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The Contribution of Women in Leadership in Tanzania

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● ● UONGOZI
● Institute

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About UONGOZI Institute

The Institute of African Leadership for Sustainable Development, commonly known as UONGOZI Institute, is a regional leadership development hub operating under the Office of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. The Institute was established in 2010 by the governments of Tanzania and Finland to strengthen the capacity of African leaders to deliver inclusive and sustainable solutions for their nations. To achieve its mission, the Institute delivers executive education programmes, facilitates policy dialogues, provides advisory services and technical support to public and private institutions, and conducts action-oriented research to support evidence-based policies and decisions.

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List of abbreviations

ACHPR	-	African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
CEDAW	-	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	-	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	-	Civil society organizations
FAWE	-	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
IDM	-	Institute of Development and Management
ILO	-	International Labour Organization
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
MCDGC	-	Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children
MIYCS	-	Ministry of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports
MSWGEC	-	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, Elderly and Children
MW	-	Ministry of Water
NGOs	-	Non-governmental organizations
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCCB	-	Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau
RGoZ	-	Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
TACAIDS	-	Tanzania Commission for AIDS
TAMWA	-	Tanzania Women Media Association
TAYOA	-	Tanzania Youth Alliance
TTCL	-	Tanzania Telecommunication Corporation Limited
UDHR	-	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
URT	-	United Republic of Tanzania
WB	-	World Bank
WFT	-	Women Fund Tanzania
WHO	-	World Health Organization

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The inputs of the aforementioned notwithstanding, the team is responsible for the final output, and nobody mentioned should be held accountable for the misinterpretation of any information in this report.

Abstract

This research report, commissioned by the UONGOZI Institute, explores the transformative contributions, challenges and lived experiences of women leaders across Tanzania’s public, private and civil society sectors. Through interviews with 55 women leaders, the study provides compelling evidence for increased female representation in decision-making spaces to address the persistent gender gap and advance recognition of their qualitative attributes in promoting holistic gender justice in leadership spaces. The findings aim to contribute to UONGOZI’s resource base for its Executive Education Programmes and inform the development of gender-sensitive strategies that promote equitable leadership models. The study highlights a range of distinctive attributes that women bring to leadership, enhancing effectiveness and driving systemic change. These include:

- **Hard work**, which enables women leaders to deliver exceptional results despite pervasive societal prejudices
- **Empathy**, fostering collaboration, trust and inclusive environments
- **Resilience**, equipping them to navigate systemic barriers and persist in their roles
- **Transformative thinking**, facilitating innovative problem-solving and institutional reform
- **Inspirational leadership**, motivating teams and communities to realize their potential.

Other notable qualities include integrity, humility and commitment to mentorship and team building, which foster shared ownership of organizational goals. Additionally, women leaders demonstrate exceptional capabilities in crisis management, time management and multitasking, skilfully balancing professional responsibilities with disproportionate domestic and caregiving demands.

Despite their contributions, women leaders continue to face significant structural and cultural challenges, including ingrained gender biases, unequal domestic responsibilities and restricted access to opportunities. To counter these barriers, they employ strategies such as mentorship, advocacy and participatory decision-making to reform institutions, influence policy and champion social justice.

By focusing on women’s lived experiences and leadership contributions, this research calls for a paradigm shift on how leadership for women is understood and practiced in Tanzania. Grounded in a feminist conceptual framework, the study underscores the urgent need for transformative action to dismantle structural inequalities and create enabling environments for women in leadership. It advocates for gender-sensitive policies, inclusive leadership training and institutional reforms to amplify women’s impact and ensure the country’s inclusive, sustainable and equitable development. To unlock the transformative potential of inclusive leadership, women must not only be represented in leadership spaces but also empowered to lead systemic change.



1 | Introduction and background to the study

1.1 Background to the problem

This research has been commissioned by the UONGOZI Institute Tanzania whose mission and mandate are to inspire and equip African leaders to deliver inclusive and sustainable development for their nations and the wider continent with the vision to achieve a prosperous, equitable and sustainable Africa. The Institute recognizes the important role that leadership plays in achieving sustainable development and further acknowledges that its mandate cannot be realized without the creation of an environment through which women and men participate equally in decision-making spaces through designing and implementing gender-responsive plans, policies and programs. To address the gender gap in leadership spaces in Africa and its negative impact on realizing sustainable development, the Institute purposefully started a dedicated leadership programme for women.

Subsequently, through knowledge gained through the program's interactive processes, the Institute realized the paucity of information available on the unique contributions that women bring to leadership and the hidden costs of the gender gap to individual countries and the continent. In the light of this knowledge gap, the Institute commissioned the current study for the purposes of contributing to the discourse on economic rights and justice as well as strengthening the Institute's executive education programme, generally, and its women's leadership programme, specifically. This study forms part of the Institute's research programme on leadership. Since its inception, the Institute has conducted research, interviewed leaders and published memoirs of former presidents to preserve information and provide present and future generations with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the history, lessons and experiences of leadership in Tanzania and Africa. The study builds on the 2017 research, Women and Political Leadership: Facilitating Factors in Tanzania, which explored the factors that facilitate women leaders to access and influence the political process at different levels in Tanzania.

Additionally, it provided empirical evidence on how and why some women were able to break through the multitude of barriers to engage in leadership spaces in Tanzania.

Following up on that research, the current study focuses on the impact women bring to leadership spaces. It seeks to facilitate a deeper understanding of women's distinctive leadership attributes and provide further evidence on the necessity of having more women in leadership roles in Tanzania. Crucially, the study aims to contribute to unlocking the full breadth of leadership talents, ideas, skills and diverse experiences and attitudes to drive the country's inclusive and sustainable development.

The Institute is also aware that the persistent gender gap in public and private leadership spaces in Tanzania contradicts the principles enshrined in various international, regional, sub-regional and national instruments and standards for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment that the country is party to, as well as provisions for non-discrimination within these instruments and the national constitutions of many African states, including Tanzania. For example:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948), which provides the foundation for the equality of all persons by affirming the principle of "inadmissibility of discrimination."
- The Convention on Political Rights of Women (1952), which specifically focuses on women's political rights.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981) (CEDAW), which provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990), which focuses on children's rights but, nonetheless, sets forth a

foundational principle of nondiscrimination that is vital throughout the life cycle of women.

Additionally, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment are key to realizing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Target 5.5 which specifically focuses upon women's participation in public, economic and economic life. See Annex 1 of this report for further details.

In addition, various regional instruments translate international instruments into commitments for promoting women in leadership spaces on equal footing with men in the context of African states (see Annex 2). These include:

- The Constitutive Act of the African Union (2002), which affirms the "promotion of gender equality" as one of the founding principles of the AU under Article 4.
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights' (ACHPR) and the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa, popularly referred to as the Maputo Protocol (2003), which calls upon all state parties to take measures to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures.

These commitments notwithstanding, gender gaps continue to persist in leadership spaces in Tanzania and in the majority of African countries, despite the significant impact of the women who have occupied high-level leadership roles on the continent and internationally. For example:

- Hon. Ambassador Gertrude Mongella, whose political career and commitment to women's empowerment led to her serving as the Secretary-General of the historic Fourth World

Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, which brought together 15,000 women and men from 185 countries to deliberate on the key issues that hindered women from attaining full equality.¹ In her own words, Hon. Gertrude admitted, *"We have an unfinished agenda. We must develop strategies to address the remaining work—empowering women to participate in decision-making and all areas of society, while ensuring investments directly support women."* She added, *"It is not enough just to open the door to the rooms of power. We have to get inside and rearrange the furniture!"*

- Prof. Wangari Maathari, the icon of environmental protection, democracy and human rights, who founded the grassroots Green Belt Movement to empower women. This movement began with the symbolic gesture of tree planting in Kenya in the mid-1970s. She passionately believed that addressing environmental degradation was an entry point to empower women to overcome poverty and build democracy.
- H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was the first elected female head of state in Africa. Elected President of Liberia in 2006 after a prolonged civil war that had left the economy in shambles and crippled democratic principles, she was an icon of peace building, national reconstruction and women's empowerment, and advocate for democratic governance.

These are only a few of the women who have made a significant impact in leadership spaces globally, regionally and at country level. The central question remains: Why does the gap in representation persist? Beyond the narrative of barriers which women encounter, what are the costs of this gap? This research documents the direct testimonies of women in leadership spaces, sharing their perceptions of their personal attributes, challenges and contributions to leadership in Tanzania.

¹See also United Nations Africa Renewal, "Gertrude Mongella, 80, Reflects on the Landmark Beijing Conference and Lessons for the Future."

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The main objective of this research is to provide country-level evidence of the potential for women's leadership to have a transformative impact on inclusive, sustainable development in Tanzania. Specifically, the study was conducted to:

- Identify the leadership attributes that women bring to leadership roles and positions.
- Showcase the notable achievements of women leaders within their organizations.
- Analyze the key strategies utilized by women leaders to overcome the leadership challenges they face.
- Draw lessons to inform the Institute's leadership programmes, with a particular focus on the women's leadership programme.
- Use the research findings to support and enhance the Institute's women and leadership programme.

The recommendations drawn from the testimonies are expected to inform future areas of research as well as policy recommendations to promote more women in leadership positions in Tanzania.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study is both timely and relevant, coming at a time of increased global awareness that unlocking women's leadership potential is essential to realize sustainable and equitable growth. For example, in his Statement to the United Nations General Assembly commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference, Jinping (2020), President of the People's Republic of China remarked:

“Women are creators of human civilization and drivers of social progress, and they have made extraordinary achievements across all fields of endeavor. In the ongoing fight against COVID-19, female medical and epidemic control workers, researchers, community workers and volunteers over the world, braving danger and working around the clock, have fought at the front line of the battle. With their dedication and ingenuity, they have written heroic epics of saving people and protecting lives. Let gender equality be implemented, and women will be at the forefront of the times.”

The study is equally relevant for the UONGOZI Institute

during this time as it approaches the end of its current strategic plan (2021-2026). One of the key objectives of the plan is the promotion of gender equality across all of the Institute's operations. Therefore, this research directly contributes to the implementation of the plan. Additionally, this study will inform efforts to improve the executive education programmes of the Institute.

1.3 Research methodology and techniques

1.3.1 Conceptual Framework

This research is a qualitative study of women's leadership using a feminist theoretical conceptual framework. Many social scientists acknowledge that there is no single definition of feminist research but agree on certain principles which unite feminist researchers. Brayton et al. (n.d.), consider that feminist research has the dual purpose of constructing new knowledge and producing social change, and it is characterized by three defining principles. First, it is informed by the struggles of women against their multiple forms of oppression. Second, it is grounded in feminist values and beliefs. Third, it is characterized by its diversity.

Similarly, Davis and Hattery (2018, p. 51) argue that feminist research is *“any research that has as its goal increasing our empirical understanding of the processes through which inequality (to include gender inequality but also other forms of categorical oppression) are reproduced with an eye toward eradication of that inequality.”* The authors further maintain that feminist theory of knowledge (epistemology) is grounded in interrogating the exclusion of women's experiences in production and use of knowledge, by questioning: who can create and produce knowledge under what circumstances? *“Feminist scholars have highlighted the fact that throughout history, in the vast majority of disciplines, the privilege of “knowing,” of having access to information, was relegated to white, European and North American, men with high levels of education... [that has] produced a narrow range of knowledge based on very limited experiences and perspectives (ibid.)”* In contrast, feminist epistemology advocates for an inclusive approach, which encourages the production of knowledge by researchers and participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including women.

Kaur and Nagaich (2019) posit that feminist research is guided by pedagogical principles which challenges the power relationship between researchers and researched, by considering that research process entails reciprocated knowledge sharing. This is eloquently interrogated by Thien and Gilliam (2020) who argued that feminist researchers have been struggling between the desire to validate knowledge of research and to politicize that knowledge in political or academic domains.

In line with feminist theory, the approach in this study is guided by a desire to validate the knowledge of the women leaders interviewed and use that knowledge to inform and enrich advocacy efforts to increase the number of women in leadership positions.

Wilson (2023, p. 87) argues that *“feminist research is grounded in a commitment to equality and social justice and is cognizant of the gendered, historical and political processes involved in the production of knowledge.” Furthermore, the author argues that feminist research “strives to explore and illuminate the diversity of the experiences of women and other marginalized groups, thereby creating opportunities that increase awareness of how social hierarchies impact on and influence oppression. ...What makes the research feminist is the way that feminist principles are integrated throughout the entire process—from development of the question, the data collection and analysis, the writing up and the dissemination. The approaches in feminist research that unify feminist perspectives are an insistence of approaches that are collaborative, non-hierarchical and reflexive.” (ibid.)*

Rajan and Kalbhor (2018), on the other hand, argue that feminist research is action and change oriented which addresses diverse and intersectionality issues, including race, religion, and political ideological process. They argue that, in feminist research, meaning comes from the experiences of women, their perception of experiences and life stories.

Both of these sources informed the qualitative methodology applied in this study to capture the perceptions of prominent women leaders in Tanzania on their life stories and leadership journeys.

1.3.2 Study methodology

This study documented the lived experiences of selected women leaders in Tanzania who have made a significant impact by using their skills to challenge and transform the status quo from their respective positions. In total, 55 women leaders from the public, private and civil society sectors were engaged by the study. Participants were purposefully selected. For the public sector, UONGOZI Institute provided a list of women who had participated in their executive education programmes, either as trainees, resource persons or board members. Women from the private sector and civil society were purposefully selected based on their strategic leadership roles, both past and present. To begin with, general background information was gathered from participants, followed by in-depth one-on-one interviews conducted by the research team using a semi-structured interview guide. Data collection took place during May and June 2024. The interviews focused on respondents' perceptions with respect to the following key areas:

- Women's participation in leadership spaces;
- Specific attributes the leaders brought to decision-making processes, as well as their unique contributions to leadership spaces;
- Sources of inspiration and motivation throughout their leadership journey; and
- Challenges encountered and how those obstacles were successfully navigated.

Finally, the respondents were asked to share lessons from their lived experiences, particularly for the next generation of young women aspiring to leadership roles.

