



# CASE STUDY Stories



**CARITAS** Schweiz  
Sulste  
Svizzera  
Svizra

**Advance**  
AFRIKA  
Where Dignity Matters

## *Who We Are*

Advance Afrika is a registered not-for-profit non-governmental organisation which aims at contributing to a safe and free society that upholds the dignity of every person. We seek innovative approaches to creating sustainable sources of livelihood in order to foster resilience among vulnerable people and social justice in the region.

We work with vulnerable youth, including, but not limited to, prison inmates and ex-inmates whom we assist by supporting them with knowledge and skills to seek work, develop decent enterprises and/or expand their already existing businesses. At the same time, we promote relationships between citizens and authorities in order to improve reciprocal understanding and trust.

## *Our Vision*

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

## *Our Mission*

We address the root causes of vulnerability by developing opportunities for economic empowerment and transforming the social functionality of communities.

# Our Work

- Community engagement for transformation and peace-building
- Rehabilitation, reformation and reintegration of offenders
- Creation of employment opportunities
- Skill-building of vulnerable individuals to support workplace success
- Advocacy and communication for changed systems, policies and mindsets

# Our Values

**Courageous leadership:** In Advance Afrika we are leaders of change. We are courageous in tackling difficult challenges; we boldly inspire, innovate and break new ground. We are quick to explore new ways of doing things, learn and grow; and we influence others to do the same.

**Passion:** We are all committed to making a difference. We want to transform the lives of vulnerable people, adding lasting value to our society. This means that we care deeply about achieving a positive impact – we are engaged, results-focused, and deliver our promises.

**Appreciation:** We respect and value all whom we work with. We seek to recognise and affirm each other's differing gifts and insights, celebrating diversity. We champion human dignity. We are optimistic, behaving kindly and respectfully; in times of conflict we seek to reconcile different interests.

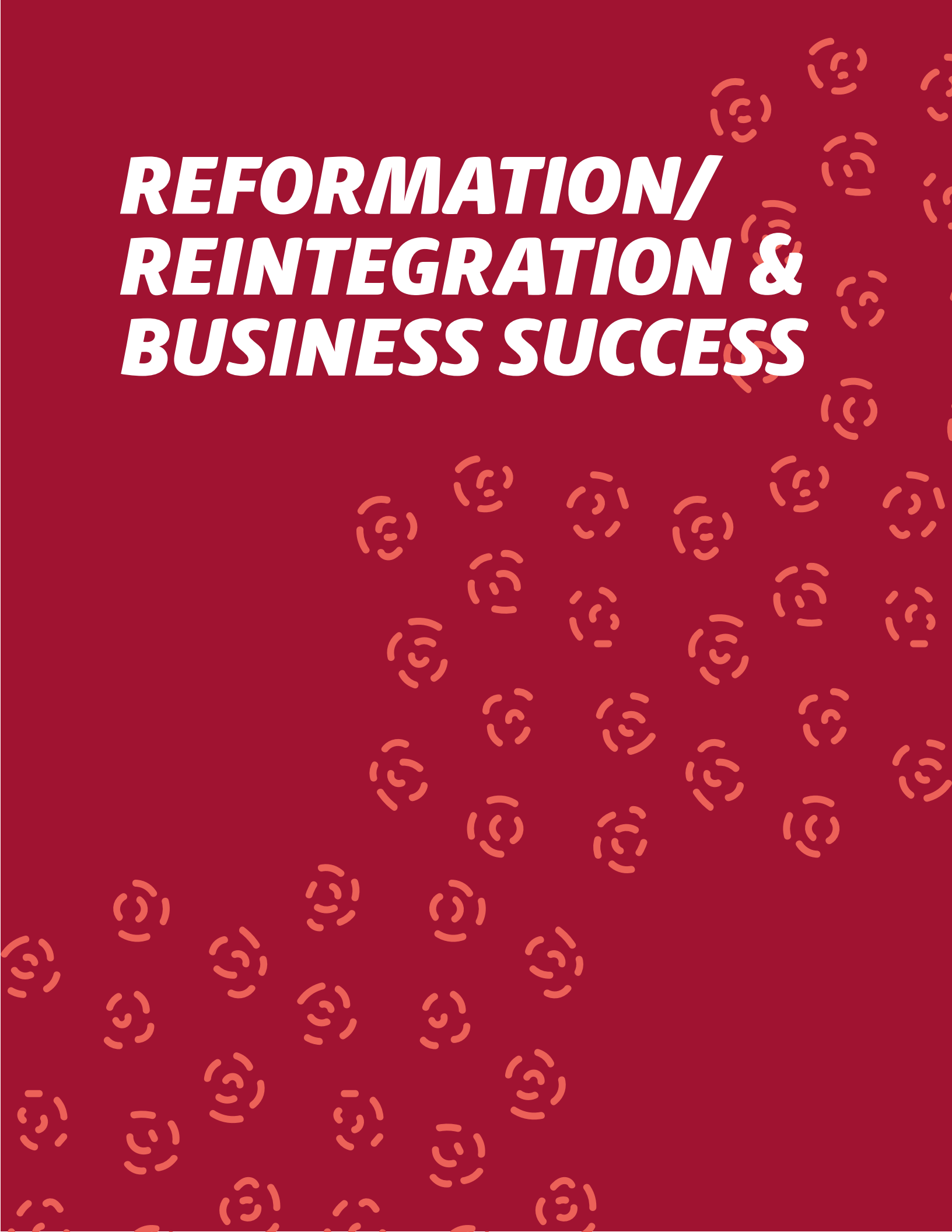
**Professionalism:** We aim for high standards of quality and excellence in all that we do, seeking to discover and deliver best practice. We are disciplined, honest, accountable and transparent so that we build trust with our stakeholders. We are good stewards of the resources entrusted to us, aiming to give value for money.

