

THE FELLOWS

The 2023–24 MSc Fellows funded by the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust



Gorata Chepete

Botswana

Gorata is a seasoned criminologist with five years of professional experience in various fields such as counter-terrorism, intelligence, peacebuilding, community development, public policy and regulatory affairs. She honed her expertise while working at a strategic advisory firm that operated at the intersection of government and industry. In this role, she handled mandates for large corporations, global foundations, and multinational organisations across multiple African countries.

Gorata's impact also extends into advocating for the African Union (AU)'s "Silencing the Guns" initiative, where she collaborated closely with the AU's Peace and Security.

Gorata recently completed the Peace, Security and Development Fellowship for African Women at the African Leadership Centre (ALC), where her research focused on understanding mutuality building between leaders and followers of terrorist groups, with a specific focus on Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in Northern Nigeria. Significantly, her contributions were pivotal in the design and implementation of initiatives at NEEM Foundation, an organisation recognised for its crisis response capabilities in conflict settings, with a core focus on ensuring the well-being of communities. Gorata is currently processing her attachment at the International Crisis Group (ICG), which constitutes the attachment phase of the ALC's Fellowship Programme for African Women in Leadership and Peacebuilding. As part of her attachment for the next six months, Gorata will be involved in the various aspects of the work of the organisation including producing policy-oriented works on peace and security issues of Southern Africa. Through this placement, Gorata will gain first hand experience of the institutionalisation and translation of peace and security issues she learned as part of her Master's programme into policy outputs and practices. She is also expected to contribute to and influence the working of the ICG.

Gorata is the winner of the ALC Master's programme field-study grant. This grant has enabled her to undertake a field visit to Nigeria to complete her dissertation on women leadership dynamics within terrorist organisations.



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Merceline Odhiambo

Kenya



Merceline is the visionary Founder of Grassroot Women and Politics Community-Based Organisation (www.grassrootwomen.org). Her organisation is dedicated to empowering and training young widows, those living with HIV/AIDS and with invisible disabilities on Political Awareness, Financial Literacy, Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights and Peace & Conflict Resolution in Ndhiwa, Homa Bay, Kenya. As a fervent Gender Equality Advocate and Women's Political Leadership enthusiast, Merceline brings a wealth of experience and a results-oriented approach to her work. She is deeply committed to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Her impressive track record includes spearheading programme development and implementation, championing the rights of women and adolescents, and bridging the gap in women's participation and inclusion in decision-making processes.

Merceline joined the ALC's Fellowships for African Women in Leadership and Peacebuilding in 2023 to give academic backing to her practical leadership experience. Merceline's dedication to leadership and governance extends to her participation in several highly esteemed programmes, including the Political Leadership & Governance Programme by Freidrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES), Kenya Leadership and Accountability Programme by the International Republican Institute (IRI), Capacity Building Programme by Sauti Kenya, Aspiring Entrepreneurs Programme by Pan-African Women Entrepreneurship Network (PAWEN), Women in Political Participation by Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Women Gaining Ground by Akili Dada, and Supporting Accountability Mechanisms for Youth Inclusion by the International Republican Institute.

Beyond leading her organisation's impactful work, Merceline serves as a board member of Digital Opportunity Trust Kenya and is an active member of the Women's Democracy Network. She holds the esteemed title of Homa Bay Global Peace Ambassador under the Global Peace Foundation and appointed Homa Bay Youth Senator.

Merceline is currently processing her attachment to UN Women Liberia from which she expects to further develop her global leadership experiences and contribute to and influence the working of the UN women in Liberia and beyond.

In addition to Gorata and Merceline, the ALC has been training other Fellows as part of its Peace and Security Fellowship for African Women and its Associate Fellowship programme. Participants in these programmes have been supported by other funders such as the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Open Society Foundation (Africa).