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| **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**  **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY** |



**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 2547**

**Prof C T Msimang (IFP) to ask the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services:**

Whether, in light of the substantive number of repeat offenders after they have completed their sentences or released on parole, he has found that the country’s system of rehabilitation of offenders is contributing positively in the war against crime; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details? **NW2919E**

**REPLY:**

Yes, the country’s system of rehabilitation of offenders is contributing positively in the war against crime. The Department’s philosophy of corrections is based on the ideals contained in the South African Constitution where it is stated that all South Africans should contribute to maintaining and protecting a just, peaceful and safe society in our country. There are thus inherent in the correctional system inter alia two obligations that the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) strives to adhere to, viz. the protection of society and creating opportunities for the correcting of offending behaviour and development and care of offenders.

Rehabilitation consists of various programmes, interventions and services to inmates in correctional centres as well as community corrections. These include amongst others, correctional programmes, social work services, psychological services, skills development and training, education, health care services, etc. Services to sentenced offenders are based on a comprehensive assessment as contained in their individual Correctional Sentence Plans (CSPs).

Rehabilitation services are geared to address individual needs as well as the offending behaviour and other factors such as substance abuse that might have contributed to committing of a crime. While the department is confident that this holistic approach contributes to the war against crime, we cannot wage this war alone. The department in its efforts to address offending behaviour and prevent re-offending needs the continued partnership with other government departments as well as civil society. While the offenders serve their sentence the department uses all its available resources to bring about a changed mind-set, while also developing skills and improving the educational levels, in an effort to release people with a greater sense of responsibility and better prospects to be law abiding. However, it is imperative that immediate families and society at large keep in contact with offenders and support them while being incarcerated, but more importantly upon their release from DCS facilities. This continued support would go a long way in addressing the tendency to fall back into crime due to lack of support, unemployment and substance abuse. Some of our programmes even consist of relapse prevention and coping plans to assist sentenced offenders coping with the challenges they are faced with upon release.

In addition and to assist in objectively establishing the impact of our rehabilitation efforts, we have partnered with University of South Africa (UNISA) who is currently busy with research to determine the impact of some of our rehabilitation programmes in Gauteng. This is an initial pilot phase. The results of this pilot will determine future impact research.

The department has developed clear targets for all our services, programmes and interventions to ensure participation of offenders both in our centres and within the community corrections system.

Through sport, recreation, arts, culture and library programmes and services, the department is assisting in the preparation of offenders for release, employment and self‐sufficiency. These programmes are structured and coordinated to be geared towards building and supporting self‐sufficiency and necessary for reducing the likelihood of offenders becoming involved in criminal activities.

The provisioning of Skills Development Programmes is aimed at reducing recidivism by ensuring that offenders are provided with Skills programmes that will assist them not only in the job market but also to create employment opportunities for themselves. The Department of Correctional Services is also partnering with the external service providers and government departments e.g. Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), in ensuring that the programmes offered are accredited by the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA’s). Between October 2014 and March 2015, 1732 offenders were trained on different accredited trade related programmes e.g. furniture making, electrical, upholstery, building and plastering etc. These programmes were funded from by DHET through the National Skills Fund (NSF).

The work opportunities that are provided to offenders as part of offender rehabilitation in the Departmental Production Workshops and Agriculture/farms do contribute positively in the war against crime. The Departmental Production Workshops and Agriculture/

farms, provide the following to rehabilitate offenders and to contribute positively in the war against crime:

* Opportunity for skills utilization and skills development, as well as work opportunities in the Departmental Production Workshops and Agriculture/farms.

The Department has 21 farms (mix farming-both animal and plant production) and 96 small sites (for vegetable and fruit production), as well as 19 textile workshops, 10 wood- and 10 steel workshops, furthermore there are 6 bakeries nationally, and one (1) shoe factory.

The offenders in the Departmental Production Workshops and Agriculture/farms are exposed to various technical fields, viz.:

* **Production Workshops:** wood machining, cabinet making, wood polishing, upholstery, sheet metal working, welding, fitting and turning, spray painting, shoe manufacturing, clothing manufacturing and textile machine mechanics as well as baking (bread baking).
* **Agriculture/farming:** vegetable, fruits, piggery, beef, dairy, agronomy, broiler/chicken production, layers/egg production, sheep and goats farming, abattoir operation/butcher, agro-processing, tractor as well as equipment operation.

The technical skills that are imparted to offenders in the Departmental Production Workshops and Agriculture/farms empower the offenders with technical knowledge, through which, upon their release, offenders can be employable and or create job opportunities, furthermore they can be self-sustained.

As part of offender rehabilitation, during 2014/2015 financial year, on average 1559 of offenders have worked in Production Workshops per day, meanwhile in Agriculture 3275 of offenders have worked per day, thus acquiring various technical skills in Production Workshops and Agriculture.

Education and participation in educational programmes is central in the department’s approach to provide opportunities for personal development of offenders as part of the rehabilitation process.

