

# The rise of women

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**T**HE 2012 Trailblazers research shows high growth rates in the number of directorships held by black women since 2010. Over the last two years the number of female directorships grew by 15%, while the number of black men appointed as directors of listed companies grew by only 8%, according to the Empowerdex research.

In 2006 only 114 black women held directorships, compared to 344 in 2012. Black men held 371 directorships in 2006, a number that rose to 702 in 2012.

The most influential black female director is Mamphele Ramphele, who serves as a director on the boards of Anglo American, Mediclinic, Remgro and Gold Fields.

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— Nonkululeko Nyembezi-Heita, CEO of ArcelorMittal SA

training the 21st-century South African citizen, held at the end of October, Ramphele highlighted the importance of education in South Africa to create future leaders.

"An education that focuses on both the skills needed to earn a living, as well as living lives that are meaningful, provides an impetus for excellence and relevance," she said.

In 2011, Nyembezi-Heita was listed by Forbes as the eighth most powerful black woman in the world, among people like Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey and Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Nyembezi-Heita was appointed as CEO of Amsa in 2008, after holding managerial positions at Vodacom and Alliance Capital Management. She is also the chairperson of the South African Iron and



■ THE MOST INFLUENTIAL BLACK FEMALE DIRECTOR: Mamphele Ramphele, who serves as a director on the boards of Anglo American, Mediclinic, Remgro and Gold Fields

The two most powerful women are Nonkululeko Nyembezi-Heita, CEO of ArcelorMittal SA (Amsa) and Nombulelo Moholi, CEO of Telkom.

New entries in the top 10 are Albertinah Kekana of Vodacom Group Limited and Zarina Bibi Mahomed Bassa of Kumba Iron Ore.

During Unisa's 2012 Founders Lecture on educating and

Steel Institute. In a recent interview she conceded that being a black woman in the corporate world is not always easy and race still plays a role: "Battles I've fought are not different to any other black person. The race issue is much bigger than the gender issue. That is a very real hurdle."

But she said: "I can't say I have ever felt marginalised, and I have been in a male-dominated environment most of my career. If competence and capability define a woman in her career, you can't hold her back."

A recent study on challenges for women in SA business, conducted by the Human Edge, showed that South African businesswomen have difficulties holding salary- or performance-related discussions and are often asked to do more than what is reasonably possible.

Black women specifically pointed out that they had difficulties working with colleagues who did not feel certain positions should or could be held by a black female.

However, despite all the challenges, it is important to take note of the progress that has been made.