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SOUTH AFRICAN SOLDIER

Special Edition

SANDF Spouses Forum
Celebrating 10 Years
SA SOLDIER
The official monthly magazine of the SA Department of Defence

From the Editor’s desk

Foreword: Chairperson SANDF Spouses Forum

2005: Welcome Ms Ngwenya

2006: Act against abuse of women and children

2006: Spouses of Generals provide guidance

2007: SANDF Spouses Forum gathers

2008: Extending the good will

2008: The SANDF Spouses Forum

2008: Bringing festive cheer to our deployed soldiers

2009: SANDF top brass visit our deployed soldiers

2009: Spouses Forum heads for the golf course

2009: SANDF Spouses Forum helps to keep toddlers warm

2009: Bigger Goodwill Parcels were donated than ever

2010: Thanking the Angels

2010: Honouring women on deployment

2011: Acknowledging the efforts of our peacekeepers

2011: SANDF Spouses Forum changes leadership

2012: SANDF Spouses Forum adds a renowned member to the team

2012: Goodwill Parcel Project cements business ties

2012: SANDF Spouses show their love for toddlers

2012: SANDF Spouses Forum celebrates Women’s Day

2013: Spouses join in the joy of giving

2014: Celebrating Youth Day

2014: Celebrating a day of humanitarian action at Kiddy College

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This Special Edition of SA Soldier is dedicated to the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum for celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

Come and relive the past first decade of the existence of the SANDF Spouses Forum with SA Soldier. This edition is packed with articles of activities and accomplishments of the Forum that were previously published in SA Soldier over the past ten years.

May the SANDF Spouses Forum continue to spread good deeds wherever they go …

Viva SANDF Spouses Forum Viva!

Nelda Pienaar
Editor SA Soldier

Significance of the logo of the SANDF Spouses Forum

Information courtesy Ms Charlotte Shoke, Chairperson SANDF Spouses Forum

What does the logo of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) symbolise? The SUNFLOWER with TWO HANDS and different coloured FINGERS displaying the four Services of the SANDF.

Yellow Bright Sunflower
• To demonstrate the Bright Light that the SANDF Spouses Forum will bring to the South African military community.
• SANDF Spouses Forum to lighten the way and illustrate the power of the light in unsure situations.
• To carry this Light and keep it burning for the younger ones to see, to follow and get energised to continue with the cause.

Four Helping Hands
• Supporting hands that portray the willingness of the SANDF Spouses Forum to get involved, to strengthen and assist in the military community.
• The seriousness and sincerity to serve fearlessly the military community is illustrated in the open hands.

Fingers (Different Services):
• Illustrate and Solidify that all Services are on board and committed to live out the motto and mantra of the SANDF Spouses Forum – “TO LESSEN THE BURDEN OF COMMAND AND STRESS ON THE SOLDIER IN THE FRONTLINE AND SUPPORT THEM (OUR NATIONS HEROES) WHO ARE BRAVELY SERVING OUR BELOVED COUNTRY”.

*Translation into Luvenda by Mr Lufuno Netshirembe.
How did the SA National Defence Force Spouses Forum originate

Where and when did it all start? The seed for the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum was planted during a Women’s Day celebration that was hosted by the SA Army Ladies in August 2005.

This gathering was followed by a workshop that took place at the SA Army College in Thaba Tshwane in November 2005. There the following resolutions were taken: the structure, purpose, frequency of meetings and the Constitution of the SANDF Spouses Forum.

SANDF Spouses Forum Constitution

The SANDF Spouses Forum originated from a need among the spouses of the SANDF to systemise their activities and to organise these more effectively on a rational basis to empower and to share.

The SANDF Spouses Forum is a non-trading institution and is established in accordance with the provision of chapter IX of the General Regulations for the SANDF and Reserve.

Members may use the language of their choice during the activities of the SANDF Spouses Forum. The Constitution shall be made available in English.

Objectives

- The aim of the SANDF Spouses Forum is to render positive service to the SANDF by
- Promoting sympathetic understanding of and active support for the partner’s tasks;
- Providing opportunities for all spouses to render service within the scope of their abilities and interest through education and training;
- Extending a hand of friendship to one another and to support and complement one another as SANDF spouses;
- Caring for members of other SANDF families should the need arise.
- Initiating activities that contribute to the support of the respective SANDF units.

Membership of the Forum

Spouses of serving, retired and deceased senior officers of the SANDF from the level of Brigadier General and equivalent ranks upwards are eligible to be members of the SANDF Spouses Forum by virtue of their partner’s employment in the SANDF.

The spouse of the Chief of the SANDF will be the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum. In the event that the Chief of the SANDF is single, he or she would be required to delegate this responsibility to any one of the spouses of the Chiefs of the Services.

The committee shall be structured as follows:
- The Chairperson: Spouse of the Chief of the SANDF
- Executive Forum Committee: Spouses of the Chiefs of the Services and Divisions
- Ad-hoc members: Representatives of the identified Portfolio Committees.

Meetings

The Executive and General Spouses Forum meetings will be held quarterly. Ad hoc or special meetings will be held as and when necessary.

General Procedures:

- Meetings may be opened with a prayer, when suitable.
- Notice of meetings must include an agenda.
- Meetings shall be held in an orderly way according to the agenda and minutes shall be taken, approved and accepted.
- Quorums for meetings shall be not less than 25% of members.
- Members unable to attend a meeting will be deemed present for the purpose of determining the quorum, provided an apology has been tendered not less than one hour before the meeting commences.

Welcome Ms Ngwenya

Article and photo by F Sgt Amelda Strydom (previously published in SA Soldier, October 2005)

The spouse of the Chief of the SA Army, Ms Charlotte Shoke, hosted a welcoming luncheon for the spouse of the Chief of the SA National Defence Force, Ms Busisiwe Portia Ngwenya, at the Bailey Club at the SA Army Engineer Formation in Pretoria on 9 July 2005. The day was filled with laughter and singing from the SA Army Band, wonderful food and friendly faces.

As Ms Ngwenya greeted everyone, one could see this is a woman with high moral values and a very strong personality, but someone who can bring a feminine touch to the harsh world of the military. With her, the proverb comes alive: “Behind every successful man is a strong and successful woman”. Ms Ngwenya was born in Mofolo, Central Soweto, on 20 March 1958. She is the second child and eldest daughter in a family of three.

Ms Ngwenya has a degree in science, a certificate in management development, a higher diploma in adult education and a certificate in organisational development. She is currently busy with her first-year studies for her master degree in business leadership. Despite the challenges of being a professional woman and wife to a very busy and high-profiled husband, she values spending time with her three loving children: a daughter and two sons.


ATTENDANCE: 40 PARTICIPANTS
FACILITATOR: MS. THANDIWE KHUMALO
SPONSORSHIP: DENEL

THE FOLLOWING WERE IDENTIFIED AS THE AIMS/OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP:

- TO DISCUSS AND AGREE ON A SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT STRUCTURE.
- TO ESTABLISH AN IDENTITY FOR OURSELVES.
- TO ESTABLISH A FORUM FOR CAPACITY BUILDING AND SOCIALIZATION.
- TO DISCUSS AND AGREE ON CLEARLY DEFINED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.
- TO ESTABLISH A MECHANISM FOR CONNECTING WITH THE UNITS IN OTHER PROVINCES.
- LOOK AT A POSSIBLE BUDGET FOR WHATEVER WE WANT TO ESTABLISH.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

THE WORKSHOP WAS DIVIDED INTO THREE COMMISSIONS WHICH DISCUSSED THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- IDENTITY
- AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
- STRUCTURE
- MEETINGS
- STRATEGIES FOR MEETING THE IDENTIFIED OBJECTIVES

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE THREE COMMISSIONS.
Act against abuse of women and children

By Ms Nomonde Vuthela
(previously published in SA Soldier, January 2006)
Photos by Cpl Lebogang Tlhaole

Women from the SA National Defence Force (SANDF), members of civil society and spouses of SANDF members gathered around a table and talked about how they could team up in an effort to fight against the abuse of women for the good of nation building. Paramount to the discussions at the Women’s Peace Table was the issue of how women should contribute to the furtherance of the aims and objectives of the African Union (AU) and New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

Hosted by the Gender Focal Point of the DOD Equal Opportunities Directorate, the women’s seminar, dubbed as a platform for “Building a National Defence Force that Truly Protects Women and Children”, was held at Waterkloof Officers’ Mess in Pretoria on 25 November 2005.

The occasion coincided with the first day of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign, a two-week period set aside by the national government in a campaign to end the senseless violence against women and children.

The main objective of the Peace Table was to afford South African women the opportunity to examine the role of women in peace support in the region and the plan of action thereafter.

As peace and security are essential items on NEPAD’s agenda, Defence Force Women took it upon themselves to brainstorm with women from society at large on how best to contribute to the continuation of these processes. The SANDF cannot talk of peace in the region in the face of gender based violence and it will take a good fight from everyone involved to rid society of this ill.

Godfrey Ngwenya, who said that the lives of many SANDF members and their spouses were similar to that of nomads and as a result the family unit was often compromised. “I have been a father and mother to my kids and I am not the only one; we need to establish safety nets supported by the top echelons of the SANDF so that we too can make a difference,” she said.

Ms Ngwenya touched on how deployment and the long separation from partners result in stress among those involved, a breakdown of relationships and the tearing apart of family life. “We are here and want to become part of the community; let there be a structured way to involve us,” Ms Ngwenya announced. Speaking on behalf of South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID) Rev N. Mosunkutu said that for there to be lasting peace in South Africa women were undoubtedly to become involved. SAWID is a vast organization of women from all sectors of life geared to working in partnership with the Government towards the great cause of rebuilding South Africa. According to the First Lady, Ms Zanele Mbeki, and mother to SAWID, the organisation has turned out differently to what was initially envisaged, as SA women have taken the development ball and are running with it.

The idea of SAWID started in 1995 and it was set up so that women taking part could have open discussions that focused mostly on the plight of women. SAWID believes it can change the lives and living conditions of the South African people. The strong presence at the Peace Table made one feel that the creation of better communities by the SANDF and partners was well on the way.

In his keynote address to the gathering the Deputy Minister of Defence, Mr Mluleki George, said that the South African National Defence Force would not condone any action by any of its members who
invoke customs, tradition or religious consideration to rationalise or justify gender based violence. “All possible action will be taken to prevent and eradicate violence within military communities. Currently gender equity training is being conducted in the SANDF in order to raise awareness of this important matter,” said Deputy integral role.”

Mr George also mentioned that the SANDF could not be content with a few women in senior positions and fewer still in positions as officers commanding. He said that the organisation therefore needed to demonstrate a resolve to eradicate this through visible action and concrete decisions, especially in the planning of programmes. Deputy Minister George also added that it was the duty and responsibility of every commander, manager and member of the Defence establishment to adhere to the principles enshrined in South Africa’s Constitution.

“Women in Defence have shown determination and commitment to prove that they too are equal partners alongside the menfolk in bringing sustainable peace and stability. It is in this regard that we find women in all areas of SANDF deployment,” he continued. “The gradual rolling out of the African Standby Force (ASF) of the AU will provide further opportunities and also pose challenges, which must be met from the outset. As we consolidate a beacon of hope for all the people of Africa we have to ensure that in the regional brigades women will play an

Minister George.

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Spouses of Generals provide guidance

By Ms Nomonde Vuthela
(previously published in SA Soldier, May 2006)

Photo by Cpl Lebogang Tlhaole

The spouses of generals and officers in the SANDF have formed a group - the SANDF Spouses Forum. It provides a programme that is sustainable and one that will at all times provide members with the opportunity to learn and become well equipped to play the part of well-informed spouses.

