



Life &  
Peace  
INSTITUTE

**#embracegenderequity**

Celebrating the dedication of LPI's women peacebuilders



The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international organisation that supports and promotes bottom-up nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation and positive social change through research, policy engagement, and action.

Since our primary way of working is in collaborative partnership, especially with local civil society, particularly women, in this limited edition, we will celebrate the dedication and achievements of LPI's very own women peacebuilders to mark the 2023 International Women's Day.

**For more information visit [www.life-peace.org](http://www.life-peace.org)**

# Beatrice Kizi Nzovu

## Team Leader Africa Country Programmes

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Beatrice is a seasoned peacebuilding practitioner with extensive experience in program design, implementation and evaluation; programme management, capacity building and advocacy.

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### Where are you from?

I'm from Kenya.

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### How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?

I've been working in the field of peacebuilding, conflict transformation, dialogue, mediation, peace education, advocacy for peace, etc for the past 17 years.

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### What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?

It means creating space for inclusion, for women in a meaningful way. Not doing it in terms of tokenism to say we have five women at the table, but to be listening to women.

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### How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?

Women have one advantage. They engage in both the formal and informal spaces. They are bridge builders. All they need is to be given the space to showcase what they have already been doing. One way is to capture what women are already engaged in their communities as peacebuilding knowledge and practice.

**Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.**

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I routinely work with young people, women, and government officials. It involves creating safe spaces for engagement, where people can come together to speak with and listen to each other.

**What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?**

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I'm very keen on aspects of African feminist knowledge capturing the knowledge women already have and how it can be used for non-violent approaches. Additionally, issues around dialogue and creation of safe spaces where this dialogue can happen, and issues of conflict sensitivity and analysis. One can only do better when one takes the time to understand better different contexts and diversities.

**If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?**

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I'd support knowledge of different peacebuilding approaches and community resolutions for community problems.



**“ Women have one advantage. They engage in both the formal and informal spaces. They are bridge builders.”**

# Susanna Sebelius

## Peacefinders Programme Advisor

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Susanna is a burgeoning peacebuilder looking to delve deeper into the field of peacebuilding across contexts by exploring the question: 'what makes a peaceful society?'. She is looking to consolidate my career within the peacebuilding field through innovative and challenging work that allows me to continuously learn and grow while harnessing my creativity and passion for transformative change.

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### Where are you from?

I'm from a small town in southern Sweden.

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### How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?

I've been working in the peacebuilding field for a little over five years now.

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### What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?

For me, it all comes back to dialogue. To do dialogue takes skill – it is much more than simple conversation. Doing authentic dialogue requires self-knowledge, an ability to vulnerably share your own experiences and perspectives, and a willingness to be changed by what you hear from another. So, for me, empowering people with the knowledge, awareness, and tools needed for dialogue is at the heart of non-violent conflict transformation.

## How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?

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Women can play an active role in promoting peace in multiple ways. Women can form networks and be connectors for others seeking to promote peace. Women can themselves become active changemakers in existing structures. Women can raise their voices on matters important to them, at home, in their neighborhoods, and in political spaces. The sky's the limit!

## Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.

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My main focus so far has been on creating platforms and opportunities for Swedish youth to themselves contribute to societal change. This has involved coaching youth in implementing their own change initiatives, facilitating opportunities for youth to engage with decision makers, and in other ways share about their own perspectives. Another part of this has also been to facilitate meetings between different groups of youth, to enable the sharing of experiences and perspectives.

## What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?

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I think meaningful inclusion – combined with dialogue – would help solve many of the issues that we are seeing. My sense is that, a lot of the time, people just want to feel that they have been heard, especially by those who have the power to create change in society. So, I am motivated to try to contribute to this in whatever way I can.

## If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?

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I would support youth-driven change initiatives because, as far as I have seen, there are many young people in Sweden who want to be leaders of change, if they are given the opportunity to. I would also support community dialogue initiatives across Sweden, connecting people from different groups and geographical areas.



“ Doing authentic dialogue requires self-knowledge, an ability to vulnerably share your own experiences and perspectives, and a willingness to be changed by what you hear from another.

# Ruth Getachew

Policy Officer for the Horn of Africa Regional Programme

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Ruth is a gender analysis expert with practical experience in implementing projects on gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence. She is currently engaged in the field of peace building and addressing human security needs, policy advocacy and research in the Horn of Africa particularly in the Borderlands of the region.

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## Where are you from?

I'm from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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## How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?

I have six years experience in the peacebuilding field.

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## What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?

It means being inclusive. It means including the vulnerable and historically marginalized community voices ( women, youth, other minority groups etc, etc) in peace dialogues, mediation and relevant peace keeping processes.

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## How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?

Historically, women continue to disproportionately being affected by conflict, ( during and after). Hence, their participation in peace process is key to achieve lasting peace. On the other hand, women are

important agents for creating stability in the lives of their families and their community at large to promote reconciliation and peace even under very difficult and traumatic situations. For this, their involvement in decision making and their role as advocates for peace, peace keepers , peace ambassadors and mediators is paramount.

**Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.**

I am involved in the HoA borderlands human security needs work. My day to day work on this requires the involvement of borderland women and youth as well as regional policy actors at local , national and regional level to ensure the human security needs in the borderlands are addressed. Borderland civil society actors are key partners in the peace building work that I am engaged in. Together, we work in articulating human security needs, amplifying grass root community voices and influence policy discourse to advance and promote peace and stability in the Horn.

**What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?**

Climate change and how it contributes to conflict in the borderlands, Structural human security needs and Peacebuilding.

Non violent approach: creating mechanisms to interact and engage with policy actors. Peace building Policy advocacy at grass root and policy levels. Creating platforms for borderlands civil society actors to directly connect with policy makers ( IGAD and local, national, regional policy actors) and influence and push the peace building agenda by amplifying grass root peace and security issues.

**If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?**

Support the work of CSOs, create COORDINATION mechanisms among these civil society actors to enable them meaningfully engage policy actors and address peace and security issues. Make sure women and youth are meaningfully engaged in decision making and peace building process; ensuring is their involvement is not tokenistic. Ensure CSO's and policy makers regularly interact through established/ instituted mechanisms and platforms to discuss and address the human security issues at the grass root level.



**“ Women are important agents for creating stability in the lives of their families and their community.**



# Martha Bakwesegha

## Senior Global Peacebuilding Policy Advisor

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Martha is a conflict resolution practitioner with several years of experience working with non-profit organisations on training/workshop facilitation, social and policy development. She is highly experienced in working with civil society groups, vulnerable groups and policy makers.

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### Where are you from?

I'm from Jinja, Eastern part of Uganda

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### How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?

I have over 19 years of working in the peace and security field.

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### What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?

It means dialogue, problem solving and restoration of cooperative relationships through mediation, negotiation and restorative justice. It also speaks to the need to pursue constructive change and not change for the sake of it...but constructive change that will build something desired rather than cause destruction. Promoting non-violent approaches speaks to promoting a spirit of understanding among people/person(s).

## How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?

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Women can play an active role by being (i) present (ii) deliberate (iii) committed in those spaces that require meaningful, inclusive engagement by women. Genuine solutions to non-violent approaches cannot and will not be realized if all stakeholders are not part of the process.

## Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.

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My routine peacebuilding working involving different stakeholders i.e women and youth involves constant engagement directly or indirectly to continue to understand and appreciate the ongoing needs which in itself translates to designing various interventions that seek to address capacity gaps through targeted trainings, policy outputs targeting key policy makers with specific consolidated recommendations, networking to further accelerate or penetrate key spaces for better impact etc. All this in an effort to coherently connect the local to global discourse.

## What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?

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Dialogue and navigating the space for effective implementation and positive impact.

## If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?

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Support to National, Regional and Continental structures to appreciate and understand local context for more meaningful, inclusive, realistic interventions.



“Promoting non-violent approaches speaks to promoting a spirit of understanding among people.”

# Yeabsra Minwyelet

## Program Officer

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Yeabsra is a young woman driven to contribute to ongoing process of peacebuilding and conflict resolution at all levels by working with different CSOs and professionally becoming exposed to research and analysis from various perspectives in a way that is inclusive and gender-sensitive to ensure that all voices are heard and valued.

### **Where are you from?**

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I'm from Bishoftu, Ethiopia.

### **How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?**

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I have been in the peacebuilding field for over three years now.

### **What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?**

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Any efforts undertaken to shift out of the conflict-habituated setting

to a peaceful situation must be carried out in a way that is free from violent acts or violence-triggering actions. Specifically, all nonviolent conflict-transformation processes, including dialogues, mediation, negotiation, and other restorative justice techniques, must be carried out in a gender-sensitive and inclusive manner. In the long run, it is crucial to ensure equal and meaningful representation of women in this process and to effectively and sustainably transform conflicts. It is important to recognize that women's participation and perspectives are crucial in achieving lasting peace and stability. This will lead to a more inclusive and sustainable peace, which can help prevent future conflicts from arising..

## How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?

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Women can advocate for the importance of CSO's contribution to peace. By forming coalitions and associations that stand for peace is one of the key mechanisms to vividly depict the CSO's role in sustainable peace whereby they can influence policies and decision-making processes that affect peacebuilding initiatives, and amplify the impact of women in promoting sustainable peace.

## Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.

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My routine peacebuilding work currently revolves around a programme LPI is implementing with two of its partners targeting women, in one of the most conflict affected areas in Ethiopia. Everyday diligently working in the programme, I'm striving to improve social cohesion through conflict transformation and promoting dialogue between communities.

## What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?


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What really motivates me is when I see a community taking charge of its own peacebuilding efforts and engaging in meaningful and inclusive conversations to come up with its own conflict prevention and resolution plans.

## If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?

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As a woman from Ethiopia engaged in peacebuilding, I would support traditional institutions to get the proper recognition and acceptance at local and national levels as effective peacebuilding or conflict transformation mechanisms. I would also work on promoting gender mainstreaming in peace endeavors. I believe that empowering women and involving them in peacebuilding efforts can lead to more inclusive and sustainable solutions.



