

Doha Declaration Programme supporting prisoner rehabilitation in Namibia

GOBABIS - The Governor for Omaheke Region in Namibia, Festus Uitele, has commended the Namibia Correctional Service (NCS) through the Gobabis Correctional Facility (GCF), for taking innovative steps to ensure food security which is linked to health outcomes, in its facilities.



The NCS is implementing prisoner rehabilitation projects with support from UNODC's Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, which assists Member States in breaking the cycle of re-offending through effective rehabilitation and social reintegration. In Namibia,

UNODC has partnered with the World Food Programme to support national efforts in improving the nutrition of inmates and in rehabilitating them.

The Governor visited a thriving hydroponic greenhouse at GCF, built in January 1967 and inaugurated in June that year.

Assistant Commissioner Saima Kamwangha briefed the Governor on the hydroponic project, stating: "Since the state has been advocating for innovation and the creation of sustainable projects, NCS has embraced the appeal to meet the government halfway in terms of food production of nutritional value to offenders."

The first harvest was made in July, she explained, adding that the facility was since then offering its services to the wider community.

Senior Chief Correctional Officer Saara Namupula outlined activities that inmates were doing.

Governor Uitele said the hydroponics greenhouse, which now produces spinach, cabbages, kale, onions and green peas both for consumption by inmates and for sale, was a welcome innovation given the harsh climate of Omaheke Region which borders the Kalahari Desert.

“With the current drought and an uncertain future in terms of crop production in this region, you have taken the right decision in setting up this hydroponic project to grow various vegetables. That will contribute to the nutrition of our inmates and community at large,” he said.

Describing his visit to the project as eye-opening, he praised the project’s backers: “We really appreciate the impact of UNODC and WFP’s interventions in this region, and these ideas that uplift the living standards of our people,” he said.

Bai Mankay Sankoh, the Country Director and Representative of WFP in Namibia, also visited the project, noting the remarkable success which UN agencies can achieve working together.

“The work done by UNODC and WFP in Gobabis clearly demonstrates that when UN agencies embrace the vision of a UN development system that delivers as one across mandates, sectors and institutional boundaries, we can better support the government and the people we are to serve. We will continue doing business differently and delivering joined-up support to achieve SDG Two – ending hunger,” he said.

Ms. Ruusa Mushimba, UNODC National Project Coordinator for Namibia, said the Gobabis project was “exemplary, a good story to tell.”

She remarked that as Namibia joined the rest of the world in striving to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), it was important to focus on food security which is linked to health outcomes. “We should also empower those who are most vulnerable. If we do not do that, we might face challenges in attaining SDGs.”

Ms. Mushimba added that rehabilitation and integration of people in conflict with the law was an imperative, given that inmates return to the wider community after serving their sentences.

“If we don’t empower them, or address the root causes of crime, some may reoffend. Once prisoners gain skills, they will use them to put food on the table at home and generate income,” she said.

The Chief Executive Officer for Gobabis Municipality, Ignatius Thudinyane, accompanied the Governor.

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CAPTIONS:

PICKINGS: Gobabis Correctional Facility inmates collect spinach from their UNODC, WFP-supported hydroponic greenhouse last week.

LIGHT: From left: Ms. Ruusa Mushimba,

from UNODC, Bai Sankoh, WFP Country Representative in Namibia, Omaheke Governor Festus Uitele, Gobabis CEO Ignatius Thudinyane, Assistant Commissioner Saima Kamwangha and John Serwanga from WFP in a jovial mood on their way to a UNODC, WFP-supported hydroponics greenhouse in Gobabis last week.

HI: Assistant Commissioner Saima Kamwangha, Officer in Charge of Gobabis Correctional Facility (right) welcomes Bai Sankoh, WFP Country Representative in Namibia to her facility last week.

WOW: Omaheke Governor Festus Uitele (left) reacts during a briefing on a UNODC, WFP-supported hydroponics greenhouse in Gobabis while Gobabis CEO Ignatius Thudinyane listens in last week.

BRIEFING: Assistant Commissioner Saima Kamwangha, Officer in Charge of Gobabis Correctional Facility (right) briefs Omaheke Governor Festus Uitele (left) while Senior Chief Correctional Officer Saara Namupula and Gobabis CEO Ignatius Thudinyane look on.

VISIT: From left: Ms. Ruusa Mushimba, from UNODC, Assistant Commissioner Saima Kamwangha, Officer in Charge of Gobabis Correctional Facility Bai Sankoh, WFP Country Representative in Namibia, Gobabis CEO Ignatius Thudinyane, John Serwanga from WFP and Omaheke Governor Festus Uitele react upon seeing thriving vegetables in UNODC, WFP-supported hydroponics greenhouse in Gobabis last week. *Photos: Moses Magadza/UNODC*