

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Deployment and separation are issues that the SANDF cannot avoid. Deployment is a parliamentary objective that is non-negotiable. As a result, spouses of SANDF members are exposed to many frustrations and challenges emanating from external military deployment. This study was conducted as a result of the observed impact that external military deployment has on military families, dissatisfaction relating to the nature of social support services that should have been rendered to spouses while members were on external military deployment, and the lack of scientific evaluation of the nature of social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. In cases where some social support services were rendered, there were complaints that these were insufficient. Therefore, in Chapters 4 and 5, qualitative and quantitative data related to social support services to both the spouse and the member during external military deployment of the member were presented, analysed and interpreted.

This chapter will present conclusions and recommendations for this study. It should further be noted that these conclusions and recommendations are based on the outcomes of both the qualitative and quantitative studies that were conducted. It will form the basis for formulation of a model for social support services during the external military deployment of the member, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

However, the researcher will start by giving an indication of how the goal and objectives of this study were attained, and how the research questions provided a

framework for the formulation of a model for social support services during the external military deployment of the member.

## **6.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **6.2.1 Goal**

This research set out to design a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members.

This study identified problems and challenges experienced by members and spouses during the external military deployment of the member. Based on this, the researcher designed a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of the member. Following is a discussion of the objectives of the study.

### **6.2.2 Objectives**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To conduct an in-depth literature review in order to conceptualise social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of the member.

This objective was attained through an in-depth literature review, which was presented in Chapter 2. This second chapter investigated the nature of social support services during external military deployment.

- To evaluate the implementation, efficiency and effectiveness of existing social support services to spouses of SANDF members while members are on external military deployment.

This objective was attained through the collection of qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) data from both spouses and SANDF members who had been involved in external military deployment (see Chapters 4 and 5).

- To design a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members as a prerequisite for combat readiness amongst SANDF members.

This objective was attained (see Chapter 7), based on the fact that the conclusions and recommendations presented here formed the basis for the design of a model for social support services during external military deployment of members.

- To inform the SANDF management about the results of the study in terms of the need for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members.

The researcher will ensure that this research is made available to the SANDF management and research subjects once this study has been acknowledged and approved. Where feasible, the researcher will make presentations at senior management meetings such as the Force Preparation Forum, the Command Council and the Military Council.

### **6.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided this study:

- What is the nature of the social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment?

Through the collection of qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) data from both spouses and SANDF members who had been involved in external

military deployment, the researcher was able to obtain information on the nature of social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. This information was presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and is incorporated into the conclusions and recommendations in this chapter. It has however, also been confirmed that social support services were not rendered to all the SANDF members and their spouses during external military deployment.

- What is the efficiency and effectiveness of social support services rendered to spouses of SANDF members during external military deployment?

Data obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative studies in Chapters 4 and 5 made it possible for the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the efficiency and effectiveness of social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. Furthermore, information presented in the conclusions and recommendations in this chapter informed this question.

- Is there a need for additional social support services to be rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members?

Based on the fact that the item that was supposed to answer this question was poorly formulated, the researcher suggests that the results be merely viewed from the perspective of services that could be helpful to members and their spouses in future deployments. The information presented in Chapters 4 and 5 formed the basis for the design of a model for social support services during the external military deployment of members, which is presented in Chapter 7.

- Are there sufficient resources to render efficient and effective social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members?

This question was answered by the responses obtained from the qualitative and quantitative studies, as reflected in Chapters 4 and 5, as well as from complaints received from social work officers (cf problem formulation) within the organisation. However, the researcher is of the opinion that on its own, this question could be another area of research that should focus on service providers such as social work officers, psychologists and chaplains. Nevertheless, provision of resources by the organisation and support to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members are inseparable. One cannot work without the other. Therefore, although not detailed, information obtained in this study informed this question to a certain extent.

- Is there a need for a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members?

As reflected in the responses of the research subjects, information obtained from this study suggested that there was a need for a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members. Hence, this model was designed and presented in Chapter 7. Furthermore, the conclusions and recommendations also informed this question.

- What type of model should be implemented if necessary?

Responses of the research subjects, particularly with regard to the question on the identification of deployment support needs throughout the deployment period, and additional needs identified during the different stages of deployment, informed this question. In other words, information obtained from the qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) studies (see Chapters 4 and 5)

formed the basis for the decision regarding the type of model that should be implemented in support of SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members, as shown in Chapter 7 of this study.

- Which discipline will be the main custodian of such a model?

Although the responses were varied, and despite the fact that there are other forms of support that need to be explored, social work was chosen as the discipline that should be the main custodian of such a model by most of the research subjects.

In light of the above, it can be confirmed that this study was guided and informed by the abovementioned research questions, as reflected in the findings and conclusions of this study.

## **6.4 CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the scientific investigation that was undertaken, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- As a country, South Africa has an obligation to promote and maintain global and regional security. As mandated by the President of the country, and due to the fact that the SANDF is structured in such a way that it has a primarily defensive orientation and stance, it is expected of the SANDF to meet the governmental imperative of promotion of peace within the continent. The fact that most African countries, such as the DRC, Sudan and Burundi are conflict ridden suggests that the SANDF will be involved in peace missions within Africa for some time to come. The study confirmed that SANDF members were deployed on external military peace missions in various countries. Sixty eight percent of the members were deployed to the DRC, 43% to Burundi and 28% to Sudan. The fact that the percentage of members who were deployed to these areas is high

indicates that members were deployed to these areas more than once. A small percentage of the members were also deployed to the Comores (2%) and the Ivory Coast (0.38%). It has also been confirmed that members were deployed to other countries such as Lesotho, Tanzania, Kenya, Germany, England and Nigeria. This clearly shows that external military deployment is a task that the SANDF organisation cannot avoid. Preparation for this task is thus of great importance to ensure the success of the mission. In the researcher's view, because SANDF members are deployed to various areas on peace missions, the provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment is non-negotiable.

- The average age of the research subjects who took part in the qualitative study was 36, which means that they are relatively young and have children who still need the guidance and support of both parents, especially where adolescents are concerned. Spouses are also in relationships that need to be nurtured and preserved. Furthermore, due to the fact that not much of a difference could be noted in their average age, the same can be said of the research subjects who took part in the quantitative study, whose average age was 38. Therefore, according to the researcher, maintenance of family relations is of great importance. The organisation has a responsibility to ensure that relations are maintained during deployment.

- Most (98%) of the research subjects had an average of 15 years' experience working in the SANDF. In the researcher's view, the fact that members had an average of 15 years' experience working in the SANDF implies that they are familiar with the organisational objectives, such as participation in peace missions around the globe, and have adjusted well to this task. One would also assume that their spouses have the necessary knowledge regarding this task and are well prepared to deal with its associated challenges and frustrations. However, this study indicated the opposite. Despite the years of employment experience in the SANDF, members and spouses encountered difficulties as a

result of deployment. According to the researcher, this suggests that they are probably not well prepared for dealing with deployment-related stressors. Therefore, the importance of provision of social support services to SANDF members and their spouses cannot be underestimated. This will ensure that members are combat ready and the mission is successfully completed. Productivity will as a result be enhanced, and the name of our country will be held high.

- An average of 11 years' experience in the marriage was documented in this study. More often than not, it is generally assumed that having a number of years' experience in the marriage suggests stability within the relationship. It is often taken for granted that the couple is resilient enough to deal with whatever life stressors they might experience. However, the opposite can be said with regard to external military deployment. The fact that spouses and members have an average of 11 years' experience in the marriage does not necessarily imply that they are able to cope with deployment-related challenges and stressors. Therefore, separation from family members as a result of external military deployment has a negative impact on marital relationships in military families, as confirmed in this study. The organisation should thus be proactive in terms of ensuring that spouses and members are resilient enough to deal with deployment-related challenges and stressors.

- It was confirmed that the majority (53%) of the members who were involved in external military deployment fell within the rank group Private to Corporal, a rank group that normally deploys internationally. According to the researcher, the fact that a large percentage of the members who were deployed fell into the NCO rank group could also be attributed to salary packages that are not attractive or adequate enough to meet the needs of families. They therefore volunteer to be deployed on more than one occasion, in order to meet the demands of family life. Therefore, irrespective of family circumstances at any point in time, members will probably seize any opportunity to be deployed in



order to make money. Social support services during external military deployment should therefore be rendered on a continuous basis, particularly within deployment units. Social workers who are working in these units must play a leading role in ensuring the implementation of these services.

- A considerable number (85%) of research subjects went away on external military deployment for an average of four months. This implies that spouses encountered deployment-related stressors as a result of deployment, as confirmed in this study. It has been noted that irrespective of the duration, deployment brings with it challenges and frustrations that have an effect on the member and the spouse during their separation. Therefore, social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during separation should ensure the inclusion of programmes to enhance spousal adjustment to separation.

