



## The Alan Shawn Feinstein International Famine Center



### The Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power, and Perceptions Methodology for Field Research

#### Overview

The Tufts International Famine Center is undertaking research organized around key issues that are likely to challenge the humanitarian enterprise during the next ten years. Four such issues have been identified and fleshed out in individual work programs: the supposed universality of humanitarian action, the implications of terrorism, the search for coherence between humanitarian and political agendas, and the security of humanitarian personnel. These four topics are being approached as individual “petals” which, taken together, constitute a single flower. The research is structured so as to examine each of the issues in detail and to explore their relation to each other.

As with earlier work conducted by the Center, the overall approach taken of is inductive rather than deductive. The core of the research, which is designed to reflect issues affecting practitioner organizations and to help them improve their effectiveness, is evidence-based. Data derived from interviews in countries experiencing crises, or rebounding from them, will be supplemented by reviews of existing literature and international consultations with experts and practitioners. Given the sensitivity of the issues raised and the high degree of opinionation associated with them, there is a premium on soliciting and analyzing the perspectives of people in the field, both aid practitioners and local people themselves. We envision that the findings of the research will inject into policy discussions a sense of how a broadly representative group of people perceive the identified issues.

Data will be gathered locally through a combination of oral interviews, informal conversations, and focus group meetings; and internationally through a significant number of web-based interviews. We have designed four instruments: (I) for local communities in the crisis areas; (II) for aid agencies and aid workers there; (III) for other international personnel; and (IV) for personnel working for donors and aid agencies at headquarters. The first three are designed for face-to-face interviews; the fourth is an electronic questionnaire and is not included in this package.

Survey I is designed to solicit information and perspectives from people in the communities and countries affected by crises. A wide range of respondents will be sought out including (a) people who are not directly linked to assistance projects as well as (b) people who are willing to express their views about how international aid has affected them, their community, and their society. Interviewees and focus group participants will be selected with an eye to a balance of factors such as socio-economic status (from destitute widows and unemployed laborers to political leaders and intellectuals), gender, religious background, ethnicity, and age. Given the limitations of the study in terms of resources and time, we will strive for diversity and inclusiveness rather than for demographic precision.

Survey II seeks to provide a framework for discussions with humanitarian personnel in the field. The aid workers interviewed in the field will represent a mix with respect to levels of responsibility, years of service, and programmatic functions. The aid agencies chosen will represent a cross-section, including UN, bilateral, NGO and Red Cross movement organizations.

Survey III seeks to elicit observations on the issues of the study from other international personnel involved in crisis countries. A perception check among international peacekeeping and diplomatic personnel, employees of international commercial firms, media officials, and the like should provide a useful optic. Interviews of DPKO personnel may be conducted at UN headquarters as well as in the field. Similarly, diplomatic personnel may be sought out in national capitals as well as in crisis countries themselves.

Survey IV will be circulated electronically to personnel in donor organizations and selected UN, Red Cross Movement and NGO agency headquarters in Europe and North America. The questionnaire will go to HQ personnel selected with an eye to a variety of responsibilities, including planning, program management, advocacy, evaluation, and constituency relations. The data gathered in Surveys I, II, and III involves conversations and interviews and is heavily qualitative in nature, Survey IV is expected to produce largely quantitative data.

While the lead researcher on each petal will have the primary responsibility for the collection of data on that petal in the countries s/he visits, researchers for the other petals will add input through secondary data collection in the countries they themselves visit. The survey instruments seek to ensure basic consistency in the questions asked and in the approaches taken on all topics in all countries. They should also help ensure consistency when multiple interviewers are gathering data within the same country.

We plan to conduct case study research on the issue of universality in Afghanistan and Sudan; on terrorism in Colombia; on coherence in DRC and Liberia; and on security in DRC and Iraq. In addition, the individual country studies should be helpful to one extent or another in analyzing each of the four issues. Thus interviews in Iraq are expected to shed light on the issue of universality and terrorism; in Sudan, on coherence; in all countries on the issue of security; and so on.

In broad compass, the research is about local perceptions of key humanitarian issues as well as of issues related to the contexts in which externally-funded aid efforts take place. It is thus in the first instance about “views” and “judgments” regarding the nature, appropriateness, and impact of externally-orchestrated aid efforts rather than about “facts.” By “aid” we mean first and foremost humanitarian assistance, which includes both assistance activities and the protection of basic human rights. We are not interested in big infrastructure projects, government budget support, or for that matter, undertakings by the commercial sector. Although our focus is on humanitarian action, we will also record views regarding other forms of assistance, including military and peacekeeping inputs.

In the minds of the local people we will be interviewing, distinctions between humanitarian and other forms of aid (e.g., developmental, human rights, peace support, etc.), as well as distinctions regarding who provides such aid (e.g., the UN, international or local NGOs, the Red Cross movement, the military) may or may not be particularly relevant. The interviews may shed useful light on the extent to which they make such distinctions and valuations.

Serious methodological problems are inherent in research of this nature. They include obvious challenges regarding sampling methods and survey techniques, selection of case study countries and, within them, of interview sites, choice of interlocutors, selection and number of questions, quantitative vs. qualitative data, the highly varied nature of the case study settings, and so on. In addition, because the research concerns perceptions of international presence and activities and probes issues of great political and cultural sensitivity, special attempts must be made to take into account the biases of western interviewers and their interviewees, the cultural filters through which data received is interpreted, and the possibility that interviewers may be told what they are assumed to want to hear. The survey instruments have been designed with such challenges in mind.