“ What really motivates me is when I see a community taking charge of its own peacebuilding efforts and engaging in meaningful and inclusive conversations to come up with its own conflict prevention and resolution plans.

# Jody Henderson

## Director of Programmes

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Jody is currently serving as Director of Programmes for Life & Peace Institute's peacebuilding work in the Horn of Africa. She has extensive experience working as Programme Advisor for LPI based in the head office in Uppsala, and served as LPI's Resident Representative first based in Khartoum and then in LPI's Nairobi office where she led LPI's Sudan, Kenya and Somalia programmes.

### **Where are you from?**

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UK and Sweden, but I've also had the privilege to call many places "home" – from Seoul and Tokyo to Gambella and South Omo, Khartoum and Kenya.

### **How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?**

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I have 18 years of experience working in the field of peacebuilding.

### **What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?**

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I usually don't think of myself as a peacebuilder – but more that my role is to support (other) peacebuilders. Thinking about all forms of inclusion and relationships is key to this, and I guess I bring my lens as a woman, mother, sister, friend, to looking at how processes can connect people. I love seeing what people with different strengths, ideas, perspectives, and dreams can create together.

## **How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?**

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How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace? Women have always played active roles in peace and conflict, often informally and not recognised but also increasingly in formal processes. Their role is key for any holistic peace.

## **Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.**

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Because I work with all our programmes and teams, my days are almost always very varied, with some routine things and others more unique or unexpected.

## **What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?**

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Many. Working with people who are the most proximate to the issues and who often have the best insights and ideas about what can be done. I love stories, music, the arts, all forms of creativity in bringing

innovative and practical solutions – breaking down lofty theories to support more practical actions that are suited to the different contexts we work.

## **If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?**

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For global military expenditure (2.1 trillion dollars in 2021) to instead be redirected to peace work, including all things that make people feel well, safe and whole – like health, education, livelihoods, the environment. I especially love working with young people in all their diversity and finding spaces to bring people together – to not just share their ideas, experiments and solutions, but also to build these together.



“ I bring my lens as a woman, mother, sister, friend, to looking at how processes can connect people.

# Judith McCallum

## Executive Director

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Judy is a senior peace-building and conflict management expert with a vast experience in designing and managing innovative programs in Africa. She has a deep contextual and practical understanding of conflict drivers, coupled with theoretical expertise in social reconciliation, community-based conflict resolution, and strengthening conflict management systems at multiple levels.

### Where are you from?

I was born in Nairobi, Kenya, but my family is from Canada, we live in Sweden, and I have Canadian and now Swedish citizenship.

### How many years of experience do you have working in peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation, advocacy, etc.?

I have been working in peacebuilding since 2006. Before that, I was more involved in humanitarian and development work.

### What does promoting non-violent approaches to transform conflicts mean to you as a woman peacebuilder?

This is a conversation I seem to be having a lot these days, given the violence in so many parts of the world. In my personal experience, when faced with violence, I have found that responding with anger or fear has always made the situation worse. But a calm and compassionate response can turn a violent situation into one of healing and transformation. Violence dehumanizes: therefore, for me, non-violence approaches mean seeing the humanity of the other and seeking ways to connect and heal broken relationships. It does not mean that there should not be accountability and justice for wrongdoing, but it must be done in a way that accepts the humanity of all actors.

## **How can women play active roles in enhancing meaningful civil society engagements for peace?**

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Women have always played significant roles in peace and conflict in their communities- often behind the scenes in their traditional roles as wives, mothers, sisters, aunties and grandmothers. However, as culture and society evolve, we see more opportunities for women to take on more non-traditional roles in the public sphere. Civil societies have long been one aspect where women have been very involved, not always in leadership roles, but we see this changing too. As a girl growing up, I had many strong women role models in my mother, aunties and others, but they were not necessarily in leadership roles. Today, I am pleased to see many strong woman leaders in all walks of life, especially in peacebuilding work. In particular, I am so pleased to see many young women finding their voices and engaging in all aspects of peacebuilding – from their local communities to the global level.

## **Kindly, describe (briefly) your routine peacebuilding work involving youth, women, and different actors at grassroots, local and global policy arenas.**

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In my current role as Executive Director, I am more involved in

administration, although I like to think I apply peacebuilding and conflict transformation principles to all aspects of my work. I very much treasure and appreciate the opportunities I have to visit our programmes, meet our local partners, and hear and see their wonderful work. I recently had the wonderful opportunity to visit South Sudan to reconnect with friends and former colleagues and learn about women’s amazing work as peacebuilding and mediators there.

## **What peacebuilding issues and non-violent approach motivate you in your work?**

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For me, my biggest motivation is seeing youth and women empowered to have a stronger voice in their communities to raise their issues and become forces for good and peace in their societies.

## **If you had unlimited resources, what would you support to promote peace in your context?**

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I would ensure more flexible and long-term funding for local women and youth initiatives.



“ A calm and compassionate response can turn a violent situation into one of healing and transformation.





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