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Painting futures, restoring hope: UNISA's *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* brings Madiba's legacy to life

In the true spirit of Nelson Mandela's legacy, UNISA's *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* Engaged Scholarship Project joined hands with the Mamelodi Community Corrections office on 17 July 2025 to honour Mandela Day at Tshegofatsong School for the Disabled in Mamelodi East. Guided by the principle of dedicating 67 minutes of service to others, the day reflected Madiba's enduring message of compassion, unity and community upliftment.

The morning began with a warm welcome from the school principal, whose heartfelt words of appreciation set the tone for a day filled with purpose and hope. Representatives from *Tshokollo ya Setšhabeng* — Dr Tandiwe Mdlungu, Mr Charles Kgoale and Mr Patrick Matsemela — rolled up their sleeves alongside



community members and parolees to paint and refurbish sections of the school.

The participation of parolees carried deep meaning. Their contribution reflected transformation, accountability and the positive outcomes of rehabilitation. It showcased the Department of Correctional

Services' continued dedication to restorative justice and reintegration — values that lie at the heart of community corrections.

As part of their outreach, the team also donated essential toiletries such as soap, toothpaste, sanitary pads and face cloths — simple yet powerful gestures that uphold the dignity and well-being of the learners. The gratitude expressed by the school community was a touching reminder of the impact of collective compassion.

This Mandela Day initiative beautifully captured the spirit of *Ubuntu* — the belief that our shared humanity binds us together. It reminded all present that true rehabilitation and reintegration become most meaningful when communities and institutions stand together in solidarity and service.



“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

— Nelson Mandela

From prison to purpose: *Operation Lukisa Sgela* turns the tide against youth crime and bullying

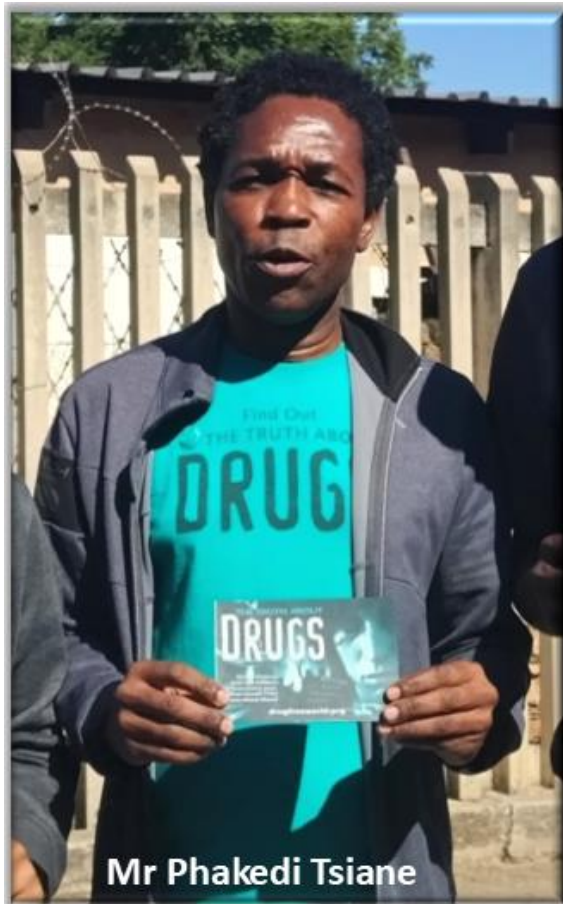
What began as one man's journey of redemption behind prison walls has grown into a powerful community movement, transforming the lives of young people across South Africa. *Operation Lukisa Sgela*, founded by former inmate Mr Phakedi Tsiane, is an anti-crime, anti-bullying and youth development initiative

that is reshaping the narrative of second chances and social responsibility.

Born from the harsh lessons of incarceration, *Operation Lukisa Sgela* was conceived by Tsiane while serving time in prison. Determined to prevent others, especially learners, from making the same mistakes, he turned his experience into a

mission of hope, discipline and transformation.

“I realised that the cycle of crime starts young,” says Tsiane. “If we can reach learners early, before the streets do, we can change lives, families, and entire communities.”



At its heart, *Operation Lukisa Sgela* is a preventative and rehabilitative community programme that seeks to steer youth away from crime through education, mentorship and active community involvement. The initiative primarily operates in Mamelodi and surrounding townships, partnering with schools to conduct awareness campaigns,

anti-bullying sessions and cleaning drives aimed at restoring both dignity and discipline within school environments. These school-based projects go beyond tidying classrooms, they build character. Learners are encouraged to take pride in their surroundings, respect authority and treat peers with kindness and empathy. The programme's motivational school visits and interactive talks tackle pressing issues such as cyberbullying, peer pressure, substance abuse, school violence and respect for educators. Through open dialogue, learners are exposed to the real-life consequences of crime and are guided toward positive and responsible choices. A major strength of *Operation Lukisa Sgela* lies in its mentorship and character development approach. Young participants are coached to develop self-discipline, empathy and accountability. The programme reinforces basic yet powerful values, attending classes regularly, wearing proper uniforms and upholding school codes of conduct.

Collaboration is another cornerstone of Tsiane's vision. *Operation Lukisa Sgela* works hand-in-hand with the South African Police Service (SAPS), Community Policing Forums (CPF), Metro Police, the Department of Health and local school wardens. Together, these stakeholders ensure that efforts to fight youth crime are not isolated but part of a coordinated and sustainable community response.

The initiative also aligns with the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) an education department programme focused on improving school culture and learner discipline. By reinforcing these principles, *Operation Lukisa Sgela* helps keep learners off the streets and engaged in meaningful activities that promote growth and self-worth.

Through education, mentorship and community action, *Operation Lukisa Sgela* is proving that personal failure can give rise to public transformation. What began as one man's story of redemption is now a

movement of hope that continues to inspire young people to choose education, respect and positive citizenship over crime and violence.

"We are not just fighting crime," Tsiane says. "We are building a generation that values life, education and community."

In communities long plagued by youth crime and school violence, *Operation Lukisa Sgela* stands as a beacon of possibility, a reminder that true change begins with courage, compassion and a commitment to give back.