The objective of the data collection is to build up a composite picture of perceptions and judgments among the key players, indigenous and international, on the four issues identified. The data gathered from focus groups and interviews, together with inputs from other sources will constitute the ingredients for further analysis. An initial objective is to be clear about prevailing perceptions on the various issues covered. While perceptions are important in their own right, they also provide pointers regarding the functioning of the humanitarian enterprise as presently constituted. Conclusions and policy recommendations will need to address the perceptions gap as well as the underlying realities as analyzed by the research team.

Given time and budget constraints, the data collected will not be based on exhaustive sampling and statistical analysis. In conducting in-country interviews, we will utilize wherever possible indigenous NGOs and local people, trained for such an exercise, and will encourage open-ended conversations devoid of externally imposed straitjackets.

We are also committed to testing impressions and conclusions with the persons interviewed, whether at the conclusion of individual or focus group interviews or at a later stage of the study. Feed-back loops will be provided, either through a recap at the end of a given interview (“This is what I have heard from you... Am I correctly reflecting your views?”) or by indicating that the researcher will be available to interviewees at some other time or location. Later on in the process, we intend to share the research report with organizations and, to the extent possible, individuals who provided input along the way.

Despite the acknowledged limitations, we are confident that the data generated will assume enough of a critical mass to allow key sets of findings to emerge. We base our confidence on the experience gained in other similar data collection efforts at the International Famine Center, including the recently completed Tufts study on perceptions of security. Moreover, the inclusion of numerous questions seeking qualitative answers not only expands on the quantitative data that our instruments will generate; it should also

enhance the value of our survey instruments in testing a working hypothesis for each of the four issue areas.

## **Themes and Country Case Studies**

### **Petal 1: Universality**

In Afghanistan, data will be collected during a visit in January-February 2006 by Antonio Donini, assisted for a portion of the time by Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam. Local facilitation is being provided by CARE, which did so as well in the predecessor study on perceptions of security. Donini will also collecting data on the earthquake and response in Kashmir.

With respect to Afghanistan, here is where plans stand at the moment:

- A small number of interviews (max. 10) will be held with senior international and national aid agency staff, both UN and NGO, with a view to eliciting reactions on the research questions and background information on the evolving situation;
- A similar number of interviews will be held with senior government and other officials (e.g., ministers or staff in the ministries of rural development, health, planning; the independent human rights commission; election board staff, etc.)
- Open ended “conversations” will be held with a range of key Afghan informants: intellectuals, journalists, businessmen, politicians, religious personalities (if amenable). An effort will be made to seek out interlocutors familiar with pro-Taliban or anti-western views. These will be one-to-one interviews or small group interviews.
- Focus group meetings will be held with perhaps 10-12 communities of various socio-economic backgrounds: university students, secondary school teachers, senior national NGO staff, village elders, shopkeepers, etc. The methodology for FGs developed in the Perceptions of Security study will be applied (see annex 1).
- In order to increase the number of female respondents, a female researcher has been recruited for a few days to set up and run 2-3 focus groups of women (e.g. female primary school teachers, rural women, widows/destitute women).
- If the budget allows and in order to expand the pool of views canvassed, additional focus groups using the same methodology could be set up and conducted by a local institution.
- Because of time and budget constraints, data collection will be limited to the greater Kabul (urban-rural) area and one other city (Herat).
- At the end of the process, it would be useful to have recap meetings with at least some of the respondents in order to present preliminary results and obtain additional feedback (e.g., a meeting with NGOs, one with UN staff, one with some of the national staff/local respondents).

### **Petal 2: Terrorism**

A visit to Colombia will be made February 17-March 4, 2006 by Larry Minear, preceded by interviews in Washington, DC October 31 – November 3, 2005 and January 25-27, 2006, and in New York November 14. In Colombia, individual and focus group

interviews are anticipated with UN agencies, international and indigenous NGOs, human rights and peace groups, and host government officials in the capital, followed by a trip to rural areas. Within the constraints of time and resources, outreach similar to that described for Afghanistan will be attempted, including solicitation of the views of the insurgents or their proxies.

### **Petal 3: Integration**

The lead researcher is Xavier Zeebroek, senior researcher with the Brussels-based organization Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP), who has already done work on this issue. Tentative plans call for a trip to Burundi in mid-February and one to Liberia in mid-March 2006, with literature review and the laying of groundwork for field visits taking place beforehand. Experience in Burundi with the UN integrated mission has been for the most part favorably perceived by humanitarian groups, while few NGOs give the integrated mission approach in Liberia positive marks.

### **Petal 4: Security**

The lead researcher is Tasneem Mowjee, an independent London-based consultant who will be gathering data in the Sudan beginning January 23, 2006. Security permitting, we hope to generate additional data on Iraq, building on earlier visits made on our behalf by consultant Greg Hansen in March 04 and April 05.

