

Advance afrika recognized for its effort
in peace building in northern Uganda

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services at Gulu women's prison

Advance Afrika establishes performing
arts centers in prisons

IMAGINEUGANDA

THIS MAGAZINE IS PRODUCED BY ADVANCE AFRIKA WITH FUNDING FROM EUROPEAN UNION AND CARITAS SWITZERLAND VOL 01, ISSUE 03, MARCH 2017

**MY CHILDREN
GOT MARRIED
WHEN I WAS
IN PRISON**

- MARGARET



CARITAS
Schweiz
Suisse
Svizzera
Sikara

Advance
AFRIKA

Note from the Country director



Just like Margaret, many women in rural Uganda go through the same ordeal and we shall share their stories in our subsequent magazine issues.

Dear reader,

The feeling of hopelessness arising from poverty, unemployment, failure to access educational opportunities and poor governance among women is a global pattern characteristic especially among vulnerable communities in areas affected by conflict.

In this issue of Imagine Uganda Magazine, we feature the story of Margaret Akumu whom we met at Gulu Women Prison while serving a three year sentence for assault following a bitter struggle with her sister-in-law. Margaret lost her husband at a tender age and as soon as he was laid to rest, her in-laws started fighting for his property. When Margaret fought back, it led to her imprisonment.

Just like Margaret, many women in rural Uganda go through the same ordeal and we shall share their stories in our subsequent magazine issues.

As an organisation, we are doing all we can to ensure that women, just like their male counterparts receive all the necessary support to aid their rehabilitation process by establishing day care services at Gulu Women Prison. This will complement the efforts of the Ugandan government in providing special facilities for the children of the female prison inmates in their early childhood development. We are also starting a new project in West Nile region to specifically focus on women in prison and their rehabilitation needs.

Do look out for what participants of the two public dialogues we held in Acholi and Lango sub-regions in February to engage participants and exchange ideas on key issues linked to youth ex-prison inmates and socio-economic reintegration, had to say too.

Our special appreciation goes to the European Union and Caritas Switzerland for believing and supporting our rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration programs in Prison.

Advance Afrika, where dignity matters!

Ronald Rwankangi – Country Director

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IMAGINEUGANDA

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PUBLISHED BY

Advance Afrika

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

- Socio-economic Empowerment of Female Inmates in West Nile project launch
- Training of Prison Social Workers
- New website launch
- End of AYE project Report

Cover Photo: Akumu Margaret



This issue is for March 2017.

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.

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.

My name is Akumu Margaret, a 39-year old mother of eight children. I bake and sell doughnuts at Pajule trading centre in Pader District. In August 2013, I was imprisoned for assault following a bitter struggle with my sister in law.

I lost my husband in 2008 and decided to stay in my marital home to raise my children. While he was sick, his brother asked to come live with us so he can support and I accepted. Unfortunately, he had unknown plans of taking over my husband's property in case he died. Immediately my husband passed on, my brother in-law and his family started fighting for his property and I had to be pushed away because I was looked at as a stumbling block. I was told their late brother's property also belonged to them.

Earlier in 2012, I could not walk because I felt a lot of pain in my legs. I had no excuse but to put the blame on my sister in law and her husband because I thought they were bewitching me for refusing to hand over my late husband's property to them.

From that incident, we started developing hatred towards each other. Later on, I developed misunderstandings with her over land until one day when we engaged in a physical fight. I was arrested and taken to Pader Police Station. After spending eleven days in police custody, I was arraigned before court from where I was proved guilty. I was then asked to pay a fine of Shs500,000.

No money to buy freedom

Since I did not have the money ready with me, I was remanded to Kineni Prison in Pader where I stayed for six months and later sentenced to three years and transferred to Gulu women Prison.

