

Women in Justice

Celebrating Women in Justice

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) joined the country in celebrating women's month and pay tribute to more than 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against the extension of Pass Laws to women. This year's theme for women's month was "A Centenary of Working Together towards Sustainable Women Empowerment and Gender Equality". In line with women's month theme, the department honours and recognises the contribution of women in leadership and the promotion of access to justice.



Nonkululeko
Sindane, Director
General of the DoJ&CD

Ms. Nonkululeko Sindane has proved beyond doubt that women can achieve greater heights in the workplace. She is the first woman to hold the position of the Director-General at the Department of Justice and Constitutional

Development. As the accounting officer in the department, Sindane is tasked with a mammoth responsibility of providing strategic leadership in the protection and promotion of our Constitution.

DoJ&CD is at the cornerstone of constitutional democracy and the custodian of the Constitution which ensures a transformed and accessible justice system for all. As the chair of the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) Cluster departments, the DoJ&CD ensures strengthening the criminal justice system, governance and the rule of law, and the role of the judiciary in the developmental South African state.

Sindane completed her matric at Isibonelo High School, and then admitted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal for legal studies. Her academic qualifications are a true reflection of her ambition to succeed. She holds a Baccalaureus Procuratoris (B PROC), Bachelor of Law (LLB). In 1995, she was admitted as an Attorney, then Admitted Conveyancer in 1996.

Her career history proves that she is a hard worker, as she has occupied various positions in the legal fraternity both private and public sector. Some of the positions she has occupied include, Director: Corporate Governance and Legal Administration, Chief Director: Performance Monitoring and Benchmarking Branch, Deputy Director-General: Shareholder Management and Regulatory Services: Department of Public Enterprises, Deputy Director General: Transport Regulation and Public Entity Oversight, Deputy Director-General: Transport Regulation, Accident and Incident Investigations: Department of Transport, General Manager: Board Secretariat and Legal Services, Arms.cor.

Currently the Director-General in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Ms. Sindane leads the team of more than 18 000 officials. For Sindane, leading such an important department is a commitment and affirmation that she bears no excuses when it comes to improvement of governance and administration within the department.

Some of the main priorities that she is focusing on include improving maintenance and the functioning of the Guardian Fund system in the country. The Director General has worked towards strengthening capacity in strategic areas, mainly those of Finance and Information Communication Technology (ICT) areas so as to ensure that the department continues to provide accessible justice for all. ■



The face at the
forefront of legislation
development in the
country

The proportion of women in executive management positions in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) continues to increase steadily as women continue

to play a much more significant part in leadership and decision making structures/bodies/committees. A good example of women in leadership is Ms. Kalayvani Pillay who is the Deputy Director-General: Legislative Development in the department.

Growing up in Chatsworth, a community where members respect and support each other, Pillay has always been passionate about achieving greater heights in her life and her current position in the department surely proves her ambition. The Legislative Development branch's main core functions include investigating and developing subordinate legislation, reviewing and amending existing primary and subordinate legislation. Leading such an important branch in the department, Pillay believes that she is very fortunate to be part of the department that has an important responsibility to the citizens, which is to ensure that everyone has access to justice.

Driven by the passion to help her community members with legal related issues Ms. Pillay studied for an undergraduate degree and LLB at the University of KwaZulu-Natal formerly known as Durban Westville. After completing her studies she practised as an attorney in a private practise before she decided to join the public service. "Working in a private firm really helped me to be exposed to various issues that were affecting the community of Chatsworth such as domestic violence and divorce cases," said Pillay.

In the year 2000 she then left the practise to join the public service. "I always wanted to be a legal researcher and that is why I couldn't miss the opportunity then I joined the public service," she said.



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Since she joined the public service she has worked in different capacities such as drafting legislation; providing legal services through the handling of litigation and legal process. Granting the fact that she has participated in the drafting of various legislation, Pillay highlighted that drafting the Domestic Violence Act was the best move by the government to help fight the scourge of domestic violence in the country. She also shared that drafting the Maintenance Act was challenging and good considering the fact that they are working on the amendment on the act to improve it.