### **Analyzing and integrating the case study materials**

Each lead researcher will draft a set of preliminary findings on a given petal, drawing into the discussion data from his/her colleagues. Assisting in the process (and also earlier on in the refining of methodology and in other research matters) will be Ian Smillie, who served on the research team for the Security Mapping study and who is familiar from his own work with the issues of the research. Karina Purushotma will assist as a researcher based at the Famine Center. We hope it will be possible for all members of the team to meet as a group on at least one occasion during the first half of 2006 to exchange data, discuss findings, and agree on recommendations. The team will also strategize about the dissemination and promotion of its work.

Regarding outputs, we expect several articles in northern and southern journals to result. The materials also should lend themselves to a book on the four petals and their interrelationships. Such a book would contain an (annotated) bibliography on the issues and the case study countries which Karina is already starting to compile. She will also be collecting and tabulating the data as country field work proceeds. We envision an extensive series of debriefings, as was done in five cities for the Perceptions of Security report.

Larry Minear  
Antonio Donini  
January 2006

## Guidance to Researchers on Using Survey Instruments

The questions in Instruments I and II are intended as a general guide for the interviews, conversations, and focus groups. While an effort should be made to obtain answers to all the questions, past experience suggests that following the questionnaire slavishly often hampers the spontaneity of interaction. In many cases it is more informative to let the conversation flow naturally, although the ability of the interviewer to fill in the blanks on the survey instrument may suffer. It is the job of the researcher to take careful notes and record the thrust of the interview, filling in the questionnaire only after (rather than during) the interview.

Before starting each interview, please explain the purpose of the study and obtain oral consent, using the consent form provided (see Annex 2). If appropriate, you should summarize or distribute the letter of introduction (Annex 3). Explain that the process is entirely voluntary and confidential, there is no obligation to answer any of the questions, and while a public report will be issued, no reference will be made to specific interviewees. If you wish to be able to use a particular statement for attribution, please obtain the interviewee's specific permission to be quoted by name. It is preferable to do this during the interview to avoid having to double back and secure permission later on.

In using Instrument I, it is useful to break the ice with some chit-chat about yourself (where you come from, what work you do, your familiarity – or lack of familiarity – with the country) and ask generic questions about life in the village/community, such as 'How are things these days?' 'What is the employment situation?' 'Are the kids going to school?' Please note down issues mentioned as they may provide useful contextual information. There is no need to keep a record of the names of interviewees, whether from one-on-one or group settings. However, the contextual information requested in Part A of Survey Instrument I is useful in interpreting the viewpoints expressed.

Focus groups offer special challenges to the researcher in maintaining a certain structured order in the issues touched upon. His/her job is to listen carefully and allow the group dynamics to proceed naturally. Free-flowing discussion within the group with different opinions expressed often upstages the intention to please the outsider. As with individual interviews and conversations, it is important to make focus group members feel comfortable by explaining the rationale and end purposes of the research, underscoring the voluntary nature of the process, and giving assurances that views expressed will be kept confidential. While a range of opinions may be expressed during the course of the focus group meeting, researchers are asked to provide a composite summary, identifying consensus views and areas where different opinions were expressed. The summary should to the extent possible follow the format of the questionnaire.

Interviews in local communities, whether with individuals or in focus groups, are in some respects the most important and least predictable element in the research. In the predecessor study, many of those attending debriefings were especially struck by the comments and perspectives of local voices, which are often marginalized, the study found, when others set international priorities. The earlier team was often pressed for more data and more analysis, including more disaggregation. The current study will seek

to expand the data base, but again within the severe constraints of available interview time and resources.

Instruments I and II ask essentially the same questions. Instrument II assumes that aid agency personnel and other international actors are broadly familiar with the four issues identified. Instrument I avoids that assumption, striving to formulate questions in readily understandable fashion without using off-putting jargon. The data gathered will convey perceptions of the issues, which may or may not reflect reality. To the extent that time is available and circumstances permit, the interviewer is encouraged to probe a bit as to why certain views are held, what is the source of the information, and to what extent the views correspond with reality.

Also, while it is important for researcher to be clear on the objectives of each of the four petals, it is not necessary to emphasize the categorizations of the questions. In fact, in some settings, informing the respondents that the following set of questions relate to “terrorism”, for example, may skew their responses. In order to keep the process open-ended, we have not used headings for the various groupings of questions.

To the extent possible, interviewers should avoid prompting answers. Although some answers contain boxes to be checked, the general intention is not that interviewees will be asked to choose from among a checklist of items. Instead, the interviewer may check those items which were spontaneously mentioned. For other questions, the interviewer should feel free to offer multiple choice questions to which the interviewee can then respond.

Instrument III is designed to provide general guidance to researchers conducting interviews in-country with international personnel outside the immediate aid and human rights community. It is understood, therefore, that the completion of the form will be more selective and uneven. The basic purposes are (a) to solicit the views of other international personnel on the conduct of the humanitarian enterprise, and (b) to explore whether other international institutions have experienced comparable challenges.

The data from instrument IV, which will be circulated from Medford to selected agencies, will be provided to individual researchers to incorporate in their own analyses.



