

The 5th annual Corrections Week kicks off

The Department of Correctional Services will kick off its fifth annual Corrections Weeks Campaign on Monday, 26 September and run it to Sunday 2 October 2011 to showcase some pockets of its successes in the work of correcting the offending behaviour of inmates.

The week will serve as a period for profiling various interventions that sometimes take place unnoticed to the mainstream of society. Society in fact has little realization that a rehabilitation centred correctional system is one of the best ways to 'aggressively' deal with crime.

Although the campaign will highlight successes in the department's quest to deliver on its mandate, it also seeks to raise awareness and call on communities to partner with the department to achieve the vision of the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa which recognises corrections as a societal responsibility. The entire White Paper is premised on the need for the foundation units of the correctional system to take responsibility for the function of correcting the offending behaviour of offenders right from the foundation units of the society. That means the families and communities ought to assist in the delivery of correctional services along the continuum of the criminal justice system. The Corrections Week programme presents such an opportunity for society in its entirety to play a role and assist the department in its corrective efforts to change the wayward behaviour of offenders and put an end to the ever increasing rates of overcrowding. However, the help being called is not just for the Corrections Week programme, it should be continuous as the department is already making "everyday a corrections day."

Therefore, from underpinning principles of sustainable corrections through restorative justice, needs based offender rehabilitation programmes, integrated delivery of criminal justice and social services, building officials into champions of transformation, enhancing partnerships and ensuring adherence to the principles of good governance, there remains a permanent gap for communities to lend a helping hand and own up to the work of corrections.

Nevertheless, work in these various areas continues around the year. Various challenges are experienced in building awareness and mobilising stakeholders and the public, in promoting buy-ins and participation in the normalization of the correctional environment in South Africa to help prevent scores of people from entering and re-entering the criminal justice system and ending up as jailbirds at correctional facilities. While the Justice, Crime Prevention

and Security (JPCS) Cluster is doing a commendable work to synergise the root cause of crime and providing solutions for the overflowing overcrowding of inmates in correctional facilities, various role-players in different sectors of societal life need to come on board. They must take up greater responsibility for intervening to deal with root causes of crime to prevent it, while at the same time joining hands to advance the cause of rehabilitation to break offenders from the entrapment and the cycle of crime in a sustainable way. The department's leadership continues to light up the fuse

help from a fraction of stakeholders and few concerned citizens, can be more than quadrupled if the society can buy-in into the business of corrections. The department celebrated one of its most successful Women's Months in 2011 by registering a series of tangible successes throughout the country. Since the start of Women's month, the department's leadership core went out and about and delivered services to the people in partnership with the people. Among the recorded milestones, the Deputy Minister Dr Ngoako Ramathodi led the department's Women's Day celebration at the Johannesburg

challenges experienced in the workplace and at home. These achievements advanced the course of taking corrections to the people and the community, as corrections is indeed a societal responsibility. The following are a few flagship programmes which the department pride itself with.

Mother and Child Units

The Mother and Child Units are a first for South Africa and Africa and will be rolled out to all the facilities that detain mothers with babies. The department has so far launched two facilities in Durban and Cape Town during the Women's Month. Two more facilities will be opened before the end of this financial year. This model Mother and Child Units offer a dedicated medical facility for both mother and child; has a kitchen that mothers can use to prepare meals and warm milk for the babies, a fully functional nursery and facilities where the women can attend rehabilitation programmes. It is spacious and will offer the children freedom of movement and expose them to basic necessities such as fresh air, playing grass, trees, direct sunlight, all of which were considered luxuries to all babies growing behind bars. At the opening of one of the facilities in Pollsmoor last month the minister said, "We want these children to be able to touch sand, to feel the grass, to know dirt and to be able to see the blue sky during their early childhood. We do not want the early memory of their mothers to be that of a person in chains."