Speaking to SA Soldier at the first General Meeting of the SANDF Spouses Forum at the Waterkloof Officers Mess on 11 March 2006 Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, wife of the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, said that one of the misfortunes following integration was the falling apart of a structure that used to exist for the women.

On this particular day of the second General Meeting held by the Forum, the issues of SANDF ranks and conditions of service were at the top of the agenda. “We are here as the spouses of the generals in the SANDF to try and empower ourselves as spouses,” emphasised Ms Ngwenya. “Knowing the conditions of service within the Defence Force will enable us in the hour of need to know exactly where to go.”

“We came into the Defence Force and nobody explained to us what was happening. Unless we know what is expected of us, we cannot perform,” continued Ms Ngwenya. “This Forum must not disappear, it must live forever, and for us this will be a legacy that we did something in the SANDF as spouses. What we had also requested was a presentation on etiquette and protocol because most of the time we get invited to functions or we go overseas and we want to represent the SANDF well.”

“We are developing a constitution for this Forum and as part of the structure the Chief of the SANDF’s spouse will always be the leader.” Members of the Forum held for the very first time a workshop in November last year to try to reformulate and establish the group.

“One of the important things that came out of the workshop was that we identified three portfolios: social support, fundraising and events management. We also identified aims and objectives.”

Ms Ngwenya explained that the group had to work hard to become popular and that without funds the aims and objectives of the group were pointless, therefore many fund-raise events must still take place. “As Generals’ wives we are a leadership group, and we are expected to provide guidance,” she said. “The social support is not going to be only among spouses, but must also filter down to the lower level officers, because they are the ones who most of the times do not have the means to support themselves.” Echoing Ms Ngwenya’s sentiments was Ms Charlotte Shoke, wife of the Chief of the SA Army, Lt Gen Solly Shoke, who said: “We need to understand better the service benefits, the structure of the SANDF and our role to be supportive, helpful and assist in whatever way, because the SANDF is a family”.

“Our husbands are pleased that we have started something here and they wish us all the success,” revealed Ms Shoke, and added: “We have to be exemplary to other women in the SANDF and show that what we are trying to do will benefit all the services.”

The Programme Leader at the event and also a member of the Executive Committee of the Forum, Ms Leone Gagiano, wife of the Chief of the SA Air Force, Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, said that the group had to support spouses of members deployed all over Africa and also involve women to prevent their feeling forgotten. She said: “Part of it is to empower our women into feeling that they too are part of the SANDF, to feel special too because we are always in the background of the men and so this support group is ideal.

“I am very excited,” she exclaimed. “This is the second time we are meeting and it shows you we are growing; there is a need and what we must do is to satisfy this need. It will not be overnight, it will take time, but in future I want people to say that when my husband was away on deployment and I had a need, other women phoned and helped,” added Ms Gagiano.

Ms Yvonne Mudimu, a member of the Spouses Executive Committee and wife of the Chief of the SA Navy, V Adm Johannes Refiloe Mudimu, Ms Leonie Gagiano, wife of the then Chief of the SA Air Force, Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, wife of the then Chief of the SANDF, Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, and Ms Charlotte Shoke, wife of the then Chief of the SA Army, Lt Gen Solly Shoke.
ABOVE: The SANDF Spouses Forum visited the Children’s Ward at 1 Military Hospital on 10 June 2006.

LEFT: Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2006 between executive members of the SANDF Spouses Forum and MassMart.

DEAR NES GOGOAN, I would really like to bring to the attention of all members of the Yeovil that I am an Eire whose wife has been assisting at the Hospice for the past 10 years as a representative for all the Eire. We have always received outstanding support from the Hospice. We have raised a lot of money which has enabled us to buy a few kettle and a microwave. They have also done some repairs to make the home more patient friendly.

We have however many more items that are needed and I would really appreciate any assistance you are able to give us. We have asked Nes Gogoa to approach the Yeovil with your request and I hope you will consider to do the same. Here are gifts for the nurse, some Christmas gifts. I therefore enclose a list of the items required and a copy forwarded to all, we are all thankful. Kind regards,

Nes Kelise Church
Wife of Brig. Gen. John Church
The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum under the leadership of Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, wife of Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, the Chief of the SANDF, hosted its quarterly meeting and luncheon at the Centre for Advanced Training (CAT) in Pretoria on 9 June 2007.

Ms Ngwenya initiated this forum in 2005 to raise funds for charity and social support. The forum members donate clothes and toys to various institutions, such as 1 Military Hospital. “Since June is the Month for Youth this meeting is dedicated to the wellbeing of children who are faced with difficult challenges, such as drug abuse as well as HIV and AIDS,” said Ms Gail Mokoape, wife of Maj Gen Keith Mokoape, Chief Director Army Reserves.

The delegates had the opportunity to tour the CAT and were impressed with the training facilities. The Officer Commanding, Col Sithabiso Mahlobo, said he was honoured to receive the Generals’ wives in his unit because they were the ones behind every decision taken by their better halves. The programme ended on a high note—singing by the Mozambican Defence Force members on course at CAT.

Dear Busi

This letter serves to confirm the current status of supplier commitments to the proposed hamper for the families of SANDF peacekeepers in Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Sudan and Rwanda.

Massmart’s Chief Executive Officer Designate – Grant Patterson – personally requested assistance from eleven suppliers in order to develop a hamper containing 12 products with an approximate value of R1,300,000.00. The supplier response to this request can be summarized as follows:

- Three suppliers offered to provide immediate assistance. This translates into a firm commitment to provide the following products:
  - 4000 ml of water in a 2litre bottle bag
  - 4000 x 5kg Hulet’s sugar
  - 4000 x 2.5kg shortcake flour
- Two suppliers indicated that their 2006 donations budget had been fully utilized;
- Six suppliers failed to respond to the request.

Our assessment is that the timing of this request was sub-optimal and we are optimistic that we will be able to secure greater supplier participation given our revised timing of August 2007.

To this end we are currently in the process of engaging with suppliers regarding their willingness to participate in this important initiative. We will provide you with a further progress update once we have received final responses from the targeted suppliers.

If you have any further queries about this correspondence then please don’t hesitate to contact Brian Lenoni on 011-517 0900.

Kind Regards,

Brian Lenoni
Group Corporate Affairs Executive

ABOVE: The SANDF Spouses Forum Women and Leadership Conference was held at the SA Army College on 18 August 2007.
Extending the goodwill

By Mr Lebohang Letaoana, previously published in SA Soldier, March 2008
Photos by F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

From a mere R1 donation from the Warrant Officers to a multimillion rand project, the Goodwill Parcel Project has grown by leaps and bounds since its inception in 2001. The Warrant Officer of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) and the Chairperson of the Goodwill Parcel Project, WO1 Johan Scheepers, attributes this success to the commitment and dedication of the sponsors who play a vital role in this project.

From 10 to 14 December 2007 the business community and all the stakeholders involved paid their annual “early Christmas” goodwill visit to the SANDF members who were deployed in the Peacekeeping Mission and to hand over the parcels and offer moral support during the festive season.

Addressing the deployed soldiers and the guests at Modderfontein Rensburg, said: “We are privileged to be here in this beautiful and electrifying atmosphere of South African soldiers who are committed to their task. You have given this country and its people stability, peace and hope. You have also restored their sense of pride and for that we salute you.”

The Commander of the African Union Special Task Force, Col Hein Visser, shared these sentiments when he said: “Our role here in Burundi is to assist with the process of incorporating the Palephethu FNL into the democratic process that is taking place here”. Various speakers from the business fraternity also had the privilege of addressing the soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) - Kamina and Kinshasa - and the Central African Republic (CAR).

“As we were driving in the streets of Bujumbura, we could see the dramatic changes that have taken place and we could also see that people are entrepreneurs and walking around without fear because of your contribution towards peace in this country,” said Maj Gen Keith Mokoape, the Chief Director Army Reserves and General Manager of the SA Army Foundation.

CAR is ranked among the poorest countries in the world and the SANDF has been given the task
to turn the CAR Defence Force into a professional defence force. They started their deployment to CAR on 1 September 2007 and for the next coming three years there will be military to military co-operation in that our SANDF instructors and Special Forces will train CAR officers. The SANDF engineers will also assist in renovating and building the country’s defence infrastructure. “So far we have achieved quick victories in training and construction tasks since October 2007 (Operation VIMBEZELA). We have also established liaison with numerous role players, such as the State, Military, Diplomatic Corps, NGOs and the local economy,” said Col Zukile Mpapela, “The gift is awesome.”

“I would like to thank the sponsors and everybody involved in this project for giving us these presents. We really appreciate them,” said S Sgt Olehile Thageng, Workshop Foreman SANDF Spec, after receiving his gift. When asked about the future of this project, WO1 Scheepers said: “In 2008 we will establish the hospital project to make sure that members who are on duty in all our military hospitals that day, and all the patients in our hospitals, receive gifts and a hamper. We are confident that we will succeed with this initiative”.

LEFT: Mr Thabo Maphisa, National Facilities Management African Life Assurance, congratulates our soldiers after receiving their gifts.

ABOVE: The Goodwill Parcel hampers were well received by the families and they expressed their appreciation towards the project.

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Distribution of commodities.

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<td>CAR soldiers under training in Bloemfontein</td>
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A feminine spirit was felt at the SA Army College on 19 July 2008 during Spouses Forum. The event was graced by spouses of high-ranking officers of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). The involvement of women in defence and motherhood was, among other things, discussed during the day.

Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, Ms Charlotte Shoke, Ms Yvonne Mudimu, Ms Sandy Africa and Ms Lizette Cornelissen were introduced to the Thembisa High School learners who were invited to enjoy the day. It was wonderful for mothers to gather under one roof to share their experiences of parenting. As one would expect of the SA Army Band, they gave a remarkable performance, so that almost everybody felt compelled to “hit” the dance floor.

Ms Makgabo Tshenkeng and Ms Letlhogonolo Mabena are young inspirational women who gave exciting speeches and shared their life experiences with the audience. Ms Tshenkeng is an international Communication student at the University of Pretoria. She had been chosen as the finest speaker at a conference in the USA. Ms Mabena is also a student at Tshwane South College where she is studying Marketing. She is also a poet.

The former Human Resources Director Acquisition and currently the Director Separation, Brig Gen Kefilwe Mathibe, and her successor, Brig Gen Thandi Mohale, were also invited to advertise career possibilities within the SANDF. She said the SANDF was undergoing transformation and rejuvenation through the Military Skills Development System (MSDS), while also balancing gender scales in the recruitment.

A Director at the Department of Arts and Culture, Ms Rosemary Mangope (the spouse to the SANDF Director Corporate Communication, Brig Gen Kwenza Mangope), gave some interesting insight into parenting styles. She illustrated the different ways that parents choose to raise their children and how they eventually grow up. The spouse to the Chief of the SANDF, Ms Ngwenya, closed the forum by thanking everyone for coming. “I urge you young women to beware of the dangers in society,” she said.
Bringing festive cheer to our deployed soldiers

By L Cpl Ally Rakoma and Pte Itumeleng Makubela, (previously published in SA Soldier, November 2008)
Photos by F Sgt David Nomtshongwana

“A"nd as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same, to the good of all living beings. The happiest of people do not necessarily have the best of everything, but they make the most of everything that they have and think of others in need,” said Dr Nelson Mandela.

The SANDF Spouses Forum and Massmart Holdings Limited hosted a breakfast briefing in Pretoria on 22 August 2008. The aim of the occasion was to reaffirm and appreciate the SANDF’s vital role in helping to bring peace to the continent. Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, Chief of the SANDF, welcomed the guests and mentioned that the SANDF was the shield of the nation and belonged to the people of South Africa.