**The Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power and Perceptions  
Survey I**

**For Communities and Local Informants in Individual and Focus Group Settings**

*Background Information (complete as applicable):*

**Date of interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of interviewee (optional) or ID#:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Language of interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of interpreter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of interview:**  less than 15'  about 30'  45' or more  60' or more

**Age of interviewee:**  18-24  25-34  35-49  50+

**Gender:**  Male  Female

**Education:**  none  some primary  secondary  university

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of household:**  Y  N if not, who is? : \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity (optional):** \_\_\_\_\_

*[Note: for focus groups, collect the above info for all participants]*

***Contextual Questions***

**1. What are the most important problems faced by people in your area?** *[Do not read out the list. Try to see what issues are mentioned in the conversation. If in a FG, ask each participant to list three and then ask the group to decide which are most important]*

**\*\*Rank the 3 most important mentioned:**

__ security/crime	__ justice	__ warlords
__ employment	__ governance	__ others (specify):
__ housing/shelter	__ transport	
__ drought/water issues	__ drugs	

**2. In the last two years the situation in your village/community with respect to these problems has:**

Improved  Worsened  Remained more or less the same

**3. Have you or your family received assistance from local or international groups in the past 2 years?**

Yes  No  Don't Know/Unsure  Prefer Not to Answer

**4. If you yourself have not received any assistance, have people in your village/urban neighborhood?**

Yes  No  Don't Know/Unsure  Prefer Not to Answer

**\*\*Types of assistance mentioned** \_\_\_\_\_



**5. Who provided the assistance?**

- Local mosque/church/religious group
- Local community
- Local/national NGO
- Government
- International organization (if possible, specify: UN, NGO, Red Cross, etc)
- International military or peace-keeping personnel
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. If you have received assistance, did the aid workers inform you Yes No or ask for your views Yes No about the type of assistance to be provided?**

**Issues**

**7. Based on your own personal experience, what kind of impact is assistance having on the lives of people?**

- Good
- Bad
- Don't Know/Unsure
- Prefer Not to Answer

Please elaborate on what is "good" and what is "bad":

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Is assistance going to those who need it most?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know/Unsure
- Prefer Not to Answer

**9. When there is a disaster (war, earthquake, flood), whose responsibility is it to provide assistance?**

- The local community
- The mosque/church
- Local government
- National government
- The army
- Foreigners
- Other

**10. Should people from your community/country go and help people in a distant country when there is a crisis there (war, earthquake, flood)?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know/Unsure
- Prefer Not to Answer

**\*\*Please explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**11. What do people here think of the foreign aid workers? Are they helping the people?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know/Unsure
- Prefer Not to Answer

**\*\*Please explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. They are doing a:**

- Reasonably good job
- Bad job
- Mixed job

Don't know

**13. Why do they come here?**

*[do not prompt]*

Because:

- They want to help
- It is their job
- They want to spread their values/religion
- They want to become rich
- Their government sent them
- They don't have anything better to do
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Has their personal behavior been**  Acceptable  Unacceptable  Unsure

*\*\*Note types of behavior mentioned* \_\_\_\_\_

**15. In terms of assistance, would your community prefer assistance from:**

- A western/northern country
- An Islamic country
- A local rather than an international organization
- A military rather than a civilian organization
- From families or relatives (e.g., through remittances)?
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- I have no preference

**16. If they have such a preference, what is it based on?**

**17. Humanitarian organizations say they are concerned with the well-being of people and that they do not take sides in political and military conflict. In your experience, how successful are they in implementing that approach?**

- Very successful
- Quite successful
- Pretty unsuccessful
- Very unsuccessful
- Not sure
- It varies, depending on: \_\_\_\_\_

**18. The best way forward in the circumstances would be:**

- Have aid groups increase their efforts to remain independent
- Have aid groups affiliated clearly with one side or the other
- Have aid groups keep their distance until the conflict is resolved
- Other
- Unsure

**19. Please name, if you can, the organizations, governments and countries that have been providing assistance in your area/community?**

**20. Which organizations have played the most important role in assisting:**

- Foreign military troops
- The UN
- Red Cross organizations
- NGOs
- The local government
- The national government
- Religious organizations (mosques/churches, etc.)
- Locally important people (warlords, landowners, drug/crime barons, etc.)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**21. Do the foreign organizations work separately or as part of one big plan?**

- Each organization does its own thing
- There is one organization in the lead and the others follow
- There is good cooperation among foreign groups
- There is confusion/overlap among foreign groups
- The military/political groups don't cooperate with the assistance organizations
- Unsure/don't know
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. In the last year has the security situation in your village/community**

- Improved
- Worsened
- Remained more or less the same?

**23. Have armed elements been active in your local area in the last year?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know/Unsure
- Prefer Not to Answer

**\*\*Please explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Have there been:**

- Robberies
- Banditry
- Intimidation
- Fighting between factions
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't know

**25. How do such incidents affect your community?**

- Major impact
- Significant impact
- Marginal impact
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

**26. Have international peace-keeping or military forces made your community more secure?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know/Unsure
- Prefer Not to Answer

**\*\*Please explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**27. Does insecurity affect the work of aid agencies in the area?**

- Yes, it makes their work difficult/impossible
- No, it does not make much difference
- Don't know

**28. Have any aid workers (foreign, national) been attacked in your area?  
If so, why might this have happened?**

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**29. Are these attacks are committed by individuals or organized groups?**

**30. What are the motivations for these attacks?**

- Personal grudges
- Religious differences
- Economic gain
- Political reasons
- Ethnic differences
- Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**31. How does the level of insecurity experienced by aid workers compare with that of the local community?**

