

# IMAGINE UGANDA

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## LIFE AFTER PRISON:

ONE MAN'S STORY OF EMPOWERING  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIS COMMUNITY.



**CARITAS**  
Schweiz  
Suisse  
Svizzera  
Svizzera

**Advance**  
AFRIKA

# Note from the Country Director



**D**ear reader,  
As I write this, Uganda Prisons Service, our core partner in the rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration sector are adopting a more rehabilitative approach in the provision of a humane and secure custody of all inmates under their care. We are honored to join hands with them to facilitate the process of preparing youth inmates for life after prison and we are thrilled to share with you possibilities of life after prison for young people.

Since we started working with youths in and out of prison, we have registered success stories we feel proud to associate with. For this second edition of Imagine Uganda Magazine, we feature the story of Okot Solomon whom we met at Erute Farm Prison in Lira while on remand. Okot was accused and charged with defilement but his parents were able to resolve the issue out of court and he was released after five months. He participated in our entrepreneurship training and wrote a proposal of what he wished to do upon release from Prison. Okot is now a mechanic and a team leader at Youth Initiative to Eradicate Poverty, a community based organisation that brings together young people in his society to learn practical skills in Lira. Just like Okot, many ex-inmates have been trained and we commit to share their stories in our subsequent editions.

The European Union Heads of Mission led by H.E Ambassador Kristian Schmidt, the head of European Union Delegation to Uganda and Ambassador Kristian Schmidt also visited our projects at Gulu Main and Gulu Women Prisons in November 2016. They described our work as a once in a life time opportunity for prison inmates to be given attention and shown how to make a decent living once released. Our plan is to reach out to youth inmates and ex-inmates in Northern Uganda while empowering them with entrepreneurship and life skills to prepare them for life after prison.

Our management and staff are committed and dedicated to fulfilling the vision of a free and safe society where young people especially those who are in prison and former prison inmates live with dignity and realise their full potential.

Advance Afrika, where dignity matters!  
**Ronald Rwankangi**  
Country Director

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## IMAGINE UGANDA MAGAZINE

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### Upcoming Activities/Events

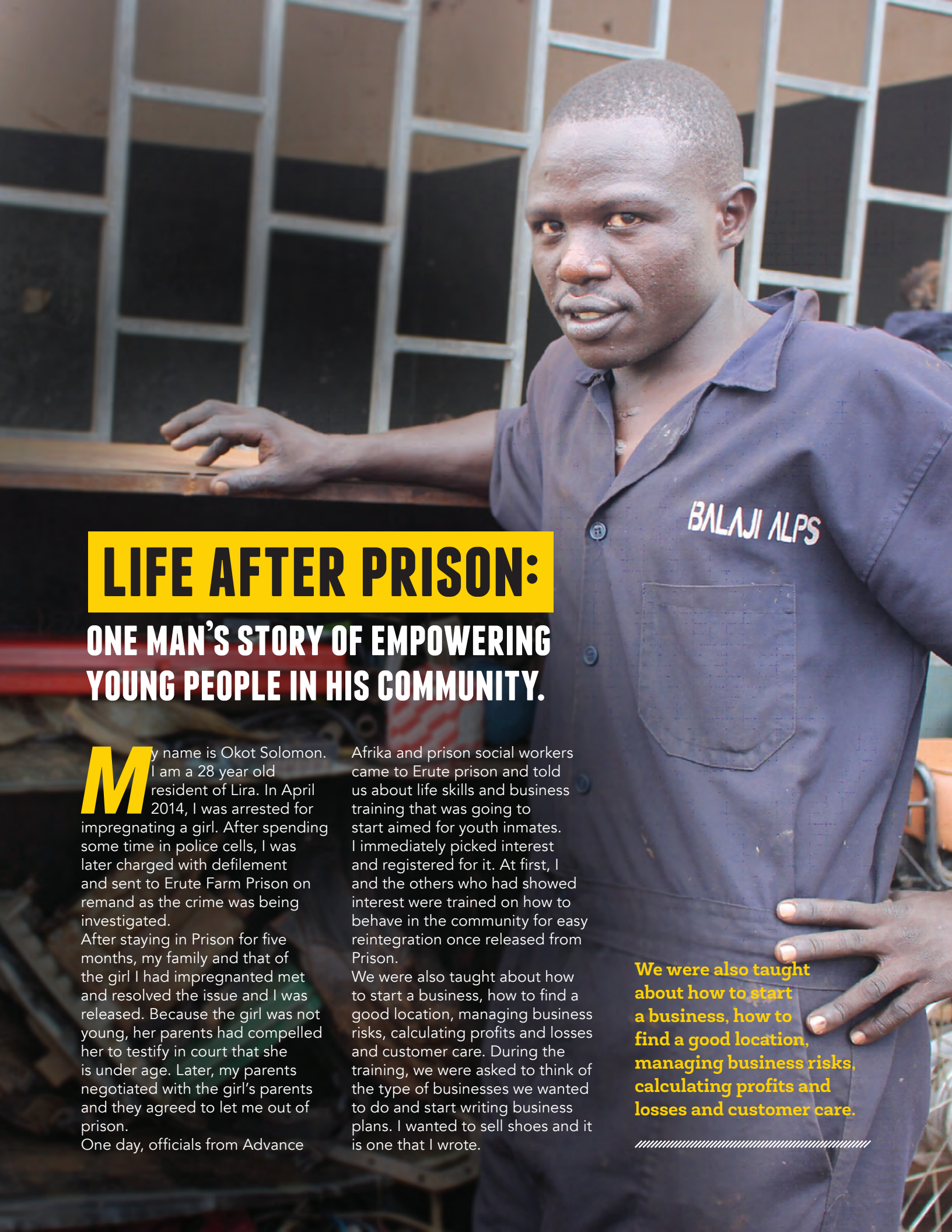
- Staff retreat in Kabale
- Exchange Visit to Rwanda
- Public Dialogues at Pearl Afrique Hotel, Gulu on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017 and Lira at 291 Hotel Suites on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2017
- New website launching soon.
- End of AYE Report.

