

IMAGINE UGANDA MAGAZINE

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**A STORY OF HOPE,
RESILIENCE AND HARDWORK
ABOUT LIFE AFTER PRISON**



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NOTE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR



Dear reader,

As we come to the end of 2016, we are excited to share with you possibilities of life after prison for young people.

The Management and staff of Advance Afrika continues with its commitment and dedication to fulfill the vision of a safe and free society where young people especially those who are in prison and former prison inmates live with dignity and realise their full potential.

For the past three years, we have been able to register success stories we feel proud of and for this first edition of ***Imagine Uganda Magazine***, we feature the story of James Opoka whom we met at Pece Prison in Gulu, while serving an eight months sentence for theft of family property, James committed to change his life as soon as he is released from prison. He was able to use the youth prisoner's economic empowerment training as a stepping stone for life after prison. Just like James many have been trained and we shall share their stories in our subsequent magazine.

Earlier this year, we launched a new three years action supported by European Union and Caritas Switzerland. The Economic Empowerment and Social Reintegration of ex-inmates project will reach out to 1,200 inmates and ex-inmates in Lango and Acholi sub region by 2019.

We want to thank The European Union, Caritas Switzerland, and key stakeholders like Uganda Prisons Service, AGEH, Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA), International Labour Organisation, Gulu University and all community business men and women who volunteer to mentor ex-inmates to make their reintegration a reality, for making this dream come true.

I implore all stakeholders to join hands with us as we continue to create better societies through rehabilitation.

Advance Afrika, where dignity matters!

Ronald Rwankangi _ Country Director

IMAGINE UGANDA MAGAZINE

EDITORIAL TEAM

MICHAEL OJOK
ROLAND NASASIRA
RONALD RWANKANGI

CONTRIBUTORS

ADAMS HASIYO
MARY FRANCES LINDSTROM
SHARON ATUKUNDA

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL OJOK

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

ENVISAGE SOLUTIONS

PUBLISHED BY

ADVANCE AFRIKA

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Cover photo; Opoka james

This issue is for November 2016. We love to hear from you, send us your favorite story/comment or opinion about life after prison to info@advanceafrika.org and we will feature them. Help us become better with each issue.

Together with our development partners we have made several efforts in the rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration of prison inmates and ex-inmates. We have since:

EMPOWERED



927

youth inmates in
entrepreneurship
and life skills.

REINTEGRATED



428

ex-inmates through
post release visits

BUILT CAPACITIES

in mentoring and coaching, business plan development and assessment and training of trainers in Entrepreneurship and Life skills respectively.



42

entrepreneurship
mentors



78

students' facilitators
from Gulu University

SUPPORTED



293

with startup kits to
start small social
enterprises.



65

Prison Social Workers

A STORY OF HOPE, RESILIENCE AND HARDWORK ABOUT LIFE AFTER PRISON.



My name is James Opoka. I'm 31 years old. I repair and sell bicycles as well as spare parts. I also sell papyrus mats and brooms at the railway crossing in Layibi Central, Gulu District.





In July last year, I was sentenced to eight months in prison for stealing our family savings. As a family, we used to collect money to put up some developments at home, but not everyone liked the idea. One day decided to take part of the money that we had so far collected and distributed it among some family members because I had a paternal uncle who wanted to use the money for other purposes instead of distributing it to family members.

After taking the money, my uncle reported the matter to police and a case of theft was opened against me, I was arrested shortly after and I spent three days in police custody before I was arraigned in court. At first I denied having taken the money but after investigations, I was proved guilty and sentenced to eight months in Prison. I served my sentence from Pece Prison in Gulu. While in prison, I learnt about an organisation called Advance Afrika and the training they were carrying out in prison, I was told that the organisation gives capital to youth prisoners who have been released from prison to help them to do something meaningful and provide for their families in order to live a good live. When I inquired more about how I can get capital after release, the social worker at our prison

told me I have to first attend a business and life skills training being offered by the same organisation for one month, free of charge.

I registered immediately to participate in the training and in the course of the training, we were taught how to do business by starting small, using what we have, how to treat customers, we were helped to understand how to live in harmony with people outside prison, they also encouraged us to forgive ourselves and those we have offended and finally how to write a business plan. In my business plan, I said I would open a small business of selling papyrus mats



“ we were taught how to do business by starting small, using what we have, how to treat customers, we were helped to understand how to live in harmony with people outside prison, they also encouraged us to forgive ourselves and those we have offended and finally how to write a business plan.

because of the high demand where I come from, but also I wanted to revive my bicycle repair business which I was doing before my arrest, so I told myself I would sell mats and use the profits I will be gaining to buy materials and equipment's for repairing bicycles.



