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Engaging stakeholders with evidence and uncertainty

Sandy Oliver, Laurenz Langer,
Mukdarut Bangpan, Promise Nduku

October 2019

UKaid from the British people

LIDC London International Development Centre

Oxford Policy Management

The team

Spanning research, development practice & humanitarian aid

UCL EPPI-Centre: Mukdarut Bangpan, Dylan Kneale, Sandy Oliver

UJ Africa Centre for Evidence: Laurenz Langer, Promise Nduku,

University of Portsmouth: Tamsin Bradley

La Trobe University: Chris Roche

IMC Worldwide: Charlotte Maugham

Independent: Kate Conroy, Hayley Umayam

Digital Solution Foundry: Chris Penkin

The current study

Assumptions and work planned

1. Stakeholder engagement is a key factor for the success of impact evaluations – both doing them and using their findings
2. Earlier study collated models for stakeholder engagement and how to choose between them depending on what is known from generalizable research and what is known about specific contexts
3. This study explores the face validity of these models to develop more practical guidance about choices and application of stakeholder engagement models for impact evaluation & synthesis

The current study

Today's opportunities

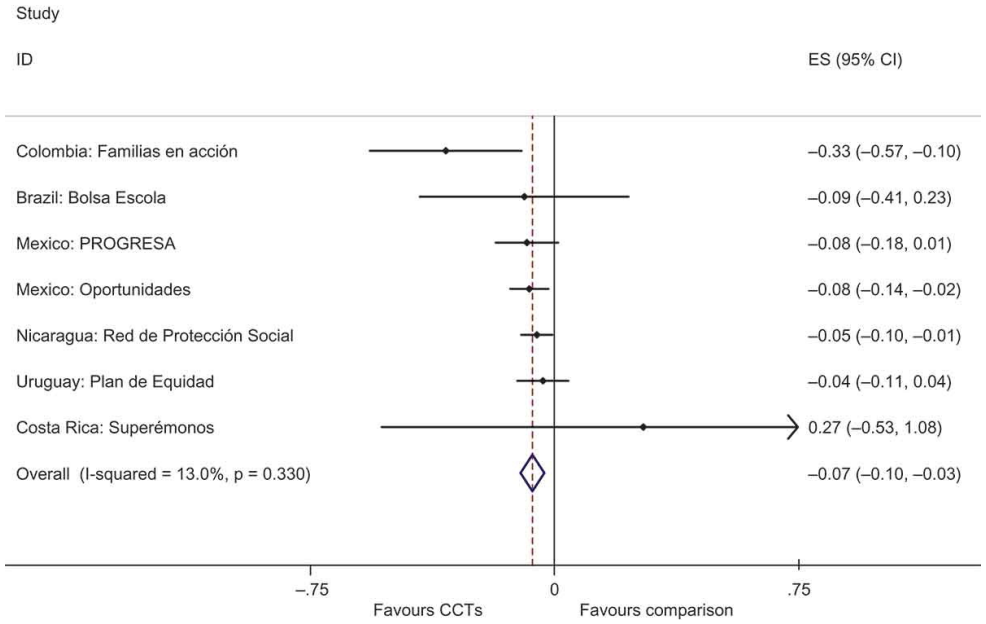
1. The study team to reflect on how we describe different models of stakeholder engagement and how to choose between
2. Workshop participants to discuss models of stakeholder engagement and how to choose between them
3. An option to participate in the study by
    - Offering written feedback, or
    - Volunteering to be interviewed later this week

   and giving us your name and email address – for more information to options for involvement

The Problem

Cash transfers: what does the evidence say?

The design, implementation and impact of programme on what individuals/ households can afford and sustain (Bastagli et al. 2006)



Effects of CCTs on children's work participation (Kabeer and Waddington 2015)

Cash transfers: what does the evidence NOT say?

Little about the

- political and institutional context in which an evidence informed approach might flourish (McCord, 2009)

People queuing with their cash vouchers outside a bank in South Sudan.
Photo credit: Dauda Koroma/Oxfam

(Bastagli et al. 2006)

Little about the

- degree to which local political actors and governments might sustain the process, even if it "works" technically. (McCord, 2009)

Engaging stakeholders: a possible solution

What do we know from living and working in, for instance, South Sudan?

What do we know from studies of similar contexts elsewhere?

Discuss with stakeholders:

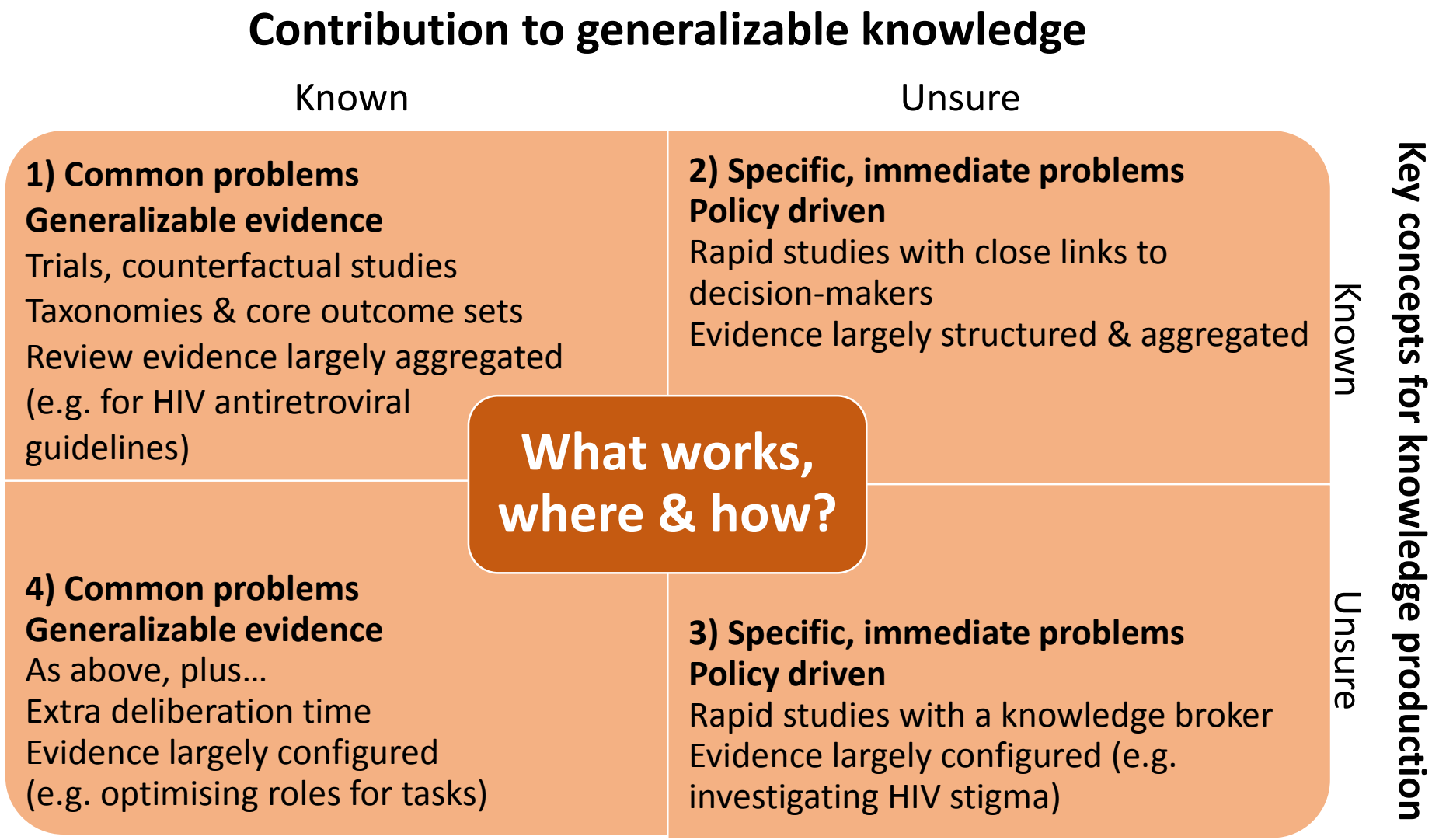
- **generalisable knowledge** to maximise rigour of research used for decisions
- **context specific knowledge** to maximise relevance of research to, for instance, South Sudan

Your role in relation to research?

ACTIVITY

- Conducting research, or making decisions that (could) use research findings?
- Describe a familiar project briefly
- List the stakeholders who might be affected and their interests
- Underline those you have involved, or might involve in the project
- List ways you have involved them or might involve them?

Framing the evidence ecosystem


Contribution to generalizable knowledge
Known
Unsure
1) Common problems
Generalizable evidence
Trials, counterfactual studies
Taxonomies & core outcome sets
Review evidence largely aggregated
(e.g. for HIV antiretroviral guidelines)
2) Specific, immediate problems
Policy driven
Rapid studies with close links to decision-makers
Evidence largely structured & aggregated
What works, where & how?
4) Common problems
Generalizable evidence
As above, plus…
Extra deliberation time
Evidence largely configured
(e.g. optimising roles for tasks)
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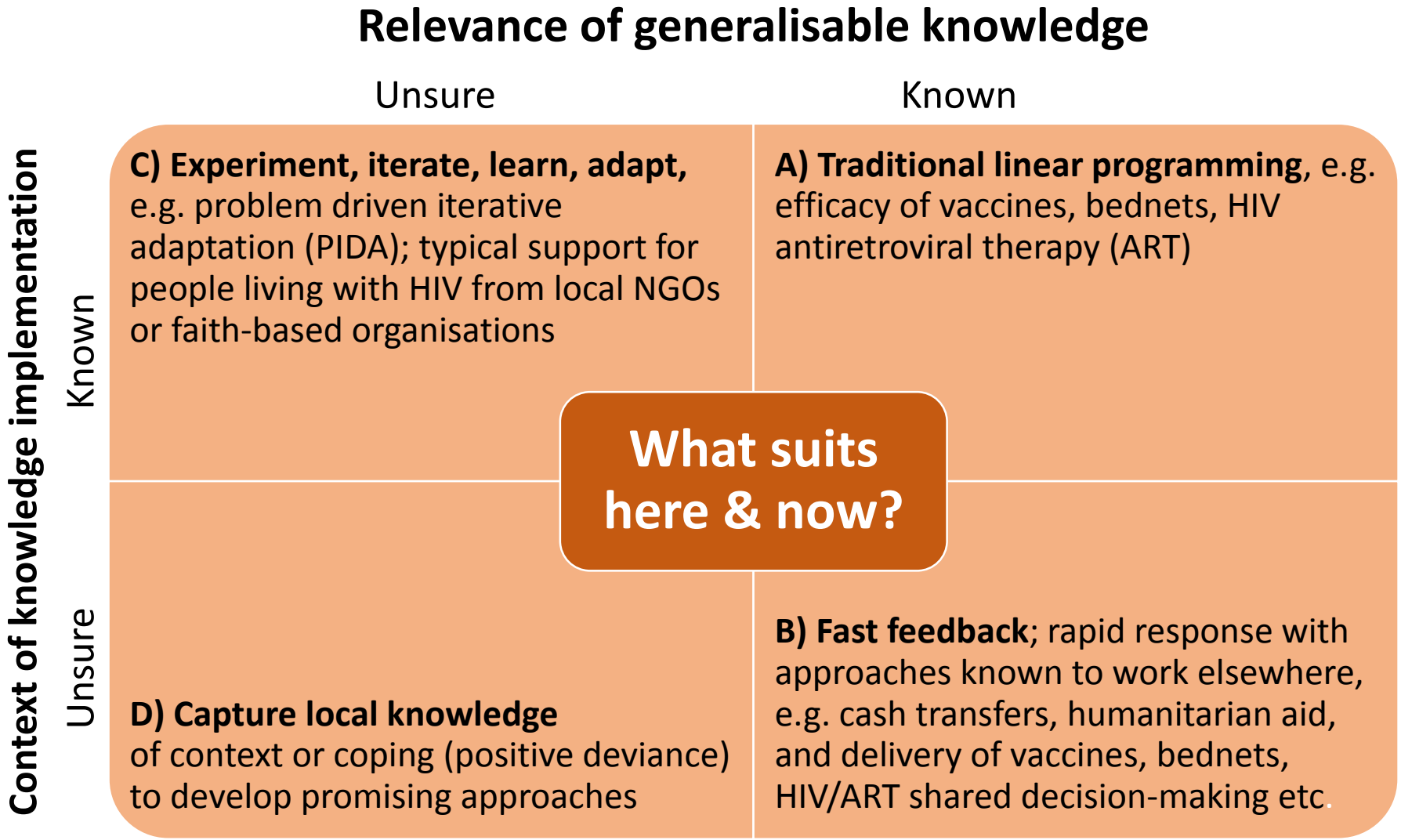
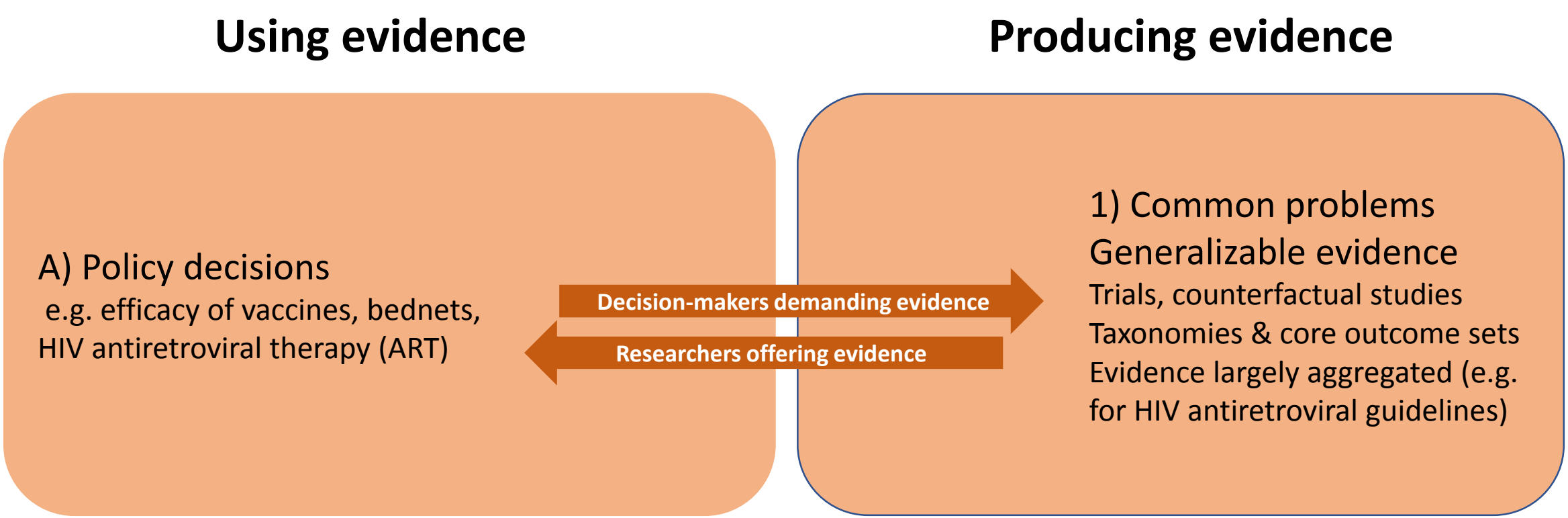

