where it was used recently, showing photographs of the process and the close involvement of the community right through. It is hoped that field practitioners will feel inspired to find out more about the technique so that they can use it in their own areas of work.

**Getting started:** Attitude and behavior are very important, as with all Participatory techniques. Those who seek to use this technique must be prepared to listen and learn from the community, genuinely seeking to learn from their perspective, rather than imposing an external perspective. When facilitated in this non-manipulative way, the information generated will be of high quality.



**Steps involved:** *Step-1:* Carry out some initial PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) exercises in the community for a general understanding of the community. This includes the *Livelihood Analysis* and the *Problem analysis and Uncertainty analysis* (uncertainties that the community faces) exercises. *Step-2:* As with PLA exercises, the information collected from the

various exercises is shared with the community to get their feedback and for 'Triangulation' of any errors. The information from other exercises will help authenticate the validity of the three exercises mentioned above. *Step-3:* This information is now added to the WWVA diagram. The way to do this is as follows. First prepare the outline of the diagram by making three concentric circles as shown below on a large sheet of paper: The innermost circle represents the areas in which the community exerts its influence and has control over. The next outer circle is the one that shows the area which outsiders associated with the community exert influence over and control. Finally, the outermost circle represents the area which is

outside of the control of the community as well as that of outsiders. *Step-4:* These concentric circles are now divided into segments (like spokes) as shown in the



diagram. The total number of segments is determined by the total number of issues covered under the **Livelihood Analysis, Problem Analysis and the Uncertainties Analysis**. *Step5:* Once this format is ready, the community is explained the rest of the process. They are to use the Ten Seed Technique (TST), placing the 10 seeds for each aspect of segments representing in turn the various aspects of the sources of livelihood, the Problems faced by the

community and the uncertainties they encounter as a group. For example, concerning the Corn production that is part of the Livelihood of the village, we ask the community to consider the 10 seeds to the factors that determine the successful cultivation of corn. We then ask them to distribute the seeds in the segment allotted to corn production, showing what part is within the control of the community, for what part they are dependant on outsiders, and what part is totally out of everyone's control. In the example shown here, from an actual situation in South China, we see that they placed 5 seeds in the inner most circle, 2 seeds in the next outer circle and finally 3 seeds in the outermost circle. *Step6:* After

the community understands how to do this, the facilitator can step aside and watch the intensive discussion and interaction as the ratios are discussed, debated, re-assigned and finalized! While facilitating workshops on the use of the exercise, the author has sometimes encountered doubts among the external participants on whether the community will understand what 'appears' to be a complicated technique. However, at every location whether in Laos PDR, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Philippines, China or Thailand; irrespective of how remote the village was, the community's excitement was unprecedented! They understood immediately after the first example, and got so excited about proceeding from one segment to the next that it was sometimes very difficult to get back into the circle and close to the sheet of paper to watch them make the seed placements. This is because the technique enables them to discuss about a topic that is extremely relevant to their world and