# Sree Project

In 2016, Advance Afrika, together with Caritas Switzerland, received funding from the European Union to expand its social reintegration efforts of ex-prison inmates in northern Uganda. As a result, the Economic Empowerment and Social Reintegration of Youth Ex-Prisoners project, a three-year action implemented by Advance Afrika in partnership with the Uganda Prisons Service with funding from the European Union and Caritas Switzerland, was launched. The project focused on the social economic rehabilitation and reintegration of 1,200 youth prisoners in 28 prison units in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions in northern Uganda. The project objectives included the Economic and Social Reintegration of Youth ex-Prisoners by developing their entrepreneurship and life skills, establishing learning and mentorship mechanisms to accompany them in the development and implementation of small businesses, providing them with start-up kits to launch small businesses, improving their reintegration into communities, and strengthening the capacities of key stakeholders.

The SREE intervention comes to an end in March 2018. In this publication, we share with you stories of a select group of beneficiaries whom we have worked with in the three years of the action. We met all of them in the various prison units spread across northern Uganda after they expressed interest in being part of the entrepreneurship and life skills training under the project. We have been able to follow them up to their communities after their release from prison. All these stories represent the struggles ex-offenders face while rebuilding their lives. Whereas some have been successful in reintegrating into society and found a stable source of livelihood, thus providing for their families, you will realise that others have not. These latter still face enormous challenges, family breakdown, stigma, poverty, and lack of opportunities for a better livelihood, to mention but a few. We have categorised the stories into thematic areas, namely: Reintegration and business success for those who have reintegrated and are managing their businesses well; Conflict transformation for those who came home and were able to reconcile well with the victims of the crimes they committed; Business challenges for those facing challenges with their businesses; Reintegration challenges for those having difficulties with their reintegration; and Reformation for those who have just been part of the training and are still in prison. We hope that as you enjoy reading these stories, you will also reflect on what each of us can do make life with dignity possible for everyone, including those who have been to prison.

# ***REFORMATION/ REINTEGRATION & BUSINESS SUCCESS***



A man with short dark hair is focused on working on the engine of a red Yamaha motorcycle. He is wearing a grey t-shirt with a large orange graphic that says '50' and 'EST 1988' inside the zero, with 'LARGEST MUSIC FESTIVAL' and 'SUMMERFEST' below it. He is holding a green-handled tool on the engine. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with some blurred greenery and a red structure.