Relevance of generalisable knowledge
Unsure
Known
Context of knowledge implementation
Known
Unsure
C) Experiment, iterate, learn, adapt, e.g. problem driven iterative adaptation (PIDA); typical support for people living with HIV from local NGOs or faith-based organisations
A) Traditional linear programming, e.g. efficacy of vaccines, bednets, HIV antiretroviral therapy (ART)
What suits here & now?
D) Capture local knowledge of context or coping (positive deviance) to develop promising approaches
B) Fast feedback; rapid response with approaches known to work elsewhere, e.g. cash transfers, humanitarian aid, and delivery of vaccines, bednets, HIV/ART shared decision-making etc.

Introducing stakeholders

and knowledge exchange, or knowledge mobilisation


Using evidence
Producing evidence
A) Policy decisions
e.g. efficacy of vaccines, bednets, HIV antiretroviral therapy (ART)
Decision-makers demanding evidence
Researchers offering evidence
1) Common problems
Generalizable evidence
Trials, counterfactual studies
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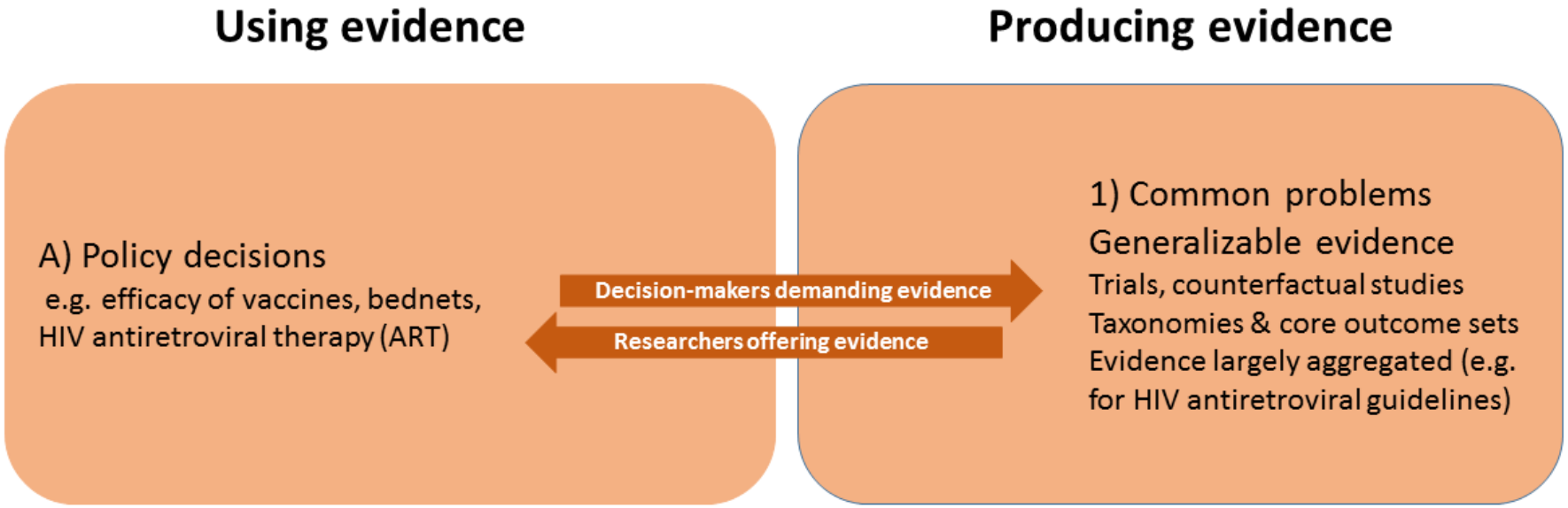
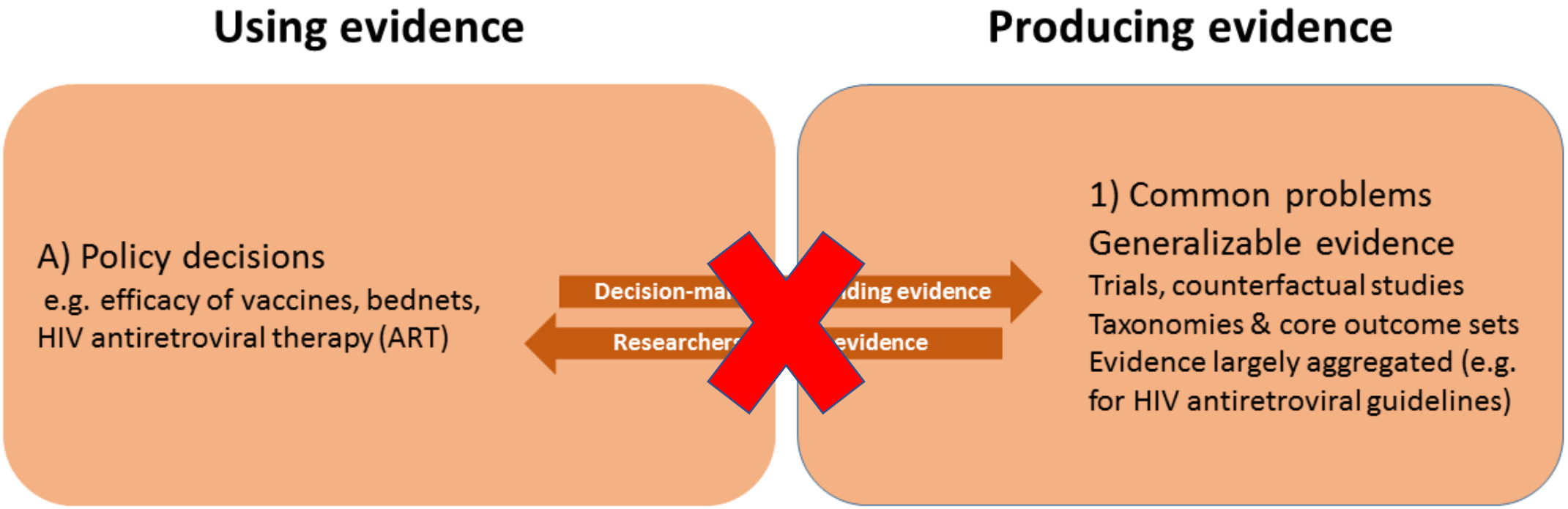
Stakeholder engagement – ‘KE’



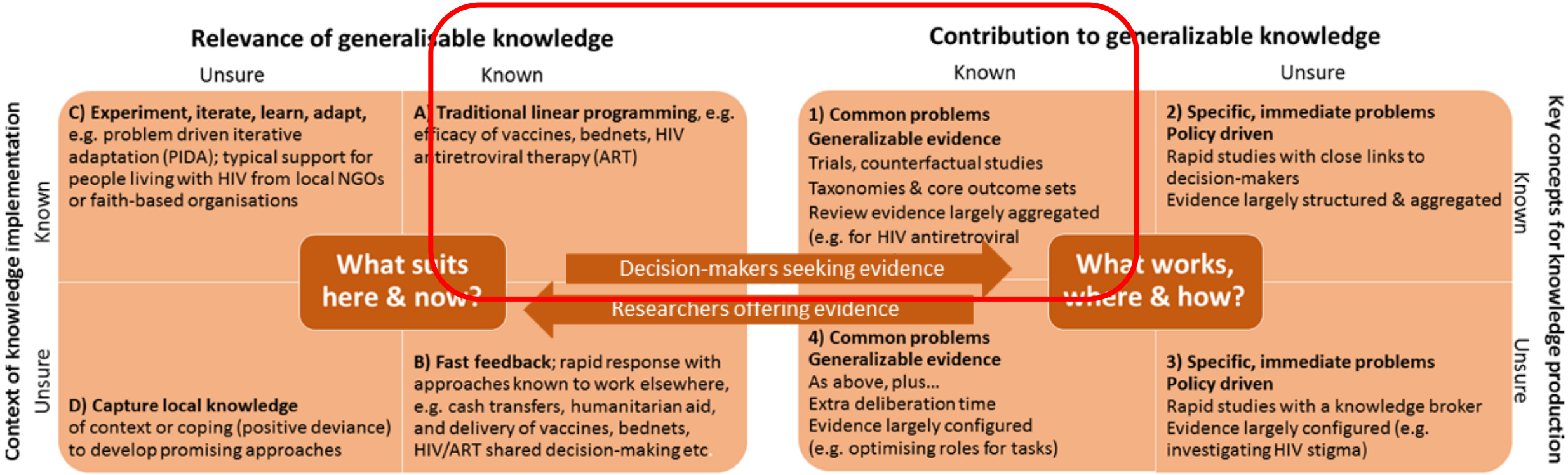
- Access to evidence libraries
- Packaging evidence to suit each audience
- Building evidence literacy and ‘intelligent customers’
- Incentives for using evidence
- Building social norms for using evidence

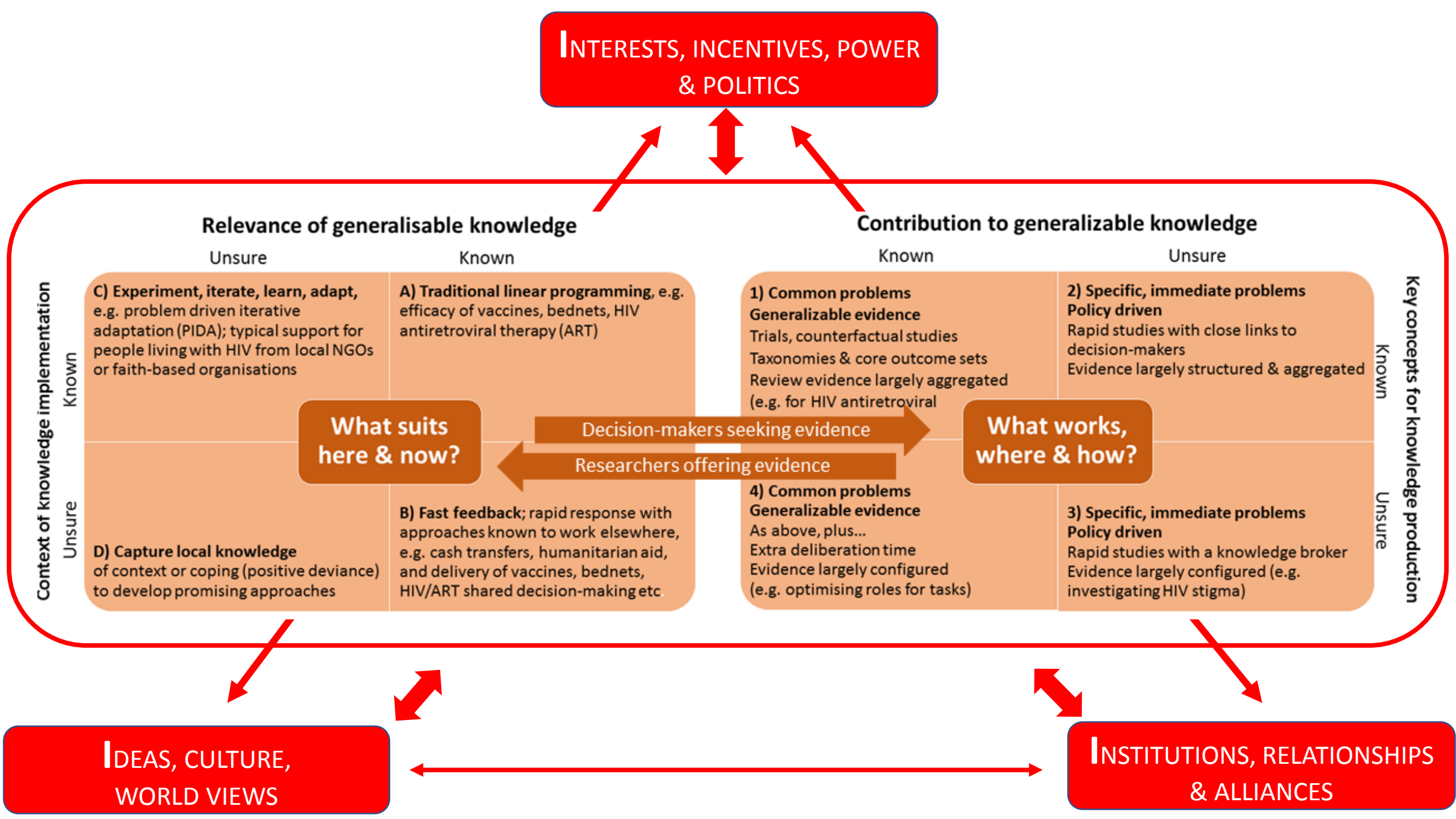
- Research priority setting
- Advisory panels
- Peer review through *infomediaries*/ translators
- Citizen science



- Relevant evidence not available in the libraries?
- No prior clarity or consensus on the key concepts?
- Evidence ‘context sensitive’ and implementation unpredictable?

