**NEWS ARTICLE**

Zutari embraces equity and co-creates equal opportunities for all

**9 March 2023:** Leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory firm [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com) values contrasting voices, alternative perspectives and insights into different cultures. It is in this space that new insights become shared goals and a unique sense of community is formed. Zutari fully supports the vision of a non-racial and non-sexist inclusive democracy by co-creating opportunities for all. On the occasion of [International Women’s Day](https://www.internationalwomensday.com/) on 8 March, under the theme of #EmbraceEquity, we talk to five trailblazing women at Zutari about the impact it has on local communities and how this reflects its broader values of diversity and inclusion.

**Andile Maphumulo, Senior Consultant, Communication and Stakeholder Engagement (Management & Sustainability), Zutari**

Andile describes herself as a jack of all trades when it comes to communication, stakeholder engagement, community development, socioeconomic development and enterprise development. She is often the interface between the client and the community, which many companies use as a branding space. However, Zutari co-creates impact. “We are involved with the community at a grassroots level. It is fascinating to see the actual impact we make on a day-to-day basis, and with each and every single project we undertake.”

The culture at Zutari is diverse and inclusive and supports its employees in everything they do. “It is a blessing to be part of that big vision because we have a real impact that affects people’s lives. It is close to my heart that Zutari co-creates mechanisms to leave a lasting impact and legacy.”

Herself hailing from a small village environment, Andile says this experience gives her a unique insight. “I have established relationships that are beneficial to Zutari to bring its expertise to bear, while being mindful and respectful of the local community’s customs/traditions and expectations. That all goes back to the brand and its values.”

**Betsey Mathew, Senior People Business Partner, Zutari**

Betsey oversees the HR function in the Middle East, managing the lifecycle of about 200 employees. The region is the work-winning engine for the company, which then gets transferred to the Global Design Centre in Cape Town. She says Zutari is defined by its culture, and that culture is underpinned by the Zutari Codes.

“It is something I am very passionate about as it embeds what we stand for in the form of simple aphorisms like ‘we are one’, ‘show grit’, ‘foster trust’, ‘own it’ and ‘get things done’. These simple catchphrases go a long way,” says Betsey, as they allow for dialogue and a consistent message throughout the company.

Commenting on the IWD 2023 theme of #EmbraceEquity, Betsey says the theme itself reflects how International Women’s Day has evolved. “It is an interesting theme this year. Equity is not only to ensure gender equality or equal opportunities. We have come a long way. Now it is about equal metrics where I am measured against the same targets as another person would be. As a woman, and especially as a woman of colour, I do not expect softer or harsher targets because of who I am. I wear my colour with pride.”

**Mercy Kariu, Structural Revit Technician in the Built Environment Unit, Zutari**

Mercy’s role is more commonly referred to as a BIM coordinator. “I am fortunate enough to work in an environment that allows multidisciplinary engineering,” she says. She manages and coordinates the benefits of BIM for the entire team and manages the information produced and how it is shared. “It is very exciting to be at the cutting edge of everything that is changing in terms of technology.”

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, Mercy says her role has been profoundly facilitated by advancing technology. “I get to work with people in South Africa and elsewhere. It is a dream come true because I get to learn about how people work in other countries and their different policies, regulations, codes and standards.”

Mercy’s interpretation of #EmbraceEquity is that there is no longer any need for her to be considered differently from her male counterparts or not afforded the same opportunities. “When that is achieved, I am able to prove myself as I am in an environment where different standards are not set according to my gender, colour or background. It is a fair and level playing field in terms of opportunity and career development.”

**Selicia Pillay, Structural Engineer in the Global Design Centre (Built Environment), Zutari**

As a Structural Engineer, most of Selicia’s projects are Australia based. “I am lucky to have been exposed to world-class projects, which you would not get in any other company, and that is exciting. It opens up your mind to different technical skills and ways of work. However, it all comes down to having a good technical foundation, as it does not matter in what country you work in.” Selicia says there is a social aspect as well due to the exposure to different cultures.