### Disclaimer:

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union and Caritas Switzerland. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Advance Afrika and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and Caritas Switzerland.

### Cover Photo; Solomon Okot

This issue is for January 2017. We love to hear from you, send us your favorite story/comment or opinion about life after prison to [info@advanceafrika.org](mailto:info@advanceafrika.org) and we will feature them. Help us become better with each issue.



# LIFE AFTER PRISON:

## ONE MAN'S STORY OF EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIS COMMUNITY.

**M**y name is Okot Solomon. I am a 28 year old resident of Lira. In April 2014, I was arrested for impregnating a girl. After spending some time in police cells, I was later charged with defilement and sent to Erute Farm Prison on remand as the crime was being investigated. After staying in Prison for five months, my family and that of the girl I had impregnated met and resolved the issue and I was released. Because the girl was not young, her parents had compelled her to testify in court that she is under age. Later, my parents negotiated with the girl's parents and they agreed to let me out of prison. One day, officials from Advance

Afrika and prison social workers came to Erute prison and told us about life skills and business training that was going to start aimed for youth inmates. I immediately picked interest and registered for it. At first, I and the others who had showed interest were trained on how to behave in the community for easy reintegration once released from Prison. We were also taught about how to start a business, how to find a good location, managing business risks, calculating profits and losses and customer care. During the training, we were asked to think of the type of businesses we wanted to do and start writing business plans. I wanted to sell shoes and it is one that I wrote.

**We were also taught about how to start a business, how to find a good location, managing business risks, calculating profits and losses and customer care.**





Solomon Okot with his Youth trainees

When I was released, getting a good location for my business became a challenge. Since I was a mechanic, I decided to look for a garage where to work as I waited for the startup capital Advance Afrika. It did not take long. When they visited me, they met me working in a garage at Kobil fuel Station, Lira.

I was given a capital of Shs300,000 (Three hundred thousand) which I used for buying tools for my workplace. At that time, there were some young people within town who showed interest in mechanics. I then started training them on how to repair vehicles. When I was in prison, I noticed that there were people who were arrested while at School and they would be interested in going back to school once released. I also thought to myself that it could be difficult to start from where one had stopped. It is then that the idea of offering

**I was given a capital of Shs300,000 (Three hundred thousand) which I used for buying tools for my workplace. At that time, there were some young people within town who showed interest in mechanics. I then started training them on how to repair vehicles.**

vocational skills came to my mind. I thought of opening up my own garage where such young people who don't have what to do can get affordable training.