‘Simple’ KE only part of the picture

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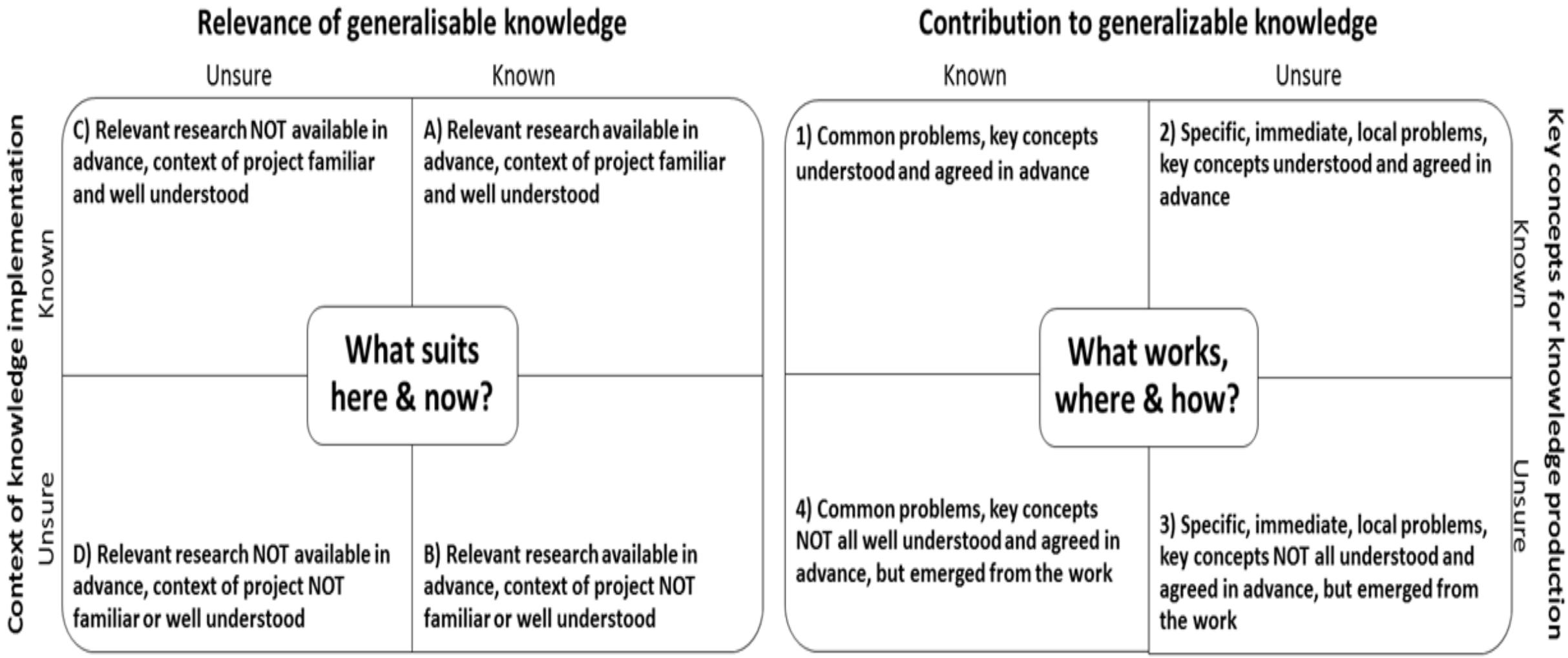
INSTITUTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS & ALLIANCES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Context of knowledge implementation
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C) Relevant research NOT available in advance, context of project familiar and well understood
A) Relevant research available in advance, context of project familiar and well understood
What suits here & now?
D) Relevant research NOT available in advance, context of project NOT familiar or well understood
B) Relevant research available in advance, context of project NOT familiar or well understood
Contribution to generalizable knowledge
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Key concepts for knowledge production
Known
Unsure
1) Common problems, key concepts understood and agreed in advance
2) Specific, immediate, local problems, key concepts understood and agreed in advance
What works, where & how?
4) Common problems, key concepts NOT all well understood and agreed in advance, but emerged from the work
3) Specific, immediate, local problems, key concepts NOT all understood and agreed in advance, but emerged from the work

Stakeholder engagement

Methods and tools

Tools that might help

Questions or prompts to help people understand the nature of the uncertain knowledge they face as them embark on a new task

A diagram, flow chart, network or mind map to help them identify:
(a) why involving stakeholders might help; and
(b) appropriate methods for engaging stakeholders with their task

(c) where differences in interests and power might lie

A map of the evidence underpinning those methods

A map of tools supporting those methods

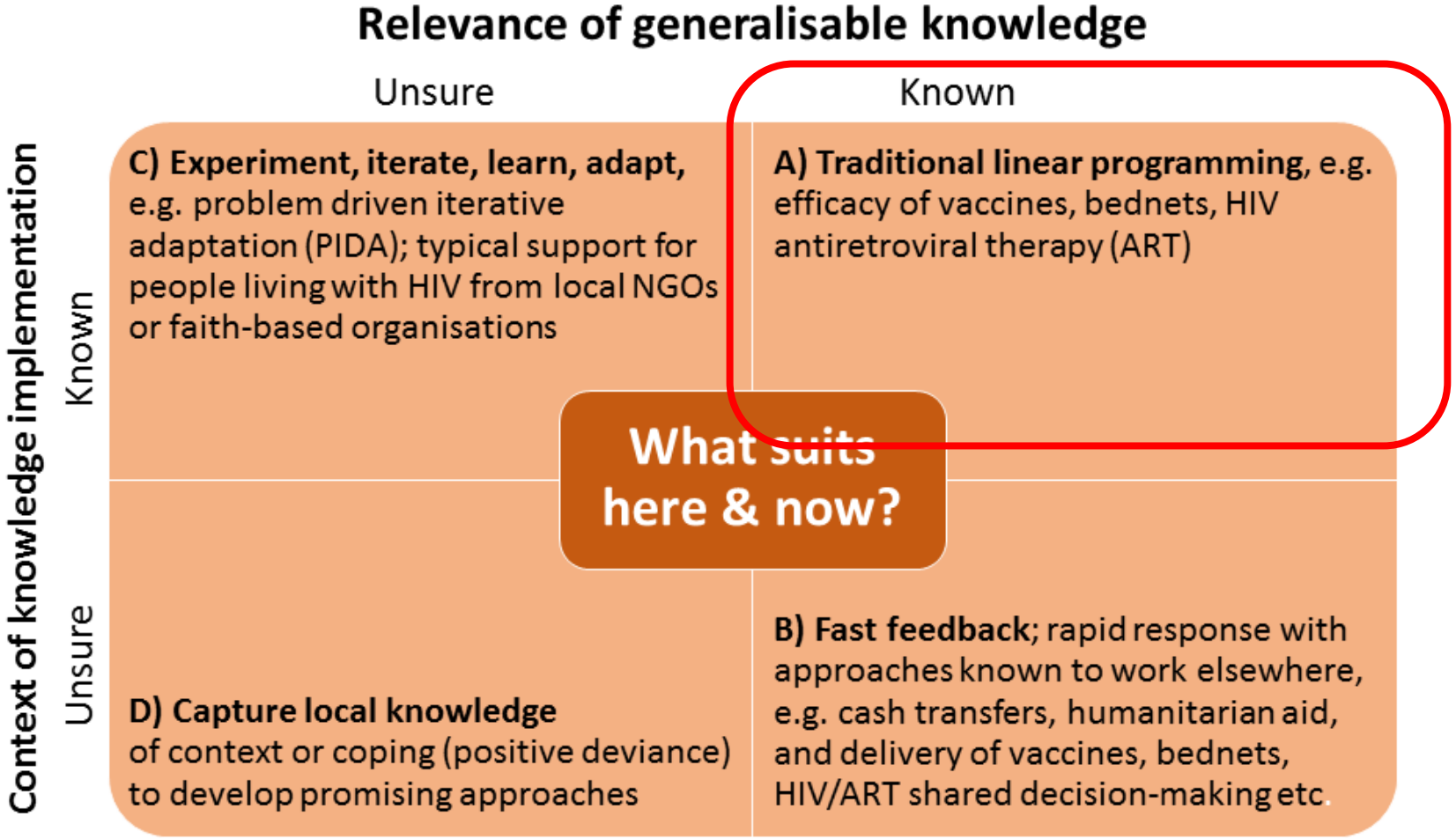
An appraisal tool for assessing the suitability of a method given the nature of the uncertain knowledge they face

Making decisions

Using evidence in different circumstances

Making decisions

informed by generalisable evidence
in contexts that are understood suits
Traditional linear programming



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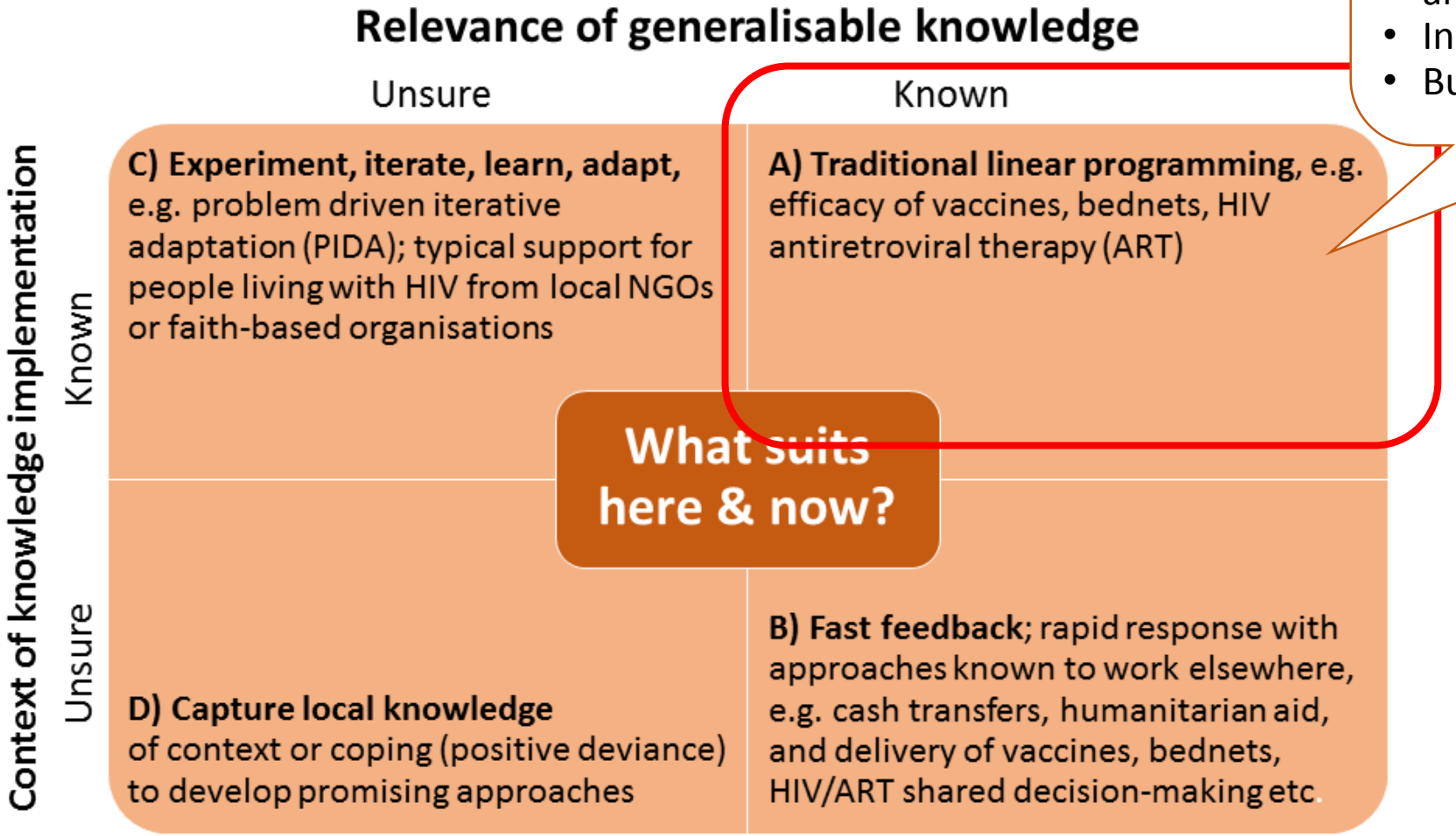


