

RISK & UNCERTAINTY IN DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

Susan Dodsworth, University of Oxford

9 November 2016

PART ONE

Challenges in democracy support

TWO CHALLENGES AMONG MANY

Difficult cases

Adapting to context

Defining and demonstrating success

Competing priorities

Managing uncertainty

Balancing risk

A limited evidence base

UNCERTAINTY

SOURCES

Events - Elections
Individuals - Intentions
Conflicting theories
Limited evidence about what works

IMPACT

Preference for 'safe' options
Limits impact
Less innovation
Less adaption to context

Example: Parliamentary turnover and support to parliamentary committees

RISK: BACKLASH

Efforts to support democracy can trigger backlash.

This risk is increasing – perversely, due to cases of success.

New empirical research shows that perceptions of threat are critical.

Key risk factors: competitive elections, large militaries, volume of aid to NGOs.

Example: Support to CSOs/MPs and the Petroleum Acts in Uganda

RISK: UNINTENDED SIDE-EFFECTS

Stems from the complexity of democratization.

Less dramatic but harder to foresee.

Similar to uncertainty, but the product of intervention, not external factors.

Example 1: Encouraging citizens to report electoral malpractice

Example 2: Parliamentary networks against corruption

PART TWO

A new framework for evaluating trade-offs

WHY THINK IN TERMS OF TRADE-OFFS?

Disconnect between research and practice magnifies risk and uncertainty.

A tool to translate evidence about what has (or hasn't worked) in the past into concrete options.

Effective management of risk and uncertainty is a question of balance:

- Which trade-offs are worth making?
- Evaluating risk and uncertainty across a portfolio of programs.

TRADE-OFF: FOCAL POINT

ISSUE / EVENT

Specific policies or legislation

Substantive problems

Cross-cutting themes

Critical events

**Example: Elections, women's
political participation**

INSTITUTION / PROCESS

Basic issues of resources & capacity

Establishing (or reforming) procedures

**Example: Parliamentary
committees, policy development**

TRADE-OFF: SCOPE

Who to include?

NARROW

Political leaders
Key support staff

BROAD

A wider range of actors
(civil society, youth & women's wings)

