

NEWSLETTER

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Looking forward together: Community Imbizo unites victims, offenders and stakeholders for healing in Khutsong

On 23 July 2026, the Community Hall in Khutsong Extension 2, Carletonville, became a place where healing, hope and new beginnings took centre stage. Hosted by Carletonville Community Corrections under the Krugersdorp Management Area, in partnership with government departments, community organisations, faith-based institutions and academic partners, the Community Imbizo showcased the transformative role of restorative justice in rebuilding lives and strengthening communities.

Under the inspiring theme, "*Ga Re Boele Morago, Re Lebile Bokamoso*" (We Do Not Look Back, We Look Forward), the imbizo united female parolees, victims of crime, correctional officials, community leaders and other stakeholders in a shared commitment to healing, accountability,

forgiveness and successful social reintegration.



Acting Head of Krugersdorp Community Corrections, Ms Maphalala, explained that the purpose of the imbizo was to strengthen community engagement while supporting the reintegration of female offenders into society. Encouraging the parolees to embrace the future with confidence, she



reminded them that while the past cannot be changed, it should never define their future. Instead, she urged them to focus on the opportunities that lie ahead and to become positive contributors within their families and communities.

At the heart of the event was the message that restorative justice seeks to repair the harm caused by crime by creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue between victims, offenders and the wider community. Rather than focusing exclusively on punishment, restorative justice promotes healing, accountability, reconciliation and restoration as essential building blocks for safer and more resilient communities.

This message came to life during the Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD) session, facilitated by Ms Phola Mogkethi from Behind and Beyond Bars. Through honest and courageous testimony, participants revealed the devastating consequences of crime while also demonstrating the remarkable capacity of people to heal, forgive and rebuild their lives.

One victim, whose brother was killed through an act of violence, shared the emotional journey that followed the tragedy. Living with trauma, fear, stigma and financial hardship, the victim found support through the Department of Correctional Services, which provided counselling services and access to the Victim-Offender Dialogue programme. An opportunity to study plumbing further restored confidence, independence and purpose, while changing long-held perceptions of offenders and rehabilitation.



Another victim delivered a deeply moving testimony of survival. After becoming blind as a result of a violent attack by her husband in 2021, she struggled to understand why he had been released on parole while they continued living

in the same community. Participating in the Victim-Offender Dialogue process, however, gave her the opportunity to express years of pain, ask difficult questions and finally find peace. Her story illustrated how restorative justice can provide victims with a voice, restore dignity and promote emotional healing.

The testimonies shared throughout the dialogue reinforced an important truth: restorative justice does not diminish the seriousness of crime. Instead, it acknowledges the harm caused, encourages accountability and creates meaningful opportunities for healing, forgiveness and restoration.



Equally inspiring were the testimonies of the female parolees, whose experiences demonstrated that rehabilitation is achievable when individuals accept responsibility for their actions and communities are willing to offer support and second chances.

One parolee reflected on her imprisonment following a violent incident during an abusive marriage, describing her period of incarceration as the turning point in her life. While in custody, she participated in rehabilitation programmes, including anger management, strengthened her faith and developed the skills necessary to rebuild her future. Following her release, she invested her pension benefits in establishing three businesses, intentionally creating employment opportunities for people with criminal records who often struggle to find work. Her story illustrated how rehabilitation can empower former offenders to become employers, mentors and agents of positive change.

Another parolee, who served more than twelve years in prison following a murder conviction, spoke candidly about accepting responsibility for her actions while confronting the ongoing stigma that many former offenders experience after release. During her incarceration, she contributed to prison education



programmes by teaching fellow offenders. Today, she continues serving her community through an after-school care programme where she supports children with learning difficulties. Her journey highlighted that rehabilitation does not end at the prison gate but continues through service, resilience and a sustained commitment to positive change.



Delivering the keynote address, Area Commissioner Mr Chaphi emphasised that reducing crime and achieving successful reintegration require a collective effort from government, communities and families. He reminded participants that crime separates individuals from the freedoms and opportunities enjoyed by society and encouraged parents to recognise early warning signs before problems escalate. Stressing that the values enshrined in South Africa's Constitution must be translated into meaningful action, he called

on every stakeholder to play an active role in preventing crime and supporting rehabilitation. Highlighting the importance of partnerships between the Department of Correctional Services, the *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* Engaged Scholarship Project at UNISA and various non-governmental organisations, he encouraged communities to provide parolees and probationers with

opportunities to demonstrate that they have changed, reminding participants that trust and acceptance are essential components of successful reintegration.



The Community Imbizo exemplified the power of collaboration in restoring lives and strengthening communities. Among the participating stakeholders were the *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* Engaged Scholarship Project at UNISA, the Prem Rawat Peace Foundation, the Merafong Department of Community Safety, Revive, Behind and Beyond Bars, and Ithemba La Bantu. Together, these organisations reaffirmed their commitment to supporting

victims, empowering offenders to become productive citizens and encouraging communities to become active partners in rehabilitation and social reintegration.

domestic violence and other violent crimes. While effective law enforcement remains essential, lasting community safety depends equally on preventing reoffending,



The event also served as a timely reminder of the importance of restorative justice as South Africa continues to confront the challenges of gender-based violence,

supporting victims and creating opportunities for offenders to rebuild their lives as responsible and productive members of society.



UNISA's *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* project honoured at Mandela Legacy Business Awards



Inspired by the enduring legacy of Nelson Mandela, organisations, community leaders and businesses gathered at the Joe Gqabi Hall in Protea Glen, Soweto, on 31 July 2026 for the prestigious Mandela Legacy Business Awards. Hosted by Ravens on Mission Community Projects under the leadership of Mr Reason Toli, the event celebrated individuals, organisations and businesses whose commitment to service continues to transform lives and strengthen communities.

Through life-skills programmes in schools and a range of community-based initiatives, Ravens on Mission Community

Projects empowers young people to make positive life choices, steering them away from crime while creating opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised communities to realise their full potential.

A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the Certificate for Community Partnership and Service Excellence to the University of South Africa's (UNISA) *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* engaged scholarship project. Presented by Mr Reason Toli, the award recognised the





project's outstanding contribution to building meaningful partnerships and delivering initiatives that uplift, empower and create positive change within communities.

The award was accepted on behalf of the project by Dr Joseph Hlatshwayo, Project Leader, together with project members Prof Ephraim Sibanyoni, Dr Aaron Labane and Mr Michael Panyapanya. Their participation reflected the University's

commitment to engaged scholarship and collaborative partnerships that address complex societal challenges through research, innovation and community engagement.



At the core of *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* is a commitment to changing public perceptions of offenders and demonstrating that, with appropriate support and opportunities, individuals can successfully reintegrate into society as productive, responsible and law-abiding



From left to right: Mr Michael Panyapanya, Mr Reason Toli, Dr Joseph Hlatshwayo, Dr Aaron Labane and Prof Ephraim Sibanyoni

citizens. The project recognises that successful reintegration extends beyond correctional facilities and depends on communities that embrace restoration, inclusion and second chances.

Collaboration remains a defining feature of the initiative. *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* works closely with the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), particularly Community Corrections offices, while partnering with non-profit organisations dedicated to restorative justice, offender rehabilitation and successful community reintegration. The project also places particular emphasis on empowering female

parolees and probationers through targeted skills development and mental health awareness programmes, acknowledging the unique challenges they face during their transition back into society.

Receiving the Mandela Legacy Business Award affirms that safer communities are built not only through accountability, but also through compassion, collaboration and meaningful opportunities for restoration. Every partnership forged, every life transformed and every opportunity created contributes to stronger, safer and more resilient communities.