

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN IN NATO FORCES

**SANDF's Approach To Integrate a Gender Dimension
in Pursuit of the Defence Mandate**

By

**Major General N. Memela-Motumi
Chief Director Transformation Management
South African National Defence Force**

Introduction

- South Africa's participation in Peace Support Operations started in 1998 and is regarded as an extension of the country's foreign policy.
- Women in the SANDF have been employed as Officers Commanding, Legal Officers, Air Traffic Controllers, Cargo Handlers, Guards, Advisory Team Members on Integration, Specialist Medical Advisors, Military Police, Infantry soldiers etc.
- Ten percent of the personnel currently deployed in Burundi, DRC and Darfur are women.

Aim

- The aim of this presentation is to share the SANDF's approach to integrate a gender dimension in pursuit of the Defence Mandate.

Scope

- This presentation will cover the following:
 - Background.
 - Women's Involvement in the SANDF.
 - SANDF Vision and Mission.
 - SANDF's Approach to Gender Mainstreaming.
 - Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms.
 - Lessons Learnt.
 - Conclusion.

Background/Context

- In the South African context, the participation of women in all spheres of life is one of the key elements of the government's transformation agenda. The achievement of gender equality is a Constitutional imperative based on section 9 of the Constitution, which entrenches the right to substantive equality. This includes the prohibition of unfair discrimination based on gender, sex, marital status, and pregnancy. It also includes the adoption of positive measures to advance women, as a historically disadvantaged group, in order to address their systemic disadvantage in organisations and society.
- Our country's Constitution further stipulates that "The primary object of the Defence Force is to defend and protect the Republic, its territorial integrity and its people in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of International law regulating the use of force."
- ✓ Equality and, consequently, Gender Mainstreaming, are implied as follows by the above- mentioned extracts from the Constitution:
 - The "people", which includes women and men.
 - The "Constitution", includes the principle of equality.
 - "International law" includes the gender dimensions thereof.

Background/Context (contd)

- Chapter six of the South Africa Defence White Paper (1996) underscores the principle of equality within the SANDF, and further stipulates that representivity in terms of race and gender is fundamental to the legitimacy of this institution.
- Reflecting this position, the Ministry of Defence has expressed a commitment to align itself to the South African Constitution and the International prescripts on issues relating to gender equity and human rights. Specifically, there has been commitment to the following aspects:
 - ✓ Increasing the representivity of women at all ranks in the SANDF and in the Defence Secretariat.
 - ✓ The acceptance of women to serve in the combat role.
 - ✓ The provision of gender sensitivity education and training to all DOD personnel without exception.

Women's Involvement in the SANDF

- Since 1994, there has been a fundamental change in the gender characteristics of the SANDF. This followed a redefinition of security, from being state centred to human security, a re-conceptualisation of the defence institution as people's Defence Force and the realignment of the role and mission of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) within a democratic framework which demands, among others, that both women and men participate fully in the provision of the envisaged security.
- A survey conducted to determine women's reasons for joining the military highlighted the following key themes:
 - ✓ **Patriotism and the desire to defend and serve our country.**
 - ✓ **Desire to obtain a new life experience, something out of the ordinary.**
 - ✓ **To pursue a career, some of whom related that they had always dreamed of being a soldier.**
 - ✓ **Others expressed a consciousness that the military is a "man's world" and cited this as the reason for their joining.**
- Currently the SANDF consists of 21 percent females. But most unfortunately at this juncture the majority are in support and health musterings. The SANDF has increased the recruitment target from 30 to 40 percent at entry level from the year 2009. The rationale being that this would enable the organisation to create a pool that would serve as a feeder system for women's promotion to senior ranks in the future.

Women's Involvement in the SANDF (contd)

- Women's representation in the rank structure at this juncture is as follows:

RANK	NUMBER OF WOMEN
GENERAL	0
LT GEN	0
MAJ GEN	1
BRIG GEN	25
COL	136
LT COL	411
MAJ	621
CAPT	883
LT	622
2LT	109
CPLN	21
WO1	361
WO2	479
S SGT	1306
SGT	1362
CPL	1558
L CPL	1224
PTE	4140

- 15.6 Percent of the women in junior ranks are in the combat corps. This indicates that in the medium to long term, women's representation in senior ranks will be corrected. The challenge is to ensure that their careers are managed effectively, so as to be able to retain them within the organisation as well as in the critical corps.

