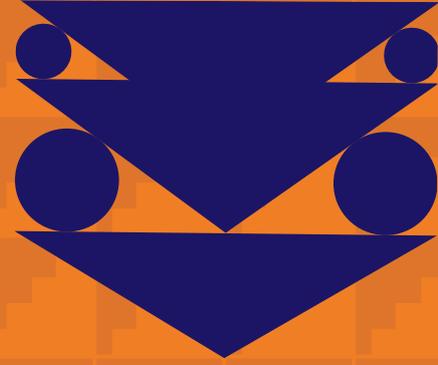


KCH NEWSLETTER 2026



How African Communicators Survived 2025

A Kenya Comms Hub Reflection

**kenya
comms
hub** An African
Narratives Hub

SECTION 1: OPENING REMARKS

From Mumbi Kanyogo,
Coordinator at Kenya Comms Hub

If I were to capture 2025 in a word or two, it would be “a lot”. 2025 demanded A LOT of social movements. Enyewe, 2025 ilizidi. And in many moments, it felt like it took a lot from us too – too much, even.

Over the course of one year, we were forced to contend with funding cuts that eroded our capacity to support the survival of our communities, heightened state repression that threatened our comrades' safety and the development of extractive technologies that plunder our creativity in the name of innovation. All of this, as multiple genocides in Sudan, Palestine and Congo were being (and continue to be) waged and the drive to normalize this reality always present. Amid all this, communicators and narrative workers, always already taken for granted and overwhelmed with the work of simultaneously being fundraisers, journalists, designers, strategists, marketers, friends, relatives, people continued to tell important stories and weave powerful narratives. At KCH we bore witness to journalists who told critical stories about how funding cuts across the continent had disrupted access to antiretroviral therapy for millions of people living with HIV. We collaborated with thinkers and researchers committed to telling the world about how Silicon Valley-based big tech firms are extracting labour, time and dignity from African digital platform workers. 2025 was a lot, but the defiance, commitment and deep love that communicators remained rooted in, got us through it.

As we reflected on what got us through the a lot-ness of 2025, it got us thinking: How did other African communicators survive 2025? HOW??? So, we asked nine African communicators and narrative workers to tell us what tools, mantras and resources they used to get through the year. For us this wasn't just an exercise in masochistic recollection, but an opportunity to think about what survival means, feels, sounds and tastes like – what and who it requires. To share this deeply personal wisdom, is a means of resisting the logics of competition that have become so pervasive in our movements and instead doing the work of co-developing a pathway for our collective thriving.

As you read these brilliant communicators' reflections, we hope you'll be as inspired as we are to join them in co-creating this shared lane where care, commitment and collaboration in communications work are the air, the trees, the birds, the words, the art and everything else around.

Mumbi Kanyogo, Coordinator at Kenya Comms Hub

SECTION 2: THE QUESTION WE ASKED

How Did You Survive 2025?

This year demanded a lot, emotionally, intellectually, strategically, and politically.

So instead of telling stories about communicators, we asked communicators themselves to speak.

We reached out to African narrative workers across movements and asked four simple but profound questions:

1. 2025 in One Word
2. What challenge did you overcome in your narrative work this year?
3. How did you overcome it? What networks or resources supported you?
4. What lesson are you carrying into 2026?

These are not polished success stories.

They are lived truths, raw, honest, sometimes tender, sometimes heavy.

(All reflections below are presented unedited, exactly as written.)

SECTION 3: VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

9 Reflections From African
Communicators



Entry 1: Grace, Advocacy
Officer | Diverse
Empowerment Foundation

1. 2025 in One Word

Stretching.

2. A challenge I navigated this year in my narrative work

In 2025, one of my biggest challenges was sustaining narrative work largely through volunteerism. Much of my storytelling around disability justice and queer liberation continued despite funding cuts affecting Diverse Empowerment Foundation, alongside my work with queer asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Holding complex stories while navigating financial precarity required constant care and intention.