The then Minister of Defence, Mr Mosiuoa Lekota, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the SANDF Spouses Forum and the sponsors. He said that humanity could live together on the basis of the idea that we all have something in common, ie “to influence each other positively in order for the ideals of peace and prosperity to foster goodwill to all living beings,” said Mr Lekota.

SA Soldier conversed with Mr Graham Rebello, Massmart Channel Executive; Massmart Holdings Limited, who mentioned that Massmart had adopted the leading role in facilitating the building of relationships between sponsors, valued suppliers and the SANDF. “As sponsors we really appreciate our soldiers’ unselfish service and self-giving and support of fellow brothers and sisters on our continent and in advancing peace. We appreciate the SANDF’s workforce that continues to carry the baton and flag of peace within our borders and beyond on our continent.

“We hope in some small way that the gesture of receiving the goodwill parcels over the festive period will go some way to putting a smile on their faces of our members and their loved ones at home to show that we care for them,” said Mr Rebello.

Gala evening At the Gala evening held at the St George’s Hotel in Pretoria, the Goodwill Parcel Project yet again provided proof of the selflessness of people supporting peace and prosperity. On 12 September 2008 high-profile members of the SANDF and the private sector were invited to pledge their support to the deployed soldiers as way of uplifting their morale. The then Master Chief Warrant Officer of the SANDF, MCWO Johan Scheepers (Chairperson of the Goodwill Parcels Project), said that through various sponsorships the project stood at R4 000 000 this year. As he was the programme director at the gala evening he called upon the representatives of the various organisations to give their pledges.

Mr Paul Myeza, Managing Director of Sanlam, said he was grateful for the efforts of the sponsors because he believed it was the right thing to do. He said that they had high esteem
for and also prided themselves on
the troops deployed to solve Africa’s
problems.

His hope was to see the end of
peacekeeping missions one day, but
until then they would still lend a hand.
The then Deputy Minister of Defence,
Mr Mluleki George, commended the
sponsors for their commitment and
contribution, saying it would not
go unnoticed. He said the Goodwill
Parcel Project was a sign of giving back
to the community and must get the
recognition it deserved.

“Since 1994 our democracy has
been striving for peace on the African
continent. The SANDF has become
instrumental in ensuring this,” he said.
He also said the United Nations and
the African Union had congratulated
the SANDF on their well-disciplined
soldiers. As an attempt to keep the
soldiers’ spirits high, Mr George said
they had already managed to transport
some of the parcels.

Some of the sponsors who gave
their pledges included Sanlam, Old
Mutual, the Absa Group, SA Army
Foundation, SAFL, Liberty Life, Clinix
Health Group, Metropolitan, SAAF,
Absa Consultants, Novare, Maxi
Credit Solutions, the SA Military
Health Service, Avbob, Chaplain
Services, Bible Society of SA and Joint
Operations.

Packing of family hamper packs
On
Friday, 10 October 2008, SA Soldier
was
again invited to witness the packaging
ritual involved in family hampers
(commodities and gifts) for the Goodwill
Parcel Project 2008 at10 Air Depot in
Thaba Tshwane. In an interview with SA
Soldier, Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, wife of
the Chief of the SANDF and Chairperson
of the SANDF Spouses Forum, said
that SANDF soldiers shared a general
responsibility for all humanity in
building a better world.

“It is hoped the Goodwill
Parcel Project, the Spouses Forum,
Massmart Holdings Limited and other
contributors will be an inspiration to
sons, daughters, mothers and fathers
in uniform that aid the desperate souls
on our continent or elsewhere in their
unselfish, self-giving for the cause,
which creates happiness and gives
purpose to life and human existence,”
said Ms Ngwenya.

Cheer for the festive season

Left: Lt
Gen Temba
Matanzima,
the then
Chief of Joint
Operations,
receiving
a goodwill
parcel from
Ms Busisiwe
Ngwenya, the
Chairperson
of the SANDF
Spouses
Forum.

By L Cpl Ally Rakoma (previously
published in SA Soldier, December
2008)

On 25 November 2008 at 10 Air
Depot in Thaba Tshwane Ms
Busisiwe Ngwenya, the
Chairperson of the SA National
Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses
Forum, handed over the goodwill
parcels and hampers to senior
members of the SANDF, Services
and Divisional Warrant Officers
as Christmas cheer to be delivered
to families of our deployed peace
ambassadors, members who will be on
duty during the festive season and in
the military hospitals.

The aim of the event was to
illustrate and reaffirm to members
that the leadership of the SANDF, the
SANDF Spouses Forum and sponsors
of the Goodwill Project and the
nation cares for them. Lt Gen Temba
Matanzima, the then Chief of Joint
Operations, expressed his gratitude
to the SANDF Spouses Forum and the
sponsors for acknowledging the vital
role played by our deployed soldiers.

“You are world-class entities and
partners. Thank you for reaching out to
our members and for appreciating their
efforts in helping to conquer the odds
and challenges that we face today in
our region and beyond and ensuring
that the SANDF is able to fulfil its
obligations towards our people,” said
Lt Gen Matanzima.
There is an idiom in Tshivenda that says “Kule ndi husina wau”, meaning the only place too far for one is places where you do not have anyone you know or are familiar with. The Goodwill Parcel Project seeks to prove just that, namely that no place is too far for the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) to remember its deployed members. The SANDF has soldiers deployed in support of peacekeeping missions throughout Africa.

Annually, a joint venture between the SANDF and the private sector is made to visit the soldiers in deployment areas beyond the SA borders to appreciate and acknowledge the work they do in support of peacekeeping.

The Goodwill Parcel Project serves as an illustration to the external and internally deployed soldiers, members on duty in operational rooms, military hospitals, sickbays as well as patients and families of the deployed soldiers that the Senior Command Cadre of the SANDF, their families and the South African business sector care for them, especially during the festive season.

In keeping with this tradition of giving that begun in 2001, Lt Gen Rinus Jansen van Rensburg (Chief of Corporate Staff), Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya (Chairperson of the Spouses Forum and the wife of the Chief of the SANDF), Gen Happy Bhembe (Chief Director Force Development Support), Maj Gen Vusi Sindane (Chief of Military Police Strategy and Planning), Maj Gen Gerald Malinga (Chief Director Operations Development), Maj Gen Keith Mokoape (General Manager SA Army Foundation), Brigadier Generals, Senior Officers, Warrant Officers, the Spouses Forum and sponsors took time off from their busy schedule from 7 to 12 December 2008 to visit our soldiers to offer their much needed help in Operations CURRICULUM, MISTRAL,
TEUTONIC and VIMBEZELA in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR).

On arrival at Kamina, DRC, we were warmly received by the Contingent Commander, Lt Col Jacobus Niemand, who briefly informed the guests of his tasks and the behaviour of soldiers under his command. He said: “We are a relatively small deployment in the Katanga Province operating two Oryx helicopters.

“Our main aim is the support of the United Nations (UN) troops deployed in the field, the transportation of passengers and freight, search and rescue, as well as rapid deployment of reaction forces.” The contingent in Kamina, even though small, comprises all the main elements one would find in a normal South African unit, such as personnel, logistics, operations, intelligence and counter-intelligence, command and control, aircraft maintenance, technicians, as well as a protection element. In conclusion, Lt Col Niemand thanked the visitors, sponsors and high profile delegation from the SANDF and wished all a blessed week for visiting our other soldiers in the various deployment areas.

SA Soldier asked S Sgt Teba Morena, a cargo handler, how he felt about the package he received. “It is a very good gesture that we get to receive these gifts; it keeps our morale high. As you might have noticed we do not have shops close by, so every gift makes a positive impact on a deployed soldier’s life,” said S Sgt Morena. The football club at Kamina also received a soccer kit from the sponsors.

We then departed from Kamina for Bujumbura, Burundi, at 16:30. On arrival at the airport we were divided into three groups to be accommodated in three hotels in Bujumbura, namely the Safari Hotel, Lake Tanganyika Hotel and Novo Hotel. On 8 December we flew to the CAR.

When we arrived at Bangui airport we were taken to Hotel Sofitel, also known locally as the Oubangui hotel, where we proceeded to present the goodwill parcels to the soldiers there. Unfortunately the President of the CAR, Mr Francois Bozize, could not be part of the high profile visit and ceremony owing to the ongoing peace negotiations he was engaged in. “As the National Contingency Commander of VIMBEZELA 2, I am extremely proud of what the VIMBEZELA achieved from its very humble beginnings in 2007,” said Col Monwabisi Nondala, Mission Commander of Operation VIMBEZELA 2, in CAR. He continued: “As can be expected from VIMBEZELA itself we have taken the responsibility not only to educate the members of FACT, but also to equip them for the future.

“Our mandate remains to train them so that they themselves will be able to meet the requirements of the future battle space and be a credible deterrent defence force of the CAR.” The Goodwill Parcel Project’s guests and sponsors went to Goma, DRC and Beni to continue filling the hearts of deployed soldiers with joy and a sense of belonging. In Bujumbura the National Contingent Commander of Operation CURRICULUM IV, Col Mantsane Mapheto, briefed all present on the contingent’s tasks. Their tasks included protection of principals, protection of FNL combatants in Ruzazi assembly area, transporting of FNL to the assembly area and protection of Modderfontein Base in Burundi.

During the visit to the three countries the Master Chief Warrant Officer of the SANDF, MCWO Johan Scheepers, emphasised to the deployed soldiers in the different military bases that the gift package to them during this time of giving was but a small token of appreciation to tell them that we were aware of the sacrifice they made. “We came here to tell that during this festival of time (to be translated as festive time) you are not alone and you have not been forgotten in this environment,” said MCWO Scheepers. He informed the soldiers that their families back in South Africa would receive a package too. “I urge you to contact my office as soon as possible if your families do not receive the parcel so that I can find out who is not doing their job in that environment,” added MCWO Scheepers.

“Packages are to be delivered to your homes, not to some meeting venue or any place other than your home.” The Chief of Corporate Staff reminded the soldiers to observe and respect the rights of women and children. Lt Gen Jansen van Rensburg said: “We need to stand up against this scourge as it has the potential of eroding the moral fibre of our society.”

He asked: “If we truly see our children as our future, then why are we destroying them; if we see women as mothers of our nation, then why are they not free to be just that.” Lt Gen Jansen van Rensburg read a goodwill message from the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Godfrey Ngwenya.

“Always remember that you are ambassadors of the people of South Africa and that the world is watching every step you take. As peacekeepers you need to be disciplined soldiers and take pride in the uniform you wear. Serve Africa with pride, respect her people, their culture and take pride in the uniform you need to be disciplined soldiers and take pride in the uniform you wear. Serve Africa with pride, respect her people, their culture and take pride in the uniform you wear.”

Sponsors of the SANDF Goodwill Parcel Project 2008 listed in no particular order: ABSA, AFRICAN LIFE, AVB, CLINIX HEALTH GROUP, LIBERTY LIFE, MAXI CREDIT SOLUTIONS, METROPOLITAN, NOVARE, OLD MUTUAL, SA ARMY FOUNDATION, SAAF BENEVOLENT FUND, SAMHS FUND, SANLAM, CHAPLAIN SERVICE, MASSMART, UNILIVER SA, NAMPACK CORRUGATED, TONGAAT HULETT’S SUGAR AND PREMIER FOODS.
Spouses Forum heads for the golf course

By Lt Sello Segone and L Cpl Mamoserwa Molefe (previously published in SA Soldier, May 2009)

It was a lovely Saturday morning, the sky was clear and the well-manicured grass of the Services Golf Club in Thaba Tshwane waited to host the members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum. An exciting day on the golf course was bound to take place. The programme of the day, Saturday, 13 March 2009, took off when Forum members gathered in the hall for their quarterly meeting. As soon as the members arrived and were offered some tea or coffee, the Programme Director, Ms Sandy Africa, welcomed everybody and explained to those gathered there the outline of the day.