- Access to evidence libraries
- Packaging evidence to suit each audience
- Building evidence literacy and 'intelligent customers'
- Incentives to use research
- Building social norms

Decisions about contexts that are understood and informed by generalisable evidence,

decision-makers engaged in **programming as a technical exercise** by

✓ **Facilitating access to research evidence**, (e.g. communication strategies and evidence repositories) if ALSO enhancing decision-makers' opportunity and motivation to use evidence

✓ **Building decision-makers' skills to access and make sense of evidence** (e.g. critical appraisal training programmes), if ALSO enhancing both capability and motivation

✓ **Fostering changes to decision-making structures and processes** by formalising and embedding one or more of the other mechanisms of change within existing structures and processes (such as evidence-on-demand services integrating push, user-pull and exchange approaches)

Langer L, Tripney J, Gough D (2016). *The Science of Using Science: Researching the Use of Research Evidence in Decision-Making.* London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education, University College London

Decisions about contexts that are understood and informed by generalisable evidence,

decision-makers engaged in **programming as a technical exercise** by

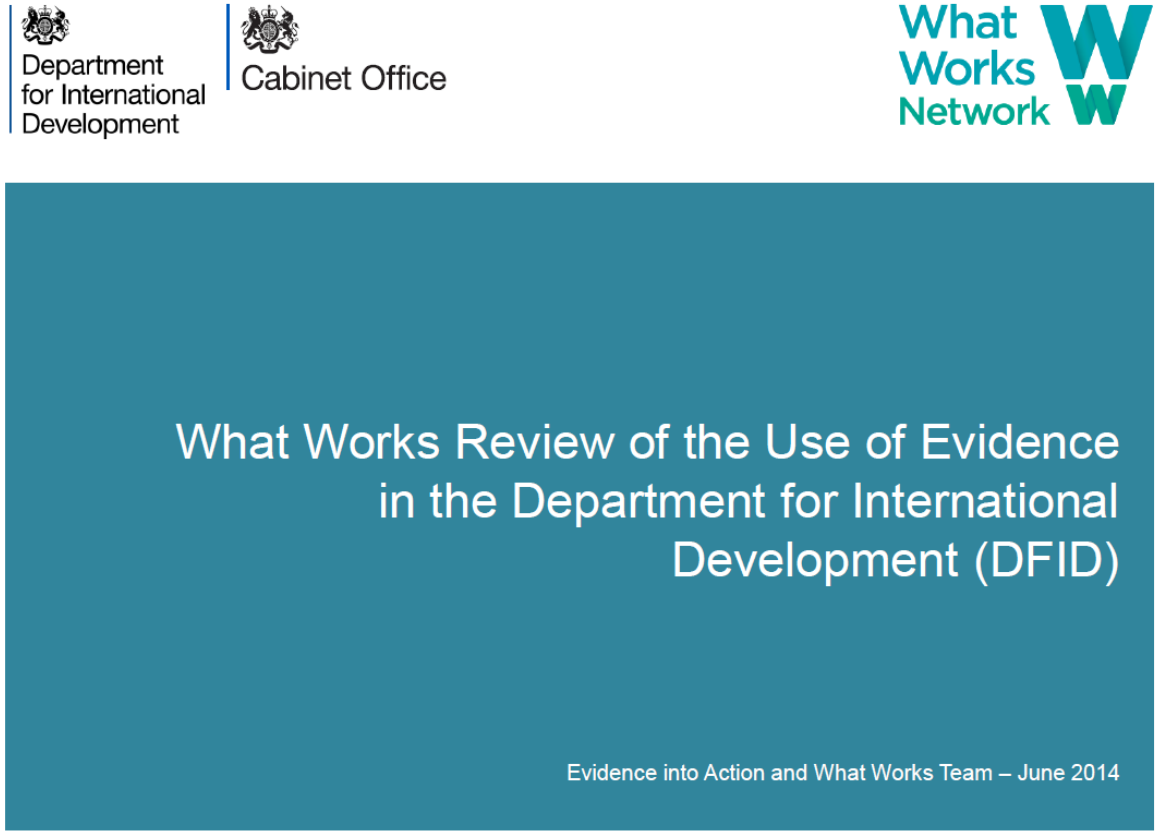
✓**Facilitating collective decision-making** by small, well-facilitated committees (6-12) with time to share and debate relevant evidence, making the most of constructive conflict

✓**Research organisations embedded in networks** have good reputations, research capacity, quality and quantity of connections to decision-makers

Oliver, S., Hollingworth, K., Briner, B., Swann, C., Hinds K., Roche, C. (2018). Effective and efficient committee work: A Systematic overview of multidisciplinary literatures. Evidence Base, 2018 (2), 1-21.

Koon A, Rao K, Tran N, and Ghaffar A (2013) Embedding health policy and systems research into decision-making processes in low- and middle-income countries. Health Research Policy and
Systems 11(30),

“We challenge DFID to better evidence generation, transmission, adoption”



Making decisions

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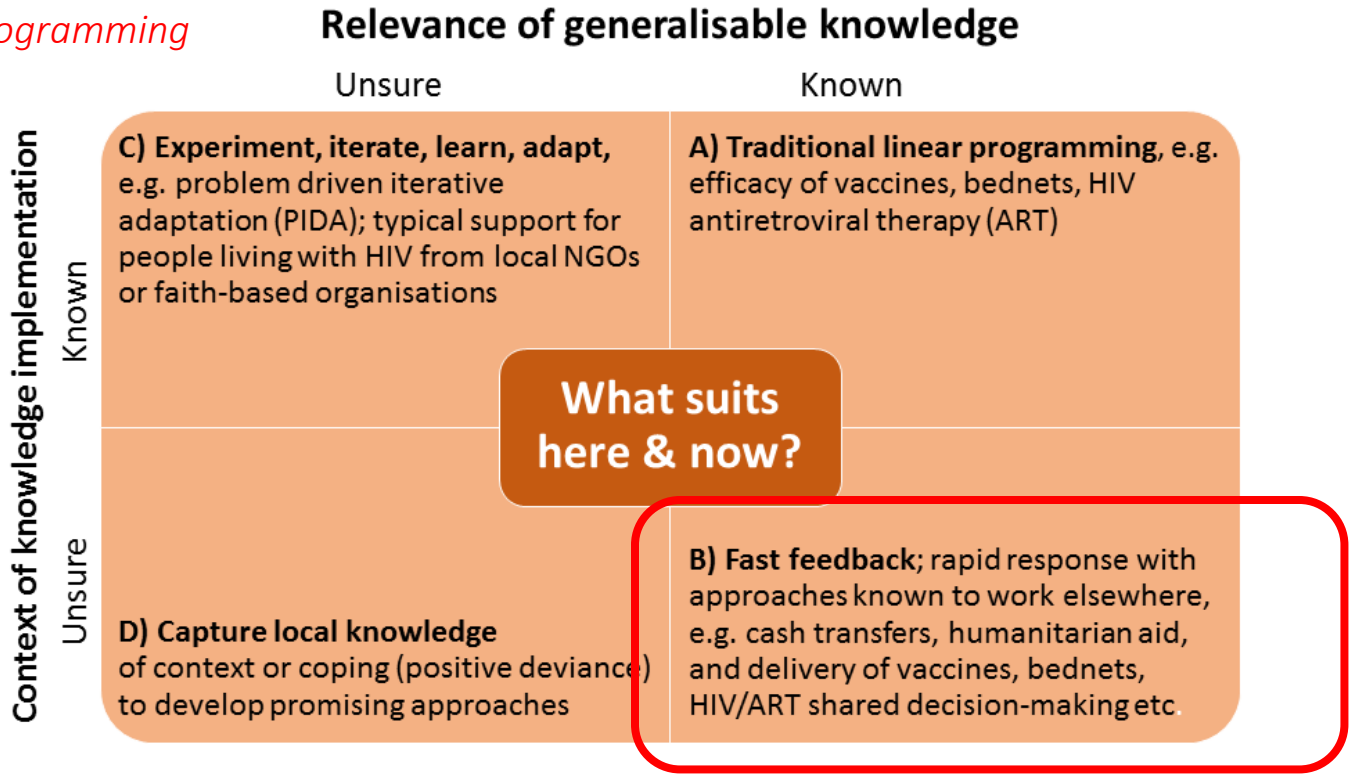

Relevant evidence IS available in the libraries,
BUT:

- Evidence 'context sensitive' and implementation unpredictable
- More people required to understand context of knowledge implementation

Making decisions

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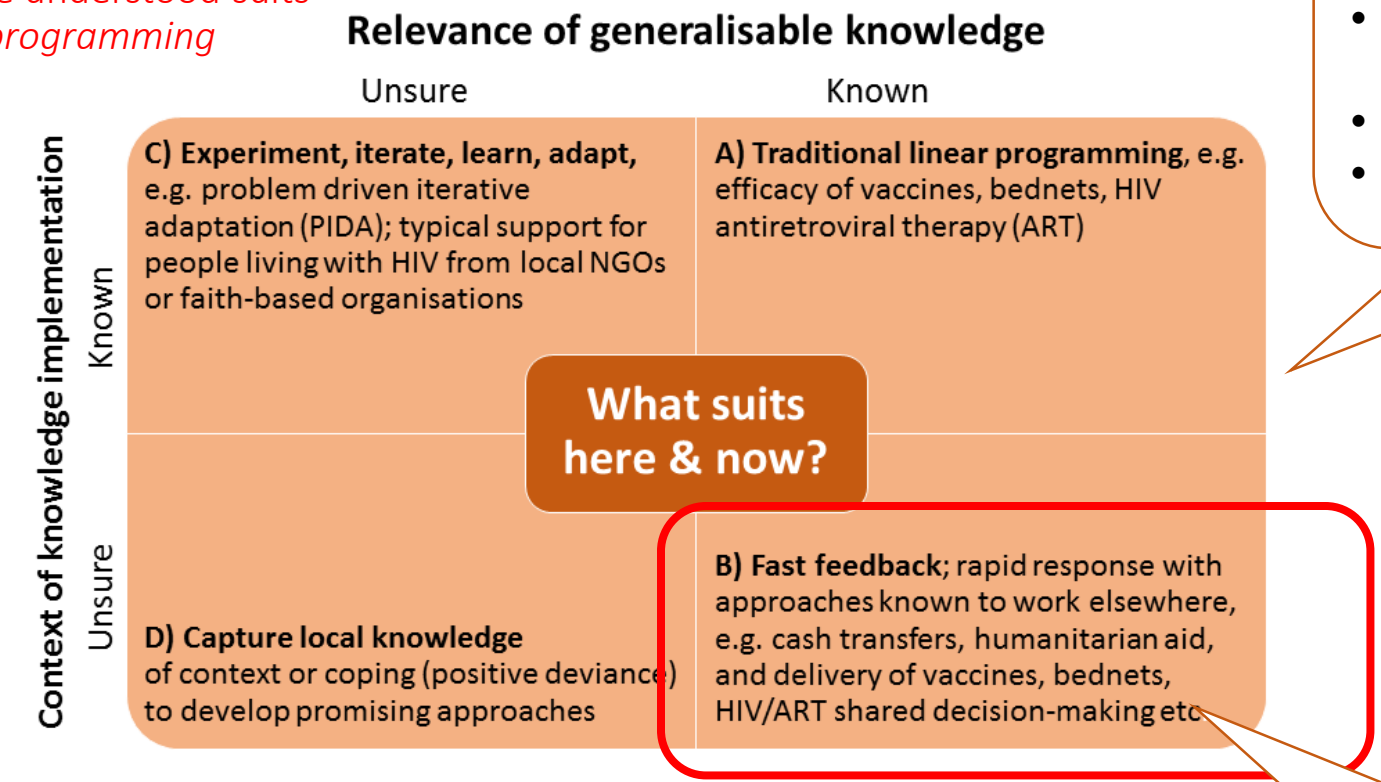
Traditional linear programming



- Access to evidence libraries
- Packaging evidence to suit each audience
- Building evidence literacy and 'intelligent customers'
- Career incentives
- Building social norms

Relevant evidence IS available in the libraries,
BUT:

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- More people required to understand context of knowledge implementation

Plus:

- Inviting regular feedback
- Collective deliberation about current state of knowledge and implications for action

Decisions in unfamiliar contexts informed by generalisable evidence

stakeholders engaged in fast feedback and adaptation by

- ✓ **Refining theories of change** with local stakeholders
- ✓**Adapting international guidance** for local use
- ✓**Knowledge brokering** to support organisational change
- ✓ **Making technical decisions** by committee
- ✓**Better complementarity** of community efforts and national programmes

