

Understanding the role of public belief systems in perceptions of bio-physical, socio-economic and cultural-spiritual vulnerabilities through the use of an emergent analytical framework.

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**WP1 Management, Integration and Dissemination**

**WP2 Multi-disciplinary Knowledge Base and Vulnerability mapping**

**WP3**

Co-operation  
with  
stakeholders,  
social groups,  
NGOs

**WP4**

**Public Beliefs, Perceptions, Attitudes and  
Preferences**

**WP5**

**Ecological**

**WP7**

**Cultural Spiritual**

**WP6**

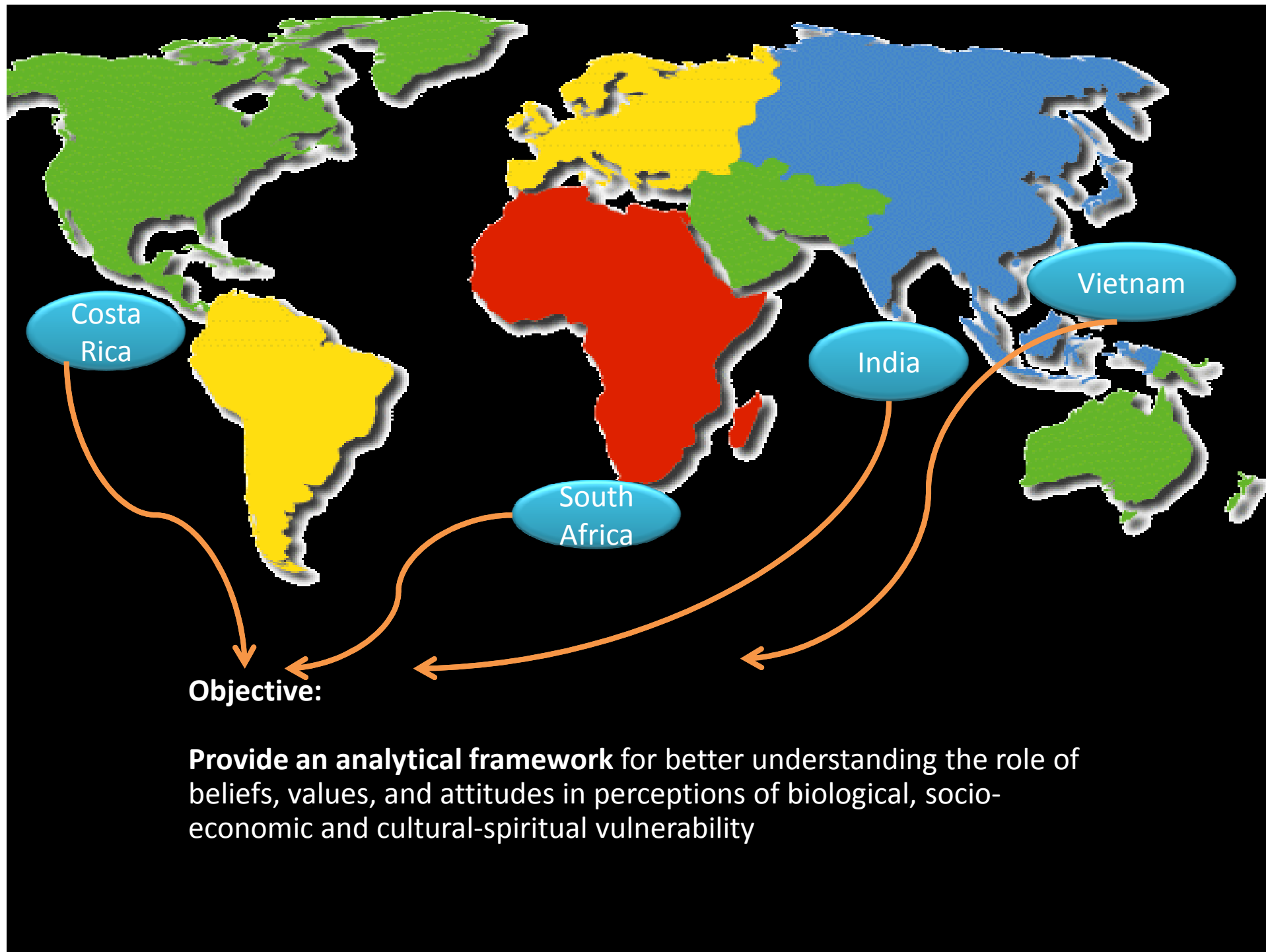
**Socio-economic**

**WP9**

Institutions,  
value-based  
strategies, and  
policy  
Instruments

**WP8 Scenarios for Sustainable livelihood and lifestyles**

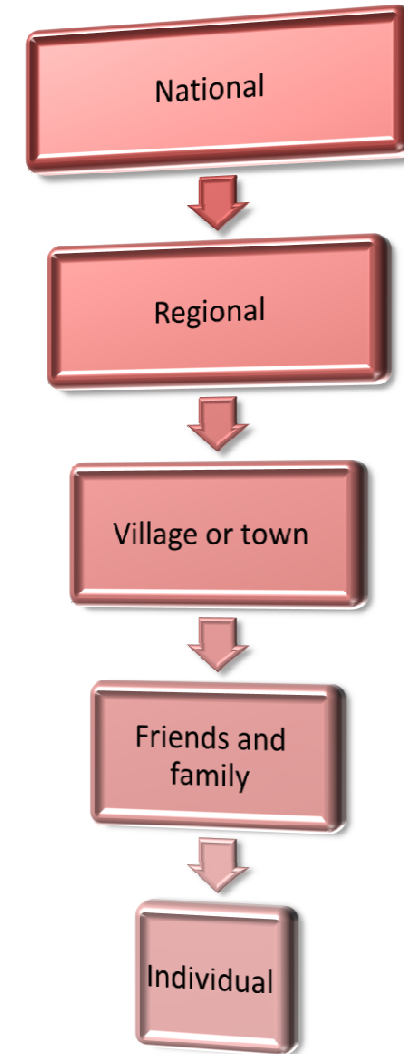
Constructive engagement with social groups and their representatives