3. How did you overcome it?

I leaned into community and collective purpose. The Disability Pride Month campaign became a key narrative anchor, allowing me to center joy, pride, and political clarity. Volunteering with COC Nederland, alongside support from queer, disabled, and feminist networks, reminded me that collective care and shared strategy can sustain storytelling even in difficult conditions.

4. One lesson I'm carrying into 2026

Sustainability is not a luxury but a justice issue. In 2026, I want to align narrative work with structures that honor both impact and livelihood, while preserving the joy and honesty that make the work meaningful.



Entry 2: Doris, Executive Director; Raise Your Voices

1. 2025 in One Word

Resilience.

2. A challenge I navigated this year in my narrative work

One major challenge was sustaining authentic, community-centered narratives in a context of shrinking civic space, misinformation, and increasing pushback against SRHR, gender justice, and human rights work. At times, dominant counter-narratives were louder, better funded, and more digitally amplified, making it difficult for grassroots voices.

3. How did you overcome it?

I strengthened my work through intentional opposition monitoring and leaned heavily collective power and strategy. By tracking hostile narratives, messengers, and framing tactics, I was able to anticipate pushback and refine messages proactively. Movement partners, feminist and civic networks, and peer narrative workers provided shared analysis, rapid feedback, solidarity, provided spaces for strategy, reflection, and mutual care.

Capacity-building spaces on narrative framing, digital security, and counter-messaging were critical, as was deep community trust built through consistent listening and accountability were key resources, reminding me that lived experience remains the most credible narrative tool.

4. One lesson I'm carrying into 2026

Narrative change is not about speed or virality, it is about consistency, care, and resilience. I am carrying forward the lesson that stories rooted in community truth, told collectively and sustained over time, have the power to outlast backlash and slowly reshape public consciousness.



Entry 3: Maureen – Press Officer, Kenya Comms Hub

1. 2025 in One Word

Adaptability.

2. What challenge did you overcome this year?

Many mainstream media outlets in Kenya are owned by politically affiliated groups or businesses with vested interests. This sometimes limits editorial independence and makes certain narratives difficult to promote if they conflict with owners' interests.

3. How did you overcome it?

I focused on building alternative channels, collaborating with independent journalists, and reaching out to writers and hosts directly. Networks of like-minded narrative workers from across the world (GFNE Network) were key to navigating challenges.

4. One lesson I'm carrying into 2026

In 2026, I'm carrying forward the lesson that collaboration and adaptability are essential to get the word out there.



Entry 4: Adenike Hamilton – Filmmaker, 3rd Culture Kid Productions Hub

1. 2025 in One Word

Reclamation.

2. What challenge did you overcome this year?

In 2025, my biggest challenge was navigating the tension between urgency and care in my narrative work. I was working across multiple communities and projects where stories carried deep trauma, around migration, environmental loss, and livelihoods while also facing pressure to produce quickly for screenings, funders, and public audiences. At times, the pace of production risked flattening complexity or exhausting both me and the communities whose stories I was helping to steward.

3. How did you overcome it?

I overcame this challenge by slowing down intentionally and re-centering accountability. I leaned into long-standing relationships with community leaders, filmmakers, and organizers in Sierra Leone who reminded me that trust is a narrative infrastructure, not a soft add-on.

Peer storytellers and mentors within African and diasporic creative networks helped me sense-check my choices, asking not just “Is this compelling?” but “Who does this serve, and who gets to live with it afterward?”

I also began designing my work with clearer boundaries: building more time for community feedback, honoring rest as part of the creative process, and saying no to opportunities that compromised the integrity of the story. These shifts allowed the work to be both more ethical and more powerful.

4. Lesson for 2026

The lesson I’m carrying into 2026 is that narrative power is sustained, not extracted. Stories don’t need to be rushed to be relevant; they need to be rooted to be transformative.



Entry 5: Tendaishe
Changamire – Project
Manager, ONG RAES

1. 2025 in One Word

Rollercoaster.

