

# Violence against women and children

*Survey shows it is widely experienced in the military*



ON 14 SEPTEMBER 1998, AT A SUMMIT in Mauritius, the heads of the SADC states signed an Addendum to the 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development. As a result, the SA Government called on all state departments, including the Department of Defence (DOD), to each make a commitment to prevent violence towards women and children.

The DOD heeded the government's call by committing itself to adopting the following measures over the next five years:

- \* To conduct a DOD-wide campaign to eliminate violence against women and children who are dependents of members of the SANDF and employees of the DOD.
- \* To formulate and rigorously enforce a policy on the prevention of sexual harassment for the DOD.
- \* To formulate a policy to prevent violence against women and children during armed conflict.
- \* To ensure that women are affirmed into positions of decision making and to facilitate their leadership skills.
- \* To ensure strict adherence to all conventions and treaties, including international customary law and tradition, with reference to the treatment of women and children during armed conflict.

The SA Military Health Service (SAMHS), under the guidance of the Director Social Work, was identified to take responsibility for the implementation of commitment one.

In order to plan an effective programme and to inform and guide the formulation of policy to address this commitment, a survey to determine the nature, extent and perceptions of violence against women and children within the DOD was requested by the Director Social Work, Brig Gen N. E. Motumi.

The Social Work Research & Development Department of the Military Psychological Institute, in collaboration with Director Social Work and Section Effect Analysis, was tasked to design and conduct this research.

## Key findings

THREE SAMPLES OF PEOPLE WERE USED IN THE STUDY, VIZ 1 769 MALE MILITARY EMPLOYEES, 977 FEMALE MILITARY EMPLOYEES AND 462 MILITARY WIVES.

In the following sections, some of the key findings are briefly presented. (*Please note, it reflects on the above-mentioned sample only*)

*In responding to questions about what role the military should take in responding to cases of family violence, the following were found:*

- \* 66.5% of female employees and 65.0% of military wives believe that disciplinary steps should be taken against abusive men, compared with 38.8% of men.
- \* 57.8% of female employees and 68.8% of military wives believe that men who are violent in their families should be charged according to the MDC, compared with 26.6% of men.
- \* 65.6% of female employees and 63.5% of military wives believe the SANDF should assist women in taking legal action against abusive partners, compared with 38.9% of men.
- \* 87.1% of female employees, 81.6% of military wives and 68.5% of men believe that the SANDF should establish safe houses for women and children whose lives are in danger.
- \* Generally, women believed that the military should take a much stronger role in responding to men who abuse their partners, than men.

*In responding to questions about how to prevent family violence in the military:*

- \* 95.2% of female employees, 92.2% of military wives and 82.8% of men believe that the SANDF should give a clear message that violence towards women and children will not be tolerated.
- \* 91.6% of female employees, 85.5% of military wives and 69.8% of men believe that men should be helped to take responsibility for their own violent or abusive behaviour.



Photo posed

- \* 92.3% of female employees, 90.6% of military wives and 75.5% of men believe that the SANDF needs to do more to promote respect for women in the workplace.
- \* 9.9% of female employees, 11.9% of military wives and 13.6% of men believe that no prevention of family violence is necessary, because "it is okay for men to hit or physically hurt their wives or partners",

*Men were asked how much they agreed with a list of 19 statements about men and women. The following were found:*

- \* 24.7% of men believe men are better than women.
- \* 36.8% of men believe that men should be in charge of women.
- \* 27.1% of men would hate to have a female boss.
- \* 41.1% of men believe that wives should do what their husbands tell them to do.
- \* 46.5% of men believe that it is natural for men to have control over others.

- \* 54.4% of men believe that men are naturally more violent than women.
- \* 41.1% of men believe that what men do in their own homes is nobody else's business.
- \* 39.8% of men believe that a man must do whatever he needs to do to ensure that his wife behaves properly.

*People who participated in the study were asked how many other people they knew who were involved in family violence (both between adult partners and towards children):*

- \* Over 70% of male and female employees of the SANDF report knowing at least one man who abuses his partner and at least one woman who is abused by her partner.
- \* About 20-25% of male and female employees of the SANDF report knowing more than ten men who abuse their partners and more than ten women who are abused by their partners.
- \* About half the male and female employees know at least one man who abuses his child and one woman who abuses her child.

*When presented with a list of 21 behaviours, including a man choking his wife, breaking one or more of her bones, stabbing her with a knife, biting or kicking her, punching her in the face with his fist and threatening to kill her,*

- \* 13.9% to 21.1% of the people participating in the study did not believe that any of these behaviours were abusive.
- \* 7.4% to 15.9% did not believe that any of these behaviours were violent.

