

DEVELOPMENT UNFRAMED



Nakentoh Kenneth

Kenneth's professional experience spans a decade across West and Central Africa. A broadcast journalist by training, his path evolved from broadcast journalism to multimedia content development, corporate communications, regional humanitarian operations, and knowledge management (KM). Kenneth currently serves as the Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist for Plan International Cameroon. In this role, he focuses on integrating learning processes and driving strategic visibility to demonstrate and scale impact across more than 30 development and humanitarian projects.



What is your journey into communication and knowledge management

I started with a foundation in journalism training, which opened the door to content development, and eventually communication and knowledge management. I had a strong passion for radio and television. I worked with several radio stations, and had a brief stint with CRTV, Cameroon's national radio and television media house.

My goal at the time was to practice investigative journalism, the kind that challenges power, and drives national change. But then I saw how risky it was. Many senior investigative journalists in Cameroon were ending up in prison, some killed. I made the tough decision to step back. I then began looking for a new path that would still allow me to communicate meaningfully, and impactfully.

I found myself in content development. It was the opportunity that came at the time, and I made the most of it! I spent about three years developing content for multimedia and telecommunications companies not just in Cameroon, but also in Asia and Nigeria. We were responsible for producing value-added service (VAS) content like motivational tips, lifestyle hacks, and short advice articles (under 200 words), for major telecoms like MTN and Orange. We also wrote longer articles on finance, health, and cryptocurrency for European clients. It was intense, high-volume work, but it built my discipline, research skills, and adaptability.

Hacking the traditional career path

I did not take the traditional academic route like many communication professionals in Cameroon. In the country, institutions like the University of Buea, and the Advanced School of Mass Communication (ASMAC) are well-established, and highly regarded for their communication and journalism programs. Graduating from them is often seen as a mark of credibility and quality education. My path, however, was completely unconventional.

I chose to learn by understanding what made those graduates stand out. I studied their curricula and networked widely. This allowed me to enrich my knowledge, build a stronger profile, and expand my skillset. I turned to platforms like LinkedIn, where I connected with communication professionals who regularly shared valuable insights.

Through that network, I found a mentor, working with UNESCO at the time, who coached me in public information management.

I also explored other non-conventional ways of learning. I would study communications job descriptions and extract the listed tasks, using them as learning points to guide my development. This strategy helped me transition from journalism to communication, and the same strategy helped me transition later from communications to knowledge management. To get hands-on experience, I began volunteering with private companies, managing their social media accounts, and supporting their public relations efforts for minimal pay.

This blend of self-initiative, strategic networking, continuous learning, and hands-on experience allowed me to successfully navigate my career transitions from journalism to communications, and then into knowledge management while building a solid foundation in both fields.

The plunge into development space

While I was a content developer, I started volunteering for the Cameroon Association for the United Nations (CAUN). As time went on, I was given more responsibilities and later migrated fully; I left the content writing role and became a full-fledged communications consultant for the organization.

I did that for some time and later found myself deeply integrated into the development sector. We had many development projects. At the same time, I wanted to learn how the communication role integrated into the private sector. If you look at my trajectory, you will find out that most often, I had two jobs. I was a communications consultant for this NGO, and I was equally a communications officer for a private company at the time. In that way, my capacities were built in both the development sector and the private sector.

The private sector experience was beneficial because as the communication officer, I collaborated closely with their social media and marketing teams to accomplish my objectives. Meanwhile, in the development sector, it was more about communication for advocacy and development. I developed communication plans and knowledge products for different projects, engaged stakeholders, and coordinated the media.

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When I left CAUN, I joined YAPCEC, a peacebuilding and youth community empowerment organization, as Communications Director. I had more leadership responsibilities there. I had a big title but I was actually the only communications person in the organization. Because the headquarters was based in Cameroon, I worked closely with country directors and leadership teams across our regional representations to engage the media, produce communication tools, and leverage social media to handle both internal and external communication needs.

