

Araika-Zawadhafsa Mkulo

Summary

Behavioural science and design expert with a demonstrable track record of transforming insights into actionable strategies. I am passionate about understanding human behaviour and using that knowledge to co-design products and interventions for social impact in the Global South, focusing strongly on food systems, climate change, youth and gender results.

Get in touch!

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Location:

Nairobi, Kenya

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[Araika-Zawadhafsa Mkulo](#)

Portfolio:

www.araika-zawadhafsa.com

Education

The University of Edinburgh MSc Cognition in Science and Society, with Distinction

September 2016

Cornell University Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Minor in French

May 2014

Université Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne

Study Abroad, Paris, France
September 2012 - January 2013

Languages

English	● ● ● ● ●	Native
Swahili	● ● ● ● ●	Native
French	● ● ● ● ●	Advanced

Employment History

Business Unit Lead: Behavioural Research and Design

ThinkPlace Kenya | February - December 2024

- Led the design and implementation of research projects, using interviews, focus groups, ethnographic observation, surveys and co-design workshops.
- Applied behavioural science frameworks and principles to research and intervention design, involving nudges, framing, social signalling, gamification, communication strategies, and more.
- Led 2 multi-country projects, including a research project with the Tony Blair Institute of Social Change to develop Country Playbooks for Rwanda, Zambia and Malawi on how to use last-mile connectivity through Starlink to strengthen sectors such as education, health, government services, agriculture and youth entrepreneurship.
- Trained, mentored and built the team's capacity on behavioural science from developing behavioural problem statements, applying diagnosis tools like COM-B and behavioural mapping and applying BeSci frameworks like F-EAST and CREATE.
- Led business development for my department, resulting in winning a contract in my first month, re-contracting existing clients and forming 3 new partnerships.
- Project portfolio includes UNICEF, Jhpiego, JSI Ethiopia and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

Qualitative Research and Behavioral Design Specialist

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics | May 2022 - January 2024

- Planned, implemented, and analyzed multiple research studies to develop behaviour maps of barriers and enablers of different beneficiaries and stakeholders, including mapping the barriers and enablers of farmers by age and community-based advisors (CBAs) in Ghana to increase engagement with Farmerline's digital platform.
- Facilitated co-design workshops to develop empirically driven interventions and prototypes. For example, I led multiple ideation sessions with UNICEF Burkina Faso to improve prenatal nutrition. We finalized and prototyped 2 interventions: MMS supplement calendar for pregnant women and a pocket-guide for healthcare workers. These interventions were proven to be effective after a year-long RCT.
- Project portfolio includes UNICEF, UNEP, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Girl Effect, GAIN, Farmerline and USAID. Work languages included English, Swahili and French.

Founder | Lead Behavioural Researcher

Safe Space Africa | March 2017 - April 2022

- Led research for consultancy projects, ranging from human-computer interaction to development research. Research outcomes include published reports, contributing to country gender action plans, inclusion and wellness policy redesign for organizations, and building new innovations for social impact.
- Managed a team of Psychologists across Africa, who provided Individual therapy to children, adolescents, and adults both physically and virtually.
- Summarised research studies on mental health, youth mindset change and gender equality into simple content for Instagram, which grew to 4,000+ followers.
- Hosted over 20 events across East Africa to encourage open conversations about mental health and gender inequality across different disciplines.

Consumer Understanding Researcher

Tigo Tanzania (MIC Ltd.) | August 2014 - July 2015

- Used qualitative and quantitative user research tools to enhance digital solutions, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, A/B testing, surveys and, competitor monitoring and analysis.
- Designed and presented monthly reports with data-driven recommendations to relevant departments and Tigo partners.
- Led the mix-matched user research studies to improve the launch and adoption of the Deezer music streaming platform in Tanzania, resulting in increased brand loyalty.