- In addition, 95% of the research subjects had been involved in external military deployment at least twice. In the researcher's view, the fact that members were deployed more than once in the past twelve months also posed a serious challenge to family life, as indicated by spouses in the qualitative study. Due to the fact that members were deployed once or twice in the past twelve months, it was not possible for members and their spouses to obtain sufficient time to work on their relationships. Families were exposed to a lot of stress as a result of deployment, which was not even combined with a recess period. Thus, family relationships suffered. Therefore, while it is vital for social support services to be rendered by the SANDF during deployment, it is also critical that members be allowed sufficient time to work on their relationships before the next deployment. The organisation must ensure that this forms a vital part of social support services to members and spouses during separation, in order to contribute to combat readiness of members and to nation building.

- Fifty percent of the research subjects in the qualitative study were unemployed while 50% were employed. The fact that 50% of the spouses were

unemployed implies that they are reliant on members for maintenance and support. Absence of the member caused an even further strain on the family, particularly with regard to finances. Therefore, the organisation has a responsibility to ensure that spousal empowerment and preparation for deployment (particularly insofar as finances are concerned) is enforced, and that the provision of employment opportunities for spouses with skills is given attention. Officer commanders and social workers should play an active role in ensuring the realisation of this objective.

- Provision of social support services to spouses who are residing in rural areas is hindered by the fact that rural areas are underdeveloped and not within reach due to lack of roads and transport in the country. As a result, it becomes difficult for social work officers to access them and render appropriate social support services during the deployment of members. Geographical fragmentation of military families also hampers the provision of social support services to spouses during separation. Spouses in rural areas find themselves in a position whereby they are isolated and have to fend for themselves when they experience deployment-related challenges and problems. It has, however, been found that to a certain extent, deployment-related challenges experienced by spouses in rural and urban areas are similar. Therefore, the importance of reaching out to all spouses and including their identified needs in the social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment is critical in enhancing their resilience during separation. Networking with social workers from the Department of Social Development with regard to areas that are not accessible, and the formation of family support groups for spouses who live in proximity could improve the provision of social support services to spouses during external military deployment of members, and improve the standard of social support service delivery to spouses during deployment.

- Most of the research subjects experienced transport-related difficulties during the absence of members. These problems placed a lot of strain on

spouses during the absence of members. Therefore, social support services that are rendered to spouses during the external military deployment of members should include assistance with transportation of children to school and to hospital, as well as transportation of the spouse for purchasing of groceries and payment of accounts in order to ease the stress of transport-related problems experienced by spouses during separation, and to enhance the resilience of families. The OC should play a pivotal role in so far as the issue of provision of transport to spouses during deployment is concerned.

- Financial problems were one of the issues that posed a challenge to a large percentage of research subjects during separation. This was also confirmed in the quantitative study. Due to the fact that some of the spouses were unfamiliar with managing the finances of the home, some of them only started doing this upon the deployment of the member. This implied further problems in the financial affairs of the family. This was also confirmed by the nature of financial problems encountered by spouses during the absence of members. Family adjustment to deployment was thus negatively affected as a result of financial difficulties experienced during external military deployment of members. Therefore, family financial security during the absence of the member should be included in the social support services that are rendered by the organisation, long before the deployment of the member, on an ongoing basis in order to enhance the adjustment of spouses during separation. The importance of ensuring that spouses are empowered to manage the finances of the home cannot be overemphasised, and financial management programmes are therefore suggested. One of the research subjects indicated that the unit should make provision for loans during the absence of the member, such as money for unplanned school trips for the children.

- It was interesting to note that despite the fact that 54% of the research subjects had joint financial accounts, financial problems were documented in this study. Therefore, the possibility of including robust financial management

interventions in the social support services that are rendered to spouses before and during external military deployment should be explored. It is known that a financial management programme is being rendered to SANDF members during deployment. The fact that financial problems were documented despite the fact that this programme is in place is a cause for concern. Various reasons, such as access to spouses, could be attributed to this situation. It is thus vital that this programme be monitored and evaluated in order to identify problems associated with its implementation and the success of the programme.

- Separation as a result of deployment is challenging and often frustrating. For various reasons, marital problems emerged as one of the challenges faced by most of the spouses during the absence of members. This was also confirmed in the quantitative study. The extension of the deployment period only exacerbated these problems. The researcher is of the opinion that these problems would not necessarily occur in the absence of deployment, particularly with regard to the issue of role changes. Taking on the role of both the spouse and the member places a lot of stress on the family. As a result, marital relationships are negatively affected by deployment. Furthermore, the family stability that prevailed before deployment is negatively affected. There is also a possibility that spouses may be in danger of contracting HIV/AIDS in cases where extramarital affairs have occurred. This poses a further security threat to our country. Therefore, the importance of building families and protecting the country while also meeting the organisational objective of participating in peace missions elsewhere cannot be overemphasised. Formation of family support groups would also help greatly in building families.

- Despite the fact that members and spouses used various means of communication in order to try and communicate with one another, communication problems between members and spouses during deployment were documented in this study. Although 63% of the research subjects made use of cell phones and telephones, they still experienced challenges and frustrations in doing so. Forty

three percent of the research subjects encountered problems related to access to a telephone facility, 27% had problems with a lack of telecommunication services, and 15% had problems with a lack of funds to make the required call. According to the researcher, communication is the only way in which spouses can keep in contact with members and rekindle the love that they have for one another while they are separated.

- The researcher also noted that despite communication challenges, the research subjects communicated with one another, which is a positive thing. A large percentage (92%) of the research subjects communicated with one another at least once a week, while a small percentage (3%) communicated with one another twice a month. In the researcher's view, constant communication between members and their spouses during separation plays an important role in the preservation of emotional ties. Furthermore, it enables the member to be kept up to date with developments at home and the spouse with developments in the mission area. Without communication, the relationship can suffer. Therefore, social support services that are rendered to spouses and members during deployment must concentrate on the provision of a reliable and accessible communication system, so as to lessen the problems associated with separation and contribute towards building relationships, enhancing deployment resilience and ensuring mission success.

- In addition, possible solutions to the abovementioned communication problems were documented in this study. Most (78%) of the research subjects suggested the introduction of a phone within the mission area to facilitate communication with spouses at least once a week, while 23% of the research subjects suggested that a telephone should be made available at the unit to facilitate communication with spouses. Eleven percent of the research subjects indicated that letters should be sent to members at the mission area and replies back to spouses at least twice a month. The provision of an accessible telephone facility (free lines) for both spouses and children at least twice a week was also

suggested by most of the research subjects in the qualitative study. Based on this, the researcher concludes that provision of accessible telephone facilities within mission areas should be included in the social support services that are rendered to members and spouses during external military deployment. The organisation, in particular the Communication Management Information (CMI) department, should be proactive in establishing a communication network with families during separation, in order to enhance their resilience during deployment.

- Deaths and illnesses in the family and admission to hospital were some of the hardships that spouses experienced during separation. While the researcher acknowledges the fact that not much can be done to prevent events such as death and illness in the family, she also found that some of the spouses and their children became ill as a result of the effect that separation had on them. The inability to adjust to the deployment of the member possibly led to their illness and admission to hospital. This shows that spouses were not resilient enough to deal with the deployment-related challenges that they experienced. It is thus vital that social support services for spouses during deployment include intervention measures that will enable them to cope with whatever challenges they might encounter.

- Maintenance-related problems were identified as one of the challenges that most of the spouses encountered during the absence of members, as tasks such as replacing light bulbs, fixing the car and replacing tyres are generally ones that are carried out by male members. The Implication here is that these things became a serious challenge during their absence, as most of the spouses were unable to carry out these tasks themselves, or were not empowered in terms of how to deal with these problems during the absence of members. As confirmed in this study, only 5% of the spouses indicated that they did not have a problem in this regard because they had the ability to address the problems themselves as a result of previous experience in handling typical maintenance- related

problems. This situation may be due to the fact that social support services to spouses during deployment do not include their empowerment insofar as maintenance-related problems are concerned. Logistical support is thus vital in ensuring that spouses are empowered to deal with whatever maintenance-related challenges they might encounter during the absence of members. This would ease the burden of deployment on spouses.

- Due to the fact that spouses had children as young as one year old and up to adolescents, most of them mentioned problems with children as one of the challenges they encountered. Obviously, children cannot be as understanding as spouses where separation is concerned. As documented in this study, the occurrence of behavioural problems in children attests to this. This further implies that children, irrespective of their age, are also affected by deployment. The instability of children during deployment places even more stress on spouses. The normal family life that existed is therefore destabilised. Spouses confirmed an inability on their part to cope with problems related to children during deployment. The fact that problems with children were documented as a problem for spouses suggests the inability to deal with children during separation. Social support services to spouses do not address the issue of children before, during or after deployment. In order for spouses to be able to cope with deployment, parenting skills for dealing with children, especially adolescents, during the absence of members should form part of the social support services rendered before, during and after deployment. Family stability would be enhanced as a result, and members would be able to perform their tasks, knowing that the family is well taken care of. A parenting skills programme would probably assist spouses in dealing with issues related to children, particularly during deployment.

