

# ONE HEALTH: A MILITARY CONCEPT/RESPONSIBILITY: THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

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**Human Health** was defined in 1948 by the World Health Organisation as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This definition was amended in 1984 to "the extent to which an individual or group is able to realise aspirations and satisfy needs and to change or cope with the environment".

**Animal Health** may be defined as the absence of disease, or the normal functioning of an organism and normal behaviour based on observing a certain number of individuals that determine the standard and thus health [5].

Human Health and Animal Health are thus so intricately linked that the following comment was passed in a Times magazine in 2006: "Human medicine is a branch of animal health, not a wholly different discipline."

**Environmental Health** is the science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting well-being by:

- Identifying and evaluating environmental sources and hazardous agents; and
- Limiting exposure to hazardous physical, chemical, and biological agents in air, water, soil, food, and other environmental media or settings that may adversely affect human health [6].

Environmental Health is thus a branch of public health concerned with monitoring or mitigating those factors in the environment that affect human and animal health and disease.

From the three definitions alone, it is evident that they are interdependent and should be managed as such thus, the concept of One-Health.

**One-Health** is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimise the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognises the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilises multiple sectors, disciplines, and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster wellbeing and challenge threats to health and ecosystems while

addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development. (OHLEPP 2021)

Health in the three domains thus has to do with the realisation of human **aspirations and needs** and to change or cope with the environment.

As the needs/aspirations of people is a challenging psychological concept to comprehend fully, an American Psychologist, Abraham Maslow, proposed in his 1943 paper in the journal *Psychological Review* "A Theory of Human Motivation" the idea of a hierarchy of needs. Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity.

A person's aspirations/curiosity can be explained by this hierarchy of needs, a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. Maslow's theory states that our actions are motivated by particular physiological needs. It is usually represented by a pyramid of needs, with the most basic needs at the bottom and more complex ones, at the top. Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up.

The most critical aspect of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is that we all start with a set of utterly non-negotiable and basic physiological needs, for food, water, warmth, and rest. In addition, we have urgent safety needs for physical security and protection from attack. If these needs are not met, a person will struggle to enter higher-level needs in the spiritual domain, love, esteem, and respect. An urge drives us for self-actualisation: a vast, touchingly nebulous and yet hugely apt concept involving what Maslow described as *living according to one's full potential* and becoming who we are.

### **One Health: The Military Connection**

In South Africa national security is no longer viewed as a predominantly military and police problem. Put differently, security was understood to be the securing of a state and the political regime of a particular state, through military means. It has been broadened to incorporate political, economic, social and environmental matters. At the heart of this new approach is a paramount concern for the security of people. Security is an all-encompassing condition in which individual citizens live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance; enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and the basic

necessities of life, and inhabit an environment that is not detrimental to their health and well-being.

The bulk of such threats emanates from inadequate political governance, environmental degradation, poor human development, the inaccessibility to vital resources, the spread of diseases and high levels of violent crime. As such, security and development are inseparably linked. Therefore, there has been a need for a shift in focus from solely securing the state by military means, to the provision of security for its people by addressing critical political, socio-economic and environmental problems. This shift has emphasized the realisation that states are no longer the sole or primary referent or object of security. Accordingly, the concept of human security is a response to a range of non-military threats that currently confront humanity.

In this way, security becomes an all-encompassing condition in which individuals can be *Free from Fear* and also *Free from Want*. This understanding of security does not replace the security of the state with the security of the people. It sees these aspects as mutually dependent. After all, the state retains its obligation to facilitate, if not create, the necessary conditions and environment for the fulfilment of human security.

Within this conceptualisation of security, the Defence Force is but one of the institutions of the state that will be requested to promote national and international security. In providing adequate responses to some security threats, it may assume the lead role, while with others it will be required to play purely a supportive function. This necessitates the requisite inter-agency coordination mechanisms to be established in government(One Health).

The primary role of the SA National Defence Force(SANDF) is to defend South Africa against external military aggression. The Constitution provides that the SANDF may be employed in the following functions:

- for service in the defence of the Republic of South Africa, for the protection of its sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- for service in compliance with the international obligations concerning international bodies and other states;
- for service in the preservation of life, health or property;
- for service in the provision or maintenance of essential services;
- for service in the upholding of law and order in the Republic in co-operation with the South African Police Service under circumstances set out in law where the Police Service is unable to maintain law and order on its own; and

- for service in support of any department of state for socio-economic upliftment.

It is, however, the policy that the above functions do not carry equal weight. The primary function of the SANDF is to defend South Africa against external military

The international practice has evolved from a position where functions were performed in silos, to one where the functions are fulfilled jointly. Jointness enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of all military operations by synchronising the actions of all Services and Divisions. Jointness attains synergy of Defence effort. Collaborative work allows for the development of effective defence policies, strategies and plans.

Jointness is an important characteristic of the defence business, producing synergistic networked effects at every level of command. Within operations, jointness will be achieved through unity of command over allocated forces. Jointness will be nurtured and enhanced in the design and development of force components and preparation of defence capabilities.

## **SANDF in Practise**

The SANDF is structured as four arms of service, the Army, Airforce, Navy and Military Health Service with a Joint Operations Command for jointness and integration of effort.

The South African Military Health Service(SAMHS) renders support within the human battlespace in a layered defence system with a stepped-up health approach ensuring force health protection and health sustainment through best value evidence-based quality health services to ensure world-class clinical health service.

The SAMHS pursues a “dual-mission” approach. This is done by:

- Force Health Protection(FHP) to protect military forces from health threats, and to promote and sustain a healthy force, whilst deployed. Integrated into Force Health protection are all health professionals ensuring integration of policy and the delivery of health services.
- Force Health Sustainment (FHS) to protect the health of forces while at base and in training, their families and other eligible persons including dignitaries and veterans. The focus is on sustaining and/or improving the health of defence members and includes activities to protect military forces from health threats while at home, employing a comprehensive health plan, initiating health promotion and executing prevention activities.

This “dual-mission” is supported by an overarching process of Population Health Improvement (PHI) that includes several strategies to improve the overall health of defined populations by targeting those issues that are identified as health threats to specific groups. It focuses on groups instead of on individuals.

However, the SAMHS is not responsible for other aspects of “health” such as Occupational Health and Safety, Physical Training; both functions of the Human Resource Division, and environmental management, a function of the Logistics Division.

Although the delivery of health services ensuring the physical health of humans and animals are overseen by the SAMHS in an integrated, unifying approach, other aspects of health within the scope of One Health are not fully integrated to be sustainably balanced to optimise the full spectrum of the health of people, animals and ecosystems.

## **Conclusion**

One Health should not only be implemented by militaries across the world to ensure an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and

optimise the health of soldiers, their families, military utilised animals and the environment they operate in but has a primary responsibility to take the lead in ensuring that all agencies, all sectors, all disciplines, and all communities at varying levels of society are mobilised to work together to foster wellbeing and challenge threats to health and ecosystems while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change, and contributing to sustainable development.

Keywords: One Health, Health, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, military responsibility, SANDF, SAMHS

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