

# A Societal Responsibility

The role of civil society organisations in prisoner support, rehabilitation and reintegration



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# 1 Introduction

After a solemn public ceremony we pronounce them enemies of the people, and consign them for arbitrary periods to institutional confinement on the basis of laws written many years ago. Here they languish until time has ground out so many weary months and years. Then with the planlessness and stupidity only surpassed by that of their original incarceration they are dumped back on society, regardless of whether any change has taken place in them for the better and with every assurance that changes have taken place in them for the worse. Once more they enter the unequal tussle with society. Proscribed for employment by most concerns, they are expected to invent a new way to make a living and to survive without any further help from society (Menninger 1985).

The notion of offender reintegration in South Africa society is conceptually challenging when considered against the background of widespread exclusion, marginalisation and inequality. Critics may rightly question the effort and cost expended for the benefit of prisoners and ex-prisoners while law abiding citizens do not enjoy basic socio-economic rights. Whether motivated by a broader constitutional obligation to promote dignity and self-worth or a more pragmatic approach aimed at limiting the harm that this group of persons could inflict, prisoners and ex-prisoners are hard to ignore when the objective is to create a safer society.

There are a substantial but unconfirmed number of non-governmental organisations in South Africa working both inside and outside of prisons with prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. These organisations provide services broadly aimed at promoting offender reintegration and reducing the chances of re-offending. There is a real and growing need for offender reintegration

services given that approximately 6 000 prisoners are released every month from South Africa's prisons<sup>1</sup> and that an estimated 358 000 people circulate through the prison system annually (Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons 2005). It is in the immediate period after release that ex-prisoners face tremendous personal, economic and social challenges. The White Paper on Corrections in South Africa, released in March 2004, acknowledges the importance of offender reintegration and has consequently framed rehabilitation as the core business of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS). The White Paper also acknowledges that 'corrections is a societal responsibility' and that civil society organisations have a critical role to play.

The type of services and activities that civil society organisations engage in has not been documented on a national level. There is thus a need to describe the types of prisoner support and offender reintegration programmes rendered by civil society organisations in South Africa based on up-to-date fieldwork. Such a description could also involve an identification of good and promising practices if these are documented or evidently visible. To investigate these and related questions, the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) and the ISS conducted a survey of 21 organisations working in the offender reintegration and prisoner support field. This paper presents an analysis of the results which are based on the views of practitioners working in these organisations. The survey investigated the following themes in each organisation, which also form the basic structure of the paper:

- Overview of organisations and their programmes
- Programme theory
- Programme objectives
- Programme targeting

- Entry and exit strategies
- Delivery strategies
- Project outcomes
- Evaluation strategies
- Key lessons learnt about offender reintegration

Civil society organisations play a key role in assisting prisoners and ex-prisoners to reintegrate into society and may at present render the bulk of such services. It is especially in respect of post-release support services that non-governmental organisations play a critical role as the DCS does not have a strong focus on this aspect of reintegration work.<sup>2</sup> As noted above, the White Paper states that ‘corrections is a societal responsibility’ but how society should take up this responsibility is uncertain. This is reinforced by the survey results which indicate a great diversity in opinion among civil society organisations about the nuts and bolts of offender reintegration and prisoner support.

Extensive research has been done in Europe, North America and Australasia over the past 20 years on what works and what does not in offender reintegration (Gendreau et al 1999; Cullen & Gendreau 2000; Sherman et al 1997). Such research has not been conducted on the same scale or with the same rigour in South Africa. There is an urgent need to fill this knowledge gap. This paper represents a first step in describing what the overall trends are in civil society-rendered offender reintegration and prisoner support services. It is hoped that this will stimulate further research aimed at strengthening the knowledge and evidence base for offender reintegration in South Africa.

By way of background it is necessary to describe what has been demonstrated to be effective in other parts of the world. It should furthermore be emphasised that imprisonment per se has not been proven to reduce crime (Gendreau et al 1999). Effective interventions are developed and implemented based on the following principles:

- Risk classification should determine the nature of programmes
- Targeting criminogenic needs, such anti-social attitudes and drug dependency
- Programme integrity is maintained by adhering to the plan and using appropriately skilled staff
- Responsiveness by matching teaching styles with learning styles
- Treatment modality: interventions are skills-based, aimed at problem-solving, social interaction and include a cognitive component to address attitudes, values and beliefs supporting offending behaviour
- Programmes are community-based (Dünkel & Van Zyl Smit 2001)

For an offender reintegration programme to have an impact on crime, substantial investments are required. Effective reintegration programmes are time consuming, expensive and require skilled personnel, and even if these hurdles are overcome, the programmes may still deliver fairly moderate results. Despite these misgivings, imprisonment without any services and especially without post-release support services will continue to churn out generations of repeat offenders with little or no hope of becoming productive, law abiding citizens.



## 2 Methodology and limitations of the study

In order to identify potential respondents for the survey, two advertisements were circulated on e-mail to a large number of non-governmental organisations. A number of positive responses were received and additional organisations were identified through other networks. Once the respondents were identified, arrangements were made for a face-to-face interview with the director of the organisation and/or the programme manager concerned. Interviews were conducted in July and August 2007 using a structured interview schedule and interviews lasted between two and four hours each. Interviews were recorded in writing on a blank interview schedule. The responses were collated for each question and analysed. This paper presents the summary of this analysis.

A number of limitations need to be noted. As the advertisement for the survey was distributed by e-mail it naturally excluded organisations that do not have access to e-mail. Due to budget constraints this was deemed the most efficient and effective manner to identify potential respondents. There is; therefore, no claim that the organisations included in this survey reflect a representative sample of organisations engaging in prisoner support and offender reintegration programmes in South Africa.

The comprehensiveness of the interview schedule also placed a limitation on the study as respondents

where not always able to grant a four-hour interview and some questions were omitted in particular interviews. Care was, however, taken to ensure that a good description was obtained of the salient features of all programmes included in the survey. Despite these limitations, the information presented here provides a reliable description of the organisations that participated in the survey.

In the description below it will be noted that there are a number of programmes and/or organisations included in this survey that may not fit the conventional notion of offender reintegration as they focus on the rights of prisoners, or work with awaiting trial prisoners. Their inclusion was deliberate in order to gain a broader understanding of the field and identify possible overlap between these programmes and what can be termed the 'conventional' offender reintegration programmes. The inclusion of the Mangaung Correctional Centre also requires special mention. This is a prison operated by a private company on behalf of the Department of Correctional Services and its inclusion was motivated by the fact that private businesses remain members civil society. Privatisation is in itself an important component of the prison transformation debate although not within the scope of this paper.

## 3 Overview of the organisations

This section first provides a brief description of the organisations that participated in the survey. It then reviews the history and background, geographical spread, size and capacity, external stakeholders, and number of programme beneficiaries for all the organisations studied.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

#### Botshabelo Centre for Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (BCRE)

The Botshabelo Centre for Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (BCRE) is based in Klerksdorp and services are structured in two phases. Phase 1 focuses on prisoners to be released in six to 12 month's time and a two-week life skills programme is presented. This may also involve the use of role models in the prison-based phase of the programme. Family support groups are also started during this phase of services. Phase 2 of the service is aimed at post-release support and ex-prisoners are encouraged to use the services of the Centre. Skills training (life and vocational) and job placement services are provided at the centre.

#### Cathy Park & Associates

Cathy Park & Associates offer a 24-hour business skills course with eight phases using a workbook with questions for the participants. A key objective is to use the skills and abilities employed in the commission of crime in a positive manner to become an entrepreneur. The first half of the programme is internally focused and

describes daily action, strengths, skills and talents. The second half of the programme looks at a practical plan in prison, vision for participants, developing business skills for after release, and the implementation of a personal vision.

#### Prisons Transformation Project

The Prisons Transformation Project run by the Centre for Conflict Resolution consists of a four-month training programme of correctional officers focusing on conflict resolution and restorative justice. The programme is designed to assist correctional officials to deal with everyday prison life and conflicts that may arise. The project may also intervene in certain conflicts with the aim of resolution. The programme is a structured national programme involving managers at the DCS centres of excellence.<sup>3</sup>

#### Creative Education for Youth at Risk (CRED)

CRED, based in Cape Town, offers a post-release programme of three sessions per week for six months, a pre-release programme over 12 months, and an awaiting trial programme consisting of three two-hour sessions per week over six months. Support groups are also run weekly. The pre- and post release programmes focus on the individual for the first few sessions and thereafter participants are encouraged to build a life plan for themselves, set boundaries, exercise self discipline and demonstrate respect. In the awaiting trial programme, each workshop has a specific outcome and consists of a series of lessons on self-development. This structure

was adopted due to the constant influx and transfer of participants.

## Damascus Ministries

The organisation runs a life skills programme at the maximum security section in St Alban's Prison (Port Elizabeth). The programme has three phases (aggression, masculinity and HIV/AIDS) and each phase takes one to one and a half years to complete. One session of approximately one and a half hours is run per month and the full programme would take seven to eight years. A group consists of 120-200 participants and is evidently more suitable for long term prisoners.

