



**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL
SERVICES, NKOSI SP HOLOMISA (AH! DILIZINTABA) MP,
IN THE SOUTHERN CAPE MANAGEMENT AREA**

28 MAY 2021

Programme Director,
Acting Chief Operations Commissioner, Mr Phikolomzi Mbambo,
Senior Managers of the Department of Correctional Services,
Our partners,
Esteemed Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Warm greetings to everyone who is attending this event today. It has been a fruitful two days of practical work, where we do not just talk about what we intend doing, but bringing to life a paradigm shift towards a self-sustainable correctional system.

Programme Director, year 2020 and the current year (2021) have been rough and forced us to look at the universe with a different eye. The advent of the Covid-19 epidemic has affected every single soul on earth. You do not need to contract the virus in order to feel its coarseness. We have lost family members, friends, colleagues and leaders in society.

This is a virus that has humbled and forced us to appreciate the value of life. It is a virus that has forced us to care for one another irrespective of our differences. And, most

importantly, Covid-19 has pushed us to do things differently. Our journey as a nation in fighting poverty, unemployment, crime and inequality requires a paradigm shift.

Frustrating as it may be that the rate of crime in South Africa continues to be fuelled by a plethora of social ills, such as poverty, unemployment and inadequate positive socialisation opportunities, now is not the time to give up. The roots of the crime problem must be addressed by supporting social programmes that improve the quality of life and prevent the development of criminal behaviour in society. We have to mend the souls that get broken because of crime. Mending the soul is thus challenging us not only to give care and support to those serving time behind bars, but it is also about extending a hand to those left broken by acts of criminality.

Ours is a delicate process of giving a new meaning of life to offenders, whilst building a sense of community and social cohesion by means of rolling out programmes aimed at uplifting people's lives and, in doing so, instilling a sense of safety, belonging and Ubuntu in our communities.

As part of law enforcement, the goal is to reduce crime. Correctional facilities play a critical role in achieving this goal. By providing inmates with structure, and teaching them discipline and skills during their incarceration, we are then able increase the probability that they will become productive members of society and reduce the likelihood of re-offending. Hence our stance as a country is that each inmate must lead a positive life by imbibing the values of truth and non-violence, and thus be able to make a meaningful contribution to society.

By accepting that a number of our inmates need reform is not a way of disparaging offenders. Instead, we are being frank in acknowledging that our task is more than just helping them overcome a few mistakes. Many offenders do not just lack self-restraint, they lack job skills. They lack education. They lack discipline. And, sadly, they lack family structures. While they are in our care, we have a latitude to help them reform by simultaneously imposing discipline and offering opportunities for improvement.

In other words, key to rehabilitation is empowering offenders to function effectively upon their release, but equally important, is to ensure that offenders are involved in productive activity while they serve their sentences.

It is, therefore, our resolve that the productive activity of inmates must legitimately advance the department's self-sufficiency and sustainability programmes. This is not something new as it has been happening over the years, but the paradigm shift is that it is now more focussed, more driven and must be measured.

The net value of the department's contribution to infrastructure development and improvement needs to be properly contextualised, and publicly shared, to demonstrate the potential value that Correctional Services can make to the country's development agenda and the realisation of the developmental targets set out in the National Development Plan. Our citizens must see the positive role of corrections in uplifting communities, by seeing offenders in action.

The official opening of the Oudtshoorn "Kuyasa" Combined Learning Centre and the Southern Cape Pharmacy in the George Correctional Centre, as projects constructed by offenders, are a living proof that self-sufficiency and sustainability are possible. These two projects saved the State more than a million rand in costs. We have to make things happen with what we have and we can do it.

Amilcar Cabral, a leader in the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule in Africa, said the following in 1969:

"We must always remember that people do not fight for ideals or for the things on other people's minds. People fight for practical things: for peace, for living better in peace, and for their children's future. Liberty, fraternity, and equality continue to be empty words for people if they do not mean a real improvement in the conditions of their lives."

Cabral has captured the main message I want to convey today. As Correctional Services, we have a number of correctional facilities which have adopted community projects, which

offer support through different programmes in terms of poverty alleviation, infrastructure development and maintenance work. This will mean refurbishment or building of new houses, starting vegetable gardens and many other projects. These are practical initiatives rendering real changes that we make to the daily conditions in which people live and such is essential to their dignity.

As Cabral understood, we did not struggle for ideals, we struggled so that people could live better and safer lives on a daily basis. As a Department, we have to tap more into offender labour in addressing some of the developmental challenges within communities. As we handed over shoes and blankets, whilst constructing a pharmacy and a school, such a contribution must stand as a beacon of hope from many fronts.

Working the land is one niche market that is yet to be fully realised in this country. We are shifting focus to foster strategic partnerships and redesigning our programmes to increase self-sufficiency through increased utilisation of the 40,000 hectares of correctional centre farm land.

I more than pleased with a tractor that has been procured in this Management Area for this particular purpose. We need to increase the agricultural productivity currently taking place on 21 correctional centre farms, and 96 smaller vegetable production sites. We foresee a bright future in the area of agriculture and more pressing is the contribution into the country's food basket.

Programme Director, it must be acknowledged that skills and competencies acquired by inmates behind bars are not only meant to benefit inmates, but must be utilized in the upliftment of communities. As we prepare offenders for social reintegration through empowering them with the necessary skills, we must make it a point that they also become economically active.

Looking at the amount of work accomplished just here in the Southern Cape, my memory flashed back to other initiatives in the country, something came to my mind. I do not think that we recognise the challenging task at hand facing correctional officials. It must be said in a public platform that we value your contribution.

The work of correctional officials is challenging, but yet very important. Though going unseen by the wider community, it does not mean it is unrecognised. Today's programme is one such occasion where we are able to demonstrate our prowess in making a real difference in the lives of not only inmates but the community at large.

The Southern Cape Pharmacy will contribute towards improving health care systems in correctional services and it will have an impact on the quality of health for offenders. The inmate population in the Southern Cape is around 3 200. Statistical data show a rise in the prevalence of chronic diseases in the management area, a clear indication of a need for a pharmacy to render and support qualitative pharmaceutical services to correctional centers.

Prior to the establishment of the Southern Cape Pharmacy, centers under the management area were dependent on the Brandvlei Centre Pharmacy in the Cape Winelands. This was at great cost and risk. We are happy that no longer will officials be exposed to such risks, while the department will also be able to realise savings in this regard.

As correctional services, we are obliged to create humane conditions of imprisonment which include access to quality healthcare by inmates, in line with the Nelson Mandela Rules. This pharmacy will make this obligation practical.

In conclusion, programme director, partnerships in the advancement of our society are important. It is in this context that I urge other stakeholders to play their part. Let us give hope to our communities by addressing the plight of the vulnerable, the unemployed and society at large. I am confident that, working together, we can conquer the challenges confronting our people, we can improve the lives of all South Africans, and we can build better communities.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who were involved from the conceptualisation of these initiatives and to see them being completed. Without your dedication, these projects would not have been achieved so successfully.

I thank you.