- While interference by in-laws was viewed positively by some of the research subjects, others had a negative experience in this regard, therefore it was identified as a problem during deployment. Although in-laws served as a source of support for some of the spouses during deployment, they were a

source of stress for others. In-laws posed a challenge to the stress already existing in families, thereby leading to further disorganisation and instability within families. Spouses should thus be assisted in the identification of social support networks that will be of value to them during the absence of members, in order to alleviate deployment-related stressors and enhance the functioning of families. The formation of family support groups could be an ideal solution in this regard.

- Loneliness and emotional problems were documented by most of the research subjects as issues that posed a challenge during deployment. This study confirms that spouses experienced loneliness and emotional problems as a result of deployment. This had a definite negative effect on the resilience of spouses during the absence of members. The fact that spouses did not have a shoulder to lean on or someone to talk to about their daily experiences and challenges made this situation worse. It also suggests that spouses did not have the ability to deal with the loneliness and emotional problems that they experienced during deployment. A spousal/family support group could be ideal in assisting spouses in coping with loneliness and emotional problems during deployment. This would enable spouses to share their deployment-related experiences and find possible solutions to these challenges. In this way, family unity would be enhanced and deployment stressors would be reduced.

- The fact that both the qualitative and quantitative studies confirmed the need for additional social assistance after deployment implies that provision of social support services after deployment is imperative. Social support needs identified by the research subjects after deployment ranged from the fact that thorough preparation for homecoming is critical, as well as marital counseling and post-deployment debriefing, and the fact that the organisation should show some interest in what is happening in the family and should show appreciation and concern for the sacrifice that the members are making. A recess period every three months was also identified as being essential, as it would make a significant difference to the marital relationship. The need for HIV/AIDS



awareness campaigns and provision of information to the spouse relating to the results of the HIV test taken by the member upon return from the mission area is also vital. A relationship exists between social assistance needs expressed by both members and spouses. Reintegration into the family was rated by 28% of the research subjects in the quantitative study, followed by debriefing (23%) and counselling for children (14%). Therefore, post-deployment social support needs expressed by the research subjects confirm the fact that the post-deployment period is just as challenging as deployment itself.

- The fact that most of the spouses had a negative attitude towards deployment could be attributed to the fact that they encountered a lot of problems during the external deployment of members. It further suggests that spouses were unable to deal with deployment-related stressors, and also indicates a gap in the support services that are supposed to be provided by the organisation. It is thus critical that comprehensive social support measures be included in the provision of service delivery by the organisation. The Social Work department could play a pivotal role in this regard by establishing a family support group that would serve as a source of support for spouses during deployment. In this way, the resilience of spouses during deployment would be enhanced.

- The fact that spouses documented deployment-related problems and challenges shows that although some forms of social support services are being rendered by the organisation, they are insufficient, as indicated in this study. Spouses would otherwise have been resilient enough to deal with these challenges. Therefore, the organisation is not doing enough to support members and spouses before, during and after deployment. The finalisation and implementation of the Draft Resilience Policy would probably be the solution to this problem, as it would enforce the implementation of social support services for SANDF members' spouses during deployment, thereby contributing towards combat readiness and improved productivity. This would further support the idea expressed by 95% of the research subjects that a uniform/standard form of

deployment support should be rendered to spouses during external military deployment. Provision of social support services to spouses is thus a prerequisite within the SANDF, as long as participation in peace missions is applicable. The development of a model that is tailor-made for the needs of SANDF members' spouses is thus critical.

- Needs that are generic to all the research subjects were identified in this study. The need for various types of social support services for members and spouses before, during and after deployment should be met through social support services. Social support needs that were generic to all the research subjects before deployment in terms of the qualitative study were provision of sufficient time for emotional preparation of the family for deployment, preparation of children, particularly with regard to communication, assistance with emotional adjustment, fostering the understanding of what deployment is, provision of a map of the mission area (that is, provision of information on deployment and its dynamics), particularly when one deployment is followed by another, marital counselling and enrichment, particularly with regard to role clarification, communication, extramarital relations and financial management.

- Social support needs that were generic to all the research subjects during deployment were the establishment of a unit deployment support committee/group that would enable them to converse with each other and share deployment-related experiences and frustrations and focus on deployment-related problems of spouses. Provision of a pamphlet with all the relevant information was also important to respondents. Feedback on the period of deployment, including the extension thereof, telephone numbers of who to contact in case of emergencies, two weeks off for members every three months, and regular home visits by the multidisciplinary team, particularly the social work officer, were also mentioned as needs. More support services should be rendered by the chaplains, particularly with regard to prayer sessions, and constant support and telephone calls should be provided by the unit and Officer

Commanding (OC), as well as spot checks by the unit just to confirm that they are still safe, especially with regard to those in military housing. Recreational facilities should also be provided in order to keep members occupied in their free time. Combat readiness of members would be ensured as a result of the provision of comprehensive (as identified by spouses) social support services to SANDF members' spouses during deployment. The formation of a family support group would also play a vital role in minimising most of the challenges and frustrations associated with deployment. A social work officer should be present during all stages of deployment.

- The fact that needs for social support services after deployment of members were identified by spouses indicates that they encountered difficulties during the post-deployment period. Members are often threatened by the already established patterns that have been working for the family. Fitting in might also be a problem. Therefore, the need for provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses after deployment of members is thus vital in order to improve family relationships. In addition to other intervention measures, post-deployment debriefing should focus on marriage enrichment programmes that are geared towards building families and dealing with all possible post-deployment-related stressors.

- Most (88%) of the research subjects (members) participated in a preparation for deployment programme. On the other hand, a considerable number (67%) of the research subjects (spouses) did not do this. Various reasons were cited for non-participation by both members and spouses, such as having no knowledge of the programme, not being given time to attend the programme, a lack of interest in the programme, distance from the unit and lack of transport. This study confirms that social support services are not rendered to all members of the SANDF and their spouses during external military deployment of members. In the researcher's view, despite the fact that a large percentage of the members attended a preparation for deployment programme, they still

documented deployment-related challenges and stressors. One could therefore assume that this programme is not meeting the needs of members and spouses. In other words, it is not having the desired result. Typical deployment-related challenges and stressors faced by spouses in the qualitative study also confirm this. Therefore, concerns raised by these members need to be incorporated into the preparation for deployment programme and addressed, in order to enhance the resilience of members. All members and their spouses should form part of the preparation for deployment programme. Social workers should play a prominent role in the provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members, and should ensure that spouses are identified as being vulnerable during this time. A joint effort by social workers from all the regions could be the solution to identification of all spouses of SANDF members who have been involved in external military deployment. This will ensure the provision of a consolidated, comprehensive social support service to spouses during deployment.

- A large percentage (76%) of the research subjects relied on each other, even during deployment. According to the researcher, the results of this study suggest otherwise. Despite the fact that the majority of research subjects relied on each other even during deployment, deployment-related problems and challenges were still noted in this study. The researcher concludes that the nature of the support relationship that exists between spouses and members who engage in external military deployment is not strong enough to ensure their resilience during deployment. Therefore, the introduction of other forms of support should be explored. Social workers, particularly those who are working in deployment units, should identify vulnerable spouses and explore the possibility of forming family support groups that will serve as a source of support during the absence of members. This will ensure that spouses have someone to rely on during deployment. In this way, a lot of deployment-related stressors will be avoided, and members will be productive in carrying out the task at hand, knowing that their spouses are well taken care of.

- Fifty one percent of the research subjects were of the opinion that unit commanders are concerned about the welfare of spouses, while 45% believed that unit commanders do not care about the welfare of spouses. According to the researcher, the fact that some of the research subjects had a perception that unit commanders do not care about the welfare of members' spouses implies that not much is being done by the organisation in terms of ensuring that the necessary support services are rendered to spouses during deployment. The organisation, particularly the unit commanders, plays a critical role in ensuring that members are combat ready and resilient enough to be able to cope during deployment. This objective cannot be achieved without the involvement of the organisation in ensuring the implementation of necessary intervention support measures for spouses during deployment. Therefore, besides other forms of support needs that were documented in this study, unit commanders are an important source of support for spouses during deployment.

- In the researcher's view, the importance of members engaging in constructive relaxation activities during deployment cannot be overemphasised. In this study, despite the fact that the research subjects engaged in a variety of relaxation activities while deployed, 61% spent their leisure time engaging in some form of sporting activity, which is of great significance. The fact that various activities such as sport, drinking alcohol, reading, going to church and using the Internet were documented in this study implies that a coordinated effort, which is vital to maintaining an 'esprit de corpse' amongst members, is not in place. It is also a prerequisite in order for soldiers to remain combat ready. Therefore, the organisation, particularly the department of Physical Training, Sports and Recreation (PTSR), should ensure the inclusion of coordinated activities in the social support services that are rendered to members during deployment.