Ms Linda Dabula was also on hand to bless the day with a prayer. To spice up the event, the members were introduced to golf. All eager to learn and clad up in their golf attire the members headed to the driving range to learn the finer points of the game. This exercise highlighted the commitment of the Forum to sport and recreation. Ms San-Marie Stevens and Ms Santie Koch explained and demonstrated how to play golf.

The members were thrilled as they were also offered the opportunity to strike the golf ball. Most were eager, as they had never played golf before and promised to follow it up and sign up with a local club with the hope of turning into professional golfers. “I hope one day I will turn professional and challenge my husband. I cannot wait to see the look on his face,” stammered one of the members of the forum. “People have this perception that only men can play the sport, well that’s about to change,” added another.

As soon as the aspirant golfers returned from the range various activities were lined up. These included a presentation by Curves Gym. Their main aim was to highlight the importance of exercising, and the promotion and maintenance of weight. A total of fifteen gym vouchers were awarded to lucky recipients. Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, Chairperson of the Spouses Forum, was also on hand to give the organisational report.

She pointed out the successes achieved by the forum and thanked the members for their continual support of the Goodwill Project, which always brings a smile to soldiers on deployment outside the country. Funding was the main factor she singled out, as lack thereof tended to hamper their intentions. She also mentioned the possibility of expanding membership to spouses of other ranks. Plans are also under way for the business world to support the forum.

Ms Africa also took to the stage to replay a message to the members of the forum. This was in a form of a speech that was delivered by the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki Moon. The speech addressed issues such as violence against women and the spread of HIV and AIDS. The occasion was rounded up with the women being treated to a fashion parade. Ms Nandipha Madikiza was on hand to introduce the members to the vast array of the latest fashion trends and accessories.
SANDF Spouses Forum helps to keep toddlers warm

The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum under the leadership of Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, wife of the Chief of the SANDF, opened their hearts to the pre-school children at the Tekkies Day Care Centre in Tek Base. This Day Care Centre is a safe haven for underprivileged children between the ages of two and five years old who mostly come from broken homes and single parent families.

The Centre does not receive any funds from either Government or the SANDF and is run on the little income received from parents who often fail to pay for their children’s day care. The remarkable personnel, Ms Helena Langenhoven and Ms Elmien Victor, regularly buy groceries for the children’s meals out of their own pockets and must occasionally even subsidise the salary of the third member of the staff. Ms Annah Modise is an invaluable and natural caregiver. She is clearly considered a substitute mother to the 16 children in her charge. Although there are no funds for luxuries, she and Ms Langenhoven gave them shelter against rain on the “stoep”, the cold floors when they sleep and provide warm food for their tummies.

During a special tea hosted by Ms Langehoven and Ms Victor to thank the SANDF Spouses Forum for the very welcome donation, Ms Ngwenya explained that the SANDF Spouses Forum was originally only requested to donate mattresses for the children. However, on receiving this request she and the other members, including Ms Charlotte Shoke, executive member of the SANDF Spouses Forum and wife of the Chief of the SA Army, and Ms Elizabeth Magalefa, Secretary of the SANDF Spouses Forum and wife of the retired Chief Naval Staff, visited the Day Care Centre and realised that it was not only in dire need of the mattresses, but also of restoration of the buildings and a stove.

This culminated in their concerted effort to obtain funds from major organisations, companies and sponsors to buy building material and other essentials for the Centre. The Day Care Centre is severely hampered by a lack of financial resources and must provide nutritious meals, education, safety and maintenance to the building on the small fees received from parents. The cost of the day care varies from R560 per month for a full day to R400 for a half day, the lowest day care cost in the vicinity. Nevertheless many parents often do not pay their children’s fees.

The personnel were thus extremely grateful for the donations received by Ms Ngwenya, Ms Shoke and Ms Magalefa on behalf of the SANDF Spouses Forum and thus contributing to the renovation of the Centre, ensuring warm meals with the stove and a comfortable sleep with the mattresses.

Ms Langenhoven rolled up her sleeves and painted the exterior of the Centre, made covers for the mattresses and painted the door to the dilapidated “stoep”, paint and 20 mattresses for the toddlers in August/September 2009.

Standing behind the children from Tekkies Day Care Centre is fltr: Ms Charlotte Shoke, wife of the then Chief of the SA Army, Ms Annah Modise from Tekkies, Ms Elizabeth Magalefa, wife of the Chief of Naval Staff (Ret), Ms Helena Langenhoven from Tekkies and Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, the then Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum and wife of the then Chief of the SANDF. Ms Elmien Victor from Tekkies is sitting next to the children.

The SANDF Spouses Forum hence
**Bigger Goodwill Parcels were donated than ever**

Article and photo by Lt Col Gerda Tredoux (previously published in SA Soldier, November 2009)

An improved and larger hamper is awaiting the families of SANDF members who are deployed externally, beyond the borders of South Africa. This year more sponsors donated food and beverages for the goodwill parcels than ever before. Massmart co-ordinated sponsorships from Huletts, Simba, Nampak Corrugated, Colgate-Palmolive, Snackwox, Unilever, Oceana Group Limited, Premier Foods, Nestle, Tiger Brands, Kelloggs, Cadbury, Bokomo and Bull Brand to donate food parcels for the families of the deployed SANDF members.

Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, Chairperson of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum and wife of the Chief of the SANDF, sincerely thanked all the sponsors for their generous contributions and the superb hampers.

“The deployed members are making great sacrifices and these goodwill parcels for their families are only a small token of our thanks for their efforts and sacrifices,” Ms Ngwenya said. Col T.K. Davies, Officer Commanding of 10 Air Depot, and his staff who provides storage and helped to pack the hamper, hosted a function on 14 October 2009 to thank the sponsors and the SANDF Spouses Forum represented by Ms Elizabeth Magalefa, Ms Anthea Schoeman and Ms Faith Malinga, all three also Generals’ or Admirals’ wives. Senior Warrant Officers from all the Services also attended the occasion under the auspices of the Master Chief Warrant Officer of the SANDF.
Thanking the Angels

By Mr Lufuno Netshirembe
(previously published in SA Soldier, January 2010)

How best do you give thanks to the one who brings peace, hope and happiness to the people? This is the quest that the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum under the leadership of Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, the wife of the Chief of the SANDF, and Goodwill Parcel Project under the leadership of first I really thought deployment was about soldiers making money and getting a few dollars to exchange for rands and so make good money from deployment. My view has changed. Deployment “is not child’s play”. The conditions that these soldiers work under are unbearable, not because they sleep in tents or weather havens, but because the situation they work under is so unpredictable. Every day they have to be ready for armed confrontation by illegitimate militia. There is nothing good about living everyday as if it could be your last. As if that is not enough, you have to be constantly thinking of your fellow soldiers that you have to protect and the citizens of the host country that need protection too (okay … I admit I feel overwhelmed by this experience. It is just that the deeper I look at the deployment of soldiers the more I realised that there is not enough gratitude to these soldiers. Deployment is not for everyone; it is for those who have “nerves of steel”).

The role of the SANDF Spouses Forum

Through the year the SANDF Spouses Forum solicits sponsors to buy food hampers for the families of the deployed soldiers. These are distributed to them over the festive season. The food hampers were delivered directly to each deployed soldier’s home personally (the families did not have to go and collect them somewhere) by 18 December 2009. These hampers go a long way to say to the loved ones at home that the SANDF cares for them and their loved ones.

Goodwill Parcel Project

From 12 to 18 December 2009 sponsors and senior SANDF officials visited the deployed soldiers in Burundi, the DRC, the CAR and the Sudan. In all these countries the soldiers expressed their gratitude not just for the gifts, but also because the people actually took time to visit them in their deployment areas. The soldiers realised that the gifts could have been sent via sustainment flights to be distributed to them; to see people from home was a blessing and good morale booster.

In the DRC, Col Barney Modisane, National Contingent Commander for Operation MISTRAL XII and XIII from 43 SA Brigade in Wallmannsthal, north of Pretoria, expressed his gratitude for the gifts on behalf of the soldiers under his command. He said he found the word “Goodwill” associated with kindness, friendliness, helpfulness, concern, care and support, “after finding the meaning of this word which is the purpose of today’s special gathering.

“The festive season is a time of doing all the things that in terms of the definition of goodwill,” said Col Modisane. In conclusion he thanked the SANDF leadership and sponsors, saying:

“Your generosity, caring,
Above: Ms Busiswe Ngwenya, the former Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, joins the deployed soldiers in song.

thoughtfulness and support are appreciated. Each effort goes a long way amid the stress and strains of the operational environment”. His speech expressed well how all the deployment Contingent Commanders and the troops felt about the gifts and most of all to see people from home. In the different deployment areas Lt Gen Rinus Jansen van Rensburg, the Chief of Corporate Staff, who was visiting deployed members under the auspice of the Goodwill Parcel Project for the last time in 2009, expressed his appreciation to the soldiers in deployment. He said: “I would like to thank you sincerely on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief, President Jacob Zuma, and the Chief of SANDF, Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, for being good ambassadors of South Africa and the SANDF in these foreign countries away from your loved ones.”

He urged the troops to give their unwavering support to the leadership of the SANDF and the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and assured them that their support gave the leadership and the Minister strength to continue seeking the best employment conditions from the highest levels of Government. In the CAR the importance of the Goodwill Parcel Project was emphasised by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and assured them that their support was continued for the training they were giving to the CAR Armed Force through Operation VIMBIZELA. He wished for continued support and good relations between the CAR and SA.

For the first time in the history of the Goodwill Parcel Project the Goodwill Parcel Project delegates, guests and sponsors were allowed to visit the Sudan. This was a special moment indeed because for the first time the delegates, guests and sponsors saw the harsh conditions that our soldiers were working under. On the question of danger and harsh conditions I interviewed Col Sazi Dlamini, the National Contingent Commander, who had been on deployment in the Sudan for 12 months. He was very clear and explicit about the dangers they had to deal with on a daily basis.

“Here in the Sudan everything has to go by road. A trip that can take 45 to 60 minutes flight by helicopter can take up to six hours by road,” said Col Dlamini. I could write a book the size of the Bible or even bigger about deployment, but that will never be enough to tell you that these soldiers are indeed “Angels”. Deployment is not only about carrying guns; it comes with heavy responsibilities.

The citizens of the host countries not only have to be protected, but must not feel threatened by the presence of foreign soldiers. This requires a serious balancing act: one of being a good guy to the citizens and a bad guy to the villains. The magnitude of the acts of appreciation cannot really be expressed by mere words only. This exercise was such an important event not just for the deployed soldiers, but even for the Government.

On 16 December the Goodwill Parcel Project delegates, the SANDF Spouses Forum, sponsors and guests were invited to the UBUNTU Village, which is the South African Ambassador’s residential place. To answer one question: Do the SANDF Spouses Forum and the Goodwill Parcel Project play a significant role? The answer is a resounding “Yes”. Are the two entities doing enough? “Yes” and “No”. “Yes”, because they acknowledge the work that our deployed soldiers do, and “no” because there are not enough gifts or “Thank You’s” to match the heart and soul that our men and women put in executing their tasks while on deployment.