While in prison, my children had no caretaker. Their uncle didn't offer any help to them. Some of my relatives took the younger ones to live with them but the older girls had to fend for themselves in all possible ways, including early



MY CHILDREN GOT MARRIED WHEN I WAS IN PRISON





ONE DAY, I MET PRISON SOCIAL WORKERS TALKING ABOUT AN ORGANISATION THAT OFFERS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS TRAINING TO PRISON INMATES. I LATER LEARNT THAT THE ORGANISATION NOT ONLY EMPOWERS BUT ALSO SUPPORTS EX-PRISON INMATES TO CHANGE THEIR LIFE AFTER PRISON.

marriage. I didn't blame them although I wouldn't have encouraged it if I were free.

At Gulu women prison, I received training in animal husbandry, basket weaving, making jewellery and baking from the African Prisons Project (APP). Despite the good training, I wasn't sure what I would do when I returned home because I knew I had lost everything.

One day, I met Prison Social Workers talking about an organisation that offers entrepreneurship and life skills training to prison inmates. I later learnt that the organisation not only empowers but also supports ex-prison inmates to change their life after prison.

I immediately expressed interest and in the course of training, we were guided to write business plans. I chose baking because I had knowledge about it and it was the easiest thing I could do.

Gates of freedom open

In January 2016 when I was set free after serving my sentence, I did not go back to my husband's house. I went to live in another area because I wanted a fresh start. I wanted to fend for my

children who survived without a single parent for three years while I was away. I decided to rent a house at Lapete Village, Paluo parish, Pajule Sub County in Pader district at Shs10,000 per month.

After settling in my new home, I was visited by a team from Uganda Prisons and Advance Afrika. I later received a table, bucket, frying pan, saucepan and one carton of wheat flour to begin my business. I started by baking doughnuts. Since my business was home based, my first customers were the retail shops near my home and students from the nearby schools.

I started my business with two packets of wheat flour but I currently use six on a daily basis. On a good day, I make profits of at least Shs10,000 and it is from these profits that I earn a living to take care of my family, pay school fees for my younger children, pay rent, among other responsibilities.

My goal is to struggle and see my children through school because they are bright and performing well. I also plan to save and buy land and build a house so that they can have a permanent home



I started my business with two packets of wheat flour but I currently use six on a daily basis. On a good day, I make profits of at least Shs10,000 and it is from these profits that I earn a living to take care of my family, pay school fees for my younger children, pay rent, among other responsibilities.

Advance afrika recognized for its effort in peace building in northern Uganda.

We were honored to join The French Ambassador to Uganda, Stéphanie Rivoal, the German Ambassador to Uganda, Peter Blomeyer and other guests on Sunday 22 January for a Peace & Reconciliation Award Ceremony and a musical Brunch at the French residence to commemorate the signing of the Elysée Treaty, to bear witness to Ugandans about the success of such a political project and to appreciate efforts of Uganda's civil society towards peace and reconciliation in Northern Uganda.

The Elysée Treaty was signed on the 22nd January 1963 by President Charles de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to end the rivalry between France and Germany for the benefit of a long and lasting era of peace and reconciliation between the two countries.

During the ceremony we were recognized and appreciated as an



organisation active in the field of peace building and reconciliation in northern Uganda, a region hard hit by a 20-year war between the government and the LRA.

Ojok Michael – Communications Assistant



What do people say about socio-economic reintegration of ex-prison inmates?

Earlier in 2017, we held two public dialogues in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. They were aimed at engaging the participants and exchanging ideas on key issues linked to youth ex-prison inmates and socio-economic reintegration. We also presented findings of a community receptiveness survey and victim-offender relationship that we conducted to provide insights into obstacles to successful reintegration of ex-prison inmates back into their community. Below is what some of the participants had to say.”



