Curriculum Vitae

NAME

Niki Palmer

Principal, The Policy Practice

NATIONALITY

British

LANGUAGES

Not specified

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE

Niki has 25 years of experience in international development and humanitarian assistance, much in fragile and conflict-affected settings. She specialises in collaborating with teams to apply political economy and conflict analysis across a range of challenges. Niki has a strong focus on climate action and land, including climate adaptation and resilience, disaster risk management and implementing land and environmental rights. She is a Principal at The Policy Practice where she co-created and is a trainer on the online course 'Political Economy Analysis for Climate Action'. Her background includes working for the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Her expertise is shaped by years of experience based in countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as diverse global policy roles.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Syria, North Africa and the Middle East region, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Belize, Brazil, Indonesia

EXPERTISE

- Political economy analysis and thinking and working politically — including training and course design
- Climate action — climate adaptation and resilience, climate finance and climate governance
- Disaster risk management, early and anticipatory action
- Land and environmental rights and land governance
- Conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected settings
- Refugees, hosts and forced displacement
- Rule of law, security and justice
- Governance and institutional reform, including state-owned enterprises

QUALIFICATIONS

1997 MA Social Anthropology, Goldsmiths College (University of London)

1995 BA (Hons) English Literature, University of Liverpool

EMPLOYMENT / SELECTED ASSIGNMENTS

Consultant International Expert, PEA perspective on conflict transformation in the Levant (Dec 2025 – Mar 2026)
UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)
Contribute to redeveloping UNESCWA's vision and method for conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the Levant sub-region. Provide a political economy lens on early recovery and rationale for using a PEA approach.

PEA of changing perspectives of Ethiopia's rural safety net (Sept – Jan 2025)
FCDO
Undertake research and qualitative analysis of the political economy of Ethiopia's rural Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). Interview stakeholders at federal and regional levels. Complete a report and several presentations for the Donor Reference Group (UK and Irish governments, World Bank) and agree findings for the next phase of PSNP programme support.

Rapid analysis of Indonesia's disaster risk management system (March 2025)
Abt Australia for DFAT
Provide a comprehensive assessment of the status of Indonesia's disaster risk management system, focused on its the strengths and weaknesses.

PEA training and mentoring for resilience, adaptation and inclusion in Nepal (RAIN) (Jan 2024 – ongoing)
Mott MacDonald
Provide training and mentoring to a team of Nepalese experts on applying PEA and TWP to challenges with the government systems for DRM and climate finance, adaptation and resilience in Nepal.

Lead on PEA, Decision Support Unit (DSU) for the Land Facility (Jul 2024 – Jul 2029)
Abt Associates
Provide guidance and leadership on political economy analysis and thinking and working politically for land governance, in support of national implementation of the Land Facility (FCDO) programme and regional and global learning on the PE of land governance. Coordinate a PE Advisory Group and work closely with colleagues at the DSU on MERL, gender and communications.

Expert on early action for disasters, international crises response system. (Mar 2024 – Jun 2024)
Centre for Disaster Prevention
Conduct a political economy analysis of the constraints to taking anticipatory action for natural disasters, based on pre-financing agreements, in fragile and conflict affected locations. Develop findings and conclusions to encourage greater attention to proactive and early disaster response from the international system.

Analyst, climate, conflict and risk assessment for Pakistan (Jan 2024 – Apr 2024)
FCDO Pakistan
Undertake research on the causes and drivers of conflict in specific geographies in Pakistan. Analyse how these drivers interact with climate change impacts and hazards. Use a political economy and conflict analysis framing to depict potential pathways of change, illustrate likely risks and make recommendations on interventions to increase disaster preparedness and conflict sensitivity.

Political economy analyst, defenders of Brazil's Amazon (Feb 2024 – May 2024)
World Resources Institute / Ford Foundation
Undertake research on the political economy factors influencing implementation of rights to environmental, indigenous and land advocacy in Brazil's Amazon. Examine cultural, economic, political and social reasons why rights are not upheld. Synthesise finding to present and conduct a workshop on potential change pathways and interventions.

Mapping UK climate finance sources for humanitarian engagement (Nov 2023 – Jan 2024)

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Map and analyse UK climate finance trends and sources and engage with the policy debate around applying climate finance to humanitarian operations. Make recommendations for NRC based on funding trends.

Conflict and Political Economy Analyst, Climate Smart Agriculture, Nigeria (Oct 2023)
The Policy Practice for FCDO, PROPCOM+
Provide peer review and advice on conflict analysis and conflict sensitive programming focused on developing climate smart agriculture across Nigeria. Provide peer review and advice on political economy analysis of agricultural value chains in Nigeria.

Consultant International Expert, Syria / early recovery (Oct 2023 – Aug 2024)
UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)
Develop a methodology for conducting climate and environment smart political economy and conflict analysis within a local needs assessment framework. Based on Syria but applicable to early recovery environments. Intention is to roll out framework across the Middle East.

