

# **POLICE AND PRISONS CIVIL RIGHTS UNION**



## **PRESENTATION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

---

**TOPIC:** 2011/12 ANNUAL REPORTS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL  
SERVICES AND THE JUDICIAL INSPECTORATE FOR CORRECTIONAL  
SERVICES

**Prepared by the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union**

**1 Marie Road, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2000**

**Tel: 011 242 4600; Fax: 086 625 3054; Email: [gs@popcru.org.za](mailto:gs@popcru.org.za)**

**OCTOBER 2012**

Honourable Chairperson, Honourable Members of the Portfolio Committee, Leadership of the Department of Correctional Services, Leaders of Organized Labour, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is always an honour for POPCRU to be part of this meeting to share valuable inputs and exchange ideas on the 2011/12 DCS and JICS Annual Reports. We have been looking forward to this kind of engagements with a full believe that they will forge a new relationship to the betterment of the Department of Correctional Services.

The Department of Correctional Services is a critical component of the Justice Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) cluster. It is also an integral part of our social services cluster, given that it is also about people and the society. It is about victims, correctional officers, families, communities and offenders. It is therefore of critical value that as we debate this annual report, we will be reminded of this vast mandate and the impact it has on our security as well as the value of our communities.

Chairperson, in 2009 the government committed itself to focus on the need to accelerate and enhance the transformation of the Department of Correctional Services into an effective and integral component of the Criminal Justice System of our country. This course for the transformation and integration of the department was informed by the assertion that the system of corrections in our country should not only be at the receiving end of the fight against crime, but should be a value chain system in the task of ensuring that our people are in line with objectives of the JCPS cluster. Without any waste of time, Honourable Chairperson, allow me to input on the debates as follows:

### **PROGRAMME 1: Administration**

Chairperson we have noted that the effectiveness of anti-corruption and fraud prevention are under continuous assessment and hoping that the department will develop more effective mechanisms to prevent maladministration and corruption. We furthermore remind the department that quality service delivery is largely dependent on having the right people in the right places with competencies and skills that correspond with their scope of operation.

Maladministration, Corruption and fraud are still noted as serious challenges within the department, as proven by the reported cases, both pending and completed. The

fact that governance in the department has been affected by several suspensions of officials is a very disturbing factor, and our submission is that the department should uphold the transparency principle that is echoed in policies that continue to drive our government. This we must do in addition to other strategic mechanisms like whistle-blowing as well as other judiciary processes. We have learnt that combating corruption remains a major challenge within the department, therefore, a need for a more systematic and partnership based approach should be an urgent priority in dealing with this matter.

Honourable Chairperson, the report clearly indicates that there is a proposed structure which is clearly aligned to the functions of the DCS and the White Paper on Corrections. POPCRU hopes that this structure will indeed serve a good purpose to the department as compared to the current top-heavy one. The increase of the staff establishment at the centre level must be a key feature of the Correctional Services' medium term planning with the emphasis on recruiting quality above quantity and ensuring the effective, disciplined skills development of recruits, in line with the DCS' responsibilities and priorities. Increases to the staff establishment will allow for the enhanced implementation of the department's mandate. A flatter organizational structure is therefore required for better service delivery to the South African citizens, rather than the many layers of command and control currently in existence. Restructuring the service is necessary as a way forward to better rehabilitation and integration of offenders. The revised structure should incorporate the advantages of decentralization of work and authority, along with specialized skills that will be available at centre level, not what has happened in the past years which was a waste of tax payers' funds under the pretext of restructuring.

## **PROGRAMME 2: Security**

POPCRU noted the decline on statistics for assaults with the understanding that a great percentage (83%) is inmates on inmates. The report on assaults is of great concern to us due to the fact that, if the department does not put more efforts in ensuring a zero tolerance on assaults, this might impact negatively towards our members as inmates might assault them due to their frustrations and overcrowding which is still a huge challenge for the department. POPCRU would as a result urge

the department to treat this matter with sensitivity as we believe that working environment plays a pivotal role in the effective service delivery of any employee. If our members continue to work under unsecured conditions, they might be demoralised and this might lead to poor service delivery by the department.

On the other hand, we are content with the stats on unnatural deaths as reported under the current and previous financial years; the department indeed did a sterling work in ensuring correctional centres are not turned into mortuaries. We furthermore submit that the department should accelerate the acquisition of its integrated security technology to curb the otherwise obvious high figures of escapes as the provision of safe and secure correctional facilities is a fundamental responsibility of the Department of Correctional Services.

POPCRU applauds DCS on the implementation of the DCS Gang Management Unit which will hopefully stabilise the rate of assaults, unnatural deaths and gangsterism, we urge the department not to rest in endeavour to ensure that the Correctional Services environment is safe and secured at all times.

### **PROGRAMME 3: Corrections**

POPCRU welcomes the endorsement of two new correctional programmes provided to address theft and fraud related offenses and further encourages the department to improve on the percentage of eligible offenders with work opportunities as this will play a crucial role in curbing recidivism. In simple term, the department should fill in all vacant funded positions that will play a crucial role in developing inmates instead of reporting that targets were not met due to the shortage of staff at the centres.

### **PROGRAMME 4: Care**

It is an obvious fact that this is a critical programme that put both inmates and officers' health at risk due to communicable diseases that might spread across the board if not well managed. It is therefore of utmost importance that the department

maintains and where possible upgrade the highest level of medical care and treatment.