- We need to tackle the root causes of crime among young people in order to succeed in the reintegration of ex-inmates and reduction of reoffending rate.
Mr Hanselm Kyaligonza, Ag. Chief Administrative Officer, Gulu District



- Community policing is paramount in addressing victim - offender reconciliation. We should adopt Alternative justice system as a preliminary measure for handling crime in the community before involving the police.
IP Ogwang Moses Community Liaisons Officer, Gulu Central Police Station



Advance Afrika establishes day care services at Gulu women's prison

Children are special and their early years of life are crucial not only for their health and physical development but also for cognitive and social-emotional development. However, children of inmates do not have the opportunity for social development as they are consequently imprisoned with their mothers. In order to provide opportunities for these children to grow and develop in a positive and healthy way, we are supporting the establishments of day care services for children of prison inmates and those in the nearby communities to provide them with an opportunity to overcome social

barriers created through imprisonment of their mothers.

The day care center which will also be used as a space for inviting mothers to learn and develop skills in the fields of early childhood education and parenting is being constructed at Gulu Women Prison with support from Caritas Switzerland. The need to support women prison inmates with children in prison programming and rehabilitation activities in empowering youth prison inmates with entrepreneurship and life skills. We realised that compared to their male counterparts, women have a

much more complex need that requires urgent attention. We believe that the day care center will complement the efforts of the Ugandan government in providing special facilities for the children of female prison inmates in their early childhood development, promote equal opportunities in the rehabilitation of women prison inmates and create a safe and friendly environment for the children.

Ocaya Stephen Michael. Community Liaisons Officer





Advance Afrika establishes performing arts centers in prisons

In response to social rehabilitation needs of prison inmates, we realized that the best practice for in-prison skills development and psycho-social reintegration is through performing arts. Therefore, we established and equipped two performing art centers at Gulu and Lira Main Prisons respectively. Together with Uganda Prisons Service management, inter-ward competitions were organized to launch the centers in March 2017. The participants showcased exceptional talent in creative dance,

poetry and original composition under the theme Rehabilitation through arts.

The main objective of this annual event is not only to contribute to the healing effect of prison inmates but also allow them to express themselves and gain confidence in their own abilities, thus improved social integration.

Egwar Daphne – Prisons Liaisons Officer



Staff retreat



The 2017 staff retreat was nothing less than a wonderful experience for our staff and key stakeholders. We worked hard in 2016 and we wanted to reflect on that, plan for New Year and say thank you to those who make it possible. We took a week off work in early February and travelled to Kabale and Kigali, Rwanda. From exchanging gifts among staff, driving on the beautiful hills of Kabale, taking boat rides on one of the deepest lakes in Africa and visiting the cleanest city in East Africa, we not only bonded, but also got to know more about each other. When we crossed over to Rwanda, the orderliness and respect of the law that welcomes you is unrivalled and as an organisation that is at the forefront of rehabilitation in Uganda, we also made it a point to visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center and Never Again Rwanda an organisation doing wonderful jobs to ensure sustainable peace in Rwanda to learn from their experiences. This has no doubt left us re-energised and ready to reach out and change more lives.

Happy Birungi Patricia – Project Assistant

Crime, Crime, Crime.

What a deadly cancer!
Where do these notorious terrorists come from?
East to west, North to south,
Everywhere they frequently occur,
Cries, cries are everywhere,
Sweeping across the whole nation

The sources of information in the country.
All the radios, televisions and newspapers cover the same sad news,
People are confused,

The children arrested for idleness and disorderly
The youth arrested for defilement
The elders, both men and women arrested for land dispute.
Hindering them from their dreams
Where is the world going?

Look? Beautiful women are in prison for murder,
Handsome and able bodied men are in prison for robbery,
They are stuck like stagnant water,
They cry, no one to respond. They shout, no one can hear.
We suggest to all the inmates, be careful with crime,
Stop having offense causing motives, they are not the cause of suffering.

Therefore, Ladies and gentlemen in prison and outside,
The young and the old in prison and outside,
Boys and girls in prison and outside,
Let us join hands together,
To wipe out this deadly cancer.

Crime, here we get out of prison,
We are equipped with the knowledge to combat you,
We are ready to wipe you out,
We want the world a free place to live without you.

After prison,
We can drive,
We can make furniture,
We can own our own business.

Written and performed by inmates of Gulu Main Prison

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:     

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