

EKTA J. PATEL

Durham, NC — epatel3@gmail.com — (404) 428-9242 — ejpatel.com — Citizenship: USA and Kenya

SUMMARY

Recent PhD graduate with 5+ years experience as a research specialist in environmental policy issues, including water resource management and climate adaptation. Proficient in mixed-methods data analysis, environmental program development, and stakeholder management across multicultural teams.

EDUCATION

Duke University, Durham, NC August 2017 - July 2023
Ph.D., Environmental Policy, concentration in Political Science

- Dissertation: *Managing (Unconventional) Water: Essays on Expert Knowledge, Media Framings, and Stakeholder Debates.*
- Committee: Erika Weinthal (chair), Betsy Albright, Marc Jeuland, Jamie McEvoy
- Relevant coursework: Environmental Politics, Advanced Statistical Analysis, Social Network Analysis, Theory Development, Politics of Urbanized Environments, Political Economy of Corruption and Governance, Political Economy of Public Policy, Qualitative Methods

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA August 2011 - May 2015
B.A., Environmental Science and Public Policy, cum laude

- Honors Thesis: *Voices of Vulnerability: Shock, Stress, and Well-Being from Climate-Induced Floods in Surat, India.*
Advisor: Sheila Jasanoff

RESEARCH AND WORK EXPERIENCE

USAID (contract through the Research Technical Assistance Center) Remote (based in Durham, NC)
Research Consultant December 2021 - May 2023

- Led the research design, development, and writing of two USAID deliverables: Water and Conflict Toolkit (2023) and Conflict Integration Guide (2023)
- Edited technical language for sections related to water, conflict, climate change, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) for two other deliverables: Feed the Future and Conflict Integration Toolkit (2023) and Food Systems Conceptual Framework Guide (2023)
- Collaborated with senior USAID leadership and technical experts from the broader academic and practitioner network; led internal workshops to solicit feedback from established subject-matter experts
- Coordinated bi-weekly presentations with USAID stakeholders; conducted interviews with international USAID mission staff (10+ countries) and implementing partners
- Initiated a documentation plan to track work progress and enhance transparency throughout the year-long project; ensured project objectives and key milestones were met in a timely manner
- Developed and presented comprehensive written and oral presentations to internal and external audiences

Environmental Law Institute Remote (based in Durham, NC)
Graduate Summer Intern June 2021 - August 2021

- Analyzed academic papers, news articles, government documents, and laws to devise approaches to minimize opportunities for water capture in market-based transactions systems
- Drafted internal research report on “Water Market Protections to Prevent Investment Water Speculation” with a focus on western USA and Australia

Duke University Durham, NC
Graduate Instructor August 2020 - May 2021

- Co-taught a year-long class on “Mapping WASH and COVID-19 in the Middle East and North Africa” to help students examine how different communities and humanitarian actors in conflict-affected countries responded to the pandemic and expanded access to water and sanitation
- Provided weekly trainings on GIS technology, quantitative data analysis, satellite mapping, and qualitative interview techniques to a class of 10 students

USDA/NIFA (contract through Duke University) Durham, NC and Central California
Research Consultant May 2019 - July 2019

- Evaluated state-level policies in California on agriculture, water, and food safety as part of a USDA/NIFA project on “Assessing Potential Human Health Impacts Associated with the Use of Oilfield Produced Water for Crop Irrigation”
- Developed a structured interview guide and conducted in-depth field interviews with local stakeholders, including representatives from the Central Valley Water Board, state-level science advisors, and NGO representatives
- Wrote memo analyzing California’s regulatory framework on oilfield produced water; offered recommendations for USDA/NIFA personnel on regulatory amendments needed to support effective water management and food security in California

Duke University
Lead Teaching Assistant

Durham, NC
January 2019 - May 2020; August 2021 - December 2022

- Served as Lead Teaching Assistant seven times across four courses:
 - Global Environmental Politics (Fall 2022 — Undergraduate Level; 20 students)
 - U.S. Environmental Politics (Spring 2019, Spring 2020, Spring 2021 — Master’s Level; 60 students per semester)
 - Environmental Law and Policy (Fall 2019, Fall 2021 — Master’s Level; 25 students per semester);
 - Environment, Conflict, and Peacebuilding (Fall 2020 — Undergraduate Level; 20 students)
- Trained students in designing project proposals, collecting and analyzing data, and writing policy memos
- Developed and implemented innovative teaching methods to enhance student engagement and comprehension; received positive student feedback for communication, teaching style, and effectiveness in facilitating understanding of complex topics

USAID (contract through the Research Technical Assistance Center)
Research Consultant

Durham, NC
October 2018 - August 2019

- Analyzed legal loopholes that facilitate the illegal wildlife trade in the Mekong and co-authored a report for USAID titled “Scaling Back Wildlife Trade in the Mekong Delta: Applying a Political Economy Lens to the Farmer Loophole with a Focus on Vietnam and Laos”
- Conducted remote interviews with stakeholders across Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, including researchers, government officials, local NGOs, international NGOs, and private sector actors
- Utilized insights from the interviews and analysis to contribute significantly to the design of three interventions to combat illegal wildlife trade, including a behavioral change campaign, an enforcement effort, and a sustainable farming program

zyBooks (an interactive digital courseware platform for STEM courses acquired by Wiley)
Business Analyst and Product Designer

