

# CAMmer in the Spotlight

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### Getting to know... Agnes Lucy Lando

**What are you currently working on?** It is difficult to pin point what I am currently working on! At the moment, I have several on-going bits and pieces of projects in the cooking pot. But I can single out just three.

The first two are academic researches that are closely related to CAM and the third might end up stretching CAM! Together with one of my postgraduate students, Stella Mwangi, I am studying Media Therapy. This is an attempt to understand why young Women in Kenya self-disclose their love challenges on television and radio. This study was initiated because of a remarkable increase in the number of young women in Kenya who discuss their intimate love life on varied television and radio programs. At the end of their disclosure, they ask for help on how to handle their problem. These programs encourage and allow women to reveal their personal love status to others on air. In the African culture, such form of self-disclosure was unacceptable and intimate relationship issues were

handled within the confines of the elders who were considered as “professionals” in such matters. With the arrival of Christianity and modernity, cultures relegated most of these responsibilities to pastors or professional counsellors. In all these cases, however, the sharing was always privately done. Therefore, the current situation moved us to investigate why women (with the majority of them being married) who are much older than the youthful and inexperienced (in matters of love) media presenters, to call the media houses to seek love solutions for their relationships or marriages from persons who, without much exaggerations, could be their children or grandchildren.

The second project is a narrative and ethnographic case study of clandestine commercial sex in internal migration and international relocation contexts; and is being jointly done by myself, Prof. James Kombo and Prof. Michael Bowen. In Kenya, kufua are domestic chores offered to internal and international immigrants. Kufua labourers earn between KSHS

150 and KSHS 300 (USD 1.5 to 3.00) after 8 am to 5 pm work. But kufua has a covert meaning: People who hire kufua laborers ask for sexual favors in exchange for an extra pay, between KSHS 1, 000 and KSHS 2, 500 (USD 10 to 25) – more than ten times the normal kufua cost. This study is concerned with the covert kufua, which is KUVUA, a daytime commercial sex practiced on and by children, youth, and adult men and women. Neighbors and family/spouses of those involved in kufua rarely suspect kufua beyond its common “washing” meaning. Refugees living in the Kenyan urban areas away from the refugee camps are also involved in KUF(V)UA. Thus, when one refugee is successfully relocated to Europe, North America or repatriated back home, they go kuf(v)ua loaded. This reality presents kuf(v)ua as a national, international and invisible humanitarian crisis with multifaceted implications for the society, especially since a large part of the society is oblivious of kuf(v)ua. This study intends to produce social and behavioral change by unveiling Kuf(v)ua as a new Clandestine Commercial Sex, and the related dangers.

And the third, a project that is very close to my heart, is that I am working with ICA Executive and a Local Organizing Committee in Nairobi to host the first ICA [Africa regional Conference](#) in Nairobi on 18th – 21st October 2016. I welcome all CAM members to the historic ICAfrica conference!

**What has been your most memorable project so far, and why?** If I am allowed, I would like to talk

about the two most memorable projects I have undertaken.

The first was a deliberate choice I made in 2008 upon return from Rome where I did my PhD. While being there, I learnt how valuable it is that professors mentor their students into academic life. I decided to do the same once I had returned home. I decided to mentor the postgraduate students of Daystar University into attending academic conference and writing joint papers. This was a first, and a number of others have since then taken it up too. The climax was on 15th June 2013 – Out of the 32 peer-reviewed papers presented at the International Conference on Communication, Conflict, and Aggression in Budapest, Hungary, we (I and six MA Communication students) won the *2013 George Gerbner Excellence Award*.

My second memorable project is my little contribution to bringing ICA to Africa. On 22-26 May 2014 - I attended (for the first time) and presented a paper at the 64th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA) in Washington, Seattle, USA. During the open forum session, I questioned the minimal presence and participation of African communication scholars in the ICA Seattle conference. I latter followed it up with the ICA Executive and suggested that perhaps it would be mutually beneficial for both ICA and Africa if ICA came to Africa instead. This culminated in the ICA’s approval to hold its first ICAfrica regional conference in Nairobi on 18th – 21st October 2016. This is most memorable –That ICA is eventually setting foot in

Africa after more than 60 years of existence, and that we have played a part in bringing it to Africa is great!

**Which achievement are you most proud of, and why?** With a great sense of humility, I am grateful to

God and to ICA for granting my heart desire – to bring ICA to Africa so that the good that ICA offers “out there” can also be experienced by African Communication scholars and researchers who, for one reason or another, but mainly due to limited financial resources and/or lack of academic mentorship, are unable to travel to different parts of the world for the annual ICA or other reputable conferences. The first (and hopefully not the last) ICA Africa regional Conference will be held from 18th - 21st October 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya. Again, a hearty welcome to all CAM members! I am also grateful to God and most happy that I am the first African to be appointed to the position of International Liaison person of CAM (since June 2016).