To prove that the legal fraternity is not only for men, Pillay believes that, women should always take up positions at the forefront to undo the unfair assumptions that women cannot be excellent lawyers. "As women we must never allow attitudes that say we cannot reach a certain goal, to become a barrier for us. We must be excellent in whatever we choose to do," expressed Pillay.

Pillay emphasised that women must work hard in their different career path and also enjoy what they do. ■



Lebo's success is driven by the passion to make a change

Fixing the performance of the public service is one of Lebo Mphahlele-Ntsasa's key area of interest and part of her leadership skills. Those who know Lebo call her "Mrs. Fix it", because of her dedication in making sure that the department is meeting

its mandatory objective to serve the public with care and dignity.

Lebo is highly qualified with a BSC from the University of Cape Town and an MBA from Wits University. She had most of her corporate experience at Sasol and Nedbank and have worked as a freelance consultant and managed a business for a number of years. She has also worked in a wide-range of areas in business throughout her career and considers herself a bit adventurous.

Three years ago, Lebo was appointed as a Chief Director: Strategy, Monitoring and Evaluation at the Department of Justice and Constitutional development. Her area of responsibilities entails strategic planning, reporting (both statutory and non-statutory performance reporting), the National Operations Centre (business information) and corporate governance structures. This include overseeing all critical activities to ensure that the department deliver good quality services to its stakeholders and provide guidance to her team members. .

Since she joined the department, Lebo has seen a shift in outlook around planning and performance within the department. The department has received an unqualified opinion in this area for two years in succession. "This is very important for me because it means the performance reported against our targets throughout 750 courts and other service points has credibility. It is critical to get good quality performance information in order to guide plans going forward. I'm proud of my contribution in the achievement but acknowledge there's still work to do", She said.

The supportive environment at home seems. to be one of the main catalyst in Lebo's steady career growth and success at work. ■



South Africa's first National Registrar for Sexual Offences Register

Ntombizodwa Koko Matjila is the Registrar for the National Register for Sexual Offences.

She obtained her first B. Proc degree from the University of the North in 1991. She went further to

enhance her qualifications at the University of Pretoria where she was awarded with an LLM degree in Constitutional and Administrative Law. Ntombi is of the view that education is the key to success. "I urge young people to focus more on their studies because without education they cannot achieve their dreams.", explained Ntombi.

In 1997, Ntombi started her career as an Administration Officer for the Appeal Board for Refugee Affairs in the Department of Home Affairs and she was promoted to the position of Legal Administration Officer in the same department. She later held several key management positions these include, managing the Legal Service of the South African Police Services. In March 2007 she was appointed as a Director: Legal Services in the Department of Justice. She was seconded as the first National Registrar for Sexual Offenders within the department in August 2009. Her duties include receiving particulars of persons contemplated in section 50 of the Act from the relevant departments for purposes of entering it into the National Register for Sex Offenders (NRSO) and reporting, without delay, any unauthorised access to or tempering with information contained in the database of the Register to the South African Police Service.

The NRSO was implemented on 30th June 2009 to register the names of people convicted of sexual offences against children and people with mental disability. This is one of the protective measures that have been put in place to protect victims. of sexual violence by ensuring that perpetrators do not find themselves working with children or people with mental disability.

Highlighting her achievements, Ntombi said she has ensured that the NRSO is implemented successfully and is up and running despite limited resources.

Ntombi is also one of the few South Africans who can speak fluently eight South African Languages and this has made her work very easy as she can communicate to her clients and stakeholders in their own languages. The public is now aware of the existence of the NRSO.

When asked about the credentials required if one intends to pursue the same career path as hers, Ntombi said "a person needs to be legally qualified with a specific interest in Legislative development, interpretation and analysis".

Ntombi admits that she is not immune to challenges that are commonly associated with the working environment. She singles out the initial phases of implementing the register as the most challenging period in her working environment.

To Ntombi, women's month is significant in that women are being recognised and appreciated for the effort they put into their day to day responsibilities. She further encouraged women not to give up their dreams. "In life you are never given a chance to dream without been given an opportunity to make it come true", she said. ■

