

Zuhura Muro: Grace, grit, making legacy

By WOMAN Reporter

OME leaders command attention by sheer volume. Others quietly shift the ground beneath your feet, leaving you standing on firmer foundations than before.

Zuhura Sinare Muro belongs firmly in the latter camp — Com

both when the moment demands.

Founder and Managing Partner of the Impact Leadership Academy (ILA), she has spent the better part of two decades shaping organisations through strategic human resources advice, talent development

though, truth be told, she can do

and management consultancy.

For her, inspiring impactful leadership means supporting organisations to be more effective in increasing shareholders' value and meeting stakeholders' expectations while achieving sustainable, so-

cially responsible growth.

Before setting up her own firm in 2007, Zuhura honed her craft through senior roles at Celtel Tanzania (now Airtel), FAIDA Business Development Centre under the Netherlands Development Organisation and the Arusha Technical College.

Those early years taught her not only the mechanics of organisational growth, but also the deeper lesson that institutions are ultimately people. Nurture them and they flourish; ignore them and the rot sets in.

Her corporate record reads like a catalogue of Tanzanian industry. She has chaired the boards of TTCL and Resolution Insurance, served as director at the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation and left her fingerprints on KCB Bank Tanzania and Mwananchi Communications.

She has served on the Tanzania National Business Council, the NSSF Board and as Vice-Chair of the Association of Tanzania Employers. Beyond national borders, her work with the Africa Leadership Initiative East Africa Foundation and the Aspen Global Leadership Network has plugged Tanzania into global conversations about leadership and ethics.

And yet here lies the paradox. Zuhura is strikingly elegant, fair-complexioned and often self-effacing, with an almost shy demeanour. But beneath that gentleness lies steel — an iron lady with nerves to match, an unflinching eye for detail and a restless vision of a better Tanzania in every sphere.

Her story begins, as many enduring ones do, with education. At the University of Dar es Salaam, she read Social Sciences with a focus on Applied Linguistics, a deceptively modest choice that proved prophetic. Language its nuances and its ability to build bridges or walls has shaped her

approach to leadership. Along the way she earned professional certifications in management and executive assistance, sharpening the administrative edge that would serve her so well later.

Those years not only shaped her intellect but also grounded her in the values that would define her leadership. Marriage to businessman Walter P. P. Muro and the raising of two sons anchored her family life, but the domestic sphere never quite contained her.

There was always something more, another institution to strengthen, another young professional to mentor, another stubborn system to gently but firmly reform.

By the mid-1990s she was Director of Business Development Services at FAIDA, mastering the consultancy toolkit. The early 2000s brought her to Celtel Tanzania, where for six years she presided over human resources, carving out a reputation as someone who could balance the bottom line with the human heart.

It was here that she began to be noticed as not just a capable manager but a leader in her own right, trusted and given opportunities to work in other markets to strengthen people strategy and deliver shareholder value.

The real shift came in 2004 when she joined the Aspen Global Leadership Network as part of the inaugural Africa Leadership Initiative cohort in East Africa. There she rubbed shoulders with reformers, thinkers and executives who convinced her that leadership was about values as much as profits.

Two years later she sat with her mentor, the late Ali Mufuruki, to found the ALI East Africa Foundation. She served as its first Executive Secretary, grounding big ideas in everyday action.

Mufuruki later encouraged her to take one of her most high-profile roles Chairperson of Mwananchi Communications Ltd. In 2008 she became one of the very few women at the time to helm a major media board, proving that competence and courage could rewrite the narrative of who gets to lead.

Her career spans virtually every corner of the Tanzanian economy: banking, insurance, media, energy, manufacturing, real estate, telecommunications, academia and the non-profit world.

When she joined the board of KCB Bank Tanzania in 2011, she hesitated, banking was not her field and she did not yet speak its dialect. But with characteristic grit she learnt fast, soon chairing the Human Resources Board Committee and rewriting policies to ensure equal opportunity. By 2015 she was chair of the entire board, presiding over a remarkable return to profitability.

Perhaps the most symbolic moment came in 2019 when three

women board members, including Muro herself, signed off the bank's financial statements. A photograph of that moment told its own story proof that the slow grind of policy, persistence and persuasion can change who sits at the table.

She went on to launch her own consultancy, Kazi Services Limited, later rebranded as Lindam Group and now thriving as the Impact Leadership Academy.

Driven by her passion for greater economic integration, she co-founded Legacy Capital Partners with trusted associates.

In 2022 she added another feather to her cap as Chairperson of TTCL, stewarding one of the nation's most strategically important parastatals until a reshuffle in 2024. For her, titles come and go; the work building institutions, mentoring people and setting standards remains constant.

Stamina and style are what truly define her. At sixty-five, Zuhura is perfectly at ease being called by her first name even by grand-children who might otherwise be scolded for such informality.

While many of her contemporaries perfect the art of retirement, she has instead sharpened her pencils, re-inked her diary and added extra pages for good measure.

Friends tease that she actually enjoys marathon board meetings and the kind of reports that send others straight to sleep. She just laughs and shrugs, insisting it is simply the work that must be done.

For her, slowing down would not only be unthinkable but also a betrayal of every opportunity she has been given. Retirement may be a finish line for some, but for Zuhura it looks suspiciously like the starting gun.

Ask her what drives her and she will point to the younger generation. Mentorship, she insists, is not a hobby but a duty. At the Impact Leadership Academy she pours her energy into equipping young professionals especially women with the skills and confidence to claim leadership.

Her philosophy is simple: gender equity is not charity but common sense. A workplace with balanced voices makes better decisions; a boardroom with women is more attuned to reality.

Through her policies, appointments and gentle but firm nudges, she has spent decades dismantling the excuses that once kept women on the sidelines.

Recognition has followed her like a shadow: named among Africa's Fifty Most Influential Women in Management by WIMA in 2022, profiled in IFC's 2021 report on women in financial services and applauded in countless boardrooms. Yet she wears accolades lightly, preferring to talk about important to the state of the services and applause the services and applause the services are services.

pact rather than applause. Her career is firmly anchored in developing talent and enhancing leadership capabilities. She serves as a Senior Associate of Uongozi Institute, where her classes on 'Personal Leadership' and 'Leading with Emotional Intelligence' are spoken of in reverent tones by participants.

She is a faculty member of Uongozi Institute and Aalto Business School's Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership, teaching Strategic HRM for senior executives and Emotional Intelligence. Within the CEO Roundtable of Tanzania, she continues to serve as Honorary Advisor for the CEOrt Apprenticeship Programme after pioneering its design in 2018.

Colleagues describe her as warm, quick to laugh and generous with advice yet demanding of excellence. She believes in the dignity of work real work, not padded titles and empty speeches.

She believes work-life balance is achieved through serving with passion. Sometimes this is seen as being a workaholic, but to her it is giving back to life the divine gift of life which can only be repaid through service.

In Tanzania, retirement often signals a fade into quiet anonymity. Zuhura Sinare Muro offers a different script. She demonstrates that sixty-five can be a season of acceleration rather than retreat, of fresh commitments rather than farewells.