- Despite the fact that a large percentage (92%) of the research subjects indicated that they never formed any sexual relations while on external military deployment, some of the members (5%) did form sexual relations during this

time. Three percent did not answer this question. However, spouses in the qualitative study documented this issue to the extent that a concern was raised that spouses should be informed of the HIV test results of members upon their return home. Of concern to the researcher is the fact that although the percentage of those who engaged in sexual relations during deployment is very low (5%), 15% of the research subjects, in the follow-up question, stated that there were children born out of these relationships. The fact that no relations existed in terms of their responses to these questions confirmed that the research subjects had not been honest in their responses. This also implies that the research subjects engaged in risky sexual behaviours, which could be costly to the country, organisation and family. National security could be affected as a result of this behaviour. Therefore, the importance of inclusion of HIV/AIDS and STD-related programmes in the social support services that are rendered during deployment cannot be underestimated. Social workers and nursing personnel should play an active role in addressing these concerns.

- Most (65%) of the research subjects stated that it was the responsibility of the social worker to support spouses of deployed members. The chaplain was rated the second highest by 35% of the research subjects, followed by the OC (20%), the multi-professional team (17%) and the psychologist (16%). The lack of accessibility to psychologists within the SANDF could be the reason for this situation. Therefore, the social worker should play a predominant role in ensuring the provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses. This also implies that the social worker should be the custodian of social support services to spouses of deployed members. This does not, however, imply that social workers should function in isolation in providing these services. Social workers must be proactive in the provision of social support services to spouses during deployment, and must ensure that the support of other important role players is enlisted for the provision of these services. In this way, a support network that would ensure the provision of comprehensive social support services during

deployment could be established. In this way, combat-ready forces would be ensured and families would be kept intact.

- Most (95%) of the research subjects felt that the provision of standardised unit social support services to spouses during the external military deployment of members is important. This was also confirmed in the quantitative study. The fact that the research subjects supported the notion of provision of standardised unit social support services to spouses during deployment suggests that a model for social support services to spouses during deployment should be designed. This further confirms the need for provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses in order to enhance their coping skills during deployment.

- As shown in the literature review presented in Chapter 2, it was found that similar deployment-related stressors and needs were identified in this study. In other words, deployment challenges and needs are common to all deployments, irrespective of the country from which the spouses originate - for example, loneliness and emotional problems, communication problems, financial problems, marital problems and problems with children. The implication here is that although it is focused on the South African military setup and informed by the outcome of this scientific investigation, the model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses will not be totally different to what other militaries are offering. Therefore, due to the fact that the outcome of this study is not totally different to what has been indicated in the literature, and the fact that this study included an analysis of social support services rendered to the SANDF members and their spouses during external military deployment, as requested by the Director of Social Work, the model will to a certain extent include social support services that are already in place.

## 6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the abovementioned conclusions that have been drawn in this study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Due to the fact that deployment is a task that the SANDF cannot do away with, the researcher recommends that the organisation regard the provision of social support services to SANDF members and their spouses during external military deployment as a priority.
- Because of the deployment-related challenges that were documented in this study, the researcher recommends that social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment be implemented. In other words, social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment are a need that should be addressed by the SANDF. The Draft Resilience Policy should be finalised and implemented within the SANDF.
- In order to reduce the effect of deployment-related stressors on members and their spouses, the researcher recommends that the deploying units ensure that a resilience programme is rendered to SANDF members' spouses on a continual basis.
- In view of the fact that members had been deployed once or twice in the past year, the researcher recommends that sufficient turnaround time between deployments be provided, in order to provide an opportunity for building family relationships and enhancing the resilience of families.
- Due to the fact that some of the SANDF members' spouses are unemployed, the researcher recommends that spousal empowerment programmes be incorporated into the programme of social support services



during external military deployment, so as to enhance spouses' resilience and adjustment during deployment.

- Since some of the spouses of members who are involved in external military deployment live in rural areas, the researcher recommends that those spouses be identified as a group that is more at risk, and that they are supported accordingly. The researcher further recommends that the establishment of family support groups in these areas be effected. Networking with social workers in these areas would be helpful in enhancing the resilience of spouses in rural areas.

- Since both members and their spouses experienced similar problems and challenges during external military deployment, the researcher recommends that social support services during external military deployment focus on addressing these challenges.

- As a result of transport-related challenges experienced by most of the spouses during deployment, the researcher recommends that provision be made for transporting spouses to places such as the hospital and shopping centre during deployment, particularly for those who are living in rural areas where transport is a common problem for members of the community.

- Based on the fact that financial problems during deployment were documented in this study, the researcher recommends that financial management programmes be rendered on a regular basis to all spouses and members who are involved in external military deployment, in order to minimise financial problems during deployment. In other words, they should be rendered long before deployment, during deployment and after deployment.

- Due to the fact that marital problems were documented as one of the issues faced by spouses during deployment, the researcher recommends that

social workers be proactive and include marriage enrichment programmes in the social support services that are rendered to members and their spouses during deployment. The formation of family support groups could be a tool for enhancing marital relations.

- In view of the fact that communication problems were experienced by the research subjects in this study, the researcher recommends that the organisation, in particular the CMI department, put measures in place to improve communication between the member and the spouse during the external military deployment of the member. In other words, there should be a communication system in place that will contribute to building family relations and to the success of the mission. Social workers within the mission area should also act as mediators on behalf of members, particularly in areas with no communication infrastructure. They should serve as a link between the member and the spouse, and should communicate with the spouse on behalf of the member.

- Preparation for deployment should not only include issues over which members have control, but should also include those that are beyond the control of members and spouses. Therefore, due to the fact that there are challenges beyond the control of members' spouses during external military deployment, the researcher recommends that issues such as preparation for death and dying, illness and admission to hospital be incorporated into the social support programme that is rendered to members and their spouses during deployment, in order to enable them to be resilient enough to deal with such events when they occur.

- Based on the fact that spouses encountered maintenance-related problems during the external military deployment of members, the researcher recommends that the organisation put measures in place to address these problems. Spouses should be empowered to handle maintenance-related tasks by themselves such as putting in a light bulb and replacing tyres. In addition, a

deployment support committee that will also address maintenance-related issues during deployment should be established within deploying units.

- Due to the fact that problems related to children were documented in this study, the researcher recommends that preparation for deployment that is focused mainly on the theme of children and deployment is implemented, and that a parenting skills programme be included in the resilience programme during deployment.

- As a result of the fact that some of the spouses encountered problems of interference by in-laws, the researcher recommends that social workers be proactive in terms of identifying social support systems that will not serve as a source of stress to spouses during deployment. Spouses should be involved in the identification of support systems that would make a difference to their lives during deployment. A family support group consisting of spouses of members who are involved in external military deployment could be ideal in this regard.

- Due to the fact that loneliness and emotional problems were documented in this study, the researcher recommends that the issue of dealing with loneliness and emotional problems be incorporated into the resilience programme that is rendered to spouses during deployment. Even in this case, family support groups within deploying units could serve as a means for alleviating loneliness and emotional problems.

- In view of the fact that social support services were not rendered to all the members and their spouses in preparation for deployment, the researcher recommends that preparation for deployment and social support services during and after deployment be rendered to all members and spouses during deployment. The organisation should enforce measures to ensure that social support services are rendered to all members and their spouses.

- Due to the fact that the need for a standardised unit social support programme for deployment support was documented in this study, the researcher recommends that a model that specifically addresses the challenges experienced by SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment be designed.
  
- Based on the fact that a need for additional social support services after deployment was documented in this study, the researcher recommends that these additional services are incorporated into the social support programme that is rendered to members and their spouses after deployment. Thorough preparation for homecoming will reduce potential conflicts that are likely to arise after deployment.
  
- Despite the fact that social workers were identified as the custodians of the social support programme rendered to spouses during deployment, the researcher recommends that a multi-disciplinary approach be followed in the provision of social support services to spouses of SANDF members during the external military deployment of members. The involvement of other forms of support should also be explored. Unit commanders' involvement in supporting SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment, and the formation of unit family support groups, would ensure the success of the mission due to the fact that members would be combat-ready and spouses would be able to deal with whatever deployment-related crises they might encounter. Furthermore, the organisation should ensure that Military Community Deployment Committees (MCDCs) that address employees' well-being within the mission areas are fully functional.
  
- The organisation, in particular the PTSR department, should ensure that a coordinated and comprehensive recreational service be provided to members during deployment, in order to reduce typical deployment-related stressors.

- A model that specifically addresses the needs of SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment should be designed. In other words, the deployment-related needs that were identified in this study before, during and after deployment should serve as a framework for a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during the external military deployment of members.

## **6.6 SUMMARY**

In summary, the abovementioned conclusions and recommendations provide clear guidelines for a model for spousal support services during the external military deployment of members. As indicated in this chapter, the framework for a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment is based on the needs that were identified in the qualitative and quantitative studies, and the assessment of social support services that are currently rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. The deployment-related challenges and needs identified in this study, which will serve as a framework for designing a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses, are not uniquely South African. They have been found to be similar to those experienced by spouses in other countries. This model will be presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7**

# **MODEL FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES TO SANDF MEMBERS' SPOUSES DURING EXTERNAL MILITARY DEPLOYMENT**

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapters 4 and 5 of this study demonstrated that a model for social support services is needed by SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. The importance of provision of spousal support services was reflected in the nature of problems and challenges encountered by spouses during deployment. Therefore, a model for spousal support services should take cognisance of typical deployment-related challenges and frustrations experienced by spouses, and should incorporate their needs.