intimately connected with their overall survival strategy. It is good to allow at least 2 hours for this exercise, because there is sometimes a lot of discussion and debate, and one must make provision for this. *Step 7:* The person facilitating the process has to be available to 'seek triangulation' (seeking other perspectives) to ensure that just the perspective of a small group doesn't get passed off for being the perspective of the larger group. All this requires is to be observant and see if there is a display of body language (or even murmuring) when the rest don't agree. This too needs to be done only at the beginning of the exercise, and the group has to be reminded that what is being sought is a portrayal of the situation as it relates to the **whole community in the present circumstances**, not merely a small group of individuals. *Step 8:* It is important to remember during the interaction that participants display different types of reactions. Some people respond more for specific issues, while others become observers. On other issues, these same people may become active in the discussion. However, an important thing to remember is that silence doesn't mean non-involvement. The safeguard that one has to have is to ensure that no particular individual or group of individuals dominates or overrules the inputs from others. Each person finds his or her own way of ensuring that their inputs figure in the emergence of the WWVA diagram. By the time the final diagram emerges, the environment is one full of noisy discussions and laughter, reflecting satisfaction and compliance with the community's perspective. An interesting observation at several locations, especially when the paper is kept on the ground, is that at times the participants get so involved in the placement of the seeds, that they actually get on the paper! (A fact Bourne out by the number of foot prints on the final output!). *Step 9:* When the last segment is completed, there is usually an increase in the volume of discussion, which is followed by silence as the group waits expectantly to see what will happen next. This is the stage for analysis of the survival strategy. The seeds in the outermost circle show the **Vulnerabilities** of the community, while the innermost circle shows the **Capacities** of the community. The segments in which these appear show which particular issue these Capacities and Vulnerabilities are related to. *Step 10 (the analysis):* The next step is then to proceed with 'interviewing' the diagram and seeking clarifications from the community on seed allocation to a particular location that may not be clearly evident. After spending some time on this, one marks out the greatest Vulnerabilities (outermost circle) and greatest Capacities (innermost circle). An important point to remember is that at **this stage** the seeds in the middle circle are not considered, as it is assumed that the outsiders who are associated with the community are involved in a constructive association. However after there is progress with the development of the community, this 'external' dependence must also be considered to be a 'Vulnerability' that needs to be