Directly observed therapy for TB failed when…

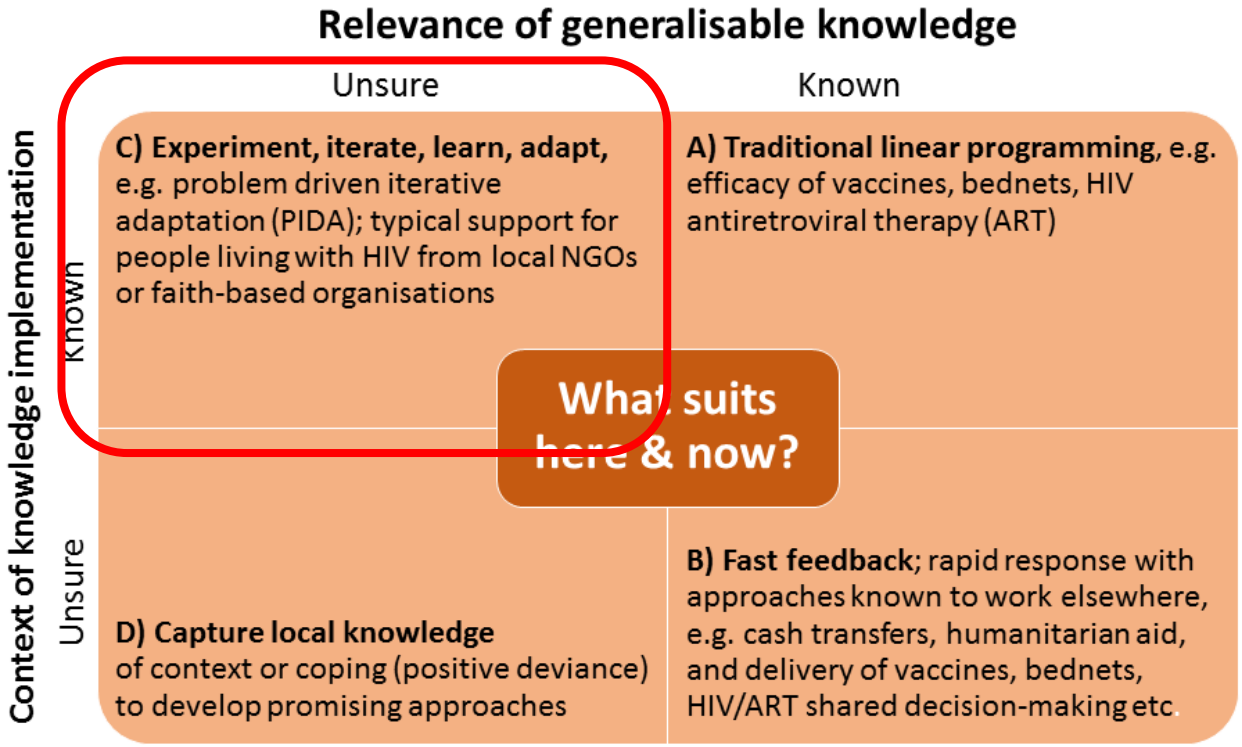
- Practitioners rationed incentives to those they considered most deprived and therefore most deserving;
- Patients found the timing of the incentive (a midday meal) and treatment inconvenient; and
- Civil conflict displaced most of the local population and prevented clinic attendance.

Andrew Kivori, 53, receives directly observed treatment (DOT) from a World Vision Liaison Officer at the Port Moresby General Hospital (Photo: Tanya Hisanan/World Vision)

Lutge EE, Wiysonge CS, Knight SE, Volmink J, Sinclair D. (2015). Incentives and enablers to improve adherence in tuberculosis. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Issue 7. Art. No.: CD007952. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007952.pub2.

Making decisions

in the absence of generalisable evidence
where context is understood suits action research

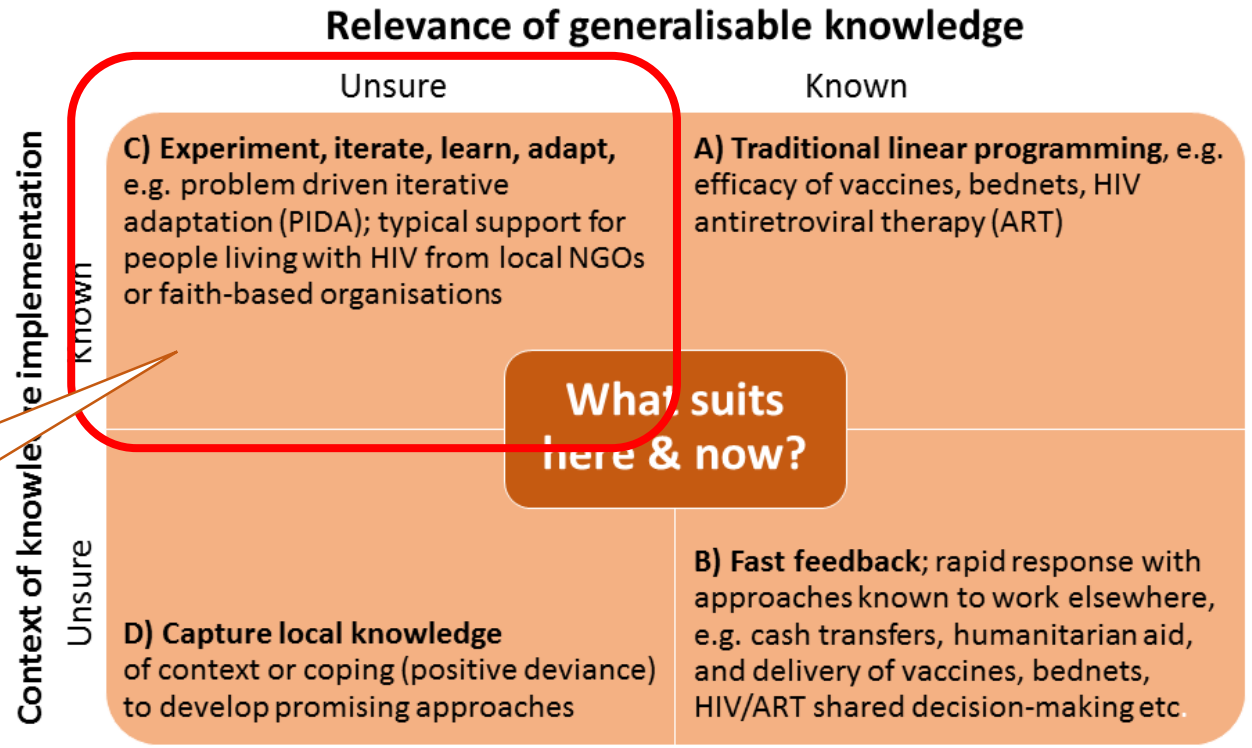


Relevant evidence IS NOT available in the libraries,
BUT:

- Context of knowledge implementation is known

Making decisions

in the absence of generalisable evidence
where context is understood suits action research



- Pooling knowledge about the local context, and solutions, already held by local organisations
- Developing knowledge and solutions with them

Relevant evidence IS NOT available in the libraries, BUT:

- Context of knowledge implementation is known

Decisions about familiar contexts lacking generalisable evidence,
stakeholders engaged in trial and error by

- ✓ **Stakeholder mapping**
- ✓ **Beneficiary feedback**
- ✓ **Accountability mechanisms**
- ✓ **Aid agency coordination**
- ✓ **Community based participatory research**

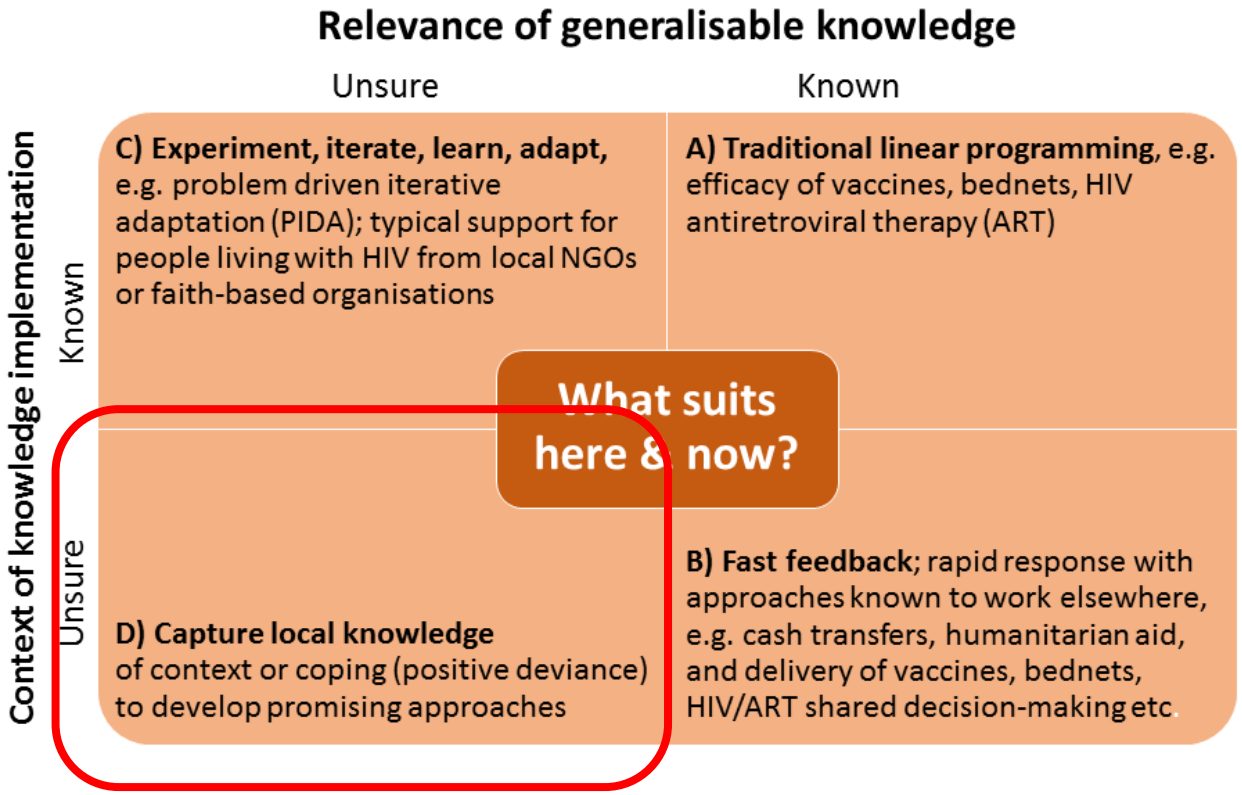
Example: Community accountability and inclusive services

Accountability ‘interventions promoted inclusive service delivery… through the enhancement of skills, knowledge and access to resources which enabled citizens to take incremental steps along the
ladder of power and strengthened the voice of some of the most excluded people in Africa.

Lynch U, McGrellis S, Dutschke M, Anderson M, Arnsberger P, Macdonald G. (2013) What is the evidence that the establishment or use of community accountability mechanisms and processes improves inclusive service delivery by governments, donors and NGOs to communities? EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London, London.

Making decisions

in the absence of generalisable evidence and
when context is NOT understood suits mobilising local knowledge



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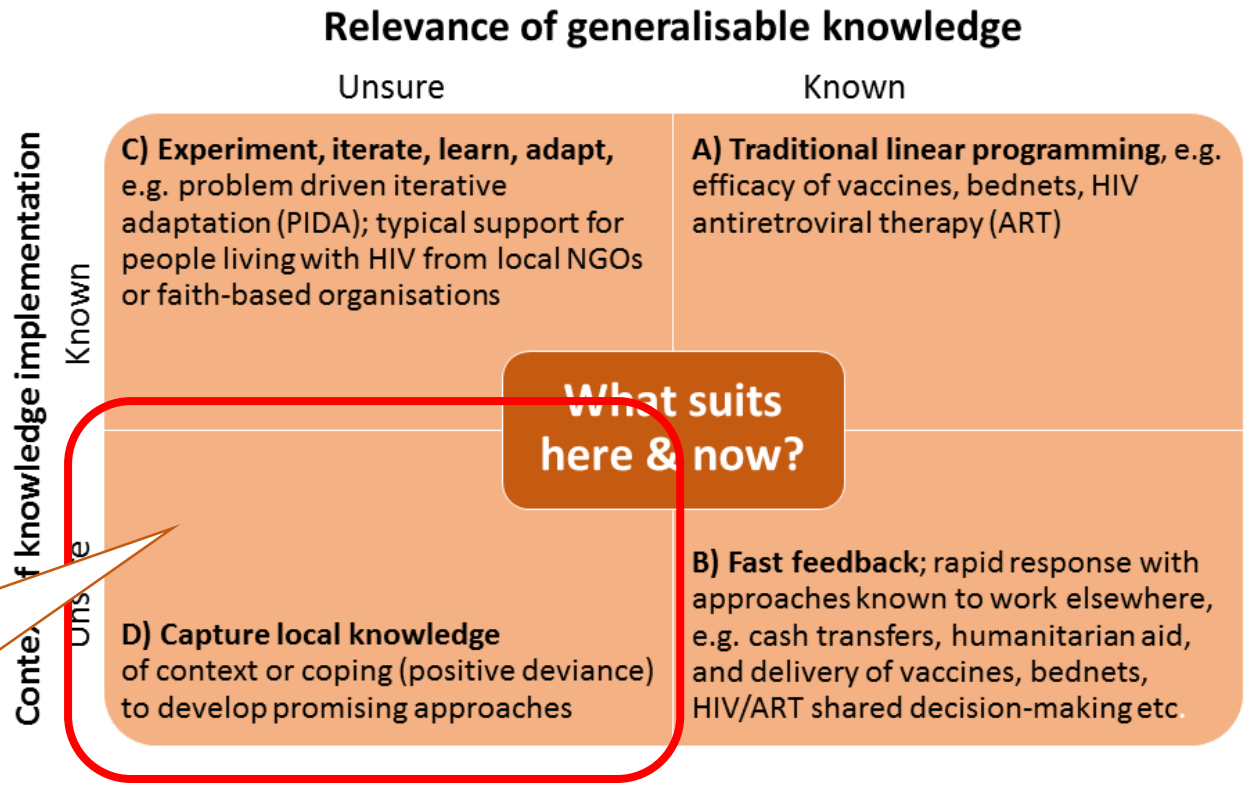


