

# Kirsten Heidi Gelsdorf

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## **CURRENT EMPLOYMENT**

**Professor of Practice of Public Policy and Leadership**

**Director of Global Humanitarian Policy**

**Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia**

**Virginia, USA**

*August 2016-Present*

- Undertaking an engagement research agenda focusing on effectiveness of global humanitarian operations and displacement advocacy and policy.
- Teaching graduate and undergraduate courses on applied public policy as well as humanitarian response and leadership.
- Participating in global policy processes and providing research and advisory capacity for the North American Cross-Border Catastrophic Disaster Response Initiative; the USAID/UK/Canada Global Grand Challenges Fund; the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI); Charlottesville International Rescue Committee; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; served as a Senior Fellow at the UN Centre for Humanitarian Data.
- Working with UVA faculty to support policy, research, and advocacy initiatives through the UVA Humanitarian Collaborative and UVA Humanitarian Exchange.
- Winner of 2020 SHEV Outstanding Faculty Award; 2019 All-University Teaching Award; 2019 Excellence in Engagement of Public Policy and Leadership Award; 2018 Batten Excellence in Teaching Award; and Casteen Teaching Fellowship in Ethics

## **PAST EMPLOYMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

**Chief, Policy Analysis and Innovation**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**New York, USA**

*2012-2015*

- Served as a Senior Policy Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on all major humanitarian policy issues.
- Led and managed one of OCHA's largest sections with a focus on policy analysis and innovation. The section conducted, facilitated and communicated policy-relevant research and analysis to anticipate and interpret global humanitarian trends, and to advance humanitarian policy and practice.
- Managed a US\$2.6 million budget to undertake and facilitate research on humanitarian assistance. This included publishing major research reports, organizing a major global humanitarian policy forum, and delivering presentations and representing the UN at major international conferences and events.

**Humanitarian Advisor**

**UN Special Envoy for Haiti, President William Clinton**

**Port-au-Prince, Haiti/New York, USA**

*Feb 2010-April 2010*

- Seconded by OCHA to serve as the humanitarian advisor for the UN Special Envoy, President William Clinton, and the UN Deputy Special Envoy, Paul Farmer on operational and policy humanitarian issues following the 2010 Haiti earthquake.
- Helped to increase links between civil-society organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the United Nations.

**Head, Advocacy and Visual Media**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**New York, USA**

*2009-2011*

- Developed OCHA's 2010 Advocacy Policy and served as a senior advisor to OCHA's Under-Secretary-General on key advocacy platforms.
- Built and managed OCHA's new Advocacy and Visual Media Unit responsible for leading advocacy campaigns and emergency communication initiatives, including community-outreach programs.

**Head, Global Challenges Unit, Humanitarian Policy Advisor**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**New York, USA**

*2007-2009*

- Served as the policy advisor to the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis and supported the Secretary-General's missions to the Rome High-Level Food Summit, G8, and General Assembly.
- Led the development of the Comprehensive Framework for Action, the consensus policy document of the United Nations system, including Bretton Woods institutions, on how to respond to the global food crisis.
- Developed and led OCHA's policy analysis on the "Implications of Global Challenges on International Humanitarian Action" to support ongoing field operations, the 2009 ECOSOC, and OCHA's 2009-2012 Strategic Plan.
- Developed and implemented OCHA's internal evaluation methodology and protocols to assess internal performance following disasters and crises.

**Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Asia and the Pacific Section**

**Coordination and Response Division**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**Dili, Timor-Leste/New York, USA**

*2006-2007*

- Served as the Senior Desk Officer, supporting all emergency operations in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as preparing briefs on the emergencies for the Under-Secretary-General, Security Council, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.
- Managed the response to the security crisis in Timor-Leste.
- Acted as the primary link between OCHA field offices, the UN Humanitarian Coordinators and OCHA in establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms, organizing needs assessments and producing consolidated appeals.

**Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Pakistan Earthquake**

**Coordination and Response Division**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Islamabad, Pakistan/Geneva, Switzerland**

*2005-2006*

- Managed the immediate search-and-rescue phase and establishment of OCHA humanitarian operations in five field offices in earthquake-affected areas.
- Served as the lead desk to support field operations, provide policy advice, and liaise with humanitarian actors in response to the October 2005 Pakistan earthquake. Drafted key reports, situation updates, and policy briefs for the Emergency Relief Coordinator.
- Deployed to Pakistan to establish an NGO Liaison Unit to support displaced populations in Mansehra, Muzaffarabad, and Batagram.

**Humanitarian Liaison Officer, Hurricane Katrina**

**Coordination and Response Division**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**Washington, D.C., USA**

*Sept 2005*

- Deployed to Washington, D.C. to participate in the UN Inter-Agency Team responsible for supporting US Government agencies responding to Hurricane Katrina. Drafted documents for donor support and information and briefing papers for UN Headquarters.
- Supported UN technical missions on information management, registration, and logistical systems establishment.

