

Dr. Silja Aebersold

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Sustainability and human rights professional with experience implementing human rights and environmental due diligence, supply chain risk management, and regulatory compliance processes within global institutions. Experienced in assessing human rights risks, developing practical due diligence approaches, engaging internal and external stakeholders, and translating international standards into operational frameworks. Brings extensive international experience in complex and high-risk environments, including collaboration with civil society organizations, funders, and local partners across the Middle East and Latin America. Fluent in German, English, French, and Spanish.

EDUCATION

American University Washington College of Law, Washington, DC, USA

Doctor of Juridical Science, August 2020

Dissertation title: *Implementing Human Rights in Afro-Descendant Communities in Colombia and Nicaragua: An Analysis of Selected Human Rights Claims at the Intersection of Legal Orders*

Advisor: Prof. Diego Rodriguez-Pinzon

Awards: Scholarships from Janggen-Pöhn Foundation and Helmuth M. Merlin Foundation

University of Lucerne, Lucerne, Switzerland

Master of Law in Transnational Legal Studies, *Magna Cum Laude*, August 2012

University of St. Gall, St. Gall, Switzerland

Bachelor of Arts in Law, *Cum Laude*, July 2010

University of Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia

Study abroad, Fall 2009

WORK EXPERIENCE

arise consulting, Heidelberg, Germany / Remote

Founder & Principal Advisor (Independent Advisory Practice), July 2026 – Present

- Advise companies on human rights and environmental due diligence, ESG regulations, and responsible business conduct, with a particular focus on conflict-affected and high-risk contexts;
- Provide strategic advice on the implementation of international standards and regulatory frameworks, including the UNGP, OECD Guidelines, CSDDD, German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (LkSG), and related ESG legislation;
- Deliver legal and strategic analysis on business and human rights, conflict risks, and public international law for organizations operating in complex environments;
- Support civil society organizations and funders in designing context-sensitive governance, safeguarding, and accountability systems;
- Lead business development, client engagement, and strategic partnerships for arise consulting.

Commerzbank AG, Frankfurt, Germany

Senior Compliance Analyst - Human Rights & Supply Chain Due Diligence, November 2023 – Present

- Develop and implement human rights and supply chain due diligence strategies, materials, and internal structures to identify, assess, and address potential human rights risks across the group;
- Advise management and internal stakeholders on human rights due diligence frameworks, regulatory developments, and their integration into operational processes;
- Support engagement with suppliers and internal stakeholders regarding due diligence requirements, including the development and implementation of contractual sustainability requirement;
- Coordinate training and capacity-building activities to strengthen institutional understanding of responsible supply chains, human rights risks, and effective stakeholder engagement.

Freelance, Remote

Legal Consultant, September 2021 – November 2023

- Assessed organizational risks related to human rights, safeguarding, and responsible conduct and developed tailored policies and mitigation measures for civil society organizations operating in complex environments.
- Developed advocacy tools, training materials, and e-learning resources on sexual and gender-based violence and human rights protection in humanitarian contexts.
- Conducted research and drafted human rights reports addressing accountability, protection, and governance issues.

Free Syrian Lawyers Association (FSLA), Gaziantep, Türkiye

Legal Advisor, February 2017 – November 2021; November 2022 – June 2023

- Managed relationships with international donors and external partners, ensuring alignment with program objectives, compliance requirements, and reporting obligations;
- Organized quality control efforts to ensure compliance with donor regulations and audit-ready documentation in projects;
- Managed multi-stakeholder projects involving international donors, civil society partners, and local actors in complex and conflict-affected environments;
- Represented FSLA at workshops and international conferences on justice and accountability.

American University Washington College of Law, Washington DC, USA / Gaziantep, Türkiye

Legal Advisor to the Syrian Initiative, October 2018 – August 2022

- Developed and delivered in-person and online courses, trainings, and lectures on public international law and good governance issues;
- Participated in strategy meetings, identified new growth and funding opportunities, and designed project proposals for the Syrian Initiative;
- Led research projects on legal and gender issues related to conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Center for Rule of Law & Good Governance (CRLGG), Washington, DC

Director, April 2019 – December 2021

- Led project teams and coordinated external partners to design and implement programs related to rule of law, accountability, and institutional strengthening;
- Represented CRLGG before potential governmental and private donors;
- Built partnerships with international and national NGOs to enhance CRLGG's profile.

Program Officer, October 2017 – April 2019

- Supported Syrian civil society organizations in building internal structures, drafting proposals, and implementing projects related to rule of law and accountability;
- Researched and wrote on legal issues in conflict and post-conflict situations in the Middle East.

American University Washington College of Law, Washington DC, USA

Research Assistant for Prof. Diego Rodriguez-Pinzon, August 2016 – April 2020

- Drafted country sessions and concluding observations of the UN Committee against Torture;
- Co-taught Introduction to International Human Rights Law in Fall semester 2017;
- Conducted research on various international human rights and humanitarian law issues, including on the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons.

Meyerlustenberger Lachenal Attorneys-at-Law, Zurich, Switzerland

Junior Associate, August 2012 – October 2013 / September – October 2014

- Worked on and led legal cases in corporate, tax, and estate law, including merger and acquisition due diligence;
- Drafted memoranda on a variety of legal issues.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Afro-Descendant or Black Communities in RESEARCH HANDBOOK OF COLLECTIVE RIGHTS (Jessika Eichler & Miodrag Jovanović, forthcoming).

Afro Communities' Struggle for Land Rights in Latin America: A New Approach to Protect their Lands in the Inter-American Human Rights System, 63 HARVARD INT'L L. J. ONLINE (2022).

LANGUAGES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Language Skills: German (native), English (fluent), French (fluent), Spanish (fluent).

Community Engagement: Arusha Women Legal Aid & Human Rights Organization (Tanzanian nonprofit for women's rights), volunteer, May – July 2015; Solidarity Network (Swiss nonprofit for displaced persons), head of the legal advisors' group, January 2015 – July 2016.

CORE COMPETENCES

Due Diligence & Risk Management

- Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD)
- Supply Chain Due Diligence
- Human Rights Risk Assessment
- ESG Risk Management
- Risk Mitigation and Remediation

Regulatory & Operational Expertise

- Regulatory Compliance (LkSG, CSDDD, EUDR, FLR, UNGPs, OECD Guidelines)
- Sustainability Data and Reporting
- Contract Negotiation and Sustainability Clauses
- Cross-Cultural Collaboration

Sustainability & Stakeholder Management

- Responsible Sourcing
- Supplier Engagement
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Sustainability Program Management
- Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships