

NEWSLETTER

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The Beginnings of 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng'

In a small coffee shop meeting that took place on 22 July 2022, Dr Francois Louw and Prof Kevin Sibanyoni sparked a conversation that would eventually lead to the creation of a ground-breaking engaged scholarship project. Over cups of coffee, these visionaries shared their ideas and laid the foundation for 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng,' a project aimed at transforming the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals.



Prof Sibanyoni and Dr Louw at their coffee meeting

Since that inspirational meeting, more like-minded colleagues from the College of Law have eagerly joined the team, each sharing the same vision for the project's impact.

'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng,' which translates to 'corrections in the community,' is an engaged scholarship project that brings together an interdisciplinary group of researchers, community corrections practitioners, offenders (parolees and probationers), and community members. The team includes esteemed individuals such as Prof Thabiso Matshaba, Ms. Nomalanga Mnisi, Mr. Charles Kgoale, Prof Willem Luyt, Prof Nicolien du Preez, Mr. Joseph Hlatshwayo, Ms. Unathi Poyo, Dr Aaron Labane, and Ms. Neo Masemene. Together, they focus on vital issues surrounding the social reintegration of offenders, the community corrections environment, and recidivism.

To encapsulate their vision and values, the 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng' team has created a distinct identity for their project. A bird soaring free from a broken chain serves as a powerful symbol of a person released from incarceration, reintegrating into society. The outstretched hand represents the unwavering support and

acceptance from the community, while the sun in the background symbolizes renewal and hope for a brighter future.



The “look and feel” of 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng'

This powerful imagery echoes their vision statement: "We aspire to change the public's perception of offenders' capacity to successfully reintegrate into communities as productive and law-abiding citizens." With such a clear vision, it is evident that the team is committed to transforming lives and dismantling societal stigmas.

At the heart of the project lies a profound mission - to establish strong relationships with communities and eliminate the stigmatization of offenders through

restorative community service, while also focusing on enhancing offender employability and skills development. It is through these practical measures and community involvement that the 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng' project seeks to bring about lasting change.

Exciting news updates on the project's progress are expected in the future, as announced by project leaders Dr Louw and Prof Sibanyoni. It is through their unwavering dedication and the collective efforts of the entire team that the 'Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng' project is set to make a profound impact on the lives of formerly incarcerated individuals and the communities they call home.

Together, let us support and embrace the transformation of lives, as we recognize the potential for change and the power of second chances.

Meet the Boss of Community Corrections

We are thrilled to introduce a remarkable individual, **Mr Phiko Frank Mbambo**, the Chief Deputy Commissioner (CDC) of Community Corrections at the Department of Correctional Services (DCS). With over 24 years of experience in the Criminal Justice field, Mr. Mbambo is a dedicated leader focused on transforming the Community Corrections system in South Africa.



Childhood Dreams and Career Path

Born and raised in East London, Mr. Mbambo hails from a large family in the town of Debe-Nek in the Eastern Cape. Growing up, he had a passion for the law and initially pursued a career in legal studies. However, during his time at the University of Fort Hare, he discovered his love for Criminology, specifically community policing and community corrections. This newfound interest led him to shift his focus and complete a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Criminology and History in 1991. He continued his studies in the field, earning a postgraduate Higher Diploma in Education and an Honours Degree in Criminology in 1993. He also holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Executive Leadership and a Certificate in Security Management. Currently, Mr. Mbambo is pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Criminology with the University of Fort Hare.

Mr. Mbambo's career journey began in 1992 when he worked as a teacher at Mpumzi High School in the Eastern Cape. He later served as a lecturer in the Department of Criminology at the University of Fort Hare from January 1994 to March 1995.

Over the years, Mr. Mbambo held various positions in different government departments related to safety and security at both the national and provincial levels.

His experience includes working in the South African Police Services Crime Intelligence Unit at the level of a Major (April 1995 – September 1996), Deputy Director: Crime Prevention at the National Civilian Secretariat for Police (October 1996 – May 1999), Director: Community Police Relations in the Provincial Government of Gauteng (Department of Community Safety) (June 1999 – November 2005). In addition, he served as a Chief Director: Security Risk Management in the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (Department of Community Safety) from December 2005 to June 2009. These experiences equipped him with a comprehensive understanding of the criminal justice system and the intricacies of community corrections.

Leadership Roles in DCS

Since joining the DCS in 2009, Mr. Mbambo has held several senior management positions. He began his journey as the Deputy Commissioner for Executive Management (July 2009 – September 2010) before taking on roles such as Deputy Commissioner of Inter-Governmental Relations (October 2010 – May 2016), Deputy Regional Commissioner and Acting Regional Commissioner: Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West Region (June 2016 – April 2019), and Regional Commissioner: Eastern Cape Region (May 2019 – April 2021). In April 2021, he acted as the Chief

Operations Commissioner for DCS before assuming his current position as CDC of the Community Corrections Branch on January 1, 2022.

Between November 2013 and March 2015, Mr. Mbambo also served as the Principal Officer of the African Correctional Services Association (ACSA) in the African continent. His work involved organizing the ACSA Biennial Conference in Mozambique, the ACSA Ministerial Consultative Forum in South Africa, and the ACSA Executive Committee meetings in South Africa, Zambia, Uganda, Namibia, Tanzania, and Mozambique for 32 members States. During his term, he also established the ACSA Secretariat and Governance Structure; reviewed the ACSA Constitution; and developed the Strategic Plan and Code of Conduct for ACSA.

Defining Community Corrections Under Mr. Mbambo's Leadership

Community Corrections plays a vital role in the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society. Mandated by legislation aligned with the new strategic direction of DCS and the White Paper on Corrections (2005), the Community Corrections system focuses on the conditional placement of offenders outside correctional centres. This includes parole, day parole, medical parole, placement under correctional supervision, and Awaiting Trial Persons.

As the CDC of Community Corrections, Mr. Mbambo is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to make the Community Corrections system more impactful. This involves forging strategic partnerships with various stakeholders, such as government departments, business sectors, civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, and tertiary institutions. Noteworthy partnerships include the Memorandum of Understanding with the National House of Traditional and Koi-San Leaders, which aims to strengthen the implementation of the social reintegration programme. Additionally, collaborations with tertiary institutions such as UNISA's Department of Corrections Management, demonstrate Mr. Mbambo's commitment to leveraging research, knowledge sharing, and best practices, to make a tangible difference in the Community Corrections system. By resourcing and professionalizing the Community Corrections Branch, Mr. Mbambo aims to reposition the system and to market the social reintegration programme effectively to the communities it serves.

At the heart of the social reintegration programme lies the elevation of victims of crime within the Community Corrections system. This is achieved through increased participation in the restorative justice programme, which incorporates Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD). By offering offenders opportunities to reflect on their

actions and seek forgiveness, Mr. Mbambo believes that the rehabilitation and reintegration process can be significantly strengthened. In addition to promoting restorative justice, the social reintegration programme provides for the economic empowerment of parolees, probationers, and victims through skills development and training programmes. By equipping individuals with the necessary skills, they become better prepared to seek employment, or become entrepreneurs, fostering self-sufficiency and reducing the likelihood of re-offending, according to Mr. Mbambo.

One of the key strategies guiding Mr. Mbambo's work is the Social Reintegration Framework (SRF). The SRF is a guiding document within the DCS that aims to prepare offenders for social acceptance and effective reintegration into their communities while on parole, or under community correctional supervision. The primary objective of the SRF is to drive the implementation of the social reintegration programme of DCS and reposition

community corrections within the criminal justice system. To achieve this objective, Mr. Mbambo and his team are enhancing existing strategic partnerships and establishing new partnerships with relevant stakeholders. The goal is to mobilize stakeholders to actively participate in community corrections and contribute to the rehabilitation and social reintegration of offenders. To facilitate this process, coordinating mechanisms and structures have been established. For example, community corrections forums are currently being set up at the local level to assist in the implementation of social reintegration initiatives. These forums will serve as platforms for collaboration and engagement between the DCS and local communities.

Mr. Mbambo's dedication to the field of community corrections is commendable. With his wealth of experience, strategic mindset, and commitment to societal change, he is leading the way in transforming the Community Corrections system in South Africa.

Revive Initiatives - Building Through Giving

Revive Initiatives is a remarkable Non-Profit Organization (NPO) dedicated to rehabilitating and reintegrating parolees and ex-offenders into our communities. Founded by David Heritage, an ex-offender

himself, Revive has been making a significant impact in the East Rand community of Gauteng since its inception in 2017.

David, with his first-hand experience of the challenges faced by individuals transitioning from incarceration to society,

has been a driving force behind Revive's mission. With a postgraduate degree in Theology Specialization in Community Development and over a decade of experience working with parolees, David's passion for serving the community and helping the poor and disadvantaged is truly inspiring. His organization, Revive Initiatives, is a testament to his commitment.

At the core of Revive's efforts are two remarkable programmes: the parolee and ex-offenders programme and the food outreach programme. These two programmes have proven to be invaluable in positively transforming communities.

The parolee and ex-offenders programme, established in 2017, is designed to provide support and guidance to individuals in their journey of rehabilitation and reintegration. Revive utilizes a support group model, where parolees meet monthly to participate in skills development, mentorship programmes, and to explore self-employment opportunities. These support groups serve as safe spaces where participants can openly discuss their reintegration challenges, seek advice from one another, and receive the encouragement they need to succeed. Additionally, Revive offers small business development courses and skills training, empowering its members to become self-sufficient and contributing members of

society. David envisions expanding these services by establishing community skills development centres in partnership with organizations operating in the corporate social investment space.



David with a group of parolees
(Source: <https://www.revivenpo.com/>)

The food outreach programme was initiated in 2020 in response to the escalating unemployment rate and the subsequent increase in displaced families and homelessness. Every week, Revive collects and distributes over 500 kilograms of quality food to those in need. By collaborating with Community Corrections offices and leveraging technology platforms such as WhatsApp and other social media formats, Revive ensures that individuals are not only provided with nourishing meals but also receive ongoing support and care. "Although we currently provide over 2000 meals a week to various individuals and struggling families, the need for assistance remains," David acknowledges. Since January 2023, Revive has distributed a staggering 50,000 meals, and their commitment to helping the

community shows no signs of waning. Monthly food parcels are handed over to Community Corrections offices, benefiting parolees under their care.

Revive Initiatives encourages individuals and organizations to join hands in supporting their noble cause. Those interested in offering assistance or learning more about their initiatives can reach out to David at Davidheritage7@gmail.com or visit their website at <https://www.revivenpo.com/>.

Revive Initiatives is an exemplary organization that truly embodies the spirit of giving and compassion. By supporting parolees and ex-offenders in their journey to reintegrate into society, Revive is not only transforming individual lives but also making our communities stronger and more inclusive. Let us join hands and continue to build a better future through giving.