Interviews were conducted in Swahili. For ethical purposes, the respondents were briefed on the research objectives prior to data collection and provided their consent for the interviews to be audio taped and their views to be included in the report. The recordings were transcribed by experienced transcribers under the research team's guidance and translated into English by the researchers for data analysis. Data was then organised into themes and systematically analysed to identify key issues and interpret meanings within the themes. Relevant stories and quotes from respondents were extracted as evidence to fulfil the study objectives. A preliminary exercise was also carried out to explore existing research in this field. Both primary and secondary data were consulted as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

2 | Literature Review

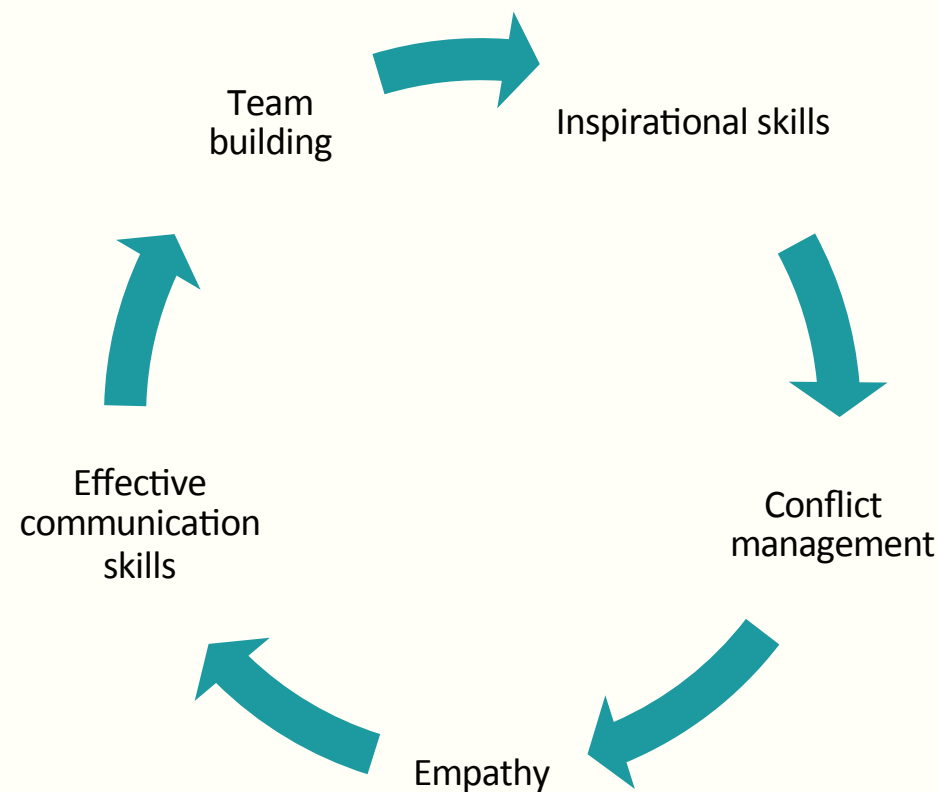
2.1 The attributes of women leaders

A growing body of literature and research highlights the unique contributions women bring to leadership spaces, hence, underscores the need for advocating for increased female representation in senior executive roles.

Research studies have identified six interrelated attributes which women bring to leadership spaces.

These include empathy and high emotional intelligence, effective communication skills, team work and transformational leadership, conflict management skills, inspirational skills and mentorship. Empathy is central to these attributes as it connects to and supports effective communication, team building, conflict management and mentoring (Sharif 2019; Kulkarni & Mishra 2022; Diaz 2024). Figure 1 depicts the interrelationships of these key attributes of women leaders.

FIGURE 1: THE KEY ATTRIBUTES OF WOMEN LEADERS



Empathy is a major area of focus in literature on women's leadership. Research evidence indicates that women are more inclined to be empathetic than men, and that this quality has a great influence on their leadership style and effectiveness. For example, a recent study by the University of Cambridge involving over 300,000 people across 57 countries indicates that women are, on average, more empathetic than men. Using the "Reading the Mind in the Eye's Test", a widely used test to assess cognitive empathy, it found that females are consistently better than males at putting themselves in others' shoes and imagining what the other person is thinking or feeling (Greenberg et al. 2022). Another study which examined reactive and creative competencies and their association with leadership effectiveness found that the typical female leader has, among other advantages, more developed skills in relating to others that bring out the best in people, groups and organizations, as well as greater self-awareness, authenticity and focus on whole-system improvement and community welfare (Adams & Van Busen 2022).

Kashyap (2022) views empathy as women's "greatest superpower," enabling female leaders to relate and openly communicate with their team, appreciate the strengths and understand the difficulties of individual staff, and listen rather than bark orders during meetings to discuss actions to solve problems. Empathy assists them in managing relationships, instilling trust and boosting employees' commitment and morale which, in turn, helps to create an environment of success and harmony in the workplace. Empathy also requires "being open-minded and understanding diverse points of view...[which] facilitates the exchange of ideas." Similarly, Barden (2023) suggests that women excel in leadership roles due to their ability to be sympathetic to the problem while empathetic to the people involved, an approach which "prioritizes problem-solving and is less focused on individual emotions." He considers that:

"Female leaders exemplify the strength of combining empathy with a commitment to finding lasting solutions for the benefit of organizations, communities, and society."

Empathy is connected to effective communication. Kashyap (2022) argues that women's role as nurturing and bonding providers, whether biologically or socially constructed, predisposes them to communicate with intimacy and connection and to value open communication in the workplace, in contrast to more authoritarian communication styles which are common among male leaders. These characteristics enable women leaders to better relate with their teams, resolve conflicts and manage crises. Women are also considered better at multi-tasking. Women manage to navigate through the multiple roles and tasks as they balance traditional caring roles and workforce responsibilities. According to research by Eagly and Johnson (1990) and a follow-up study by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), women leaders were generally found to be more participative and democratic compared to the more directive and autocratic, top-down style often used by men. By engaging with others, encouraging participation and using collaborative approaches, women tend to foster positive team relationships. They were also slightly more likely to exhibit transformational

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leadership behaviours, such as epitomizing the mission of an organization and inspiring others to follow their example. In addition, transformational leaders more often employ positive rewards and reinforcement rather than the punishments or negative incentives that are more typical of a transactional or coercive style of leadership. The studies observed significant overlap between the leadership styles of men and women, but women more often demonstrated effective leadership behaviours and these small positive differences have a profound influence on building relationships and improving performance over time.

Empathy is also related to selflessness. Women are more inclined to share knowledge, mentor others, particularly young women, and emphasise collective ownership of success alongside individual accountability. According to Kelly (2022), studies of Fortune 500 and FTSE 100 companies have variously found that those companies with female CEOs are more likely to appoint women to top management positions, more likely to have board diversity policies in place and a higher percentage of women on their boards, more likely to support the career advancement of female employees, and more likely to have flexible working arrangements, which are particularly important for women who shoulder the majority of domestic responsibilities.

The desire to mentor younger generations is a vital leadership attribute for unlocking the full potential of both women and men as they advance in their leadership journeys. Kashyap (2022) argues that “women make amazing mentors.”

“Women are more understanding, strong-willed, tactical, and cognizant in comparison to men and this is precisely what makes them terrific mentors. We need more and more women in mentorship

programs, and we must also focus on women mentoring women for a bright future.”

Perhaps most importantly, increasing diversity in leadership brings new perspectives into leadership spaces. Women bring unique skills, different perspectives and innovative ideas to workplaces, thereby improving decision-making processes. In short, based on the attributes that women bring to the workplace and the benefits they bring to institutions, a compelling case exists to substantially increase the number of women in leadership.

2.2 The contributions of women leaders

In addition to the research on the attributes of women leaders, studies have highlighted the significant economic, social and political contributions by women. For example, research by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) has consistently found that increasing gender parity has the potential to dramatically boost regional and global economic growth. Using a realistic “best-in-region” scenario, i.e., if each country improves women’s equality to match the country in their region that has achieved the most progress towards parity, African economies could add \$316 billion or 10 percent to their collective GDP by 2025 and the global economy could expand by \$12 trillion or 11 percent by the same year (MGI 2015, 2019). Applying a “full-potential” scenario in which women play an identical role to men in labour markets, Africa could increase its collective GDP by \$1 trillion or 34 percent by 2025 and the global economy could grow by up to \$28 trillion or 26 percent by 2025 compared with a business-as-usual scenario.

At the company level, McKinsey’s 2016 Women Matter Africa report revealed that African companies with greater gender diversity on their boards of directors and executives tended to be more profitable. That study found that companies with at least 25 percent female representation at board level reported earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) margin that were 20 percent higher than the industry average (McKinsey & Company 2016).

Another study from Europe showed a significant positive correlation between gender diversity in senior positions and firm performance in Europe. Based on a sample of over 2 million companies across 34 European countries, the research found that substituting one male for one female person in senior management or on the corporate board was associated with between 8 and 13 basis points higher return on assets (Christiansen et al. 2016). And recent research by Bloomberg Intelligence found that companies with more women on boards in the US, Europe and Asia-Pacific (excluding Japan) had between 2 and 5 percent higher annual returns than peer companies with less gender diverse boardrooms (Bloomberg 2024).

Other studies have similarly established correlation between gender diversity in the senior leadership of an organization and stronger financial performance (Agyemang-Mintah & Schadewitz 2019; Dwaikat et al 2021). The Credit Suisse Gender 3000 dataset, which covers 3,000 global companies in OECD countries, found that more diverse management teams translate into long-term value creation. Relative to companies with female representation of less than 15 percent in management, the share price of companies with 20 percent or more female representation outperformed by 3.6 percent (Credit Suisse Research Institute 2019).

Beyond financial performance, gender diversity in leadership is also positively correlated with better corporate governance. Di Miceli and Donaggio (2018) found that firm performance across environmental, social and governance (ESG) dimensions is positively connected to gender-diverse leadership, and, in turn, improved ESG outcomes are associated with better company performance, including firm value. The authors concluded that women in leadership are:

“more likely to care about the broader implications of company decisions. This, in turn, is likely to lead to more balanced decisions—decisions that take into account the interests of all stakeholders, which will help maintain strong, long-term relationships and ensure business sustainability. Ultimately, this will reflect back on the company in a positive way, leading to enhanced firm value...Given the clear connection between more women at the top and better ESG, the results provide an even stronger rationale for business leaders to address the lack of gender balance in their boardrooms and senior management.

More broadly, an analysis of 820 leaders conducted between March and June 2020, found that women were rated more positively by those who worked with them on 13 out of 19 leadership competencies, including initiative, the ability to inspire and motivate, learning agility, decisiveness, collaboration, honesty and integrity, communication, developing others and building relationships (Zenger & Folkman 2021).

A paper by the International Financial Corporation (IFC) in 2021 also highlighted the value of women’s leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the need for “ethical and moral purpose, compassion, and care—often-overlooked characteristics that are traditionally associated with women.” Indeed, based

on their analysis of the early response to the pandemic in 194 countries, Garikipati & Kambhampati (2021, p. 415) concluded that the COVID-19 outcomes (number of cases and deaths) were “systemically and significantly better in countries led by women.” In part, they attributed this success to the proactive policy responses that the female leaders adopted, but they suggested these results could also be associated with the leaders’ clear, decisive and empathetic communication and to their being risk-averse with respect to people’s lives.

A subsequent study by Ozdenerol et al. (2023) compared how 14 female-led countries managed the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery. The research focused on the timing and effectiveness of measures, such as school and workplace closing, stay-at-home requirements, international travel controls, mask mandates and vaccination policies, in lowering the viral reproduction rate and number of new cases and deaths in each country. The analysis found that the leaders of Bangladesh, Barbados, Denmark, New Zealand and Taiwan:

“...demonstrated exceptional crisis management qualities. They embraced a detail-oriented, empathetic, and adaptable leadership style, challenging traditional gender stereotypes. These leaders excelled in conveying information, showing empathy, providing clear and transparent communication, prioritizing collaboration, and adapting swiftly. They prioritized science and public health over politics and effectively conveyed the severity of the situation without causing undue panic.”

By bringing to light the successful performance of female leaders during the pandemic, both in developed and developing countries, the study offered valuable insights into crisis management, particularly the importance of effective and empathetic communication by leaders to build public trust and improve compliance. The findings further underscore the importance of challenging cultural norms and beliefs about women’s capabilities and the need to foster gender-inclusive leadership.

2.3 The persistent gender gap in leadership

Despite the strong and expanding empirical evidence on the contributions of women, a gender gap in leadership persists and efforts to close the gap are slow. Based on UN Women data on political leadership, as of 1 January 2024, only 27 countries are led by women, and only 23.3 percent of cabinet ministries, up less than 0.5 percentage point since 2023. Only 15 countries had female representation in cabinet positions of 50 percent or more. In addition:

“women continue to primarily lead portfolios related to women and gender equality, family and children affairs, social affairs, and indigenous and minority affairs. Policy domains such as economic affairs, defence, justice, and home affairs, continue to be dominated by men.”

UN Women’s Gender Snapshot 2024 report further observed that only 26.9 percent of parliamentary seats were held by women globally, up from 22.3 percent in 2015 (UN Women & UN DSEA 2024). The report concludes that, at the current pace, gender parity in parliaments will not be reached before 2063. Similarly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2025) reported that women’s representation in parliament had substantially increased over the thirty years from 1995 to 2025 but progress had stalled in 2024. The share of women in parliaments as of 1 January 2025 was 27.2 percent, up only 0.3 percentage points from the previous year. Regionally, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the share of women in parliaments at 27.1 percent is almost the same as the global average, but Rwanda leads the world for the percentage of women in parliament. In 2025, almost two-thirds (63.8 percent) of MPs in Rwanda’s lower chamber were women.

A comprehensive global analysis of the gender gap by the World Economic Forum (2023) reported modest improvement. Since its inception in 2006, the Global Gender Gap Index has provided an annual benchmark on the progress towards achieving gender parity across four dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment). On a scale of 0 to 100, Index scores can be interpreted as the distance or percentage that countries have covered towards achieving gender parity. Overall, in 2023, for the 146 countries assessed, the global gender gap score is 68.4 percent, an increase of only 0.3 percent since 2022. The report concluded that if no measures are taken to rectify the situation, it was going to take 131 years to reach full parity.