A life skills programme is also run in the medium security section of the same prison and involves 12 sessions over six months. Groups consist of 40 participants, and the programme consists of components such as anger management, communication skills, and emotional abuse. Both of the above programmes use notebooks for participants to record their thoughts and insights. Prisoners in each section provide administrative assistance to the programme.

Damascus Ministries also provides a Bible study programme which has two groups of 20 participants in the maximum security section and three groups of 40 participants in the medium security section. The Bible study programme is facilitated and assisted by prisoners and volunteers under supervision. Counselling is also provided upon request to 40 prisoners in the maximum section and 15 in the medium security section.

## Drug Assessment and Rehabilitation Education (DARE)

DARE offers two types of programmes. One of these is part of the Integrated Youth Offenders Programme.<sup>4</sup> Services are offered to a group of 20 participants over a six month period involving group discussions and self reflection. The programme uses a manual and worksheets filled in by participants. The peer counselling programme runs over two to four months with two sessions per week and is aimed at training of peer counsellors in prison to assist other prisoners with substance abuse problems. The programme has three stages:

- Stage 1: General awareness and education about abuse and addiction
  - recovery group
  - maintenance group
- Stage 2: Ongoing participation in either of the two groups

- Stage 3: Follow-up sessions to evaluate programme effectiveness and to establish further needs

## Former Convicted Offenders Development Initiative (FOCODI)

The programme, run by former prisoners, is centred on life orientation, conflict resolution, and anger management. It is structured according to four phases dealing with crime, preparation for life outside prison, preparation for employment, and post-release support. It uses group therapy, role playing, collaborating learning activities, and debates between youth in schools and offenders. Individual sessions are also offered if necessary. The programme aims to target repeat offenders. A 25-day business skills programme focusing on entrepreneurship is also provided and supported by presentations and public speaking training.

The programme is run inside prison by ex-offenders who are also the co-founders of the organisation. Debates are set up between prisoners and school learners, the latter being transported to the prisons. These debates take place throughout a year. Even though all the above training is done in prison, during Phase 4, which is the last phase, former prisoners are encouraged to visit the organisation's offices at the Rehabilitation Centre in Vosloorus on a voluntary basis for further support.

## Justice for Prisoners and Detainees Trust (JPDT)

JPDT staff visit prisons in KwaZulu-Natal and provide human rights education to prisoners. The organisation has also established structures in prisons consisting of sub-section representatives who sit on the prison's section committee. These committees may meet at any time with the head of the section and once per month with the head of the prison. JPDT also facilitates communication between families and prisoners. Prisoners can contact JPDT (through reverse charge telephone calls) and the organisation will then make contact with his or her family. A more recent initiative is to offer home-based care for AIDS patients which includes training of the prisoners' family members to provide care and support. JPDT also refers clients to other service providers.

## Khulisa – Gauteng

Khulisa's rehabilitation programme targets offenders between the ages of 18-35 years with a Grade 10 level of literacy and an approved release or placement date at least

two years into the future, or those serving a sentence of five years or less. After induction an offender profile is drawn up and used in developing a sentence plan. The programme structure emphasises life skills development, emotional intelligence and instilling good working habits. The ‘my path programme’ remains the foundation upon which behavioural interventions for offenders can be built.

A pre-release programme is offered to prisoners who have participated in the rehabilitation programme. This 10 week programme focuses on restorative justice interventions and also links released prisoners with DCS community corrections for further support.

A post-release programme is offered to released prisoners who have participated in the rehabilitation and pre-release programmes. Participants are required to sign a post-release agreement and a case plan is then developed. Efforts are being made to link individuals to community structures that can render services to released offenders. Community awareness campaigns are also undertaken to create awareness about ex-prisoners, to educate the public and provide feedback on success stories. Programme participants are monitored through follow-up visits and where possible, community mentors are assigned.

## Khulisa – Western Cape

Khulisa – Western Cape started in early 2007 with a programme at the awaiting trial children’s section at Pollsmoor prison. The programme focuses on life skills development and self evaluation. The programme consists of six sessions spread over three weeks, each session lasting approximately three hours. Daily worksheets are kept and participants receive a certificate upon completion of the programme.

## Lotsha Ministries

Lotsha Ministries is a faith based organisation in Gauteng. It networks with third parties to provide services and run programmes which it facilitates and manages. Through third parties Lotsha Ministries facilitates access to accommodation, food, education and employment for ex-prisoners.

## Mangaung Correctional Centre

This privately operated prison offers two types of programmes: the specific outcomes programme, which is terminated when outcomes are achieved and the offence related programme which is outcomes based – the person is either competent or has to repeat it. The latter is a fixed

programme, individual needs orientated, and focussed on skills development.

The specific outcomes programme is therapeutic in nature and is facilitated by a social worker and psychologist. The programme targets sex offenders, violent offenders and property offenders and encourages the development of guilt, remorse and empathy. The offence related programme focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention, life skills, anger management and substance abuse prevention.

## Nicro – Bloemfontein, Kimberley and Port Elizabeth

Nicro’s ‘tough enough programme’ starts approximately six months prior to release and continues approximately six months after release. Groups of 20 participants are recruited and the following phases are involved:

- Phase 1: recruitment and assessment
- Phase 2: five-day intensive session looking at the individual causes of offending and taking responsibility
- Phase 3: defining the skills needed to live a crime free life, developing a life plan, and acquiring the skills and insights thereto
- Phase 4: post-release participants can seek assistance from any Nicro office through support groups or other services
- Phase 5: follow-up services
- Phase 6: tracking after one year

## Prison Fellowship South Africa (PFSA)

PFSA offers a faith based eight week programme where confession is discussed in small groups, consisting of offenders and victims. Social workers and a psychologist work with the team. The emphasis is placed on an understanding of Biblical views of justice, mercy, and reintegration. Reconciliation is central to the programme. PFSA offers the eight-session sycamore tree programme:

The Sycamore Tree Programme is a victim awareness programme that uses restorative justice principles. The content is covered in six sessions designed to enable prisoners to understand the impact of their crime on victims, families and the community. It also encourages prisoners to accept personal responsibility for their actions and points to the need to make amends. Surrogate victims come into prison to tell their stories. At the end of the programme, prisoners are given the opportunity to take part in symbolic acts of restitution, taking the first step towards making amends for their past behaviour.

The programme is available to all regardless of faith, gender or age and is presented by trained prison fellowship staff and volunteers (Feasey et al 2005).

The sycamore tree programme consists of eight sessions:

- Session 1: introduction (to prepare offenders and victims to participate in the programme)
- Session 2: what is crime? (to explore what the Bible says about God's view of crime)
- Session 3: responsibility (to explore what it means to take responsibility for committing an offence)
- Session 4: confession and repentance (to understand the meaning, power and importance of confession and repentance)
- Session 5: forgiveness (to understand the meaning, power and importance of forgiveness)
- Session 6: restitution (to understand restitution as a response to crime)
- Session 7: toward reconciliation (to move toward healing and restoration by sharing letters and covenants prepared by both victim and offender participants)
- Session 8: celebration and worship (to reflect on and celebrate the new awareness that group members have about crime and healing)

## President's Award

The President's Award programme is run in several prisons in South Africa and works with young people between the ages of 14 and 25 years. Prison officials are trained by President's Award staff as 'award leaders' and they interact with the participants in their prisons and sections. A year-plan is developed for each unit and officials are trained to run the programmes. Through their interaction with participants, award leaders entrench new ways of thinking and behaviour that are pro-social.

The programme consists of bronze, silver and gold stages and takes approximately one year per stage. The programme is voluntary and participants need to perform a certain number of hours in respect of four types of activities: community service, adventure activity, skills development, and sport. From bronze to gold the activities and hours become more onerous. Participants receive their bronze, silver and gold awards at well publicised ceremonies.

## Phoenix Zululand

While the programme is ultimately a restorative justice intervention, it starts with a life skills programme for

prisoners. Services are rendered in a number of northern KwaZulu-Natal prisons. Groups of eight to ten participants are engaged in one to two hour sessions over four to five weeks. Programmes are co-facilitated by a Phoenix employee (who may be an ex-prisoner) and a community volunteer. The life skills programme uses a manual as a guide. Each participant receives a workbook for the life skills course to record insights and learning. Drawings and art are used extensively to facilitate communication and self reflection. The organisation identifies prisoners for family conferencing and facilitates the preparation of participants as well as the logistical arrangements. In addition to the life skills programme and family conferencing other interventions include:

- 'Voice behind the walls': groups of prisoners record radio dramas and storytelling which are used by three local radio stations
- 'Groundswell' is an environmental learning programme and is not prison based
- Arts programme to provide a form of self expression for prisoners

## Realistic

Realistic is a four month structured daily programme focusing on life skills, group therapy, crafts and skills training providing support to parolees and probationers from Guguletu in Cape Town. Over weekends, outdoor activities such as hiking are engaged in to reflect on the past week and assess individual progress. After specific skills courses, participants receive certificates at a graduation ceremony. The programme also emphasises assistance and support to families and parents of programme participants and open communication between participants and their families. HIV/AIDS awareness and HIV/AIDS counseling skills are also covered by the programme. Participants are selected with the assistance of the Community Corrections Office of the DCS in Mitchell's Plain.