*Advance Afrika supported me with a toolbox that contained motor repair tools such as a set of spanners and pliers, among other items.*

# BABYLON ANYWAR

On 12 December 2013, I was arrested by the police for causing an accident. I had knocked down a child while riding a motorcycle. When I was arraigned before court after spending one year on remand, I was convicted on 17 December 2014 to serve a three-year sentence at Kitgum Central Prison. The child I knocked down has since remained mentally challenged. In my second-last year of confinement in 2015, I learnt of an organisation that was training youth inmates in skills development and entrepreneurship to help them start and build a meaningful life once released from prison. I wanted to register, but the social worker informed me that they had already registered enough inmates for the training. He requested me to wait for the following year since I still had two more years to spend in prison, and thus did not meet the eligibility criteria for participation. I ended up helping my colleagues who were trained that year. I cleaned the hall for the training, kept food for them and made myself available to assist them in any way possible so that they could concentrate on the training.

In 2017, I registered early enough and took part in the training. Everyone with one year to go was asked what they were interested in doing as a source of income after release and I chose mechanics. Prior to my imprisonment, that was the work I was doing because I had dropped out of school in Senior 1 since I lacked school fees. I made up my mind that early in life to start doing something hands-on. That was when I joined Kitgum Technical Institute to learn simple engine mechanics and I specialised in motorcycle repair. Other skills I learnt on the job. Therefore, with the mechanic background I already had, the skills training helped me to improve and acquire more knowledge, especially in business management, savings and customer care, among others. While in prison, I used to repair all the motorcycles belonging to prison officers. One day, I was even photographed riding a prisons motorcycle and my picture was published in the newspaper, but I was given the motorcycle to repair it.

When I regained my freedom on 17 October 2017, I looked no further than putting the knowledge and skills I had acquired from the training into practice. Advance Afrika supported me with a toolbox that contained motor repair tools such as a set of spanners and pliers, among other items. I set up a motorcycle garage at East Ward A in Kitgum town in northern Uganda in front of my uncle's motorcycle spare parts shop.

At the workshop, I also train other youth to repair motorcycles. I am also a farmer at Palabek Gem village where I hail from. I started training other youth in February 2018 and each one of them paid me 150,000 shillings for a six-month training course. I have retained some of them, depending on their behaviour and attitude towards work. I do not want to do anything that will jeopardise my future, so I stay away from crime and I always caution my trainees about actions that can lead them to prison. I came to understand that when you are imprisoned, your life changes for the worse. Everything in life comes to a standstill. It becomes hard to begin something for yourself once released because the community already has a different perception and attitude towards you. This is something I experienced first-hand.

Recently, I was told that the father of the kid I knocked down was looking for me. I know he is not happy that I am out of jail, because this showed even when I was still in jail. I am afraid of what will happen when he finds me, because I do not know his intentions and that worries me a lot.





## KETTY AJOK

I am Ketty Ajok, 32 years old, a single mother of three children and a businesswoman in Oyam district. I run a produce business in Te-Duka market in Oyam town council. Before going to prison, I used to sell food items (tomatoes and Lake Victoria sardines [omena/mukene]) in Anyeke market, Oyam district. However, I was involved in a fight with a neighbour in the market over space for doing business and was arrested and charged with assault. I was then sentenced to one year in prison, although I ended up spending only nine months at Oyam Women's Prison.

While in prison, my business collapsed and my children dropped out of school since I could not pay their school fees. As a way of keeping active and busy, I got involved in basket weaving inside prison and also enrolled for the Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) class so that I could learn how to read and write.

Upon release, I started selling simsim to revive my business, which is now based at Te-Duka market. I later got support from Advance Afrika (50 kg of beans, 100 kg of maize and produce materials) to boost the produce business that I had already started. This business is now doing better owing to the knowledge and skills I got in prison from the entrepreneurship and life skills training and from the support that I received. I have now even added other food items such as rice, tomatoes, onions, Irish potatoes and cooking oil to boost the business and my children have been able to go back to school.

