Iraq 3,100 BCE
History matters: New York 1931

Source: PBS 1999
Growing Pains

Source: Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2007
Staff Growth

Source: Stoddard, Harmer & Haver. 2006
Standards and Accountability

- Fast developing standards
- Financial accountability
- SOPs
- All products of system growth
Solve my problem, not yours!

- Poor accountability, bad technique and behavior are the greatest causes of mistrust and discontent
Learning is risky!

“It’s better for us not to measure impact or attribution, if we were to discover that we were having little or no impact, it’s better that we don’t know about it.”
The system doesn’t help

- Agencies significantly over report their successes and under report their failures

“As a project manager, I have a contract with HQ to deliver on the performance indicators of my projects, and in reality, failure and not delivering what I have contracted to is unacceptable.”
Context is everything

- Standards & Systems
- Context, Flexibility
There are known knowns, known unknowns... and then there are the unknown unknowns.

A new strategic landscape of manifest uncertainty, of fundamental and catastrophic surprise.
Famine in Britain 1947
Challenges around humanitarianism

1. Climate change
2. Globalization
Climate Change: IPPC Key findings

1875

2004
What Glacial Melt will mean

Source: Google.org
Historical complexity

Source: David D. Zhang, Peter Brecke, Harry F. Lee, Yuan-Qing He, and Jane Zhang. 2007. Global climate change, war, and population decline in recent human history.
Globalization: Commodity chains

- **Parts and raw materials**
- **Manufacturing and assembly**
- **Distribution**

**Stage Flows**
- **Bulk shipping**
  - High volumes
  - Low frequency

- **Unit shipping**
  - Average volumes
  - High frequency

- **LTL shipping**
  - Low volumes
  - High frequency

- **Transport Chain**

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Cell phone liberation

- Market prices
- Cash transfer
- Pasture ID
- Early warning
- Human rights violation reporting
Central America 2004: Alchemy

- Chiapas, floods & Landslides
- Maize
- Rehab funding linked to crop change
- Palm oil
Alchemy

6,000 liters/year

446 liters/year

172 liters/year
“Free” Market forces

- 3.2 million farmers
- 160,000 suppliers
- 8,600 manufacturers
- 110 buying desks
- 600 Supermarket chains
- 170,000 outlets
- 89 million customers

Source: Patel 2008. Data for UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium
Changing actors

Old School

New School

Market

Increasing $/person

Market

Aid agency role?

Welfare / NGO
Complexity & Context
Modelling complexity globally

Australia drought

Ethanol production

Global eating patterns

Consumers

Producers

Food prices up

Food Security

Graphics from BBC
Livelihoods and Human Security in Karamoja
So what?
Brave new world: non linear, Complex
Implication for governance

Disasters as a threat to governance

Support & empower

Suppress & control

[Feinstein International Center logo]
Implication for humanitarian agencies

- Understand complexity
- Standards AND context
- Get fixated about Impact
Institutional Change

1. Relationships, not structure
2. Evidence driven narratives
3. Multi level engagement
4. Positive feedback loops
Relationships not structure

Total re-think of partnerships
Evidence driven narratives

Service providers

Indicators of service provision
Multi-layer engagement
Positive feedback loops

- Push authority down
- Reward competence
- Reward risk & learning
The Dancing Elephant

1. Relationships, not structure
2. Evidence driven narratives
3. Multi level engagement
4. Positive feedback loops