

Kirsten Heidi Gelsdorf

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

- Designed, raised funds, and co-leading the [UVA Humanitarian Collaborative](#) initiative involving faculty, students, and external practitioner partnerships.
- Leading applied research and policy development projects for organizations such as American Red Cross, USAID, Sesame Workshop, GIZ, United Nations, Save the Children International, and UN Centre for Humanitarian Data.
- Developed and hosted the [podcast BeyondAid](#) with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- Developed and run [Read for Action: The Humanitarian Book Club](#).
- Teaching graduate and undergraduate courses on applied public policy as well as humanitarian response, leadership, contemplative public policy, innovation and ethics.
- Selected to serve on the Strategic Advisory Group for Save the Children, World Economic Forum Expert Network, Humanitarian Innovation Fund funding committee, and others.
- Winner of 2020 State of Virginia Outstanding Faculty Award; 2021 University of Virginia Public Impact Research Award, 2021 and 2019 and 2021 Batten Excellence in Engagement of Public Policy and Leadership Award; 2020 Batten Excellence in Service Award; 2019 All-University Teaching Award; and 2018 Batten Excellence in Teaching Award.

SELECTED RESEARCH/POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Principle Investigator

Sesame Workshop

Promoting Investment in Early Childhood Development in Emergencies (ECDiE)

2020-present

- Completing a multi-project grant for Sesame Workshop involving research, policy development, and advocacy support to incentivize greater funding and greater programmatic investment in ECDiE.

Strategic Advisor

German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)

Effectiveness of Psychosocial Interventions (PSS) in the Context of Forced Migration

2020-2021

- Completed a global systematic review and meta-analysis of PSS interventions with a specific focus on populations affected by forced migration. Current research questions include: to what degree are psychosocial interventions in the context of forced migration effective?; to what degree do psychosocial interventions with different characteristics differ in their effectiveness?; to what degree do context variables moderate the effectiveness of interventions?; and to what degree are unintended positive and/or negative impacts reported when implementing psychosocial interventions?

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.

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*

- Helped lead research team 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.
- Supported with engagement and presentation to major donors and humanitarian practitioners.

Senior Advisor/Project Expert/Board Member**Virginia, USA/The Hague, Netherlands****Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)****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.

PAST EMPLOYMENT

Chief, Policy Analysis and Innovation

United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

New York, USA

2012-2015

- Led and managed one of OCHA's largest sections with a focus on policy analysis and innovation.
- Served as a Senior Policy Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on all major humanitarian policy issues as well as delivered presentations and represented the UN at major international conferences and events.
- Managed a multi-million budget to conduct, facilitate, and communicate policy-relevant research and analysis to anticipate and interpret global humanitarian trends and advance humanitarian policy and practice.
- In my tenure I developed an annual flagship publication, a think brief series, and initiated and developed the now annual UN Global Humanitarian Policy Forum involving hundreds of practitioners and thinkers.

Humanitarian Advisor

United Nations Special Envoy for Haiti, President William Clinton Port-au-Prince, Haiti/New York, USA

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

United Nations

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

United Nations

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

United Nations

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

United Nations

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

United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Washington, D.C., USA

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

United Nations

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Banda Aceh, Indonesia

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

United Nations

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

United Nations

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.

SELECTED BOARD and REVIEW PANEL APPOINTMENTS

Expert

World Economic Forum, Expert Network

2021-on-going

- Nominated to serve as an expert in collaborating to promote research and develop new ideas and a policy agenda supporting the mission of the WEF.

Funding Committee

Humanitarian Innovation Fund

2020-2024

- Selected out of 200 applicants to serve as funding committee member to review and advise on new innovations to support populations in need of humanitarian aid. Focus areas include disability and inclusion, intimate partner violence, and bringing innovation to scale.

Expert Panel

USAID and Inter-American Development Bank *JuntosEsMejor Challenge*

Washington, DC

2020, 2022

- Review proposals and provide assessments on proposals aimed at scaling innovative solutions to support crisis affected Venezuelans and host communities.

Expert Panel

Toronto, Canada

Grand Challenges Canada, Humanitarian Grand Challenges Fund

2018-2019

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

Advisory Board

Do no harm: Ethical humanitarian innovation and digital bodies (EtHumIn)

2019-2020

- I serve on the policy advisory board that examines how innovation in the domains of humanitarian technology and digitization of beneficiary bodies shape and challenge humanitarian action and its contribution to the SDGs. The board also includes Harvard University, Oxford University, ALNAP, and Stanford.

Advisory Committee

Platform for Disaster Displacement

Geneva, Switzerland

2017-2018

- The Platform is the main global body developing normative frameworks and policies to protect people displaced by climate driven disasters. I was able to have Batten named as an advisory member and served in annual review meetings and strategic processes.