Los Gatos, CA
July 2015 - July 2017

- Leveraged extensive market research techniques to design and implement new STEM subject products, resulting in a substantial 30% increase in company revenue
- Developed comprehensive written presentations and talking points for senior leadership, which were effectively employed in investor meetings and national conferences
- Conducted regular product effectiveness analysis and customer satisfaction surveys to collect and analyze feedback from student and instructor users, synthesizing the results into actionable insights for product enhancements

Urban Health and Climate Resilience Center
Field Researcher and Intern

Surat, India
June 2014 - August 2014

- Led an interview-based field research project analyzing the vulnerabilities of impoverished slum communities to climate change, subsequently proposing strategic climate resilience initiatives
- Conducted a comprehensive quantitative analysis of disease surveillance data encompassing over 40 million individuals across Gujarat, India, identifying key patterns and trends related to climate change
- Coordinated with the mayors and chief medical officers of eight cities to develop adaptation strategies centered around health, energy, and climate change for ongoing and future policy considerations

Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights
Research Intern

Boston, MA
June 2012 - September 2012

- Conducted research on gender mainstreaming, gender conflict and security, and United Nations resolutions on women’s rights
- Authored an analytical report and annotated bibliography on gender security and corruption within South Asian governments for the Women’s Regional Network
- Promoted to an Executive Function role, which entailed managing 30 interns and helping with website design

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS & WORKING PAPERS

“Debating Desalination: Stakeholder participation and decision-making in southern California,” In *Water Alternatives*, 2023.

“Rights, resilience, and water in turbulent times,” with Erika Weinthal, In *Global Environmental Politics in a Turbulent Era*, 2023.

“Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Mekong,” with Songkhun Nillasithanukroh, Edmund Malesky, and Erika Weinthal, In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Environmental Politics*, 2022.

“Expert Knowledge and International Coordinating Bodies: The Case of UN-Water,” *Under Review*.

“Framing Desalination: Alignments with Climate (Mal)Adaptation in Global News Media,” *Under Review*.

“The Role of Religious Organizations in Urban Water Crises: A Case-Study on Cape Town,” *Under Review*.

“Untitled: Land Rights and Tenure Security in Urban Slums,” *Under Review*.

“Water Infrastructure and Situated Politics in Bengaluru,” *Under Review*.

SELECTED NON-ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

“USAID’s Revised Water and Conflict Toolkit,” with Erika Weinthal, blog in *New Security Beat*, March 2023.

“Water and Conflict: A Toolkit for Programming,” with Erika Weinthal, Geoff Dabelko, Carl Bruch, Jack Daly, and Nikki Behnke, prepared for USAID, January 2023.

“Women in Water Diplomacy Network After Action Report: The Water Diplomacy Symposium and Network Engagement in the 2023 UN Water Conference,” with Elizabeth Koch et al., 2023.

“Scaling Back Wildlife Trade in the Mekong Delta: Applying a Political Economy Lens to the Farmer Loophole with a Focus on Vietnam and Laos,” with Edmund Malesky, Songkhun Nillasithanukroh, and Erika Weinthal, prepared for USAID, June 2019.

GRANTS & AWARDS

Duke Summer Research Fellowship	2018 - 2020, 2022, 2023
Duke Graduate Student Training Enhancement Grant	2021
Duke Human Rights Summer Research Grant	2021
Duke Dissertation Research Travel Award	2020, 2021
Duke Africa Initiative Student Award	2020
Harvard PBHA Outstanding Senior in Service	2015
Harvard South Asia Institute Prasad Fellow	2014
Harvard University Center for the Environment Award	2013, 2014

CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

Association of American Geographers, Denver, CO	2023
UN-Water Week: Global Water Diplomacy Symposium, New York, NY	2023
International Studies Association, Nashville, TN	2022
International Studies Association, Honolulu, HI	(canceled) 2020
Sustainability and Development Conference, Ann Arbor, MI	2019
Duke Global Environmental Health & Energy Student Working Group	2018
NICAR Conference - Investigative Reporters and Editors	2018

SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

Board Member, Duke Bass Connections Student Advisory Council	2021 - 2022
Invited Student Speaker, Duke University Board of Trustees	2022
Board Member, Duke African Graduate and Professional Students Association	2020 - 2021
Student Member, Africa Initiative Search Committee	2020
Graduate Seminar Co-organizer, Duke Environmental Policy Program	2018 - 2020

SKILLS & TRAINING

Languages: English (native fluency), Gujarati (native spoken fluency), Hindi (native spoken fluency), Spanish (limited proficiency), Swahili (limited proficiency)

Fieldwork: USA (4 months, 2019), India (3 months, 2014), other opportunities canceled due to COVID-19

Computer: R, Python, ArcGIS, QGIS, NVivo, HTML/CSS, WordPress, Sketch, Adobe Illustrator, Microsoft Office Suite

ICPSR Summer Program, Empirical Modeling and Causal Inference	2018
Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR), Syracuse University	2019
Duke Environmental Impacts Fellow Program	2020