## StreetLaw – Durban

StreetLaw focuses on specific legal issues, conducts research and develops training materials. Depending on the need and level of prior knowledge, the programme involves 10-25 sessions of 45-60 minutes each, twice per week with unsentenced prisoners in selected KwaZulu-Natal prisons. Sessions are facilitated by staff of StreetLaw as well as students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal law faculty. Workshop sessions focus on the law and human rights and particular emphasis is placed on

assisting unsentenced prisoners with their cases, especially if they are representing themselves. HIV/AIDS and the law is a further focus area. The programme uses interactive teaching methodologies, training materials written in layman’s language, and multiple follow up sessions.

## HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The majority of organisations began providing the services reviewed in this study after 2000 (Table 1). There are organisations, such as Nicro<sup>5</sup>, that were established many years ago but the current offender reintegration service was established more recently. The overall impression is thus that the majority of non-governmental organisations running prisoner support and offender reintegration services began offering these services very recently. Of the organisations reviewed, roughly one third ran their existing service prior to 2000 and two thirds established the service after 2000.

The motivations for the establishing the services are also diverse and include:

- Personal inspiration
- Former DCS officials being unsatisfied with services rendered by the department
- The need to support DCS
- A need to transform existing services that were regarded as ineffective
- Ex-prisoners feeling that services need to be run by ex-prisoners
- A religious conviction

**Table 1:** Year of commencement and total number of programmes

Year programme started	No. of programmes	Total number of programmes
1985	1	1
1990	2	3
1994	1	4
1997	1	5
1998	1	6
1999	1	7
2000	3	10
2001	2	12
2002	1	13
2004	2	15
2005	2	17
2006	3	20
2007	1	21

- The sudden availability of funding for work with prisoners
- Breaking away from an existing organisation

Interestingly, none of the organisations reviewed identified the promulgation of the Correctional Services Act (111 of 1998) or the release of the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa as motivating reasons for the establishment of their services.

## GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD

A total of 21 organisations were included in the survey and their geographical location is presented in Table 2. Their legal status and additional descriptive comments are also provided. In the case of national organisations, such as Khulisa and Nicro, each office which participated in the survey is regarded as a separate entity for the purposes of the study.

## NATURE OF SERVICES

Organisations were asked to describe the nature of their services based on a pre-determined list of options, or they could add to the list (added items are indicated with an asterisk in Table 3). From the list it is evident that life skills, therapy (group and individual), skills development, family support, employment preparation and creativity focused interventions were most frequently cited by the organisations as best describing their services. It should be noted that organisations could identify more than one category and this was done in the majority of cases. With a few exceptions, it can be concluded that organisations use a number of modalities to provide support to prisoners and assist in offender reintegration.

## SIZE AND CAPACITY

The organisations reviewed were asked about the size of their permanent staff, part-time staff and volunteers engaged in prisoner support and offender reintegration services. The average number of permanent staff employed by the organisations was four. Ten organisations reported using part-time staff and the average was 10 such staff members.<sup>7</sup> Fourteen organisations reported using volunteers and on average used 77 volunteers. The averages for part-time staff and volunteers are skewed by four organisations which use large numbers of these two categories to increase their capacity.<sup>8</sup> If these organisations are excluded, the average drops to four volunteers per organisation.

The overall profile is that the organisations reviewed had limited human resources capacity and the typical

**Table 2: Geographical location of organisations**

Province	Organisation	Type	Comment
Eastern Cape	Damascus Ministries	NPO <sup>6</sup>	Only active in St Alban's Prison
	NICRO Port Elizabeth	NPO	Part of national organisation present in all nine provinces
	President's Award	Trust	The head office is in the Eastern Cape with services run nationally
Free State	NICRO Bloemfontein	NPO	Part of a national organisation present in all nine provinces
	Prison Fellowship International	Section 21 company	
	Mangaung Correctional Centre	Private company	
Gauteng	Drug Assessment and Rehabilitation Education (DARE)	NPO	
	Lotsha Ministries	Faith based organisation	
	Former Convicted Offenders Development Initiative (FOCODI)	NPO	
	Khulisa – Gauteng	Section 21 company	Part of a national organisation
	Cathy Park & Associates	Closed corporation	
KwaZulu-Natal	Street Law	Section 21 company	This is one of several Street Law offices
	Phoenix Zululand	NPO	Phoenix's services are concentrated in northern Zululand
	Justice for Prisoners and Detainees Trust (JPDT)	Trust	
	Childline KwaZulu-Natal	NPO	Part of a national organisation present in other provinces
North West	Botshabelo Centre for the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders (BCRE)	NPO	
Northern Cape	NICRO Kimberley	NPO	Part of a national organisation present in all nine provinces
Western Cape	Rebuilding & Life Skills Training Centre (REALISTIC)	NPO	Active in Gugulethu community
	Khulisa Western Cape	Section 21 company	Part of a national organisation
	Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR)	NPO	
	Creative Education for Youth at Risk (CRED)	NPO	

profile is an organisation or programme in an organisation with four permanent employees, approximately four part time staff members, and between three and 10 volunteers.

## NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES

The organisations reviewed were asked about the number of beneficiaries of their prisoner support and offender

reintegration programmes per year. The figures provided varied in accuracy – some were taken from annual reports and can thus be accepted as accurate, whereas others were educated guesses by the respondents. In order to provide a fair overview, categories were created from the data as shown in Table 4.

The majority of organisations (12 in 2005/6 and 10 in 2006/7) reached between 20 and 100 beneficiaries per year. As will be shown later, these are organisations

**Table 3: Nature of service rendered**

Category	Number of organisations
Life skills development	19
Therapy (group)	16
Education and skills development and business skills	15
Family support	14
Restorative justice	14
Preparation for employment	12
Therapy (Individual)	12
Art, drama, creativity	12
Religious/spiritual	7
Legal services	4
DCS staff capacity building *	1
Sport *	1
Rights education *	1
Advocacy and lobbying, litigation *	1
Community service, eco-therapy, sport *	1

providing more intensive and longer term services. At the other end of the spectrum are organisations that work with large volunteer networks and/or work with large groups of prisoners at a time, and are thus able to reach in excess of 1 000 people per year. Considering that an estimated 6 000 prisoners are released per month, the demand for offender reintegration and prisoner support services clearly exceeds the supply of such services from civil society organisations.

**Table 4: Number of beneficiaries per organisation per year**

Number of beneficiaries per year	Number of organisations in 2005/6	Number of organisations in 2006/7
20 - 100	12	10
101 - 500	2	3
501 - 1 000	1	2
1 000+	4	4

Apart from providing services to people, a number of organisations also manufacture products. This is done either to generate income or as part of skills training programmes, or both. These include various handcrafts, carpentry, artworks, paper maché, poetry, horticulture, and tailoring.

### EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS OF ORGANISATIONS

Due to the small size of organisations, it is necessary that they increase their capacity and facilitate delivery through external stakeholders. Respondents were thus asked what contributions external stakeholders make to their services (Table 5). As can be expected, the organisations noted the key role that the DCS plays in providing access to their clients who are still imprisoned, providing venues for programmes, and assisting with the selection of programme participants. Other government departments appear to play a less significant role. It is also noticeable that non-profit organisations as well as the private sector play a noticeable inter-agency support role to each other, as noted from the last category in Table 5.



**Table 5: List of external stakeholders**

Identified stakeholder	Type of contribution made	Frequency identified by respondents
DCS	Facilitates access to prisons and programme participants	13
	Provides venue for programme	4
	Works directly with officials	2
	Provides important information on prisoners	2
	Assists in selection of participants	3
	Provides security	1
Dept. of Labour	Offers employment opportunities for clients	2
Dept. of Justice	Assists in restorative justice interventions	1
Dept. of Education	Assists with work in schools	1
Dept. of Social Development	Provides subsidies for staff salaries	3
SAPS	Partner in crime prevention work	2
	Partner in CPF	1
SA National Parks Board	Provides venue for hiking trips	1
Dept. of Sport and Recreation	Supports programme	1
Other civil society agencies providing assistance	Khulisa, CSV, ABSA, Nicro, Bosasa, Ragoga, Churches, Phaphama (Alternative to Violence Programme), Temba HIV, Legal Aid Clinic, lawyers, University of UKZN Law Clinic, Zululand Chamber of Business Foundations, KZN Society of Friends, Child Welfare, and POPCRU	10

## 4 Programme theory

In this section programme theory is dealt with in respect of three sub-themes:

- An explanation of the basic theory underlying the programme and its origin
- A definition of successful offender reintegration
- The influence of best practice principles on the programme

### THE BASIC THEORIES UNDERLYING THE PROGRAMMES REVIEWED

Three theoretical approaches that deal with the causes of crime and appropriate responses are discernible from the interview data. The first, and largest category of responses (just more than half), can broadly be described not as a theoretical approach *per se*, but rather an understanding of crime developed from personal observations, popular beliefs and experience in working with offenders, prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families. This is not to argue that this approach is without merit or factual basis, but rather that a distinct theoretical model was not identified by the respondents.

