

# SPORT IN THE ARMED FORCES

## SPORT AS PROMOTOR OF GENDER EQUALITY

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### INTRODUCTION

1. Overview of Gender Equality in the South African National Defence force (SANDF). Women in the SANDF is not really something new. Since the Second World War, women have been employed in the auxiliary forces, especially the medical side. In 1971, the first training college for white women was established in the SA Army. Since then, women have been employed in various support posts in all the arms of the Service.

2. The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that all citizens have fundamental rights and freedom within the law. Furthermore, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service requires that all state departments must be representative. The White Paper on Defence also requires the Department of Defence (DoD) to be representative of all population groups in order to achieve legitimacy.

3. The DoD declared its intention to break with the discriminatory and unrepresentative practices of the past and a policy of equal opportunity and affirmative action was drawn up. This policy will among others

- a. provide equal opportunities for all military and civilian employees to rise to the highest level of responsibility possible, based on their individual ability and diligence;
- b. ensure equity of employment;
- c. eradicate all forms of unfair discrimination between men and women.

4. How the Gender Equality Factor is Being Planned in the SANDF. The DoD is committed to gender equality and discrimination against persons on the grounds of their gender. Under mentioned guidelines will promote good order, discipline and equality in a non-sexist DoD for the individual :

- a. Regard and treat colleagues of all sexes as true equals
- b. Maintain a gender-fair and neutral environment.
- c. Avoid sexual harassment, but also all activities that raise the potential for sexual harassment.
- d. Avoid fraternisation.
- e. All women will have the same opportunities to training, development and participation in sport.

## AIM

5. The aim of this presentation is to give an overview on sport as the promoter of gender equality.

## SCOPE

6. The scope of this presentation is as follows :

- a. Background of the participation of women in sport.
- b. Statistics of participation
- c. Representation on managerial level.
- d. Status of women orientated sport.
- e. Allocation of resources.
- f. Necessity of sport participation for women in uniform.
- g. The way forward.

## BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SPORT

7. Sport for women has been more a myth than a reality because the western world has both accepted and rejected women in sport. Society has always been enthralled by the athletic skill and prowess of a few women and for these women, sport is real.

8. The role of the women in society is traditionally a supportive one. Young girls at school take part in sport activities but less emphasis is put on achievement, and more on the participation factor. That is the reason that most girls stop taking part in sport after school. Only a few, with the support of their families, reach their highest potential.

9. Very high emphasis is placed on women's obligations in the domestic sphere. This is also a limiting factor on female aspirations and opportunities for success in sport and physical activities. When a woman marries and has children, her household is the primary interest in her life. This is also true of the women in the military especially if she is married to a soldier who is away from home at irregular times.

10. While the white females under western modernisation had undergone more changes, the black females are much more obligated towards traditional culture. This is slowly changing in the military by the opportunities to educate herself, the demands of physical training and fitness, participation in sport on a competitive basis etc. In some ethnic groups, the concept of "a fat woman is a beautiful woman" is still the norm.

## STATISTICS OF PARTICIPATION

### 11. Age of women in the SANDF.

AGE	PERCENTAGE
18 - 25	32%
26 - 35	40%
36 - 60	28%
TOTAL	100%

13. The assumption can be made that 32% of women are still participating in sport and 68 % are married and are not participating in sport. At the age of 36 - 60, women would like to get active again in sport, but feel that they are too old to start a new activity. Some are trying the old codes of sports they took part in, in their youth, and some start activities like walking and road running.

14. Codes of Sport versus Participation. The following statistics are available which is an indication as to what codes of sport are played by women in the SANDF :

Serial No	Codes of Sport	Number
1	Aerobics	6
2	Action Cricket	8
3	Athletics	32
4	Equestrians Sport	6
5	Service Shooting	24
6	Cycling	5
7	Golf	6
8	Angling	4
9	Hockey	40
10	Judo	3
11	Jukskei	14
12	Karate	19
13	Clay Pigeon Shooting	1
14	Cricket	36
15	Cross Country	6
16	Marathon	3
17	Squash	16
18	Netball	198
19	Under Water Sport	42
20	Orienteering	1
21	Road Running	6
22	Pistol Shooting	19
23	Badminton	69
24	Practical Shooting	3
25	Rock & Beach Angling	10
26	Route March	9
27	Bowls	13

28	Scuba Diving	24
29	Soccer	6
30	Walking	16
31	Wrestling	1
32	Swimming	7
33	Table Tennis	3
34	Tennis	30
35	Tug of War	4
36	Parachuting	8
37	Darts	4
38	Volley Ball	42
	Total	743

15. Statistics show that only 8.9% of all woman actually participate in sport. This is a situation that has to be addressed.

#### REPRESENTATION ON MANAGERIAL LEVEL

16. Only one woman in the SANDF is at the present time the chairperson of a SANDF sport. This also means representation at National level. The only codes of sport where women are the representative on club level are netball and badminton. Women are mainly appointed as secretaries and bookkeepers/treasurers of sports clubs, Provincial and National sports bodies.