* These sponsors are not listed in any order of importance. “Ri a livhuwa, ngvohe afha hune na tusa hone zwi sa fheli” (thank you, may where you take from always be replenished).
Honouring women on deployment

Women on deployment were recently honoured and celebrated by the SANDF Spouses Forum during Women’s Day celebrations held at the SA Army College in Thaba Tshwane on 28 August 2010. The Forum recognised the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building. Also stressed was the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts towards the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

The Chief of the SANDF, Gen Godfrey Ngwenya, the Chaplain General, Brig Gen (Rev) Marius Cornelissen, and the Master Chief Warrant Officer of the SANDF, MCWO Johan Scheepers, graced the occasion with their presence and recognised the commitment of women on deployment. They pointed out their selfless dedication to the safety of the Republic and the continent, and their determination to protect those who are vulnerable and insecure.

A former VIP Protection Commander in Burundi, Maj I.J. Owen, is such an unsung heroine. She is young and is passionate about being a woman in arms serving her country and its people. In her speech she took the audience on a tour of her deployed duties and shared her experiences and the conditions that women endure on an equal basis with their male counterparts on deployment.

The story that touched the audience most was that of two SA Police Service (SAPS) women, Col Ntlogeleng Menda Aucone and Constable Mmasebelalo Macey Ramantsi, who were abducted in the Sudan on 15 April 2010. They shared their 15 days of endured emotional suffering. These two unsung heroines conducted themselves peacefully at all times, regardless of the abduction and despite all the cowardly acts to dampen their spirits and threats to their lives. They remained focused on their mission: to protect, serve, empower and execute their tasks with excellence.

The meeting was also conducted to observe the impact that external military deployments have on the families of deployed soldiers. Maj Sello Maganwe shared his family’s experience when his spouse was on an external deployment in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He related the nature of social support services that should be rendered to families and evaluated the implementation, efficiency and effectiveness of existing social support services to families of SANDF members while on deployment.

The Director of the New York National Guard Family Programs, Lt Col Kelly Hilland, was the guest speaker and she shared with the delegates the family programmes established and facilitated by the National Guard for families of members deployed. She mentioned that a strong bond meant a stronger defence force. Some of the programmes included the Yellow Ribbon event, family wellness, family readiness assistance, youth and community programmes and family assistance specialists. She stated that these programmes were facilitated by ongoing communication, involvement, support and recognition between the National Guard families and the National Guard in a partnership that promotes the best in both.

The Chief of the SANDF said that South Africa was immensely blessed to have the kind of women we have women, who despite the challenges and hardships that life often throws at them, become victorious in the end. They endure the struggles and negative challenges, yet through their dedication and commitment they remain as firm as rocks.

The Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, said that it was a special and joyous day: A day of honouring the commitment, dedication, selflessness and amazing women on deployment. Ms Ngwenya concluded: “One is bound to find such a woman, a woman of character and dedication; an exceptional woman who goes beyond just her normal duty, but puts in an extra effort. As the SANDF Spouses Forum we recognise and honour you for your contribution to creating a safer Africa.”

The SANDF Spouses Forum is an important initiative within the SANDF. Its role and objectives include providing a platform for women’s contributions and participation in changing the lives of ordinary citizens, particularly the families of members deployed on external military operations.
Acknowledging the efforts of our peacekeepers

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Goodwill Parcel Project while at the same time showing appreciation and support to our externally deployed members as many sponsors as possible were invited to meet with our peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR) when goodwill parcels were presented to them.

This goodwill visit took place over the period 11 to 17 December 2010, not to reimburse our deployed soldiers for their efforts, but to show gratitude and to encourage them over the festive season. For the past ten years goodwill parcels have been synonymous with tokens of appreciation. The Goodwill Parcel Project has since grown and evolved to provide goodwill parcels to all internally and externally deployed members, including hampers for these members’ families back home.

In order to show that the sacrifices of soldiers who passed away while on deployment or operations are not forgotten, the Goodwill Parcel Project, through the Warrant Officers Spouses Forum, has been also extended to include these deceased soldiers’ families, starting 2010. As a token of appreciation from the Warrant Officers Spouses Forum these families received Bibles in their own language donated by the Chaplain Services.

A two-minute silence was observed during the handing over of goodwill parcels in memory of those who lost their lives in operations. “They will never grow old. May their souls rest in peace,” said Members of the Goodwill Visit team with our peacekeepers in Kinshasa. Credit must be given to all the Warrant Officers in the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). It all started in 2001 when the Warrant Officer of the SANDF and the Warrant Officer of the Joint Operations Division established the Goodwill Parcel Project.

At that stage there was no funding for the project, and the Warrant Officer of the SANDF then requested that all Warrant Officers in the SANDF donate R1 towards the project. Since then sponsors from the private sector, the SANDF Spouses Forum, and the Warrant Officers Spouses Forum (in 2010) joined in. Currently the SANDF Spouses Forum is the custodian of the hamper packs for the deployed members’ families, oversees the obtaining of sponsors and determines the contents of these hampers.

Not only was it the 10th anniversary of the Goodwill Parcel Project, but it was also the last year that the Master Chief Warrant Officer of the SANDF, MCWO Johan Scheepers, would form part of the goodwill visits to our deployed soldiers. MCWO Scheepers said his goodbyes at the various pit stops while delivering the tokens of appreciation to our deployed soldiers. MCWO Scheepers said: “There is a time to come and a time to go. It was a privilege to have served my soldiers and country. Thank you for being a family for Sheron, my wife, and I.” He also thanked each and every sponsor for his or her contributions over the years.

The 2010 sponsors were: Absa Group, Avbob, BAE Systems, Bible Society of SA, Chaplain Services, Bull Brand, Cadbury, Cash on Hand, Clinix Health Group, Colgate Palmolive, Credit Solutions, Defence Institute, Investment, Liberty Life, Massmart, MaxiCredit, Metropolitan, Nampak, National Brands Ltd, Nescafé, Nestlé, Novare, Oceana Brands, Old Mutual, Premier Foods, SA Air Force, SA Army

Above: Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, the then Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, with members of the goodwill visit team in Kinshasa.

Left: Lt Gen Derick Mgwebi, Chief of Human Resources and the Patron of the Goodwill Parcel Project (right), hands over a token of appreciation to Col Mteleleli Ngculu, the RSA National Contingent Commander Operation MISTRAL XVI.
Ms Ngwenya for her and her team's good work you do.” He also thanked parcels. “Please continue to do this handing out of goodwill. The understanding and the make-up are because of you”. Lt Gen Mgwebi said that without Sergeant Majors the SANDF would not be able to do this handing out of goodwill parcels. “Please continue to do the good work you do.” He also thanked Ms Ngwenya for her and her team’s must be respectful at all times”. He added: “Peace and stability contribute to the economy of this country. Please do what you do best. Provide that security so that Africa can be secured.”

Lt Gen Mgwebi also stressed that the Non-commissioned Officers and the Warrant Officers were the backbone of the SANDF. He added: “Without them we are not a well-disciplined force. They are the advisers to their commanders at all levels.” On presenting the goodwill parcels to the deployed soldiers MCWO Scheepers said that inside the wooden box was a pack of playing cards and a multi-utility tool.

He explained to the soldiers that the utility tool could be used to fix everything, “BUT NOT to settle arguments between each other. Then the multi-utility tool will be taken back and the person will be returned to his/her unit (RTU) immediately”. He added that the men could utilise the empty wooden box to keep their medals inside, while the women could use it as a jewelry box. Soccer and netball kits were also presented to the contingents at the various bases.

Each soldier also received a Bible from the Chaplains Service. The Chaplain General, Rev Marius Cornelissen, said: “Inside the Bible is the Anthem, the Code of Conduct and a calendar with important dates, including verses for comfort.” MCWO Scheepers said to the deployed soldiers: “We are proud of what you are doing. You are important to South Africa, and to us. We salute you.”

The Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Busiswe Ngwenya, said that she spoke on behalf of all sponsors and as a mother. She said: “I was touched by the Chaplain’s sermon. I see well pruned trees when I look around. I see sweet fruits that are useful to all of us. In any conflict situation the ones suffering the most are the children and women. Soldiers please provide shelter and shade as fruit bearing trees to those in the community, also to your women colleagues. The roots you leave behind should be deep-rooted democratic roots.”

Ms Ngwenya added: “All women soldiers, be good ambassadors from South Africa. I spoke not only to women, but to everyone here deployed, but I mentioned women soldiers first because I am a mother. We salute you. We respect and recognise you. We care and support you. We shall be there for you. I wish you a blessed Christmas and hopefully a more successful 2011.”

The Chairperson of the Civilian Leg of the Goodwill Parcel Project, Mr Gerrit Beumer from ABSA Group, spoke on behalf of all sponsors. “It made me proud to enter this base this morning. Well done! The goodwill parcels are tokens of appreciation for the sacrifices that you make.”

At the final pit stop - at Munigi Base in Goma - on 16 December 2010, the RSA National Contingent Commander Operation MISTRAL XVI, Col Meteleli Ngcule, said that he felt privileged to see so many guests. He said: “The gifts give our soldiers courage and energy when they know their efforts are recognised.” He then thanked Lt Gen Mgwebi and the sponsors for travelling so far to deliver the goodwill parcels and also for providing them to their families.

The soldiers were pleased with the gifts and felt that their efforts were not in vain. Talking to Cpl Johannes Masemola, who is on deployment from 8 December 2010 to 8 June 2011 in the DRC, he said: “The SANDF is looking very well after us. It feels good. I only miss my family and I would like to send them my love and regards”. Pte Reginald Shingange, Pte Linda Sihakhane, L Cpl Gift Bapela and L Cpl Jafeta Tlaka from 35 Construction Regiment (SA Engineers) were in good spirits while on duty at Munigi Base in Goma where the delegation visited the base to hand over the goodwill parcels.

(SANDF Spouses Forum) good work. He also thanked all the sponsors for seeing fit to come and experience what our deployed soldiers were going through.

They are usually deployed for six months or even longer. He said that they would now have a better understanding of the challenges of Africa. Lt Gen Mgwebi, when referring to the gifts, said: “When you use your multi-utility tools back home, it will remind you of this trip.” He added: “The soldiers we did not see in the Sudan. They will also receive their multi-utility tools back home, it will remind you of this trip.” He added: “We are proud of what you are doing. You are important to South Africa, and to us. We salute you.”

The Chairperson of the SANDF
March 2011 is celebrated as International Women’s Day worldwide. It originated in 1910 in Copenhagen where a group of women took steps to promote equal employment opportunities. In 1911 the day was marked officially as International Women’s Day. Over the period 11 to 13 March 2011 the SANDF Spouses Forum visited the Military Academy in Saldanha to motivate female learners who were away from their homes for a period of at least one year and shared with them the 100th anniversary of International Women’s Day.

It is for this contribution that the SANDF Spouses Forum took the initiative to celebrate this month by sending the message that they saluted them for their bravery in their oath to the South African Flag. With the theme “equal access to education training and science technology” the SANDF Spouses Forum is spreading the message of women inclusion at all levels in various sectors of our society.

The then Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, addressed all female students of the Military Academy as follows: “Women in uniform have shown great determination in volunteering to infiltrate this male dominated field in the security cluster. It is also true that the educational gap is steadily narrowing. However, we need to acknowledge the harsh reality of this significant progress. We are proud of the achievements of a small fraction of the women and young girls in our country”.

Ms Ngwenya added: “As women we need to emphasise our capabilities within our respective environment as daughters, mothers, sisters, friends, colleagues, employers and employees among various other roles we play. The future of our nation depends on the choices we make, whether to see the opportunities afforded to us for what they are, exploit them to our advantage and eventually succeed.”