Typically, this category of responses linked crime to unemployment, poverty, low educational levels, family dysfunction, and lack of morality. Respondents holding these views emphasised the need for skills development, increased employment opportunities, demonstration of the possibilities of a crime-free life, provision of opportunities for self improvement, rendering needs and rights based programmes. Historically these ‘theories’ developed from personal observations about what is apparently not working and references were made to services provided by the DCS. A more general notion that having community

support will create the opportunity for ‘mistakes to be rectified’ was also reported. The upsurge in violent crime in the mid-1990s was also noted as a reason for one organisation’s particular approach to offending behaviour.

The second set of responses – just less than half of respondents – included references to a significant number of more structured theoretical approaches and included the following:

- Conflict resolution theory
- Social work systems theory (focus on offender, family and community to address risk factors for criminal behaviour)
- Cognitive-behavioural theory
- Narrative theory
- Rational-emotive theory
- Behaviour modification theory
- Person-centred theory
- Eclectic psychodynamic theory
- Youth development theory (focus on mental and physical development, youth need a sense of belonging, sense of mastery, sense of independence, and a sense of generosity)
- Restorative justice philosophy, and a culture of rights promotion in a democratic legal system

It is not within the scope of this paper to deal with the merits of each of these theoretical approaches in respect of offender reintegration, but the diversity in theoretical approaches is nonetheless very noticeable. A small group of organisations noted that they conducted research – primarily literature reviews – to agree upon a particular theoretical approach in their work.

A third, small category of respondents referred to a Biblical approach as the theoretical basis for their

interventions. It should be noted that this approach is not necessarily at odds with the approaches identified in the above two categories, but places the emphasis on the values underpinning the Christian faith. As will be described further on, there is a considerable measure of overlap between the methods used by faith based organisations and the interventions of secular organisations. Organisations from other religions were unfortunately not identified at the start of the research project.

## HOW PROGRAMMES DETERMINED THEIR SUCCESS

The notion of success in offender reintegration is important as it relates to the definition of the problem in the first instance, followed by formulating an appropriate response that would produce the desired result. From the responses, it is evident that there is no consensus about what constitutes success in offender reintegration. Four categories of responses were identified, with the first and largest being that the person does not re-offend. However, what re-offending exactly means was not clearly identified and respondents referred to a general notion of adjusting well in society and taking responsibility. The most specific response from this category was that the person does not commit any parole violations. Whether or not a parole violation constitutes re-offending has been the subject of research. Including parole violations in calculations of re-offending may inflate re-offending figures despite the offence not posing a risk to society.

The second group of responses placed the emphasis on the ex-offenders' employment status as the defining characteristic of successful offender reintegration. References were made to income stability, and being self-sufficient as indicators in this regard. It is uncertain whether employment was understood as an indicator of lifestyle stability.

The third category of responses regarded positive community and family relations as the defining quality of successful reintegration and emphasised the lack of stigmatisation, the existence of support networks, integration into community activities, and being an agent of change. The acquisition of skills and abilities, both individual and social, in order to be a constructive citizen, was regarded by the fourth group of respondents as the key qualities of successful reintegration.

## THE INFLUENCE OF BEST PRACTICE

The influence of documented international research on work with prisoners and offenders appears to be widespread. The majority of organisations reviewed cited one or more international source that influenced their work. Some sources cited referred to recognised 'best-practice'; whereas, others were merely international cases and not necessarily descriptions of best-practices.

It is also evident that restorative justice philosophy and practice have had a significant influence in recent years as this was noted by a number of organisations. Research done domestically by the Institute for Security Studies, Medical Research Council and individual researchers was also cited as offering best-practice and as having an influence on the organisations' programmes. Absent from the responses were references to the widely recognised rigorous meta-analyses conducted by North American and European scholars in the past 20 years that have attempted to distil the fundamental qualities of successful offender reintegration programmes (Gendreau et al 1999; Cullen & Gendreau 2000; Sherman et al 1997). While reference was made to international and domestic works describing good practice, it was not apparent how these sources substantively influenced the programmes, except in a general sense. More detailed research will be required to investigate this issue.

## 5 Objectives of the programmes under review

This section deals with how organisations defined the problem they are trying to address, the needs of their target group, the objectives of the interventions, and the envisaged long term impact of the intervention.

### PROBLEM DEFINITION

How organisations define the problem they are focusing on is important as this should determine the services being rendered. In this regard three major themes were identified. A smaller group of organisations (two in total) had an institutional focus and defined the lack of skills among DCS staff to deal effectively and appropriately with prisoners as the core problem. Their services were aimed at assisting officials to deal better with prisoners by improving their conflict management skills, and their general skills and capacities to work with offenders. Services were generally aimed at job enrichment of officials.

A second, and similarly sized group of organisations, defined the problem as one of rights violations. In particular, they regarded ignorance of the law and limited general knowledge of rights as key problems amongst prisoners, with particular reference to unsentenced prisoners who represent themselves in court.

The third and largest group of organisations viewed re-offending after release as the central problem and identified the following as sub-themes in this regard:

- Unemployment
- Lack of employment skills
- Acknowledgement of the crime and taking responsibility
- Rejection by the community and family
- Limited opportunities for restorative justice

- Lack of skills (e.g. parenting skills, life skills and conflict resolution skills)
- Substance abuse and dependency
- Lack of support for parolees
- Personal lifestyle characterised by instability and marginalisation
- Personal disempowerment (e.g. lack of life purpose, goals and direction)

One organisation focused specifically on the protection of children against abuse and directed its services at convicted sex offenders who are in the community on parole, or under correctional supervision.

Despite the large proportion of organisations identifying re-offending as the main problem, no clear definition of what precisely re-offending is (as noted above) emerged from the findings. None referred to the type of crime or the period over which re-offending should be measured. The notion of re-offending is described in very general terms – it is the commission of another offence over an unspecified period of time that may result in re-imprisonment. A possible consequence of this is that nearly all the organisations which defined the problem as one of re-offending did not have a clear, concise and accurate problem definition.

Organisations used general terms and were not specific in respect of their target groups, the criminogenic factors, environments, and time periods in which they worked. All the organisations focusing on re-offending had elements of these definitional requirements but did not cover them all. It should also be noted that apart from these conceptual uncertainties, the DCS is at this stage not able to provide data on re-offending, although efforts to address this are reportedly underway.

**Table 6: Client needs as identified by service organisations**

Category	Sub-theme	Frequency
Emotional needs (13)	General life skills	3
	Emotional support	3
	Low self esteem	2
	Aggression management	2
	Lack of trust	2
	Behavioural challenges	1
Need to restore family relationships (12)	Restore family relationships	7
	Unstable family/poor socio-economic situation	3
	Lack of family contact	1
	Sense of belonging	1
Economic/employment (10)	Employment	6
	Literacy and education	1
	Fear of economic dependence upon release	1
	Unemployment linked to gang involvement	1
	Criminal skills can be turned around to use positively in developing business	1
Personal empowerment (6)	Taking responsibility for life and actions	2
	Developing plans for life upon release	1
	Self expression	1
	Decision making	1
	Come from background lacking social structure	1
	Need to develop positive personal networks	1
Acceptance by the community (6)	Rejection	3
	Fear of stigmatisation	3
	Meeting unrealistic demands from community upon release	1
	Need for mutual understanding amongst offenders, victims and community	1
Legal rights and education (3)	Education and literacy on the law	1
	Ignorance about the law and legal processes	1
	Assistance with legal representation	1
Material needs (3)	Basic needs, food and shelter for self and family	3
Substance abuse and awareness (1)	Need to deal with substance abuse problems	1

## DEFINED NEEDS OF THE TARGET GROUP

After defining the problem, the next step is to define the needs of the target group. It is in essence the definition of needs that will shape an organisation's response. A total of nine categories of needs were identified from the data. This again indicated the diversity in opinion amongst organisations about the needs of the client group, despite a broad consensus that re-offending is the main problem. As indicated in Table 6, under each category,

organisations placed the emphasis on particular sub-themes in defining the needs of the target group.

From the responses it is evident that organisations working in this field emphasise needs of an emotional nature, the restoration of family relationships, economic (or employment) needs, acceptance by the community, and personal empowerment. The distinctions between these categories, with the exception of employment, are not clear. Overall, the primary needs identified by the organisations relate to personal development which in turn

**Table 7: Programme objectives identified by service organisations**

Objective	Frequency
To develop skills of and educate prisoners	14
To provide restorative justice interventions to prisoners	4
To link prisoners (ex-prisoners) to community resources and opportunities	3
To link prisoners and ex-prisoners to employment opportunities	3
To restore relations between prisoners and their families	4
To assist prisoners in recovering from substance abuse	2
To provide post-release support	2
To improve self knowledge amongst prisoners/ex-prisoners	2
To facilitate community involvement with prisoners and ex-prisoners	2
To modify the behaviour of prisoners	2
To train DCS staff in conflict management	1
To sustain conflict management skills in DCS staff	1
To train prisoners in conflict resolution	1
To contribute to national policy making in respect of prisoners	1
To develop pro-social values amongst prisoners	1
To reduce prison overcrowding	1
To provide shelter to released prisoners	1
To care for the spiritual needs of prisoners	1
To prepare prisoners for their release	1
To monitor the human rights situation in prisons	1

relate to a broader social acceptance in the context of the family and the community. Only one of the organisations reviewed focuses on substance abuse and identified this as the key need. This does not mean that substance abuse is of lesser significance, especially since it is well established that prisoners have a high rate of substance abuse prior to, during and after imprisonment (Social Exclusion Unit 2002).

