



# Feinstein International Center

Strengthening the humanity and dignity of people in crisis through knowledge and practice

**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

# FIC: What?

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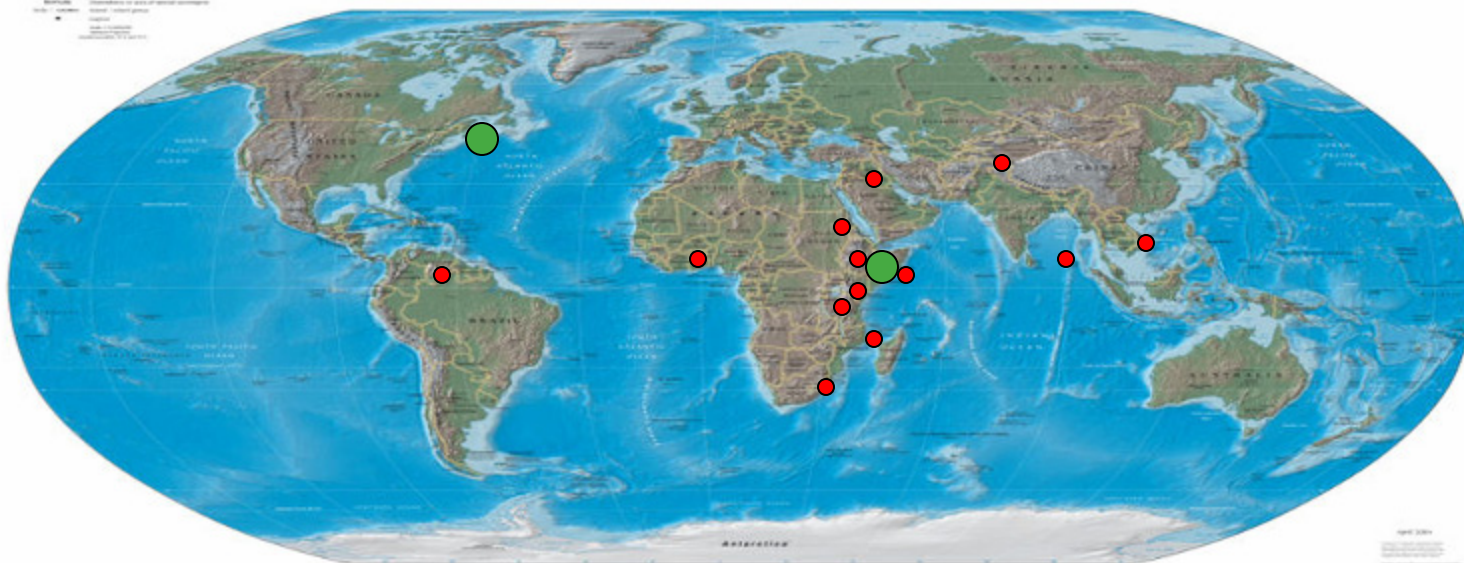
- Lives and Livelihoods
- Protection and Rights
- Politics and Policy



# FIC: Where & How?

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Physical Map of the World, April 2004



**Research > Teaching > Institutional Change**

# The Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power and Perceptions

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## Them & Us

Universality Terrorism Integration Security

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# HA2015 case studies

Afghanistan  
Sudan  
Northern Uganda  
Burundi  
Liberia  
Colombia

# Methodology

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- Evidence-based. Local perceptions on key humanitarian issues
- “Views” and “judgments” on the effectiveness and impact of HA
- “Meaning” rather than facts
- Views of aid agencies in the field and at HQ also sought

# Methodology (ctd.)

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- Focus groups (40), socially stratified
- 700+ persons interviewed
- Agency interviews
- Electronic questionnaire
- Survey tools at [fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)



Teachers, Ghorband, Afghanistan

# 1. Universal Humanitarianism?

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# Findings

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- H' values resonate in all countries and cultures
- The humanitarian enterprise is seen as northern and western