Silverman (2000:77) postulates that “models provide an overall framework for how we look at reality. In short, they tell us what reality is like and the basic elements it contains (ontology) and what is the nature and status of knowledge (epistemology)”. Bailey (in De Vos, 2002c:37) defines a model as:

A copy, replica or analogy that differs from the real thing in some way. A social science model consists mainly of words, a description of a social phenomenon, abstracting the main features of the phenomenon without attempting to explain or predict anything from the description. Thus, the goal in social science models is not necessarily to include all features of the system being modelled, but only those necessary for research purposes.

In this study, the model that is designed in this chapter is based on the following factors: assessment/evaluation of social support services that are supposed to have been rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment, as requested by the Director Social Work (complaints received by the Department of Social Work concerning the fact that no or insufficient social support services were rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external

military deployment formed the basis for this decision), deployment-related challenges and frustrations, and the needs that were identified in both the qualitative and quantitative studies. As was confirmed in Chapter 2 and in the quantitative and qualitative studies, it was also found that deployment-related challenges and frustrations of spouses appear to be similar, irrespective of the country of origin. For example, as long as there are no social support services, loneliness and isolation will remain problems for spouses during deployment, irrespective of where they are. Therefore, due to the fact that this model does not exist in isolation, but is tailor-made to specifically address the needs of SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment, it will focus on SANDF spouses, but is not totally unique to other DODs such as the US DOD, which is in the lead insofar as spousal support services during deployment are concerned. This is probably as a result of the fact that they have, for many years, been involved in different forms of deployment throughout the world.

According to Fawcett, Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, White, Paine, Blanchard and Embree (in De Vos, 2002d:407), “by studying successful and unsuccessful models or programmes that have attempted to address the problem, researchers identify potentially useful elements of an intervention. This synthesis of existing knowledge helps to guide design and develop activities”. In the researcher’s view, despite the fact that not much has been written on the description of models, these successful models or programmes will serve as a guide in designing a model for spousal support services during external military deployment of members. Therefore, in this design phase, the researcher endeavoured to design a model that could be used to support SANDF members’ spouses during external military deployment. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the goal of this model is to contribute to healthy family functioning, thereby fostering combat readiness amongst SANDF members. The researcher made use of the conceptualised stages of the design of a protocol by Barnes-September (in De Vos, 2002d:407-8), which were developed from the D&D model by Thomas and Rothman (1994). The researcher aligned herself with

these stages, due to the fact that they are relevant and applicable to this study. Therefore, according to the researcher, the following stages of protocol development by Barnes-September (in De Vos, 2002d:408) are recommended:

- Stage 1: Problem analysis derived from the findings of the information gathering and synthesis phase.
- Stage 2: Setting the objectives for protocol development.
- Stage 3: Considering optimal approaches and materials.
- Stage 4: Drafting and designing.
- Stage 5: Consulting, editing, assessing and taking corrective action.

Following the guidelines provided in the findings and conclusions of this study, a model for social support services during external military deployment of members has been designed as follows:

## **7.2 STAGES OF MODEL DEVELOPMENT**

### **7.2.1 Problem analysis (stage 1)**

As indicated by Barnes-September (in De Vos, 2002d:408), the first step in the design phase is problem analysis, as derived from the findings of the information gathering and synthesis phase. According to Mark (1996:81) and Babbie and Mouton (2001:78), “social work research begins with a problem”. Therefore, problem identification forms the basis for the design of any model, otherwise there would be no need for research. Hastings (in De Vos, 2002d:397) provides the following definitions of social problems: “social problems are conditions of society that have negative effects on large numbers of people, a social problem is a condition that has been defined by significant groups as deviation from some social standard, or breakdown of social organisation, a social problem is a condition affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, about which it is felt something can be done through collective action”.



The focus of the abovementioned definitions is thus on the identification of a particular social problem that negatively affects a number of people, and on which specific problem solving mechanisms need to be in place in order to resolve the problem. The researcher conducted this study in order to design a model for spousal support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. Complaints about insufficient or no spousal support services and the need for a scientific assessment of social support services provided to spouses during deployment informed this study.

As indicated in Chapter 3 of this study, this phase involves the analysis of the problem in preparation for the planning of a project based on the findings of the scientific inquiry. Therefore, the researcher conducted qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) studies in order to obtain a better understanding of social support services rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. A summary of the findings of these studies indicated that:

- SANDF members have been involved in external military deployment;
- deployment has its own challenges and frustrations;
- spouses encountered a lot of deployment-related stressors as a result of deployment (for example, loneliness and emotional problems, communication problems, problems with children, transport problems, maintenance problems, marital problems and financial problems);
- some of the spouses did not participate in the preparation for deployment programme;
- there was a lack of support during deployment;
- all spouses should take part in the preparation for deployment programme, in order to enhance their resilience during deployment;
- measures should be put in place in order to ensure that those spouses who have been identified as being vulnerable are also supported during deployment;

- spousal empowerment programmes should be incorporated into the social support services programmes that have been rendered to spouses during deployment, in order to enhance their resilience; and
- social support services should be provided to spouses during all the stages of deployment.

According to the researcher, based on the analysis and findings of the qualitative and quantitative studies that were conducted and presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study, it became apparent that spousal support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment was a problem that needed to be addressed by the organisation. In light of these outcomes, the researcher decided that a model that addresses the problem of spousal support to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment should be designed. Brewer and Collins, as quoted by Barnes-September (1998:139), referred to "multi operations paradigm that assumes that some degree of error and truth are inherent in all research methods". The researcher is in agreement with this view, and in order to try and overcome this limitation, she made use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies. Once the problem had been analysed, the next step was to set objectives to guide the design of the model.

### **7.2.2 Setting objectives for model development (stage 2)**

In the researcher's view, the findings in the problem analysis phase clearly indicated that social support to SANDF members' spouses is a problematic issue during the external military deployment of members. Based on these findings, the primary goal of this study was to design a model for social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members. This programme should be rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment of members. Once the problem had been analysed, the next phase in the process of designing a model, which is setting objectives for the development of a model for spousal support services to SANDF members'

spouses during external military deployment, followed. Therefore, the objectives of the designing of a model for spousal support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment were as follows:

- To incorporate literature on social support, as referred to in Chapter 2, in order to substantiate the model.
- To incorporate the needs of spouses that were identified in the study.
- To propose programmes that will ensure that spouses are well prepared for deployment during all stages of deployment, based on the findings of this study.
- To include a social support system as an overall concept in the model.
- To highlight a variety of social support services at different stages of deployment.
- To consider governance as an important concept in the model.
- To enhance the resilience of spouses during external military deployment.

These objectives served as a guideline in the formulation of the model. The next step in the design phase is considering optimal approaches and materials.

### **7.2.3 Considering optimal approaches and materials (stage 3)**

According to Noy (in Campbell, Campbell, Schultz and Styles,1991:42), “the concept of spouse readiness has been coined by military policy makers and researchers to acknowledge the importance of the military family to the successful fulfillment of the Army's overall mission”. Furthermore, according to Campbell et al. (1991:42), “given the importance of the family, it can be concluded that just as soldiers must be prepared for immediate deployment, the military spouse must be prepared to assume the role and duties of household head to ensure family functioning during deployment.” The researcher agrees with the abovementioned authors' view, and is of the opinion that the SANDF has an obligation to ensure that spouses are well prepared to deal with whatever

deployment-related challenges they might be faced with during deployment of members. The Draft Resilience policy, which ensures the implementation of social support services to spouses during deployment, should be finalised and fully implemented.

According to Cobb (in Hunter and Nice, 1978:210), “it seems reasonable to generalize from this evidence that the military wife and family unit would be better able to manage the stresses of deployment if they were aware of one or more of the basic types of social supports available in their community”. Using Cobbs’ framework, these social supports would include information such as “leading the wife and family to believe that they are cared for and loved, esteemed and valued and belong to a social network of communication and mutual obligation” (Cobb, in Hunter & Nice, 1978:210).

In addition., according to Spellman et al. (1991:6-7; see also Hornig, 1994:8-59), deployment and family deployment is challenging and frustrating for both the member and the family. Family support enhances combat readiness of the member. Involvement of commanders in the family support groups (FSGs) as part of preparation for deployment is regarded as one means by which the organisation can express concern about the welfare of families. A FSG is viewed as an effective way of providing support to families during deployment, and is their most immediate source of support. Functional FSGs have to a great extent enhanced the resilience of spouses during deployment. The focus of treatment is on all levels, namely prevention, treatment and aftercare. Issues such as problems with children, stress management, questions of fidelity and anxiety over reunions can be discussed at these FSG meetings. Combat readiness of the member is thus enhanced by the knowledge that his/her family is well supported during deployment.

Based on the abovementioned, the importance of the formation of spousal support groups cannot be underestimated. Caliber Associates (1991:32) are of

the opinion that “mutual support groups or self-help groups offer individuals an opportunity to interact socially and to share feelings and discover that others are experiencing similar feelings (i.e. that their feelings are normal)”. Pinch (1994:56) also indicated the importance of an informal network of wives’ clubs for spouses of deployed members.