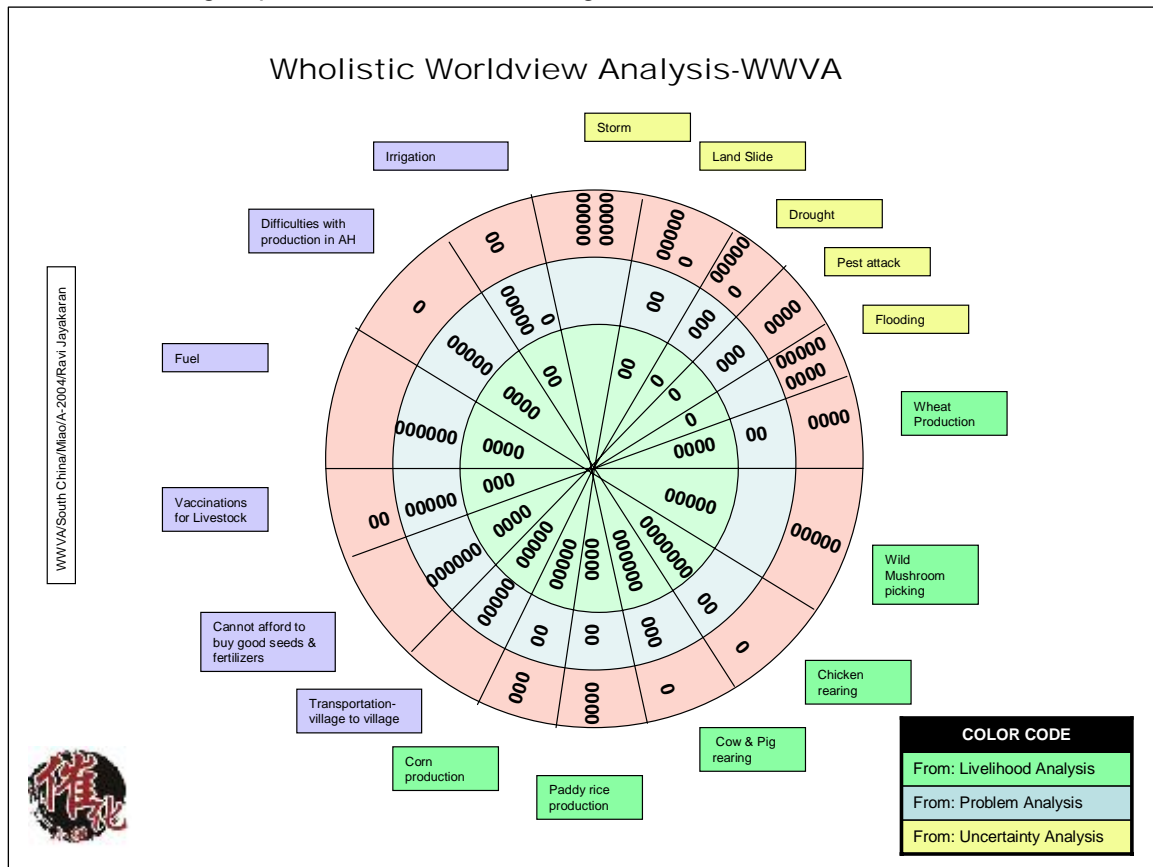


overcome. When this is done, the community's development will move towards long term sustainability.

**How the WWVA and Community survival strategy are connected:** The WWVA profile of the community is a profile of how the community perceives itself. This is also therefore a profile of the survival strategy of the community. By studying the WWVA one can understand what the community does to survive in its environment, and the type of challenges it faces by way of problems and uncertainties that it encounters and its ability to cope with these.

**Using the information:** After the WWVA has been carried out and analyzed, the next step in the Strategy for development is to work on reducing 'Vulnerabilities' and building the 'Capacities' of the *Survival strategy* of the community. Some simple important principles to be remembered in carrying this out almost co-simultaneously are as follow:

- Just building *capacities without reducing vulnerabilities* will result in frustration for



the community, because the vulnerabilities will remain and continue to be a hindrance to their development.

- On the other hand just removing vulnerabilities without building capacities will result in the community becoming dependant on the development agency.
- The steps involved in proceeding with this therefore are to first identify the greatest vulnerabilities that the community encounters. The vulnerability (outermost circle) with the highest number of seeds is considered to be the first priority for development followed by the next highest and so on.

After the priority list for development is prepared (based on which is the greatest vulnerability – identified by the greater number of seeds in the outermost circle), we proceed with carrying out a stakeholder analysis for each issue with the community. After identifying the main stakeholders involved, look at the capacities and vulnerabilities of each of them and then identify the interventions required for 'building capacity' and 'reducing vulnerability' for each stakeholder in helping to overcome that vulnerability. These

become the activities of the program, and they can then be combined together under the 'outputs' they will generate, and these in turn can be grouped together under the Impact that they will produce. This information can then be put on a log frame, and will be entirely community planned, and community owned. This planning which is done using the WWVA tool can be done at a



village level, commune level, District level, Provincial level or Country level. In each case the composition of the planning group will change to those that are familiar with the area at that particular level, be it the village level, the commune level, the District level, the Province or Country level.

The following is a list of multidimensional development related information that can be generated from the WWVA exercise (including the ones mentioned above):

- The consolidated Survival strategy of the community
- The C/V (Capacity/Vulnerability) analysis of the community's survival strategy
- The areas in which the community depends on outsiders for its survival
- The comparative poverty profile of the community for comparison with other communities for prioritizing for development

- The basic foundation for developing a PCDP- Participatory Community (level) Development Plan
- The Wholistic baseline profile of the community

This paper seeks particularly to highlight the aspect of the analysis that relates to the Wholistic baseline of the Community, and how it relates in Wholistic integration to their worldview. Every community (like individuals) seeks 'God' in the areas of their **greatest needs (vulnerability)**. They run to 'God' in crisis, seeking for help. In the same way, from the WWVA picture we can see that the areas of greatest need are the issues for which the community seeks help from **praying to the gods, spirits, and ancestors**. This dependence is perceived by the community as a **very concrete component of their survival strategy**. Outsiders, who are not sensitive to this, may see it mainly as a 'vulnerability' that needs to be countered and overcome through the process of development. The community sees it as an area for which



