

More must be done for women empowerment

While the country has made strides in women empowerment, government says it would like to see more being done in the judiciary and the private sector.



Bathabile Dlamini wants to see the private sector doing more to empower women in South Africa. Image: GCS

"To date, we have very few women judges - one judge president and only two women judges in the Constitutional Court," said Social Development Minister Bathabile Dlamini.

Addressing a post-State of the Nation (SONA) Social Protection and Community Development Cluster briefing, the minister noted that generally, South Africa's performance on gender equality was commendable.

She cited the Social Institutions and Gender Index of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which ranked South Africa fourth out of the 87 countries in the 2012 index. SA was the top ranked country in Africa.

"On the SADC Gender and Development Index, South Africa was ranked second in 2012, with a score only slightly lower than that of the top performer, Seychelles.

"On the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index, South Africa has consistently remained in the upper echelons, reaching sixth position in 2011," Minister Dlamini said.

"Before 1994, the South African Parliament had a mere 2.7% representation of women. Today, the number of women representatives has increased to 44% in Parliament and 42% in Cabinet," she added.

Dlamini says the country has adopted legislative reforms and developed policies that seek to promote and protect women's

rights in the home, the community and the workplace.

The Domestic Violence Act; Prevention of Family Violence Act; Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act are some of the laws the country has put in place to protect women.

To provide relief to victims of crime and violence, government introduced the Integrated National Policy Guidelines for Victims Empowerment Programme (VEP) in 2009. "The VEP forms an integral part of government's goal of protecting the rights of women and children," she said adding that the programmes focuses on providing services that protect, support and care for victims of crime and violence.

The department, in partnership with the Vodacom Foundation and other stakeholders, has launched a 24-hour Command Centre as a pilot project to assist victims of gender-based violence.

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