#### STATUS OF WOMEN ORIENTATED SPORT

17. The SANDF does not recognise all the codes of sport that are played in South Africa or the world as official sports. All recognised codes of sport have the same status if they be women orientated or men orientated codes of sport. The reason for officially recognising certain codes of sport is among others

- a. Interest in the sport by members of the SANDF.
- b. Facilities available at SANDF bases.
- c. Finances available at SANDF and club levels.
- d. Logistical resources such as transport, equipment, etc

18. All codes of sport are open to women who would like to participate. In fact women are encouraged to participate. Certain codes of sport like netball, badminton, volleyball and tennis are more "women orientated" than soccer, wrestling etc., but women who are so inclined, have the opportunity to pursue her particular interest.

19. However, with the new SANDF, research is being done as to the interest in sport of integrated members of the statutory- and non-statutory forces. With the acceptance of the SANDF into CISM, the emphasis is moving to military orientated codes of sport like orienteering, military pentathlon, sea week and different codes of shooting. As with all the other codes of sport, women are also encouraged to participate in these codes of sport.

## ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

20. The allocation of resources for sport, and this includes women orientated codes of sport, is based on the following :

- a. Participants. As more women are employed in the SANDF, the potential for more participants in sport become greater.
- b. Recognition. More participants in certain codes of sport will lead to the recognition of those codes of sport as official.
- c. Funding. When a certain code of sport is official, funding is made available.
- d. Facilities. Sports facilities will be the next step. Either new facilities are built, or it is hired in the community.
- e. Competition. When all of the above have taken place, competition automatically results. Competition not only internally, but also externally.
- f. Development. At this stage it is imperative to develop not only the players, but also the coaches officials and administrators by presenting courses in all departments.
- g. Empowerment. Through the participation of sport, women can empower themselves, not only to have equal opportunities as men, but also to excel as participants, coaches, officials and administrators.

## NECESSITY OF SPORT PARTICIPATION FOR WOMEN

21. Sport is one of the few ways in which women can reach true equality. However, it must never be taken out of consideration that women are different to men. They will never be men, but they can be co-equal to men in their own way. We must ensure that women are not forced to be like men. She is and will always be different to the man. On the other hand, we must ensure that she is not made into an inferior person. She is co-equal to the man. Sport is one of the means to do just that.

22. Sport will do the following for women in the military :

- a. Participation. Women who have never taken part in sport will experience the joy of togetherness with her peers and meeting new people with the same interest as herself.
- b. Fitness. Sport is one of the easiest and more enjoyable ways to improve fitness. Not only will general fitness improve, but the shape of the body will improve.
- c. Image. As the nature of women is, when all of the above improve, her self image will improve which will improve her self worth, self importance and productivity.

d. Health. It is a fact that the general health of women improves with exercise. Aspects like menstruation, pregnancy and child bearing become easier through regular training.

e. Self worth. When women have achieved all of the above, her self worth and self esteem improves. She feels she can compete with any man, and even do better in some ways. She has proven that she can compete and excel on her own terms even if she is not as fast or as strong as a man.

## STEREOTYPES

23. Because the female body is constructed differently to that of the man, it is an accepted fact that women cannot compete on an equal basis in sport as a man. The female body has become a stereotype to discriminate against. The interrelationship between body image and movement suggests that various skills and capacities might be dependent upon a well-organised body image. When knowledge of our body is incomplete and faulty, all actions for which this knowledge is necessary will be faulty too. We need body image in order to start movement.

24. The cultural belief that a woman's place is in the kitchen, a baby in the pram, one on the hip and one in the making, also stereotypes women as non-achievers. In the black communities in the RSA, this is still very much in evidence. This fact is slowly changing with performances of the highest quality by black athletes like Maria Motolo and other American, Canadian and Jamaican athletes.

25. The social acceptance of women athletes often relate to their femininity. Sports like softball, soccer, weightlifting, field events in athletics etc which utilise more masculine skills are far less desirable for female athletic competition than gymnastics for example, which emphasise delicacy and gracefulness.

## THE WAY FORWARD

26. Changing Perceptions. Women have worked hard over the years to change all of the above perceptions. Legislation as to the equality of women has now empowered women to develop and train themselves for the enlarged range of employment and participation in sport to provide them with real possibilities of choice.

27. The benefits of taking diversity into account are the following :

- a. Full utilisation of human resources.
- b. Reduced interpersonal conflict amongst others as respect for diversity increases.
- c. Enhanced work relationships based on mutual respect and increased employee knowledge of multi-cultural issues.
- d. Improved productivity through fitness.
- e. Improved self-image as fitness improves and a better looking body develops.
- f. Psychological benefits of recognising the ability to reach your full potential.