*When asked about their own experiences of family violence, the following were found:*

- \* 36.6% of female employees and 29.9% of military wives reported that they had been in an abusive or violent relationship in the past, while 28.4% of men reported that they had been violent or abusive towards a partner in the past.
- \* 17.0% of female employees and 27.4% of military wives reported that they are currently in an abusive or violent relationship, while 11.6% of men reported that they are currently abusive or violent towards their partners.
- \* 10.0% of female employees, 13.9% of military wives and 8.2% of men report that they are currently violent or abusive towards their children.
- \* 13.3% of female employees, 21.8% of military wives and 10.3% of men report that their partners are currently violent or abusive towards their children.

*Families who experience one form of abuse (such as violence towards the wife) are at greater risk for experiencing other forms of abuse (such as violence towards a child). The following were found :*

- \* Men who report that they are currently abusing their partners

**Continued on page 41**

# Violence

are more than 24 times more likely to report that they are also abusing their children currently than men who report that they are not currently abusing their partners.

- \* Women (both employees and wives) who are currently being abused by their partners are about ten times more likely to abuse their children currently than women who report that they are not currently being abused by their partners,
- \* Women (both employees and wives) who report that they are currently being abused by their partners are ten to fifteen times more likely to report that their partners are also abusing their children than women who report that they are not currently being abused by their partners.
- \* A child who is being abused by one parent is eight to fourteen times more likely to be abused by the other parent as well.
- \* In half the families where a woman is being abused, a child is also being abused.

## Response to these results

The results found in this study are of grave concern to the SANDF. Out of this study, a set of 18 discussion points have been generated, which address various actions which could be taken by the SANDF, including prevention efforts, therapeutic options, the role of the military, policy issues, etc.

These points will, over the next several months be explored by various role players, including the Directorate Social Work, the Chief Directorate Equal Opportunities and the Military Psychological Institute.

The SANDF is committed to ensure that women and children have safe environments in which to live and work, and that violence towards women and children, and any violence for that matter, will not be tolerated. Every effort will, therefore, be made to ensure appropriate, creative and strong actions in responding to the violence which is clearly widely experienced by military families.


Military health professionals, such as social workers, psychologists, doctors and nurses, are already able to assist families experiencing family violence.

Women who are in abusive or violent relationships can receive counselling, legal advice and support from military health professionals.

Men who are abusive or violent towards their partners can be helped to deal with their violent behaviour.

Children who are being abused by their parents, or who are witnesses to violence between their parents can also be helped with counselling to deal with the feelings that result from this.

People experiencing family violence are encouraged to contact a military health professional and request assistance.


Further information concerning this study can be obtained from Brig Gen Ntsiki Motumi (Director Social Work) at (012) 671-5315 or from Maj Adrian van Breda (SO2 Social Work Research & Development) at (012) 319-3263 - Editor. 

## A true musician


Capt Jerry Sibanyoni has served as a percussionist in the Correctional Services Band for ten years. He was recruited into the former SADF to start a black band and attested as a Corporal on 2 February 1977. Capt Sibanyoni started the band with only seven members and acted as the Bandleader of the then 21 Battalion Brass Band until the appointment of WO2 Steyn in August 1977. He was appointed as the Second-In-Command of the band that was at that stage still a brass band. The band now consisted of thirty members. He toured the country and performed at various shows and Freedom of City parades, as well as entertaining the troops in the then South West Africa during 1978. Capt Sibanyoni was promoted to WO2 in 1984, and was placed in charge of the band. He decided to bring in woodwind instruments and consequently recruited six clarinet and four saxophone players.



In 1987 Capt Sibanyoni was the first black person in the SADF to be promoted to the rank of WO1 and was one of only four black Warrant Officers in the SADF. He was selected for officer training and attended the Officers Formative Course in 1991. Capt Sibanyoni was commissioned in 1994 when he was transferred to the Directorate of Music as SO2 Music. He also acted as Director of the SA Corps of Bandsmen from August 1997 to August 1998, in the absence of the Director who was then on course.

Capt Sibanyoni moved to the Bank of Lisbon Building in Pretoria with the newly formed Sub-directorate Ceremonial and Military Music as SO3 Music in November 1999. (Photo: Sgt Johann Pretorius). 

## Manage your image and hair

When it comes to managing your image and hair, consider the Let's Talk Hair & Image. The salon was launched on 12 June in the basement of level two, room 205 at the Defence Headquarters in Pretoria. Ms Thembekile Gqala, B. Sc (Hons) and Director of the salon, offers a wide range of styles ranging from relaxers to dreadlocks, designer cuts, men's haircuts, S-curly, and perms. More still, you get cosmetic products at reasonable prices. See your image being changed by a professional and friendly hairdresser. Come and see for yourself or call Wilma or Sunnyboy at tel nr: (012) 355 5657. 



Gen Sipho Ntshong, the Chief of the SANDF, thanks Sunnyboy for a fine haircut. Photo: Sgt Johann Pretorius