The Department of Defence and Military Veterans is synchronised with the Government’s message of giving women a chance in leadership positions. This can be seen in the appointment of the Minister of the Department of Defence and Military Veterans and the Secretary for Defence. Both these women are serving as living proof that women are capable of holding high-profile positions and they are a great inspiration to women in the DOD.

The advancement of women in the DOD needs to be pursued with the vigour it deserves and women should seize the opportunities presented to them. This was emphasised by Minister Lindiwe Sisulu when she was highlighting the role of women in the DOD. She said: “They care and they pay attention to detail. Women excel better under pressure: when women are put into difficult positions they come out the best.” Ms Ngwenya said: “It is no walk in the park and the road ahead needs strong, mature women and my experience has taught me that women have to leap to cover a distance that men can walk. That is why we need to apply ourselves and be more assertive when it comes to issues of our advancement.”

Ms Ngwenya quoted Hillary Clinton in her speech on International Women’s Day: “If we invest in women’s education and give them the opportunity to access credit or start a small business, we add fuel to a powerful engine for progress for women, their families, their communities and their country. Women invest up to 90% of their income in their families and their communities. When women have equal access to education and health care and the freedom to start businesses, the economic, political and social benefits ripple out far beyond their own homes”.

The female learners also had an opportunity of sharing their challenges and seeking advice from the women who came to motivate and give support to them. The SANDF Spouses Forum has taken a stand to mentor these young women. To all the women of this institution, the ball is in your court, the road has been paved for you; go out there and take the women in the DOD forward.
A new Chairperson was appointed for the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum at the SA Army College in Thaba Tshwane on 20 August 2011. This forum has been in existence for over six years under the leadership of Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya. Ms Ngwenya was one of the spouses who were instrumental in the formation of the SANDF Spouses Forum, which she led with passion and pride.

This forum assists in the goodwill parcel project which recognises the families of SANDF soldiers on deployment during the festive season. Over the years the project has had many sponsors, and has been ably assisted these ladies with their passion and dedication for the work that their husbands do each day. Their work goes far beyond just sitting and building each other up on issues that each can relate to.

Among other social responsibilities the spouses forum has also adopted the orphanage school in Thaba Tshwane, which made national news when the Minister of Defence, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, and former Chief of the SA Army now the new Chief of the SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke, donated blankets and food hampers. It is fitting that this forum is part of the greater SANDF. For its work it has received many accolades.

Under the leadership of Ms Ngwenya the forum visited the women learners at the Saldanha Military Academy to celebrate National Women’s Day 2011. The visit was aimed at encouraging these women who work far from home to ensure that the mission and vision of the department are kept in good and disciplined hands. Ms Ngwenya hands over the baton, with the money invested in the forum and a good legacy, to Ms Charlotte Shoke who also was previously the Chairperson for the SA Army Spouses Forum.

Ms Shoke is the spouse of the Chief of SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke.

Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, the outgoing Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum (right), hands over the file of all statements of accounts and the constitution of the Forum to her successor, Ms Charlotte Shoke.

Ms Ngwenya urged Ms Shoke to continue being the strong woman she has come to know over the years: “You have been a backbone of the SA Army Spouses Forum, as you take up more responsibility, I know you will excel. To the other ladies of the Forum please continue to support my successor with the same measure of commitment and dedication you have given me. You are indeed in good hands and I would not have had any other person take over the reins from me. She is soft-spoken voice, yet her leadership and discipline are clear”.

Ms Charlotte Sbu Shoke’s Curriculum Vitae

Ms Charlotte Shoke was born on 15 February 1952, attended school in Swaziland, and matriculated at St Michael’s Girls High School. She joined the African National Congress and went to Zambia where she furthered her studies, obtaining a certificate in business management at the Evelyn Home College of Journalism. She went back to Swaziland, and served in the underground structures of MK, where she supported the Transvaal Machinery headed by Guebuza (later Gen Nyanda).

She was a courier of intelligence information into and out of SA. During the crackdown by the Swaziland Government on the liberation movement in the mid-80s, it was felt that Sbu’s security had been compromised. She had to leave Swaziland for Zambia, with the children. She worked in the Treasury of the ANC until she was redeployed to Zimbabwe where she continued with her studies, obtaining a diploma in business management.

Upon her return to SA, Sbu attended childcare courses, and worked at the Jabulile Ndlouv Childcare Centre in Johannesburg, run by the South African Communist Party. When that project closed, she devoted her time to child care charity organisations in the informal settlements in Midrand until her time was cut short by her responsibilities as spouse of the Chief of the SA Army.

Ms Shoke takes over the forum with much delight as MTN announced at the event that they were going to adopt the forum. This partnership will enable the forum to achieve its goals tirelessly knowing that MTN is behind them.
Christmas came early for the Kiddie College at Tek Base in Thaba Tshwane as the members of the SANDF Spouses Forum opened their hearts to the 37 children of the crèche on 30 November 2011. The forum organised a Christmas party for the crèche.

“This is a gesture to say we value the importance of the children’s wellbeing and know that this school is building future leaders and possible Generals for the SANDF”, said Ms Charlotte Shoke, the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, as she addressed the parents. The forum contributed gifts and toys to promote effective learning and development at the crèche. The theme of the day was: “Children are our future, love them and care for them”.

Ms Shoke emphasised that it was important to build a strong foundation for the mental growth of our children and she insisted on a good partnership between the parents and the teachers to see that the vision of the crèche was implemented successfully.

The crèche also received a pledge from MTN to install a geyser in the vicinity in January 2012.

Ms Motsi Monare from MTN was pleased to make the announcement to the school in the presence of the parents. Ms Monare said: “This is to show our commitment as MTN to well-being of the children and to make the lives of the teachers easier. She concluded: “Children are the future; let us work hand in hand to give them the best education.”

Ms Charlotte Shoke, the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum (back row, second from left), and Ms Motsi Monare from MTN (back row, first from left) with the teachers and children of Kiddie College at Tek Base.
Members of the SANDF Spouses Forum held a meeting at the SA Army Foundation in Centurion on 12 March 2012. This was a special event to welcome (Honorary) Colonel Yvonne Chaka Chaka as a mentor of the forum. The Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Charlotte Shoke, welcomed Mama Chaka Chaka as part of the forum as an (Honorary) Colonel of the SA Air Force and ambassador the SANDF Spouses Forum to help achieve their visions.

In her address Col Chaka Chaka said: “I am proud that you have chosen me to be part of this great initiative that boosts the morale of your husbands and promotes the reputation of the organisation as a whole and seeks ways to overcome the challenges of soldiers. I have been honoured to work closely with the wives of presidents from other African countries. It is something I am passionate about, but as the saying goes: charity should begin at home. I have met most of your husbands and today is a happy day for me to meet with the wives who make sure that the generals of the SANDF are well taken care of.

“It is women like you who hold much responsibility and who should be caregivers to your husbands, as their jobs are stressful. Women should empower themselves too as good partners and as businesswomen who will contribute greatly to our community of SANDF soldiers. This forum is doing a good job, but it should also be publicised at the optimum level. I can tell you now that there are people who would be interested in sponsoring this forum.

“My passion about women’s empowerment has led me to adopt a clinic in Kenya and I am currently in the process of adopting another one in Namibia. I donated a car in Tanzania after I saw a woman carrying her sick child to the clinic which was a 7km walk from the village, something that pained my heart so much.”

In closing, she said that she also would like to interact with the soldiers on deployment, as they are prone to contracting malaria. She said she would like to educate and motivate them as their work was appreciated beyond the SANDF.
Article and photos by Mr Lufuno Netshirembe (previously published in SA Soldier, January 2012)

The first SA National Defence Force (SANDF) contingent to be deployed in Burundi on a peacekeeping mission was on 1 November 2001 under Operation FIBRE. This peacekeeping mission was not an easy exercise, but in spite of all the hurdles the aim and objective of the SANDF were achieved. Once the mission was accomplished, the troops were withdrawn. Since the official SANDF withdrawal from Burundi there have been no reported incidents of violence.

The peacekeeping mission helped to establish a new democratic government in this previously war-torn and poverty-stricken country. Once the political stability was established economic stability and eventually economic growth could be stimulated. The South African business community through the sponsorship of the Goodwill Parcel Project (GPP) saw an opportunity to invest in Burundi.

The investment deals would further fortify the relations that already existed between the two countries. On 16 December 2011 the South African military and civilian delegations arrived in Burundi and were welcomed with a welcoming function. As Mr Membathisi Mldlalana, the ambassador to South Africa, was on official duty in South Africa, Mr Chris Botha, the Chargé d’Affaires, took over the responsibility of hosting the delegation.

On this occasion Lt Gen Derick Mgwebi, the Patron of the GPP and the SANDF Chief of Joint Operations, highlighted the type of relations that South Africa and Burundi enjoyed. After the speeches Ms Charlotte Shoke, the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum and wife of the Chief of the SANDF, handed over the GPP Christmas gifts to the embassy personnel.

On 17 December 2011 it was time to get down to the serious business of talks between the Agence Burundaise de Promotion des investissements (API) and Burundi Investment Authority and South African business community that sponsored the GPP and the SANDF Spouses Forum. In officially opening the meeting Mr Botha welcomed the attendants. In his speech Lt Gen Mgwebi highlighted the need for this business meeting.

He explained that the GPP was not the custodian of this initiative, but rather was used together with the SANDF Spouses Forum to facilitate this drive to stimulate
economic growth in Burundi. Mr Emanuel Niyungeko, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism of Burundi, told the delegates that Burundi was indeed a good country to invest in as it had become stable politically and promised good returns on investment for potential investors as there were many opportunities in this virgin niche market. Some of the business opportunities available were in the food industry where there was a need to set up tomato production plants and a cassava flour mill on KUMOSO plain. Investments were also required in modern pineapple and passion fruit processing plants. In the construction industry there were opportunities to build houses it was time for the GPP and the SANDF Spouses Forum sponsors, on behalf of the South African business community, to exchange ideas on how they could be of assistance to Burundi.

The banking, insurance, health and food sectors gave their different presentations on how they operated back home in South Africa. The South Africa-Burundi business meeting was held at Hotel du Lac Tanganyika (Lake Tanganyika Hotel) and Chaired by Mr Christian Nkengurutse, the General Secretary of Federal Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

After the most important business of the day was concluded the SANDF Spouses Forum visited the Musaga Women’s co-operative that empowered disadvantaged women who were affected by the conflict. Next they visited one of the poorest orphanages in Burundi under the custodianship of Ms Mbonimda Capitdine. At the orphanage the SANDF Spouses Forum handed her some of the much needed necessities to the children who were living in squalid conditions. The gifts included soccer balls, kitchen utensils and toiletries.

In the Central African Republic (CAR) on 20 December 2011 the GPP delegation distributed the annual GPP gifts to the SANDF soldiers who were training the CAR’s soldiers. The deployed SANDF soldiers in CAR were accommodated at Villa 14 ministerial residence in Bangui. In the CAR, Maj Gen Duma Mdutyana from the SANDF Joint Operations Division presented the gifts on behalf of Lt Gen Mgwebi who could not make it to the CAR due to other official engagements.

The occasion was graced by the CAR Chief of Staff, Brig Gen Guillaume Lapo. Brig Gen Lapo is the Chief of the Defence Force (basically the equivalent of the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke). In his speech Maj Gen Mdutyana pointed out that the ultimate goal of the relations between the CAR and South Africa needed to reach the level where the CAR and SA could negotiate to establish business/economic ties.