One other achievement I am most proud of is the [Master Communicators Welfare Association](#). With a group of MA Communication students, we started MCWA on 14th March 2013 to respond to the plight of bright but financially challenged MA communication students who kept dropping out of university. Our greatest concern was that there are a number of MA Communication students dropping out of studies or missing out on the end of semester exams because of their inability to pay fees. Our motto is derived from the parable of the mustard seed (Luke 9:10-17): LITTLE IS MUCH WHEN

HUMANITY COOPERATES WITH GOD. The 4th MCWA scholarship award will be ISSUED on 14th March 2017. Feel free to visit the website and support us to support a bright but financially challenged MA Communication student.

**Amy Jordan, our previous CAMmer, would like to know what you would say about opportunities for cross-national collaboration between the Global North and the Global South, whether you feel this is important, and what you see as the most important areas in which CAM collaborators would focus their efforts?** First of

all I am very humbled, and was pleasantly surprised, to be nominated by Amy Jordan as the next CAMmer in the spotlight. I cannot fit in her shoes! But I can try to follow her and step where she has stepped. However, I am not surprised that Amy Jordan is asking whether I feel the importance for cross-national collaboration between the Global North and the Global South, because I know that she believes that this is the way to go. And I do too! Amy has lived it, encouraged it and she knows that it is valuable and that it works! Under her presidency, in 2016, a high number of African communication scholars, researchers and postgraduate students from different universities made it to the Fukuoka Conference because ICA highly subsidized their travel grants.

*So do I feel that Global North and Global South collaboration is important?* Of course YES! The Global North and Global South countries are at

different levels of development – including academic training, research and scholarship. And it is only through the Global North and Global South collaboration that the deficits of either hemisphere can be offset. As St. John Paul II always said, nobody (nation) is so poor that he has nothing to give, and nobody (nation) is so rich that he has nothing to receive, I deeply believe that both the Global North and the Global South have something to offer to enrich and develop each other. A clear case in this point is ICA coming to Africa in October 2016. Talking of ICA coming to Africa, I sincerely appreciate the keen interest with which the 2014 ICA President Prof. Peter Vorderer took up the idea and subsequent follow-ups and discussions. Then came Amy, who even made a trip to Africa in Dec 2015 to experience first-hand the African needs and together with us “saw” how ICA would further realize its Internationalization agenda. That visit “fixed” the dates for the first ICAfrica conference. Needless to say that the appointment for Amy to visit Africa was fixed in 2015 during the ICA San Juan Puerto Rico meeting during the CAM group meeting!

So, back to the question on what Amy would like to know:- *Do I feel that the Global North and Global South collaboration is important?* Absolutely! There is such a wide-gap, in all dimensions, between the Global North and Global South. Geographical location and degree of development in Global South hampers economic, academic and research developments in Global South. One of my pains organizing the ICAfrica conference has been that

authors of positively reviewed papers are unable to come to Nairobi for the conference because they can't afford air ticket, hotel accommodation, and some couldn't afford the registration fees of USD 150! Global South is thus suffering not just from landlocked countries but I dare to say landlocked minds because very few scholars (from the Global South) are able to mix locally and internationally. The vast majority are landlocked in their respective institutions or nations because of limited facilitation.



What I would say about *opportunities for cross-national collaboration between the Global North and the Global South?* The opportunities are a legion! Higher education, academic research, academic associations, (to mention but a few) in my view are trade commodities that ought to respond to the

market forces of supply and demand. Every country, North or South, have specific needs that are not necessarily met 100% by its nation or region alone. The secular world has already moved into North-South partnerships and collaborations. Why not in the academia? The structures have already been laid down by the existing inter-governmental collaborations between and among nations, regions, and continents. The academy should follow accordingly in a more organized and pronounced manner. There is need to strengthen existing cross-national academic relationships and even establish more, which would encourage and support student and faculty mobility to accommodate the inevitable global trend of cross-national collaboration between the Global North and the Global South. The North-South collaboration is an important tool for promoting professional diversity within and across borders.

*What do I see as the most important areas in which CAM collaborators would focus their efforts?* CAM members could focus their effort in internationalizing CAM with academics and researchers from both the Global North and Global South. This would then lead to partnerships and collaborations in researches in both hemispheres. Research opportunities would be more. The North can collaborate with the South in research and research areas that can be done in the South by the southerners would be handled as such. This will bring about not only partnerships, but also lessen the travels of academicians and researchers from one corner of the globe to the other to carry out

what someone has already undertaken. This would thus lessen research overhead-related expenses in researches being carried out in foreign lands. Such a practice, will in the long run, lead to empowerment of locals and confidence building to a large extent.

Further, the Global North should support the Global South by sharing that what is lacking in the Global South. And here I am not just talking about money – I am talking about, for example, exposure and reputable associations. Just as people tend to give special attention to that less privileged person in the family, so should the Global North make a deliberate effort to support the Global South grow out of the academic and research challenges they have. This can be done through joint researches as well as mutually beneficial exchange programs for both faculties and students. Yet it ought to be understood that I am not advocating for the Global South to be entirely depended on the Global North in these areas. I am rather advocating for the creation of an environment that will enable the Global South cooperate among themselves, then extend that cooperation with the Global North. Opportunities for cross-national collaboration between the Global North and the Global South will most probably also reduce illegal immigration and perennial human tragedies of persons from the Global South trying to make their way into the Global North, because those opportunities will begin to be available locally too.