On certain projects she communicates directly with various stakeholders in different time zones. “Having that exposure and liaising with stakeholders is a great experience, as it shows how resilient and adaptable the Zutari culture is.”

This has been a mindset change accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. “We were compelled to stay at home and make it work. We were literally working on exceptional projects which seemed almost surreal considering we were working from home.”

Having started at Zutari immediately upon graduating, one of Selicia’s first projects was the iconic 16 on Bree high-rise residential building in Cape Town. Given she has only been with the company five years, she is grateful for the extensive experience she has garnered to date, including being able to go to site on local projects, and being exposed to a range of digital tools that allows Zutari to deliver projects ‘virtually’ anywhere in the world.

“I do not think there is anything like seeing something you have designed come to life, which for me is one of my highlights. I am amazed at what I have accomplished thus far, and thankful for Zutari showing me what I am capable of achieving,” says Selicia.

#EmbraceEquity simply means being on a similar footing to her peers. “I have worked hard to be where I am and do not want to be granted concessions only because I am a woman. However, there are still systemic barriers and glass ceilings in place.” Yet in the early stage of her career, Selicia says she has already observed a marked difference.

“I would still like to see an equal number of women in leadership positions, which is a glass ceiling that needs to be broken. I think we are headed in the right direction, but we must work to break those barriers,” says Selicia. Another obstacle is unconscious bias, which the Zutari culture actively mitigates by equipping all with an equal voice.

**Blanché Hanstein-Kaber, Country Manager: Namibia, Zutari**

Blanché began her career at the company as a Structural Technician. Persuaded to continue her studies, she achieved her BTech in 2009, laying the foundation for her largely technical role. However, in 2018 she was approached to apply for the position of Country Manager of the Namibia office.

“I was completely taken aback as it was so unexpected. I was in a technical field and had no managerial experience. However, Zutari management said they saw potential and that it was not about experience,” says Blanché. She took them up the offer, starting what she describes as an incredible journey.

Blanché attended the Women in Leadership Roles programme in Cape Town, which she says went a long way to instilling confidence in herself. In April she graduates from the 18-month Adaptive Leadership Course. She says the leadership training offered by Zutari has been exemplary, benefiting her in her management role and in her personal life.

Blanché concurs that #EmbraceEquity means equal opportunities for all. “I myself have walked that journey and observed that the company is open to that. The opportunities are there. It is just a matter of grabbing hold of them. I am passionate about the Zutari Code stating that ‘we are one’. It does not matter who we are, we are all treated the same and are all connected together, which is how we embrace equity,” concludes Blanché.

***Ends***

**Notes to the Editor**To download hi-res images for this news article, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the Zutari link to view the company’s press office.

**About Zutari**

As an engineering and advisory firm, we believe infrastructure has unparalleled potential to create enduring impact. Never more relevant, this potential can be realised only if we plan, design, deliver and manage infrastructure in ways that maximise its value. Our work in water, transport, energy, resources, and built-environment infrastructure does just this – helping to nurture thriving communities, growing economies, and healthy environments.

At Zutari we understand that radical impact doesn’t just happen; it requires more of us to connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted.

**We connect differently**. Our broad collective of in-house experts connects across traditional disciplines to provide integrated results. We collaborate with clients, partners, and end-users, leaning into diverse perspectives to create superior solutions - together.

**We work smarter**. Our people lead the industry. We draw from deep technical skills, accrued over decades, and embrace the transformative power of digital technology to find simpler, better, and more innovative ways to deliver value.

**We stay rooted**. Few can rival our local capacity and understanding. Building on solid foundations, now 90 years in the making, we are trusted to shape locally relevant solutions through our extensive footprint in Africa and the Middle East.

At Zutari our people connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted. Working in this way, we reliably deliver impact through infrastructure, making the world a better place – one project at a time.

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