The Department is currently focused on the strengthening of the registered schools to ensure compliance to Department of Basic Education (DBE) policies and standards and to address the pass rate of the grade 12 learners. The Department reached the desired outcome of the establishment of 14 full time schools by 2014. The expansion and increase of the number of full time schools will be considered after all the currently registered schools have complied with the DBE Policies and Regulations. A Compulsory Education Task Team was established to ensure that all offenders without a qualification equal to Grade 9 or Adult Education and Training (AET) Level 4 are enrolled in the education programme. In 2015 participation of offenders in all the available education programmes stands at 16 444.

Acknowledging the efforts by the DCS in the rehabilitation of offenders, one should also acknowledge that no guarantee can be given that an ex-offender will not reoffend, due to various external factors that are beyond the control of DCS, e.g. lack of support from family and community, poverty, unemployment, etc.

The South African Department of Correctional Services has taken a deliberate and conscious decision to put rehabilitation at the center of all its activities in order to ensure that ex-offenders return to society as law-abiding and self-supporting individuals. In this process the Department is aware of the fact that corrections is a societal responsibility, therefore the Department is working very closely with civil society organizations and other government departments in its rehabilitation efforts.

Achievements

* There is a notable increase in parolee and probationer compliance levels in South Africa. Of the 71, 623 Daily average community corrections caseload, 51 634 are parolees and 18 545 probationers, whose compliance levels are at 98% and 95% respectively. This was done through the establishment of community corrections satellite offices as well as service points managed in consultation with stakeholders. These interventions help build credibility and public trust in the system increasing more non-custodial sentencing by the judiciary.
* The introduction of the innovative Electronic Monitoring System which was launched in July 2014 marked another milestone in the modernisation of correctional services. Since its rollout, cumulatively 1009 people were tagged and currently 604 persons are monitored by this system. Electronic Monitoring System has enabled the department to effectively track offenders on 24-7-365 basis. During the 2015/16 financial year at least 1000 people can be tagged at any given time.
* Major strides were made in advancing victim participation in the parole system in line with Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 and Correctional Services Act, 1998, which provide a framework for consultation of victims of crime in parole considerations. The department is committed to ensuring effective social reintegration with more involvement and participation by victims, families and communities.
* Significant progress was made in championing the implementation of restorative justice model as an integral part of broadening access to justice and enhancing the criminal justice range. In order to improve victim and community participation at various stages of corrections. The Department introduced the victim offender mediation and dialogue, thus far 1541 victims and 3738 offenders have participated in these restorative justice initiatives in the last financial year alone.
* DCS has made concerted efforts to explore a possibility of reducing the period of criminal record for ex-offenders particularly for minor and non-violent cases as part of enhancing rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into their respective communities as productive and law-abiding citizens.

* DCS has made courageous efforts to introduce a concept of Halfway House in 2012 in order to enhance social reintegration of offenders and to reunite offenders with their families especially those who did not have support systems at their time of release from the correctional centre. There are seven (7) halfway houses which have established through partnerships. These include the following :

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| REGION | HALFWAY HOUSE | NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION |
| Gauteng | Naturena | House of Glory |
| Eastern Cape | Vezokuhle | Vezokuhle Youth Development Project |
| LMN | Lehae la Batho | New Life After Prison |
| Klerksdorp | Dream Team Foundation |
| XILEMBENI | Nomasojabula |
| Western Cape | Beauty for Ashes | Beauty for Ashes |
| Realistic | Realistic |

* Halfway houses have contributed positively towards minimizing chances of re-offending and reduction on overcrowding in correctional centres. The total numbers of eighty four (84) residents were successfully reintegrated. The majority of offenders who went through halfway houses were assisted to find permanent employment and others have started their own businesses through the assistance from Non-Governmental Organisations.
* Greater strides were made with regard to building partnerships with academic institutions to use learners from these institutions to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to conduct profiles of community of origin of offenders. The provision of community profiles will effectively assist the Department to identify needs and risks of offenders who are due to return those particular communities and to guide services and interventions targeting offender behaviour. The profiles of community of origin of offenders are the key indicators of rehabilitation and successful reintegration of offenders
* DCS has partnered with state agencies and departments, Non-Profit Organisations, academic institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations, and other relevant external stakeholders to broaden the scope and spread of interventions to correct offending behaviour.
* These partnerships have led to 76 parolees being employed permanently by the Working-on-Fire programme. To improve offender reintegration, 212 parolees and probationers were provided with start-up tools to enable them to open their own businesses and thereby contributing to employment creation. These partnerships have added employment opportunities for parolees in the current financial year. There are also numerous cases of successful rehabilitation/reintegration including businesses operated by ex-offenders who have been provided with start-up tools, who have in turn employed other offenders/community members.
* The employability of ex-offenders is the key indicator of successful reintegration. In numerous interactions former offenders who have remained law-abiding citizen for years but they are finding it extremely difficult to maintain or retain their employment after employers had discovered that they have criminal record. A criminal record is a barrier to a successful reintegration of offenders because the majority of employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders, thereby relapsing into life of crime as means of survival. The Department of Correctional Services is in the process of providing inputs on the expungement of a criminal record to the South African Law Reform Commission.