

Lauren Ellen Smith is a former member of the Trinity United Church family, granddaughter of Jim and Margaret Montgomery, and a friend and cousin to many in the Shelburne area.

From a young age Lauren envisioned herself working with the United Nations in the international development sector. Following the completion of her undergraduate degree in International Economics and Finance at Ryerson University in Toronto in 2010, Lauren had a short stint in Wealth Management Finance with Scotiabank on King Street in Toronto. After two years in banking, Lauren decided to pursue her master's degree at the University of British Columbia where she studied Food and Resource Economics and International Nutrition. For her masters project she led a research team evaluating the effectiveness of home fortification with Micronutrient Powders for young children in Rwanda, and was subsequently hired by the University of British Columbia where she supported UNICEF with research related to young child nutrition in more than six countries in 2013.

Lauren's diplomatic nature and innate leadership ability has contributed to a certain "savoir faire" developed over a series of international missions where she was responsible for liaising with community members, health workers, local leaders, and high-level government officials on national public health and nutrition programming. She relished the time spent with mothers cooking porridges for their children and collected many recipes and friends. She easily found synergy between her social and cultural (especially food related!) curiosities and the research she led. While providing technical assistance to the government of Rwanda for [the first national scale-up of home fortification in Africa](#), Lauren began to refine her particular interest in human behaviour.

Lauren is driven by the human right to health and believes that meaningful engagement with communities can ensure more equitable health and food systems. She has worked with some of the most marginalized populations to co-design strategies for improved health and wellbeing. Lauren has worked in more than a dozen countries across Southern and Eastern Africa, West Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean using community-based approaches to tackle a range of communicable and non-communicable health issues, including malnutrition, malaria, antimicrobial resistance, Ebola, schistosomiasis and COVID-19. In addition to her work in international development, Lauren has been deployed in emergency humanitarian responses by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Lauren and her partner Stuart are currently living in Rome, Italy and both work for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) which in 2020 was [awarded The Nobel Peace Prize](#) giving WFP recognition *"for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict."*

Lauren is looking forward to starting her PhD in Health Policy at the University of Toronto, Dalla Lana School of Public Health this Fall.



*Picture:*

*Lauren in Thimphu, Bhutan during her most recent mission in January 2021 where she supported WFP Bhutan and the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture with a Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for the National School Health and Nutrition Programme.*