**IDENTIFIED OBJECTIVES**

A number of organisations stated that their objective is to reduce re-offending with some elaborating further on this. The aim is to understand what objectives have been identified as necessary to achieve the broader aim of successful offender reintegration, and how these objectives relate to the problems described above. A large number of objectives were recorded and these are summarised in Table 7. Although the exact wording may have been edited, the essence of the objectives was retained in the summary.

The development of skills and the general education of prisoners was the objective recorded with the highest frequency. Based on the needs of the target groups identified

in Table 6, these aims probably relate to emotional needs, employment and personal empowerment. While the need to restore family relations received a relatively high ranking in Table 6, only one objective in Table 7, cited by four organisations, can be related directly to this need. Employment was also rated relatively high as a need in Table 6, but only one objective in Table 7, cited by three organisations, can be linked directly to this need.

The linking of objectives to needs appears to be less than precise. This disjuncture may be the result of the language style used by organisations in defining needs and formulating objectives. It may also, however, indicate a less than precise match between the described needs of the client population and the objectives of the organisation. This is not to suggest that there is a complete mismatch, but rather that a closer and more precise definition of needs may result in more precisely described objectives.

**ENVISAGED LONG TERM IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME**

While organisations often have short term objectives relating primarily to annual outputs, they were asked about the intended long term impact of their services. The

majority of organisations identified reduced re-offending or a reduction in crime as the envisaged long term impact of their efforts, but emphasised different aspects in this regard (Table 8). Most organisations see some form of

personal transformation as the key ingredient in achieving a reduction in re-offending, and consequently emphasise issues such as self respect, normalisation of lives, the development of pro-social values and social responsibility.

**Table 8:** Envisaged long-term impact of programmes

Category	Sub-theme	Frequency
Reduced re-offending (16)	Develop social responsibility and pro-social values	3
	Transforming the lives of released prisoners, self respect, balanced, independent	2
	Normalisation of ex-prisoners' lives	2
	Develop ex-prisoners as role models	2
	Increased tolerance, compassion and understanding by community	2
	Diversion of offenders	1
	Accountability	1
	See change in prison sub-culture	1
	Prisoners to understand law and rights	1
	Impulse control	1
Employment of ex-prisoners (3)	More employment opportunities for ex-prisoners	1
	General awareness of alternatives to crime	1
	Develop skills to be self employed (legally)	1
Other (5)	Reduced overcrowding in prisons	2
	Be regarded as real stakeholders in crime prevention and offender reintegration	1
	Released prisoners to remain drug-free	1
	Increased focus on HIV/AIDS	1
	Improved service delivery by DCS	1

## 6 Targeting of services

### TARGETING AND SELECTION OF CLIENTS

Organisations tend to target particular sub-sets of people as clients – be they prisoners, ex-prisoners or the families of prisoners and ex-prisoners. The categories of prisoners targeted are listed in Table 9 and the data shows that the majority of organisations target sentenced juveniles between the ages of 18 and 21 years, followed by awaiting trial detainees and sentenced adults. The focus on sentenced juveniles is noteworthy as this sentence group constitutes only 6.5 per cent of the sentenced prison population.<sup>9</sup>

Three organisations indicated that they target all prisoners. Only one organisation reported that it occasionally targets sentenced children. Working with sentenced prisoners is undoubtedly easier as the client group is more stable and has settled into daily and weekly routines in the prison system. Despite this advantage, nearly a quarter of the organisations work with awaiting trial detainees.

Three organisations noted that they target ex-prisoners; with one providing services specifically to parolees, one targeting all ex-prisoners as walk-in clients, and the third specialising in sex offenders released on parole or correctional supervision.

**Table 9:** Target in-prison populations

Category of prisoner	Frequency
Sentenced juveniles (18-21 yrs)	11
Awaiting trial detainees	4
Sentenced adults (imprisoned and paroled)	4
All prisoners	3
Children (sometimes)	1

Eight organisations indicated that they target the families of prisoners, but in half of these instances these are only the families of programme participants. Given the high rating given to family relations in Table 6, the relatively low number of organisations working with families of prisoners and ex-prisoners as a defined target group, is somewhat surprising. It should also be noted that the families of prisoners also approach organisations as walk-in clients seeking assistance, but these clients do not constitute a specific target group. The organisations stating that they do not target families of prisoners, explained that they will render assistance upon request; but that it is not a focus of the organisation.

Apart from the broad categories of selection, respondents were also asked about the selection of individual programme participants and whether any criteria were applied in this regard. With a few exceptions all respondents reported that a selection process takes place. Three organisations reported that DCS is involved in the selection process by either identifying potential programme participants from whom the organisation will then select, or by directly identifying the prisoners for participation.

Participant stability and programme timing appears to be important as organisations working with sentenced prisoners favour those prisoners who will be released within three to 12 months, but preferring six to 12 months prior to release. For a smaller group of organisations, it is preferable that the participants have a year or more remaining of their sentences. Medium security prisoners are favoured by some organisations as there are fewer restrictions placed on these prisoners. Prisoners who are to be transferred are excluded by one organisation from its programme.



Nearly half of the organisations noted that participation in their programme must be voluntary and they aim to select those prisoners who show commitment to change, enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the programme. It appears that the majority of organisations follow a process of announcing or advertising their programme, briefing of the prisoners on the programme and; therefore, engaging in a selection process through an assessment interview. One organisation uses trained prisoners as co-facilitators and these prisoners also assist in selecting the programme participants as they have personal knowledge of their fellow prisoners. Three organisations noted that they also look at family responsiveness and the role that the family can play in the reintegration process when selecting programme participants.

The language abilities, educational levels and literacy of programme participants are also factors considered by some organisations. The emphasis is placed on selecting groups of participants who speak the same language, and have similar literacy and educational levels. Only two organisations noted factors that would exclude potential participants, namely serious psychopathologies (the substance abuse programme) and very disruptive individuals (the restorative justice programme). What is evident from the data is that the perceived willingness and commitment to participate in a programme carry more weight in the selection of participants than the risk factors and criminogenic needs of potential programme participants.

## GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS

The respondents were asked if they are addressing specific place-based needs (i.e. in a specific geographical locality) or whether they believe that their programme could be extended and replicated in other areas if the resources were available. Only two organisations explained that their services are aimed at addressing specific place based-needs. They motivated this by the match between their unique circumstances and the responses that they had developed as a consequence.

The remainder of the organisations were of the opinion that their services can be replicated in any locality and motivated this view with the following reasons:

- The programme is flexible and the content can be adapted to different environments and target groups
- There is a universal need for offender reintegration programmes
- It is not expensive and can be operated in resource constrained environments
- Substance abuse is a global problem
- Prison sub-culture is universal and facilitates application of the programme

It needs to be emphasised that although these organisations believed that their programme can be implemented in different localities, the actual interventions need to be adapted to suit the particular needs of participants.

# 7 Constraints and enhancers of delivery

## CONSTRAINTS

As can be expected from the organisations reviewed, funding was considered to be a significant constraint on delivery. In this regard, it was not only the lack of funding, but also the time it took to source new donors, liaise with donors and participate in various events related to fundraising. It should be noted that the organisations reviewed do not receive funding from the DCS.

Nearly all the organisations described problems they experience in their interactions with the DCS. The most significant of these were:

- Staff shortages experienced by the department cause difficulties in accessing prisoners. This creates security concerns that override programme delivery plans
- Poor information flow between the department and the organisations
- Lack of support and respect for the programme and its objectives
- Poor communication between DCS members and organisations
- Conservative attitudes on the part of DCS officials
- DCS staff are disorganised and do not cooperate with the programme
- Bureaucratic red-tape that makes it difficult to get things done
- Poor administration in the department
- The high administrative load brought about by the need to submit reports to DCS on each programme participant

## SOCIAL FACTORS

One organisation in the Western Cape noted a difference between African and coloured programme participants. This related to literacy and educational levels, with African prisoners being at a disadvantage. Class differences within race groups were also noted as contributing to diversity – the implication being that programme facilitation needed to be adjusted accordingly. The importance of cultural differences and sensitivity to diversity was also noted by a number of respondents. The value of traditional practices and the role of elders were seen as cultural influences assisting in the reintegration process.

The urban-rural divide presented both obstacles and opportunities. Urban areas were noted for having more business opportunities, more resources to assist ex-prisoners, more employment opportunities, and meant families live closer to the prison and are able to visit more frequently. On the negative side, urban environments presented more risks upon release such as social attitudes that emphasised materialism, and the existence of gangs and organised crime groups. Prisoners who return to rural areas, to their families and to the stability of kinship networks are assisted in the reintegration process. However, rural areas suffer from high unemployment and a general lack of resources and opportunities.