Co-Creator and Trainer, the Political Economy of Climate Action (Ongoing)
The Policy Practice
Create, develop, and deliver an online course on the political economy of climate action. Launched in June 2023 and delivered over seven 2-hour sessions. The second iteration ran through Nov 2023. We expect to continue to run this online course twice yearly.

Trainer and Course Designer, PEA and TWP applied to health and climate (Mar – Apr 2023)
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Develop and deliver a 2-day, in-person training, covering applied political economy analysis and thinking and working politically in relation to health and climate. Create tailored case studies on Ethiopia and Nigeria.

Trainer and Course Designer, PEA and TWP applied to operating in Ethiopia (Sept – Dec 2022)
TripleLine Ethiopia
Develop and deliver a 1-day, in-person training on basic concepts and methods and likely challenges to using these approaches in Ethiopia. Produce a summary report based on the main findings of the training day, with recommendations.

Trainer and Course Designer, PEA and TWP applied to energy transitions (Sept – Nov 2022)
World Resources Institute (WRI)
Design a bespoke course covering working politically in support of energy transitions in Kenya and India, with illustrative case studies from both countries. Deliver the training to WRI participants over a 3 day, in-person workshop.

Analyst on the Financing Window for Hosts and Refugees (WHR) (June – September 2022)
World Bank Group
Conduct a rapid assessment of the challenges and successes of the Bank's primary financing mechanism for the socio-economic development of hosts and refugees in eligible countries. Based on interviews and desk research complete and agree a final report recommending potential next steps for the Bank.

Analyst on Political Economy, Risk and Conflict Analysis in Fragile Contexts (April – August 2022)
World Bank Group
Lead two in-depth case studies on the use of political economy analyses by World Bank teams in Ethiopia and Lebanon. Contribute to a wider internal review aimed at enhancing political economy, risk, and conflict considerations in fragile, conflict affected contexts.

Lead researcher, Internal Assessment of Politically Smart Working at WRI (March – May 2022)
World Resources Institute (WRI)

Lead an internal review of the knowledge and application of political economy analysis and approaches to thinking and working politically across WRI, including country offices and global teams. Create a survey to provide quantitative analysis and undertake qualitative interviews. Present findings and recommendations to WRI leadership.

Adviser and Analyst on Climate Adaptation and Local Governance, Nepal (Nov 2021 – Dec 2022)
Mott MacDonald
Undertake political economy research on local climate adaptation and infrastructure development in Karnali Province. Produce an internal report on political economy constraints and opportunities, and a synthesis report for public circulation. Present findings; develop and deliver training for Nepal team.

Analyst on Political Economy Constraints to Climate Policy in Africa (Nov 2021 – Aug 2022)
Mott MacDonald
Undertake and present research developing the knowledge of Africa-focused personnel on the overarching climate risks, policy responses and relevant political economy factors impacting climate action in Africa. Focus on Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria and regional policy across the continent, facilitating internal discussion and responses.

Adviser, Political Economy of Climate Change (May 2021 – April 2022)
World Bank Group
Provide 'call-down' advice on the political economy of climate change across teams, country offices and practices. Produce short case studies synthesising examples of political economy in climate policy making.

Senior Governance and Development Expert, Ethiopia (March 2020 – February 2021)
United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)
Lead split-site team to produce a new assessment tool and conduct an internal political economy analysis of refugee inclusion in Ethiopia. Combine refugee protection, governance, area-based development, and political economy approaches.

Senior International Expert, Political Economy of Solar, Ethiopia & Uganda (February – April 2020 and October – November 2020)
Tetra Tech, Africa Clean Energy Technical Assistance Fund (ACE TAF)
National and local constraints to off-grid, stand-alone solar systems in Ethiopia and Uganda, working closely with local teams of energy experts. Conduct training on political economy for energy programme managers across Africa.

Co-Author, Political Economy of Domestic Climate Change Governance (December 2019 – July 2020)
World Resources Institute (WRI)
Co-author working paper aimed at climate change advocates, taking a political economy lens and applying it to domestic climate change governance. The guide aims to inspire greater attention to contextual realities and the domestic constraints and enablers of climate action.

Analyst on Economic Opportunities for Hosts and Refugees in Uganda (October – November 2019 and April 2021)
World Bank – Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Global Practice
Compile global lessons and experience on enabling economic opportunities for refugees and hosts, applied to the Ugandan context. Include strategies to enhance resilience to shocks, build assets and address obstacles to success. Draft concept note and risk matrix for a new WBG programme piloting several approaches to enhancing economic opportunities in targeted settlements.

Lead Author Political Economy of Policy Effectiveness in East and Central Asia (October – November 2019)
World Bank – Europe and Central Asia Department (ECA)
Lead author chapter in the WBG publication on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in ECA, exploring underlying political economy drivers of state capture, transparency, and accountability.