The Centre for Humanitarian Data

The Hague, Netherlands

2018-2023

Senior Fellow

- The Center aims to 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-Present

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

SELECTED PUBLISHING and EDITORIAL WORK

Books

- *Understanding the Humanitarian World*. Coauthored with Daniel Maxwell. 2019. London: Routledge Press. May 2019. Adopted by Princeton University, Dartmouth, Elon, LSE, Millersville University, Columbia University, Harvard University, George Washington University, and MIT.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- Nguyen AJ, Lasater ME, Lee C, Mallawaarachchi, Joshua K, Bassett L, Gelsdorf K. Psychosocial support interventions in the context of forced displacement: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Migr Health*. 2023.
- 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/Op Eds/Media Mentions

- The New Yorker, [How Would a Humanitarian Pause Work in Gaza?](#) Nov 2023.
- The Chronicle of Philanthropy, [How Much Good Can \\$100 Million Do? Sesame Street and IRC Put a Big Bet to the Test](#), October, 2023.
- NPR *Marketplace*, [“Among the Aid, Ukrainian Refugees can Expect Cold Hard Cash”](#), March, 2022.
- The Conversation, [In some cases, ‘humanitarian corridors’ in Ukraine could do more harm than good”](#) (picked up by The Independent, Houston Chronicle, Yahoo News) March 2022.
- Washington Post, [Humanitarian corridors are meant to evacuate civilians in war. But they can be dangerous](#). March 2022
- NPR, *With Good Reason* Invited Guest interviewed for 24 min segment on show, [Humanitarian Aid Misconceptions](#). (April 2021)
- Christian Science Monitor, [“After Haiti quake, aid workers make respect a part of relief”](#) August 2021
- Daily Progress, *Op Ed*, [COVID and Hunger are intertwined](#), October 2020
- Charlottesville Tomorrow; *Op Ed*, [You Can Be a Good Neighbor and a Global Citizen During the COVID-19 Crisis](#), March 2020
- DEVEX Opinion: [Now is the Time to Prioritize Mental Health](#), May 2020
- “Promoting Leadership on Early Childhood Development in Crisis Contexts.” Sesame Workshop, July 2020.
- “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

- “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.

SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Presented INEE *Coordination in Practice: Lessons Learned from Early Childhood Development Coordination in Challenging Contexts*, 2024. Featured Speaker Hilton Humanitarian Awards 2023; Chaired Karsh Democracy 360 Panel *The Climate and Refugee crisis and role of Democracies*, 2023; Keynote and Invited Presentation: Princeton University *Policy Challenges in Cash Transfer Programming in Humanitarian Crisis* 2021; GAGE event *The Lessons of War: The United States, Afghanistan, & Iraq since 9/11* with Brookings and the Atlantic Council 2021, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *“Changes to the Humanitarian Architecture”* 2021; Virginia Journal of International Law Symposium, Panel Speaker *“The Future of Human Rights”* 2021; *Humanitarian Innovation*, Brown University. 2018. Invited Guest Lecture: *Leadership in Crisis Contexts*, Columbia University 2018, Invited Guest Lecture: *Challenges and Opportunities for Data in Humanitarian Aid*, NYU Stern School 2018; Expert Briefing: *Research on Commitments to Humanitarian Summit* UN Global Humanitarian Policy Forum 2017; Expert Briefing: *Humanitarian Innovation* International Peace Institute (IPI). Washington DC, 2017; Expert Briefing: *Application of Technology for Humanitarian Relief* UN Office for Outer Space Affairs 2017; Government Donor

Briefing: *Investments for Humanitarian Research and Innovation*; ELRHA Steering Committee. London. 2017. Expert Briefing: *Investments for Humanitarian Research and Innovation. UK/DfIDt*. London. 2017; Advisory Participant on *Humanitarian Architecture*. ODI/Humanitarian Policy Group, London, 2017; Invited Discussant at Human Rights Scholarship Conference, UVA Law School. 2017; Invited Guest Lecture on *New Trends in Humanitarian Response*, Tufts University. November 2017; Roundtable speaker at Google Inc. on 'Data Fellows in Humanitarian aid for Centre for Humanitarian Data.' 2017. Invited Presentation on *Approaches to change: evaluation and evidence, standards and certification*; ALNAP Humanitarian Conference, Sweden. 2017; Invited Panelist on *Between Samaritans and States: The Political Ethics of Humanitarian INGOs*. (ISA), 2017; Presentation on the Development of Centre for Humanitarian Data.' Leiden University. Netherlands, 2016.

SELECTED UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Vice-Provost for Engagement Public Service Pathways, Diplomacy and Security Advisory Committee 2022-2024; University Women's Leadership Council (WLC) 2020-2023;; Committee for The Center for Global Health Equity Guerrant Global Health Equity Award Ctte, 2021-2022; Undergraduate Curriculum Ctte 2021; COVID Faculty Productivity Committee, for Vice Provost of Faculty Affairs, 2020; Women's Leadership Council, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 2020; UVA Women's Center's Beth Garrett Memorial Award for public policy 2020; Jefferson Medalist Committee, 2019-2020; Center for Global Health Equity, 2020; Faculty Fellow Center for Global Health Faculty Fellow 2018-2020; Batten Executive Committee, 2017-2018-2019; Batten Dean Search Committee, 2018-2019; Batten Teaching Evaluation Committee, 2018-2019; Batten Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, 2018-2019; Batten Applied Policy Project Curriculum Committee, 2018-2019; Batten Admissions Committee, 2018-2019; Batten Engagement Evaluation Committee, 2018-2019; Deans International Engagement Committee 2018-2019; Leadership in Academic Matters Participant (LAM) 2018; Vice Provost Community Engagement Committee: 2017-2019.

EDUCATION

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

Massachusetts, USA

September 1999 to December 2001

Masters of Law and Diplomacy (MALD) in Humanitarian Affairs and Food Security

Dartmouth College

New Hampshire, USA

September 1993- June 1997

Bachelor of Arts (AB) with double major in History with a focus on Asian Studies and a special major in International Environmental Issues