

Zawadhafsa (Araika) Mkulo

Senior Behavioural Scientist | Behaviour Change and Community Programme Design

Abu Dhabi, UAE | zmkulo@gmail.com | [linkedin.com/in/araika-zawadhafsa-mkulo](https://www.linkedin.com/in/araika-zawadhafsa-mkulo) | araikazawadhafsa.com

PROFILE

Behavioural scientist and designer with 10 years of experience designing, testing and delivering behaviour change programmes with communities, governments and multilateral partners across Africa and the MENA region. She has worked with UNICEF, UNEP, USAID, WFP, One Acre Fund, Jhpiego and the Tony Blair Institute on climate, food systems, agriculture, public health and gender programmes. Brings hands-on experience delivering project from field research and behavioural diagnosis through to co-design, prototyping, piloting and scaling.

CORE EXPERTISE

Behavioural diagnostics (COM-B, F-EAST, CREATE) • Community and stakeholder co-design workshops • RCTs and field experiments • Qualitative research (KIIs, focus groups) • SBCC campaign design • Programme delivery with government and multilateral partners • Training and capacity building • AI-assisted research synthesis and prototyping

EXPERIENCE

Senior Behavioural Science Consultant - Product July 2026 - Present

Magenta Consulting

- Scoped a five-week MVP for an AI product that diagnoses behavioural barriers preventing users from completing desired actions and generates personalized Arabic text messages using EAST framework.
- Designed the engine's diagnosis, segmentation and messaging logic, with human review built in.
- Built an industry literature review method to ground barrier libraries in Saudi and Gulf evidence.
- Advised on pilot design: survey sampling, hold-out accuracy testing, pilot sizing and randomised control groups.
- Mapped the MVP's progression into funded product features.

Senior Behavioural Design Consultant May - September 2025

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics

- Led intervention design to improve youth farmer engagement across three One Acre Fund country programmes in Ethiopia, Uganda and Burundi.
- Synthesised field insights across country contexts into personas, behavioural journey maps and a prioritised set of barriers.
- Designed and facilitated co-design workshops with young farmers, government partners and One Acre Fund staff to generate locally grounded solutions.
- Packaged final interventions including peer champion models, farmer starter packs, behaviour change campaigns and gender-inclusive training adaptations.
- Advised One Acre Fund on building behavioural design into its programme cycle to scale youth-inclusive approaches.

Director & Business Unit Lead, Behavioural Research and Design February 2024 - May 2025

ThinkPlace Africa

- Led a multidisciplinary team delivering behavioural design projects for global development partners across Africa.
- Directed end-to-end delivery of public health, gender, tech inclusion and climate change projects for UNICEF, Jhpiego and the Tony Blair Institute, while managing client relationships.
- Designed SBCC campaigns, community conversation toolkits, country playbooks and digital service redesigns.
- Wrote winning proposals that secured over \$500K in new business for behavioural projects.
- Built the team's behavioural science capability, from writing behavioural problem statements and behavioural mapping to applying COM-B, F-EAST and CREATE.
- Piloted AI tools for research synthesis and rapid prototyping to shorten turnaround on client work.

Qualitative Research and Behavioural Design Specialist May 2022 - February 2024

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics

- Led research, experimentation and intervention design across public health, climate change and gender projects in Africa and the MENA region.
- Designed and ran multi-country behavioural experiments, including RCTs and A/B tests, whose findings informed partner policy decisions.

- Facilitated co-design workshops that turned research insights into behavioural maps, service designs and fully packaged interventions for partners including UNEP, UNICEF and USAID.
- Created a behavioural design and qualitative analysis toolkit that was adopted across Busara teams, speeding up project delivery.
- Trained 40+ colleagues in participatory research, human-centred design and behaviour change frameworks.

Behaviour Change and Innovation Consultant August 2020 - March 2021

World Food Programme, Innovation Accelerator

- Co-created 100+ concepts for transforming urban food systems by 2030.
- Designed and prototyped Forever Food, an organic solution that extends produce shelf life by up to 20 days without refrigeration; one of five finalist interventions tested in market.
- Developed behavioural nudges and positive framing to increase market vendors' adoption of Forever Food and other finalist interventions, including household waste management and alternative protein solutions.
- Led user research and testing with end users, vendors and government stakeholders, and built gender-sensitive innovation metrics across the portfolio.

Gender Research Consultant September 2019 - June 2020

UNICEF Tanzania

- Led the evaluation of 12 UNICEF programmes, including WASH and life skills programmes to reduce HIV and economically empower young people.
- Designed Appreciative Inquiry research and led key informant interviews and focus groups.
- Wrote the published report Gender Promising Practices in UNICEF Programming in Tanzania (2020) and 11 human interest stories.

Founder and Lead Behavioural Researcher March 2017 - April 2022

Safe Space Africa

- Built and led a team of psychologists, researchers and content creators across 5+ African countries.
- Ran user research, prototyping, piloting and improvement of community wellness programmes and digital services.
- Moved services online during COVID-19, keeping the business running and doubling revenue.
- Produced insights that contributed to national gender action plans and organisational wellness policy reforms for partners including UNICEF and HDIF.
- Hosted 20+ regional community events on wellness, public health and gender.

EDUCATION

MSc Cognition in Science and Society, with Distinction | The University of Edinburgh, 2016

BA Psychology, Minor in French | Cornell University, 2014 (Study abroad: Université Paris Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2012)

PUBLICATIONS AND RECOGNITION

- Wolters, M., Mkulo, Z., & Boynton, P. (2017). The emotional work of doing eHealth research. Proceedings of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.
- UNICEF Tanzania (2020). Gender Promising Practices in UNICEF Programming in Tanzania. Drafting author.
- Featured in Habit Weekly's Behavioural Design Around the World series on designing culturally grounded interventions in Africa.
- Three cover stories in The Citizen (Tanzania), 2020 to 2021, on women's mental health and on WFP innovation.

CERTIFICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS

Member, Global Alliance for Social and Behaviour Change (2024 to present) • Certified AI Product Manager, Product Manager Accelerator (2025) • Machine Learning Foundations for Product Managers, Duke University (2025) • Foundations of UX Design, Google (2023) • Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo (2023) • Foundations in Design Thinking, IDEO U (2022)

LANGUAGES

English • Swahili • French