The establishment of these units profoundly expresses in practical terms the imperative of the now six years old White Paper on Corrections to incarcerate

will be surrendered to the care of a family member or guardian chosen by the inmate mother who will then return to the female cells. The child would

Curriculum Statement (NCS) programme - the Usethubeni Youth Centre in Durban Westville. Of the tens of thousands of young inmates that should be

is done in an effort to enhance the utilisation of the available resources. The Department has also engaged various stakeholders to involve offenders in mainstream activities that could lead towards poverty alleviation within communities. The aim of engagement was to formulate a relationship with other government departments and stakeholders so that they consider offenders as an available workforce, that can be used as some sort of reparation and pay-back to the communities they have offended. The department has developed a draft concept document on the utilisation of offenders in meaningful work activities. The document aims to regulate the external hiring of offenders to participate in community projects. The involvement of offenders in community projects or activities is of fundamental importance in their rehabilitation and reintegration process.

Halfway houses

With the Halfway Houses project, the department aims to place offenders who have reached their minimum detention period and also those who are eligible for parole but do not have a stable addresses or



still maintain the psychological and emotional contact with the mother through arranged visitations. All of this is done to ensure minimum damage in the development of a child, during the important formative years.

Operation Funda

Operation Funda is one of the Department's flagship projects launched by Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula in January 2011 to enhance access to education and training by offenders to gear them for successful and sustainable social re-integration. It came into being after the Minister raised concerns about numbers of lifers considered for placement on parole, who were incarcerated as juveniles for serious crimes that had not had access to or used the opportunity to empower themselves. Young people constitutes 69%



offenders for rehabilitation in safe custody and with the respect of their human rights. The programme itself will keep the mothers with their babies for a period up to when the child is two years, after which the child

of the total offender population and there are 13 dedicated youth facilities among the 241 operational correctional centres nationally, yet for years there has only been one full-time school doing the National

Offender Labour

Through the Offender Labour workforce, the department awards offenders an opportunity to participate in community based development projects by providing offender labour as part of their social reintegration back into the society. This

Commemorating Africa Corrections Day: 26 September

The Livingstone Declaration adopted by Corrections and Prisons Services from the African continent at the historic launch of the African Correctional Services Association (ACSA) in Zambia in 2008 enjoins all ACSA jurisdictions to hold annual events on 26 September to commemorate their collective achievements in the long march to transform and harmonise corrections in the continent.

The collective spirit and solidarity embedded in the Livingstone Declaration recognised the monumental task of effecting a paradigm shift from a punitive prisons system we inherited from the colonial past to a correction, rehabilitation and social re-integration system that is rooted in African human centred values and ubuntu. The Declaration testifies to the abiding commitment of Corrections and Prisons Services to be at the centre of initiatives

to contribute to the renewal of the continent, advance the frontiers of freedom, prosperity and improvement of the quality of life that inhabitants of this continent hold so dear. Corrections and prisons must be at the heart of the African agenda to wind back the dark forces of criminality so that space is created for social cohesion and economic development to flourish. The Africa Corrections Day should remind us that corrections and prisons are still at the periphery of the processes of continental integration and that

the need to put in place processes that would lead to mainstreaming of these functions into the African Union cannot be overemphasised. With the commemoration of the Africa Corrections Day, we reaffirm our resolve to join forces with our sister services in the continent to carry forward the task of advancing the unity and integration of our region the SADC and the continent in all functional areas of corrections and prisons. South Africa has been at the forefront of the continental

initiative to bring together Corrections and Prisons systems to address common challenges to ensuring public safety so that an environment that is conducive for the citizens of this continent, women and children to fulfil their aspirations is created. This commitment stems from our belief in that we share a common history, heritage and destiny with our patriots in the continent. This is best demonstrated by the challenges of overcrowding and incidence of communicable diseases in our facilities, which are so pervasive

throughout the continent. The launch of ACSA in Zambia in 2008 and the call for the establishment of the Southern African Corrections and Prisons Forum at the Southern African Consultative Conference on Corrections and Prisons held in Sandton in 2011, attest to the collective spirit to join hands to accelerate harmonisation and find solutions to common challenges confronting us. The founding of these organisations is an achievement we can be proud of, which marks a watershed in the history of corrections and prisons in this continent. It provides an opportunity to place at the disposal of the continent best practices and time tested African solutions to our problems. South Africa has an instrumental role to play in charting the future of ACSA. South Africa was unanimously elected at the ACSA Biennial Conference, held in Accra, Ghana in 2010 to serve a second term as the Secretary of ACSA.