**What is an important question from parents and practitioners that we as academics cannot**

**provide a good answer to yet?** Why children's television programs, especially cartoons, have subtle violent content, oblivious even to parents, and without PG sign.

**What would be your work motto?** My work motto is PHD & 2C – *Prayer, Hard work, Discipline, Collaboration and Consultation*. This work motto has not only kept me going all my life but has also created opportunities for me that have led to a greater success, one that I couldn't have achieved without PHD & 2C. My Christian faith and religious life provide me values of hard work and discipline in everything that I lay my hands on. Collaboration with others helps me trade-off my weaknesses or things I couldn't achieve on my own. And consultation is the secret that keeps me in the right side of civil and Church the law!

**Which of your publications is your favorite, and why?** Some of my favorite publications are:

Lando, A. L. (2016) "*Using Media to Resolve Media Engendered Ethnic Conflicts in Multiracial Societies: The Case of Somalis of Kenyan Origin.*" In this article I argue that many ethnic conflicts are media engendered and the same media can be used to resolve those conflicts.

Lando, A. L. & Mwangi, S (2014). "*Social Media and Mobile Phones are bonding and Vilification Tools: Exposing Kenya's 2013 Post-Election Violence.*" In B. A. Musa & J. Willis (Eds.), *From Twitter to Tahrir Square: Ethics in Social and New Media Communication*, Vol. 1. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Whereas the world celebrated a peaceful year in 2013 for Kenya, Stella and I found out that, unknown to many, there was Post Election Violence (PEV) during the 2013 General Elections, only that it was done in the social media.

Lando, A. L. (2014). "*Rumours on Social Media: Implications for Individuals and Society.*" In B. A. Musa & J. Willis (Eds.), *From Twitter to Tahrir Square: Ethics in Social and New Media Communication*, Vol. 2. Westport, CT: Praeger.

In this study, I reflected on the impact that rumours on social media have on individuals or the society.

Lando, A. L. (2013) "*Media Ethics in the Kenyan Media? Understanding the Disconnect between the classroom and practice*", in *African Journal of Communication*. Nairobi: East African Communication Association; Vol. 1. No. 1 pp. 15-42

In this research, I found out that what universities, with a bias to Christian institutions of higher learning, teach their students is not what the students apply in the field. Hence there is a disconnect in applying the theory learnt in class to the actual situation in the field.

**If you had unlimited resources, what kind of project would you want to do and why?** If I had unlimited resources, I would strive to complete the KUF(V)UA research, then I would later carry out part II of KUF(V)UA research to follow up on repatriated refugees in different parts of the world, to find out if they continue kufua there, and the implications thereof. I would then work with others to develop policies on this using the research findings to source

for funds or partner with interested organizations to identify alternate economic empowerment of socially vulnerable KUF(V)UA people.

**If you had to give one piece of advice to young CAM scholars, what would it be?**

The Chinese proverb is spot on: A journey of one thousand miles starts with a single step. Yet, that initial step has to be purposive and focused! For young CAM scholars, mix and interact with the right people, ask the right questions, and dare to venture in the areas that your peers or your heart fear most! Take risks! Get rid of fear! Venture into the unknown. Dream big and seek out others who can help you actualize your dream. This is my experience. Just one example. My first time to attend the ICA conference was in Washington Seattle. I am not only an African but also a religious in uniform. So I stand out. But I am never shy!

I was touched by the dismal number of communication scholars and researchers in the ICA Washington Seattle conference in 2014. I dared to ask ICA officials why this was the case, and if there was anything that could be done! ICA listened, and gave me two years to explore with them the possibility of bringing ICA to Africa.

The following year, 2015, ICA was in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The ICA Director, Dr. Michael Healey, after hearing the slow progress we had made with bringing ICA to Africa, saw Amy Jordan pass by and said to me, “follow her and remind her about ICA going to Africa!” Later on I bumped into Amy at the CAM reception. And we moved into a corner to speaker. But barely 2 mins into our conversation,

someone else came for the President’s attention. And Amy said to me, “Sister I have to go, something urgent needs my attention.” But then I said, why don’t you come over to Africa so that we discuss ICA in Africa, uninterrupted? She said, YES I will come. And in less than 30 seconds before she was taken away, we fixed the date of her visit. 2nd week of December. As she moved away she said, “Sister, we will make it happen! The next time I saw Amy was in December 2015 when she came to Africa to listen and plan for ICA Africa! The rest is history because ICA will be holding its first Africa regional Conference in Nairobi on 18th – 21st October 2016.

The point out of this long example is, DARE to VENTURE!

**Who would you like to put in the spotlight next ?**

I would like to nominate Dr. Dina L. G. Borzekowski , EdD. She is a researcher from the University of Maryland.