- Aid workers are much more insecure than local people
- Aid workers are more insecure
- Aid workers are less insecure
- Aid workers and the community experience about the same level of insecurity
- Aid workers are much less insecure
- It depends on the particular aid workers and/or agency in question
- Unsure

**32. If you answered the previous question about particular workers in the affirmative, which of the following factors help account for the differences in levels of security?**

- The trust that has/has not been built up over the years between an agency and the community
- The values and approach of the particular organization
- The nationality of the particular organization
- The religious or ethnic nature of the organization
- The reputation and personal behavior of individual international staff members
- The reputation and personal behavior of the individual local staff
- Other (please specify):

**33. Any other comments:** \_\_\_\_\_



**The Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power and Perceptions**  
Survey II – For International and Local Agency Workers in the Field

*Background Information (as applicable):*

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

**Institutional Affiliation:**

UN    International NGO    National NGO    RCM    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Years of employment in the humanitarian or development field:**

Fewer than 5    5-10 yrs    10-15 yrs    15-20 yrs    20+

**Level:**  Senior    Mid-career    Junior

**Countries in which you have served a humanitarian/development organization:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:**  Female    Male                      **Status:**  Local    Expatriate

**1. If your organization receives funding from western/northern donors, does this have an impact on: (circle yes or no)**

- a. The extent to which you are able to respect humanitarian principles Y/N
- b. The choice of your local partners Y/N
- c. How you are perceived by your beneficiaries Y/N
- d. Your advocacy activities Y/N
- e. other aspects of your work (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**2. If your organization receives funds from non-traditional donors (e.g. Islamic countries/foundations), do they impose any restrictions on your work? (circle all that apply)**

- a. The extent to which you are able to respect humanitarian principles
- b. The choice of your local partners
- c. How you are perceived by your beneficiaries
- d. Your advocacy activities
- e. Other aspects of your work (explain): \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Not applicable

**3. Do you find that traditional humanitarian principles, based on IHL, are generally understood by the communities in which you work?**

Broadly understood    Misunderstood    Ignored    Don't know

**4. Are they understood by local staff in your organization?**

Broadly understood    Misunderstood    Ignored    Don't know

**5. Do you think that the principles of your organization are in line with, or contradict, local values, approaches, aspirations?**

Aligned with       Contradict       Don't know       Other, explain:

**6. Where such a "perceptions gap" exists, does your organization seek to address it?**

Yes       No       Don't Know/Unsure       Prefer Not to Answer

**\*\*Please explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. If you agree that there is a perceptions gap, should this gap be narrowed?**

No, humanitarian action should maintain its traditional ethos and operational style

Yes, there should be major reforms to make such action more culturally sensitive

Unsure

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. In your experience, does attention to cultural-sensitivity work against the promotion of international human rights norms and social change?**

Yes

No

Unsure

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. How widespread in this country is the view that western-funded aid agencies have a hidden agenda (e.g. political, economic, religious/missionary, promotion of alien values, etc.)?**  Limited       Widespread       Unsure

**10. Does the perception that your agency is associated with an external agenda (if it exists) create a security risk for you and your staff?**  Yes       No

**11. Is there resentment and/or hostility against the aid enterprise in the country in which you currently work?**

Yes

No

In some quarters

Don't know

**12. If yes, what are the reasons?**

Alleged corruption

Personal behavior/lifestyle of aid personnel

Lack of visible results

Promotion of alien values

Perceived hidden agenda

Insensitivity to local concerns

Other:

**\*Please specify your answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Do you expect the humanitarian enterprise ten years from now to be (prompt only if necessary):**

More or less as it is today

Bigger/Smaller

More international/More local

- More independent/More donor-driven
  - More politicized/More principled
  - More commercial/More altruistic
  - More military
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't know
- \*Please Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Please circle True or False to each of the following statements, as reflected by your experience.**

- T/F Aid activities today are proceeding pretty much as they did before 9/11.  
 T/F Aid activities have been significantly affected by 9/11 and the world's response to it.  
 T/F Aid has always been set in a political context, and today is no different.  
 T/F There is a difference today in both the degree and the pervasiveness of political intrusiveness into humanitarian work.  
 T/F The forces of terrorism have increased the extent and/or severity of human need.  
 T/F The efforts of international community and governments to combat terrorism have themselves increased the extent and/or severity of human need.

**15. In your view, has the war on terrorism influenced the policies of the country where you work with respect to the assistance and protection of civilian population?**

- Yes    No    Unsure  
 If yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Has it influenced your organization's selection of local partner organizations?**

- Yes    No    Unsure

**17. [For Islamic contexts only] With respect to Islamic organizations in particular, have your organization's relationships with them been affected by the increased scrutiny now applied by some donor and host governments?**

- Yes    No    Unsure

**18. Has the war on terrorism influenced the perceptions of your organization's humanitarian work by local populations?**

- Profoundly    Significantly    Minimally    Not at all    Unsure

**19. To what extent does your experience as an aid practitioner bear out the hypothesis that international humanitarian action is affected by the war on terrorism?**

- It corroborates the hypothesis  
 It calls the hypothesis into question  
 It neither confirms nor denies the impacts alleged  
 Unsure