Navigating change and transition into Knowledge Management

In 2019, while still in a communications role, I began to take on responsibilities that naturally steered me towards knowledge management. I found myself integrating program development with key elements of knowledge management, gradually laying the groundwork for my transition. By 2020, I made a deliberate shift, fully immersing myself in the field.

When COVID-19 hit in 2020, everything had to shift online. Some of our trainers and stakeholders at the time did not have digital literacy skills. Stakeholder engagement had to take on a different dimension. I started incorporating training and development into my role, organizing periodic internal trainings for the staff and engaging them in reflections on how to make our online programs richer.

This yielded amazing results! When we redefined our communication strategy to be intensely online, and social media-focused, we reached a considerable amount of program participants compared to our physical models.

In addition to the communications work, I had to create a team focused purely on program development; reflecting on stakeholder engagement, designing training models, and planning modules to make sure our programs were easily accessible. That is how I found myself shifting into capacity building, resource management, and leading human resources.

If you look at these functions, they are the core elements of Knowledge Management: People, Process, and Technology.

Process: Focuses on creating organizational policies, procedures, or strategies that facilitate the smooth implementation of sharing knowledge.

Technology: Focuses on leveraging different platforms, like creating a knowledge hub, a repository, or utilizing collaboration tools to work more efficiently.

People: This is the most critical. In many spaces, knowledge management is treated as a simple compliance exercise; just capturing files and storing them away in a folder or server. We must completely change that outlook. The true ultimate value of a knowledge management framework is not passive data accumulation or archiving files. Its true purpose is to cultivate an environment where every single individual recognizes themselves as an active knowledge worker. When you do that, KM becomes about decentralized decision-making authority. It is about equipping all staff at all levels with the ability to make highly strategic, well-informed choices in real time. We do this by turning documented organizational failures, and hard-won successes into accessible, applicable intelligence. It ensures that institutional experience actively drives our future choices rather than just gathering dust in a repository.

This deep, hands-on immersion into the intersections of people, processes, and technology is exactly what prepared me for my transition. Years prior, I had applied for an internship at Plan International. The process back then was unsuccessful, but they kept my CV in their database.

I received a call for an interview long after I had forgotten about the application. I went into the interview thinking it was a communications role. It was based on the questions they were asking, that I realized it was a knowledge management role. I openly told them, "I have never heard of knowledge management before," but they assured me they trusted my abilities and profile. I was able to respond to their questions accurately.

I started the role not fully knowing its initial scope, but within a week, I discovered that my work was at the regional level for Plan International West and Central Africa, scaling initiatives across fourteen African countries. Covering fourteen countries after previously managing six was an incredible step up. Today, I am the Knowledge Management Advisor for Plan International Cameroon, working directly at the project management level to design and embed KM strategies across the project lifecycle.



Now that you are in the development space with an organization like Plan International, what trends should we expect to see in this space over the next five to ten years?

From both a communications and knowledge management perspective, I think the major trend will be a heavy focus on communications for advocacy and resource mobilization. We find ourselves in a global space where resource mobilization is vital to the survival of organizations. We have several crises ongoing in the world right now, and funding priorities are shifting. Donors or Western funding agencies might suddenly pause funding to local programs to focus aid on immediate global humanitarian crises. If you find your organization lacking funds because of these shifts, you have to align your career objectives with sustainability. You need to get acquainted with project proposal writing, master stakeholder engagement, and find partners who support your organizational objectives. The trend is that professionals must become multi-skilled actors who can directly contribute to keeping an organization resilient.

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Where do you see yourself in this space in the next few years?

Knowledge management is not the final end goal of my career. I want to use my previously acquired experiences in communication, and KM to eventually transition into Organizational Development, specifically focusing on people, culture transformations, and leadership. I want to be able to impact people, an organization's culture, and organizational development.

The skills I am actively trying to acquire at the moment are centred around managing cultural transformations. This includes deepening my capacities in human resources, learning and development (L&D), and strategic leadership.