SANDF VISION

- Effective defence for a democratic South Africa.

SANDF MISSION

- To provide, manage, prepare and employ defence capabilities commensurate with the needs of South Africa, as regulated by the Constitution, National Legislation, Parliamentary and International obligations.

SANDF's APPROACH TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- The DOD has integrated a gender criteria in all military policies plans and processes, including mission assessments. In pursuance thereof a DOD Gender Mainstreaming Strategy was promulgated and it provides strategic direction in the execution of the Defence Mandate. The activities highlighted in the Strategy are as follows:
 - That structures to advise, execute, monitor and report on Gender be established in all the Services and Divisions.
 - That the Performance Agreements (PAs) of all Chiefs as well as Commanders must include gender responsibilities and accountability.
 - That Services'/Divisions' Business Plans incorporates gender mainstreaming and that reports submitted must reflect this.
 - That all SANDF members be exposed to programmes that facilitate change in behaviour and attitudes.
 - That women's participation in Peace Support Operations be increased to 30 percent by 2014.

SANDF's Approach to Gender Mainstreaming

- That gender be mainstreamed in all communication activities: Info Bulletins, reports, and speeches.
- That ongoing advocacy programmes on gender equality be conducted.
- That a 365 days campaign of No Violence Against Women and Children be supported.
- That 30% of all training participants must be women: wrt
 - Military development courses;
 - Foreign learning opportunities offered in a year;
 - Study scheme and bursaries; and
 - Instructors in SANDF's training institutions.
- That Services and Divisions must publish on yearly basis their Gender Plans with targets per successive rank levels.
- That sexual harassment, discrimination be addressed urgently.
- That women's career in the sharp end be effectively managed in order to ensure their retention.
- That gender perspective be integrated in all military development courses.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

- A Gender Mainstreaming Council (GMC) has been established, and it consists of women and men representing the SANDF's Services and Divisions.
- The council meets once a month and is chaired by a Major General. The Services and Divisions' reps are Brigadier Generals with the lowest rank being that of a Colonel.
- The Council's representatives serve as gender advisors to their respective Chiefs and are also responsible for the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan.
- Issues raised within Services and Divisions are then placed on the agenda of the highest decision making structure of the DOD, referred to as the Defence Staff Council (DSC)
- Annually DOD Gender Conferences are organised during the month of August. The Minister of Defence, members of Parliament serving in the Defence Oversight Committee, Service and Division Chiefs, women from all rank levels as well as the Service's Officers Commanding attend these conferences.
- The purpose of these dialogues is to build consensus and to collectively note progress achieved and challenges experienced.

Lesson Learnt in Women's Involvement in PSO

- Debriefs on women's experiences in Peace Support Missions indicates that the benefits of deploying them results in the following:
 - ✓ Female Infanteers experience their deployment as an opportunity to put their military training into practice.
 - ✓ Female Peacekeepers are trusted by the local chiefs and as a result thereof, are able to interact with the community through projects. This enables them to gather valuable information and also influences the support of the mission by the locals.
 - ✓ Female Peacekeepers serve as role models to local women and kindle their interest in the reconstruction and development programmes.
 - ✓ The pre-deployment conducted prepares both women and men adequately for deployment.
 - ✓ Challenges experienced relates to the fact that some female's menstrual pains are severe and as a result they struggle to walk long distances when on foot patrols.
 - ✓ The acceptance of women's involvement in Defence does not imply that prejudice against them in certain roles does not exist.
 - ✓ Some male colleagues treat women as equals and others as individuals who need to be protected.

Conclusion

- The implementation of the DOD's Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan is regarded as South Africa's commitment to national, regional and international protocols on gender equality.
- The deployment of female peacekeepers is being experienced as beneficial.
- The creation of support mechanisms, including flexibility in deployment periods, enables critical mass to volunteer for peace support operations.

Thank you for your attention

Questions / Comments