**20. Have military or peace-keeping troops provided emergency relief assistance to civilian populations?**

- Yes    No    It varies    Unsure

**21. Please indicate which of the following features of integrated political/military/humanitarian missions, often cited as *benefits* to the aid activities carried out within such frameworks, has been true in your experience:**

- Aid activities are strengthened by virtue of being part of a package of measures addressing the multiple needs of a given situation on the ground.
- Aid linkages with a peace support operation allow for better humanitarian access and protection of vulnerable groups.
- Relationships with the host political authorities are more effective and coherent by virtue of the common front presented by participating agencies.
- Association with peace keeping or military forces contributes greater security for humanitarian operations.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. Please indicate which of the following features, often cited as *costs* to humanitarian action of such integrated missions, were true in your experience:**

- Humanitarian principles and priorities are not respected by international political-military personnel.
- Humanitarian activities are constrained in terms of where they are allowed to be carried out (e.g., humanitarian access to insurgent-controlled areas has been restricted by international political-military authorities).
- Humanitarian work is perceived as a part of a political-military strategy, reducing its neutrality, impartiality, and/or independence.
- Aid agency staff security has been compromised by real or perceived association with a peace support operation or other political framework.
- The behavior of foreign military personnel has created security risks for aid agency staff
- The visibility and profile of humanitarian work has been reduced.

**23. Please identify other features which you experienced as either**

**Benefits:** \_\_\_\_\_  
or

**Costs:** \_\_\_\_\_

**24. In your judgment, did the benefits outweigh the costs?**

- Yes     No     The balance shifted over time     Unsure

**25. If there is not a UN integrated mission in the country in which you work, does the prevailing political framework raise any of these questions for your organization?**

**26. In the country where you work have security conditions for aid personnel during the past few years:**

- Improved                       Deteriorated                       Remained more or less the same

**27. If they have deteriorated, what in your judgment are the main reasons? (Check as many as apply)**



- Breakdown of law and order
- Activities of warlords and drug-lords
- Perception that aid agencies are taking sides
- Arrogant/insensitive behavior by aid workers
- Inability/failure of aid agencies to explain their mission
- Confusion over identity of personnel
- Breakdown of communications with belligerents
- Reaction to perceived Western or Northern agenda of aid agencies
- Failure of the authorities to take protective action
- Some combination of all of the above
- Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

**28. Have international military or PK troops contributed to enhanced security for aid operations?**    Yes         No         Unsure

**29. Have they contributed to enhanced security of civilians?**    Yes     No     Unsure

**30. Some aid agencies perceive themselves to be more secure than others. Please indicate whether in your view each of the following statements is *True* or *False*:**

T/F Some aid agencies are indeed safer than others.

T/F There is a correlation between the degree of safety and the way in which an agency relates to a given community.

T/F The local staffs of agencies tend to be less vulnerable than their international staffs.

T/F Local NGO groups tend to be more secure than international NGOs.

T/F Local people make distinctions between/among international aid agencies and personnel.

**31. In your judgment, how might the staff security situation be improved in contested environments such as this one?**

**32. Please add any additional comments you would like to contribute:**

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**The Alan Shawn Feinstein  
International Famine Center**



**The Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power and Perceptions**  
Survey III – For Other International Personnel (i.e. non aid workers)

*\*To be used only as a guide*

**Information about the Interviewee:**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Present position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Years of employment by this/similar international institution:**

Fewer than 5     5-10 yrs     10-15 yrs     15-20 yrs     20+

**Level:**  Senior     Mid-career     Junior

**Gender:**  Female     Male

**Countries in which you have served your present organization or an earlier employer:** \_\_\_\_\_

We are conducting research on various aspects of humanitarian action in today’s post 9/11 world. We are soliciting in particular the perceptions of local people in countries experiencing major crisis, or rebounding from them, along with the views of assistance agency personnel. In order to provide additional perspective, we are interviewing other international personnel from diplomatic, peacekeeping, media, and commercial quarters for their views on the issues. We would be grateful for any comments you have on the four hypotheses we are testing. For each hypothesis, we have several specific questions.

**Universality**

*Hypothesis: The philosophical, corporate, and operational roots of the international humanitarian apparatus are inescapably Western and Northern. While its principles may well be universal, humanitarian action is based on the “restricted consensus” of the handful of donor states that hold the purse strings, along with operational agencies who are custodians of the flame. The quality and effectiveness of humanitarian work suffers as a result.*

**1. Do you find that the humanitarian principles of international assistance agencies are generally understood by the communities in which they work?**

Yes     No     Don’t know

*\*If not, does it matter?*  Yes     No     Don’t know

**2. Are international humanitarian operations carried out by established western agencies perceived differently from those of a non-western or local nature?**

Yes     No     Don’t know

**3. As a member of an international organization yourself, do you find your own organization or enterprise faces similar difficulties in relation to the perceptions of local communities?**  Yes     No     Don’t know

*\*If your objectives or activities are misunderstood (deliberately or not), please explain:*

### ***Terrorism***

*Hypothesis: Terrorism and counter-terrorism are undeniable facts of life which have important impacts on the functioning of the humanitarian enterprise. Some impacts are short-term and immediate; others, more long-term and enduring. Some affect the conduct of humanitarian operations internationally; others impinge principally on aid activities in countries experiencing terrorist threats. Some impacts involve perceptions of humanitarian work; others, the work itself.*