Furthermore, Caliber Associates (1991:11) postulate that in order for organisations to be effective and efficient in the preparation of their members for deployment, it is vital that they have a project plan in place that clearly outlines programmes that will be at the disposal of spouses during deployment. A well coordinated FSG service should be regarded as a priority, and should include crisis management in collaboration with other organisations. The researcher is in support of the idea of collaborating with other organisations, particularly for areas that are not accessible. These organisations can be useful in cases where expert services such as counselling are required.

This plan, according to Caliber Associates (1991:13), “should be written in a manner, which is most useful to leadership and agencies at the base. Although planning is crucial, flexibility during deployments will be necessary. Once a plan is developed, the plan should be reviewed on an annual basis”. The researcher agrees with the aforementioned authors, and is of the opinion that once the model is fully operational, it should be evaluated on an ongoing basis in order to assess whether or not it has achieved the desired outcomes. Based on the findings of this study, this will be another area for future research.

In order to design and develop a comprehensive model for spousal support services to SANDF members’ spouses during external military deployment of members, existing models were reviewed and used as guidelines in the development of the SANDF Unit Family Support Groups (SANDF UFSGs) model. The researcher believes that both formal and informal UFSGs should be established within all deploying units in the SANDF, in order to holistically

address challenges and problems experienced by spouses and members during external military deployment. The Officer Commanding, with the support, advice and assistance of the multi-disciplinary team, should ensure that these SANDF UFSGs are established, and should monitor their functioning. The involvement of spouses of members who are involved in external military deployment is critical, particularly those who have been identified as vulnerable.

The researcher further agrees in principle with the abovementioned authors with regard to the fact that deployment-related stressors can best be dealt with once spouses are informed of the social support services at their disposal. Having information about who to contact plays an important role in the stability of families during the absence of members. The knowledge that the spouse is supported during deployment will enhance the productivity of the member in the mission area. The formation of UFSGs within the SANDF should be a forum in which all spousal deployment-related frustrations and challenges can be raised and addressed. This need was identified in both the qualitative and quantitative analyses and findings. In this study, the research subjects made reference to the formation of a unit spousal support group. However, the researcher preferred the usage of the term 'FSGs', which is essentially a unit spousal support group, because the term 'SANDF UFSGs' is more applicable, all-inclusive and relevant as a model for family support groups within the SANDF. Therefore, the researcher proposes the UFSGs model in the SANDF as one that can address all the challenges and problems that have been identified in this study. The formation of UFSG committees in all the deploying units in the SANDF in order to address deployment-related problems and challenges is thus of great importance.

As indicated by Hornig (1994:41), the importance of provision of social support services throughout the different stages of deployment is clear, as also confirmed in this study. In this way, the functioning of military families will continually be improved. As identified in this study, the importance of provision of social support

services to SANDF members' spouses during the external military deployment of members, and during all stages of deployment, cannot be overemphasised. SANDF UFSGs should be functional within the deploying units on an ongoing basis. This will ensure stability and continuity of social support service delivery to members and spouses who are involved in external military deployment. The following is a brief discussion on each of the stages of deployment:

## — **Predeployment**

- ▶ Predeployment entails preparing service members (including personal and family affairs, family care plans, deployment briefings or materials). According to Hornig (1994:60), FSG initiatives could also include predeployment training classes or programmes.
- ▶ Logistics of processing service members on the mobility line (including the presence and role of FSGs and other agencies on the mobility line).
- ▶ Organisation and coordination of family support services (identifying the services and supportive efforts to be provided by the base, base agencies and units) (Caliber Associates, 1991:13).

Predeployment preparation is vital. As confirmed in this study, the researcher supports the idea that the abovementioned social support services or programmes should be rendered to members and spouses before deployment.

## — **Deployment**

- ▶ Deployment entails the coordination of family support services (strengthening supportive efforts at the base, base agencies and units).
- ▶ Additional support services (including developing services such as a telephone hotline and expanding needed services such as children's programmes).
- ▶ Coordination with schools (including determining protocols with

schools and identifying an agency or leader to serve as a liaison with schools) (Caliber Associates, 1991:13).

According to Hornig (1994:59), “many other activities that FSG commonly sponsor, coordinate or participate in also directly or indirectly foster family support goals”. These typically include:

- Sponsoring new families;
- Holding newcomers’ orientation;
- Organizing holiday and other unit parties or outings;
- Arranging employment or relocation briefings;
- Compiling listings of available childcare or actually providing short-term care;
- Arranging transportation, especially during deployment, to essential locations such as the commissary or hospital and to FSG meetings;
- Obtaining discount tickets for family activities, especially during deployment;
- Making plans for homecoming;
- Raising funds;
- Providing workshops on topics such as coping with stress, managing loneliness, military benefits, prenatal care, preparing for deployment (emotionally and practically) or using community services; and
- Distributing deployment assistance materials and Community Resources Directories to all family members (Hornig, 1994:59).

The researcher agrees with the abovementioned author, and is of the opinion that some of the programmes mentioned above are also applicable within the SANDF, as has been identified in this study.

### — Reunion (Post-deployment)

- ▶ Reunion entails the return of service members.
- ▶ Reunion preparations.
- ▶ Reunion support services (Caliber Associates, 1991:13).



The importance of provision of social support services to members and their spouses after deployment has also been documented in this study. As a result, the reunion stage cannot be ignored. Intervention measures that incorporate the needs of spouses should form part of social support services upon homecoming. Furthermore, the United States Department of Defence (US DOD) makes use of the FSG model to support families during deployment. Although it is US based, this model was used as a framework in the design of the model for spousal support to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. This is based on the fact that similar deployment-related stressors were documented in this study. As shown in this study, there are many commonalities between the challenges and problems experienced by Army spouses and members who are involved in military deployment all over the world. However, there are also differences. For example, some of the programmes that have been proposed in this model are not totally suited to SANDF spouses and members' needs - for example, antiterrorism precautions, especially overseas. As indicated by Silverman (2000:77), it will be used as a framework for designing the model for spousal support to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment.

The next phase in the design and development of a model for spousal support services within the SANDF during external military deployment is that of drafting and designing, as indicated by Barnes-September (in De Vos, 2002d:408).

## **7.2.4 Drafting and designing (stage 4)**

### **7.2.4.1 Introduction**

Drafting and designing is the 4<sup>th</sup> stage in the development of a model for spousal support services within the SANDF during external military deployment. Based on the abovementioned, the SANDF UFSGs model may be suitable for addressing deployment-related challenges of SANDF members' spouses during

external military deployment of members, due to the fact that it takes cognisance of the assessment/evaluation of social support services that are supposed to have been rendered to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment, and because it is needs-based. In other words, the findings of the qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) studies provided a discourse for the designing of this model. As a result, it was found to be suited to the challenges and frustrations of SANDF spouses during external military deployment of members for the following reasons:

- It provides solutions and answers to the challenges and problems raised by the research subjects in this study.
- It is all-inclusive and holistic.
- It incorporates support needs of spouses.
- It will make a significant contribution to combat readiness of SANDF members who are involved in external military deployment, and the promotion and maintenance of healthy military family units.

#### **7.2.4.2 Design Questions**

In order to provide direction for the design of the model for spousal support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment, the following questions were formulated:

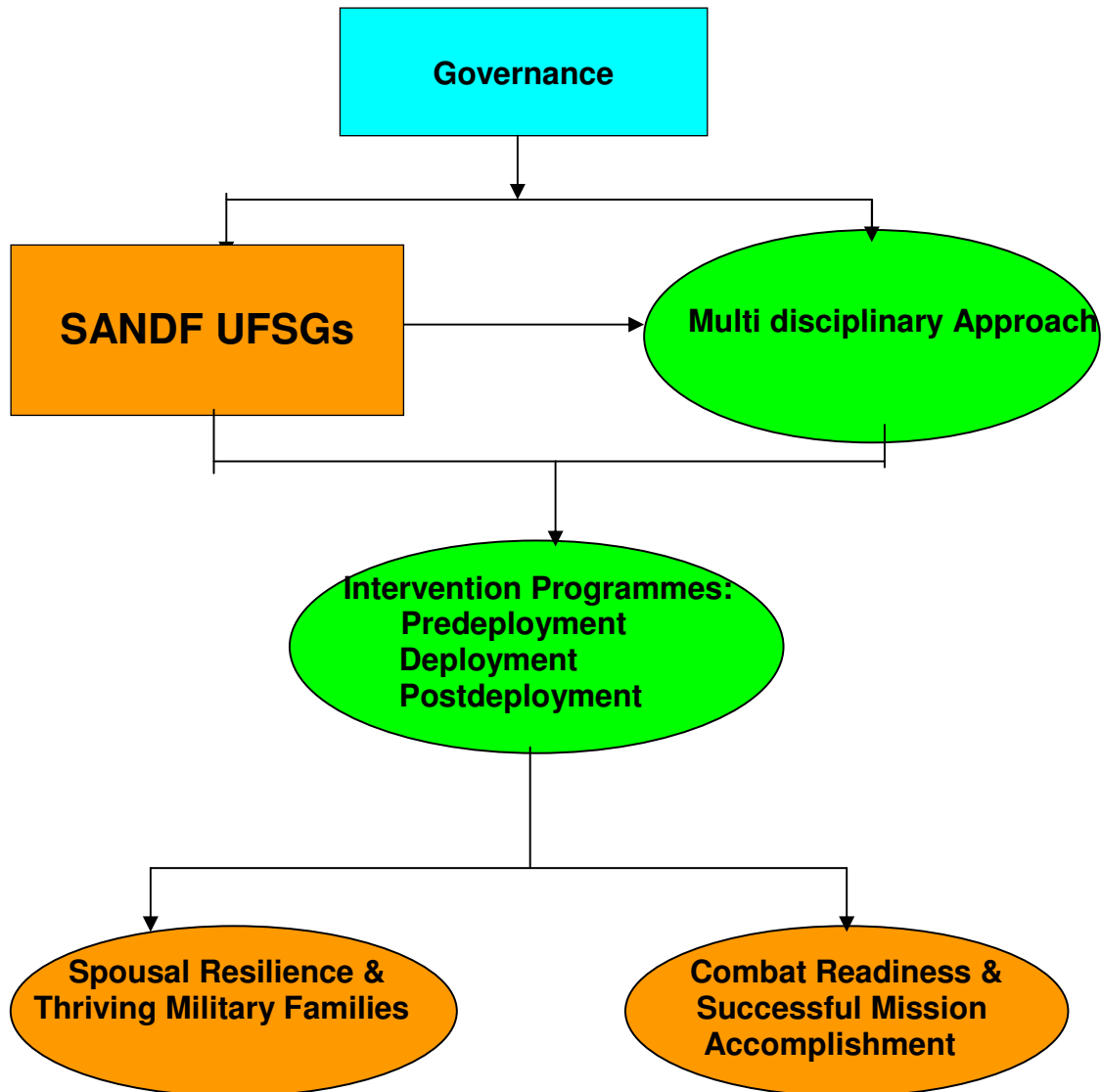
- What legislates the provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment?
- What are the key components of the model?
- What are the phases of deployment?
- What is the nature of social support services needed by spouses during each phase?
- What are the overall needs of spouses?
- Who are the key role players and what are their obligations?

- Are there time frames associated with the provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment?

The proposed SANDF UFSGs model stresses the importance of organisational provision of social support services and spousal resilience, resilient military families and combat readiness of members during external military deployment. Spousal resilience is critical to successful mission accomplishment and is therefore the ultimate goal. Lack of resilience of the spouse will lead to family problems that will force the organisation to send the member back home in order to resolve these problems, which is costly for the organisation. The proposed model further recognises that the SANDF Draft Policy on Resilience, which mandates that social support services be rendered during deployment, can to a great extent influence spousal resilience. It should, however, be amended to include the institution of SANDF UFSGs within deploying units in the organisation. Spousal support services are not uniformly implemented within the SANDF. Therefore, the model emphasises the importance of provision of social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment by means of the establishment and implementation of SANDF UFSGs in all units. Although social workers have been identified as the custodians of this model, a multi-disciplinary approach should be followed in the implementation of this model.

### 7.2.4.3 SANDF Unit Family Support Groups (SANDF UFSGs) Model

Figure 35: SANDF UFSGs Model for spousal support during external military deployment of members



#### 7.2.4.3.1 Contents of the model

The main objective of the SANDF UFSGs model is to improve the resilience of spouses during external military deployment, thereby promoting thriving military families. The model can be outlined as follows:

The text of the SANDF UFSGs model will consist of three main sections.

- Section 1 deals with an overview of the model, the purpose of the model, the SANDF UFSGs approach, the multi-disciplinary approach and key role players.
- Section 2 provides an overview of the phases of deployment.
- Section 3 deals with intervention programmes that are aimed at the provision of social support services to spouses during external military deployment, and which are applicable to each phase, based on the findings of the scientific investigation.

The SANDF UFSGs model can be explained as follows:

## **SECTION 1**

### **7.2.4.3.2 Overview**

This SANDF UFSGs model is based on the concept that spouses need to be prepared in order to be able to deal with whatever stressors they might be faced with during external military deployment. The importance of maintenance of healthy family systems cannot be underestimated, particularly during deployment. SANDF UFSGs should be established within all the deploying units in order to ensure that SANDF members' spouses are well supported during external military deployment.

### **7.2.4.3.3 Purpose of the SANDF UFSGs**

SANDF UFSGs can play a critical role in the promotion of resilience of spouses

during external military deployment. The purpose of the SANDF UFSGs is as follows:

- It instils the sense that the organisation cares about the well-being of spouses during external military deployment.
- It serves as a source of support for spouses during deployment.
- Experiences and expertise with regard to dealing with deployment frustrations and challenges are shared amongst spouses.
- It provides a sense of belonging to spouses.
- It serves as a resource for dealing with deployment-related challenges and frustrations.
- It serves as a platform for venting frustrations related to deployment.
- It enhances the self-esteem of spouses of SANDF members who are involved in external military deployment.
- It contributes to nation building.
- It contributes to the maintenance and promotion of healthy family relationships.
- It serves as a link between the spouse and the member.
- In general, it contributes to combat readiness of members and successful mission accomplishment.

#### **7.2.4.3.4 SANDF UFSGs Governance**

Provision of spousal support services by the organisation to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment is non-negotiable. In order for the organisation to be successful in its mission accomplishment, provision of social support services to spouses should be enforced. The Draft Policy on Resilience should be amended to incorporate the formation of UFSGs within all deploying units, and be finalised and implemented. Once implemented, it will serve as the policy that will guide the management and implementation of spousal support services during external military deployment. SANDF UFSG meetings should

take place at least once a month in order to address deployment-related social support issues. For the purposes of overall coordination of social support services to the SANDF organisation as a whole, the Resilience Advisory Committee (RAC), which consists of representatives from all Arms of Services and Divisions, should ensure that regular meetings are held for feedback purposes and to address higher level challenges. At unit level, Military Community Development Committees (MCDCs) should include feedback reports on the functioning of UFSGs that specifically focus on deployment support issues. This report should be submitted to the RAC, which is responsible for deployment issues within the SANDF organisation, on a monthly basis. SANDF UFSGs should thus form part of the agenda items for discussion within the MCDCs. It should be noted that the MCDC is responsible for the overall wellbeing of members of the organisation. SANDF UFSGs, on the other hand, will focus on the provision of spousal support services during deployment. Therefore, issues that were identified in this study should form part of deployment support intervention programmes that are rendered to spouses during deployment. The Draft Resilience Policy should also incorporate the fact that MCDCs are regarded as the unit umbrella body that is responsible for ensuring that SANDF UFSGs are functional within the organisation. Due to the fact that MCDCs are not operational within all units in the SANDF, the Draft Resilience Policy must enforce their implementation, as the MCDCs have a responsibility to ensure the proper functioning of SANDF UFSGs.

#### **7.2.4.3.5 Multi-disciplinary approach**

Although the Social Work department has been identified as the custodian of this model, a multi-disciplinary approach should be followed in addressing the issue of spousal support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. Provision of spousal support services during deployment is the responsibility of the organisation as a whole. Therefore, all disciplines should be involved in maintaining and contributing to healthy military families during

deployment. All disciplines within various units should ensure that UFSGs are operational on a continuous basis. One would assume that the member and the family play a pivotal role in ensuring that support services are in place well before the deployment of the member. However, this does not seem to be the case. Problems experienced by spouses during the absence of members suggest otherwise. Hence, there is a need for the organisation to ensure that spouses are empowered to be resilient during deployment. Key role players in the provision of spousal support services during deployment are as follows:

- The Officer Commandings (OCs);
- Social workers;
- Psychologists;
- Chaplains;
- Nursing personnel; and
- Spouses.

#### **7.2.4.3.6 Roles and responsibilities of key role players**

The Policy on Resilience should serve as a guide in the implementation of spousal support services during external military deployment.

##### **- The Officer Commandings (OCs)**

OCs play a leading role in ensuring that spouses are well supported during deployment, and that UFSGs meetings and programmes are conducted on a regular basis. OCs should ensure the success of these programmes by means of their presence, providing resources, namely transport for spouses to attend these meetings, as well as funds for refreshments and guest speakers when necessary. OCs have a responsibility to enhance the perception that the organisation cares about spouses during deployment. They have to chair the meetings in which issues related to spousal support during deployment are discussed and resolved. Their involvement and participation is vital to the



achievement of the UFSGs goal. Furthermore, OCs should ensure that feedback regarding the provision of spousal support services within their areas of responsibility is sent to the RAC on a monthly basis.