*“Aid workers from abroad do not take sides” (beneficiary Sudan)*



# Findings

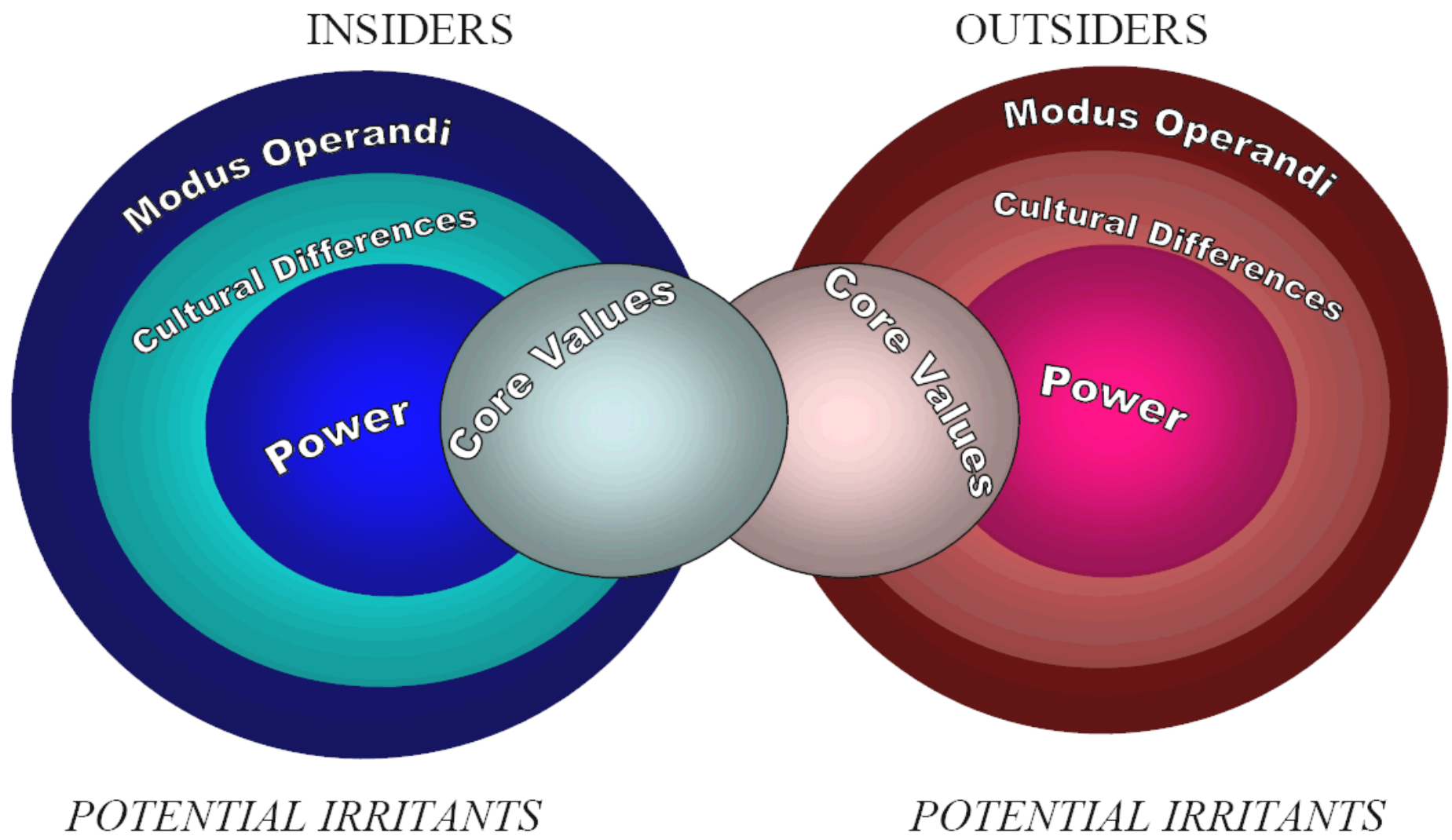
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- Poor accountability, bad technique and behavior are the greatest causes of mistrust and discontent

*“They show up, do an assessment and we never see them again” (villager, Afghanistan)*



# TENSION BETWEEN INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS



Core values appear to be largely congruent but  
differences exist because of fundamental differences

# Findings

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- Humanitarianism is a dominant discourse
- Local NGOs forced to mimic Western NGOs.
- “You” can join “us”



# Findings

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- Much humanitarian action is unrecognized because it does not fit our image.
- “Other” humanitarianisms save and protect lives too



# Conclusions

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- Humanitarianism is unnecessarily self-defining.
- Competence matters.
- The H' enterprise is ill equipped to deal with asymmetric war situations
- Humanitarians are often guilty by association



# Conclusions (ctd.)

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- Recognize the contributions of others
- Promote a more inclusive notion of universality
- We need bigger ears and smaller mouths

# Research issues for the future

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- How to relate to militant groups (Hizbollah, Hamas, Tamil tigers) with effective community-based humanitarian capabilities?
- Professionalism/institutionalization vs. flexibility/cultural sensitivity
- Do the universality issues also apply in “natural disaster” situations?



