

# “I love to learn from people around the world”

→ **JOEL GILL** is an International Development Geoscientist at the British Geological Survey (BGS), and Founder and Director of the charity Geology for Global Development (GfGD). A Geological Society Council member, he is also Secretary for Foreign and External Affairs.

## Tell us about your work

I work at the interface between geoscience and international development, focusing on themes including sustainability, disaster risk reduction, and education for sustainable development.

By day, I work at the BGS supporting our international development programmes and delivering ‘multi-hazards’ research. By night and weekend, I lead the work of GfGD, a charity helping to mobilise and equip geoscientists to deliver the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals: a global plan to end poverty, improve social wellbeing and protect the planet.

## What are you currently working on at the BGS?

I’m helping to review the impact of our recent international development programme. Starting in 2017, it involves three research platforms: integrated resource management in eastern Africa, resilient Asian cities, and global geological risk. We work with overseas partners to understand their needs, and co-design and deliver research, informatics, and outreach activities. We’re also exploring ways to share our learning with diverse groups within and beyond the geoscience community.

I’m also leading BGS’ contribution to a new interdisciplinary four-year research project: Multi-hazard and sYstemic framework for enhancing Risk-Informed mAnagement and Decision-making in the EU (or MYRIAD-EU). Starting this autumn, the project aims to address multi-hazard risk management



## What’s your favourite thing about your work?

I love the opportunity to meet and learn from people around the world, and their inspiring commitment to securing a sustainable future. We’re working together on activities that have the potential to make a real difference. At GfGD, we’re at the forefront of geoscience diplomacy, integrating our knowledge into global policy processes and providing a voice for geoscientists in forums where they wouldn’t otherwise be represented.

Pictured, above: Joel’s roles combine his passion for geosciences and sustainability

through the lens of sustainability challenges that cut across sectors, regions and hazards.

## Tell us a little about GfGD?

After completing my undergraduate degree (in Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge, UK), I supported a review of an NGO’s water programme in Tanzania, which highlighted that geoscience is not always integrated into planning and monitoring of such programmes, and that geoscientists working on them don’t always have the appropriate skills and training. In 2011, I founded GfGD ([www.gfgd.org](http://www.gfgd.org)) to address these gaps. Our activities include research, policy engagement, and education and training. Later this year we’ll launch our new strategy, and set out plans to expand this work and opportunities to partner with us.

## What advice would you give to someone hoping to work in your field?

Think strategically about how to use opportunities in your formal education, such as tailoring a dissertation to sustainability focused work, taking modules from other departments or seeking placements. Commit to diversity and inclusivity, ethical engagement and the building of respectful and meaningful partnerships. Invest time in building new skills and knowledge. Look at job adverts, read widely, including from the perspective of the social sciences, and look at reports coming out of the United Nations and associated agencies. Finally, network! Look out for events and talks at and outside of universities (particularly those in other departments). Organisations such as the Overseas Development Institute and the United Nations have free, virtual events. 