

Humanitarians and Academics have an interesting relationship. Humanitarians want to do the ideal thing, but are presented with the demand of delivering “now” as they come face-to-face with those in need. Academics build up a wealth of knowledge through their work and want to share this knowledge to aid and improve humanitarian response. Even with the same overall desires, these groups have different jobs that are not always immediately compatible. These tables, intended as a conversation starter, aim to highlight some of the basic things each side should know about the other when collaboration begins. The goal is not to provide a “clear guide” but to offer some insights that are worth considering when talking about working together.

10 THINGS ACADEMICS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HUMANITARIANS

What you should know about Humanitarians

- 1 The time frame for humanitarians is mission dependent; ranging from **days or weeks to months or years**.
- 2 Humanitarian mandate is to **help vulnerable people** in challenging environments by following humanitarian principles.
- 3 Humanitarians are **accountable to donors/other actors** whilst following strict procedures which can impede on quick adaptation.
- 4 Humanitarians measure success from **quantifiable outputs and reports** and are often judged based against their last response.
- 5 Humanitarian practice and policy are often **based on organizational experience and learning**, rather than rigorous scientific research.
- 6 Humanitarians **tend to work** in highly complex contexts and rapidly changing environments that they have to adapt to.
- 7 Humanitarians **might document** lessons learnt, but documenting work is not the primary mandate.
- 8 Humanitarian outputs and knowledge sharing tends to be **more action-oriented** and directed at practical solutions.
- 9 Humanitarian **global best practices and policies take time to transfer** to the field, requiring training, policy change, etc.
- 10 Humanitarian **work requires** integration of different expertise, groups and areas as needed.

10 THINGS HUMANITARIANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ACADEMICS

What you should know about Academics

- 1 The timeframe for academic work, research and publication is **months or usually years**.
- 2 Academics’ **mandate** is in increasing public knowledge and filling knowledge gaps.
- 3 Academics can pursue **curiosity driven research** and are for the quality of the work, mostly accountable to academic peers.
- 4 Academics measure success from the **quality and impact of research**; including publications, teaching, valorization, and social impacts.
- 5 The creation of academic knowledge is **built on rigorous scientific methodologies and theories**, using different sources.
- 6 Academics **are not always embedded in the operational context** due to priorities in teaching, budget restrictions or institutional policies.
- 7 Academics **may create actionable outputs**, such as prototypes, draft policies or recommendations, but it is not the primary mandate.
- 8 Academic results are documented so the approach to arrive at the **outcomes can be verified and validated by peers**.
- 9 The capacity and ability to conduct work in academia is **often dependent on funding** such as government grants, private donors or public institutions.
- 10 Academic work tends to have a **specific focus or interest**, and often considers humanitarian work through a specific “*lens*”.

THESE TABLES ARE NOT DESIGNED TO BE COMPARED

 These points should be considered very generalized stereotypes. Each individual will differ. The list was compiled through a light literature review and a few discussions with academics and humanitarians. It should not be considered comprehensive or scientifically robust. Rather, it should be considered a conversation starter.