Author of Political Economy Analysis of Ethiopia's Safety Net (May 2019 – June 2020)
World Bank – Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice
Manage a team to provide extensive political economy analysis of Ethiopia's safety net, to influence the design of the fifth phase of program funding. Include national and sub-national analysis of targeting, scalability, governance, and graduation. Undertake field research in Tigray, Afar and Oromia.

Lead Author on Political Economy Analysis for Reforming SOEs (December 2018 – June 2019)
World Bank – Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions Global Practice
Produce comprehensive 'how to' internal guidance on the Political Economy of Reforming State-Owned Enterprises, including corporate governance, markets and finance.

Author on Vulnerability and Disaster Resilience in Ethiopia's Lowlands (September – October 2018)
World Bank – Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group
Research and write chapter on the governance and political economy of Ethiopia's border areas in a Bank publication on vulnerability in Ethiopia's lowlands. Include Ethiopia's political system, its impact on pastoralist and agro-pastoralist livelihoods and factors related to food security, managing shocks and enabling resilience.

Adviser on Economic Opportunities for Ethiopians and Refugees (October 2017 – January 2020)
World Bank – Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Global Practice
Provide technical and programming advice on sustainable economic opportunities for Ethiopians and refugees, including stakeholder analysis, political economy and institutional assessments, risk appraisals and an integrated technical assessment. Donor liaison and advice to the WBG on a new multi-donor trust fund, including drafting programme documents.

Senior Governance and Conflict Adviser, Governance and Climate Risk (May 2017 – April 2018)
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, North Africa Joint Unit
Develop a strategic case for UK funding to climate adaptation in North Africa focused on the relationship between climate change, environmental degradation and stability in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Libya. Conduct funding options analysis on climate risk management and climate adaptation work in the region. Author strategy on risks to governance in North Africa and agree work-plan for follow-up actions at posts and Whitehall.

Senior Governance Adviser / Deputy Head Governance and Security (July 2014 – April 2017)
DFID Ethiopia
Senior Adviser to DFID's largest aid programme at this time. Manage a split-site team and deputise for the wider team. Head of strategy and programming for Ethiopia's Somali Regional State and directly accountable for over £80 million in social sector and disaster relief programming. Conduct evaluations, streamline programming and close poorly performing elements. Produce analysis on disaster risk reduction, Embassy-wide risks, and lowland vulnerabilities.

Policy Adviser Rule of Law (RoL), Security and Justice / Acting Team Leader (November 2010 – July 2014)
UNDP headquarters, Bureau of Development Policy
Manage publication of UN knowledge products, support country-based colleagues, manage global programme on the rule of law, lead on contexts undergoing political transitions and conduct missions to Egypt, Tunisia, Rwanda, Kyrgyzstan, El Salvador and Belize. Represent UNDP on organised crime, drugs and the environment.

Conflict Adviser Middle East Peace Process (September 2006 – November 2010)
DFID Jerusalem (covering Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem)
Lead on the Arab Israel conflict, managing a team of police and military advisers responsible for Palestinian sector governance. Co-author the UK's state-building policy for Palestine and produce joint government conflict analysis.

Conflict Adviser Afghanistan (August 2005 – September 2006)
DFID Afghanistan
Manage UK Development Advisers across Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Responsible for UK grant making on conflict prevention. Lead on civil military relations and provincial reconstruction.

Training

- Political Economy Analysis in Action, The Policy Practice, 2021.
- Risk, Mitigation and Control, DFID, 2016.
- Value for Money, DFID, 2015.
- Field Course on the Horn of Africa, Rift Valley Institute, 2014.
- Truth Seeking and the Challenge of Sustainable Peace, ICTJ – BIPRC, 2010.
- Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy, UNITAR-IPI Fellowship Programme, 2008.
- Inside the Middle East, Brookings, 2007.

SELECTED REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Palmer, N, (2024) 'Why ideas matter for action on climate and environment', The Policy Practice, blog post

Palmer, N, (2021) 'International development must be politically smart to deliver climate goals', The Policy Practice, blog post

Worker, J, Palmer, N, (2021) A Guide to Assessing the Political Economy of Domestic Climate Governance, World Resources Institute.

Palmer, N, Fritz, V, (2020) Drivers and Enablers of Policy Effectiveness in ECA, chapter in Building Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions in Europe and Central Asia, World Bank.

Palmer, N, Rose, J, (2019) The Political Economy of Reforming State Owned Enterprises, World Bank (internal).

Palmer, N (2019), Regional Governance, chapter in Poverty and Vulnerability in the Ethiopian Lowlands: Building a More Resilient Future, World Bank.

Brooks, J, Palmer, N, Melim-McCleod, C (2014), Guidance Note on Assessing the Rule of Law Using Institutional and Context Analysis, UNDP.

Managed and contributed to:

Nunan, F (2016), Topic Guide: Governance of Natural Resources, DFID.

Parsons, J, Kutateladze, B (2014), Why, What and How to Measure? A User's Guide to Measuring Rule of Law, Justice and Security Programmes, UNDP.

Various (2012), Security Sector Reform Integrated Technical Guidance Notes, UN Department of Peacekeeping.