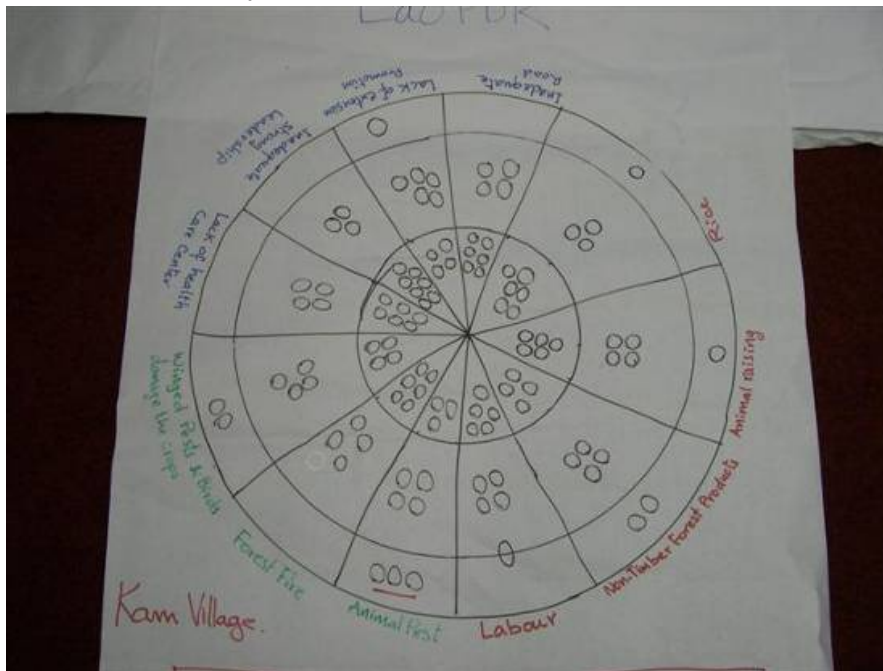
they are have 'handed over' to their 'supernatural helpers' (gods, spirits and ancestors) on whom they are 'dependant' as much as they are on the outsiders they interact with as a community. This dependence is manifest in the community is the form of **sacred places and temples**. In fact if one were to carry out a rapid vulnerability profile, these spots and structures would provide the

necessary information, with the greater vulnerability being represented by a greater structure. This is why, when new programs are introduced in a village to overcome 'vulnerabilities', the community initially resists them. The action is seen as breaking loyalty with one of their supernatural helpers to seek help elsewhere! Community development workers often either are insensitive to this dimension or proceed 'as if it doesn't exist'. There is need to address communities wholistically, because that is the way their worldview is, and address their concerns in each area. Development organizations thus need to understand these realities related to the community before seeking to make changes of even 'challenging their worldview' when it is associated with a negative or desperate practice such as female infanticide or something similar. *Wholistic transformation of the worldview through collaborative re-construction of their common reality is after all- the objective of PLA.*



**Summary & way forward:** Finally to summarize the steps involved in carrying out the WWVA exercise in a village, the following are the steps:

- Carry out the general PLA exercises required for understanding the survival strategy of the village
- At the end of these exercises, carry out the Livelihood analysis, the Problem analysis and the Uncertainty analysis exercises using the TST (Ten seed Technique) and verify with the other PLA exercises that this information is accurate
- (if one knows the community well enough, then just the 3 exercises mentioned above - Livelihood analysis, the Problem analysis and the Uncertainty analysis- are sufficient)
- Identify the components of the 3 exercises and use these to determine how many segments the WWVA diagram will have (with one segment for each component)
- Then using the TST again, get the community to distribute the seeds in the 3 parts of each segment based on how much the community controls (inner most circle), how much it depends on outsiders for (second outer circle) and what is outside of



the control of both the community as well as outsiders (outermost circle)

- When this has been done for each segment, discuss around the final diagram, and identify the greatest vulnerability,

then next highest vulnerability and so on.

- Carry out a stakeholder analysis for each of the vulnerabilities, and identify the capacities and vulnerabilities of each stakeholder to overcome that vulnerability.
- Identify and list action to be taken for overcoming the vulnerability,
- List these under outputs based on results expected

- List the outputs under impacts expected
- Put information on a log frame and then start using it as the program design document and 'Plan of Action'.
- This technique can start being used in your existing projects. Initially start using the approach at one place in your project area, and then expand it to cover other programs as you become more proficient in facilitating the process.