- **Social Workers**

Social workers play a critical role in enhancing the resilience of spouses during deployment, and have a particular responsibility to maintain a balance between the demands of the organisation and the needs of members. They have to identify deployment-related stressors of spouses, provide counselling or refer them for counselling to another professional workere such as a nurse or psychologist if necessary, and ensure the implementation of preventative/promotional intervention measures to address these challenges and frustrations. Of critical importance is the provision of advice and guidance to UFSGs meetings and the OCs. Due to the fact that deployment support services to spouses need to be rendered on an ongoing basis, members should take part in activities/programmes that are conducted with spouses, for example, marriage enrichment and conflict management, when they are home. In most cases, these programmes are only conducted with members in the units. Therefore, both spouses and members should be subjected to these programmes when they are back home. This will enhance their resilience. Networking with other social workers is of critical importance in cases where spouses are not within reach. The RAC must ensure the institution of SANDF UFSGs in all the deployment units in the organisation, in order to ensure that spouses who are living in South Africa can attend these programmes.

- **Psychologists**

Psychologists also play an important role in the provision of spousal support services during deployment. They have to be part of UFSGs meetings. They also provide psychological advice and guidance in these meetings. In addition, they

provide counselling services or refer accordingly when necessary, and provide programmes during the meetings - for example, stress management programmes.

- **Chaplains**

Chaplains play an important role in the provision of spousal support services during external military deployment. From a spiritual point of view, chaplains provide counselling services or refer accordingly if need be. Along with the rest of the other professional team members, chaplains provide intervention programmes such as the HIV/AIDS value-based programme.

- **Nursing personnel**

Nursing personnel also play a vital role in the provision of spousal support services during external military deployment. They form part of the UFSGs meetings and provide the necessary counselling and advice insofar as health issues are concerned. Along with the other professional team members, they provide intervention programmes such as HIV/AIDS and health information sessions.

- **Spouses**

Spouses play a pivotal role in the SANDF UFSGs. Social support services during external military deployment should be implemented according to their needs. Representatives of spouses should be present at all the planning meetings of the UFSGs, due to the fact that they serve as a mouthpiece for other spouses. They act as a source of support for one another during external military deployment. Therefore, they should be present in all the UFSGs meeting/functions.

## SECTION 2

### 7.2.4.3.7 Overview of the phases of deployment

This study confirmed that there are three phases of deployment, namely pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment. The following is a discussion of each phase:

#### — Pre-deployment phase

The pre-deployment phase refers to the phase before the actual deployment. It thus entails preparation for deployment. This phase plays a critical role in ensuring the combat readiness of members. During this phase, spouses should be prepared for deployment of members. Spousal preparation before deployment ensures that spouses are resilient enough to cope with deployment-related challenges and frustrations. All spouses should undergo the preparation of deployment programme along with members. SANDF UFSGs must ensure that spouses are ready long before the actual deployment. Preparation for deployment programmes should be implemented with spouses in order to contribute to the ultimate organisational goal, which is successful mission accomplishment.

#### — Deployment phase

The deployment phase refers to the phase during which the actual deployment of members as a result of external military deployment occurs. As confirmed in this study, provision of spousal support services is even more critical during this phase, due to the fact that it involves many stressors, and this has an effect on the combat readiness of members. SANDF UFSGs can play a pivotal role in this phase. The UFSGs serve as a tool by means of which the resilience of spouses

can be enhanced. Various intervention programmes that are needs-based should be implemented by the organisation during this phase.

### — **Post-deployment phase**

The post-deployment phase refers to the phase after deployment, and involves the reunion of the family after reintegration. As confirmed in this study, as much as homecoming is exciting, it also has its own challenges and frustrations. Provision of spousal support services even after deployment will facilitate family adjustment. SANDF UFSGs should continue to function even after deployment, in order to ensure continuity.

In general, provision of spousal support services before, during and after external military deployment is an organisational responsibility. The SANDF UFSGs are a means by which comprehensive social support services can be provided to spouses during external military deployment. As documented in this study, different challenges and frustrations were experienced by spouses during each phase. Based on this study, the need for various social support services during deployment were identified by spouses in each phase. The following gives an indication of the identified programme interventions that are applicable to each phase:

## **SECTION 3**

### **7.2.4.3.8 Intervention programmes applicable to each phase**

The intervention programmes applicable to each phase are as follows:

### — **Pre-deployment phase**

The following aspects should be included as part of the SANDF UFSGs' intervention measures for spousal support during external military deployment in the pre-deployment phase:

- Provision of sufficient time for emotional preparation of the family for deployment.
- Fostering an understanding of what deployment is.
- Assistance with emotional adjustment.
- Transport arrangements for both children and spouses.
- Preparation of children, particularly with regard to communication with the member.
- Provision of a map of the mission area (in other words, provision of information on deployment and its dynamics), particularly when one deployment is followed by another.
- Marital counselling and enrichment, particularly with regard to role clarification, communication, extramarital relations and financial management.
- The establishment of a unit deployment support committee that will focus on deployment-related problems of spouses.
- Provision of a pamphlet with all the relevant information and telephone numbers of who to contact in case of emergencies.
- Parenting skills programme.
- Preparation for events such as death and illness in the family.
- Resilience programme.

#### — **Deployment phase**

The following aspects should be included as part of the SANDF UFSGs' intervention measures for spousal support during the deployment phase:

- Provision of an accessible telephone facility (free lines) for both the spouse and the children, who should be able to call the member at least twice a week.
- Regular home visits by the multi-disciplinary team, particularly the social work officer.
- Practical maintenance assistance, for example, replacing light bulbs, fixing the car and replacing tyres.
- Transportation of children to school or to the hospital.
- Transportation of the spouse for purchasing of groceries and account payments, particularly with regard to those who reside in remote rural areas where there is no transport available.
- Constant support by the unit and the Officer Commanding (OC).
- Two weeks' recess for the member after every three months of deployment.
- Establishment of a deployment support group that will enable spouses to converse with one another and share deployment-related experiences and frustrations.
- Feedback on the period of deployment, including the extension thereof.
- Home visits and telephone calls from the unit every now and then.
- Spot checks by the unit just to confirm that the family is still safe, especially for those in military housing.
- The social work officer and chaplain should act as a link between the family and the member.
- More support from the unit should be provided, such as letters of encouragement, cards, gifts, unit news etc.
- A 24hour help desk or halfway house should be established, even if it is just for communication purposes.
- Recreational facilities should be provided in order to keep members occupied in their free time.
- More support services should be rendered by chaplains, particularly with regard to prayer sessions and spiritual support, financial management

- programmes (one of the research subjects indicated that the unit should make provision for loans in case of need during the absence of the member, such as money for unplanned school trips for children).
- Parenting skills for dealing with adolescents during the absence of the member.
  - The provision of employment opportunities for spouses with skills.
  - Stress management programme.
  - Deployment counselling.

### — **Post-deployment phase**

The following aspects should be included as part of the SANDF UFSGs intervention measures for spousal support during the post-deployment phase:

- Thorough preparation for homecoming.
- Marital counselling.
- Debriefing.
- The organisation should show some interest in what is happening in the family. In other words, the functioning of SANDF UFSGs should continue even after deployment.
- The organisation should show appreciation and concern for the sacrifice that members are making.
- HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and provision of information to the spouse concerning the results of the HIV test undertaken by the member upon arrival back home.
- Conflict management.
- Counselling for children.
- Reintegration into the family.
- Reintegration into the workplace.
- Redefining of roles.

Implementation of the abovementioned intervention measures within the SANDF UFSGs will make a significant contribution to spousal readiness, and will contribute towards combat readiness of members. In this way, healthy military families will be enhanced, and the organisational objective of successful participation in peace missions will be attained. Following the design phase is the phase of consulting, editing, assessing and taking corrective action.

### **7.2.5 Consulting, editing, assessing and taking corrective action (stage 5)**

Consulting, editing, assessing and taking corrective action is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final stage in the designing of the proposed SANDF UFSGs model for spousal support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment. According to Barnes-September (in De Vos, 2002d:408), the final phase in the design and development of a model involves consulting, editing, assessing and taking corrective action. In this phase, the researcher consulted various sources, edited and assessed the model and took corrective action based on the outcome of the literature review and suggestions made by her study promoter and colleagues.

## **7.3 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on the conclusions and recommendations made in this study, areas for future research were identified as follows.

- The issue of sufficient resources to provide efficient and effective social support services during external military deployment of the member should be explored with service providers.
- The SANDF UFSGs model should be pilot tested, implemented and evaluated.



- Social support services in terms of the needs of female SANDF members who are involved in external military deployment require further exploration.

## **7.4 SUMMARY**

In summary, the SANDF UFSGs model may be an ideal model for addressing the challenges and problems experienced by spouses of SANDF members during external military deployment. Older versions of journals and articles were used because they were more relevant and applicable. Social support services to SANDF members' spouses should be rendered on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that members and their spouses are resilient enough to cope during the absence of members due to external military deployment.

The implementation of the SANDF UFSGs model may enable spouses to deal with deployment-related stressors and foster healthy family relationships on the one hand, and contribute to combat readiness on the other hand. The researcher confirms that the goal of this study which was the design of a model on social support services to SANDF members' spouses during external military deployment was attained. The attainment of this goal was made possible through the achievement of the objectives of this study as indicated in Chapter 6.