When disaggregated by dimension, the report shows that much greater progress has been realized in closing the gender gaps in health and survival (96 percent) and educational attainment (95.2 percent) but that the gaps in economic participation and opportunity (60.1 percent) and especially political empowerment (22.1 percent) remain wide and unaddressed.

These findings are corroborated by Deloitte’s “Women in the boardroom: A global perspective” report (7th edition) which analysed gender diversity in the boardroom across 72 countries. Globally, it found that women hold only 19.7 percent of board seats and 6.7 percent of board chairs. Only 5 percent of Chief Executive Officers and 15.7 percent of Chief Financial Officers are women (Deloitte Global Boardroom Program 2022). McKinsey & Company (2024) similarly found that women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, holding only 29% of senior management (C-suite) positions globally. Pay data for 2025 further reflects this gender disparity. Globally, women were paid \$0.83 for every \$1 earned by men (Statista 2026).

In Africa, a study of gender equality in 754 companies on 13 stock exchanges in 2023 found that, on average,

women held 21% of board seats, 8% of board chair positions and 9% of CEO positions. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange in South Africa led the region with women occupying 32 percent of board seats followed by the Rwanda Stock Exchange (26 percent) and Nairobi Securities Exchange in Kenya (24 percent). Tanzania was slightly below the regional average; the percentage of women in board positions for companies listed on the Dar es Salaam Stock Exchange (DSE) was 18 percent (Sustainable Stock Exchanges & IFC 2023). A study conducted by The Boardroom Africa (2024) showed that the gender gap had marginally improved by November 2024. At that time, women held 21% of non-executive director seats on listed companies but only 5 percent of board chairs. The study also found that women only held 16% of Chief Executive Officer or Managing Director positions and 31 percent of Chief Financial Officers in Tanzania’s listed companies. A UN Women Technical Brief (Hanna et.al. 2023) estimated that the percentage of women in managerial positions in Tanzania in 2023 to be 25.78%. However, based on their forecast model, this percentage will only slightly increase to 26.8 by 2030 and marginally decrease to 28.68% by 2050. This implies that concerted efforts are needed now to close the gender gap.

This review of existing evidence on the contributions of women in leadership spaces, coupled with the analysis of the gender gap in these spaces, offers key lessons. First, while women have made tangible contributions in the spaces they occupy, these contributions are yet to be translated into meaningful measures to close the leadership gap. The existing gender disparity is costing nations, organizations, companies and the world in general by missing out on valuable skills, talents and perspectives that could have otherwise contributed to global, national and organizational growth. Furthermore, this exclusion denies women the opportunity to contribute to their own personal growth, their communities, their organizations/companies, as well as to global wealth and well-being.

3 | Study Findings

3.1 Characteristics of respondents

The majority of participants were aged between 35 and 55 years (Table 1). Although age was not a variable for

selecting participants, the data indicate that women are more likely to take up leadership positions at ages beyond the younger reproductive age bracket of 24 to 34 years when caring responsibilities frequently preclude taking on leadership roles.

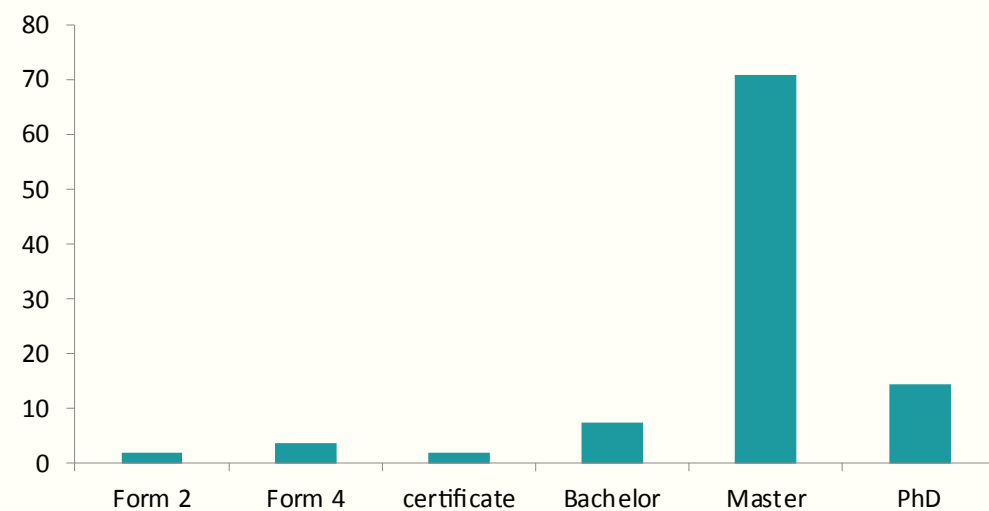
TABLE 1: AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

Age	Frequency	Percentage
24 to 34 years	3	5.50
35 to 55 years	44	80.00
56+ years	8	14.50
Total	55	100.00

Education was not a variable which determined the selection of participants. However, the data in Figure 2 indicate that holders of a master's degree or above are more likely to hold or qualify for leadership positions.

Therefore, the need to advocate for gender equality in accessing education at higher levels needs to be underscored.

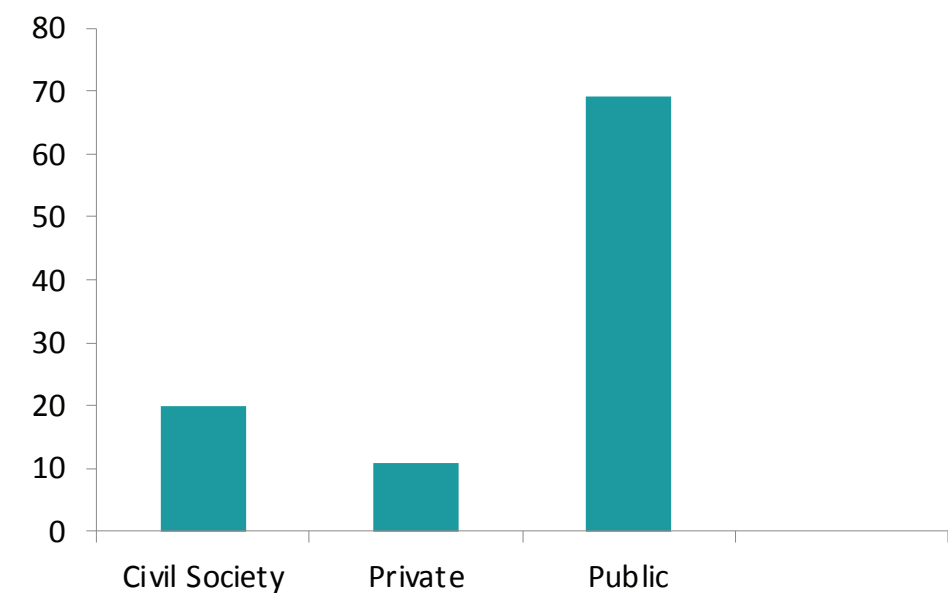
FIGURE 2: PARTICIPANTS' LEVEL OF EDUCATION



The majority of participants were from the public sector as the study design was initially limited to women leaders from government institutions who had participated in UONGOZI's leadership programmes (Figure 3). However, following discussions with the research team, it was agreed that a proportion of

respondents from private and non-state actors would be selected to assess the commonalities in issues and challenges faced by women leaders regardless of sector.

FIGURE 3: PARTICIPANTS BY SECTOR



3.2 Women's leadership attributes and impact on leadership strategies

In this section, the study shares voices of women in leadership positions on what they considered to be the traits or attributes that influence their leadership styles. In summary, all of the women interviewed acknowledged having certain attributes they believed were unique to women. These character traits included being hardworking, empathetic, selfless, collaborative, trustworthy, resilient and nurturing. They also described being skilful in time management, multitasking, conflict management, and the ability to inspire and motivate others, especially other women. The findings are presented in greater detail in the following sections.

3.2.1 Hardworking

Being hardworking was consistently identified by respondents as a central leadership trait. It drives women to deliver results, stay focused, manage time effectively and hold others accountable for their contributions. Hard work also gives them the strength to stand firm in their beliefs. However, due to the socially constructed roles in most societies, which require women to fulfil both productive and reproductive roles, women often have no choice but to multitask. They are expected to manage their households, attend community and social functions, and maintain social networks. This constant pressure to prove their capabilities often takes a toll on their wellness.

Lillian Lukambuzi, Director, National Environment Management Council (NEMC), said that women must dedicate significant time and attention to their work, as they are expected to succeed both in the public and private spheres. They must prove their leadership capabilities while ensuring their families' well-being and maintaining social networks. According to Lillian, this requires additional resilience and the ability to tackle complex issues in a simplified way. Despite the heavy burden of multitasking, she said "Women are not afforded the luxury of "failing". They are expected to focus on every detail and deliver consistently to build trust and overcome societal prejudices about their leadership abilities.

While working hard is generally considered an essential trait for all leaders, women often have to go the extra mile to prove their capabilities beyond any doubt. This is due to ingrained cultural beliefs and prejudices that frame men as natural leaders and women as followers. As **Hon. Asha Rose Migiro, former United Nations Deputy Secretary-General**, explained:

"In the first place, as a woman, you are not recognized as a leader, so you have to demonstrate leadership through your actions and the quality of your work."

She further noted that this dynamic takes a toll on women, making it difficult to balancing the multiple roles that society expects them to juggle, regardless of their professional position.

Halima Maulidi, Deputy Principal Secretary, Ministry of Works and Investment, Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (RGoZ), emphasized the importance of hard work in her career. She said, "I force myself to complete all my tasks at the office, even if it means staying late." For Halima, working hard requires mastering time management to balance official duties with personal

responsibilities, including caregiving and community-based tasks. She acknowledged that maintaining this balance is difficult and often requires external support. For example, she sometimes relies on her sister to manage family responsibilities when her job requires travel. Halima admits that this creates extra work for her sister, highlighting the shared burden women often face in balancing their professional and personal lives. Delegation of responsibilities, whether at work or home, becomes a crucial strategy for women navigating the work-life balance, but it is not without its challenges. Diligence in work can give one the courage to demand promotion or proper allocation in the leadership ladder.

Vivian Temu, Mwananchi Communication Limited, said that she works hard in whatever assignment she is tasked with but, at times, she felt she was not fairly treated or appreciated. Referring to her previous role with FINCA Microfinance Bank, she related that her supervisor used to assign her many assignments, including those that the supervisor was supposed to have done, as well as those for which she did not have experience. However, she was a fast learner; she sought information from her colleagues and started to perform very well. After six months of working in the department, her supervisor informed her that he was going to leave, and Vivian requested him to recommend her for the position as his successor. But he informed her that she was not yet qualified and would not be capable of taking over the job because she did not have enough experience and knowledge. This came as a surprise to Vivian who was completing most of the tasks that the supervisor was supposed to do. Knowing that she was a hardworking person and a fast learner, she did not settle for the negative response. She applied for the position along with external candidates and was given the job. For her, many women do not get leadership positions because of prejudices and norms, but hard work as well as the

capacity to demand their rights can ultimately lead to overcoming some of the barriers that women face as they vie for leadership positions. Refusing to settle for prescribed positions is a strategy that women have used to claim their rightful positions. According to Vivian, she was able to stand out and demand her rights and refused to accept non-recognition of her work because she had self-confidence, independent-mindedness, and determination to challenge prejudices. She attributes this to her personal growth, the determination to learn, as well as exposure to training programs, including those conducted by the UONGOZI Institute.

Anascolastica Sabuni is the **Chairperson of Wanawake Laki Moja**, a women-based civil society organization (CSO) in Shinyanga Region, and a Chairperson of the Tanzania Masters of Ceremony Association for the Lake Zone, which includes six regions. In addition, she is a full-time employee. Therefore, she navigates a triple work burden to continue her activism to defend the rights of marginalized kids, particularly in the area of gender-based violence (GBV). She is a survivor of sexual abuse; at the age of 16, she became pregnant and vowed to fight against GBV throughout her life. This means activism has to go hand-in-hand with her formal job which earns her a living, as well as the care of her household. To achieve a work-life balance, Anascolastica admits that she has to delegate some of her duties to remain sane. While delegating is considered an effective strategy for leadership, for women it is even more critical as they have to balance care roles with demanding leadership tasks, while trying to maintain their own health and wellness.

Fatma Lyimo, Human Resources Manager, President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (TAMISEMI) (URT) viewed time management as critical for women to navigate a work-life balance. For Fatma, a culture of managing time needs to be infused from

childhood. According to Fatma, she had to work hard from an early age, required to do household chores to support her mother after the loss of their father when she and her siblings were very young.

According to Fatma, women have the God-given gift of being able to multitask. She says she has a very rigid timetable, of waking up very early, praying, cleaning her house, doing exercise, as well as preparing breakfast before leaving for work. Fatma does not have a housekeeper. She completes most household work single-handedly.

Similarly, **Pili Kamari, Chief Accountant, Ministry of Minerals (URT)**, admitted that leadership was never her goal. She felt comfortable in her previous role as a subordinate in the Ministry of Finance. However, her leadership journey began when she was appointed to lead a branch office in Lindi, largely due to her hard work and traits like empathy. Afterwards, she was transferred to the Ministry of Minerals as Chief Accountant, a position she has held for about a year. Pili admits that, like many women, she struggles to balance work and family life. To manage, she prefers to stay late at the office during the week, preserving her weekends for herself and her family.

Hon. Mgeni Hassan, Deputy Speaker, Zanzibar House of Representatives, highlighted the unique challenges that women politicians face. Balancing household responsibilities, community involvement and social networks along with political duties, while also caring for themselves, is quite challenging. Speaking from her experience, Hon. Mgeni explained that she serves on multiple committees and boards, in addition to her roles as Deputy Speaker, member of social networks and family member. In all these roles, she is expected to deliver without compromising on the quality of her work or her well-being. As a politician, visiting her

constituency is not just a political obligation but an investment in future electoral success. For her, time management is critical in navigating the complexities of balancing life and work.

