

GAABA LAHEL MARIA

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY
PEACE ADVOCATE

Block 110, Plot 2048 Kyaggwe County 

(256) 778190911 / (256) 757201724 

gaabalakelmaria@gmail.com 

[LinkedIn](#) 

Profile

Results-driven communications strategist with 5 years of experience leading donor communications, advocacy, and multi-country campaigns across Africa. Skilled in producing high-quality donor-focused materials, mobilizing resources, and strengthening partnerships with UN agencies, governments, and international funders. Adept at digital storytelling, policy influence, and visibility strategies that drive impact in gender equality, access to information, and human rights.

Key skills

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Donor communications & visibility strategies• Strategic communications & advocacy• Resource mobilization & partnership building• Digital storytelling & multimedia content creation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy influence & multi-country advocacy• Social media strategy & digital campaigning• Stakeholder engagement & coalition building | Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Canva❖ Adobe Suite❖ Microsoft Suite❖ Google WordPress❖ Google Analytic Hootsuite❖ Buffer❖ Zoho❖ Social media tools. |
|---|---|---|

Experience

Communications and Advocacy Lead

March 2023 - present

Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC)

AFIC is a pan-African organization with 56-member non-governmental organizations advancing access to information, transparency, and accountability across the continent.

Key Achievements

- Led donor communications and visibility across multi-country campaigns in Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Kenya, producing impact videos, newsletters, donor briefs, and storybooks such as 'Voices of Change: Women in Public Procurement.'
- Secured and reported on approximately UGX 1 billion in donor funding, strengthening women-led business initiatives and public procurement programs.
- Designed advocacy strategies that influenced Uganda's 15% reservation scheme for women, Tanzania's e-procurement platform, and Ethiopia's inclusion committee.
- Ensured donor visibility requirements were met through tailored reports, branded knowledge products, and high-profile events.
- Partnered with UN Women, UNESCO, Hewlett Foundation, and IDRC on campaigns advancing journalist safety, ATI laws, and gender inclusion.

- Managed crisis communications during elections, securing government commitments on journalist safety and human rights.
- Developed course modules for Right to Information training online course by AFIC, Fray College and Centre for Law Development.
- Trained over 500 public officials, 510 CSO representatives, 345 university students and 67 AFIC and partner staff on different topics including strategic communication, open contracting, access to information legislation, participation, human rights-based approaches, among others.
- Led the development and operationalization of AFIC's communication strategy 2025/30.
- Documented and disseminated impact stories, case studies to share knowledge, experiences and learning.

Digital Journalist

August 2021 to 2023

See TV Uganda

SEE TV is a national TV station located in Kampala, Uganda. It focuses on producing world-class local content in edutainment and current affairs, targeting a younger, primarily female, English-speaking audience under the age of 35.

Key Achievements

- Led the implementation of digital strategies that positioned SEE TV as the leading TV in mobile entertainment
- Led the creation of engaging digital content innovatively using canva and adobe suite
- Researched, wrote, and produced news articles, videos, and digital content for online platforms.
- Broke exclusive news stories that gained national attention and influenced public discourse.
- Successfully expanded SEET TV's digital reach, increasing online engagement and viewership by 60% within two years.
- Led live coverage of major events, including elections, protests, and government briefings, through live reporting, live streaming, and instant updates.

Consultancies

Communications Coordinator - Africa Network of Information Commissions (ANIC)

2023-2024

Managed digital platforms, developed campaigns, and facilitated advocacy efforts on ATI and information rights across member states.

Rapporteur—International Labour Organization (ILO)

2022

Documented and summarized key discussions, presentations, and stakeholder engagements during the three-day launch event of ILO's Social Finance Model held on 22nd to 24th November 2022 at Kampala Serena Hotel.

Digital media Consultant - Kad Initiative Uganda

2024

Developed and implemented the digital communication strategy, including launching a social media presence and creating web content via WordPress.

Content Creator - Community Integrated Development Initiative (CIDI)

2024

Produced campaign content to support the implementation of the organization's communication strategy.

Communications Consultant—Shed—Lifting Communities

2022–2024

Developed a communications and digital strategy; trained in-house teams on creative content design and digital storytelling.

Freelance Writing

The New Vision; Gender writer

2023 to 2025

The Leadership magazine; Gender writer

2021 to 2023

The South World, London-based magazine; Culture writing

2021 to 2022

Education

Master of Strategic and Corporate Communication Makerere University	Ongoing
Bachelor of Journalism and Communications Makerere University	2014-2018
Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) Sheema Girls School	2012-2014
Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) St. Peter's SSS Uganda	2008-2011

Training and Certifications

Training & Certification	Institution
Introduction to Media Management	Gray College of Communications, South Africa
Digital Journalism	Reuters
Certificate in Gender Balanced Content	WAN-INFRA, Women in News
Certificate in Podcasting	Thomson Foundation
Agroecology reporting and Communications	Agroecology school of Journalists and Communicators
Message and message development	GFA Consulting Group GmbH under the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH Uganda Governance and Civil Society Programme (GCSP)
Writing for social media	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH Uganda Governance and Civil Society Programme (GCSP)
Using e-newsletters	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH Uganda Governance and Civil Society Programme (GCSP)
Smartphone photography	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH Uganda Governance and Civil Society Programme (GCSP)

Research and publication

1. Research: Examining the gendered dimensions of journalists' safety in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-indicators-unveil-gendered-realities-journalists-safety-east-africa>
2. Policy paper on Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Practice in Uganda: <https://africafoicentre.org/wpdmpro/policy-brief-bridging-the-gap-between-policy-and-practice-in-uganda>
3. Research on Women's participation in public contracting in EA.

<https://africafoicentre.org/wpdmpro/final-synthesis-report-on-the-barriers-and-solutions-to-womens-participation-in-public-procurement-in-eastern-africa>

4 Stories of Change: Inclusion of women in public procurement

<https://www.africafoicentre.org/wpdmpro/inclusion-of-women-in-public-procurement-stories-of-change/>

Professional memberships

- East Africa Public Relations Association (EAPRA)
- Public Relations Association of Uganda (PRAU)
- Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ)
- Uganda Media Women Association (UMWA)

Leadership roles

Membership Coordinator for 56 CSOs in ATI, Transparency and Accountability	Present
President, Master's Class of Communication, Makerere University	2024 - 2025
Female team leader, National Evangelisation Team (NET)	2018 - 2019

References

Martin Nahabwe
Human Resource; Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC)
Email: martin@africafoicentre.org
Phone number: +256 702 590269

Academic
Dr. William Tayebwa
Academic Supervisor, Makerere University
Email: wtayebwa@gmail.com
Phone: +256 752 48289

Charity Komujjuzi
Direct Supervisor; Africa Freedom of Information Centre
Email: ckomujurizi@gmail.com
Phone: +256 707 806253