

Zawadhafsa Mkulo

Summary

Behavioural Science and Innovation Specialist with 10+ years of experience applying human-centered design and behavioural insights to public health and global development. Skilled in behavioural diagnostics, intervention design, rapid prototyping and stakeholder engagement. I am proud to report that my work has been published, adopted into policies, presented at global conferences and featured in Behavioural Science networks.

Contact

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Location:

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

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[Zawadhafsa \(Araika\) Mkulo](#)

Portfolio:

www.araikazawadhafsa.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

Publications

Gender Equality Promising Practices in UNICEF Programming in Tanzania UNICEF Tanzania [Read Report](#)

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

Consulting History

Product Lead

Product Manager Accelerator | April - December 2025

- Led the vision, strategy, and delivery of a behaviourally informed digital intervention supporting youth to quit vaping through real-time emotional support and gamification,
- Diagnosed behavioural drivers of youth vaping (peer influence, perceived harm reduction, habit loop) through qualitative research with adolescents and young adults.
- Designed and implemented an evidence-based framework combining CBT-informed prompts, craving tracking, and personalized nudges to address nicotine addiction and relapse prevention.
- Prioritized high-impact features for limited frontend engineering capacity, enabling efficient product iteration and faster GTM readiness, while prioritizing future features (e.g. smartwatch integration, peer forums, therapist matching).
- Led an agile cross-functional team of engineers (ML, backend, frontend), designers, and behavioural scientists to build AI architecture and launch an MVP in 10 weeks.

Behavioural Design Consultant

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics | May - September 2025

- Led intervention design to improve youth farmer engagement across three One Acre Fund (OAF) country programs in Ethiopia, Uganda and Burundi.
- Synthesized insights across country contexts to develop actionable personas, behavioural journey maps, and prioritized barriers.
- Designed and facilitated co-design workshops with youth, government partners, and OAF staff to generate solutions grounded in local context and behavioural science.
- Packaged final interventions such as peer champion models, farmer starter packs, behaviour change campaigns and gender-inclusive training adaptations.
- Advised on integration of behavioural design into program delivery, strengthening OAF's internal capacity to scale youth-inclusive approaches across multiple touchpoints in the program cycle.
- Trained Busara's project team on design workshop facilitation and best practices.

Behaviour Change and Innovation Consultant

World Food Programme | August 2020 - March 2021

- Co-created 100+ moonshot concepts for transforming urban food systems by 2030 in partnership with the WFP Innovation Accelerator.
- Designed and prototyped the solution, "Forever Food," to extend produce shelf life by up to 20 days – one of the top 5 finalists tested in-market.
- Developed behavioural nudges and positive framing techniques to increase merchants' adoption of Forever Food.
- Created gender falsification criteria and mainstreamed gender-sensitive innovation metrics across the portfolio.
- Led user research and experimentation to validate product concepts with end users, vendors, and government stakeholders.
- Collaborated with cross-functional teams including researchers, architects, engineers and tech innovators to develop, prototype and iterate solutions.
- Delivered high-impact pitches and demo sessions to UN stakeholders, donors, and ecosystem partners.

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

- Developed Appreciative Inquiry (AI) research questions and led data collection through KIIs 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.

Certifications

Product Manager Accelerator
Certified AI Product Manager
July 2025

Duke University
Machine Learning Foundations
for Product Managers
May 2025

Google
Foundations of User Experience
(UX) Design
February 2023

Noble Work Foundation
From Zero to NVivo 12 -
Qualitative Data Analysis with
NVivo
January 2023

IDEO U
Foundations in Design Thinking
May 2022

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

Rowan Harrity
Engagement Director, Busara
rowan.harrity@busara.global

Agnes Ngure
Regional Design & Demand
Advisor, Jhpiego
agnes.ngure@jhpigo.org

Oliver Muchiri
CEO, ThinkPlace Africa
oliver.muchiri@thinkplace.co.ke

Employment History

Business Unit Lead: Behavioural Research and Design
ThinkPlace Africa | February 2024 - January 2025

- Led a multidisciplinary team to deliver behavioural design solutions for global development partners across Africa.
- Spearheaded winning proposals that secured over \$500K in new business for behavioural innovation projects.
- Directed the end-to-end delivery of complex public health, gender, tech inclusion and climate change projects for UNICEF, Jhpiego, and the Tony Blair Institute, with measurable impact metrics.
- Designed solutions include SBCC campaigns, community conversation toolkits, country playbooks and digital systems re-design.
- Trained, mentored and built the team's capacity on behavioural science from developing behavioural problem statements, behavioural mapping and applying frameworks and tools like COM-B, F-EAST and CREATE.

Qualitative Research and Behavioral Design Specialist
Busara Center for Behavioral Economics | May 2022 - February 2024

- Led research, experimentation, and behaviorally informed intervention design across public health, climate change and gender projects in Africa and the MENA region.
- Facilitated co-design workshops, translating research insights into behavioral maps, service and system designs, and fully-packaged interventions for partners such as UNEP, UNICEF and USAID.
- Created a behavioral design and qualitative research analysis toolkit that was scaled across teams, improving project delivery and speed.
- Trained over 40+ team members in participatory research, human-centered design, and behavior change frameworks.
- Delivered projects in English, Swahili, and French, enhancing accessibility and cultural relevance in behavioral research.

Founder | Lead Behavioural Researcher
Safe Space Africa | March 2017 - April 2022

- Built and led a cross-functional team of psychologists, researchers, and content creators across 5+ African countries.
- Oversaw the end-to-end project lifecycle of wellness initiatives; conducting user research, prototyping, piloting, and optimizing digital content and services.
- Strategically transitioned to online therapy during the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring business continuity and achieving a 2x increase in revenue.
- Produced and disseminated insights that contributed to national gender action plans and organizational wellness policy reforms for partners like UNICEF and HDIF.
- Hosted 20+ regional events fostering open dialogue around wellness, public health, and gender issues.

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 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.