## UNANTICIPATED FACTORS AND OUTCOMES

Even well planned and executed programmes have unanticipated factors and outcomes and it is important to identify these for their positive and negative qualities. The

### Organisations' views of the challenges of working in a prison environment

#### Time constraints

- 'The prison day is very short'
- 'Prison searches take place any time and hinders the smooth running of the programmes'
- 'We sometimes cannot find the social worker to prepare the venue'
- 'There is not enough time, the need is tremendous but we cannot reach everyone'
- 'We have three hours to cram in our programme'
- 'Offenders have other prison duties which may clash with the programme'
- 'Prisons are centres of punishment and not for training and group sessions'
- 'Limited time to work with prisoners, it is a difficult environment due to security staff shortages and access problems'
- 'Distances that need to be travelled between prisons are far'

#### Noise and environment

- 'We run the programme outside and there are many disturbances'
- 'The prison environment, the inhumane treatment of prisoners and the violence – it is not conducive to anything'
- 'The physical environment is not conducive, there are many interruptions, prison routine is limited'
- 'There are many interruptions, noise, and freezing cold conditions'
- 'There are many interruptions'

#### Lack of resources and support

- 'Lack of resources restrict the implementation of the programme'
- 'Lack of support from government and business companies'
- 'There is a big gap between government policy and practice'
- 'Lack of support from community'

#### Programme continuity and content

- 'We do not know if a (specific) child was on the programme; the DCS administration files are incomplete'
- 'Prisoners long for their families and their individual needs may be conflicting with the programme'
- 'Prisoners fear that they may lose their monthly stipend if they participate in the programme'
- 'Offenders lack motivation as they are teased and bullied by other inmates if they participate in the programme' (substance abuse programme)
- 'Low motivation from participants, they want instant gratification, they do not think of long term success'

organisations reviewed were asked about unanticipated outcomes and they mentioned these in respect of staff instability, prisoner issues, and programme issues. As the description below shows, not all of these are 'outcomes' of the programme and include unanticipated factors having an impact of the overall service.

As noted earlier, DCS staff instability due to promotions or absenteeism has a very direct effect on programme implementation as staff may have been trained to provide certain services or to train other officials. At a logistical level, staff shortages may result in organisations not being able to access prisoners at all or not for the desired duration on a particular day. The impact of staff instability on programme implementation and the effect it has on day-to-day operations were clearly not anticipated.

With regard to unanticipated factors and outcomes in respect of prisoner issues, the following were identified:

- Prisoners are transferred and thus leave the programme
- Prisoners become dependent on the organisation for all their needs
- Prisoners leave the prison with great enthusiasm but are unable to cope with the social and emotional pressures of life outside

- Prisoners have unrealistic expectations and think that employers will readily accept them
- It takes a long time for prisoners to admit guilt and show remorse
- The social standing of prisoners participating in a programme often undergoes a radical change from being ridiculed to being seen as 'heroes'

On a more general level it was observed by one organisation that the increasingly conservative attitude of the government towards offenders creates a difficult environment for offender reintegration programmes and that this finds expression in the attitudes of officials toward its programme. The effect of the prison environment on programme delivery was also emphasised, with overcrowding being the main issue.

The cost of the programmes also had unanticipated consequences and half of the organisations had to make significant adjustments to reduce costs associated with salaries, material assistance to ex-prisoners, stationery, accommodation, transport, education and skills programmes, and communications. It was also reported that the demand for services increased more rapidly than had been anticipated at the time that the costing was done.

# 8 Benefits from programme participation and evaluation of programmes

## IDENTIFIED BENEFITS

Organisations were asked to describe the benefits that participants receive from their programmes, as well as the proof that such benefits were indeed derived from the programme. The beneficiaries of the programmes were identified as awaiting trial detainees, sentenced prisoners, released prisoners (including parolees), families of offenders, victims, officials and society. A summary of the interview data is presented in Table 10.

In respect of awaiting trial detainees the main benefits from the programmes are improved knowledge and understanding of how the legal system works. One programme uses pre- and post-programme feedback forms to establish whether the information conveyed was indeed received in the correct manner. Feedback from officials on the improved behaviour of accused in court was regarded as evidence by one programme of its effectiveness. Feedback from officials, generally of an informal nature, was cited by several organisations as an important source of evidence that its programme is having the desired effect.

For sentenced prisoners the main benefits appear to centre on an opportunity for self reflection and developing plans for the future. Restoring relationships with families, learning about gender and sexuality, laws and rights and acquiring skills were also noted. Some programmes use formal feedback forms to measure the effect of their programme but this appears to be widely supported by informal feedback from officials, letter writing, feedback from families, personal knowledge of the programme participants and special events to acknowledge the achievements of programme participants.

The benefits for released prisoners tend to be more practical and tangible in nature, and relate to finding

employment, acquiring skills and receiving more practical assistance with life outside of prison. Evidence of progress after release is collected mainly through follow-up visits to the individual and/or his family; the client visiting the programme staff; as well as assessments that continue after release. Organisations running structured post-release programmes may find it easier to collect such information.

Families often suffer severe stress as a result of the imprisonment of a member and substantial restoration of relationships is then required. Support and counselling services are rendered by some organisations and the reconnection of a family and an imprisoned member is regarded as an important step. Visits to the family home and engaging with the family are regarded as important sources of information on how the family is dealing with the imprisonment of a member.

Through restorative justice interventions, victims also benefit from the reviewed programmes. Evidence of this was found in the cooperation between the victim and offender during victim-offender mediation sessions. The influence of restorative justice programmes was also seen to benefit society at large. Events celebrating restorative justice were seen as proof of this.

Only two programmes target officials specifically – the one aims to improve skills and the other aims to provide richer job content to officials and enable them to regard their work with prisoners in a different light. Formal feedback from officials as well as requests for the organisations to return and train more officials, were regarded as proof of the benefits of the programme.

## EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

Two thirds of the organisations reported that their programmes had been evaluated and that the majority

**Table 10: Defined programme benefits and validation**

Group	Benefit	Proof
Awaiting trial detainees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It is an opportunity for self reflection</li> <li>■ They receive information on how to access legal aid system, pre-trial awareness training, it prepares them for court</li> <li>■ Increased knowledge on rights, responsibilities and the law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pre-course evaluation and post-course evaluation</li> <li>■ Magistrate gave feedback that there was an improvement in the offenders' behaviour in court</li> </ul>
Sentence/pre-release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It is an opportunity to focus on plans after release</li> <li>■ They are experiencing the consequences of their actions, awareness, knowledge, and recovery</li> <li>■ It is the first time that they can talk about their feelings; it is a safe space to talk and build trust</li> <li>■ The group helps offenders (sex offenders) to break through the denial of their behaviour</li> <li>■ They learn about sexuality</li> <li>■ Restore relationships with their families</li> <li>■ Increased self-confidence; a sense of having a vision for themselves</li> <li>■ Practical business skills and how to implement them outside of prison</li> <li>■ They learn new insights and possibly behaviours from the life skills programme</li> <li>■ Increased knowledge on rights, responsibilities and the law</li> <li>■ They are exposed to the benefits of the programme, learn life skills and are exposed to restorative justice philosophy</li> <li>■ They acquire skills</li> <li>■ Usually we deal with grown men who experience for the first time in their lives that someone is actually listening to them and giving them an opportunity to feel safe. They become aware of their feelings. They learn to deal with themselves and not blame others for their actions. They learn to verbalise their feelings. Through these processes they restore dignity within themselves and their relationships with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Observe a change in attitude and increased contact with their families</li> <li>■ Evaluation forms are used (written and verbal)</li> <li>■ We get to know each individual and can observe changes</li> <li>■ Participants give us letters</li> <li>■ Feedback received on the programmes</li> <li>■ Pre- and post-intervention assessments three months after the programme</li> <li>■ Observe an improvement in physical posture, facial expression, self-confidence, setting daily goals, self-pride, reporting back and evaluation forms</li> <li>■ Informal feedback, awards ceremonies, feedback from award leaders who submit quarterly reports, unofficial and informal communication</li> <li>■ Use questionnaire used to make sure that the material was conveyed properly</li> <li>■ Verbal feedback as well as letters from prisoners</li> <li>■ Officials give feedback</li> <li>■ The lanyard cards have become prized possessions and the programme now has a lot of status with prisoners. They are now '[programme name] fellows'</li> <li>■ This is a general sense from knowing the prisoners</li> </ul>
Post-release, including parolees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Economic skills, placements in jobs, we advocate with various departments</li> <li>■ We have a support system; We help them facilitate their plans and dreams</li> <li>■ Assist them with job applications and typing of CVs and hand-deliver these applications</li> <li>■ By being supported practically</li> <li>■ Kept very active in crime combating activities and inculcates socially acceptable values and morals</li> <li>■ By getting employed, some have been employed by parole board as mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Monitor through case files of each individual, home visits with the family</li> <li>■ We take a video recording during the camp</li> <li>■ Evaluation forms, we also phone them and follow up</li> <li>■ We look at success stories</li> <li>■ They come tell us that they are employed and they say thank you</li> <li>■ We have an electronic database and we do continuous follow ups and visits</li> <li>■ Some are still in the programme and are active members</li> <li>■ We distribute evaluation forms after each session; we also monitor through tracking the individual through follow up visits at their homes and with families</li> </ul>
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ We promote family unity</li> <li>■ We support them, visit, counsel and pray, we become friends with them, and build a relationship of trust</li> <li>■ The child does not depend on them anymore</li> <li>■ They are able to reconnect with an imprisoned family member</li> <li>■ Through family services and legal advice they benefit</li> <li>■ The parents benefit as the child does not roam around</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Through follow up, we are able to see a change in the family relationships; they talk to each other and do things together. This is done through family group conferencing</li> <li>■ The photographs are important to the families and help them to rebuild the relationships (the programme sends photographs between prisoners and their families)</li> </ul>