Beng'i Issa, Executive Secretary, National Economic Empowerment Council, echoed this sentiment. She noted that because women are more scrutinized than men, they are forced to put in extra hours and manage multiple tasks to meet the societal and professional expectations placed on them. While women often deliver better outcomes than their male counterparts under these conditions, they do so at the expense of their own well-being and that of their children.

Very few women leaders interviewed were able to consistently set aside time for self-care. **Doris Mollel, Founder and Executive Director, Doris Mollel Foundation**, acknowledged the challenge of balancing her demanding work schedule with maintaining her personal health. She often endures sleepless nights, except on weekends or when traveling, during which she makes a conscious effort to disconnect by switching off her phone, meditating and relaxing. For women, achieving a healthy work-life balance requires creative time management to stay mentally and physically fit, especially in environments that push them to sacrifice rest.

Similarly, **Ziana Mlawa, Human Resource Manager, Ministry of Energy (RGoZ)**, emphasized the importance of time management as a strategy to navigate the multiple responsibilities that women leaders must juggle. Ziana explained that she efficiently organizes her office hours, ensuring that she completes her work between Monday and Friday. This discipline allows her to spend quality time with her family on Saturdays and Sundays. Her colleagues are well aware that Ziana does not bring office work home, a boundary that helps her balance her professional duties with household and community obligations.

Mwanamami Mtoo, Assistant Director for Diversity Section, Directorate of Policy Development, President's Office-Public Service Management and Good Governance (PSMGG) (URT), acknowledged the toll that work can take on women leaders' physical, emotional and spiritual well-being is beyond imagination. To manage stress, she dedicates private time to activities like listening to music, dancing and playing with children, alongside jogging and reading. These activities help her reduce stress and relax.

Building supportive friendships and networks can also help in managing work-related stress. **Fortunata Alex, Director of Monitoring and Evaluation, President's Office-Planning and Investment (URT)**, finds that friends not only offer valuable advice when mistakes are made but also provide emotional support. She employs an open-door policy at work, encouraging staff to approach her with both official and personal matters, a strategy that fosters team building. Fortunata also makes time for physical exercise whenever her schedule allows.

When exhaustion from overwork sets in, **Fatma Ghaib, Registrar, Zanzibar Fair Trade**, finds solace at the beach. She explains that the sea breeze has a calming effect that helps her relax, clear her mind and rejuvenates her body. In addition, she watches movies, makes time for prayer, and listens to music as part of her self-care routine.

Similarly, **Fatma Hamad Rajab, Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Information, Youth and Sports (RGoZ)**, enjoys unwinding by listening to taarab music. She finds that listening to her favorite tunes, even while working through her files, helps refresh her tired mind and body.

In summary, the majority of respondents admitted to bearing an extra burden of work due to societal attitudes and prejudices about women's leadership

capabilities. As women, they have to put in extra work to prove that they are capable. This added pressure often comes at the expense of their socially expected roles at the household and community levels, as well as their personal well-being. However, without challenging the underlying societal norms that impose this unfair workload, women will remain trapped into continuing to manage the situation rather than transforming it. Similarly, promoting time management without addressing the multiple roles that women juggle due to cultural expectations may enhance performance but will leave women overburdened. Hence, based on the testimony of the leaders interviewed, addressing the multiple roles women face will need to be a key strategy in empowering and encouraging more women to take on leadership roles.

3.2.2 Empathy

Empathy was also frequently mentioned by respondents as another distinctive attribute of women leaders. Empathy encompasses many other traits including leading with compassion, nurturing others, mentoring and practicing selflessness. It contributes to creating positive, collaborative work environments where collective understanding and ownership of goals and challenges are fostered. Empathy entails communication, emotional intelligence, active listening and flexibility.

Almost all women who participated in this research said that they care for others and are considerate and supportive of co-workers. For example, **Mansula Mosi Mohamedi, Principal Secretary, Civil Service Zanzibar**, describes herself as being friendly, kind and caring, which she attributed to her 'mothering' role. Mansula says she supports her fellow colleagues and encourages them to develop a learning culture which, according to her, facilitates them to unlock their potential. She has been striving to push for women's

education, which she considers to be a liberating tool. In reference to her caring role, she shared a case in which she supported a girl from a poor family to attend school. At the time of the interview, this young woman was attending university studies and performing very well.

Salha Kassim, Executive Director, Ministry of Water, Energy and Minerals (RGoZ), considers humility (which she relates to empathy) to be one of her unique attributes. For instance, when she is in an informal gathering with friends and her colleagues, nobody will recognize that she is an engineer with an impressive title. She says she goes out with friends, dressed in casual wear, joking and having fun. But when it comes to office and work, all her colleagues (including the men) know that I am a "lion", who demands delivery, accountability and responsibility. For her, humility does not lead to compromising duties and responsibilities. Instead, humility creates and strengthens bonding, friendship and trust.

Similarly, **Wanyinda Kuta, Director of Administration, Ministry of Water (URT)**, expressed similar sentiments of humility when she said, *"One of my attributes is listening to fellow workers, as I accept my vulnerability."* She acknowledges that the people she leads are knowledgeable and that she also has some knowledge which needs to be shared. She underscored the need for reciprocated learning as a strategy to maximize the potential of staff in the Ministry. By understanding the people you are leading, she further emphasized, you will be able to unlock their potential. Given that one is dealing with diverse human beings, one has to take time to connect and understand them. Wanyinda referred to her teaching experience at the Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT). She related that students in a specific course used to perform badly each year, and that the management of DIT decided

to allocate this course to her, either to transfer the blame for the students failing or to test her credibility as a teacher. Accepting the challenge, she started by building a friendly learning environment through which the students were open to come for consultation. She also instilled a sense of accountability among the students for their own learning, an aspect which transformed the students' attitudes. At the end of the year, no student failed that course. In other words, she established a bond with the students, they saw the need and value of transforming the pedagogic methods of imparting knowledge, and collectively assumed responsibility for their success or failure. This was a powerful strategy to facilitate success, made possible because she considered the students as her own children and cultivated an interest in their success. To Wanyinda, dialogue is an essential leadership strategy as it creates mutual trust, friendship and collective accountability.

Doris Mollel, Executive Secretary, Doris Mollel

Foundation, which advocates for increased maternity leave for women who deliver premature babies, viewed that women put their heart into what they do because they are not motivated by fame, power or money. For her, the driving force behind her current role is her inner self. She is motivated by her own experience of being born pre-term and inspired by the story of her mother on the challenges of taking care of a premature baby. This personal life experience pushed her to engage and advocate for the rights of women who give birth to premature babies as part of a broader campaign to acknowledge and value the reproductive role of women. Appropriately valuing mothers and motherhood will entail providing sufficient paid maternity leave for all women as well as providing additional support to those who deliver children with different forms of disabilities.

Hawa Mbae, Executive Director, Business Licensing

Regulatory Council, said that women, love to have a peaceful environment for themselves, their families and in workplaces. Because of their caring nature, women can connect with people's feelings and are able to read the body language of joy or sadness. According to her, these attributes enable women leaders to reach out to members of the general public. Similarly, they are a driving force in understanding and taking action to address the specific needs of the people they lead.

Pili Kamari, Chief Accountant, Ministry of Minerals

(URT), mentioned that her leadership journey resulted from hard work and empathy. Upon her appointment to lead the Ministry of Finance's office at Lindi, she sensed tensions in the office, and she sensed that some staff doubted her capacity to lead. In response, Pili took time to study the work environment and adopted an open door policy to allow staff to address their private and public challenges.

She took time to learn about and get to know her staff, which contributed to changes in their mindset on her capacity to lead the team. She said that women often have to go the extra mile to connect with the people they lead to build trust, bring harmony and create a conducive work environment that promotes openness and dialogue. Referring to an instance when one of her female employees appeared to be depressed and her performance was declining, she reached out. Trusting in her intentions, the employee shared her story of domestic abuse. She advised her to walk out from this abusive relationship and the violence which she hated. Similarly, **Eng. Zena Saidi, Chief Secretary, RGoZ**, expressed more or less the same feelings of being supportive to all workers with special attention to women. She said, *"I hate seeing people being oppressed. I am open and listen to others. I do not personalize criticism as I perform my duties without*

expectations of favours." Zena described supporting colleagues to develop their communication and presentation skills, and assisting them to plan and manage their time. Although she purposefully cares for her staff, Zena also does not compromise quality and timely delivery of outputs.

Ambassador Amina Ally Salum remarked that she is driven by a desire to support other women. She has held various leadership positions within and outside the country, and during the 2015 general elections in Tanzania was among the few women to ever contest for the office of President. Throughout her leadership journey, she has voluntarily supported and mentored many women in both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. At times, she would go an extra mile and invite them to her home. She said that mentoring does not always lead to great results, nonetheless, Ambassador Amina never gave up in her efforts to support women.

Halima Maulid Salum, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of

Works and Investment, RGoZ, also considers herself to be humble and caring as a leader. She seeks to nurture the talents of staff by connecting with them to understand their potential. She made reference to a female lawyer she nurtured, who was transferred to another section of the Ministry that did not recognize her capabilities. Fortunately, Halima was transferred to the same department and quickly allocated the individual to positions to utilize her talents.

Neema Mwakalyelye, Deputy Director, Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)

said *"personal and institutional integrity are key pillars in infusing institutional integrity and accountability."* She remarked that as a public institution that fights against all forms of corruption, the PCCB requires leadership that is driven by passion, which is selfless, and has a commitment to serve others and the nation. The PCCB must also demonstrate institutional integrity so as to

mirror the values it aims to instill in society. According to Neema, personal integrity should guide the behaviour of civil servants in both their public and private lives.

Driven by empathy, **Halima Maulid Salim, Deputy Principal Secretary, President's Office- Labour, Economic Affairs and Investment (RGoZ)**, admitted being a force behind the establishment of the universal social security scheme for elderly persons in Zanzibar, which was modelled on the system in Namibia that she studied and adapted to the context in Zanzibar. According to the policy, every Zanzibari aged 70 years and above receives 20,000 Tanzanian shillings per month. Although the amount is small, the system establishes a principle of universal insurance covering all elderly people whether formally employed or not. Halima was also instrumental in the establishment of the Harassment Support Centre modeled after Smart Naira in Zambia. Halima credits her empathy for pursuing such initiatives.

Similarly, **Siti Abbas, Director, Community Development, Gender and Children, Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (RGoZ)**, has a background in civil society with a focus on young people. She was nominated to the Constitutional Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania through the youth ticket. She considers herself friendly, supportive, open and self-confident but stands firm in her beliefs. She is committed and dedicated to supporting young people, particularly women. Consequently, when she was appointed to government positions, she requested her supervisors to allow her to continue participating in women's rights issues, particularly those advocating for young women. This permission was granted, hence, Siti continues to wear two hats as a government official and an activist for women's rights. Through her current portfolio, she has been able to support various groups by coaching and supporting them to qualify for loans. In her own

office, she has also established a roster which provides opportunities for staff to travel and attend training. This is both a capacity-building and team-building strategy because, in many male-dominated structures, travelling for work, particularly when it involves monetary gains in the form of travel, training and meeting allowances, is normally hoarded by men. Additionally, she works to facilitate the translation of gender equality principles in village-level committees. In all of her duties, she seeks to ‘lead with a soul’, driven by a passion to bring change and selflessness in tasks, which are all attributes of empathy in leadership.

“I am open, fair, friendly, tolerant, persevering and God-fearing and gently handle issues,” said **Hon. Anna Atanaus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (RGoZ).** According to Hon Anna, she listens more and talks less. This allows her to understand the views and attitudes of her staff, connect with their concerns and build their capacities. Such attributes have enabled her to establish trusting relationships with her staff, leading to teamwork and collaborative strategies for implementing the vision of the Ministry. In stark contrast, she shared a story from a previous work position when she was assigned a task by a supervisor who doubted her capacity to perform. When she accomplished the assignment to a high standard and in timely way, her supervisor confessed that he did not expect her to accomplish the task so efficiently and well. Her testimony reflects what women frequently experience when working under supervisors who do not trust women’s performance. Driven by passion, she has used her position to influence the establishment of safe homes for victims of abuse, as well as facilitated the establishment of orphanages and senior citizens’ homes.

“I feel indebted to the Tanzanian public in general but to women in particular whose resources have contributed to my leadership journey,” said **Fatma Hamad Rajab, Principal Secretary Ministry of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports (RGoZ).** Fatma describes herself as a person with high levels of personal integrity, diligence and generosity. In her position, she employs an open-door policy. When appointed to her current role, she sensed tension among staff, who probably resented her appointment, but she used her conflict management skills to handle tensions in a very calm manner. With a clear understanding of how patriarchal culture and oppressive systems employ divide-and-rule tactics to maintain power over the disadvantaged and undermine their personal integrity, she decided not to personalize her response to the resistance. Instead, she opted to support her colleagues by encouraging them to take advantage of the existing facilities and opportunities to advance their knowledge and skills. She established a roster system for staff travel to benefit from exposure to training as well as the travel allowances. In this way, she was able to win the trust of her colleagues and facilitate team building and collective ownership of the organizational vision and mission. Referring to her previous work as a head of school, she had initiated a loan scheme for teachers and supported a girl who had been abused by a police officer by ensuring that the culprit was subjected to justice and the victim protected.

Colleta Mgeni, Auditor, Ernest & Young Tanzania, described herself as *“a caring person, with an inquisitive mind, dynamic and hardworking with the courage to question.”* She recounted an experience while attending a client outside the office. She said that the client made fun of her pregnancy by asking *“How did you hurt your tummy?”* While the client might have taken it as a joke, for Colleta, this is how women professional are regularly mistreated through gender

incentive jokes, which undermine their integrity and professionalism. These jokes are an expression of how men resist or refuse to acknowledge women’s leadership positions and authority.

She said that having a female supervisor has had a positive impact on her leadership journey. The office has been transformed to support female workers to navigate the work-life balance. Her office provides a safe working environment and flexible working arrangements for staff that allow women to fulfil their multiple roles and tasks in their professional and private lives. For example, her office allows individuals to choose to work from home or the office and on any time schedule that fits their other commitments. She has also sought support from her supervisors to establish safe office spaces for nursing mothers. Although these workplace arrangements do not necessarily reduce the workload for women, it sets the principle of appreciating the care burden they face. They also reduce the anxiety of mothers about the security of their children and reduces the hours that women have to walk to and from work to nurse their babies.