**Internally Displaced Persons Officer, Tsunami**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**Banda Aceh, Indonesia**

*Jan 2005 to Aug 2005*

- Deployed as the IDP Advisor for the tsunami response in Banda Aceh by facilitating operations, policy development and coordination forums.
- Wrote and developed the "Humanitarian and Early Recovery Assistance Framework", conceived and implemented the IDP Transitional Settlement Monitoring System and facilitated all IDP coordination meetings to support the humanitarian community in assisting those who were displaced and lost their homes and/or livelihoods.

**Head of Sub-Office/Humanitarian Field Officer**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**Monrovia, Liberia**

*2004-2005*

- Deployed to establish and run the sub-office for the post-conflict south-central region of Liberia.
- Carried out humanitarian assessments, established coordination mechanisms, and developed humanitarian programs.
- On behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator, served as the manager of the Humanitarian Action Committee in Monrovia, which oversaw macro-humanitarian issues and made operational policy decisions.

**Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Africa Section  
Coordination and Response Division**

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**

**New York, USA**

2002-2004

- Served as the principal desk officer in response to the Southern Africa food-security emergency, with responsibilities for facilitating operations, providing briefings for senior UN staff including the UN Special Envoy.
- Analyzed links between HIV/AIDS, food security, and political instability.

**Programme Associate**

**United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

**New York, USA**

1997-1999

- Supported information and media needs for UNIFEM programs on human rights and development.
- Helped produce documents and outreach events, including "Promoting Accountability for Women's Human Rights," 1997 UNIFEM Annual Report, UNIFEM's Internet site, the First Mayan Women's Congress, and the 1998 global videoconference on Eliminating Violence Against Women.

**RESEARCH/POLICY ENGAGEMENT/**

**Principle Investigator**

**Chair of Working Group for Underserved Populations**

**North American Humanitarian Response Initiative (NAHRI)**

**Washington DC, USA**

**American Red Cross**

2018-2019

- Helped to develop a new framework for 'Cross-Border Catastrophic Disaster Response' that aims to increase efficiencies, better align operational procedures and address policy opportunities in cross-border response to potential catastrophic disasters between USA, Mexico, and Canada. Focused on the policy working group on proposed solutions for underserved populations for governments and red cross societies.

**Expert Panel**

**Toronto, Canada**

**Humanitarian Grand Challenge Fund. The United States Agency for International Development Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and Grand Challenges Canada**

2018-2019

- Support in the advising and selection of projects for the \$500 million Fund for *Creating Hope in Conflict: A Humanitarian Grand Challenge*.

**Policy Advisor and Member**

**Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI)**

**Global**

2017-2019

- Member of GAHI launched in 2016 by the Government of the Netherlands, British Government, Microsoft, Airbnb, the United Nations, and the largest aid NGOs to put together an alliance to promote new innovations to improve humanitarian response.
- Developing policies for scaling-innovation in humanitarian sector.

**Principle Investigator/Senior Strategic Advisor**

**New York, NY**

**United Nations, Annual Synthesis Report on Progress since the World Humanitarian Summit**

2017

- Served as the PI to conduct research that reviews all progress from May 2016 to May 2017 made towards the global commitments made toward the multi-year 5-point policy agenda agreed to at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.
- Lead in engagement and presentation to governments and humanitarian practitioners.

**Strategic Lead**

**Virginia, USA/London, UK**

**ELRHA Global Prioritization Exercise**

2016-2017

- Served as the PI to conduct research on mapping global humanitarian research and innovation capacities to develop a global framework for prioritizing investment in research and innovation for humanitarian action.
- Research includes a systematic literature review and key stakeholder interviews.
- Lead in engagement and presentation to major donors and humanitarian practitioners.

**Senior Advisor/Project Expert/Board Member  
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)**

**Virginia, USA/The Hague, Netherlands**

**Conceptual Framework for Centre for Humanitarian in the Hague**

2016

- Serve as the Senior Advisor and Board member to support policy development, strategic planning, and conduct public advocacy for the Centre.
- Worked with Dalberg Global Development Advisors to conduct research and develop the policy and administrative framework for a new Centre for Humanitarian Data in The Hague.
- Led and conducted stakeholder interviews and worked to establish the framework for the new Centre.

**Researcher**

**Virginia, USA/London, UK**

**Livelihoods, Social Protection and Basic Services in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations Research Programme Consortium**

**Overseas Development Institute (ODI)/Feinstein International Center (FIC), Tufts University**

2011-2012

- Served as a senior researcher in developing a proposal and successfully securing a six-year US\$1.8 million research grant from DFID to investigate the appropriate building blocks (social protection, basic services, etc.) required in post-conflict Uganda and South Sudan to support livelihood recovery.
- Was a partner in the ODI Research Programme Consortium, bringing together communities of practice and leading research organizations (Centre for Poverty Analysis, Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University, and Save the Children UK) to bridge the knowledge gap on when it is appropriate to try to support the building of secure livelihoods in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

**Researcher**

**World Food Programme, Darfur Evaluation**

**Feinstein International Center (FIC), Tufts University**

**Virginia, USA**

2006

- Managed the production of a design-phase evaluation for WFP on its projects in Darfur, Sudan.
- Drafted a meta-evaluation on historical assessments and evaluations between 2002 and 2004 in Darfur.