**4. In your view, to what extent has the work of humanitarian organizations been affected by the war on terrorism?**

- Profoundly       Significantly       Minimally       Not at all       Unsure

*Please explain your answer:*

**5. Given the reality that humanitarian activities have always been set within a political context, do you view the impacts of the war on terror as an extension of past politicization, or something fundamentally different in nature?**

**6. Based on what you have said about the impact of terrorism on aid activities, how would you assess the performance of aid agencies in identifying and addressing these issues?**

- The aid community is fully aware of the consequences of such pressures on their ability to function and has taken steps to address the problems
- The aid community is aware of the issues but seems somewhat paralyzed by them (e.g. because of tension between their values and the pressure from donors or the military)
- The aid community has not taken to heart the fundamental changes in their operating environments
- Other

### ***Coherence***

*Hypothesis: The issue of whether humanitarian action should be integrated into the political and peace-building aspects of multidimensional peace missions is the subject of active debate involving the United Nations, governments, and aid agencies. This research tests the hypothesis that the cost to humanitarian action of integration exceeds the benefits reaped by humanitarian action from such integration*

**7. Have you worked within any of the political or peace support frameworks established by international organizations or governments for dealing with conflict or post-conflict challenges?**

- Yes       No       Unsure

**8. In your view, how appropriately have the assistance agencies positioned themselves in relation to such frameworks?**

- The agencies did not establish enough independence
- The agencies took too independent a course
- The agencies got it about right
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Security**

*Hypothesis: Have humanitarian personnel lost their respected status? Multiple factors are at play which impact on the vulnerability of humanitarian workers. This research will test the hypothesis that the single most important reason for the increased insecurity is the breakdown of the “contract of acceptability” between belligerents and the aid enterprise (this in turn affects the “contract” between local communities and aid agencies).*

### **9. Have international military or PK contingents: (circle yes or no for each)**

- a. Enhanced the security of local populations **Y / N**
- b. Facilitated work of humanitarian and human rights groups by expanding access **Y / N**
- c. Themselves provided assistance **Y / N**

### **10. In the countries where you have worked or with which you are familiar, has security for humanitarian operations during recent years:**

- Improved
- Deteriorated
- Remained more or less the same

### **11. If conditions have deteriorated, what in your judgment are the main reasons?**

- Breakdown of law and order
- Activities of warlords and druglords
- Perception that aid agencies are taking sides
- Arrogant/insensitive behavior by aid workers
- Inability/failure of aid agencies to explain their mission
- Breakdown of communications with belligerents
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **12. As a member of an international institution, do you face some of the same difficulties in the area of security?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

### **13. If your organization faces increased security risks, what action have you taken?**

## **Guide for Focus Groups**

### **A Survey Instrument for the Tufts Researchers**

**(adapted from the Tufts Security Study)**

A Focus Group is a mechanism to collect information in group settings less suited to the use of other more individualized survey instruments. Group dynamics serve as a mechanism to allow information and viewpoints to ‘emerge,’ both for the group as a whole and for individuals. While useful, focus groups have drawbacks of which researchers must be aware. Individuals often will not behave the same way or say the same things if in a group, especially if community leaders or people who may be perceived as threatening (e.g. police informers) are present. In fact, the dialogue may reflect some of the very insecurity that the research is trying to identify and gauge. Getting the composition of the group right and constructing a few follow-up individual interviews afterwards can help offset some of the drawbacks.

The following suggestions are designed to make the use of focus groups in the research productive in the data generated and consistent in approach across the case study settings. Since focus groups may be conducted not only by members of the Tufts team but also by their local partners in individual countries, it is important that all those using this device adhere to the same approach. For the benefit of the other researchers, please make your write-ups as detailed as possible.

1. *Getting the group right.* There are no hard and fast rules. Homogenous groups (e.g. teachers in a secondary school, small farmers from the same village, unemployed youth attending a training course, women queuing up at a clinic) tend to work better than ad hoc groups (randomly selected people in a particular street) or groups where hierarchical considerations may skew the dynamics (e.g. a group where the village leader or local politician is present). If appropriate it is useful to provide tea/soft drinks and cookies for participants.
2. *Size.* Groups of more than 10 to 12 people tend to become unmanageable in terms of the dynamics of eliciting useful information. Try to agree on group composition and ground rules in order to avoid stragglers coming in and out.
3. *The role of the interviewer.* Typically you will be working through an interpreter who may have been instrumental in setting up the group and will undoubtedly have his/her own biases and agenda. You should therefore start by clarifying the ground rules. Explain the purpose of the study: that the meeting is for you to understand their perspectives, that what they say will be treated as confidential, that the final report will be made public, and that you are not an employee of any assistance or military agency. If asked about the rationale of the study, explain that you think it is very important to listen to what communities have to say in order to build trust regarding the respective roles of the various actors. Be careful not to create expectations (e.g. saying that you are writing a report for aid agencies may link you in their mind to the provision of assistance). Be aware that most people have some experience in dealing with ‘foreigners’ and that some are masters in telling you what you want to hear. As far as possible your role should be low key: observe, listen, and record. If one or two people monopolize the