Fortunata Alex Soka, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, President’s Office-Planning and Investment (URT), emphasized the need to support young girls from childhood to develop self-confidence, self-esteem commitment and a hard-working culture. She said, *“I encourage, train and support young girls to realize their dreams.”* Fortunata described herself as caring, polite, friendly, committed, transparent and supportive of the staff with whom she interacts.

“I get pride in other people’s success particularly women” said **Mzuri Issa, Executive Director, Tanzania Women Media Association, Zanzibar.** She described herself as a dedicated and committed person to her work. Driven by passion and the desire to bring change

and possessing excellent communication skills, she has been able to build teamwork and collaborative relationships in her workplace. These qualities have also enabled her to build collaborative working relationships with women media associations from other countries including Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda.

“I have a determination to be part of change,” said **Elizabeth Mleli, Founder and Managing Director, Sure Starts Early Childhood and Elementary School Tanzania.** This is what inspired her to quit her well-paid corporate job to initiate a program to transform the lives of children with special needs. Elizabeth describes herself as a critical thinker and output-oriented person, passionate and determined to deliver results. She takes pride in having been one of the initial thinkers on the need for special education in Tanzania, and she has committed her energy to mentoring and coaching other women to unleash their potential.

“I have an amazing capacity and passion to support other women to excel,” said **Ruth Mboma, Supervisor in Engineering, Tanzania Telecommunication Company Limited (TTCL).** She identified empathy and team building as the two qualities that have contributed to her leadership journey to date. She considers that these attributes have enabled her to support colleagues who face both professional and domestic-related challenges. She related that some of her fellow workers have freely shared personal challenges in their private lives, which demonstrates a relationship of trust. Outside of official duties, she founded a women’s support group in her neighbourhood. Although she chairs the group, she considers herself an ordinary member. She sets aside her directorship and professional status, which often detaches individuals from the real world in which they live. This has enabled her to establish trusting and friendly relationships in her work with the women’s group.

“Caring for others is even more critical for people working in the nonprofit sector,” said **Elizabeth Ndakidemi, Deputy Director, Tanzania Youth Alliance (TAYOA)**. In the first place, some NGOs, including the one she leads, receive large sums of money which is supposed to be directed to targeted beneficiaries. Therefore, these organizations need leaders who not only care for people but also demonstrate a high level of integrity. Being a ‘mother’, she seeks to connect with young people as if she is working with her own children. She said, “I have big dreams for my own children” and wish to see these other young people grow and actualize their dreams. She aspires to see this generation of Tanzanian youth be the ‘drivers’ of the country’s development.

The narratives in this section affirm that women leaders exemplify the quality of empathy. They described caring for, listening to, counseling and frequently taking actions to inspire and motivate their staff and other people in their communities. Additionally, due to empathy, women leaders have been able to bring about transformative changes in their varied positions. These range from changes in attitudes to establishing institutional frameworks, as well as supporting individuals to excel. They can relate to the feelings of others and understand the emotional dynamics within groups. Empathy has further allowed women leaders to create supportive environments, build trusting teams, and address the needs of team members more effectively, leading to increased engagement and workplace morale. In addition, it is important to note that coaching is increasingly commercialized; individuals get paid for coaching and mentoring rather than nurturing voluntarily. In contrast, the testimony of participants indicates that mentoring for many women leaders is driven by selflessness and by empathy.

3.2.3 Inspirational leadership

Finding inspiration, and, in turn, inspiring others is closely related to empathy. Almost all of the women leaders interviewed in this study acknowledged that their leadership journeys were shaped by people who inspired them—whether by trusting them with leadership roles from an early age, treating them as equals or reminding them of their capabilities. Their sources of inspiration varied. Some women credited their mothers, whose resilience and hard work enabled them to sustain families despite limited resources. Others were inspired by their fathers, who provided equal educational opportunities and demonstrated belief in their daughters’ intelligence and capabilities. Yet others were inspired by their teachers who encouraged them to excel and spotted their leadership potential early on. Several women were inspired by supervisors, both male and female, who urged them to pursue leadership roles or attend leadership courses. Prominent women leaders like Gertrude Mongella, Anna Makinda, and Samia Suluhu Hassan were frequently mentioned as role models for their transformative leadership.

“I resolved to do whatever it takes to lift my mother out of the poverty we endured during my childhood,” said **Bengi Issa, Executive Secretary, National Economic Empowerment Council**. Her determination to overcome poverty and support her family became a driving force in her leadership journey. She also credited her academic success to her uncle’s encouragement, who always supported and encouraged her to focus on her studies. Another pivotal moment in her career came when women’s groups at the Institute of Development and Management (IDM-Mzumbe) advocated for her appointment to a lecturer’s position at Mzumbe University, challenging discriminatory hiring practices. Despite being the top-performing student, the Institute

initially hired a male student who had placed second. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of women’s group at the Institute, she was ultimately appointed. This experience of support and advocacy led Beng’i to champion the formalization of employment for 100 staff members at the Tanzania Commission for AIDS (TACAIDS), who had previously been working as casual labourers. She also played a key role in founding the AIDS Trust Foundation, which advocates for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and works to combat stigma and discrimination, influencing policy changes in the process.

“Leadership wasn’t my calling,” said **Hon. Anna Atanaus, Deputy Minister for Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children (RGOZ)**. She attributes her current position to sheer luck but said she was inspired by Ambassador Gertrude Mongella’s exemplary leadership, particularly her role in organizing the 1995 Global Women’s Conference. Hon. Anna believes in the importance of supporting young women from early childhood, building their confidence and challenging gender stereotypes. Her passion for the welfare of orphans and abandoned children, as well as neglected elderly citizens, led her to initiate the establishment of a safe house for orphans and a senior citizens’ home, despite limited resources.

Dr. Josephine Rogate Kimaro, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Zanzibar Presidential Delivery Bureau (RGoZ), credits her father as her primary source of inspiration. Despite poor performance in the early years of primary school, her father consistently reassured her of her intelligence, reminding her that exams were not the only measure of intellectual ability. His unwavering support helped her improve academically and nurtured her confidence. Dr. Josephine also drew inspiration from her mother, who started as a hospital attendant and worked her way up to lead the reproductive and maternal health

portfolio at the regional level. Her mother’s resilience motivated her to make a difference, leading her to mobilize resources to establish the Presidential Delivery Bureau. The Bureau plays a critical role in monitoring resource management, ensuring that national resources are used efficiently—a mission that aligns with Dr. Josephine’s commitment to accountability and the broader interests of the nation.

Queen Siraki, Head of Special Asset Section, Exim Bank, dedicates much of her private time to mentoring young girls, sharing her leadership journey, and encouraging them to put effort into every task. Queen admits she never aspired to leadership but was motivated and inspired by the achievements of women leaders like Brenda Msangi, CEO of CBRT, and Diana Kisaka, Managing Director of T-MARC Tanzania. Attending leadership training sessions conducted by Brenda further instilled the importance of hard work, which contributed to her success in marketing and resource mobilization for Exim Bank.

Each of the women leaders interviewed shared a common thread—support and inspiration from key individuals in their lives helped shape their leadership paths. By recognizing and appreciating those who inspired them, these leaders are now committed to uplifting others, demonstrating that leadership is not just about individual success but also about empowering others to achieve their fullest potential.

3.3 Do women in leadership positions make a difference?

This section presents in-depth case studies of the leadership journeys of six prominent women and their contributions to leadership spaces in Tanzania:

- Case study 1: Professor Penina Mlama
- Case study 2: Hon. Mgeni Hassan
- Case study 3: Hon. Asha-Rose Migiro
- Case study 4: Eng. Mwajuma Waziri
- Case study 5: Ms. Neema Mwakalyelye
- Case study 6: Dr. Lucy Shule

These participants frequently mentioned influencing policy development or plans for implementation, fostering institutional transformations, enhancing a learning culture, introducing new structures and processes, and changing the mindset of the people they led with regards to women in leadership spaces. A number of the leaders also described supporting women to overcome their personal fears and the prejudice of others to circumvent obstacles that hindered their upward mobility to leadership roles, while others selflessly refused to claim personal credit for their contributions but attributed their success to collective efforts. By highlighting the significant contributions of these trailblazing women, the study seeks to provide evidence that clearly demonstrates the benefits of having women in senior leadership positions and what is missed out when they are not.

3.3.1 Case study 1: Prof. Penina Mlama—A trailblazer in academic leadership



Prof. Penina Mlama's leadership journey began at the University of Dar es Salaam, where she held several key roles: Head of the Fine and Performing Arts Department, Associate Dean of Research and Publication in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Dean of the same faculty, and ultimately, Chief Academic Officer (now Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic). She was the first woman to hold the position of Deputy Vice Chancellor at UDSM and nationally. Prof. Mlama believes that her leadership journey enabled her to influence policy changes and institutional transformations to advance gender equality at national, regional and global levels.

The Tuseme Program: Empowering girls through theatre

As Head of the Fine and Performing Arts Department, Prof. Mlama co-initiated the Tuseme Program (Kiswahili for "Let's Speak Out") in 1996. This outreach initiative used participatory theatre methods to empower secondary school girls. The program's goal was to help girls identify and address societal gender barriers,

understand the patriarchal norms limiting their educational outcomes, and equip them with tools to overcome these challenges.

Initially launched in seven schools in Tanzania, the program expanded to over 30 schools and was eventually integrated into the national education system. Under Prof. Mlama's leadership at the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the Tuseme model has spread to other African countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Senegal, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The program has achieved notable successes, including:

- Boosting girls' confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem;
- Improving academic performance and decision-making skills; and
- Empowering girls to challenge systems and situations that negatively impact their welfare.

Despite its success, the program revealed that teachers were not well equipped with the pedagogic skills needed to empower girls. This highlighted the need for teacher training, which Prof. Mlama addressed by introducing a special program to equip teachers with participatory teaching tools to sustain Tuseme's impact.

Affirmative action in university admissions

As Chief Academic Officer, Prof. Mlama's primary challenge was the low rate of female admissions: only 17% overall, with 3% in science and 1% in engineering programs. She championed institutional policies to address this disparity, introducing affirmative action measures that allowed female applicants to be admitted with 0.5 points below the general cutoff, provided they met the basic university requirements.

To address the lack of female applicants in science disciplines, Prof. Mlama introduced an eight-week

pre-entry program. Female candidates who missed admission by 0.5 points received intensive training and a special university examination. Those who passed were admitted. This initiative proved highly successful, with many participants outperforming their peers in subsequent academic assessments. The program was later extended to engineering and benefited over 500 women before being phased out as female representation in these fields increased.

To institutionalize this policy, Prof. Mlama influenced the university's 1994 Corporate Strategic Plan, which mandated incremental benchmarks to achieve a 50-50 gender balance in admissions over five years. Female enrolments increased significantly, reaching 40-50% in some disciplines, particularly the humanities. Despite its success, the policy faced resistance from male student leaders and some faculty members, as detailed in the following challenges.

Faculty of Law non-compliance

During a meeting of the University Admission Board, which Prof. Mlama was chairing, various faculties presented their admission lists for the board to approve. All faculties except the Faculty of Law had complied with the university policy of a 10% yearly increase. That year, the minimum female admission requirement was 30%. When Prof. Mlama asked why the Faculty of Law had not complied, the Dean arrogantly replied, *"In the Faculty of Law, the collegium has decided that in our admission, we are not going to be bothered by this 30% business. So, the collegium has selected the students according to how we think is best for us."*

Prof. Mlama responded calmly but firmly, offering two options:

1. The Dean could return to his collegium, conduct another admission process that adhered to university requirements, and

- present the new list to a special admission board meeting for approval, with the Faculty of Law covering the costs.
2. If the faculty refused to admit female students according to university requirements, no first-year students would be admitted to the Faculty of Law for the coming academic year.

The Dean had no choice but to comply and repeat the admission process, meeting the financial conditions specified.

Student government pushback

One day, representatives of the university student government stormed Prof. Mlama’s office, demanding the abolition of the pre-entry program for female students, arguing that it undermined the meritocracy criteria for university entry. The discourse on meritocracy, particularly as applied to gender discrimination, highlighted its limitations in addressing social injustices resulting from historical imbalances in gender, ethnicity, race and religion. Meritocracy criteria often use flawed measures that ignore the diversity of relevant talents or merits and the different contexts that hinder individuals from accessing social outcomes like education.

In response, Prof. Mlama invited the students to a dialogue over a cup of tea. She first raised their awareness about the value of the program not only for women but for the university and the country. She expressed her opinion that their demand to stop the pre-entry program displayed a high level of selfishness, as it would deny not only the young women currently enrolled but potentially their sisters, cousins, nieces and friends from benefiting in the future. She reminded them firmly that, as a student organization, they did not have the mandate to order her office to abolish any university program.

Gender mainstreaming in university curricula

Prof. Mlama recognized that increasing the number of female students was necessary but not sufficient for achieving gender equality. The content of university education also needed transformation. She advocated for gender mainstreaming in all curricula, ensuring that learning materials and teaching practices would challenge gender stereotypes and promote social justice.

In light of this, she influenced the University Council to direct all faculties and departments to mainstream gender in their curricula. However, not all faculty members were supportive. When the Head of the Department of Chemistry resisted, Prof. Mlama summoned him to her office, calmly reminding him of the implications of his stance. She advised him to withdraw his letter and offered support to help him incorporate gender mainstreaming into his discipline. He complied.

Other faculties and departments responded positively. For example:

- The Department of Political Science introduced a compulsory course titled Gender and Politics, which aimed to foster gender awareness among students; and
- The Institute of Development Studies developed a gender-related module for all undergraduate students.

Gender Awareness Training Program for the university community

To address persistent gender insensitivity, Prof. Mlama introduced a Gender Awareness Training Program targeting the entire university community, beginning with Deans and Heads of Departments. The program, though not reaching all levels, had significant

transformative impacts, with some of the resistant deans becoming ambassadors for affirmative action.

The Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy

A major initiative led by Prof. Mlama was the development of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy at UDSM, prompted by increasing cases of sexual harassment, including the tragic suicide of a female student who had been subjected to an attempted gang rape. Motivated by this tragedy, Prof. Mlama championed the creation of a comprehensive policy to address sexual harassment, accompanied by the structural support mechanisms, including a university-level gender coordination unit as well as gender desks in all colleges, faculties and institutes. These efforts ultimately led to the establishment of the University Gender Center.

One of the most challenging cases during Prof. Mlama’s tenure at UDSM involved a senior professor who attempted to rape a master’s student after his attempt to solicit sexual favours for good grades failed. Despite the professor being a respected academic and family friend, Prof. Mlama acted decisively to initiate disciplinary action. Her strong leadership in this case set a precedent for holding perpetrators accountable and challenging the culture of impunity.

Leadership at FAWE

From 1998 to 2007, Prof. Mlama served as Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). Under her leadership, FAWE conducted a gender analysis of education policies in 33 Sub-Saharan African countries, leading to the adoption of gender-responsive education policies in all 33 countries.

During her tenure at FAWE, Prof. Mlama also initiated the Centre of Excellence (COE) model, transforming schools into gender-responsive environments that supported girls’ education. Since its inception in 1999,

COEs have been introduced in Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zanzibar. More than 6,500 students have benefited from FAWE’s COEs through improved academic performance, greater participation and retention of girls in schools and reduced teenage pregnancies.

Prof. Penina Mlama: Scholar, artist and playwright
In addition to her leadership in education and gender equality, Prof. Mlama is a distinguished scholar, artist and playwright. Her literary works, including plays such as Heshima Yangu and Pilika za Dunia, address themes of gender-based violence and societal progress.

Conclusion: The challenges and lessons from Prof. Mlama’s leadership
Throughout her leadership journey, Prof. Mlama faced unique pressures as a woman leader, which demanded meticulous planning and critical thinking. Despite these challenges, she remained focused on creating lasting impact, guided by fairness, integrity and a commitment to justice.

- Prof. Mlama attributes her success to several factors:
- A supportive leadership environment at the University of Dar es Salaam;
 - Advocacy and activism within the university and beyond; and
 - A deep understanding of institutional policies and unwavering commitment to transforming the status quo.

In summary, Prof. Mlama’s leadership exemplifies the transformative impact of women in leadership roles. Through initiatives like Tuseme, affirmative action policies and gender mainstreaming, she not only increased opportunities for women but also challenged societal norms and institutional practices. Her legacy continues to inspire those committed to advancing gender equality in education and beyond.

3.3.2 Case study 2: Hon. Mgeni Hassan: Deputy Speaker, Zanzibar House of Representatives



Hon. Mgeni Hassan stands out as a trailblazer in Zanzibar's political landscape, embodying resilience, dedication and advocacy for gender equality. As Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and the first woman to chair the House in 2010, Hon. Mgeni has navigated the complex and often demanding world of politics while balancing her roles in family, community and social networks. This case study explores her experiences, achievements and the unique challenges she faces as a woman in a leadership role.

Hon. Mgeni describes her journey in politics as a “*delicate act*” of balancing multiple responsibilities. In addition to her official role as Deputy Speaker, she is actively involved in various parliamentary committees, boards and social networks, all of which demand her time and commitment. As a family member and community leader, she feels a constant pull between professional and personal obligations. Time management has become her most essential skill, allowing her to fulfil her political duties without compromising the quality of her contributions or her

well-being. She notes that visiting her constituency is not only a political obligation but also an investment in her future success as a leader, as these visits strengthen her connection with her constituents.

Hon. Mgeni highlighted the following achievements and contributions of her leadership.

Initiatives to increase the representation of women in the Zanzibar House of Representatives

Her historic appointment in 2010 as the first woman to chair the Zanzibar House of Representatives marked a turning point for advocacy for women's representation in the Government of Zanzibar. Upon her appointment, Hon. Mgeni noticed the absence of women in influential roles and the lack of female voices in decision-making processes. She initiated efforts to increase women's representation in the House and organized capacity-building programs to empower female members. This process has led to several transformative impacts, including enabling women members in the House to hold the government accountable on issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) and gender-responsive budgeting. Her efforts have also strengthened women legislators' ability to challenge discriminatory laws, such as the Criminal and Evidence Law (Sheria ya Ushahidi), fostering a more inclusive legislative environment.

Reviving the Women's Cross-Party Caucus

As chairperson, Hon. Mgeni revived the Women's Cross-Party Caucus, enhancing the collective voice of women in the House and advocating for gender-related issues, especially GBV and gender budgeting in Zanzibar. Her successful leadership in the caucus earned her an invitation from UN Women to visit Ethiopia, where she shared insights on how such a caucus can drive change in parliamentary decisions.

Mentorship and advocacy

Hon. Mgeni has significantly contributed to increasing the number of women in parliament and at the council level, encouraging them to actively participate in politics. With the increase in the numbers and enhanced capacities of women in leadership roles, there has been a noticeable rise in women chairing parliamentary committees, including the influential leadership committee, which plays a crucial role in shaping major decisions in the House.

Promotion of women's voices in the legislative process

Hon. Mgeni has played a key role in encouraging independent voices for women in legislative initiatives. Thanks to her influence, more women members are now introducing private member motions, a rarity before her leadership. For instance, women have introduced a motion to address the discriminatory constituency fund system, which excludes those who enter the House through affirmative action. Although this motion has been tabled twice without success, it signifies progress toward fairer policies.

Increased representation of women in government and non-government leadership

Furthermore, Hon. Mgeni believes that her consistent push for gender equality in government boards and religious institutions in Zanzibar has been successful in advocating for increased representation of women on government boards. She achieved a significant breakthrough by influencing the appointment of a woman representative in the Office of the Mufti—a traditionally male-dominated religious institution. Her advocacy efforts have also led to the expansion of one-stop centres for GBV victims, ensuring that each district now has at least one centre. These centres provide essential support for survivors, marking a significant step toward addressing GBV in Zanzibar. One of her leadership contributions has been inspiring campaigns and mentorship for women's leadership

during events to mark the 16 Days of Activism against GBV² in Zanzibar. For example, Hon. Mgeni has inspired countless women to actively campaign against gender-based violence in leadership. In this way, her commitment to mentorship extends beyond the House as she encourages young women to pursue leadership roles, even within male-dominated political parties.

What accounts for the success of Hon. Mgeni's leadership journey?

According to Hon. Mgeni, several factors have contributed to her success and achievements in leadership. First, she credited her upbringing. She was raised by two powerful women—her biological mother and her aunt—who both instilled in her a sense of understanding, appreciation of her talents, self-worth and confidence. These qualities are essential in nurturing a young girl's leadership potential. Additionally, the investment in her education contributed to developing her leadership abilities. Friends and colleagues further encouraged her to pursue a political career. She recalled two sets of friends: her workmates in the Commission of Tourism (where she was employed prior to entering politics) and the ordinary women and men with whom she interacted, particularly while working for CSOs. Her exposure to various forums within the country and internationally further highlighted the challenges women face nationally, regionally and globally, stimulating her interest in advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment. The recognition and appreciation of her work by others have also earned her the leadership positions during her career. For example, she acknowledged her political party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), particularly Umoja wa Wanawake (UWT), the women's wing of the party, which identified her talents and nominated her through the special seats arrangement to represent institutions of higher learning in the Parliament of the URT.

²The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign dedicated to raising awareness and taking action to end violence against women and girls. It runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day)

Hon. Mgeni also credits her personal attributes for opening doors throughout her leadership journey. She describes herself as highly passionate and committed person to causes she believes in. Once she starts on a project, she will not settle until she sees it through to a successful conclusion. She also describes herself as down-to-earth and someone who works and socializes well with ordinary women and men at the local level, which has enabled the establishment of trusting relationships with colleagues and community members. Additionally, she consults and seeks advice before making decisions because she believes success or failure is attributed to collective efforts rather than individual ones.

Conclusion: The challenges and contributions of Hon. Mgeni's leadership

Despite her many accomplishments, Hon. Mgeni faces the ongoing challenges common to women leaders, including societal expectations, gender biases and the constant struggle to balance personal and professional commitments. Her experience underscores the difficulties many women face in leadership, where they are often expected to excel without compromising family or community obligations.

In summary, Hon. Mgeni's journey is a testament to the resilience and strength of women in politics. Her leadership has not only paved the way for other women in Zanzibar but also enhanced the inclusivity and responsiveness of the legislative process. By challenging the status quo and empowering other women, she has helped shape a more equitable political landscape in Zanzibar. Hon. Mgeni's story highlights the transformative power of women's leadership and serves as an inspiration to those striving to make a difference in their communities and beyond.

3.3.3 Case Study 3: Hon. Asha-Rose Migiro--Breaking the glass ceiling



Hon. Asha-Rose Migiro's leadership journey began in academia as a university lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of Dar es Salaam. She advanced to become Head of the Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law (1992–1994) and later Head of the Department of Civil and Criminal Law (1994–1997). Her academic expertise and commitment to women's rights led to her appointment to Tanzania's Law Reform Commission in 1997 and, in 2000, to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Despite the prevailing patriarchal attitudes in the legal field, where male colleagues often referred to themselves as “learned brothers,” Dr. Migiro actively advocated for marginalized women's rights by offering legal aid to those who could not afford representation. Through the legal aid scheme, she realized that women's challenges extended beyond legal barriers to include gender-based violence, economic exclusion and limited access to services, and she broadened her focus. She advised women parliamentarians on

interpreting legislation affecting women and children's rights and provided counsel to SUWATA, the economic wing of Umoja wa Wanawake (UWT), expanding her influence beyond traditional legal practice.

Disrupting the politics of exclusion: Research on women in leadership

Dr. Migiro's passion for women's leadership was fueled by her role as a co-researcher in a study on women and leadership in Tanzania. Among the individuals who inspired her was Bibi Titi, an icon of Tanzania's liberation movement. In an interview, Bibi Titi challenged her as a female academic in Tanzania, questioning why documenting the stories of women who had contributed to the struggle for independence had been delayed for so long. This profound encounter and challenge shaped Dr. Migiro's understanding of women's historical contributions, their invisibility and the urgent need to amplify their voices.

Bibi Titi's story further inspired her interest in politics. Bibi Titi challenged the exclusion of women from the story of Tanganyika and later Tanzania's independence struggles. This exclusion of women from historical narratives is a global issue, eloquently articulated by Salami (2022), who noted:

“History is a text on desire. When we learn history, we learn about what generations have fought for, resisted, and dreamed of. But under patriarchal rule, history is largely a text on male desire... It's men's drives that are reflected in the shared human story.”

Navigating the political arena: “If you can't win them, join them.”

In 2000, encouraged by the women she admired, Dr. Migiro entered politics by winning a parliamentary seat through Tanzania's special seats arrangement. Subsequently, she was appointed Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children (2000–

2005). With no formal orientation, she defined her role through consultation and self-education. Despite resistance from ministry staff who expected her to play a symbolic role, she redefined leadership within the ministry, emphasizing accountability, hard work and active participation in policymaking.

During her tenure, she contributed to renaming of the office from the “Ministry of Community Development, Women Affairs and Children” to the “Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children.” This shift expanded the ministry's mandate to address gender inequalities comprehensively. Her leadership also saw the transformation of the Women and Development Policy (1992) into the National Gender Policy (2000), advocating for the integration of gender equality into policies and development strategies.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation: From conventional to economic diplomacy

From 2006 to 2007, Dr. Migiro served as Tanzania's first female Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Recognizing the changing global landscape, she championed a shift from conventional diplomacy to economic diplomacy, focusing on trade, investment and technology transfer. Under her leadership, a mandatory economic diplomacy course was introduced for diplomats, aligning foreign policy with economic priorities.

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding: The Great Lakes region

As Tanzania's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2007, Dr. Migiro played a pivotal role in mediating conflicts in the Great Lakes region.³ She chaired several regional inter-ministerial meetings on peace and security, culminating in the landmark Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region. Article 11 of the pact addresses the prevention and

³This region, comprising countries in Eastern and Central Africa, has been plagued by conflicts rooted in colonial manipulation and post-colonial power struggles. These conflicts, sustained by a complex web of local and external actors, have caused immense suffering, particularly for women and children.

suppression of sexual violence against women and children, a critical issue both in peacetime and during conflict. Due to her engagement in peacebuilding initiatives in the Great Lakes Zone, Hon. Asha-Rose Migiro was appointed President of the Security Council meetings debating the issue of security in the Great Lakes Region.

Engagement with peacebuilding initiatives in SADC

Hon. Migiro was also involved in peacebuilding initiatives in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as the chair of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation. This body was established with a mandate to promote peace and security in the SADC region as a prerequisite for achieving the region’s objectives of socio-economic development, poverty eradication and regional integration, as outlined in the SADC Vision 2050. It covers the following six areas:

- Politics and diplomacy
- Defense
- State security
- Public security
- Regional peacebuilding
- Police

Breaking the glass ceiling: Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

Dr. Migiro’s engagement in the peacebuilding process in the Great Lakes Region and her active involvement in the SADC region highlighted her leadership capabilities and traits on the global stage, leading to her appointment in 2007 as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. She said:

“I was the third person, and the first African woman, to be appointed as the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General since the establishment of the position in 1997.”

This appointment was a historic moment, not only for Africa but particularly for African and Tanzanian women, as she shattered long-standing stereotypes about women in leadership at the highest levels. The Office of Deputy Secretary-General was established with a mandate to support the United Nations Secretariat’s operations to ensure coherence of activities and programs. Some of her duties included:

- Assisting the Secretary-General in managing the operations of the Secretariat
- Acting for the Secretary-General at the UN headquarters in the absence of the Secretary-General
- Supporting the Secretary-General in ensuring inter-sectorial and inter-institutional coherence of activities and programs, in addition to supporting efforts to elevate the UN’s profile and leadership in the economic and social spheres, including strengthening the UN as a leading center for development policy and assistance.