Business sponsors of the 2011 GPP (in no specific order) were: the Bible Society, Old Mutual, Sanlam, Liberty Life, Metropolitan, Avbob, SA Army Foundation, SAFI, SA Air Force Benevolent Fund, Absa Group, Novare, BAE Systems, Navy Fund, Defence Institute, Clinix Health Group and various Massmart business categories, namely Colgate Palmolive, Nestle, Premier Foods, Snackworks, Tongaat Hulett Sugar, Tiger Brands and Oceana Brands. Without these sponsors the GPP would not have been as successful as it was.
The 2012 Goodwill Parcel Project is in full swing

By Mr Kgabo Mashamaite
(previously published in SA Soldier, July 2012)
Photo by Cpl Itumeleng Makhubela

The 6th Goodwill Parcel Project was in full swing when Massmart Holdings Limited invited the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and senior members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) to a breakfast in Pretoria on 25 May 2012. The aim of the breakfast session was to review the achievements of the Goodwill Parcel Project during the past year and to acknowledge the valued contributions of the food suppliers towards the Project.

Delivering her address the former Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, said that she was touched by the generosity of the corporate sponsors towards the members of the SANDF. Minister Sisulu said: "Our National Defence Force is eternally grateful to the sponsors and we appreciate their efforts in bringing happiness to the families of the members deployed, who also cannot be with their respective families owing to their national commitment. Equally, we would also like to extend our deepest gratitude on behalf of the recipients of the parcels that you help us to recognise their sacrifices in offering the services of their children, spouses and parents in answer to our national call and we will always be grateful for that."

According to Mr Graham Rebello, Channel Executive Massmart Holdings Limited, the experience of distributing food parcels to various families is always moving. He said: "What touches me most is the response of families to the goodwill parcel. The fact that the SANDF and the corporate sponsors appreciate the contribution of their family members on the continent is overwhelming."

Speaking on behalf of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Dinah Masondo appreciated the support from the business community towards helping the Forum continue to looking after the families of the deployed soldiers. This year the Goodwill Parcel Project is looking to increase articles in the food parcel to over 5 500 because of the increase in deployed soldiers, largely on internal missions. The overall cost of the packaged articles is estimated at about R2,5 million.

SANDF Spouses show their love for toddlers

By Cpl Ally Rakoma (previously published in SA Soldier, August 2012)
Photo by Sgt Elias Mahuma

"There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children” - Mr Nelson Mandela. This quote rang true with the celebration of this global icon’s 94th birthday. As part of celebrating the values and principles that Madiba epitomises, members of the SANDF Spouses Forum, chaired by Ms Charlotte Shoke, together with the spouses of the Military Attachés and Advisory Corps (MAAC), honoured the living legacy of Mr Nelson Mandela by dedicating their time and effort to Kiddy College at Tek Base in Pretoria on 19 July 2012.

Mr Mandela’s selfless request to the world is not only to celebrate his birthday, but to contribute to social upliftment and dedicate at least 67 Minutes and more to good deeds on behalf of the underprivileged in our communities. These women added value to Madiba’s vision and donated groceries, snacks, toys, learning materials and other much needed resources to the children of Kiddy College. After visiting the children, the women paid a visit to the Sterkfontein Caves and the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind National Heritage Site. Maj Gen Ntsiki Memela-Motumi, the Deputy Chief of Human Resources, encouraged the group of women to strive to be agents of change and work together to create a caring society and help change the world for the better. Talking about the significance of International Mandela Day, Maj Gen Memela-Motumi said that former President Nelson Mandela was loved and revered throughout the world and his name resonated with people across the globe. She reminded the women that in 2009 the United Nations declared 18 July as International Mandela Day. She added: “Today we have dedicated Madiba’s birthday towards a good cause. Children are close to Tata Madiba’s heart. Let us continue to inspire hope and action.”

Ms Eriam Ghias from Pakistan, on behalf of the spouses of the MAAC, said that there could be nothing more fitting than to celebrate a life well lived and ensure that the ethos and legacy of Mr Mandela continued forever. She said: “He is a symbol of peace, hope, unity and prosperity.”
SANDF Spouses Forum celebrates Women’s Day

**Article and photo by S Sgt Lebogang Tlhaole (previously published in SA Soldier, September 2012)**

The SA Military Health Service (SAMHS) hosted the SANDF Spouses Forum Women’s Day celebration at the SAMHS Training Formation in Thaba Tshwane on 18 August 2012. The theme of the day was “Celebrating Women, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”. Each year in South Africa, National Women’s Day is celebrated on 9 August.

Thousands of events occur not just on this day, but throughout August (Women’s Month) to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women. This year’s Women’s Day celebration of the SANDF Spouses Forum was not only used to socialise and network, but to reflect and look back to a tradition that represents at least five decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

Ms Charlotte Shoke, Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, took the stand to call upon all spouses to take practical actions to end violence against women and to celebrate heroines of yesteryear such as Ms Helen Suzman, Ms Lilian Ngoyi, Ms Charlotte Maxeke and others who stood against the apartheid government. She said: “We have improved the position of women so that they can assume their role in the public sphere, protect the sovereignty and security of our country and play a role as peacekeepers in Africa.”

Furthermore, she encouraged people to use every platform to change the mindsets of men and women to respect one another. Ms Shoke requested members of the Forum to support unit programmes aimed at managing diversity and building cohesion with regard to transformation goals. The spouses also committed themselves to providing counselling to the young leaders and members to deepen their patriotism and unity.

She also encouraged those in attendance to be grateful for what they have and to learn to share with those less fortunate. She motivated everyone to believe in themselves and reminded the guests of how fortunate they were to be South African citizens. During her address, General Riah Phiyega, Commissioner of the SA Police Service, said that women must play their role in society, and women of power or substance should contribute wherever they were. She asked what the women of today were doing to produce the women of tomorrow. She concluded by applauding the SANDF Spouses Forum for their excellent work in the SANDF.

**SANDF Spouses Forum**

SANDF Spouses Forum is an official association structured to empower, give support and form networking relationships among the spouses of Generals and Flag Officers in the DOD. This Forum is mandated to conduct outreach projects for identified areas of concern within the SANDF. In this regard it upgraded the children’s ward at 1 Military Hospital and donated food hampers to members in deployment areas.

The SANDF Spouses Forum was established six years ago and is recognised as an official entity of the DOD community. It is led by Ms Charlotte Shoke, wife of the Chief of the SANDF, Gen Solly Shoke. The Forum members meet voluntarily once a quarter to review the progress of its annual goals.

The Forum promotes intergovernmental dialogue and encourages society to reconnect with the past in order to shape the direction of the future. Social segments such as youth, women, people living with disabilities, students, learners, civil society, religious and cultural fraternities, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, business, recreation and sport have an important role in helping sustain discourse on this theme.

**Spreading goodwill to our deployed soldiers**

**Article and photo by Mr Kgabo Mashamaite (previously published in SA Soldier, October 2012)**

The Goodwill Parcel Project is growing in leaps and bounds, the sponsorship value being in excess of R2.5 million. This was announced by the Chairperson of the Project, Mr Angel Ramphele, during the Goodwill Parcel Project Gala Evening in Pretoria on 7 September 2012.

The aim of the event was to enable the corporate sponsors to make pledges towards the Project. Mr Ramphele said: “It is indeed a great honour to experience the commitment and passion from all of you. It is only through your dedication and compassion that our operations can benefit from the Goodwill mission, which is in its twelfth year of existence, having grown from a sponsorship value of R25 000 in 2001 to a whopping R2.5 million in 2012.”

Mr Ramphele added that members of the public and business community took time to travel to remote locations to join our operational forces over the Christmas period as has been the case over the past few years. The sponsors brought joy and thanked our soldiers who have to leave their loved ones back home.

Among the guests who graced the event were Gen Solly Shoke, the Chief of the SA National Defence Force, and Dr Sam Gulube, the Secretary for Defence. The event was also used to welcome new sponsors.
July 2013 marked the 95th birthday of Mr Nelson Mandela - a living legend and stalwart whose selfless work for humanity has shaped the history of our country and inspired many citizens around the world.

Members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum and the spouses of the Military Attachés and Advisory Corps (MAAC) heeded the call to “Take action, inspire change and make every day a Mandela Day” by visiting Refentse Primary School in Mamelodi to give inspirational talks and donate paint to refurbish the school.

Kicking off the proceedings at the school Brig Gen Nombulelo Maphoyi, Director Defence Foreign Relations, urged the young people to become the captains and masters of their own destiny.

Ms Charlotte Shoke, the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, delivered the message to the young people that through the power of education they could change the world. She said: “Through the power of education you, learners, standing here today could one day work for the SANDF and be messengers of peace for our country and our continent.”

Expressing his sentiments to members of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Mr Hendrick Maponya, the School Principal, said that today’s exercise would perpetuate the lasting legacy that Madiba represents.

From Refentse Primary School, the Madiba magic continued and a convoy was formed to drive to the Itlhokomeleng Association for the Aged and Persons with Disabilities in Alexandra Township. Members were welcomed by the CEO, Ms Marjorie Manganye, who said that the centre cared for the elderly and vulnerable residents in the community and for homeless people. She said that they were grateful for the spouses’ visit to the centre to put smiles on the faces of the elderly. She added: “Keep on giving, never stop, because you are giving us hope.”

On behalf of the spouses of the MAAC, Ms Sylvia Bangue, wife of the Cameroon Assistant Defence Attaché, said that all spouses must shoulder the responsibility of building a caring society that takes care of the aged and those less fortunate.
The SA National Defence Force Spouses Forum visits Soweto

By Cpl Ally Rakoma (previously published in SA Soldier, April 2014)

Photo by Pte Jonathan Mogano

D efence Foreign Relations, together with the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum chaired by Ms Charlotte Shoke, took the spouses of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps (MAAC) on a journey of discovery to Soweto on 28 March 2014.

The aim of the event was to strengthen ties of goodwill and rekindle friendships. Of greater importance on this day, however, was to reflect on the historic milestone of transformation since 1994 that South Africa has undergone and the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprising, which have become turning points in our history.

They visited Kliptown Museum where the Freedom Charter was adopted, then proceeded to the Hector Peterson Memorial which was unveiled by Mr Nelson Mandela on 16 June 1992 in honour of the youth who gave their lives in the struggle for freedom. The last stop was at 8115 Vilakazi Street Orlando West, the home of the late former President, Mr Nelson Mandela. The house has been declared a national monument.

At the end of the tour the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Shoke, delivered a message to the spouses of the MAAC. She welcomed them and extended a sincere hand of friendship.


Celebrating Youth Day

ABOVE: Various gifts were sponsored by Old Mutual, Liberty and MFS Holdings. Ms Charlotte Shoke, the Chairperson of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum (3rd from left) and Ms Dinah Masondo, the Chairperson of the SA Army Ladies Forum (2nd from right) with representatives of the sponsors and children of SANDF members residing in flats in Sunnyside.

Celebrating a day of humanitarian action at Kiddy College

By Cpl Ally Rakoma (previously published in SA Soldier, Vol 21 No 7)
Photos by Mr Themba Mntyali

On Mandela Day members of Defence Foreign Relations with the SANDF Spouses Forum and spouses of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps joined the global call to action to do good and pledged 67 minutes of their time towards a good cause by taking part in a charitable initiative by donating toys, stationery, clothing and non-perishable products to children at Kiddy College in Tek Base in Pretoria.

Mandela Day is a global call to action that celebrates and commemorates our late former President, Mr Nelson Mandela, and provides an opportunity for all to emulate his role of humanitarian action and goodwill.

The children were cheered by the goodwill and generosity of their visitors. The late Mr Nelson Mandela cherished the “little ones” and dedicated his life to fighting for their well-being.