**Evaluation Researcher**

**World Food Programme, Sudan Food-Aid Evaluation**

**Feinstein International Center (FIC), Tufts University**

**Khartoum, Sudan/Massachusetts, USA**

2006

- Researched, developed and drafted the Evaluative Guidance Document that set a policy-level framework for WFP Sudan in the post-conflict environment.
- Assisted in coordinating WFP's Food Aid Forum held in Sudan, 6-9 June 2006.

**Consultant**

**CARE Ethiopia**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

2001

- Deployed to Borana, Ethiopia, to review which emergency programs had most helped recovery following the 1999/2000 food emergency in southern Ethiopia, focusing on community-based animal-health programs.
- Designed and wrote a three-year community-based animal-health and drought-mitigation program submitted to USAID OFDA.

**Research Emergency Officer**

**CARE Ethiopia/East Africa Regional Management Unit**

**Borana, Ethiopia/Nairobi, Kenya**

2000

- Deployed during the famine to support emergency food distributions, water-tankering for drought-affected areas of southern Ethiopia.
- Supported the research and writing of "The Failure of operations of the Ethiopian Food Security Reserve 1999-2000".
- Supported the development training modules for rights-based and household livelihood security programming.

**PUBLISHING and EDITORIAL WORK**

**Books**

- *Understanding the Humanitarian World*. Coauthored with Daniel Maxwell. 2019. London: Routledge Press. May 2019.

**Peer-Reviewed Publications**

- Daniel Maxwell, Nicholas Haan, Kirsten Gelsdorf, and David Dawe. "The 2011-12 Famine in Somalia: Introduction to the Special Edition." Special Edition, *Global Food Security Journal*. Elsevier 2012.

- Degan Ali, Kirsten Gelsdorf. “Risk-Averse to Risk-Willing: Learning From The 2011 Somalia Cash Response.” Special Edition, *Global Food Security Journal*. Elsevier 2012.
- Kirsten Gelsdorf, Peter Walker, and Dan Maxwell. “The Future of World Food Programme (WFP) Programming in Sudan.” Special Issue: Food Security in Sudan, *Disasters Journal* 2007 Vol. 31 S1 S1-8.
- Kirsten Gelsdorf, Daniel Maxwell, and Dyan Mazurana. ‘Livelihoods, Basic Services, and Social Protection in Northern Uganda and Karamoja.’ Overseas Development Institute. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, London, United Kingdom. August 2012.
- Daniel Maxwell, Kirsten Gelsdorf, and Martina Santschi, ‘Livelihoods, Basic Services, and Social Protection in South Sudan.’ Overseas Development Institute, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, London, United Kingdom. July 2012.

#### **International Reports/Articles**

- “Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Crisis Risk Management in Humanitarian Assistance.” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *OCHA Policy Publication Series*, March 2014.
- Kirsten Gelsdorf, ‘Implications of Cash Transfer Programming on Humanitarian Coordination.’ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *OCHA Occasional Policy Paper Series*, May 2013.
- Kirsten Gelsdorf, ‘Global Challenges and their Impact on International Humanitarian Action.’ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Occasional Policy Paper Series*, January 2010.
- The Secretary-General’s Report, High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. ‘*Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)*, July 2008.
- Kirsten Gelsdorf, ‘Humanitarian and Early Recovery Assistance Framework’ South-East Asian Tsunami, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. 2004.

#### **Publication Advisory Board Appointments**

- “The State of the Humanitarian System.” ALNAP, 2014.
- “Fit for the Future: Are NGOs, UN organisations, donors, governments and policy makers that implement, fund and influence emergency cash transfer programming ‘fit for the future’?” Humanitarian Futures Project, January 2014.

#### **EDUCATION**

##### **The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University**

**Massachusetts, USA**

*Sept 1999 to Dec 2001*

Masters of Law and Diplomacy in Humanitarian Affairs and Food Security

##### **Dartmouth College**

**New Hampshire, USA**

*Sept 1993- Jun 1997*

Bachelors of Arts with double major in History with a focus on Asian Studies and International Environmental Affairs

##### **University of Nairobi**

**Nairobi, Kenya**

*Dec 1994-March 1995*

Certificate in Environmental Studies

#### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

##### **The Centre for Humanitarian Data**

**The Hague, Netherlands**

*Board Member, Appointed January 2017*

- The Center will increase the use and impact of data in the humanitarian sector by developing policy for shared standards and integrated data systems, increasing the capability of practitioners and operational partners to access and use humanitarian data, build new partnerships in data problem solving, and promoting a data services platform for key decision-makers and leaders in the humanitarian system.

##### **Girl Determined**

**Myanmar**

*On Board of Directors, Appointed March 2016*

- Girl Determined is a girl’s leadership and empowerment International Non- Governmental Organization.

##### **International Rescue Committee (IRC) Charlottesville Virginia**

**Virginia, USA**

*Community Advisory Board, Appointed July 2016*

- IRC is a US refugee resettlement Non-Governmental Organization.