Establishment of UN Women

One of her proudest achievements during her tenure as Deputy Secretary-General was her role in the creation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, commonly known as UN Women. UN Women was established as an entity to support member states in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. It focuses on five priority areas:

- Increasing women’s participation and leadership
- Ending violence against women
- Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes
- Enhancing women’s economic empowerment
- Making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

During its launch, Hon. Asha-Rose emphasized: “UN Women will give women and girls the strong, unified voice they deserve on the world stage. I look forward to seeing this new entity up and running so that we—women and men—can move forward together to achieve the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women and girls, everywhere.”⁴

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, during the launch, echoed similar sentiments, acknowledging the significant strides made in promoting gender equality through the creation of UN Women. Dr. Migiro’s contributions to this global entity remain a unique legacy, benefiting women and girls around the world.

Coordination of UN agencies: “Delivering as One”

The second area that Dr. Migiro is proud to have helped architect was her role in the UN’s “Delivering as One” pilot initiative, which aimed to improve and strengthen the coordination of UN agencies at the country level. Coordinated by the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Migiro was directly engaged with the eight countries that volunteered to participate in the pilot: Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Vietnam. Designed around four key principles—one leader, one program, one budget, and where necessary, one office—the goal of the approach was to make UN activities at the country level more effective, efficient, coherent and coordinated.

What accounted for Hon. Migiro’s professional success?

Hon. Migiro attributed her success and achievements to the factors, including her personal attributes, which are revealed in the following quotes:

- **Result-oriented:** She said, “Within me, there are things I wish to see happen (king’ang’amizi). I will work for them to the end, not for fame or power, but for a cause I believe in. By so doing, when the results are good, it makes you visible and increases your chances of advancing.”
- **Attention to detail:** “People call me a ‘perfectionist,’ but I see myself as thorough. I pay attention to details, which adds value to what I do. The end product is of high quality, and this often opens doors to various opportunities.”
- **Time management:** “If you want things done perfectly, you need to manage time well. But time management must be institutionalized, as the workplace requires everyone to accomplish a task.”
- **Lifelong learning:** “In most of the positions I’ve held, I’ve needed to learn from everybody, regardless of their social position or status in a given context. This attribute has enabled me to navigate challenging situations, such as being a politician, a minister, understanding the UN system, and personal development.”
- **Hard work:** “When I was appointed Minister of Community Development, Gender and Children, my staff often reminded me that I was a politician, not a civil servant, and wasn’t expected to report early to the office. But I continued my usual routine of early arrival, which instilled self-discipline among the staff.”

Additionally, she credited her legal training and exposure to liberation philosophies for equipping her

⁴UN Women. UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women. United Nations Press Release, New York, 2 July 2010. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Media/Stories/en/UNWomenPressRelease201007021pdf.pdf>

with tools to manage conflict and address and build peace and justice from a gender perspective.

In summary, Hon. Asha-Rose Migiro's leadership journey—from academia to the global stage—has left an indelible mark on national, regional and international platforms. It highlights the transformative potential of women in leadership. Her story demonstrates that addressing gender discrimination is not only a matter of human rights but also key to unlocking innovative leadership for national, regional and global development.

3.3.4 Case study 4: Eng. Mwajuma Waziri, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water (URT)



Eng. Mwajuma Waziri is the Permanent Secretary of Tanzania's Ministry of Water, responsible for overseeing the Ministry's functions at the policy and strategic levels. As Permanent Secretary, she is also the Chief Accounting Officer and the overall overseer of the Ministry's human resources and administrative affairs. In a tone reflecting both her confidence and humility,

Eng. Waziri said:

"I am a living legacy in the field of water engineering in the country. ... If you talk about engineers in the water sector, there is nobody in this field who does not know me."

Eng. Mwajuma began her career in the private sector as a Project Engineer at Don Consultant Limited, responsible for consultancy and construction services from 2008 to 2011. She joined the public service in 2013. Prior to her current role, she served as:

- Water Engineer, Masasi District Council under the President's Office-Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG);
- Water Engineer and Coordinator of the Simiyu Climate Resilience Project, Ministry of Water;
- Water Engineer in charge of Government-Funded Projects, Ministry of Water;
- Assistant Director of Water Supply and Sanitation, Operations and Maintenance, Ministry of Water;
- Assistant Director of Water Supply and Sanitation, Design and Construction Management, Ministry of Water from 2020 to 2023, during which time she managed multi-million-dollar mega water supply projects across the country;
- Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Water in 2023 (a position held for one year) prior to her current promotion to Permanent Secretary.

At a technical level, Eng. Mwajuma Waziri is a seasoned Tanzanian Water Resources Civil Engineer with wealth of experience spanning over a decade. Specializing in water engineering, she commands a comprehensive set of skills including engineering design, technical specifications, construction works, tendering and

evaluation aligning seamlessly with both international and local standards.

"What I am really proud of," said Mwajuma Waziri, "is my ability to translate theoretical knowledge into real-life practice." This was only possible because she allowed herself to learn in the field. She has trained many engineers throughout the country to conduct appraisals of water projects. Previously, the practice was to hire consultants to conduct appraisals for village-level water projects. Mwajuma is confident that she has transformed this practice, which was an additional cost to the government. From her point of view, she was able to transfer and use the knowledge acquired from her private sector experience to the public sector, thereby enabling her and the engineers she trained to translate their theoretical knowledge into practical expertise. According to Mwajuma, when she joined the public sector, she realized that the work ethics in the government service were different from those in the private sector. When she joined the PO-RALG at the district level, she was not a leader, but she quickly became known to everybody in the district council, including the District Director, because of her performance. Upon transferring to the Ministry of Water, she worked in a department dealing with rural water supply. Recognizing her capabilities, her immediate supervisor in the Ministry decided to load her with many responsibilities, including tasks that he was supposed to handle himself. She was often sent to deal with difficult and challenging situations.

However, hard work did not translate into material remuneration. Coming from the private sector, she was forced to start at a lower level than her colleagues who had joined the public sector directly from university, despite holding a master's degree in Water Resources Engineering from UDSM and being a registered Professional Engineer. But she decided not to fight

for this but to do her job and let her performance speak for itself. Subsequently, she was awarded the "Champion Woman" award in the field of engineering at the country level by the Engineers Registration Board, and, at the continental level, she came second. As mentioned above, after a few years of work, she was promoted to Assistant Director, then Deputy Permanent Secretary, and finally Permanent Secretary. According to Mwajuma, leadership should result from an individual's performance, not from reward. But certainly, for women, it is a different story.

What accounts for her success?

Eng. Mwajuma said she was inspired by her mother. Despite many challenges, her mother was able to invest in her daughter's education and encouraged Mwajuma to work hard to succeed in her studies. She further acknowledged the individuals who spotted her talents and encouraged and promoted her to more senior leadership positions. Finally, Eng. Mwajuma considers herself as a team builder, strategist and inspirational leader. Over the course of her professional career, she has undertaken multiple leadership roles and successfully accomplished many high-level, complex projects.

⁶In November 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) issued the Education Circular No. 2/2021 expressing the government will to readmit drop out students back to formal schooling. Then, in February 2022, the Ministry issued a Re-Entry Guideline for Students who dropped out of Primary and Secondary School. See <https://campaignforeducation.org/images/downloads/f6/1784/reworked-tenmet-re-entry-policy-brief.pdf>

3.3.5 Case study 5: Ms. Neema Mwakalyelye: Deputy Director, Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB)



Introducing herself, Neema Mwakalyelye said:

“I am a Principal Officer skilled in areas of ICT, leadership and governance. I also have extensive experience in deploying digital platforms to improve institutional capacity and governance. I am a leader who has led various committees and teams, particularly in matters related to public procurement, integrity and strategic planning. Over the course of my career, I have acquired and developed competencies in areas such as systems analysis, ICT management, strategic planning and management, project management, stakeholder engagement, coaching and mentoring, and public speaking.”

Her leadership journey

Neema’s leadership journey in public service began as the Head of the Management Information System (MIS) Unit at the PCCB from 2009 to 2020, a unit later renamed the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Unit. Her main responsibilities

included overseeing more than 130 offices within a private and secure telecommunications network, enabling seamless communication between investigation teams and other official matters. She was also responsible for the design and development of PCCB’s electronic Corruption Reporting System and several back-office applications, positioning PCCB at the forefront of electronic platforms for preventing and combating corruption. Additionally, she was part of the teams responsible for developing ICT Security Policies for the Tanzania Financial Intelligence Unit, PCCB and the Ethics Secretariat.

From 2020 to 2021, Neema served as Senior Directing Staff at the National Defense College Tanzania. Her responsibilities included mentoring senior government officials to enhance their strategic thinking, strategy formulation and implementation capabilities in matters related to national security.

Currently, Neema is the Deputy Director at PCCB. Her main responsibilities include assisting the Director General and overseeing community education, ICT, internal affairs (staff integrity) and estate management functions.

Contributing to the creation of departmental vision

According to Neema, her appointment as Head of the MIS Unit was a welcome opportunity as it gave her the opportunity to be part of the team responsible for “creating the vision for the institution” in terms of the direction it was going to take in using ICT to curb corruption. She was even more encouraged because the Director General had given her the freedom to design the strategy for the Unit. She also wanted the formulation of the vision to be a shared process with colleagues to ensure sustainability, ownership and collective accountability.

Building team spirit amidst unspoken tensions

When Neema was appointed as Head of MIS, she did not immediately realize that tensions existed regarding her recruitment from outside the institution. She later learned that some of her colleagues were initially skeptical about her appointment as vacancies were typically filled by staff within the institution. Sensing the tension, she set about finding ways to address the concerns. To start, she organized a series of meetings and consultations to plan and design a strategic roadmap for the ICT Unit as part of attaining the vision of the PCCB. The developed strategy focused on:

- Creating governance structures to ensure that ICT projects were owned and approved by management;
- Establishing infrastructural facilities within the agency to facilitate internal communication;
- Creating appropriate systems to support PCCB functions; and
- Enhancing the capacity of officers within the agency to support the infrastructure and use the systems.

Fortunately for Neema, the top management had granted her the freedom to come up with innovative strategies to build the ICT Unit. Once the strategy was approved, she organized her staff into teams, each responsible for ensuring the success of the strategy. Every team member could clearly articulate their role in achieving the desired result. The intention was to build consensus among her colleagues so that, at the end of the day, they would collectively own the strategy, share the gains and account for mistakes or challenges. It did not take long to build trust and team spirit, though new challenges emerged regarding the use of new systems. Some departments wanted to retain control over their own systems, and, in other cases, staff were unwilling to transition from traditional paper-based methods. It took years of training, customization, upgrades and

dialogues to reach the current setting whereby most of the Bureau’s activities are enabled by ICT. Neema believes these efforts supported the restructuring of the PCCB, which included recognition of the Head of the ICT Unit as a Director.

Transforming disciplinary approaches

Neema is also proud of her contribution to the transformation of disciplinary approaches for staff who engaged in unethical conduct. As a law enforcement agency, PCCB staff are expected to have high moral standards and personal integrity. Therefore, when individuals fall into conflict with the law, rules or regulations, the authorities are expected to take stern measures, including dismissal, when necessary. After an in-depth consultative process, Neema and her colleagues concluded that dismissal was not addressing the root cause of the problem. They also considered the impact of terminating an employee’s formal employment, not only on the individual but also on their dependents. Evidence indicated that some terminated employees struggled to reintegrate into society. They all agreed that PCCB was obliged to find lasting solutions to offenses, which should include corrective and preventive measures. This internal dialogue ultimately led to the enhancement of the roles of Integrity Committees and the recent formation of social welfare desks. The goal of the social welfare desks is to equip employees with professional psychologists and experts to support their professional and personal growth, thereby minimizing unethical conduct and helping achieve organizational goals.

Building a learning culture

Another area in which Neema has strived to make an impact is enhancing a learning culture. Neema believes in continuous learning—from books, individuals and institutions. She believes that no one can claim to know everything at any stage of their life. Neema

has a rich, multi-disciplinary background, starting with a first degree in Computer Science, a Master of Strategic and Security Studies, a Master of Science in Information Technology and Management, and a Diploma in Leadership from the Uongozi Institute and Aalto University. Neema is of the view that, for women, learning and capacity enhancement are crucial for building confidence, enhancing self-esteem and providing the right tools for leadership and management. Therefore, she seizes every opportunity to learn, understand and address issues, and encourages colleagues to search for knowledge. She shared an example of a conversation with a colleague who told her, “*Neema, you are very intelligent.*” Her reply was, “*No, you are actually more intelligent than I am; the only difference is I invest a lot of time studying, searching for knowledge, and gathering information.*” She further explained, “*In an exam, I might get an ‘A’ while you come out with a ‘C.’ This is because I spent more time studying while you took things easy, which resulted in your ‘C’.*” From her perspective, women in particular need to build a learning culture to enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem, which opens doors for upward mobility.

Neema has also taken personal initiatives to support and mentor women, particularly younger women entering the job market. She encourages them to read, attend courses and accept leadership positions when available, both within their institutions and elsewhere. However, she noted that, for some women, professional advancement is not about their capacity to lead but the weight of the family responsibilities they carry, which may require them to sacrifice their roles as mothers,

wives or caregivers for personal development. According to Neema, this issue requires broader discussions beyond the workplace.

3.3.6 Case study 6: Dr. Lucy Shule, Director of Studies, National Defense College—Tanzania



Dr. Lucy Shule, Director of Studies at the National Defense College (NDC), is an academic with extensive experience in teaching, research and publications. She has taught courses at different institutions on many subjects including: conflict resolution and security, multilateral conference diplomacy, international political economy, international relations, Tanzania's foreign policy, diplomacy and protocol, African international relations and diplomacy, and the Defense and Security Management Programme.