Learning and Development is naturally tied to knowledge management because it applies directly to the "people" element of the KM framework. As a manager, you want to put in place initiatives where people can learn from each other, acquire new skills that are relevant for the achievement of their personal and organizational goals, and systematically capture lessons learned from institutional activities. Ultimately, I want to reach a point where I am helping both staff and leadership teams at all levels, leverage organizational knowledge to make well-informed, strategic decisions that transform institutional culture.

What would you say is the difference between communication, or even development communication, and Knowledge Management?

When you look at knowledge management, it is a holistic process. We move through a continuous cycle: capturing, redefining, storing, sharing, applying, and updating knowledge. This is the knowledge management cycle, and it deals with different kinds of knowledge, whether it is tacit, explicit, or implicit. Its focus is on turning technical experience into tailored messages for specialized audiences, to generate documentation, share applicable program options, and improve strategic decisions.

Communication is the engine that makes this cycle visible and effective. It turns technical knowledge into clear language tailored for each type of intended audience, disseminating messages through adapted channels to sensitize internal or external publics on key issues. Usually, when you want to disseminate knowledge, you use communications materials, platforms, and tools. You need communication skills to design those messages effectively. Even when you want to capture knowledge, for instance organizing reflection meetings to extract lessons learned and best practices, it takes sharp communication qualities to document those insights exactly as they are supposed to be caught. The two fields align because communication strategies are a core component for implementing the knowledge management cycle, especially in packaging and sharing knowledge across an organization.

What are some of the misconceptions you have had to deal with regarding the career path you have taken?

The first is the fact that people think that if you are a communications professional, you can automatically handle everything. Social media, design everything, equally take photos. People don't seem to realize that communication is vast, and there are deep specializations within the field. For instance, high-level content writing is a highly specialized, technical skill on its own. If you give a content writer a camera, they might not be able to produce quality pictures or videos.

Secondly, as a knowledge manager, people often think that it is the knowledge manager who will come and physically handle their knowledge for them. They forget that they are the actual knowledge workers. They are the ones executing the projects, applying their technical knowledge, facing the challenges, and devising the solutions. My role is simply to provide the systems that help you structure that expertise. The role of the Knowledge Manager is not to create or carry your data for you; it is to come in, remind you of what you already know, and introduce structured, organized systems so that your expertise can be preserved and shared to benefit the entire organization.

Actually, what you are doing with Development Unframed is an intentional act of Knowledge Management in itself. You are systematically engaging practitioners across Africa, capturing our tacit field experiences, and organizing them into a structured body of work so that others can learn, apply it, and make better decisions.

What skills or competencies you would recommend to people who are new to this field?

One should have technical skills, but you equally need to have other organizational skills. One key organizational skill I recommend is the ability to be highly adaptive and apt at learning. We live in a highly knowledge-centric world where things change dramatically. Communications professionals must be ready to take on new responsibilities, even if they feel those tasks are not directly linked to traditional communications. That is how you remain relevant to an organization as business needs change.

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Your role with Plan International Cameroon has since evolved. What does that change look like?

In January 2025, I transitioned into the role of Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist. It is a massive step up in scale. Instead of advising on a singular programmatic level, I am now the direct focal point managing both KM and the communications workflows for over 30 active projects across the country.

These projects span different funding cycles, some are short term emergency humanitarian interventions, and others are long-term development projects, all funded by different donors like Global Affairs Canada, ECHO, the EU, many UN agencies, and the World Bank. They cover diverse sectors like education, livelihood, health, sexual reproductive health, protection, gender and inclusion, economic empowerment, youth leadership, peacebuilding, and nutrition. It is a lot of work, but there is so much learning when you are rubbing shoulders with all these different sectors and projects.

On any given day, I am balancing two parallel responsibilities:

Communication and Visibility: Ensuring absolute brand compliance and visibility across 30+ projects with highly specific donor requirements.

Knowledge Management: Actively working with project teams on "capitalization," which is just a technical word for integrating learning processes by bringing out lessons learned and producing knowledge products, to demonstrate the impact of our work.