2. What challenge did you overcome this year?

Our biggest challenge was having to deal with anti-rights opposition in Zimbabwe. We are not fully past the crisis, but we are currently working to help local partners develop the expertise to respond to anti-rights actors using narrative work. This is the first time reproductive health rights advocates in Zimbabwe have really interacted with the ugly side of the global opposition against sexual and reproductive health rights. Many of our partner organisations are scared and worried – choosing to be silent, rather than reclaiming the narrative space.

3. How did you overcome it?

To overcome this challenge, we are currently tapping into the expertise of our colleagues in Kenya who have been at the forefront of challenging the global anti-rights coalition.

4. Lesson for 2026

2025 taught me that it's all about setting the record straight and owning the narrative. It reaffirmed the importance of telling stories that matter because those of us who support rights are the majority. The other side is just louder.



Entry 6: Ndinda Kioko - Writer and Journalist

1. 2025 in One Word

Life-changing.

2. What challenge did you overcome this year?

2025 tested my faith in the power of story. The world has felt increasingly overwhelmed by crisis and many of the systems that sustain narrative work especially in our part of the world have been shutting down. Moving from one project to the next often required holding onto the belief that this work still is needed and will survive, even when the conditions around it suggest otherwise.

3. How did you overcome it?

Cultivating hope and paying attention to the work these stories are doing, what they are making possible. Staying clear-eyed about how difficult this moment we are living in is and facing my work anyway.

My community of friends and creative collaborators who throughout the year have thought with me and challenged me and helped imagine new possibilities and worlds. And music. And my two cats.

4. Lessons for 2026

I can do meaningful work with the resources I already have, which are more abundant than I sometimes notice. In 2026 I want to build a narrative practice that recognizes and works with that abundance.



Entry 7: Onward Chironda –
Founder, My Age Zimbabwe

1. 2025 in One Word

Resilience.

2. What challenge did you overcome this year?

Funding cuts due to the shifts in the US government's policies were especially challenging for me as a leader of an organization. Navigating these changes required strategic adjustments and innovative thinking to sustain our initiatives and support our community effectively.

3. How did you overcome it?

My Age has been working with young people in their diversities to co-create spaces to foster open and honest conversations, allowing youth to share their thoughts, challenges, and aspirations without fear of judgment. For many, these safe spaces provide a sanctuary where they can express themselves freely, fostering empowerment and resilience.

4. Lessons for 2026

Maintaining safe spaces for adolescents and young people is essential for their health, rights and wellbeing. In a world where young voices are often marginalized, establishing and nurturing these youth-led safe spaces is vital. By doing so, we not only support individual knowledge but also foster a sense of ownership to the spaces, enabling the next generation of leaders to thrive, regardless of financial constraints. To create and sustain safe spaces without significant resources, organizations can utilize local volunteers, community engagement, and partnerships with schools and local groups. Leveraging technology, such as social media and online platforms, allows us to maintain connections and promote dialogue among young people.



Entry 8: Ayodeji Rotinwa Editor, openDemocracy

1. 2025 in One Word

Resistance.

2. A challenge I navigated this year in my narrative work

Waves of authoritarianism and anti-queerness have come and seem here to stay in a context where funding has dried up.

3. How did you overcome it?

Keeping the work going! I am thinking of "radical" queer aid collectives across East Africa like the Trans and Queer Fund or UmaUma both from Kenya who break from the current model of seeking "donor funding" from benevolent philanthropists of the global North and looking within to provide for queer communities based on the principle of collective liberation, care, and even justice. Even as funding has dried up everywhere - and even before, they kept doing this work. The more privileged in their communities can offer some of what they have to those who have less.

It taps into the spirit of the words of poet, Gwendolyn Brooks, who says, "We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond." We really are. Anti-queerness will come, and stay and hopefully eventually go. But it is queer people taking care of one other like this that endures.