- Pooling knowledge about the local context held by individual practitioners and community members

Decisions in unfamiliar contexts lacking generalisable evidence,
stakeholders engaged in mobilising local knowledge by

- ✓ **Gathering and applying local, tacit knowledge**

  Capturing their insights about factors influencing their lives,

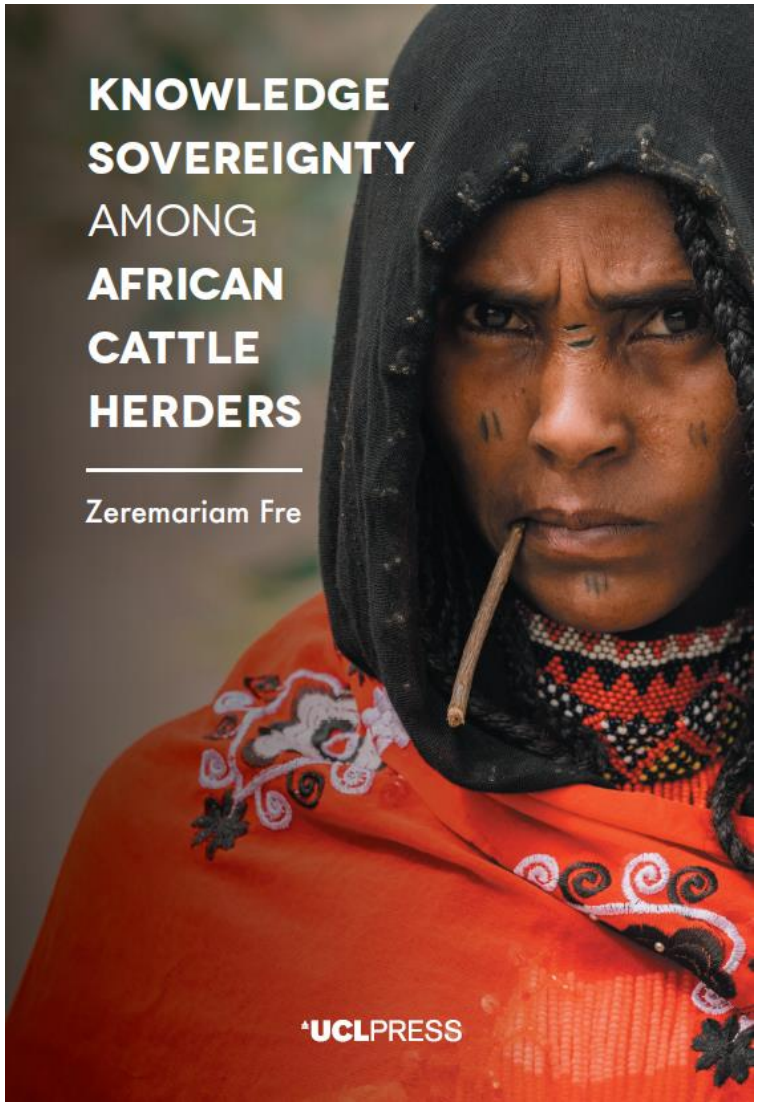
  Recognising exceptional instances of coping with challenging circumstances (positive deviance).

  Participatory processes for recreating and nurturing local knowledge in crisis-affected communities

- ✓ **Remote programming practices:** remote control, remote management, remote support, remote partnership

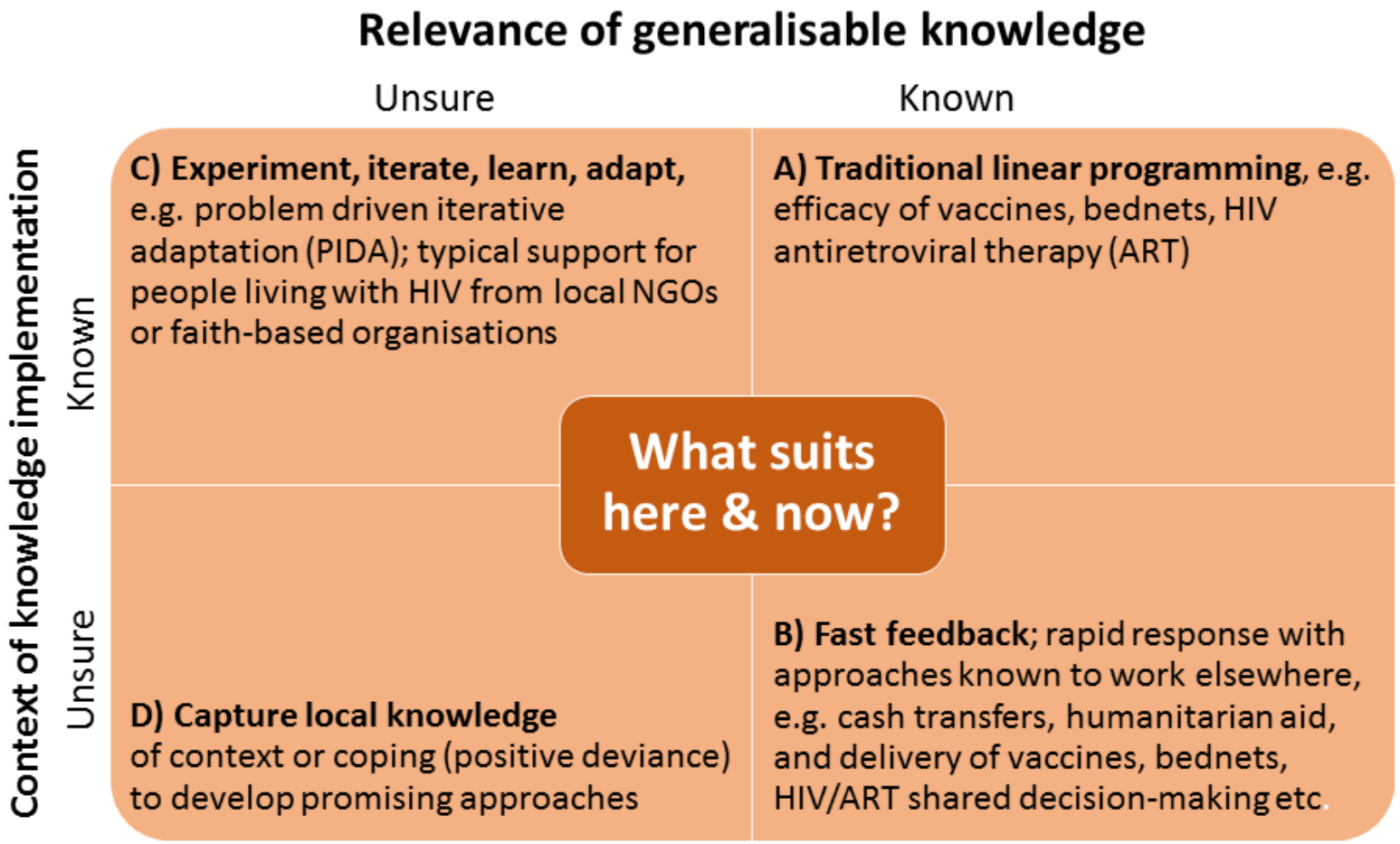
Example: herders' knowledge

Pastoral knowledge is embedded in the cultural, spiritual, political and social system of pastoral societies. The cultural aspect is particularly important; the knowledge is often transmitted orally and passed down to each generation through stories, songs and other rituals, where cattle are revered.

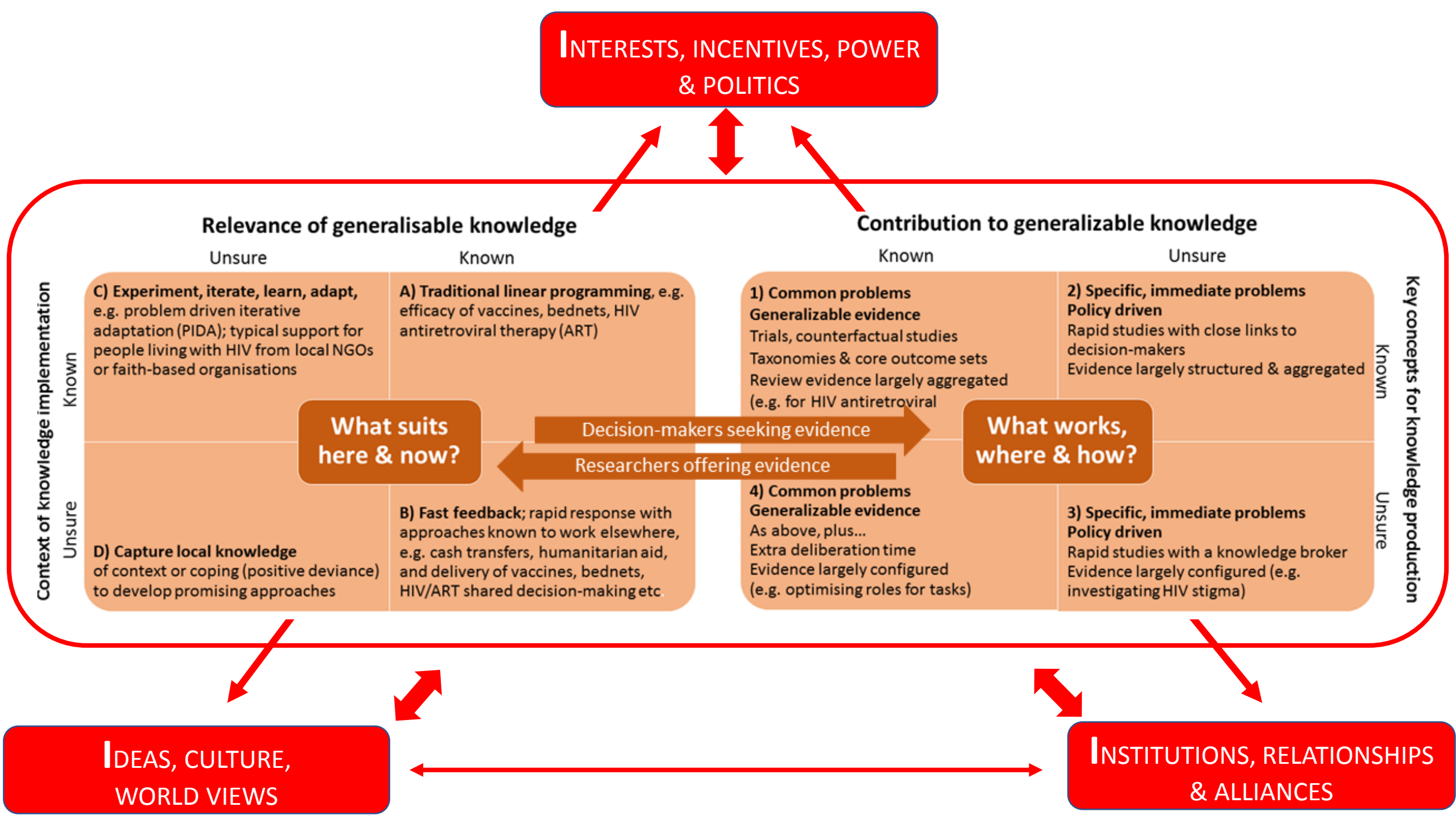


Fre Z (2018) Knowledge Sovereignty among African Cattle Herders. UCL Press, London.

Making decisions



Learning from political science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Every day political analysis

Understanding interests
Understanding change

Desk work
Team discussion
Ask an expert

DLP
DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Everyday Political Analysis

January 2016

David Hudson DLP - University College London
Heather Marquette DLP - University of Birmingham
Sam Waldock DFID - Rwanda

In this short note we introduce a framework for thinking about politics and power called Everyday Political Analysis (EPA). EPA is for anyone who is convinced that politics and power matter, but feels less sure of how to work out what they mean for their programs. This note introduces a stripped-back political analysis framework – stripped down to its barest bones – leaving only the essentials needed to help frontline staff make quick but politically-informed decisions.

The political environment can kill a program, or make it thrive. In Zambia a technically sound donor health program was wrecked by a politician who restructured the health system to extend his power rather than to deliver services. In Uganda a donor livelihoods program was closed early because the implementers were more interested in personal enrichment than helping the poor. Making sense of the political context – and being able to use this understanding to make more politically savvy decisions – is essential to improving the effectiveness of development programs.

Where are we? A mirror, not a 'God's eye view'

A critical component to any political analysis is to include ourselves – especially if we are likely to be part of the incentive structure facing others, because of budget, diplomacy or expertise.

But more than this, it's critical to reflect on our own interests and incentives – to understand where we are coming from and our own room for manoeuvre. It would always be advisable to conduct your own internal political analysis – not just look 'outwards'.

How can busy frontline staff make the kinds of quick but politically smart decisions that will make their programs succeed? PEA training and/or a formal PEA study help, but many staff still feel under-equipped to interpret fluid political contexts outside of the classroom when making frequent and fast decisions.

Everyday political analysis helps address a gap in the work of frontline staff: how to understand the changing political context and make politically-informed decisions on a day-to-day basis. The average program staff member is faced with having to make multiple politically-informed judgments every day, often quickly. The EPA framework provides a condensed checklist to help conduct quick political analysis and make this an accessible part of ordinary business practice.