When the management of the garage where I was working realized I was training other people, they asked me to let them go or find another place because they didn't have space. They could only accommodate me. In December 2016, I got a two roomed house with an empty space behind it along Kampala highway in Ojwina division. I decided to rent it. Currently, I am setting up the place to train the youth in vocational skills like tailoring, welding, mechanics, carpentry and joinery, nursery bedding and tree planting. Most young people end up in prison because they lack what to do and access to proper education. We have

formed a community based organisation called Youth Initiative to Eradicate Poverty (YIEP) and the training institute will belong to the group. We have already finalized registration at sub county level and now in the process of registering at the district.

As I worked to make life better, I met the lady I was accused of defiling. She apologized to me and on behalf of her parents. I told her it was fine since all that was in the past. I had to forgive her because she has my child and I could not afford to live with the anger. I felt a sigh of relief.

I now have a wife and intend to marry her in 2017. I also support my child by providing the things she needs since she is also starting school this year.

For Advance Afrika, they should continuously follow up ex-prison inmates they have supported to see how they are doing and if possible, give more support to those who are progressing and like to expand their business.

I feel it is good to support fellow youth to allow them learn how to make a living for themselves.

I was also supported by people to reach where I am. Some of them don't have resources to go to school especially in current times when education is so costly. If they acquire vocational training, they can create their own jobs and make a living out of them.



Solomon Okot repairing a customer's vehicle at Kobil Petrol Station, Lira

**As I worked to make life better, I met the lady I was accused of defiling. She apologized to me and on behalf of her parents. I told her it was fine since all that was in the past.**



Okot Solomon (in white) with a trainee and member of YIEP at their nursery bed



The Sub-county registration certificate of YIEP

# European Union Heads of Mission Visit Gulu Main and Gulu Women Prisons

We were privileged to be visited by the European Union Head of Missions led by H.E Amb. Kristian Schmidt, the head of European Union Delegation to Uganda on the 23rd of November 2016. The delegation visited our project

at Gulu Main and Gulu Women prison to assess the progress of the Economic Empowerment and Social Reintegration of ex-inmates project and interact with key stakeholders on the issues of rehabilitation, reformation and

reintegration of prison inmates and ex-inmates. This was a remarkable and life time opportunity to us and Uganda Prisons Services as well as the project itself.



# H.E Dr. Peter Blomeyer, the German Ambassador to Uganda Pays a Courtesy Call on us at our Head Office in Gulu.

We hosted the German Ambassador to Uganda, H.E Dr. Peter Blomeyer and other Civil Society Organisation's active in the field of Reintegration of former Lord's Resistant Army victims at our head office in Gulu, where we facilitated a discussion

about rehabilitation, reintegration and healing. We also visited Burcoro survivors group in Awach Sub-county, Gulu District to get first-hand information on what transpired during the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency in that community.

Dr. Peter Blomeyer, AA staff and representatives from other CSO's in Gulu



Dr. Peter Blomeyer, AA staff meeting some members of Burcoro Survivors group



Dr. Peter Blomeyer, inspecting a monument built in honor of Burcoro massacre victims during the LRA insurgency in northern Uganda

# Advance Afrika's Contribution to our Work



In prison, we have done a lot in regard to inmate's rehabilitation and reformation. We try as much as possible to get them to turn away from crimes that could have led to their imprisonment. The rehabilitation process involves education, counseling, sports, spiritual, moral and vocational training, among others. However, little was being done to ensure that

these inmates are resettled back into their communities. When Advance Afrika came in 2014 to give a helping hand in their rehabilitation, as social workers, we were trained as trainers in entrepreneurship and life skills to cater for reintegration of ex-prison inmates. Under this arrangement, we identify youth inmates who are left with a short time period to complete their sentence and are willing to be trained in business and life skills and impart them with knowledge to help them start small businesses once released from prison. During the business and life skills training, inmates are given a chance to develop their business proposals that we help fine tune. Thereafter, they are given some capital in form of start-up kits to ensure that they get a source of livelihood once out of prison. After the training, we conduct