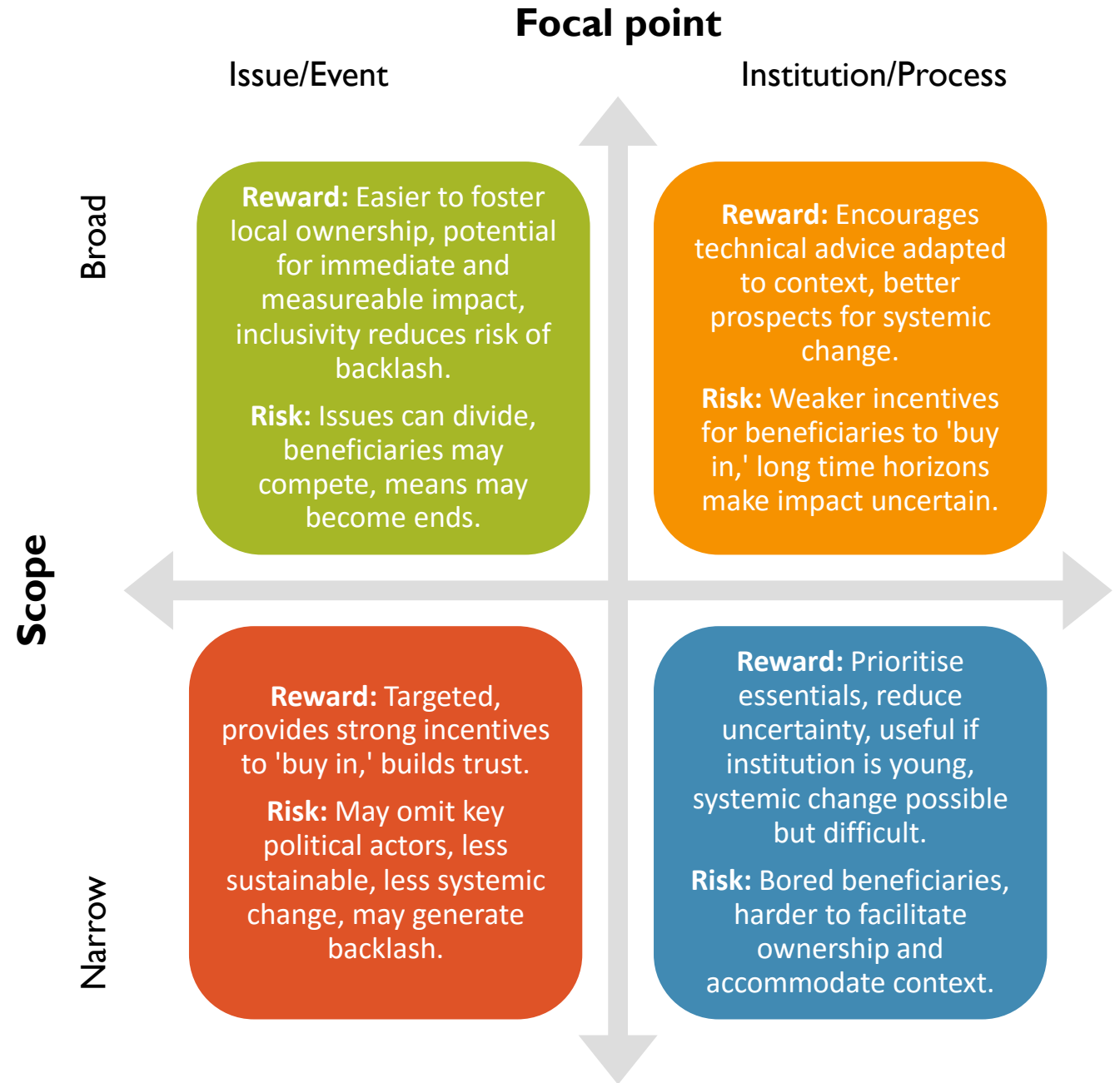
DISCUSSION

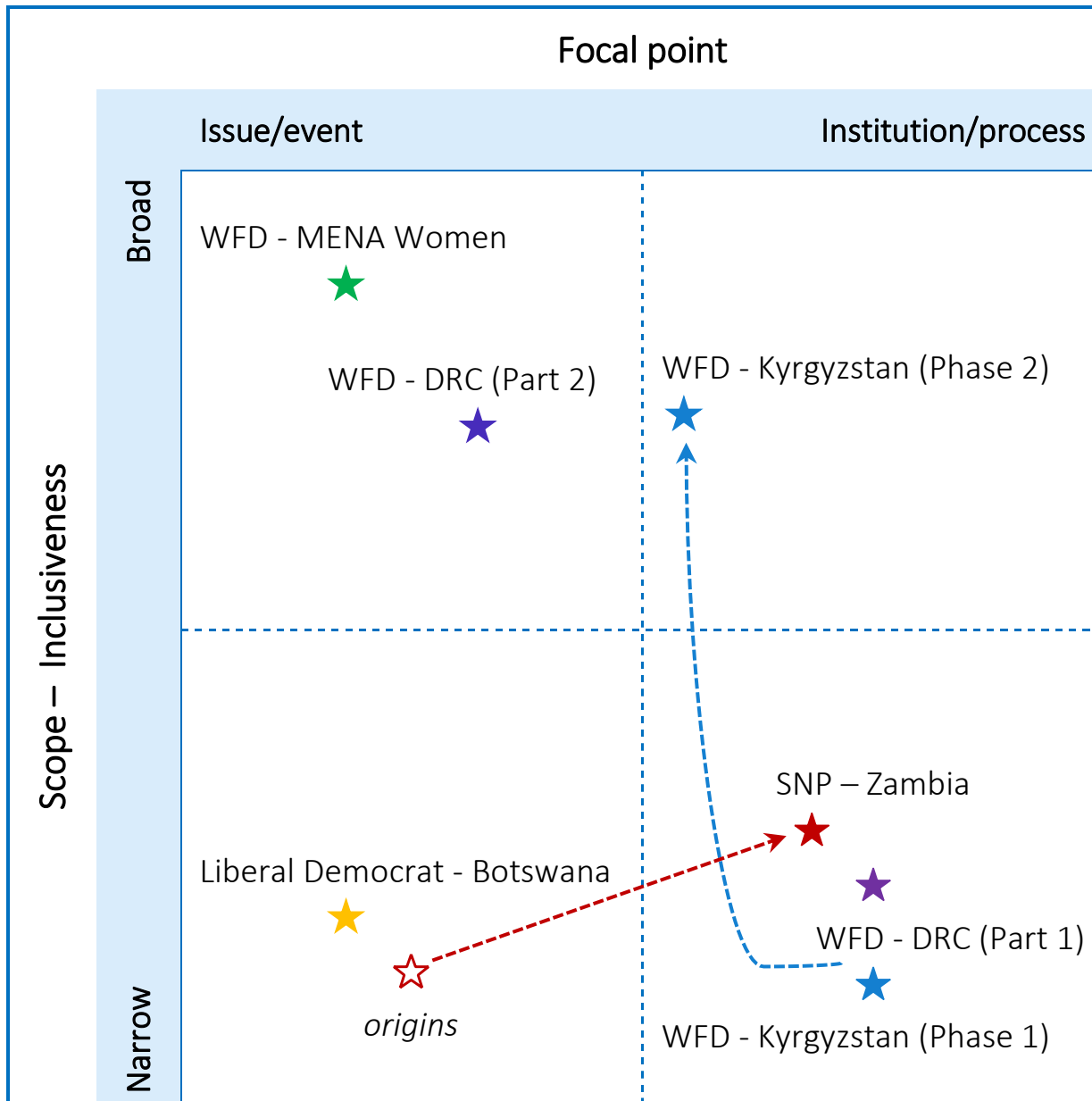
Questions & comments so far

PART THREE

Applying this framework in practice

HOW TRADE OFFS INTERACT





SOME
CONCRETE
EXAMPLES



BOTSWANA MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

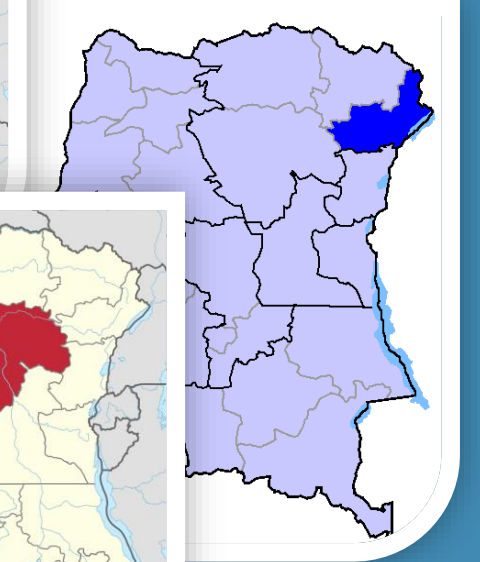
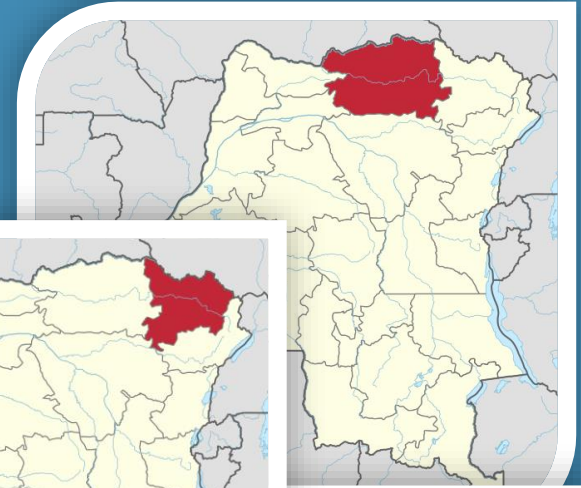
P O Box 2410 Gaborone. Plot No. 515, Extension 4

Tel: (+267) 395 3930 Fax: (+267) 395 3931

www.bmd.co.bw



Botswana!... Wa rona!...



KEY LESSONS

The trade-offs are dynamic.

Context has a big influence on whether a trade off is worth it.

We **cannot** avoid risk & uncertainty entirely,

BUT

We **can** balance them across a portfolio of programs.

PART FOUR

Other challenges

COMPETING PRIORITIES

What happens when programs multi-task?



DISCUSSION

If you have more questions:

susan.dodsworth@politics.ox.ac.uk