

C2A reaches behind bars



Last year, Unisa's Chance 2 Advance (C2A) programme, in partnership with the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) Head Office Directorate: Research and Development Skills, conducted a successful pilot aimed at exploring the feasibility of rolling out a learning and skills development programmes across DCS facilities in South Africa. The 2017 pilot reached 74 participants: 46 offenders and 28 parolees across three Correctional services facilities in Pretoria.

In September 2018, C2A joined forces again with the DCS Head Office Directorate: Research and Development Skills to roll out relevant workshops for offenders, parolees, and DCS officials, this time across 11 correctional services facilities in three provinces, Gauteng, Limpopo, and the North West.

The programme focused on learning opportunities that enhance the employability of parolees, improve communication skills, develop entrepreneurial consciousness and activity, and support participants in aspects pertaining to food and nutrition and the development of food gardens in order to improve health and food security.

The 2018 DCS-C2A collaboration reached 550 participants. Of the 550, 145 participants were DCS Technical Vocational Training Education (TVTE) students and five were DCS staff members. Through the C2A office, 14 Unisa academics from five colleges—Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Human Sciences, and Law—participated by creating and facilitating relevant and user-friendly learning and empowerment workshops where knowledge was shared between academics and participants.

This is what participants had to say

Participant 1: "I want to thank Unisa; today I am equipped with entrepreneurial, communication and problem solving skills. Please take this programme to our communities and train our children in business and entrepreneur skills so they could become well informed entrepreneurs."

Participant 2: "This programme has offered development lessons which has instilled my confidence to pursue my dream of becoming a responsible business person."

Participant 3: “Due to poverty and the high rate of hunger in our communities, I have learnt the importance of starting an organic garden at home. I have also learnt about the importance of eating a nutritionally balanced meal.”

What C2A facilitators had to say



Maryam Moosa

“The DCS programme really took me out of my comfort zone and tested my ability to adapt my facilitation skills and workshop content to these unique circumstances. We had a full room of participants who mostly seemed keen to learn. Since our workshop is aimed at employability skills, participants were especially interested in creating their own future work opportunities once they are released.

“The venue was not ideal, with cramped seating and insufficient resources in terms of sound bars and Wi-Fi. Despite these challenges, I believe that the workshop was a success and that the participants did take something away from it. It seems as if the offenders are a largely overlooked group who do not get the necessary help and support that they require. Many do not know what they will do once they are released and worry about finding a job. It is our hope that the workshop helped to give them some hope of a life after prison”.



Sadika Ismail

“I found the experience to be a real eye-opener and a great learning experience. We reworked our content for the context and found that many of these students were more open to the entrepreneurial aspects of employment. We also experienced them to be very reserved throughout the morning and found much more interaction as the day progressed. Those that were interested in the material we offered, interacted with us and contributed meaningfully in the class. We look forward to other projects with Chance 2 Advance”.



Nhlanhla Radebe

“Education, skills, and empowerment programmes are highly needed in our society. C2A provides a much-needed lifelong learning programme. Our communities could be a better place if we follow up and offer advanced education. It fulfils me to be a community change agent. I can't imagine myself elsewhere, other than engaging and changing people's lives for better.”

**Compiled by the C2A team*