4. Lessons for 2026

Sharing queer stories is in and of itself an act of resistance in a global context where the idea that queer people should be on fringe margins, banished from collective society, grows apace. Movements who have already done the hard, capital intensive work of tracking attacks, monitoring rolling back of rights, intervening with crucial health services for queer people; should also know that storytelling about queer ordinariness, queer joy, queer existence (without fanfare) is just as important. Queer people do and should not constantly exist in opposition to people and ideas that seek to harm them. They also raise children, pursue comedy, debate philosophy, and fall in love. Even with limited resources, we can go back to basics of continuing to share those stories amongst ourselves, on our platforms: in newsletters, Whatsapp posts, serializing them, reposting, retweeting, posting, recording. They need not be grand. They need not be a campaign.



Entry 9: Aaron
Ainomugisha – Journalist &
Team Leader, Rise News
Uganda Network

1. 2025 in One Word

Challenging.

2. What challenge did you overcome? this year?

2025 came with several lessons and challenges as we coped with the threats posed by escalating state and non-state perpetrators targeting critical media in Uganda and Africa. On the other hand, AI also posed sizeable challenges, becoming one of the key drivers of fake news, disinformation and misinformation.

3. How did you overcome it?

We are endeavoring to address these challenges through more innovative and creative storytelling, global networking and collaborations. We are venturing further into collaborative, in-depth and people-centred journalism to ensure bigger impact and sustainability.

4. What lesson are you carrying into 2026?

As Rise News Uganda Network, we have realized that we are not only competing with fellow mainstream media outlets, but we are also facing competition from mushrooming unprofessional citizen journalists and other agents of fake news, disinformation and misinformation. The lesson moving forward is to strengthen collaborative, in-depth, people-centred journalism to ensure impact, credibility and sustainability.

SECTION 4: WHAT WE HEARD

What These Stories Tell Us

Across all nine reflections, certain themes rise clearly and consistently:

1 Survival was collective, not individual. Every communicator survived this year by leaning on people, not just practices, networks of peers, comrades, trusted editors, fellow movement builders, and community spaces that offered affirmation, feedback, strategy, and emotional anchoring. This was about who held you when the work became heavy: the WhatsApp group that helped you sense-check a message, the colleague who shared a resource, the mentor who reminded you why the work matters.

Collective survival was relational, a web of humans keeping each other grounded, encouraged, and capable of continuing.

2 Care was not optional, it was infrastructure.

From slowing down to creating safe spaces to protecting dignity, care shaped the possibility of continuing to build progressive narratives amid several crises.

3 Scarcity shaped the year, but so did ingenuity.

People adapted, refused to disappear, and found new ways to keep their communities' stories alive.

4 Narrative work remained deeply political.

Whether confronting anti-rights actors, resisting erasure, or holding complexity, everyone affirmed that storytelling is movement-building.

5 Hope was a practice, not a feeling.

Many carried hope deliberately, even when the world made it difficult.

These reflections affirm a simple truth:

African communicators did not just survive 2025, they carried movements through it.

SECTION 5: LOOKING AHEAD

What We're Carrying Into
2026

As Kenya Comms Hub, we step into 2026 holding the lessons shared by our community:

1. We are centering sustainability — for the narrative work and the narrative worker
2. We are investing in community as narrative infrastructure.
3. We are telling truer, braver stories — stories rooted in care, clarity, and collective power.
4. We are choosing depth over speed, intention over urgency.
5. We are protecting the people who protect the narrative.

2026 will require courage.

But it will also require companionship, and we are committed to both.

SECTION 6: CLOSING NOTE

Thank You for Staying

To every communicator, journalist, storyteller, designer, strategist, movement builder, and comrade who held narrative work in 2025:

Thank you.

Thank you for the labour, the love, the thoughtfulness, the strategy, and the commitment.

Thank you for telling stories that needed to be told.

Thank you for surviving a year that demanded too much.

You are not alone.

And if you survived 2025, you belong here.

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