pre-release visits to the inmate's community before they are released and post-release visit after they have returned to the community. During post-release visits, we provide mentorship and life skills to support and enable them cope with life after imprisonment. We also help them assess if the business plans they developed from prison are viable. Advance Afrika's intervention has turned out to be very vital especially at this time when Uganda Prisons Service is shifting its focus from a punitive institution to one that offers safe and humane custody to inmates while preparing them for life outside prison. The work the organisation is doing ensures a complete cycle of rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration.

**Andrew Okello. Regional Welfare and Rehabilitation Officer, Acholi sub-region.**



**Advance Afrika attains an advanced level Non-Governmental Organisation quality assurance certificate for embracing global standards for civil society organisation's accountability.**

As an organisation undergoing a steep learning curve which to us is a great opportunity to learn, unlearn and re-learn. We volunteered and willingly subjected ourselves to self-scrutiny in late 2016. This saw us apply to be assessed by Non-Governmental Organisations Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM) whose major aim is to promote adherence to generally acceptable ethical standards and operational norms by Civil Society Organisations. QuAM sets principles and standards of behaviour for responsible practice, protecting the credibility and integrity of certified NGOs in Uganda.

We subjected ourselves to this self-scrutiny because we saw this as a tool to internally regulate, know our strength and improve our weak areas. They among other things looked at our governance, management and resource mobilization systems and we successfully went through the certification process and got an advanced level certificate.

**Sheila Innocent (Finance and Admin Manager)**

# Advance Afrika Supports National Schools Debate Championship 2016

Advance Afrika partnered with National Debate Council to support the 2016 National Schools Debate Championship where students from over 38 Secondary Schools across the Country debated about "Creating Better Communities through Rehabilitation of Prisoners".

The exciting yet educative championship enabled the students to learn about the justice system with major emphasis on Uganda Prisons Service, how it operates and why an organisation like us is interested in the rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration of ex-prison inmates.

A select team of students took to the floor of parliament for a debate with Members of Parliament on the motion of "This house would privatize prisons" before Mengo Senior School were crowned champions in the afternoon triumphing over Mbarara High School in a heated debate about Prisons focusing on rehabilitation rather than retribution.

The National Schools Debate Championship is an annual event for secondary schools and Uganda's most celebrated debate championship organized by the National Debate Council and hosted by Parliament of Uganda. It has been happening since 2009 and is national in character. The week long, fully residential championship brings together students from across Uganda to debate on a given theme.



Mengo Senior School, the Champion of 2016 National School Debate Championship



Advance Afrika Country Director, addressing participants of the 2016 National School Debate Championship at Parliament of Uganda



Brigadier Felix Kulaigye awarding Abass the best speaker of the championship



Hon. Ariko Edmund Herbert Okworo. Soroti Municipality Member of Parliament Representing the speaker at the closure of the 2016 National School Debate Championship

# Meet our New Staff

Three years ago, we sat in a tiny two roomed office in Gulu accommodating only four staff. Today we enjoy a great team of 26 staff with expertise in different areas that add value to our work. We have established three fully fledged offices in Kampala, Lira and a Head Office in Gulu. This growth has not just come by

unplanned; the continued hard work and support from the team, our partners and stakeholders, has brought us to where we are now and will take us to where we are heading in the future. Meet the new personnel's who joined us.



**Komakech Robert**  
Office Assistant



**Ntende J. Daniel**  
Project Trainee



**Otim Robert**  
Driver



**Muzamil Ali**  
Project Trainee



**Alleluia nowamaani**  
Accounts assistant



**Irene Erben Mukasa**  
Program Manager



**Wachal Emmanuel**  
Project Trainee



**Frank Twinamatsiko**  
Manager Fundraising and Special  
Projects

## **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:

Facilitating communities to **Recognise** and **Redress** the root causes of criminality amongst their young people.

Enabling the **Rehabilitation**, **Reformation** and **Reintegration** of those who have offended

## **VALUES:**

Dignity, Respect and Integrity

Follow us on:     

### **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.

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