# **RISK & UNCERTAINTY** IN DEMOCRACY SUPPORT

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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

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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

#### **INSTITUTION / PROCESS**

Basic issues of resources & capacity Establishing (or reforming) procedures

Example: Elections, women's political participation

Example: Parliamentary committees, policy development

# **TRADE-OFF: SCOPE**

## Who to include?

#### NARROW

#### **BROAD**

Political leaders

Key support staff

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

# DISCUSSION

Questions & comments so far

# PART THREE

Applying this framework in practice

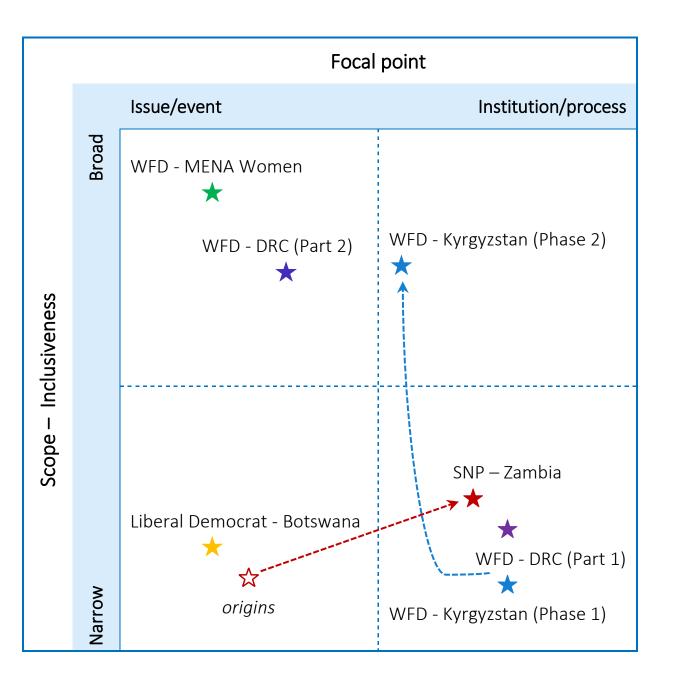
## HOW TRADE OFFS INTERACT

Broad

Scope

Narrow

<b>Focal  </b> Issue/Event	p <b>oint</b> Institution/Process
Reward: Easier to foster local ownership, potential for immediate and measureable impact, inclusivity reduces risk of backlash. Risk: Issues can divide, beneficiaries may compete, means may become ends.	Reward: Encourages technical advice adapted to context, better prospects for systemic change. Risk: Weaker incentives for beneficiaries to 'buy in,' long time horizons make impact uncertain.
Reward: Targeted, provides strong incentives to 'buy in,' builds trust. Risk: May omit key political actors, less sustainable, less systemic change, may generate backlash.	Reward: Prioritise essentials, reduce uncertainty, useful if institution is young, systemic change possible but difficult. Risk: Bored beneficiaries, harder to facilitate ownership and accommodate context.



# SOME CONCRETE EXAMPLES

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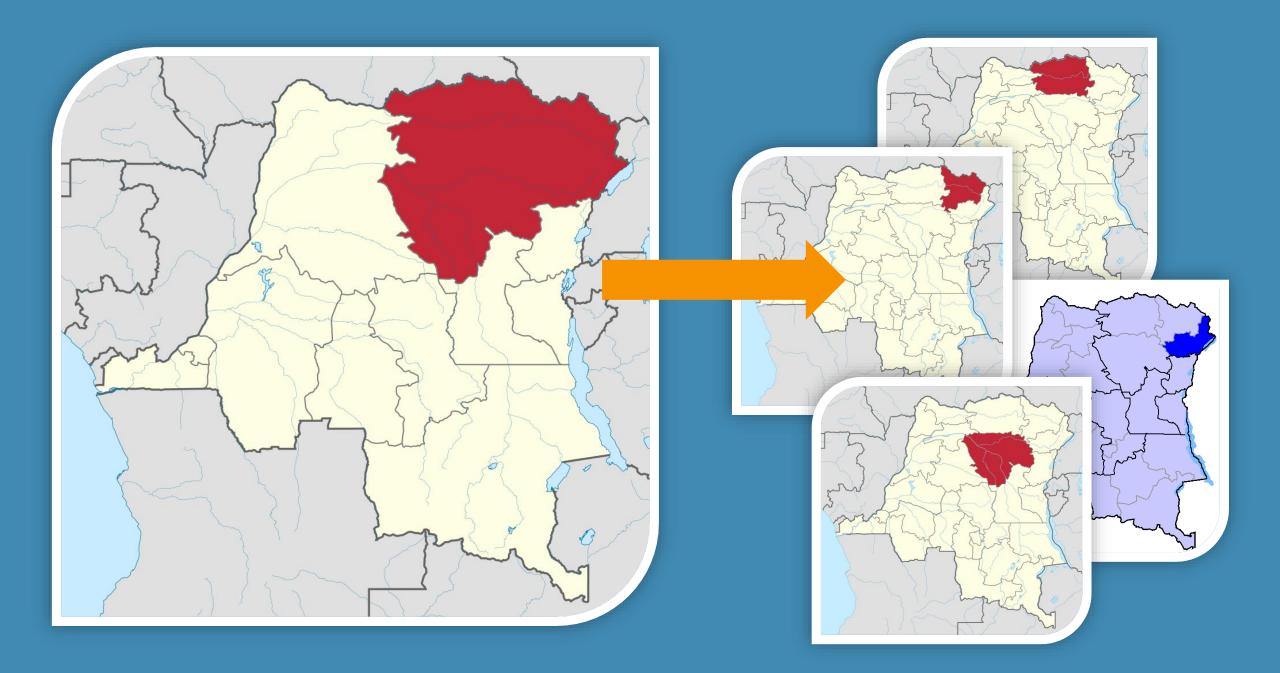
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## **KEY LESSONS**

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

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