Before going to prison, I was always undermined by other businesspersons within the market; they lacked respect for me and would insult me, claiming that I was uneducated. But now, people respect and appreciate me, and some even say, "Going to prison is good; it makes one come back with a lot of changes in their lives". I am now able to save money and I know how to budget my money, which is something I did not know before going to prison. Out of this small business, I have been able to invest in other businesses, I bought a cow and I also plan to buy land by the end of the year so that I can construct a house for my children. On a good day, I make a profit of about 30,000/-, and this has helped me to pay school fees for my children.



*I later got support from Advance Afrika (50 kg of beans, 100 kg of maize and produce materials) to boost the produce business that I had already started.*

## AGNES AMONY

My name is Agnes Amony. I sell silver fish (mukene) alongside other small food items at Lira main market in Lira town. I was once married and lived in Nwoya district where I was also a youth councillor for Nwoya town council. Unfortunately, my husband eloped with another woman in Kampala city where he was working, leaving me with our five children to look after. Soon, one of my husband's brothers started making advances towards me but I constantly turned him down. One fateful day, he came to my home at about 9.00 pm and insisted that he should spend the night with me, but I refused. Looking very angry, he left. Unfortunately, he fell in a rainwater drain since it was dark. I believe he was not helped because those who passed by him thought he was drunk. The next morning, he was found dead by the roadside. Since a number of people knew about his interest in me, they came to my home with police officers, accusing me of murder. I was arrested and taken to prison, where I spent two weeks as investigations went on. However, I was later released owing to lack of evidence. Because of the sentiments of my neighbours towards me, I decided to relocate to Gulu district, where I stayed with my sister for one and a half years. I would, however, frequently go for council meetings in Nwoya. One day in 2014, when I went back for a council meeting, I was rearrested and remanded to Gulu Women's Prison.

I spent two years on remand, then I was acquitted and released on 10 October 2016. Upon my release, I moved back to my father's home in Lira district to rediscover myself. As I said earlier, currently I sell silver fish (mukene) to earn a living. When I had just got out of jail, life was not easy, but my sister gave me 200,000/- to start a business and I later received support from Advance Afrika to boost my business.

From this business, I have been able to rent a house to live in, pay school fees for my children and join a VSLA where I save 20,000/- weekly. On a good day, I earn about 150,000/- profit when I buy fish direct from the landing site, in addition to selling other retail items.

I highly appreciate the support that Advance Afrika offered me and for the training I received while in prison as well as through mentorship when I got out. Now I am not only an ex-inmate doing business; I also help other ex-inmates struggling with businesses in my community. In the 2021 elections, I hope to offer myself to contest the position of district youth councillor for Lira.





*I highly appreciate the support that Advance Afrika offered me and for the training I received while in prison as well as through mentorship when I got out.*

## **SIMPO KIA**

Before going to prison, Simpo Kia, 31 years old, was a peasant farmer and successful businesswoman who ran a bakery. She was also married with six children and was living in Ogur in Lira district with her husband. However, one day, Simpo's husband and his uncle had a misunderstanding at the market. Her husband came back home and began fighting and beating her. She then ran to her father-in-law, who advised her to report to the LC1. Instead, she went to her neighbour's home where she spent the night. The next day she went back home and her husband's uncle came to see him. Her husband refused to come out of the house. The uncle got into the house and they started fighting again. Simpo's husband was kicked savagely in the stomach by the uncle, who left him in the house and ran off to the clan leaders to ask them to come and settle their dispute. Her husband kept complaining about pain in his stomach. He was rushed to hospital to receive treatment but, unfortunately, died at the gate of the hospital. After this, a clan meeting was held, and it was concluded that she had killed her husband. She was only rescued by the LC1 from her in-laws who wanted to beat her. The LC1 took her to Ogur Police Post and Lira Central Police Station was informed. It was officers from the central police post that picked her up from Ogur.