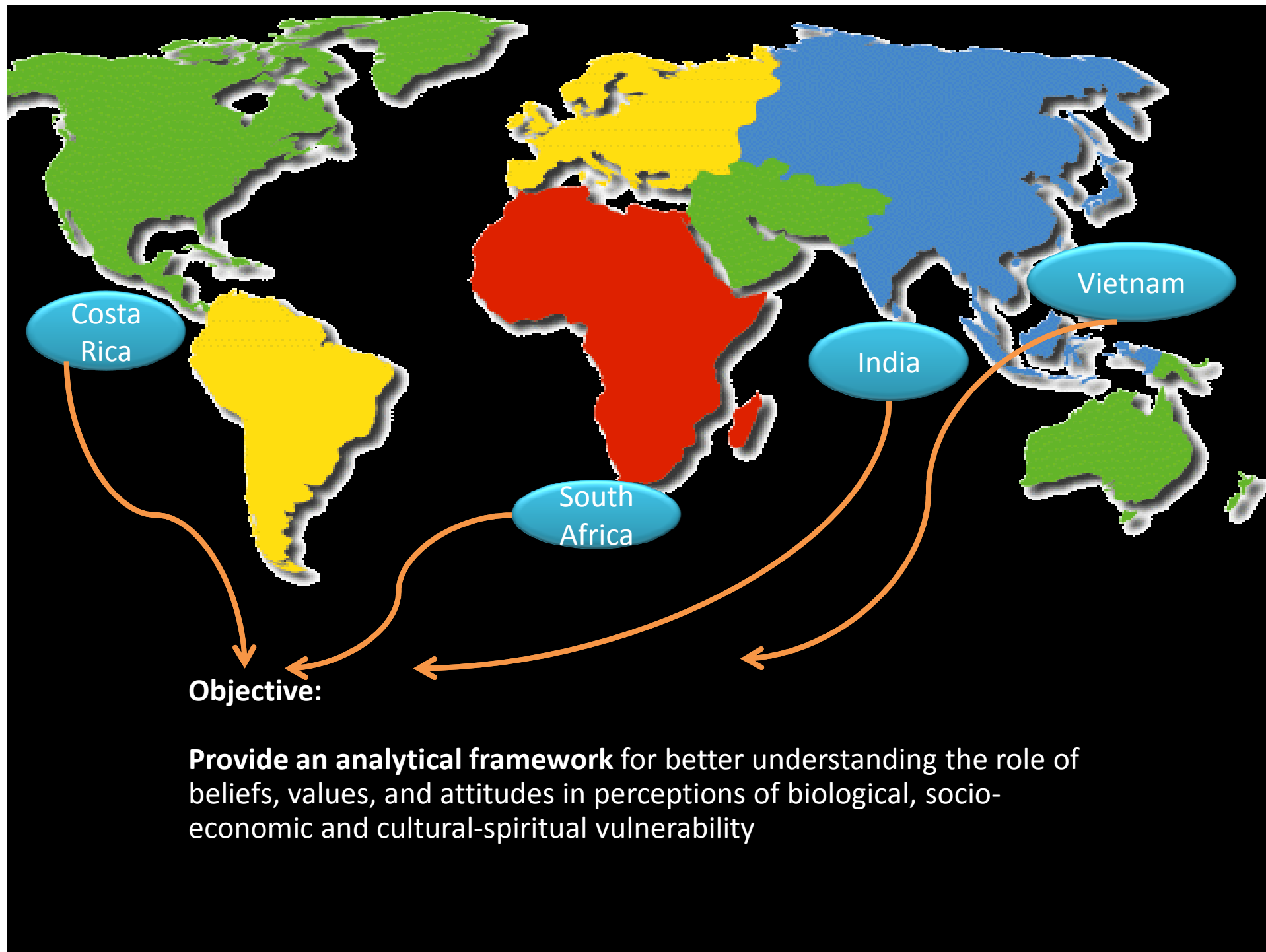


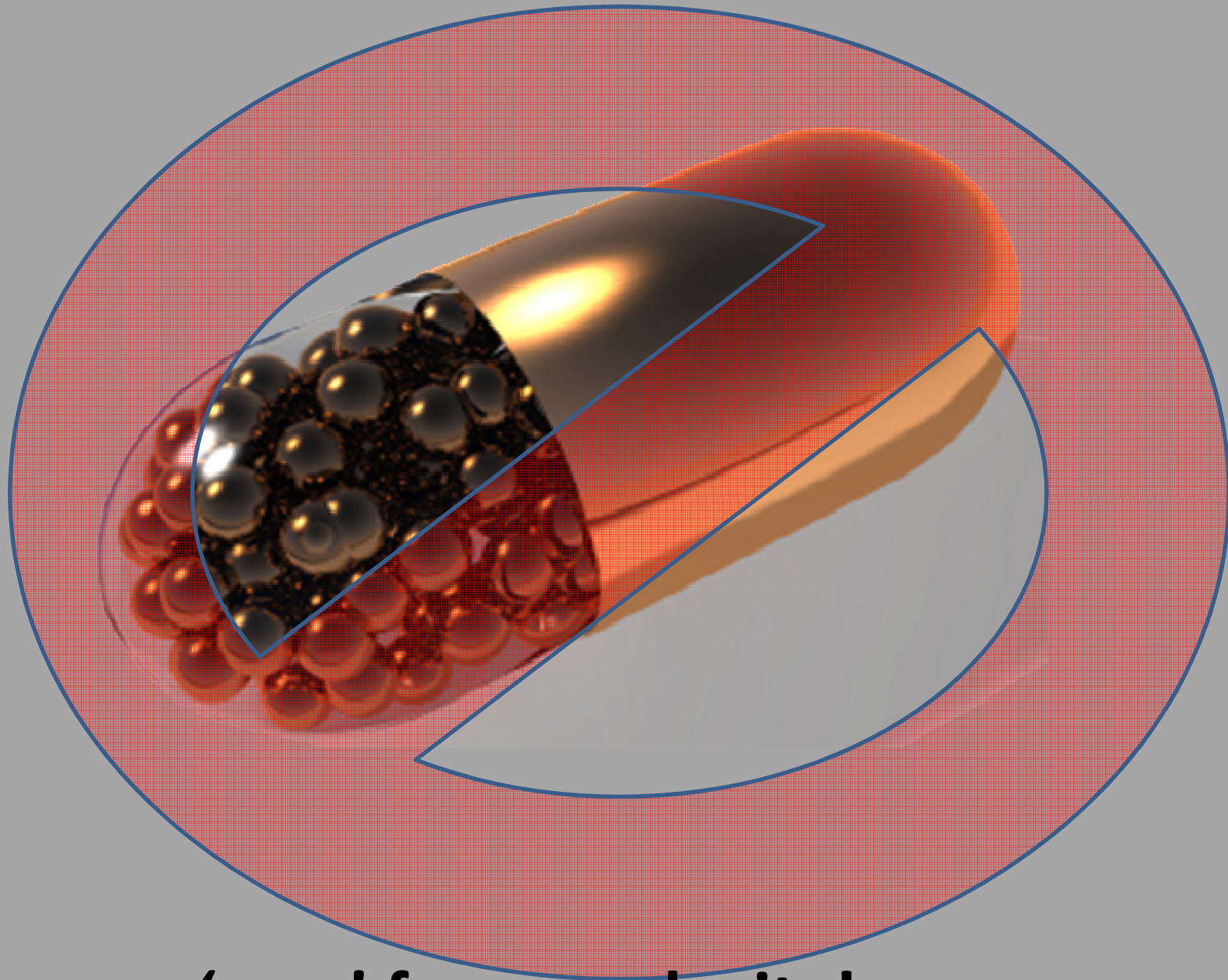
What role do people's **beliefs, values** and **attitudes** play in how people perceive biological-, socio-economic-, and cultural-spiritual vulnerability