I was lucky to have attended their entrepreneurship training, because it helped me understand how to do business especially when it comes to treating customers and when I was released, the organisation visited me at home to find out how I was coping with life outside prison, this impressed me so much because most prisoners thought it was a lie, that may be they will not fulfill their promise once we leave prison, they gave me the chance to work at their farm in Gulu for a few days as I fine tune my business plan and wait for support.

While at the farm, I met my colleagues who were once in prison also helping there, I later learnt that most of them were interested in farming and therefore they were there to learn more about farming. I enjoyed the few days we were together at the farm because it helped us bond and catch up on the experience of life in and out of prison and I was able to earn some money to take care of my basic needs at the time.

When I returned home, I found my family was not in good conditions, my children had stopped going to school and some of my properties like the bicycle and kitchen utensils had been stolen. Till today, I have failed to trace them, neither the person who stole them.



After getting a place near the railway station in Layibi Center to operate from, I was given 100 pieces of papyrus mats and a roll of black dump proof coarse bag to start my business with. At first business was slow and hard, but it soon picked up, I can't go a day without getting at least 10,000 Ugshs. Sometimes I make up to 400,000 Ugshs in a week because I would supply traders going to South Sudan with Papyrus mats.

Besides selling mats, I also repair and sell bicycle spare parts as well as second hand bicycles, I move around and buy bicycle parts in the community and among my colleagues and later on assemble the parts together into a complete bicycle, this helps me to make more money. For instance if I buy spare parts to assemble to assemble a bicycle at 30,000 Ugshs, I can sell that

bicycle between 50,000 and 60,000/= even my former clients whom I lost when I was taken to prison are also coming back one by one.

All these has greatly improved my families welfare, my children are getting back to school and now I can provide for them, I hope to start repairing motor cycles too in the near future and employ other young people in my community.

I want to sincerely thank Advance Afrika for the business training, and support they are giving to prisoners and ex-prisoners in northern Uganda because it is changing lives.

VISITING CGP



We paid a courtesy visit to the Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabashaija earlier in the year to update him about our intervention in Ugandan Prisons and he expressed gratitude to our project “The

Economic Empowerment and Social Reintegration of Youth Ex-prisoners” which compliments their mandate of rehabilitating and reintegrating ex-inmates and pledged continued support on behalf of Uganda Prisons Service.

Caritas Switzerland's Country Coordinator Ms. Kathrin Wyss, Advance Afrika Country Director Ronald Rwankangi and Program Manager, Sharon Atukunda with The Commissioner General of Prisons, Dr. Johnson Byabashaija at his office at Prison Headquarters.



Mary Frances Lindstrom

Prisons are places associated with vulnerability, despair, and loss of hope — but prisons shouldn't be places necessarily associated with loss of humanity and human dignity, or places of hopelessness. Although the challenges are many and the obstacles are formidable for young inmates both in prison and returning to society, Advance Afrika is committed to a vision of hope and aspiration as well as practical realisation of opportunities for ex-prisoners to make a different future for themselves and for their communities.

Advance Afrika head office moved to Gulu.

As we continue to grow, we have to embrace change and as a result our head office has been moved to Gulu, you can find us on plot 29, Acholi road, Pece Housing Estate. This move is to get closer to our beneficiaries and coordinate our work better. We also have another office on Plot 7, Elong-jani Close, Olwol road in Lira district to coordinate our reach out in the lango sub-region and our Kampala office will remain for coordination activities and advocacy.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF INMATES

Uganda Prisons Service (UPS) applauds and recognizes the collaboration with Advance Afrika in the rehabilitation and Reintegration of inmates in the Lango and Acholi sub-region. The entry of the organisation into the sphere of corrections comes at a time when Uganda Prisons Service has changed its philosophy from a punitive to a correction dispensation. Such a change in philosophy demands action oriented decisions and strategic partnership to create visible change.

The average prison population is 48,010 inmates. 44.2 percent are convicts, 55.3 percent are on remand, 0.5 are civil debtors, and 95.6 are male while 4.4 percent are female.

Uganda Prisons Service is constitutionally mandated to contribute to the security of members of the public by offering safe and secure custody to inmates while offering them social rehabilitation and reintegration so that upon discharge, they become productive and law-abiding members of the community. The strategic thinking of Uganda Prisons Service is to anchor social rehabilitation and reintegration as part of the correctional mandate as bestowed by the constitution, strategic partnership with members of the community, civil society organization and other government agencies is of cardinal importance.

While Uganda enjoys a lower recidivism rate of 21 per 100 inmates released and an incarceration rate of 102 per every 100,000 Ugandans. Current crime trends in the country



48,010 AVERAGE PRISON POPULATION

42% CONVICTS

55.3% ON REMAND

0.5% CIVIL DEBTORS

95.6% MALE

4.4% FEMALE

point to continued and sustained surge of people committing crimes and getting imprisoned. This absurd development therefore calls for putting in place strategic partnerships to ensure that those who come to prison are helped to address their criminality and helped to reintegrate back into their communities as productive and law-abiding citizens.