How do you practically help teams adopt KM habits ?

The deeper, systemic hurdle is mindset change. Knowledge Management is still a relatively new concept for many teams. It takes time, patience, and constant coaching to the point where capturing lessons learned is an automatic part of their daily routine, rather than an afterthought. When you want to capture impact, you have to train people how to identify and communicate it.

I developed a strategy to help embed knowledge management into the deep roots of community project implementation; at that very basic level. To make it real for the teams, I run pilots. I go to one project, implement a particular strategy, and produce a capitalization or lessons learned document with them. Then, I show it to the other projects. I show them that this finished knowledge product can be used to mobilize more resources, demonstrate the impact of the project and the organization, help individual staff members demonstrate their own capabilities and increase the credibility of the organization in its capacities to handle such interventions. By doing these hands-on demonstrations and capacity buildings, they begin to see the true reward.

Why is that local focus so critical to your strategy?

At a strategic level, we do not always have the close observation that community level has. That is why it is so important to capacitate our implementing partners and program participants, so they are able to identify, leverage, and scale their own knowledge. I want them to be able to leverage what they know, adapt to new knowledge, and scale their own innovations. When partners and participants can communicate their own innovations back to us, that is how we truly transform program delivery.





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Kenneth is a Cameroonian, bilingual communications and knowledge management professional with over a decade of hands-on experience across West and Central Africa. He started his career in the grit of broadcast journalism and investigative storytelling, before moving into high-volume digital content production, corporate communications, and regional humanitarian operations.

Kenneth currently serves as the Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist for Plan International Cameroon. In this role, he acts as the strategic focal point for over 30 development and humanitarian projects funded by major global donors like the World Bank, the EU, and Global Affairs Canada. He is also the author of ***Keeping Knowledge Alive (May 2026)***, a practical playbook on KM strategies for learning and transformation in the humanitarian sector.

You published your first book; *Keeping Knowledge Alive*. What gap does it fill for development professionals?

Keeping Knowledge Alive is a handbook designed to accompany anyone, be it students, non-profit or for-profit professionals, or workers in the development and humanitarian sector, who wants to transform lives, improve program quality, and see real impact in target communities.

In this book, I suggest that readers can use knowledge management as an enabler and a strategic tool to learn, and then transform their programming. It is highly relevant at local, national, and international levels. We live in a knowledge-centric era where you can get any kind of knowledge anywhere, which brings a lot of noise. This book helps to quiet the noise, and helps you select what relevant to keep you going toward your goals.

I designed it as a practical handbook. It captures my experience in knowledge management from 2020 to 2026 and covers strategies you can use from the idea stage and conception, to planning, implementation, and project transition or closure. It includes step-by-step guides on implementing tools, and because of my background, it weaves together communication, monitoring and evaluation, research, archiving, community of practice, organizational learning, project management, capacity building, organizational culture, and institutional memory.

Ultimately, it is about keeping knowledge alive, the knowledge of partners, clients and community, the knowledge of the individual, as well as institutional knowledge.

You also recently received a prestigious regional recognition award. What did that milestone mean to you?

The Regional Director of Plan International West and Central Africa honoured me with a recognition award for my five years of contribution to knowledge management at the regional level. Because our West and Central Africa region covers 15 countries, contributing significantly to knowledge management at that scale for the past five years has been incredibly humbling, and I was very honoured to receive that recognition. It is a rewarding reminder of why we do this work.

Development Unframed: is a discourse series featuring African development communication practitioners. Our mission is to democratize the practice, build a robust and accessible body of knowledge, practice, and practitioners across the continent. Ultimately, the series aims to foster a shared understanding of development communication as a strategic enabler of development processes, while actively dispelling commonly held misconceptions about the nature of the discipline.

This issue(03) tackles a critical question facing development practitioners: How do we prevent valuable program insights from being lost in compliance paperwork, and instead use them to actively improve lives.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are those of the interviewee. They can be reached through their social media platforms.