## 2. Terrorism & Counter Terrorism...

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...and its impact on HA

Big T: terrorism with a global reach

little t: terrorism as a daily local reality

# Findings

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- Small **t** terrorism is a reality and driver of livelihood distress in many conflicts
- The connections of small **t** to big **T** terrorism are often tenuous



# Findings

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- Terrorism is NOT a useful analytical concept
  - The nomenclature creates distortions
  - The context of GWOT shrinks humanitarian space
  - T label blocks dialogue

*“The shadow of GWOT has become a major defining factor in the operating environment of aid agencies” (NGO, AFG)*



# Findings

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- Terrorism puts states on the defensive
  - “justifies” curbing civil liberties
  - Acts as a distraction from structural issues
  - A law enforcement approach to terrorism is less threatening to HA than a “war”



*“The readiness of the government to use the terrorist label has affected the ability of NGOs to operate freely in the North”  
(NGO, Uganda)*

# Findings

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- Both terrorism and counterterrorism directly impact humanitarian action:
  - Denial of access
  - Attempts to manipulate & control
  - Polarizes debate: with or against?



*“The argument for humanitarian space in Afghanistan has been lost. It has been trampled by the political imperative” (donor representative, Kabul)*

# Conclusions

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- GWOT tends to incorporate HA into the northern political and security agenda
- It increases the need for independent HA to assist and protect vulnerable civilians

# Issues for the future

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- H actors need to understand conflict drivers
- States should nuance use of T label
- H actors need to be more professional, politically savvy and creative in GWOT contexts...
- and more assertive in defending principles

# 3. Coherence

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## Humanitarianism & political/military agendas





# Findings

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- The political-humanitarian relationship is far from a collaboration among equals: in the post 9/11 world, politics trumps humanitarianism



# Findings

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- Integrated missions are the new UN orthodoxy
- Humanitarian and HR components are subordinated to political diktats
- Our case studies document negative impacts on HA



*“The pluses of integration are greatly outpaced by the minuses” (UN staffer, Burundi)*

# Findings

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- In high profile crises, UN HA and HR action is more likely to be instrumentalized
- NGOs are excluded or lose faith in UN coordination mechanisms

*“In Liberia the integration of OCHA into the UN mission was a failure for nearly everybody concerned” (aid worker, Monrovia)*

# Issues for the future

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- H agencies are interested in the success of peace processes and want their voices to be heard in support of political solutions
- Inside or outside the tent? Being inside has not guaranteed equal billing for humanitarian concerns.

# 4. Security



# Findings

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- High profile crises add to internationals' risk: in AFG and Iraq, no longer taboo to attack aid workers
- National staff pay the highest price: risk is passed on to them (79% of victims) (Source Stoddard, Harmer & Haver 2006)



# Findings

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Security brings the four “petals” together.

The security of civilians and aid workers is affected by:

- The perceived lack of universality of HA
- The conduct of T&CT measures
- The extent to which HA is integrated into political frameworks

# Findings

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- Western association of humanitarianism manipulated to increase threats
- In asymmetric wars, HA itself is seen as asymmetric/one-sided to its own peril

5 MSF workers killed in Afghanistan



Fazil Ahmad  
Afghanistan

Egil Tynaes  
Norway

Helene de Beir  
Belgium

Pim Kwint  
Holland

Besmilla.h  
Afghanistan

IN MEMORIAM



# Findings

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- The \$ cost of security is increasing and influencing programming decisions
- Linking local conflict to GWOT reduces staff security



# En route to 2015...

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- Lack of universality is a perennial but un-prioritized issue
- Terrorism is a more pervasive threat to HA than generally realized
- The integration agenda is often advanced at humanitarianism's peril
- Insecurity is a significant limitation, particularly in high-profile contexts

# HA 2015: Next steps

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- Phase II: Sept 06-Aug 07
- Roll-out of results in North and South
- Additional case studies: OPT, Iraq, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, DRC
- Focus also on “natural” disaster situations
- Addressing the “So what?” issue: agency consultations, policy papers, programming guidance, international conference
- ***Comments and suggestions welcome!***



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