Uganda Prisons Service signed a three year Memorandum of Understanding with Advance Afrika to undertake the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. Under the memorandum, Advance Afrika is to train youth inmates' in 26 Prison units in the two sub-regions of Acholi and Lango in northern Uganda in entrepreneurship and lifeskills. Upon completion of the training, inmates with good business proposals will be given start-up capital to start small income generating projects.

The pilot phase of the project in 2015 demonstrated the crucial contribution Advance Afrika can play in complimenting the efforts of Uganda Prisons Service to rehabilitate and reintegrate inmates. Through training inmates' life skills and entrepreneurship, inmates leaving prisons are prepared to launch their socio-economic lives and address their biggest challenge of finding livelihoods after being away for a long time.

The partnership of Uganda Prisons Service and Advance Afrika brings hope to many youth inmates in the prison units of the two sub-regions and helps in stemming the possibility of the discharged inmates to re-offend.

Mr. Hasiyo Adams
Senior Welfare and Rehabilitation
Officer (Prisons Headquarters)



BOARD MEMBERS VISIT

Our Board of directors joined our field team in the north for two days to orient themselves with what we do and to allow them experience first-hand what our staff go through and see how far we have gone in achieving their dreams, we met and interacted with key stakeholders especially from Uganda Prisons Service, supported ex-inmates and those still serving their sentences.



SUPPORT TO YOUTH LED ORGANISATIONS IN UGANDA

This year, we were greatly privileged to offer support and technical guidance on institutional strengthening to 44 youth led organisations from the districts of Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Soroti, Gulu, Kitgum, Oyam, Lira, Nebbi, Zombo and Arua in Uganda. This was under Youth to Youth (Y2Y) Fund, a major component of Youth Entrepreneurship Facility (YEF), a programme implemented in Uganda by International Labour Organisation and funded by European Union. The main objective of Youth Entrepreneurship Facility (YEF) is to contribute to the creation of decent work for young Africans, both as a means of self-employment and as job creation for others.

Youth to Youth (Y2Y) Fund is a competitive grant scheme to identify and support youth-led entrepreneurship development projects as a means to create decent employment for youth. The Fund is a tool to identify, support and promote innovative, small scale projects on youth entrepreneurship, conceptualized, submitted and implemented by youth-led organizations. It gives youth an opportunity to contribute to youth employment as active development partners rather than just beneficiaries.



MEET IRENE ERBEN MUKASA

Our program manager in charge of Victim-Offender Relationship Project, Civil Peace Service, Performing arts and Children's program.

Irene Mukasa is a peace practitioner and social worker with over five years of working experience in the areas of peace education, dealing with the past, youth empowerment and social counselling. She has worked and studied in Germany, Lithuania, Romania, Rwanda and Uganda with organisations like Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Never Again Rwanda, UNHCR and Life Concern Uganda, among others.

Irene joined us in late 2016 as part of a collaboration with the Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH), a German catholic agency for international development cooperation which believes that all progress begins and ends with people and comes to fruition through interaction and dialogue. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge, owing to her previous work experiences in different countries.

For over 50 years, AGEH has been a reliable partner for development workers and a key source of specialist personnel for many church and other civil society organisations active in the field of international development cooperation work. As a state-recognised personnel service provider, AGEH supplies qualified Christian-oriented experts from Germany and other EU countries for projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. Since being founded by Catholic associations and organisations in 1959, AGEH has supplied over 6,000 experts for development projects.



“ For over 50 years, AGEH has been a reliable partner for development workers and a key source of specialist personnel for many church and other civil society organisations active in the field of international development cooperation work

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zfd Ziviler Friedensdienst
Civil Peace Service



THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE
FOR EASTERN AFRICA



VISION:

A safe and free society where young people live with dignity and realise their full potential

MISSION:

To empower vulnerable youth so as to promote economic development and the prevention of crime and antisocial behaviour, by:

1. Facilitating communities to *Recognise* and *Redress* the root causes of criminality amongst their young people.
2. Enabling the *Rehabilitation*, *Reformation* and *Reintegration* of those who have offended

VALUES:

Dignity, Respect and Integrity



Offices:

Plot 29, Acholi Road, Pece Housing Estate, Gulu District.
Plot 7, Elong-jani Close, Olwol Road, Lira District.
Plot 950, Bukasa Road, Katongole Zone, Muyenga-Bukasa.
P.O Box 36888 Kampala, Uganda.

Tel: +256 414 661 113, +256 392 612 564, +256 706 302 979

Email: admin@advanceafrika.org

Website: www.advanceafrika.org

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