There are **two 'steps' for everyday political analysis**.

- **Step 1: Understanding interests:** What makes people tick?
- **Step 2: Understanding change:** What space and capacity do people have to effect change?

For each step a series of yes/no questions helps unpack what is going on.

Do not think of people as individuals – no person is an island

There is a well-known effect in psychology called 'attribution bias' where the observer tends to describe others' failings in terms of individual error: 'they are poor because they made bad decisions'. In contrast, we recognise the role of context for ourselves: 'I am poor because I was unlucky or the situation conspired against me'.

EPA starts from the person we want to understand – our counterpart, a bureaucrat, activist, politician or traditional leader. It can also be an organisation or group of individuals or a coalition, though note that any grouping of individuals will contain its own politics of competing objectives and interests. The important thing is to understand their context – the pressures they face from others and the rules within which they have to work.

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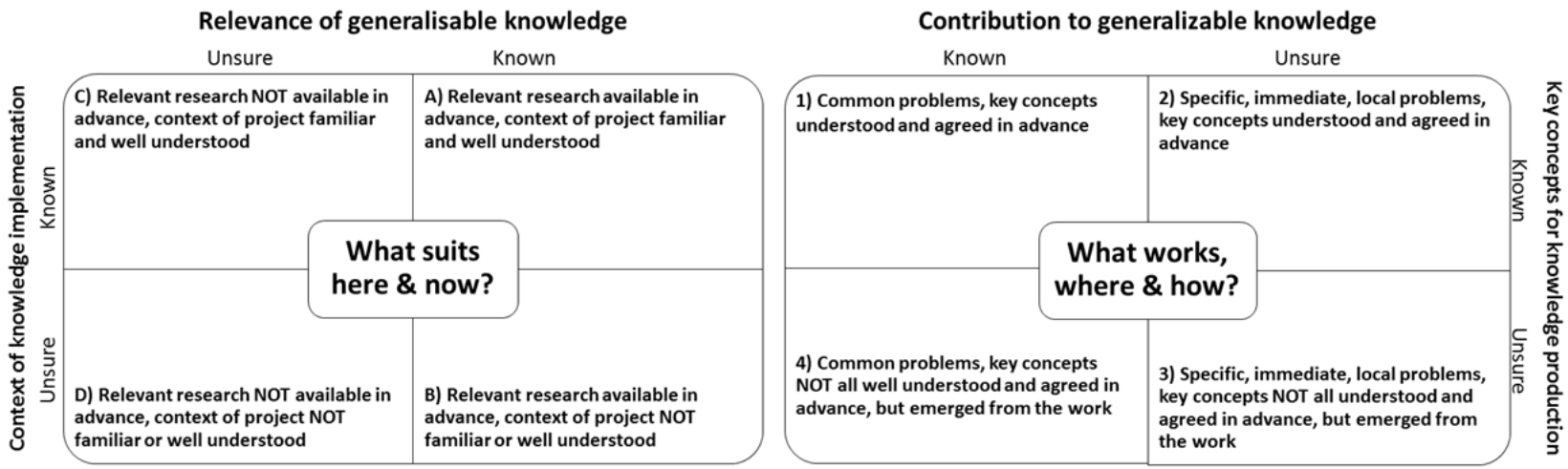
Conclusions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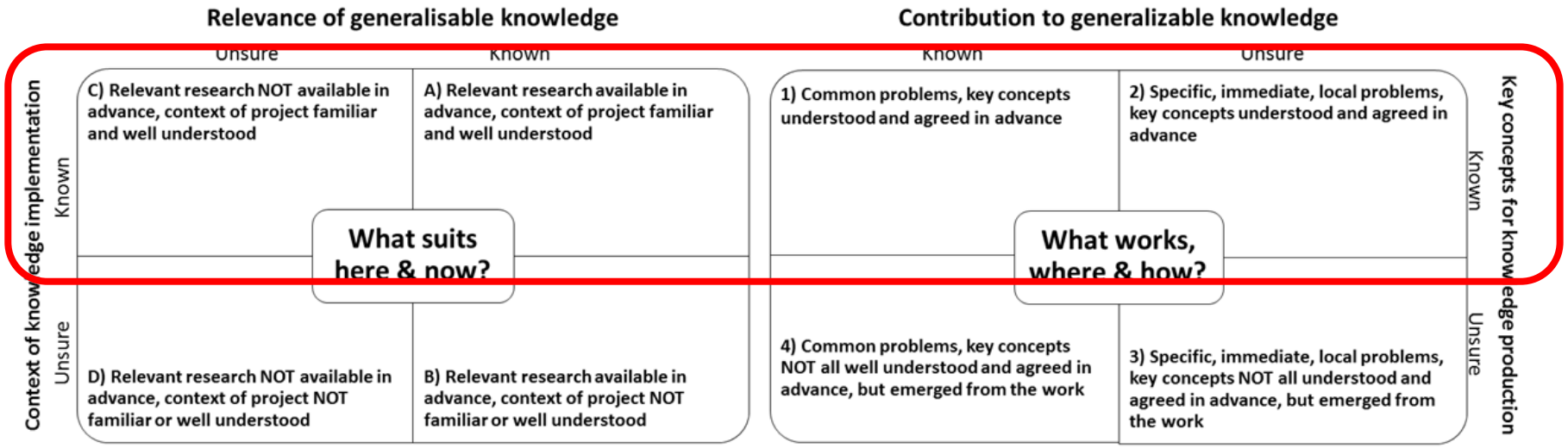
What suits here & now?
D) Relevant research NOT available in advance, context of project NOT familiar or well understood
B) Relevant research available in advance, context of project NOT familiar or well understood
Contribution to generalizable knowledge
Known
Unsure
Key concepts for knowledge production
Known
Unsure
1) Common problems, key concepts understood and agreed in advance
2) Specific, immediate, local problems, key concepts understood and agreed in advance
What works, where & how?
4) Common problems, key concepts NOT all well understood and agreed in advance, but emerged from the work
3) Specific, immediate, local problems, key concepts NOT all understood and agreed in advance, but emerged from the work

When context is clear and agreed in advance



When meaning of context known and agreed before implementation

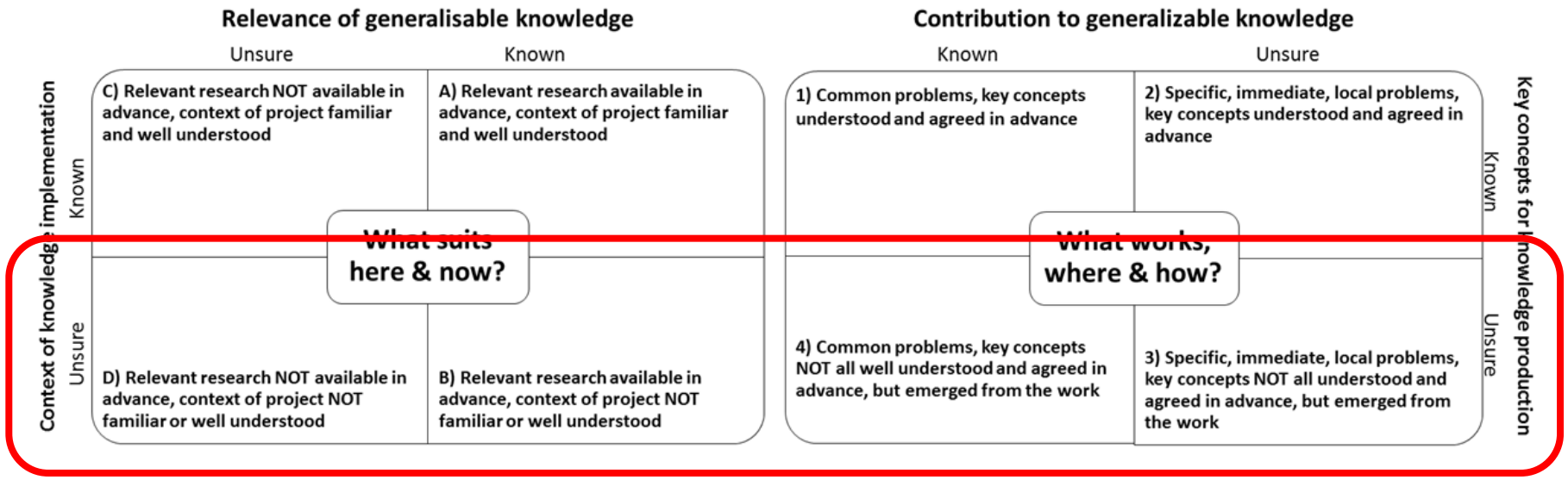
When meaning of key concepts known and agreed before research

Methods of choice

- Small numbers of stakeholders, drawn from key organisations
- e.g. Committee membership, key informant interviews, partnering stakeholder organisations

Limitations: may miss important voices

When context is unclear, variable or contested in advance



When meaning of context unknown or contested before implementation

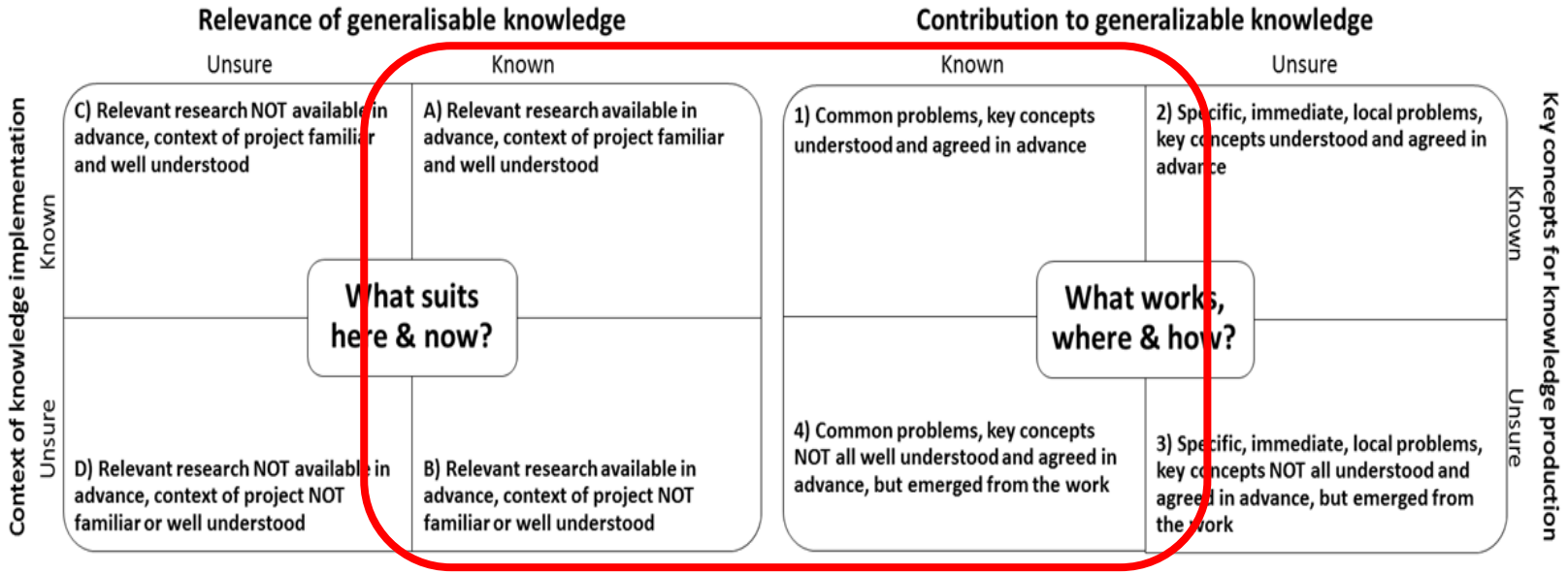
When meaning of key concepts unknown or contested before research

Methods of choice

- Large numbers of stakeholders, selected for diversity
- e.g. Widespread consultation, facilitating discussion and deliberation, capturing mutual learning

Limitations: may miss important deadlines

At the centre of this landscape

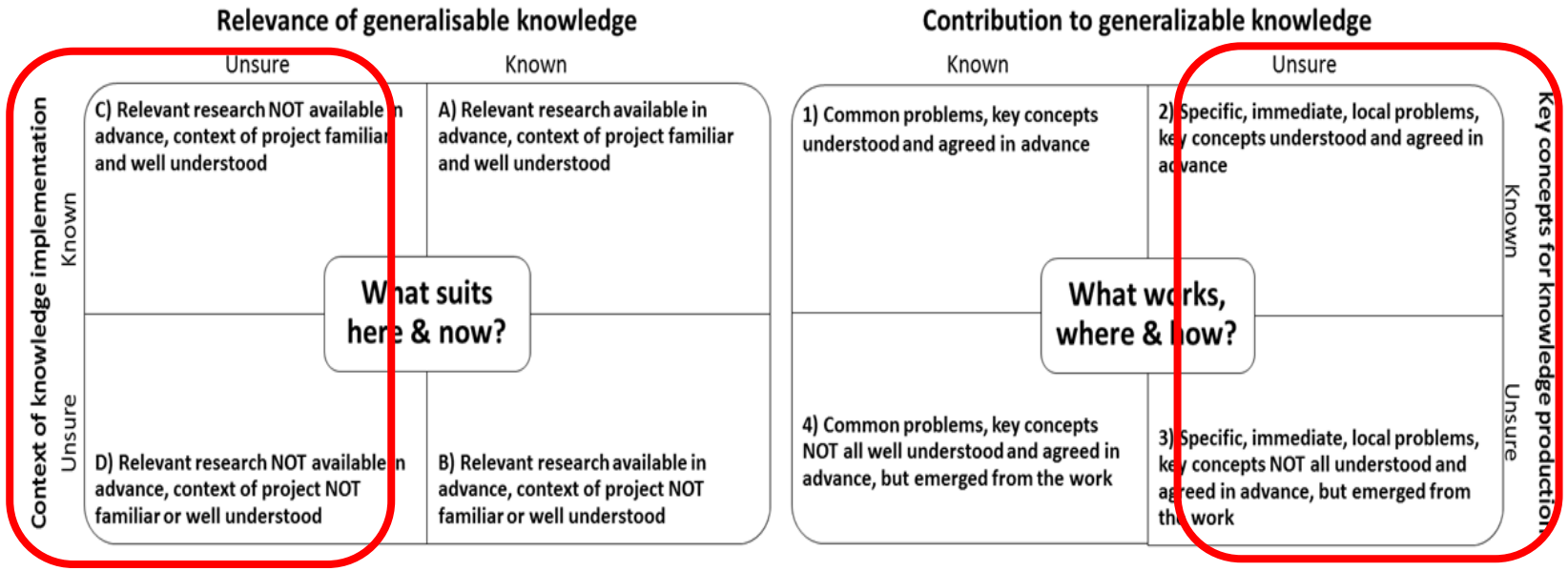


Decisions tend to be made by (inter)national organisations, who

- Particularly value technically rigorous research, and
- Emphasise how the evidence is appraised technically rather than how stakeholders interact to make sense of it