Group	Benefit	Proof
Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The participants tell us who the victims are. We assist the ex-offender to contact the victim. This helps the victim to emotionally and spiritually heal and forgive. It is a space for him/her to air how he/she feels</li> <li>▪ Healing takes place, there is a greater awareness on both sides, leading to change</li> <li>▪ Through family services and legal advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We can see cooperation between the victim and ex-offender and this is done through victim offender mediation</li> </ul>
Prison officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Correctional officers at different levels benefit: improve mindsets of how to deal with transformation issues. We offer skills on how to improve service delivery, interventions, needs analysis, and technical/practical skills</li> <li>▪ They are exposed to a way of working with prisoners that is different to the emphasis on security; this brings a different dimension to the prison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluation forms</li> <li>▪ We are asked to come back by offenders and correctional officers</li> <li>▪ Trained DCS staff members are promoted and the way they work has changed</li> </ul>
Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ By changing a person's nature</li> <li>▪ We have support groups and <i>ubuntu</i> clubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Restorative justice testimonies provide the proof; these are special events demonstrating the effectiveness of the programme</li> </ul>

of these evaluations were external. However, it should be emphasised that the majority of the external evaluations were done by the donor that supported the programme. Although such evaluations are useful to all stakeholders involved, they should not necessarily be regarded as independent and impartial evaluations. This type of evaluation usually focuses on the processes of implementation and not necessarily on the impact of the programme—using longitudinal and quasi-experimental

designs. Despite these constraints, nearly all the organisations who have had evaluations conducted, reported that they implemented changes to their programmes based on the evaluation results.

Internal evaluations were also reported by three organisations and referred to a process whereby a facilitator is brought in to assist with a discussion and debate on the programme and that a report was written which reflected the discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

## 9 Entry and exit strategies

### GAINING ENTRY INTO DCS

Cooperation with DCS and permission to access prisoners are critical components of the organisations' entry strategies since all, except one, of the organisations work inside prisons or with DCS Community Corrections. Despite the fact that DCS is a national department, the information collected indicates that there is no uniform manner in which non-governmental organisations access prisons and prisoners.

Access appears to be gained at the levels of the head office, area commissioner, head of prison (HOP) and even at local official level through social workers. Some organisations reported that they are invited by the DCS while others explained that it took them several months to get approval to run their programmes in a particular prison. In a few instances service level agreements exist between the DCS and the organisation concerned, but this appears to be the exception.

The most common route followed by non-governmental organisations is to approach the HOP and explain the programme, its purposes, benefits and requirements. If permission is granted in principle, this discussion will also deal with logistical issues such as dates, time considerations, venues, and so forth. About a quarter of respondents explained that they have a long standing relationship with the DCS at a prison, area or regional level and it is not necessary to negotiate access every year. In these instances the HOP is informed of programme needs and logistical arrangements, and these are normally agreed to and accepted.

One organisation explained that it is necessary to first approach the prison social worker and secure his/her support for the programme before approaching the HOP because the social worker may feel that the

non-governmental organisation is undermining his/her position and function. A few organisations reported on further steps to gain and facilitate entry, such as marketing the programme with prison warders.

Further considerations that were regarded as important in gaining entry included:

- Finding out, before meeting with DCS, what the department is engaged in and what is currently shaping strategy
- Building a relationship of trust with DCS
- Acknowledging the work of DCS and providing officials with feedback
- Ensuring that the prison is informed of the programme and any specific interventions well in advance
- Access may be facilitated if there is an official supporting the programme
- Staff should not be forced to participate in or support the programme, but the benefits should instead be demonstrated and experienced

One organisation reported that the influence of gangs is significant as it is the gang leaders who ultimately give approval to individual prisoners to participate in programmes. Whether this applies to other prisons is uncertain and further research is needed in this regard.

### EXIT STRATEGIES

Questions about the sustainability of programmes were asked. The majority of programmes indicated that they see their programme as becoming sustainable. Sustainability is interpreted here as sustaining the impact of the programme as opposed to the programme becoming financially self-sustainable. There was a broad

acceptance that financial sustainability may not be a feasible objective and that the programmes will always rely on some form of donor support.

Prisoners and ex-prisoners were regarded as key agents for sustaining the impact of the programme. It is expected that they will be law abiding citizens based on the skills, abilities and insights they have acquired through the programme. Respondents also explained that prisoners who have participated in the programme, can also share the programme content with other prisoners. Concerns

were nonetheless expressed that if participants leave the programme, or the organisation leaves, they may lose motivation and interest, and fall back into crime.

Other stakeholders that were identified in respect of sustaining impact were families of prisoners, former programme participants that are now facilitators, DCS officials and community groups. The data, however, shows that this is a complex issue with no obvious solutions and that significant hurdles stand in the way of ensuring the sustainability of programme impact.



# 10 Lessons learnt about what works and what does not

The 21 organisations reviewed in this study represent a wealth of practical knowledge on prisoners support and offender reintegration gained over many years. In view of this, they were asked to identify important lessons learnt about what works and what does not in prisoner support and offender reintegration.

## LESSONS LEARNT ABOUT WHAT WORKS

A wide range of observations and insights about what is effective was recorded from the respondents and these can be grouped as follows:

- Programme–participant relationship
- Mode of programme delivery and programme purpose
- Programme capacity
- External relations of the programme

### Programme–participant relationship

The development of trust between participants and facilitators was seen as important in rendering an effective intervention. Developing trust was believed to be linked to being transparent and honest with participants about the programme and life after prison. Treating the participants humanely, emphasising respect and promoting dignity were regarded as key values for successful interventions.

Related to this, was the notion of separating the act (the crime) from the person who committed it. Promoting acceptance and giving recognition were regarded as ways to foster this. It was also noted that patience is important in this type of work and results may not be immediate or conclusive. The relationship between the participant

and the programme also needs to be expanded to include the family of the participant as an integral part of the programme.

### Mode of delivery and programme purpose

Programmes need to focus on changing behaviour while simultaneously meeting the needs of participants. In the case of serious offenders (e.g. sex offenders), it was noted that programmes need to be long term – longer than one year. To ensure that programmes are effective, programme integrity needs to be maintained and implementation should not deviate from the planned outputs. Interventions need to be inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary. The mode of delivery needs to match the abilities of the participants and adhere to the responsiveness principle.

The role of assessments prior to the programme and continuous assessment during the programme was emphasised by a number of respondents. In respect of children, it was reported by one organisation that it is important for children to develop positive relationships with adults. This objective can also be extended to adults in order to develop positive relations with peers upon release. A number of respondents remarked on the importance of continued support after release to ensure that programme impact is sustained.

Related to post-release support, it was noted that structured opportunities for ex-prisoners to ‘experience the community’ need to be created. Post-release support groups should also be mixed in respect of offender status, race, gender and class to facilitate the development of positive social relations. The effectiveness of narrative therapy was emphasised by one organisation although this may be more widely practiced.

## Programme capacity

The respondents noted that effective programmes require well-trained staff members who exhibit a passion for this type of work. It is also evident that the work can be taxing and that personal motivation will play an important role. It was also noted that staff need support to deal with the trauma of the work. Using former participants as co-facilitators can also expand the capacity of programmes since they have more legitimacy amongst prisoners and ex-prisoners.

## External relations

It was noted that for programmes to be more effective and efficient, they need the support and commitment from departmental officials. One respondent remarked that it is important to ‘understand the DCS’ if one is to work with them successfully. Community involvement and the mobilisation of community resources to assist released prisoners were seen as important external factors to improve the effectiveness of programmes.

## WHAT DOES NOT WORK?

Lessons about what doesn’t work tend by default to be the opposite of what was described as being effective. Several other issues were however identified to emphasise and/or expand on the lessons about what does not work. The responses are grouped into three categories:

- Programme–participant relationships
- Mode and type of programme delivery
- Environment of the programme

## Programme–participant relationship

Being dishonest with programme participants were regarded as a major flaw, as participants will lose faith in the programme and doubt the integrity of the facilitators. Ignoring ‘petty problems’ of participants was regarded in the same light, as this causes doubt and makes participants question the commitment of facilitators. On the other hand, respondents cautioned against creating unrealistic expectations and facilitators taking on more than what they can deliver on.