Publications

The emotional work of doing eHealth research

Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems

Wolters, M., Mkulo, Z., & Boynton, P.
doi:10.1145/3027063.3052764

Gender Equality Promising Practices in UNICEF

Programming in Tanzania

UNICEF Tanzania

[Read Report](#)

HCI for Development: Does Sense of Agency Affect the Adoption of a Mobile Health Insurance Service in Tanzania

University of Edinburgh Masters Dissertation, 2016

[Read Paper](#)

Professional Groups

Global Alliance for SBC February 2024 - Present

A group of organisations and SBC practitioners, including UNICEF, DFID, WHO and USAID, among others, aligned with the mission to advance the scale, quality, impact, and sustainability of communication for development, media for development, social change, and behavioural change strategies.

References

Michael Ngigi

CEO, ThinkPlace Kenya

michael.ngigi@thinkplace.co.ke

Robert Nyaga

Technical Director, Qualitative Research & Design

robert.nyaga@busara.global

Tulanoga Matimbwi

Gender Programme Specialist, UNICEF Tanzania

tmatimbwi@unicef.org

Behavioural Design & Research Consultancies

Behaviour Change Consultant

WFP Innovation Hub Tanzania | August 2020 - March 2021

- Developed 100 moonshot ideas with WFP Innovation Accelerator to radically reshape the future of urban food systems in Dar es Salaam by 2030.
- Created gender falsification criteria to mainstream gender results in all finalist ideas while also testing different frameworks to increase youth engagement in agriculture through in-peer strategies, social norms and positive framing to mitigate present bias.
- Successfully prototyped and tested the business model of the finalist moonshot 'Forever Food' which extends the shelf life of fruits and vegetables for up to 20 days.

Gender Promising Practices in UNICEF Tanzania Programming UNICEF Tanzania | September 2019 - June 2020

- Developed Appreciative Inquiry (AI) research questions and led the data collection through KIs and Focus Groups based on an in-depth literature review.
- Led the evaluation of 12 different UNICEF programmes, including a cash transfer and life skills training programme to reduce HIV and economically empower youth.
- Drafted the published "Gender Promising Practices in UNICEF Programming in Tanzania" 2020 Report, and 11 human interest stories from 11 different programmes.

M-Afya User Research Mobile Afya | March 2019

- Created medium fidelity prototypes of the USSD application for user testing with 150 girls and women from low-income households in Dar es Salaam.
- Insights from the research led to redesigning the core feature 'Binti Calendar', simplifying the health content for the user to understand and redesigning the navigation feature on the user interface, resulting in 12,000 girls and women subscribing within the first year of launching.

Specializations

- Social and Behaviour Change
- Behavioral Science
- Human-Centered Design
- Qualitative & Quantitative Research
- User Experience (UX) Research
- Capacity Building
- Team Leadership
- Project Management
- Report Writing
- Public Speaking

Certifications

Foundations of User Experience (UX) Design

Google | February 2023

From Zero to NVivo 12 - Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo

Noble Work Foundation | January 2023

Foundations in Design Thinking

IDEO U | May 2022

Notable Achievements

Habit Weekly Spotlight: Behavioural Design Around the World

Around the World is Habit Weekly's piece sharing practical insights and experiences from accomplished behavioural designers and practitioners across the globe. I shared my work applying behavioural science to design impactful interventions in Africa. I also spoke about how to approach WEIRD literature and building interventions that are culturally sensitive.

On the cover of "The Citizen Women's Magazine"

Featured on three cover stories in the Citizen Magazine, the most prestigious English newspaper in Tanzania:

October 3, 2020 - "Health matters: A mind of her own."

November 18, 2020 - "Helping Tanzanian women to access mental health care."

May 09, 2021 - "How to extend fruit's shelf life without refrigeration."

100 Tanzanian Sheroes

This project was created in 2018 by the Swedish Embassy in Tanzania to inspire girls to believe in themselves and their dreams by listing the most inspirational women from diverse industries in both the publication and on Wikipedia.