Limitations: may be lead by the evidence more than the problem

At the margins of this landscape



Decisions tend to be made by local organisations and practitioners, who

- Particularly value locally relevant research, and
- Emphasise the influence of politics on how decisions are made and implemented rather than the technical appraisal of evidence

Limitations: may ignore relevant evidence generated elsewhere

Another problem

This is the perspective of evidence 'geeks'

Evidence geeks have a

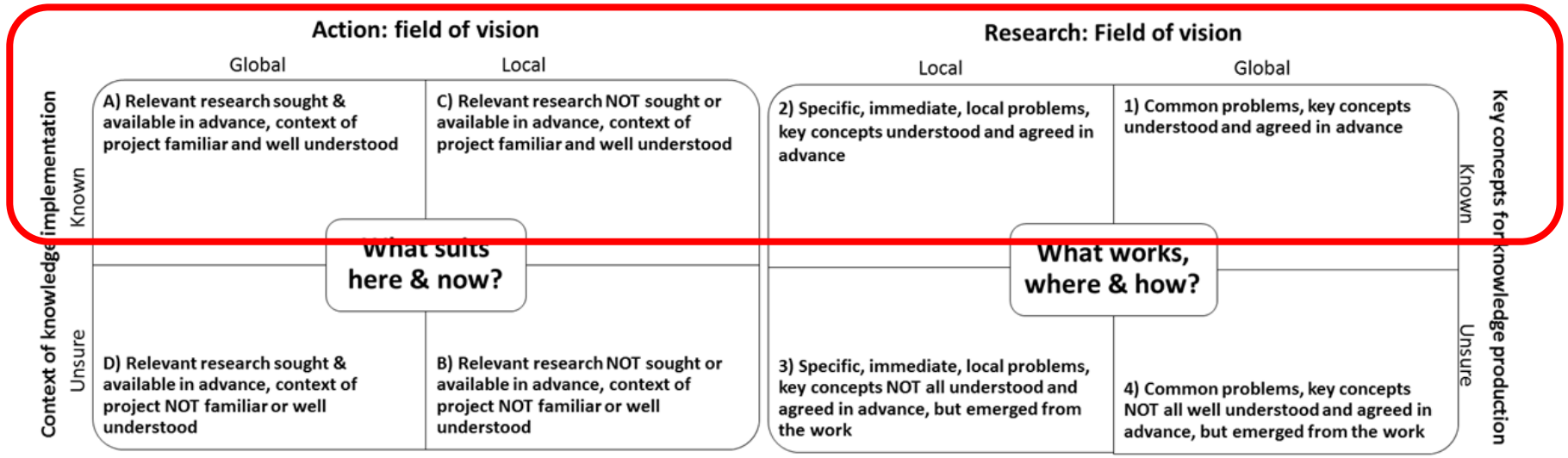
- Panoramic vision of global evidence

Development practitioners have a

- Zoom focus on setting of interest

So let's turn the landscape inside out…

When context is clear and agreed in advance



When meaning of context known and agreed before implementation

When meaning of key concepts known and agreed before research

Methods of choice

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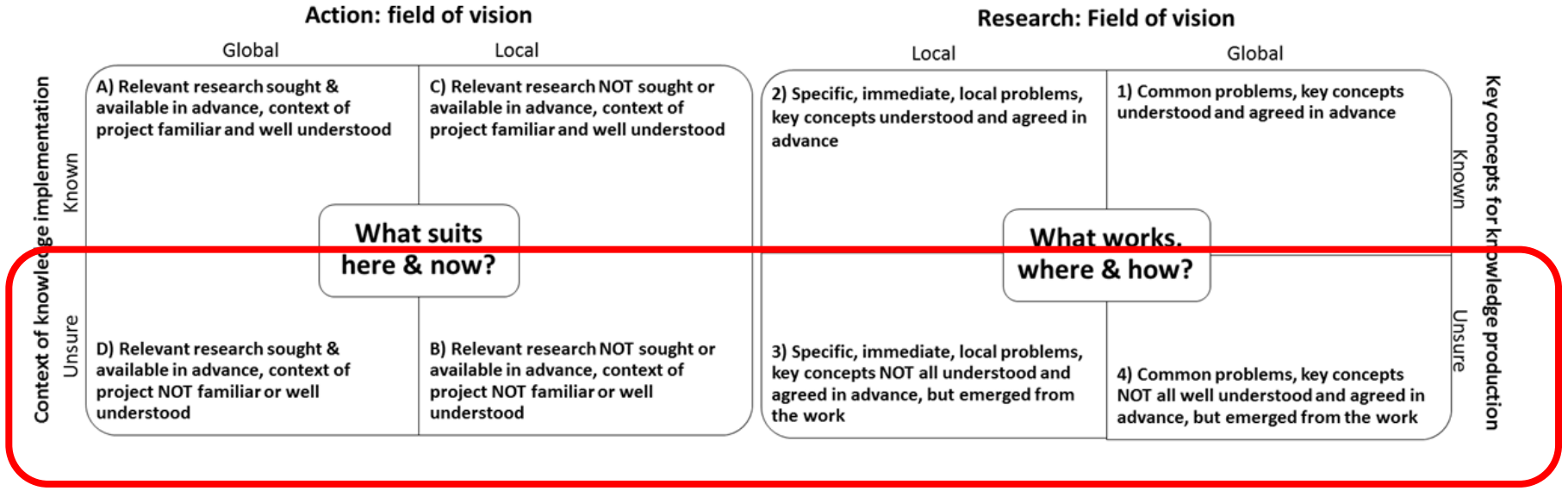

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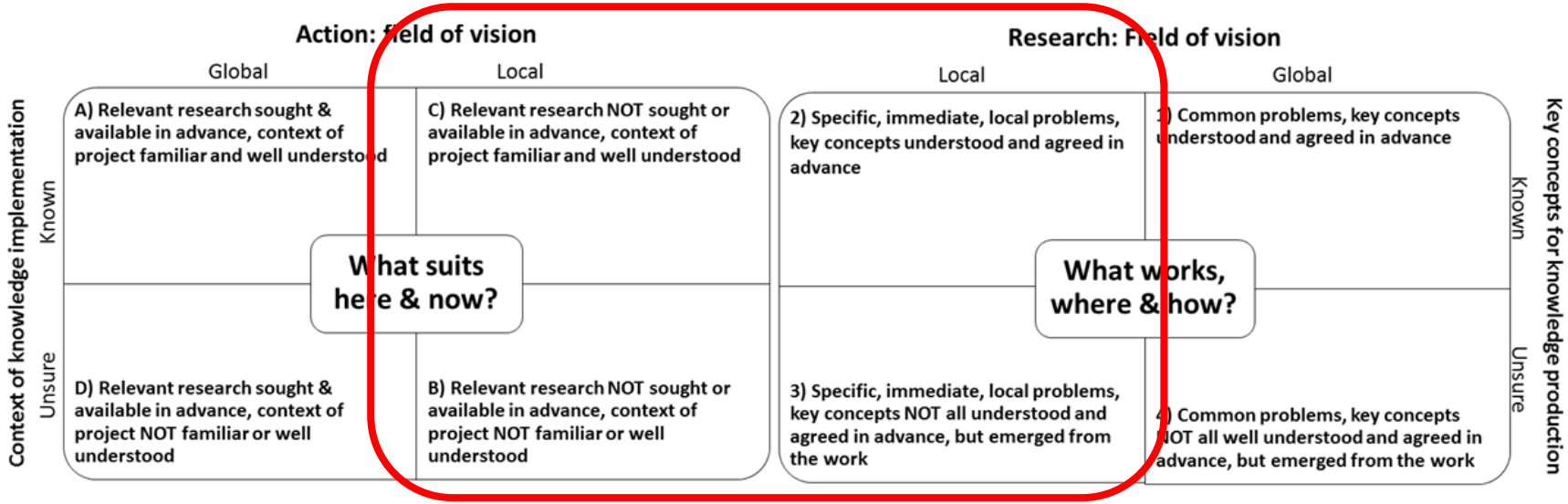
At the centre of this landscape

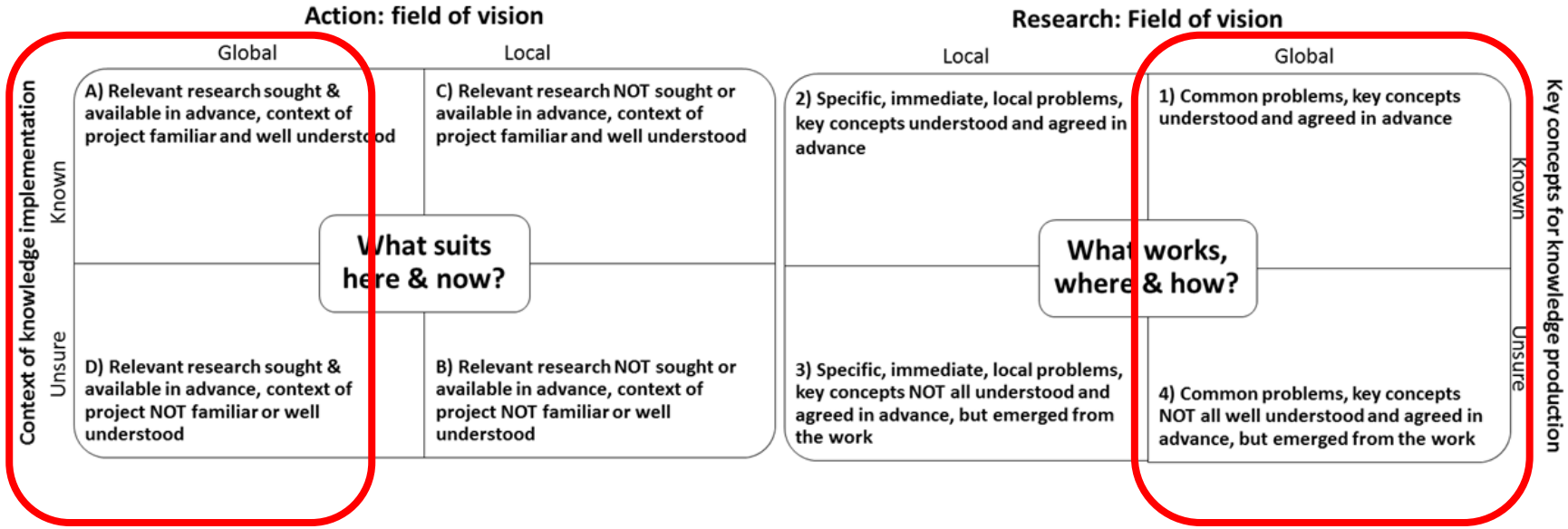


Decisions tend to be made by local organisations and practitioners, who

- Particularly value locally relevant research, and
- Emphasise the influence of politics on how decisions are made and implemented rather than the technical appraisal of evidence
- Often have most influence on the ground

Limitations: may ignore relevant evidence generated elsewhere

At the margins of this landscape



Decisions tend to be made by (inter)national organisations, who

- Particularly value technically rigorous research, and
- Emphasise how the evidence is appraised technically rather than how stakeholders interact to make sense of it

Limitations: may be lead by the evidence more than the problem

Next steps

After this taster session

- One-to-one interviews with evidence ‘geeks’ and development or humanitarian practitioners
- Refining the framework
- Developing tools to support thoughtful choices of stakeholder engagement methods
- Signpost evidence and tools

If you’d like to offer your expertise through a one-to-one interview please contact me: sandy.oliver@ucl.ac.uk

Original working paper

Oliver S, Roche C, Stewart R, Bangpan M, Dickson K, Pells K, Cartwright N, Gough D, Hargreaves J (2018) Stakeholder engagement for development impact evaluation and evidence synthesis. Centre for Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL), London.

sandy.oliver@ucl.ac.uk

CONTACT CEDIL

cedilprogramme.org
E: cedil@cedilprogramme.org
T: +44(0) 20 7958 8136
: @CEDILprogramme
: cedilprogramme