(Note: Photographs (1-6) in this article are from actual field situations in South China where the Wholistic Worldview Analysis exercise was conducted. Photo 7 is of the WWVA of 'Kam' village in Lao PDR. All photographs were taken by the author Dr Ravi Jayakaran)

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Recommended further reading:

- (1) Working with the Poor: Bryant L. Myers ET. All. 1999, MARC/World Vision Publication
- (2) Participatory Poverty Alleviation & Development: Ravi Jayakaran, 2003, World Vision International –China, Publication .Also available on CD ROM from Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen University, 2005, Cambodia 2006
- (3) Walking with the Poor: Bryant L. Myers, Orbis books, 1999
- (4) The Twilight Labyrinth: George Otis Jr. Chosen Books, 1997
- (5) Facilitating Small Groups: Ravi Jayakaran, 2003, World Vision International –China, Publication. Also available as CD ROM from Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen University, 2005, Camodia, 2006
- (6) The Ten seed Technique (TST): World Vision China publication 2002, downloadable from :  
<http://www.worldvision.org.au/resources/files/Ten-Seed.pdf> (download the TST e-book)
- (7) Other resources on the Internet:  
[http://www.fao.org/Participation/ft\\_show.jsp?ID=1981](http://www.fao.org/Participation/ft_show.jsp?ID=1981)  
<http://www.childsurvival.com/connections/start.cfm#spring2002>

## About the Author:

*Dr Ravi I. Jayakaran has over 31 years of experience in Poverty reduction and Development programs. He works as the Senior Director of Global Programs for MAP International (Medical Assistance Programs International [www.map.org](http://www.map.org) ). In this role he provides supervisory oversight and Strategic support for all of MAP International's global programs that cover the distribution of essential medicines valued at around 300 Million USD a year in over 109 countries, the Humanitarian Assistance and Relief office that responds with appropriate relief programs to all Global relief situations, the MAP International Fellows program that sends 30-40 American Medical students out to field exposure programs in 45 potential countries and all the MAP International country offices in Indonesia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Bolivia, Ecuador and Honduras.*



*Before joining MAP International, Dr Jayakaran was Chief Consultant of Quality Professional Interfaces (QPI-GMS). In this role he was based in Phnom Penh Cambodia , and worked predominantly in the Greater Mekong sub-regional Countries, providing consultancy on issues of Participatory development, Poverty reduction, impact of Regional economic integration, HIV-AIDS programs, Street children support programs, Trafficking prevention, Rapid needs assessments, Corporate social responsibility ,Evaluations and capacity building.*

*He has worked with a variety of Regional government organizations in the GMS, the ADB, the UNDP and several International NGOs.*

*Dr Jayakaran has experience in providing consultancies in over 10 countries in the Asia pacific region and also in Africa and Latin America. He is a prolific writer and has brought out over 18 publications. His latest book 'Mobilizing Child Participation in the Development Process' is currently being edited for publication during late 2008.*

*He started is career working Maharashtra with Magsasay award winner and Mahatma Gandhi's right hand man – Dr Manibhai Desai-who was the founding Director of Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation Ltd. Following this he moved to the state of Bihar where he was the head of the corporate social responsibility wing of the Usha Martin Group of Industries in Tatisilwai, Bihar, India, till 1992.*

*Ravi has lived and worked in India, Cambodia and China. His wife Vimla has just completed an assignment as a teacher at the prestigious International school of Phnom Penh. They have two sons – Amit & Rohit. Amit has a MS in robotic engineering from UFL and currently works with National instruments based in Chennai where he lives with his wife Jennifer. Rohit has a MS in International business from London and a diploma in Drama from London school of Drama and has worked in various radio stations in India as a programme anchor and producer. He has just moved to Dubai and joined a radio station there.*

*Ravi and Vimla Jayakaran are currently based in the US and live in Decatur, GA.*