

## REHABILITATION AND EXTENSION SERVICES IN THE ZAMBIA CORRECTIONAL SERVICE

*Ng'andu Shandomo\**

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Zambia Correctional Service is governed by chapter 37 of the laws of Zambia, The Zambia Corrections Act of 2021,<sup>1</sup> which was under review from 2016 following the Service's name change from Zambia Prisons Service to Zambia Correctional Service on 5 January 2016. According to article 193 of the Republican Constitution,<sup>2</sup> the Service is mandated to manage all prisons and correctional centres across the country. The mission statement of the Service is "*To provide humane custody and quality correctional services in order to promote public safety and to contribute to the social economic development of the country.*"

This in itself entails that the correctional service endeavours to promote programmes and projects aimed at positive reintegration of inmates back into society and to reduce the rate of recidivism of both inmates and juveniles lodged at the correctional centres and prisons around the country. This write up aims at highlighting the programmes and projects being undertaken by the Zambia Correctional Service to promote positive reintegration of released inmates in Zambia through the provision of rehabilitation and extension services to inmates.

### II. REHABILITATION IN THE ZAMBIA CORRECTIONAL SERVICE

The Zambia Correctional service promotes reintegration through provision of education and treatment programmes to inmates before release from correctional centres and prisons. The education provided ranges from literacy, primary, secondary and tertiary education. This educational programme sees inmates learn basic reading and writing skills, arithmetic and technology. At tertiary level, inmates are allowed to pursue certificate, diploma and degree programmes of their choice with Zambia's higher learning institutions and universities. It suffices to mention that the service has partnered with well-wishers to support inmates in getting this much needed education.

The treatment programmes are available immediately after admission and assessment. These include counselling, therapy and extracurricular activities that help to address the psychological needs of the inmates in line with the offence they committed. Qualified psychologists are available to provide this service.

Agriculture is one of the major economic activities practiced around the country. The Service is providing general agriculture as both a skill for business and means of basic survival and living. This programme provides employment for released inmates and a source of food.

Furthermore, the service has in the recent past embarked in robust skills training programmes and projects for inmates. These trade-tested skills range from carpentry and joinery, entrepreneurship, auto mechanics, power and electrical, visual art, pottery, cutting tailoring and design technology and many other skills provided under the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) system in Zambia. The skills training programmes have positively contributed to the acquisition of skills necessary for inmates to realize a meaningful source of income once released from correctional centres.

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\* Assistant Commissioner, Officer in Charge, Zambia Correctional Service, Zambia.

<sup>1</sup> The Zambia Correctional Service Act, 2021

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of Zambia Act, 2016

With the aforementioned, officer capacity-building programmes in rehabilitation and extension programmes of released inmates have had officers trained in the proper management of offenders, respect for the rights of individuals in detention and implementation of the minimum rules for people in detention<sup>3</sup>. This in itself creates a friendly environment and platform where inmates are able to benefit from the many reintegration and treatment programmes and services championed by the service.

### **III. EXTENSION SERVICES**

In the quest to maximize positive reintegration, the Service has established the directorate of extension services whose mandate includes advocacy for employment of inmates who acquired skills while in incarceration, promotion of continuous provision of health care to inmates and continuation of education services especially to inmates who are released before they complete their educational and skills programmes.

The extension services also champion offender-victim reconciliation. This is carried out through specially trained officers that are based at each correctional facility. These officers run peace clubs for inmates that aim at equipping them with basic conflict management skills which help in reducing the likelihood of reoffending. They also carry out victim-offender reconciliation programmes. This promotes a friendly environment where released inmates are able to work and interact without hostility from the general public.

The extension services also provide startup support for setting up income generating activities for inmates through support from the Government. This support is provided as financial capital or provision of tools and equipment, depending on the recommendation from the extension officers after a thorough assessment. The released inmates are also helped to set up cooperative groups that include members of the community and these are eligible to access constituency development funds to fund income-generating activities for the cooperative.

Another programme provided through extensions is the Compulsory Aftercare Order (CACO). This provides for continued supervision of inmates that have served their sentence but are determined to still be at risk of offending. The law<sup>4</sup> provides for conditions to be attached to the release of such an inmate to the effect that if they fail to follow the terms of their release, they may be taken back into custody. This usually applies to those inmates who have reoffended multiple times after serving a sentence of imprisonment.

Community sensitization, which is the sharing of educational information with the community, and awareness programmes have recently been used to promote reintegration of released inmates. This is done through road shows, drama and culture, TV shows and feature films done by the Zambia Correctional Theater and Arts Club. Other sensitization activities are done through the Public Relations Office using various media platforms such as social media and the Press.

### **IV. CHALLENGES**

Realizing and implementing these reintegration programmes has come with a number of challenges. First, it has been difficult to change the attitude of society towards inmates. It has been observed that the negativity towards ex-inmates has continued to lead to rejection, discrimination and segregation for most of the inmates that are released. This has resulted in them failing to get jobs, sustain businesses and establish healthy social relationships, hence increasing the chances of reoffending.

Second, there is a lack of institutions to partner with the Correctional Service in reintegration of inmates. This has resulted in the inadequacy of monitoring and supervision of the discharged inmates. It has led to extension officers from the Correctional Service having to carry out a lot of roles in an effort to ensure that

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<sup>3</sup> The General Assembly, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), 8 January 2016.

<sup>4</sup> The Zambia Correctional Service Act, 2021

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the inmates are successfully reintegrated, hence a compromised quality of service.

Further, some ex-inmates live in remote areas and in towns that do not have correctional facilities. This creates a challenge of accessing them regularly to ensure consistent monitoring of their reintegration.

### **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The paradigm shift from prisons to corrections brought in positive developments to how offenders are treated during and after incarceration. The implementation of skills training, education, and health management and extension services is giving an opportunity to ex-inmates to reintegrate in a sustainable manner, even though a few challenges still exist.

To overcome the challenges that are currently being faced I would recommend working with local authorities, such as the councils and traditional leaders to help trace and monitor released inmates, especially in remote areas. I further recommend working with religious and Non-Governmental Organizations to engage the communities to help eliminate discrimination against former inmates and to build support systems for them.