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PAROLE

What is parole?

Parole is an internationally accepted mechanism that provides for the conditional release of offenders from correctional centres into society before they have served their entire sentence of imprisonment.

In South Africa it is referred to as a placement option from a correctional centre into the system of community corrections. This means that the offender is released from the correctional centre prior to the expiry of his or her sentence to serve the remainder thereof within the community. Parole is always subject to specific conditions that an offender must comply with. Parole allows the offender to return to normal community life albeit under controlled conditions and under the supervision of correctional officials until their sentence expires.

Although every offender has to serve the full sentence which was imposed by a court, the Department of Correctional Services realizes that, in the interests of the successful reintegration of the offender into his/her community, it is normally not appropriate for offenders to serve their entire sentence in a correctional centre. Foreign nationals may also be deported back to their country of origin before expiry of their sentences.

When admitted to a correctional centre, each offender

is assessed to determine what kind of interventions are required for them to be able to change their offending behaviour and to prepare them for a better and responsible life after their release from a correctional

centre. These interventions are included in a sentence plan and record is kept of progress with the sentence plan and the offender's cooperation with the process of rehabilitation. Placement on parole is not a right or an automatic action. A comprehensive report is prepared by a Case Management Committee for consideration by

the circumstances within which it was committed

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community whether restorative justice has taken place. When a Board considers placing an offender on parole, the potential risks related to such a placement are thoroughly considered and measures are put in place to ensure that the necessary control and supervision will be exercised over the offender until his/her sentence has expired. Regardless of the period that an offender has served in a correctional centre, he/she would be found unsuitable for parole

placement if he/she: poses a threat or danger to the community, has repeatedly shown that he/she does not wish to, or cannot, comply with the conditions of conditional release, does not comply with the expectations of the sentence plan, cannot adapt to life in a correctional centre or displays unacceptable behaviour.

In such cases it will be advisable that the offender serves a greater part of the sentence in a correctional centre, if not the entire sentence. Offenders who have served their entire sentence inside a correctional centre are released unconditionally when their sentence expires.

What is the difference between parole and correctional supervision? Parole placement is the conditional placement of an offender from a correctional centre into a community to allow him or her to complete their sentences at home. It enables the offender to reintegrate into society under controlled conditions. Offenders who are on parole are monitored and supervised by Community Corrections offi-

cial and they are employed by the Department of Correctional Services. Release on parole is conditional and strict adherence to parole conditions is expected. Non-compliance with parole conditions may lead to the cancellation of parole and the person will be returned to a correctional centre. Placement under correctional supervision is a community-based sentencing option that is available to courts. A sentence under correctional supervision entails that the offender

is allowed to serve part or the whole sentence in the community. Such a sentence is subject to certain conditions which can include compulsory community service, compulsory programme attendance and house arrest. The offenders are monitored and supervised by probation officers employed by the Department of Correctional Services. The National Commissioner of Correctional Services, in certain instances, may convert a sentence of imprisonment into one of correctional supervision.

Complainant involvement in Parole Board hearings The Department of Correctional Services has developed procedures to facilitate and promote the involvement of complainants (or victims of crime) in Parole Board hearings. This is in line with the Victim Empowerment Strategy of Government. A complainant/victim may attend a Parole Board meeting in which the offender concerned is considered for placement on parole or for placement under correctional supervision. A complainant/victim or his/her relative may also request a Parole Board to consider a written or recorded representation.