As a researcher, she has conducted various studies on topics such as patterns of accountability in Tanzania and gender equity in Commonwealth higher education research, which used UDSM as a case study. Additionally, she has participated in designing courses and developing programs and curricula, including the Master of Arts course in African International Relations and Diplomacy for the Open University of Tanzania, and the Bachelor of Arts degree curriculum in International Relations and Diplomacy for the Salim Ahmed Salim Centre for Foreign Relations. She also contributed to designing a competence-based curriculum training for the Tanzania National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET). Some of her papers include: *Gender Perspectives in Civil-Military Relations*, a presentation used as part of the Executive Course in Defense and Security Management and *The Challenges of Affirmative Action in Tanzanian Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of the University of Dar es Salaam*.⁵

While working as a researcher at the Dar es Salaam sub-center of the Southern African Defense and Security Network, Dr. Shule was responsible for developing short courses for senior officers from Tanzania's defense and security organs. In this role, she successfully persuaded her colleagues to introduce gender aspects into civil-military relations training and advocated for the inclusion of more female senior officers from the defense and security sectors in the training.

Gender mainstreaming in security and strategic studies training

Dr. Shule commented that “*Mainstreaming gender in the security and strategic studies training curriculum has resulted from collective decision-making processes in the college.*” She declined to take credit for introducing gender aspects and increasing the number of women guest lecturers in security and strategic

studies, because she believed this was the result of collective decision-making processes. Nonetheless, she has played an instrumental role, using her soft skills of negotiating, persuasiveness, politeness and listening to incorporate gender topics into the program and gender perspectives into the security field more broadly, which is traditionally male dominated. These are significant achievements especially given that the NDC is an rules-based and command-driven inter-services institution guided by military rules and regulations. In her role as Director of Studies, she has created a learning environment that is increasingly attracting training participants from other African nations.

Dr. Shule's success in convincing her colleagues to mainstream gender in military training as well as security studies is a unique contribution given the role of defense and security in protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations. While the sovereignty of states is paramount, the foundations of peace rest on the personal security and well-being of individual citizens, including women. Secure homes lead to collective desire to safeguard the territorial integrity and security of a nation. This underscores the need to sensitize defense, security and civilian officers, particularly those of higher rank in decision-making roles, to be sensitive to gender-related security and strategic issues. In this, she believes that the NDC course is significantly contributing to changing the mindset of the senior officers. She said:

“I have been running the gender course for the past four years, and I can tell, after each session, the participants come out with new set of knowledge, sensitivity as they broaden their understanding of security matters beyond the territorial state.”

⁵This paper was co-authored with Amandina Lihamba and Rose Mwaipopo. See Women's Studies International Forum, 29, 2006, 581-591.

Re-entry Policy and Guidelines for girls who drop out of school

Dr. Lucy further described being part of the team that developed the national Re-entry Policy and Guidelines,⁶ which allows re-entry to school for girls into the formal education system who had dropped out for any reason, including pregnancy.

What accounts for Dr. Shule’s success?

Dr. Lucy Shule, was inspired by both of her parents. Her mother instilled a strict sense of time management, while her father’s mantra, “I know, I need, and I can” (“Najua, nataka, naweza”), became a lifelong guiding principle. For Lucy, it fostered a strong sense of accountability and commitment, reminding her to take full responsibility for the outcomes of her work.

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⁶In November 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) issued the Education Circular No. 2/2021 expressing the government will to readmit drop out students back to formal schooling. Then, in February 2022, the Ministry issued a Re-Entry Guideline for Students who dropped out of Primary and Secondary School. See <https://campaignforeducation.org/images/downloads/f6/1784/reworked-tenmet-re-entry-policy-brief.pdf>

4

Study conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Study conclusions

The following key issues emerged from the testimony of the 55 women leaders interviewed.

4.1.1 Transformative contributions of women leaders

This study reaffirms the critical importance of gender diversity in leadership by highlighting the unique and transformative contributions women bring to leadership spaces. Attributes such as empathy, collaboration and resilience—often under-appreciated in traditional leadership discourses—are shown to be vital for fostering inclusive governance and addressing complex societal challenges. The findings emphasize that ignoring these qualities in leadership narratives not only limits the full potential of women leaders but also hinders the broader societal and organizational progress they could drive. Recognizing and leveraging these attributes is essential to advancing inclusive and sustainable growth and innovation.

4.1.2 Value of qualitative methodologies in leadership research

The use of case studies as a research methodology added immense value to this study, enabling women leaders to share deeply personal insights within their lived experiences, strategies for overcoming systemic barriers, and the transformative nature of their contributions. Unlike traditional methodologies, case studies provided a flexible and intimate platform, fostering openness and authenticity. These qualitative insights underscore the holistic value of women’s leadership and offer invaluable guidance for designing responsive policies that promote gender equity. This approach not only enriched the research process but also shed light on the nuances of women’s leadership that are often overlooked in conventional studies.

4.1.3 Evidence of the dual work burden faced by women leaders

The study reveals the dual burden faced by women leaders, who often balance professional demands with caregiving and societal expectations. Many women shared the emotional, physical and mental resilience required to excel under these conditions, often at significant personal cost. Without robust institutional and societal support, this burden risks diminishing their long-term effectiveness and engagement in leadership roles. Therefore, the establishment of wellness and care support systems is critical to sustain women’s leadership potential and ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making positions.

4.1.4 Influence on policy and social justice

Women leaders play a pivotal role in driving policy transformation and advocating for social justice. By leveraging collaborative approaches and emotional intelligence, they challenge hierarchical structures and promote equity across sectors. Their capacity to reshape organizational cultures and influence systemic change highlights the need for greater investment in recognizing and nurturing these qualities. Promoting these transformative leadership styles is essential for advancing more inclusive and equitable societies.

4.1.5 Resilience and problem-solving in male-dominated fields

The resilience and creativity demonstrated by women in male-dominated fields are key assets that enrich organizational cultures and governance. These contributions underscore the importance of policies and programs that not only dismantle systemic barriers but also amplify women’s leadership potential. Mentorship, capacity-building initiatives and wellness support are vital in nurturing young women as future leaders and equipping them to navigate and excel in these challenging spaces.

In summary, this study amplifies the voices of women leaders and emphasizes their transformative potential in leadership spaces. By focusing on their qualitative contributions and recognizing the unique attributes they bring—hard work, empathy, emotional intelligence, collaborative decision-making and resilience—the study underscores the strategic necessity of integrating these qualities into leadership discourses.

Addressing systemic barriers and nurturing women's leadership is not just a matter of equity but a crucial step toward achieving sustainable development, innovation and inclusive governance in Tanzania and beyond.

4.2 General recommendations

Both the general recommendations in this section and those specific to UONGOZI Institute in the next section emphasize the transformative potential of women's leadership attributes and the value of qualitative research in shaping leadership discourses.

4.2.1 Implementation of gender-sensitive policies

Governments and organizations need to recognize the unique attributes women bring to leadership, such as empathy, collaboration and resilience. Embedding these qualities into gender-sensitive policies will not only promote equity but also enhance organizational effectiveness.

4.2.2 Structured mentorship and capacity building

Mentorship programs should not only prepare women for leadership but also address the systemic undervaluation of their contributions. These programs should incorporate training on leveraging women's leadership qualities to foster innovation and inclusiveness.

4.2.3 Educational campaigns to raise awareness and shift societal norms

Educational and media campaigns should explicitly highlight the transformative potential of women's leadership to challenge prevailing stereotypes and inspire future generations to embrace gender-inclusive leadership.

4.2.4 Promoting collective leadership models

Leadership models that emphasize collaboration over competition should be promoted. Women leaders, through their natural predisposition for empathy and teamwork, are well-positioned to lead these models to drive inclusive, sustainable development.

4.2.5 Wellness and resilience programs

Institutions must prioritize wellness and resilience programs tailored for women leaders, addressing their dual responsibilities and ensuring they have the resources to thrive. Such programs are essential for preventing burnout and sustaining their contributions.

4.3 Recommendations for UONGOZI Institute

4.3.1 Mainstream gender in leadership training

UONGOZI Institute should embed modules on women's unique leadership attributes—such as empathy, problem-solving, collaboration and resilience—into its training programs. These modules should also address systemic barriers and gender biases in leadership spaces. Case studies from this research can serve as powerful tools for illustrating the value of gender-aware leadership. These real-world stories can inspire actionable strategies for navigating systemic barriers and achieving impactful leadership outcomes.

4.3.2 Develop a gender-focused research agenda

The Institute's research agenda should prioritize studies on women's leadership contributions and the systemic barriers they face. By using qualitative methods such as case studies, UONGOZI can amplify the transformative insights women leaders provide. An annual Gender and Leadership Report could track progress in achieving gender equity across various sectors, helping guide future programs and policies.

4.3.3 Highlight the value of qualitative research

UONGOZI should lead by example in embracing qualitative research methodologies, such as case studies, to uncover nuanced insights into women's leadership. These findings can shape training programs, influence policy discourse and contribute to broader societal transformations in leadership practices.

4.3.4 Strengthen gender knowledge and skills among Institute management and staff

To champion the recommendations of this report effectively, a comprehensive gender capacity-building program should be implemented for the Institute's Board of Directors, management and staff to deepen their understanding of gender dynamics in leadership and equip them to lead by example. This internal commitment will enhance their ability to advocate for and implement gender-sensitive policies and programs within the Institute and in partnership with external stakeholders.

By taking concrete steps to strengthen its capacity for gender advocacy and implementation, UONGOZI will affirm and reinforce its role as a champion for inclusive and transformative leadership.

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Annexes

Annex 1: International instruments that affirm women’s rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948): This instrument provides the foundation for equality of persons as it affirms the principle of “inadmissibility of discrimination” and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex (see Preamble, paragraph 1, and Articles 2 and 7). Article 21.1 further states “Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”

The Convention on Political Rights of Women (1952) is one of the earliest international instruments to focus on women’s political rights. The preamble affirms that “everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives, and has the right to equal access to public service in his country, and desiring to equalize the status of men and women in the enjoyment and exercise of political rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Article 3 further states “Women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.”

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981) (CEDAW) provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women’s equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and to stand for election. It further emphasizes that “discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity” (Preamble, paragraph 7).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1990): While the convention focuses on children who have not reached the age of majority which would have allowed them to participate in leadership, it nonetheless provides a foundation principle of nondiscrimination which is vital throughout the lifecycle of a woman. It also provides a basis upon which children, both girls and boys, are allowed to fully develop their talents, including leadership talents. The need to nurture leadership potential from childhood is underscored. This is clearly articulated in paragraph 7 of the preamble which states “Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.” Article 28 provides for equality in to education: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.” Education is a foundation and a tool for building leadership skills. While Article 29 provides: 1: “States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- a. The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- b. The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- c. The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin .”

The **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** commits to addressing core issues of gender equality and discriminatory practices While most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have gender equality implications, a number of the goals are more explicit in targeting women and leadership.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality edution and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education is a key to unlocking women’s leadership potential.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This is critical in promoting women in leadership.

Goal 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. Policy and legal frameworks provide a foundation for advocating and advancing women’s participation in leadership.

Target 5.5. Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life. This is directly relevant to the initiatives of promoting women in leadership spaces.

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries. This includes addressing gender disparities in opportunities and outcomes.

Target 10.2. By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Target 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Target 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

Target 16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development. In addition to the global standards/instruments, there are Regional Instruments which translate the international instruments into regional commitments for promoting women in leadership spaces on equal footing with men. These include :

Annex 2: Regional and national instruments in Africa for women’s rights

The **Constitutive Act of the African Union (2002)** recognizes that freedom, equality, justice, peace and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples. Promoting gender equality is one of the spelt-out principles.

The **African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights’ (ACHPR)** and the **Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa, popularly referred to as the Maputo Protocol (2003)**, are instruments particularly relevant for gender equality in leadership. In the Preamble of the Protocol, States Parties are:

“FIRMLY CONVINCED that any practice that hinders or endangers the normal growth and affects the physical and psychological development of women and girls should be condemned and eliminated;

DETERMINED to ensure that the rights of women are promoted, realised and protected in order to enable them to enjoy fully all their human rights.”

Article IX RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that:
 - a) Women participate without any discrimination in all elections;
 - b) Women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes;
 - c) Women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programs.
2. States Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want adopted in 2013 is dedicated to realizing 7 central aspirations. Most of these aspirations have a gender equality implication while Aspiration 3 affirms the goal of gender equality and Aspiration 6 specifically seeks for Africa to be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded.

Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Paragraph 28. We aspire that by 2063, Africa will:

- Be a continent where democratic values, culture, practices, universal principles of human rights, gender equality, justice and the rule of law are entrenched; and
- Have capable institutions and transformative leadership in place at all levels.

Aspiration 6: An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

Paragraph 47. Africa shall be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded, on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation, locality, age or other factors.

Paragraph 48. All the citizens of Africa are actively involved in decision making in all aspects of development, including social, economic, political and environmental.

Paragraph 50. The African woman will be fully empowered in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights, including the rights to own and inherit property, sign contracts, register and manage businesses.

The **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development** was adopted in August 2008 and came into force in 2013. Fourteen Member States (including Tanzania) are party to the Protocol. The Protocol was revised in 2016 to align it to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Targets, Agenda 2063, and the Beijing Plus 20 Review Report. Twelve Member States have signed the Agreement Amending the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, including Tanzania. The objective of the Protocol is to provide for the empowerment of women, as well as to eliminate discrimination and achieve gender equality and equity through development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programs and projects in the SADC region. The Protocol also seeks to harmonize the various international, continental and regional gender equality instruments that SADC Member States have subscribed to such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and its Platform of Action, The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) amongst others. Therefore, the Protocol consolidates and creates synergies between various commitments on gender equality and women’s empowerment into one comprehensive regional instrument that enhances the capacity to plan, implement and monitor the SADC Gender agenda effectively.

Provisions in national constitutions

Lastly, most African countries have national instruments and/or legislation which provide for equal participation of women in leadership spaces. For example, the **1977 Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania** provides for equal participation of women and men fully in all aspects of the political process. In its preamble the Tanzanian constitution provides for recognition of equality of persons. Additionally:

Paragraph 9 provides for respect for human rights as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It requires government and all institutions to provide for equal opportunity for both women and men. Paragraph 21 affirms that every citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania has a right to participate in the governance of the country directly or through their elected representative. Paragraph 22 provides for equality of opportunity and equal rights through equal terms and conditions to hold public office.

Furthermore, the constitution through various amendments provides for affirmative actions to rectify historical gender imbalances in women’s access to representative organs of state such as parliament and local council (URT 1998, 2005)

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