## Mode of delivery and type of programme

One respondent noted that programmes that focus only on spiritual care are ineffective as they are not sufficient to provide sustained support. Programmes that are confrontational and judgmental were also described as being ineffective and should be avoided. While it is acknowledged that many prisoners require additional skills to assist them to find employment upon release, it was noted that skills development is not sufficient and that the person needs to be personally prepared in order to make effective use of skills development and employment opportunities. High volume and short-term pre-release work was regarded as ineffective and a waste of resources. Unstructured programmes were regarded as similarly ineffective. Preference should rather be given to longer-term work with groups of ten people and definitely less than 20 participants. Related to this was a comment that ‘giving too much too quickly’ is ineffective as participants do not have the opportunity to absorb and practice the skills and information gained. The use of programme manuals was also regarded with suspicion and the emphasis was placed on rather using a programme guide that is not prescriptive in respect of particular activities and content. Following from this, it was emphasised that programmes should focus less on theory, and more on practice and experience, to demonstrate the benefits of the programme. Given the complexities of crime and its causes, approaches that are ‘single minded’ were described as ineffective. Caution was also given in respect of programmes that operate in isolation from other organisations. Lacking post-release support was regarded as a serious shortcoming. Lastly, it was remarked that participants should attend the entire programme and not only parts thereof.

## Environment

As can be expected from previous concerns raised about the DCS, it was emphasised that programme facilitators and officials should have a common goal and not hold separate or opposing views in this regard. Essentially the environment should be conducive to the objectives of the programme. Related to this, a number of organisations reported that human rights violations present a particular challenge to offender reintegration programmes. Human rights violations undermine the core values of human dignity and safety. In addition, while programme staff may be aware of such violations, they are reluctant to report these as they may be denied access to the prison and their clients.

# Conclusions

The survey data described prisoner support, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes falling into three broad categories: capacity building with staff working in prisons; rights education aimed at prisoners; and preparing prisoners for release and rendering post-release support services. These focus areas are closely linked when the broader aim is to reduce re-offending. Poorly skilled prison staff, a counter-productive prison environment, rights violations, poor preparation for release and limited or no post-release support will in combination contribute to high re-offending rates. Of the 21 organisations surveyed there was, however, not one organisation that worked in all three focus areas.

The survey also found that there is great diversity amongst organisations in respect of nearly every issue dealt with in the survey. On the one hand this indicates the willingness of the sector to engage in innovative approaches and incorporate a wide range of modalities in service delivery. On the other hand, it is also testimony to a fairly fragmented sector in which there has been limited debate on what offender reintegration is, what is effective and what should be avoided. By comparison, the child justice sector, which in certain respects deals with similar issues, exhibits a far greater sense of cohesion and common purpose on what services need to be rendered, what is effective and what the outcomes should be. For example, the Department of Social Development released in 2007 minimum standards for diversion programmes (Department of Social Development 2007). Similar standards for restorative justice interventions are being drafted and these are greatly influenced by the work in the child justice sector since 1992. Efforts need to be made to bring stakeholders together to share knowledge and facilitate greater cohesion, without compromising the individuality of organisations. The evidence suggests that

the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa and the Correctional Services Act (111 of 1998) have not had a significant impact, if any at all, on how civil society interprets prisoner support and offender reintegration.

The link between services rendered by the DCS and the civil society organisations appear to be weak. While there is in some instances a sense of stronger cooperation, the overall impression is that the services rendered by civil society organisations are not integrated into the sentence plans developed by the Department.

Most of the programmes described in this report are relatively new. Two thirds were established in the past eight years. This indicates that there has been substantial innovation in the field in recent years, but also that there has been limited time to demonstrate evidence-based interventions. There is thus an urgent need to conduct research, especially high quality impact evaluations, incorporating longitudinal experimental designs, on offender reintegration programmes. Demonstrating the effectiveness of such programmes is politically important to render weight to arguments that imprisonment alone is not effective in reducing crime. It is furthermore important to illustrate the costs and benefits of such programmes in order to support the more limited use of imprisonment. It is necessary that knowledge and evidence informs the debate on policy and law-reform. In addition, it is important to ensure that interventions are based on 'what works', as opposed to common sense understandings of what ought to work.

Most of the existing research on programme effectivity has been conducted in developed countries. While valid conclusions may have been reached, these will probably always be regarded with some sense of suspicion, given the differences in context. The question of what works, needs to be asked specifically in the South African

situation, with reference to the large prison population and overcrowding; the high levels of violence in prisons; the influence of prison gangs; and the inability of the state to provide comprehensive services to prisoners. These are important systemic challenges shaping the outcomes of offender reintegration programmes rendered by civil society and the state.

While civil society organisations are making a valuable contribution to offender reintegration, it must be accepted that these organisations cannot meet the current demand for services, especially when they are not receiving financial support from the DCS. It is, therefore, necessary for civil society organisations in this field to define their roles clearly, be that as supplementary to the DCS, supportive of the Department, to fill in the gaps in services that DCS does not fill, or a full-scale service assuming the functions that government should fulfil. These are key strategic considerations, for which there are no immediate answers, but it is certain that dialogue between the DCS and its civil society stakeholders on such issues is needed.

The survey also found a range of problems, at various levels, between the DCS and its civil society stakeholders. Importantly civil society organisations often feel themselves at the mercy of the Department with the threat of denied access always looming. This issue is of particular significance in respect of rights violations which civil society organisations may be reluctant to report, for fear of being denied access. This is an unacceptable situation. The services rendered by civil society organisations are in principle rendered in good faith and the DCS has a duty to exercise quality control in this regard, but organisations working in prison should not be victimised because they report rights violations or any other transgressions allegedly committed by DCS officials. Access of organisations to prisons must be regulated in a manner that protects the rights and interests of civil society organisations, the DCS and prisoners.

Unsentenced prisoners present particular practical as well as more theoretical problems. It should firstly be acknowledged that unsentenced prisoners constitute roughly a quarter of the total prison population and, furthermore, that they can remain in this state of limbo for long periods. The DCS does not see it as part of their responsibility to deal with the personal and social needs of these persons and the Department of Social Development

effectively ignore them. Since they are unsentenced and mostly unconvicted, the question arises as to the nature of programmes for this category of prisoners. It should also be noted that many of these prisoners remain in prison for months, and sometimes years, only to be acquitted and released. While they are not ‘offenders’, they undoubtedly are in need of ‘reintegration’.

The survey also found that there is a fair amount of agreement between what rigorous international studies have found to be effective in offender reintegration, and what the South African organisations described as effective measures. At the same time, it was also found that there is not always a close match between the defined problem, the identified needs, the programme objectives, and the envisaged long-term impact. This is an issue for further research. Organisational development is also required to support to practitioners to achieve a more accurate match in this regard. Louw (2000), cited in Dawes and Van der Merwe (2004), articulates this challenge well:

- The more clearly and accurately the focal social problem is defined
- The more clearly and precisely the needs of the target group can be assessed
- The more appropriately the programme is designed to address the needs
- The more effectively the programme is delivered and implemented
- The more the short and medium term outcomes are achieved
- The greater the long term impact is likely to be

Compared to prevention and early intervention services, offender reintegration programmes will remain the most intensive, the most expensive and probably the least effective in reducing crime. This does not mean that these services must be abandoned. There is enough evidence to indicate that they do make a difference when implemented properly. The 21 organisations included in this survey have demonstrated the willingness and ability of the South African civil society sector to assist in offender reintegration. The challenges identified are not insurmountable, but will require the development of a true partnership between the state and civil society to assist prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.

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# Notes

- 1 In the 12 months preceding the remissions of 2005, an average of 6 119 sentenced prisoners were released from prison per month (Department of Correctional Services).
- 2 The 2006/7 DCS budget allocated only 3.5 per cent of the total to the Social Reintegration Programme to post-release support services (CSPRI Newsletter No. 21 March 2007).
- 3 The centre of excellence concept is an attempt to create an environment that helps in providing holistic integrated services to the offender to produce a socially responsible person. In these centres, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) seeks to eliminate overcrowding as an inhibitor of effective service provision to the offender. The DCS also seeks to guarantee the existence of competent personnel to provide the range of services that have to be delivered to an offender. For more information see website on DCS centres of excellence at [http://www.dcs.gov.za/Homepage\\_CentresOfExcellence/default.htm](http://www.dcs.gov.za/Homepage_CentresOfExcellence/default.htm).
- 4 The Integrated Youth Offender Programme (IYOP) was a collaborative effort between six organisations aimed at offender reintegration and operated between 2004 and 2006 at the Boksburg Correctional Centre. The six organisations were the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Interactive Themba Theatre, Restorative Justice Centre, DARE, Nicro and Phaphama Initiatives.
- 5 Established in 1910.
- 6 Non-profit organisation registered under the Non-Profit Organisations Act (71 of 1997).
- 7 One organisation reported using 75 part time staff members. If this figure is excluded the average drops to four part time staff members.
- 8 Four organisations reported using 150, 200, 550 and 112 volunteers respectively.
- 9 As on 31 December 2007.

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