- These are all complex terms – what do they have in common?
  - Can be both shared and individually held
  - Informed through socialisation, indoctrination, study, self discovery, experiences etc.
  - Both consciously and unconsciously held
  - Manifest in all manner of behaviour, from day-to-day living to ritualised and cultural practice

# Different contexts play a role here







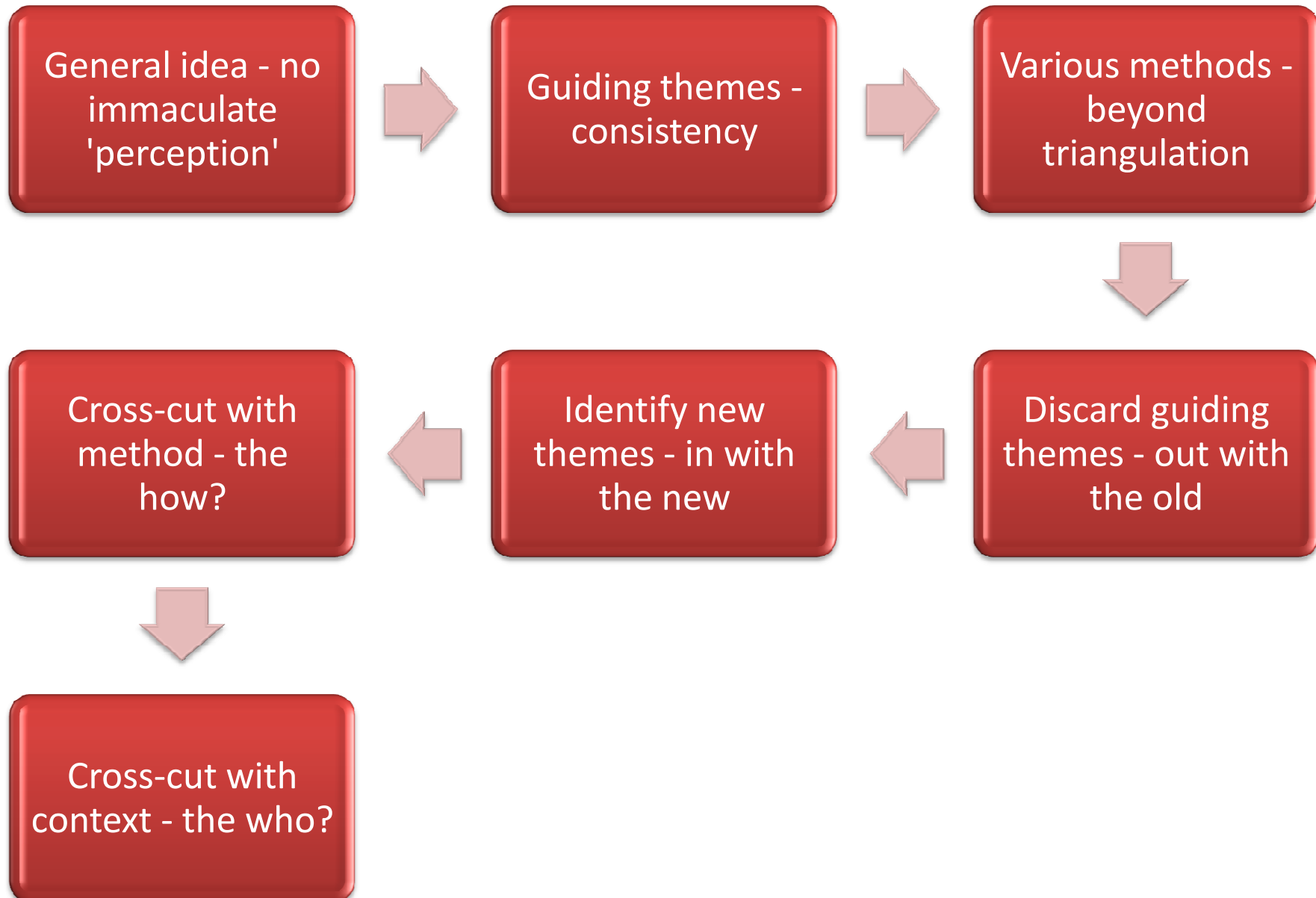
**No one 'cure' for complexity!**

# APPROACH

- Emerging framework
- What do we mean by this?
  - Embraces ideas of participatory research
  - Different methods at our disposal
  - Needs to deal with multiple contexts
  - Needs to deal with different research teams
  - Creates space for reflexivity



# How does it work?



# Two outcomes from the emergent framework:

1. Better understand the data generation process through different methods
  - Not the content but the nature of the data
  - Impact of method chosen, researcher involved, physical circumstances, different expectations, etc.
  - Utility of the method used
2. Analysis becomes context driven
  - Not hypothesis driven
  - Becomes emic in nature
  - Iterative process



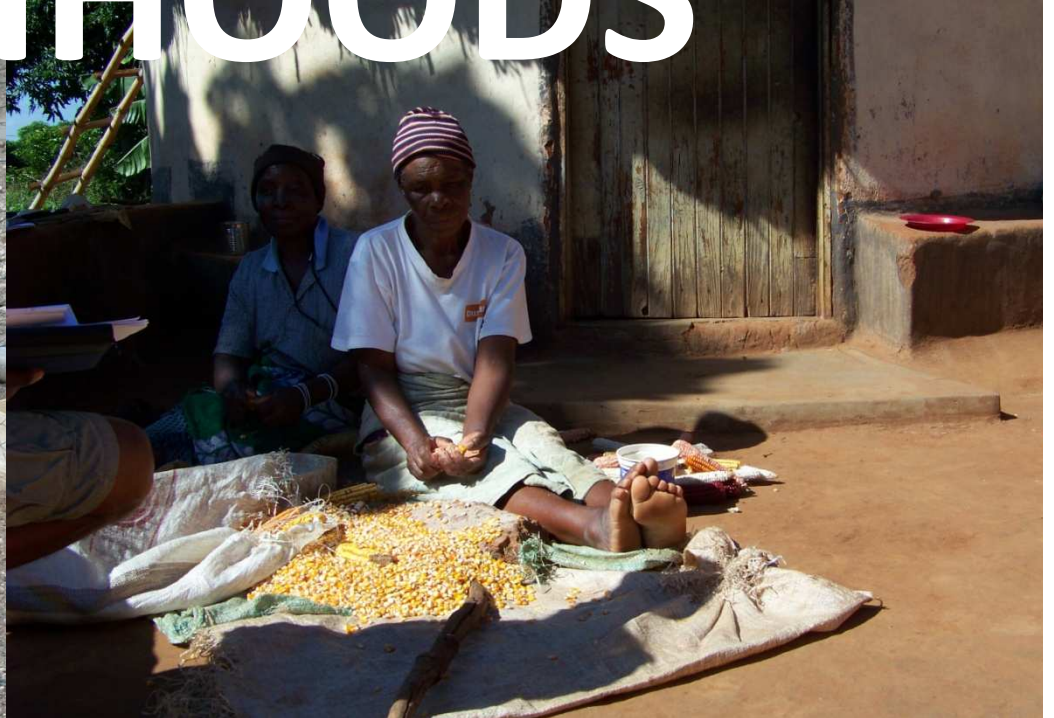


# HARDSHIP





# LIVELIHOODS





# NATURE & BIODIVERSITY



DO NOT DEFOREST  
VHA SONGO REMA MIRI

Care for the environment  
Kha vha tsireledze mupo

Approved by:  
Zwo tenelwa nga:  
Traditional Leaders  
Mahosi  
Tshikondeni Mine

BELIEFS & CULTURAL

PRACTISE



# 1. Emergent process themes

- **Researcher positionality**
  - *Positionality of the researcher becomes explicit*
  - *Researcher profile, gender, race age*
- **Respondents' perception of the interviewer**
  - *Respondents' perceptions of who we are*
  - *Respondents answering what they think the researchers want to hear*
  - *Respondent fears the reaction of the interviewer*
- **Application of method**
  - *Time of day and its impact on the results*
  - *Where the interaction was held, ie. at their home, outside etc.*
  - *Interruption of daily chores by interaction*
  - *Geographical setting and access to*
- **the village**
  - *Sequence of research method process*
- **Interpreter positionality**
  - *Interpreter context/ background*
  - *Interpreter's profile*
- **Researcher Expectations and Preconceptions**
  - *Didn't get expected answer – intrusion of own perspective on research process*
  - *Researcher's willingness to probe or ask sensitive questions*
  - *Preconceived notions held by researchers regarding the characteristics of the method e.g. more people arrive*