Ms Sobia Kamran, wife of Brig Gen Ali Kamran, the Defence Adviser Pakistan, on behalf of the spouses of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps, said that it was a privilege for them to join hands with the SANDF Spouses Forum and Defence Foreign Relations to reach out to the children to offer whatever assistance they could.

Ms Charlotte Shoke, the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, encouraged members to be change makers within communities and collectively join hands to serve the less fortunate. She urged them to promote the well-being of mankind and make every day a Mandela Day.

One of the children, Ndalamo Dinala (4), expressed her joy and said: “I am thankful for the gifts we received.”
“SANDF Spouses Forum can hold the knife by its sharp end”

By Cpl Mzontsundu Mdolomba
(Previously published in SA Soldier, Vol 22 No 4)
Photos by Mr Themba Mntyali

The SA Military Health Service hosted the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum International Women’s Day celebrations with the theme “Wellness and Beauty” at the Military Health Training Formation in Thaba Tshwane.

The Programme Director of the day was Ms Noleen Maphaha who informed the guests of the proceedings of the day. The National Ceremonial Guard Band entertained the guests for the duration of the function.

Chaplain Thandiswa Mpetsheni started the event with a prayer. Everyone was welcomed by the hostess, Ms Juliah Sedibe, wife of the Surgeon General. Among the guests were the wives of Defence Attachés from Turkey, Zambia, Namibia, Russia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Japan, the Netherlands and Malawi.

Ms Maphaha, wife of the General Officer Commanding 1 Military Hospital, recounted the history of International Women’s Day. She said: “It happened more than a hundred years ago. On the 8th of March 1908, despite the bad weather, a crowd consisting of thousands of women workers at factories went down town to New York to protest against the injustice of inequality between women and men. At that time many of them had to stand working the machines all day, including the pipelines, or sit in front of sewing machines. A working day lasted from 12 to 24 hours. For such tiring work the compensation was very little. They had to work in terrible working conditions and did not receive a pension.”

She continued: “This demonstration went down in world history as the first organised action to fight for women’s social rights. In 1910, following the proposal of Clara Zetkin, the second Women’s Conference was held in Copenhagen, where it was decided to celebrate Women’s Day every year. International Women’s Day was first celebrated on 8 March 1911 in Denmark, Switzerland, Australia and Germany. After the October Revolution there a process for the equality of Russian women began as well, and the holiday was enshrined in the Constitution adopted in 1919.”

Dr Lesiba Khalo, a Medical Doctor at the Oncology Unit at 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria, held a presentation on health issues, with great emphasis on cancer. He said: “Cancer has become very common nowadays especially breast and cervical cancer, and we are seeing it in much younger women. Early detection is very important and one needs to be aware of the signs and symptoms and also how to deal with the reality.”

He encouraged people to stick to a balanced diet and exercise.

To entrench the theme of the International Women’s Day celebrations, Mr Salinda Makhazi said the women not only had to work hard, but also to look after their good looks. He recommended his natural product, “Bio-Lotion”, to the attendees.

The next speaker was the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Charlotte Shoke, wife of the Chief of the SANDF. She expressed gratitude...
to Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, her predecessor, for chairing the Forum and for her distinctive leadership abilities during her term as the Chairperson of the Forum.

Ms Shoke also applauded the achievements of the Forum since its founding. She said: "We were part of the team that distributed goodwill parcels to the families of the deployed soldiers.” The Forum has always rendered humanitarian assistance during both war and peace. Ms Shoke added: "We also donated some of the goodwill parcels to orphanage homes, which showed that women can hold the knife by its sharp end.”

The Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum said: "The Forum is also involved in various projects that contribute towards the development of women. It is currently presenting a sewing course for the women in the region. Shortly another group of women will complete their basic computer literacy skills training, which will be another landmark by the Forum in achieving its goal.”

The construction of two additional classrooms at the Tek Base Créche, Thaba Tshwane area, was undertaken. This was completed and the two classes were opened by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula in May 2015.

Ms Shoke encouraged the junior women to benchmark the current Forum in order to elevate it to the next level so that people stopped thinking that they were there just to enjoy the status of being Generals’ wives. At the end of her speech she quoted the words of Margaret Thatcher, a former British Prime Minister: “In politics, if you want anything said ask a man; if you want anything done ask a woman”. Ms Stellah Njolomba, wife of the Zambian Defence Attaché, acknowledged the potential of the SANDF Spouses Forum and for their achievements on behalf of the wives of the attachés. She promised that they would use the know-how to implement programmes in their countries of origin.

At the end of the function Ms Gloria Dabula, wife of Chief Director Military Health Force Preparation, thanked all who contributed towards the success of a most useful day. She acknowledged the Forum’s exceptional achievements in shaping political, social and economic programmes on behalf of women.
Spouses of senior officers and attaché relaxing in Bela-Bela

By Sgt Itumeleng Makhubela
(previously published in
SA Soldier, Vol 22 No 5)
Photo by L Cpl Jonathan Mogano

Defence Foreign Relations treated members of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum and the spouses of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps recently to a day of fun-filled activities at the Warmbaths Forever Resort in Bela-Bela.

The Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Charlotte Shoke, welcomed the women, especially the new ones.

Ms Shoke said: “I hope we are going to build a big family as women of the SANDF Spouses Forum and the spouses of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps. I am very pleased to be friends with you and hope we will meet again.”

She mentioned that the SANDF Spouses Forum and the spouses of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps were grateful for all the activities the Defence Foreign Relations had organised for them and would like to commend them on their efforts.

The Defence Foreign Relations is primarily responsible for the promotion of foreign relations with representatives of the Military Attaché and Advisory Corps, the Department of Defence and the South African Defence Industry.
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**Since 1918**
SA National Defence Force Spouses Forum celebrating its 10 year anniversary

By AB Samuel Ramonyai, trainee at SA Soldier
Photos by Cpl Jonathan Mogano

“Let's hold hands moving forward”, was the theme of the 10 year anniversary celebrations of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum. This special day was held at Burgers Park Hotel in Pretoria on 10 October 2015 to reflect the historic milestones of the SANDF Spouses Forum.

After everyone was welcomed by Ms Kathy Smith, spouse of the Deputy Chief of the SA Army, the event was opened with a prayer by Ms Bridget Ford, spouse of Chief Director Military Health Force Support. Ms Ford read from Psalm 118: 24: “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” to encourage all women to make the day a joyful one. The National Ceremonial Guard Band, the South African Folk Dancers, Thaba Tshwane Women, as well as the SA Air Force entertained the guests on this auspicious occasion.

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When giving a brief history of the Forum, Ms Busisiwe Ngwenya, the retired Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, said: “The SANDF Spouses Forum originated in August 2005 during a Women’s Day celebration that was hosted by the SA Army Ladies Forum. This meeting was followed up by a workshop that took place in 19 November 2005 at the SA Army College. Resolutions were taken with regard to structure, purpose, frequency of meeting and the constitution.”

The objectives of the SANDF Spouses Forum are to render a positive service to the SANDF by promoting sympathetic understanding of and active support for their partners’ tasks; providing opportunities for all spouses to render service within the scope of their abilities and interest through education and training; for SANDF spouses to extend a hand of friendship to one another and to support and complete one another; caring for families of SANDF members; and initiating activities that support the respective SANDF units.

The SANDF Spouses Forum, in
partnership with Massmart and other valued sponsors of the Goodwill Parcel Project, embrace the needs of the spouses and families of soldiers on deployment over the festive season. The SANDF Spouses Forum took up the challenge to support the families back home and this initiative was extended to members on duty at military hospitals, both staff and patients, over the festive season. They are visited to support them and present them with a Goodwill Parcel hamper to show them that they are not forgotten.

The next speaker, the Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum, Ms Charlotte Shoke, wife of the Chief of the SANDF, expressed her gratitude to

Ms Nqwenya, her predecessor, for chairing the Forum and for her distinctive leadership abilities during her term.

Ms Shoke said: “We are part of the team that distributed Goodwill Parcel hampers to the families of the deployed soldiers. The Forum has always rendered humanitarian assistance during both war and peacetime. We donated some of the Goodwill Parcel hampers to orphanage homes. The Forum is also involved in various projects that contribute towards the development of women.”

The Chairperson of the SANDF Spouses Forum added that each and every woman must ask herself what she has done for the SANDF or what she is going to do for the SANDF. At the end of her speech she quoted these words of President Barack Obama: “People will judge you on what
you destroy, not on what you build”.

Ms Shoke and Ms Ngwenya cut the cake to celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the SANDF Spouses Forum and presented gifts to the Chiefs’ spouses and the sponsors. At the end of the function Ms Faith Malinga, spouse of the Deputy Chief of the SA Air Force, thanked all who contributed towards the success of a most useful day.

LEF T: Ms Charlotte Shoke, Chairperson SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum (middle) and Ms Juliah Sedibe, spouse of the Surgeon General (4th from right) with current and retired SA Military Health Service Ladies Forum.

BELOW: Ms Charlotte Shoke, Chairperson SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum (4th from left) and Ms Afrika Msimang, spouse of the Chief of the SA Air Force (4th from right) with the current SA Air Force Ladies Forum.

Ending 2015 on a memorable note

A B O V E: Ms Charlotte Shoke, Chairperson of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Spouses Forum (back, 4th from left) and Ms Dinah Masondo, Chairperson of the SA Army Ladies Forum (back, 4th from right) enjoy the Year-end Function with the other members. (Photo by L Cpl Jonathan Mogano)
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a challenge, a commitment, a future
How much do you trust in the Almighty

By Chaplain (Past) Othusitse Tau, Chaplain at 1 Special Service Battalion

The book of Psalm 125:1 (“those who trust in,lean on, and confidently hope in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which can never be moved but abides and stands fast forever”) Amplified

When reading the above portion of Scripture, we come to realise the importance of trust from a Biblical point of view. The following questions give one a clear understanding and interpretation of trust:

• Who do you trust?

• What's the level of trust do you have towards the one whom you trust?

• How far can you trust?

• When should you trust?

• What are the benefits thereof?

In answering the questions given above, the one whom you trust must be able to provide a sense of security and total dependency at all times.

The level of trust includes loyalty and fairness at all times. It goes beyond certain measurable standards designed by man.

You let your life to be fully guided and navigated even when it seems dark and there's no way to escape.

You trust because you are driven by hope and having consistent conviction that; no matter how difficult, but the one whom I trust will be able to take me through whatever situation I might be experiencing.

Trust is much more seen when an individual seems to have lost hope based on circumstances pushing him or her to give up.

T - Transparent (open up)
R - Reliance (depending on)
U - Union with (oneness)
S - Selflessness (sacrifice to assist over and above any human expectation)
T - Truthfulness

Trusting in God wholeheartedly gives us the assurance that no matter how high or low the situation can be; He is able to “exceedingly and abundantly” rescue, revive and restore you, and making it possible for you understand that the road we all travel will have obstacles and might sometimes be unbearable.

Albert Einstein writes: “Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matter.”

The above statement is different with God, it does not matter the time, place and duration, He can be trusted at any given time, for He does not sleep nor slumber.

Trusting God helps one’s faith to be unshakable, immovable, no one can move a mountain; every mountain is well established just as Mount Zion was established and was used by God's people as a place of worship to the Most High. The more you trust in God, the more you realise your inner strength to press on.
The South African National Defence Force is a pillar in the reactive physical campaign being fought against poaching on the ground and in the skies. We also engage in proactive educational campaigns to spread awareness about the intrinsic value of this magnificent animal.

Medicinal myths and a lack of care for our natural environment will be the forces behind the extinction of this magnificent animal.

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