We are further of view that the department should be more sensitive with regard to inmates who have been diagnosed with mentally illnesses as they might pose a serious danger to the officers and fellow inmates, and over and above, the department should explore other alternatives for this means as they obviously cannot be properly rehabilitated with their state of mind.

On this programme, we would like to urge the department to consider the submission we presented during the 2010/11 annual report that recommended the department to attract and retain scarce skills (e.g. medical doctors, psychologists, etc.) that are required to effectively assist in the delivery of adequate care programmes within the facilities.

#### **PROGRAMME 5: Development**

We find it very disturbing that the overall participation of offenders in various skills development programmes could not be reached due to shortage of technical educators, artisans and other professionals for the provision of the skills development programmes, POPCRU made several presentations on filling of scarce skills positions within the department, therefore reports of this nature indicates that inputs raised in this sittings are not taken into consideration.

The report under review states that the Department succeeded in exceeding the target of filling 1476 vacancies set as target for 2011/12 financial year, but there still remain a challenge at centre level in terms of service delivery. Honourable Chairperson, it should be borne in mind that the effectiveness of the organisational structure should not be drawn directly to the numbers employed but rather the calibre of such. It is therefore viewed as the wasteful expenditure if indeed resources would be channelled to feed a certain section of department whereas the other section (grassroots) suffers to effectively deliver.

Chairperson, regardless of the input we presented last year on the stats on staff development, this report still does not reflect any progress made on such and this

time around we would like the department to provide us with an explanation towards this concern. Does this mean the department does not develop its employees? We would like to see the department providing skills development to the officials in order for the department to render effective service delivery; we are therefore requesting a report in this manner. POPCRU is of view that employees are the engines in achieving great objectives of this department, it is therefore essential that they must be regarded and treated as such, if the department want to succeed, it should develop the skills and competencies of the employees. This is also informed by the fact that the department is going through alterations and it is unimaginable how officials can deliver on the mandate if there is no training that cuts across that is being provided.

The challenges experienced by the department have to be met and addressed with the limited financial muscles at our disposal and that requires all of us to be meticulous in our efforts of promoting the spirit of the white paper.

### **PROGRAMME 6: Social Reintegration**

Chairperson, research has proven that the period after release is extremely important in reducing the chances of the proverbial revolving door of re-offending with particular emphasis on parole and correctional supervision, yet the social reintegration programme receives about 5% of the total departmental budget.

It is our view as POPCRU that the strategic plan is silent in as far as addressing the needs of released prisoners through access to services and continuing education. POPCRU views it as important that the department in as far as there is in-prison services; the department should extend these to include post release.

POPCRU believes that there is a great impact of prison reintegration into communities and unless more funds are allocated and the concept of social reintegration is hypothesized we risk the real possibility of the revolving door. This view chairperson, is informed by the fact that the White Paper on Corrections is expressive about the focal role of the family, community, and the society at large on the role of rehabilitation and social reintegration of the offender. We are pleased to

hear that submissions of community members on parole-hearings are showing a marked increase (253 in 2010/2011 to 684 in 2011/2012), though there is still a question of implementation on various inputs presented to this Committee. We however encourage the department to work closely with more Non-Governmental organizations that have a better link with communities that the parolees are going to be released into. This view is heightened by the increasing evidence that certain communities contribute largely to the prison population and as a result community life becomes destabilised in many ways. This of course has led to young people going through the system on a continuing basis.

### **PROGRAMME 7: Facilities**

The 2012/2013 strategic plan articulates a strategy of reducing overcrowding in our facilities through the reduction of the length of detention of remand detainees and improved management of conversion of custodial sentence, yet it is with regret to note that some particular programme is not well managed. Chairperson our contention is that the department has continuously allocated funds for the past financial years to public private partnerships without a concrete and permanent solution to our current challenges.

2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
R728,610	R771,205	R774,253

This represents a marked increase of 7% into the current year, Honourable Chairperson; this is a significant and intentional diversion of funds to feed the Public Private Partnership Prisons. Let me remind this house that the government of South Africa adopted a Policy Document known as Batho Pele Principle, which is a guiding document predominantly used to guide departments on the issues of service delivery and utilisation of public funds<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore our view that, this Policy Document is being violated by the Department of Correctional Services whereby the funds

<sup>1</sup> Eight Batho Pele Principles of Transformation

allocated to ensure proper implementation of the department's mandate are being redirected to render the department useless.

Honourable chairperson it is our considered view that the department does not comply fully with the requirements of Section 35 (2) of the constitution with respect to the conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity. The correctional services Act in Chapter (3) brings these rights into operation and compliance with these requirements should be the ultimate focus considering the funds that are at the disposal of the department should make this programme possible.

Chairperson and the house at large, POPCRU is further concerned by reports that even this year we are confronted by the reality of two centres (Ceres and Vanrhynsdorp) that are still incomplete and this is perhaps compounded by the fact that these projects were allocated to a single service provider perhaps without even the necessary capacity. Chairperson, moving forward, we request the department to thoroughly intervene and provide the much needed intervention in these projects as situations of this nature contribute further to the glut of challenges experienced by the department.

**In conclusion:**

POPCRU would like to take this opportunity and thank all the Correctional Officials who continue to work with dedication and commitment under life threatening conditions. To all POPCRU members, we continue to expect vigilance, discipline and professionalism.

We trust that the points raised here will contribute towards assisting the department to better perform its responsibilities.

**Together we can do more to ensure a safer and secured South Africa**

**I thank you**

**Delivered by: Nkosinathi Theledi**

**POPCRU General Secretary**

**10<sup>th</sup> of October 2012**