# Emergent process themes

- **Interpretation Issues**
    - *Changing meaning of questions – knowledge or language domains*
    - *Lost in translation*
  - **Method Attributes**
    - *Presence of interpreters*
    - *Method appropriate to context of case study area*
    - *Respondent's experience of the method (comfort, trust comprehension)*
    - *Opportunity created for researcher to probe further*
  - **Respondent Reaction**
    - *Group structure (age, gender and hierarchy) dynamic can influence the answers*
    - *Respondents feel more at ease with same gender*
    - *Cultural taboos reflected in the way*
  - **Relationship between research partners**
    - *interpreter /researcher partnership*
    - *Understanding of individual in time and space (diachronic and synchronic)*
    - *Building a rapport*
  - **Planning**
    - *Clarity of information requested.*
    - *Length of interaction and its impact on the results*
    - *Sequence in which research methods were conducted*
- respondents reacts to researcher's sex*
- *Male's reluctance to engage female interviewers*

# Emergent process themes – some examples



- Interpretation versus translation – the household survey and the interview
- Positionality – gender issues in the group discussions and the interview
- Difficulties in establishing rapport/trust between researcher/interpreter and respondent



## 2. Emergent content themes

- **Cultural and Spiritual Markers**
  - *Belief in ancestors and witchcraft*
  - *Myths and legends*
  - *Cultural practises influence how people use natural resources*
  - *Sacred spaces/animals and plants*
- **Local Knowledge**
  - *Culturally embedded*
  - *Old vs. new*
  - *Hierarchy of access*
- **Trust/belief in traditional leadership**
  - *Reluctance/frequency of negativity w.r.t leaders*
  - *Headman plays a major/minor role; Perceptions of leadership style of chief*
  - *Trust in the management of biodiversity*
- **Contrasts and duality**
  - *Between bio-medicine and traditional healing*
  - *Religious duality*
  - *Younger generations' dis/interest in traditions*
  - *City life vs. village life*
  - *Old vs. new ito education*
- **Context**
  - *Contexts inform beliefs*
  - *Historical patriarchy influences the way people use natural resources*
  - *Political context causes trust issues (race)*
  - *Socio-economic context of individuals and the village*
  - *Cultural-spiritual context*

# Emergent content themes

- **Agency and Sense of Self**
  - *Perceptions about what people need to be happy*
  - *Belief in ability to improve their condition*
  - *Perceptions about what is poor/rich*
  - *Individual sense of agency*
  - *Ability of people to formulate response to crises*
- **Trust in Government**
  - *Trust in the management of biodiversity*
  - *Confidence in social grants*
  - *Lack of trust in government*
- **Community Dynamics**
  - *Trust between community members*
- *Sense of community (willingness to help each other)*
- *Division of labour among community members*
- **Perceptions of the biophysical**
  - *Access to water supply, drought*
  - *Availability of land*
  - *Utilitarian view of resource*
- **Infinite availability of resources**
  - *Sense of sustainability*
  - *People's awareness of the impact of their actions on the 'life' of the resource and biodiversity*
  - *Belief in nature always providing*
  - *Good understanding and buy-in of sustainability*

# Emergent content themes – some examples



- Link between notions of trust between community members and willingness to help others
- Perceptions of the biophysical – nature is both for utility and special; nature can harm and protect; respect for nature
- Culturally embedded knowledge

# **So, what is the role of public belief systems in perceptions of bio-physical, socio-economic and cultural-spiritual vulnerabilities?**

- Beliefs influence the degree to which people feel vulnerable or not
- Holding beliefs may prevent people from acknowledging their vulnerabilities, but the converse is also true
- Beliefs may make people more aware of their vulnerabilities and also how to reduce these vulnerabilities
- Biodiversity conservation can be supported/legitimised through the harnessing of certain beliefs
- Beliefs can give agency
- Beliefs enables/promotes resilience
- Shared beliefs establishes solidarity
- Beliefs are interconnected and complex and facilitate complex networks and interconnections