- conversation, intervene to ensure that everyone present has a chance to speak. If you identify someone who is shy, reserved or disagrees a lot, you may want to select him/her for a separate interview.
4. *Process*. Having explained who you are, what you do, and where you are from, ask members to identify themselves (although not necessarily by name). Explain that you want to understand their perspectives. If the group is literate, you could ask them to write down on a post-it or sheet of paper “three things that make you feel secure” or another ice-breaker question. If the group is not literate, you may want to approach the issue more indirectly, e.g. from a human security angle (what are the main problems today? How does this compare with one year ago?) and then move to the more substantive questions. Try to summarize (or record on paper, if appropriate) points of agreement and disagreement as you go along. Use survey instrument I as a guide for the questions to ask, but don’t be surprised if extraneous issues crop up. These may be interesting in their own right so don’t be too directive in getting back to your agenda. If there are arguments within the group and/or the interpreter has trouble keeping up, explain that you need to know what the group's views are and ask for time out so the interpreter can summarize things for you.
  5. *Sensitivities and vulnerabilities*. Please keep in mind that in some settings, the expression of personal opinions may expose a participant to pressure or even risk of reprisals. Thus while as a group facilitator you should try to draw people out, there may be limits to the appropriateness of doing so. Keep in mind that from the standpoint of the research, we would like to identify perceptions of the activities of humanitarian personnel. At the same time, we need to avoid giving such personnel more prominence than local communities accord them. If necessary, repeat that what is said will remain confidential.
  6. *Length of session*. Let the group dynamics dictate this but do not let things drag on beyond an hour or 90 minutes max. Be aware that participants may have limited time to contribute and at the end of the session be sure to thank them for their involvement. Toward the end, you might attempt a summary of what you have heard and ask people to indicate whether you got the gist of things right. Areas of disagreement as well as of consensus should be noted. After the meeting, be alert to the possibility of one-to-one interviews with participants using the standard survey instrument.
  7. *Note-taking is very important* – if everything has to be translated you will have more time to take notes! Try to write up your notes as soon as possible after the meeting. Please try to capture any particularly illustrative comments that might be quoted in your report. For follow-up purposes (e.g. to share the finished report), please note who should be contacted. Feel free to leave a copy of the Letter of Introduction with one or more of the community leaders.

## Informed Consent Form - Humanitarian Action 2015

**Title:** Humanitarian Action 2015

**Principal Investigator:** Larry Minear

**Co-Investigators:** Antonio Donini, Tasneem Mowjee, Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Karina Purushotma, Greg Hansen, Ian Smillie, and Xavier Zeebroek.

### Consent Statement

*The following will be read to potential study participants.*

I am a researcher associated with Tufts University in the United States which is doing a study on current and future challenges facing humanitarian organizations. The study will include interviews conducted in a number of countries such as Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Liberia, Burundi, Iraq, and the Sudan, and at aid agency headquarters.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any question and can stop the interview completely at any time. You can ask any questions at any time before, during, and after the interview. The researchers will publicize the results of this study but will not reveal the identity of those who have been interviewed.

Within this framework, would you agree to answer the questions for this study?

*I certify that this statement has been read verbatim to persons interviewed for this study and that they have agreed verbally to participate accordingly.*

*Signature of Researcher:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature of Witness:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

### Debriefing Statement

*The following will be read to participants after an interview has been conducted.*

Do you have any questions about the questions or the purpose of the study at this time? If you do in the future, you can contact us through our local partner agencies or at our website <famine.tufts.edu>. We will welcome comments on the completed report, which is expected to be available in mid-2006.



**The Alan Shawn Feinstein  
International Famine Center**



**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This will introduce a member of a research team from the International Famine Center at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. The team is gathering information in individual interviews and focus group settings as part of a study on humanitarian action entitled “Principles, Power, and Perceptions.”

The purpose of the research is to provide humanitarian organizations and policy-makers with insights into four issues that are expected to challenge practitioner agencies during the coming decade. They are the purported universality of humanitarian action, the implications of terrorism, the search for coherence between humanitarian and political agendas, and the security of humanitarian personnel. These topics are being approached as individual petals which, taken together, constitute a single flower. The research examines each of the issues and their relation to each other.

Unlike research by other institutes of a theoretical sort, this study relies heavily on interviews of local people in crisis-affected countries and of aid personnel assisting them. The interviews conducted, whether of individuals or in groups, will be off the record, although the interviewers may take notes. Your participation is entirely voluntary. The final report will include no quotations of individuals by name without their expressed consent. The findings and recommendations of the study will be published in a series of reports and articles in 2006.

The team is an international and interdisciplinary group of eight: Antonio Donini, Larry Minear, Tasneem Mowjee, Sippi Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Karina Purushotma, Greg Hansen, Ian Smillie, and Xavier Zeebroek. Donini is the team leader; Minear directs the Center’s Humanitarianism and War Project. The team may also arrange with individuals or organizations for assistance in the interview process. The research, independent and oriented toward operational realities, is being underwritten by a number of NGOs, governments, UN organizations, and foundations which support the Center’s work.

Questions about the study may be addressed to Antonio Donini ([antonio.donini@tufts.edu](mailto:antonio.donini@tufts.edu)) or Larry Minear ([larry.minear@tufts.edu](mailto:larry.minear@tufts.edu)). Information about the study and the Center is available at <[famine.tufts.edu](http://famine.tufts.edu)>

Thank you for your cooperation and input.

Peter Walker, Director  
Feinstein International Famine Center