Simpo said that she spent two weeks at the police before being taken to court. She was convicted of manslaughter on 24 December 2013 and sentenced to five years in prison. She went with her twin children, aged one and a half years, to prison, but they were both taken back home at the age of two. During her trial, no one turned up for the hearing. Simpo spent the first year of her conviction in Lira Women's Prison before she was transferred to Oyam Women's Prison from where she was released on 6 November 2017. Upon her release, she went back to her father's home in Kole district where she was welcomed. She said this made her feel valued since the community had not turned against her but had instead helped her to reintegrate. Her in-laws warned her never to return to her husband's house or else they would kill her. Her father wrote a letter inviting her in-laws for a dialogue, but they declined the invitation. He went ahead to meet the mother of the deceased, who granted permission for the children to visit Simpo. Despite the fact that she provides for their scholastic needs, she has been denied custody of her children.

Simpo was supported by Advance Afrika to start a business selling cooking oil and she said that this has helped her a lot to provide scholastic materials for her children and to cater for other basic needs. She added that through this venture she was able to set up a small retail shop to support the cooking oil business.

***She said this made her feel valued since the community had not turned against her but had instead helped her to reintegrate.***





## **STELLA LUTWAL**

My name is Stella Lutwal. I am a single mother of four boys. My eldest son is in Senior 4 and the youngest is in Primary 3. My husband succumbed to high blood pressure when I was six months pregnant with my last-born son. I currently live in Kal Kwaro village at Pajule trading centre with my brother and his family at our late father's home.

Before going to prison, I was a businesswoman in Kitgum town. I was also the chairperson of a village savings group in Pandwong. As the chairperson, one of my responsibilities was keeping the group's savings. One day at around 2 p.m., while on my way to the bank to deposit the group's weekly savings, I was waylaid and robbed of 1,800,000/- that had been collected. I immediately reported the incident to the police and the area Local Council (LC) 1 chairperson. A few days later, my group members started demanding their money and they would not believe that I was robbed. All they wanted was their money back in lump sum. They later opened a police case against me.

I stayed in police custody for three days before I was taken to court. From there, I was

remanded to Kitgum Prison for two weeks before I was bailed out. As a bail condition, I had to report to court in two weeks. Thereafter, I was remanded for three months. When I was arraigned before court, the presiding judge asked me to pay back the stolen money or face a three-year jail term. My brothers raised 700,000/- as initial payment to allow me to resume my business and pay back the balance later. The complainants refused to receive the money and demanded the entire sum at once. I had no option but to accept to serve the three-year sentence at Kitgum Main Prison from January 2016 to January 2018.

In jail, I heard about business training, for which I immediately enrolled. I took part in the entrepreneurship and life skills training offered by Advance Afrika in June 2017. Prior to imprisonment, I sold dried fish in Kitgum town market. When I heard about the training, I told myself that it would be an opportunity to gain more business knowledge to apply when released.

I was taught about managing small businesses, how to treat customers, how to live with other people at home, including the complainants once released, among other topics. When I was released in January 2018, I met a few former group members and life continued normally. I had forgiven them in my heart while in prison, despite having been bitter with them.

My original home is in Kitgum town. When I was released from prison, I stayed there for a few days and decided to go back to my father's home in Pajule to start life afresh. My mother had taken over my responsibilities but could not afford to keep my children in school. My eldest son, who should have sat for Uganda Certificate of Education exams in 2017, could not. He is repeating the same class because there was no

money for the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) registration and school fees at that time.

Two other children are in Senior 2 in Kitgum district while the youngest, 12 years old, lives with me at Pajule and is in Primary 3.

Immediately after my release, my elder sister supported me with 150,000/- to start a business. It was easy because I had learnt how to write a business plan during entrepreneurship training. I bake cakes, mandazi, chapati and prepare chips, groundnuts and simsim paste. I rent the business premises at 20,000/- per month. Business is going on well. On a good day, I make between 50,000/- and 100,000/-.

In prison, I was a bitter person but the life skills I received helped me deal with the bitterness. If somebody offends me, I easily forgive him or her in order to live a free life. I am always happy and satisfied with the small business I have.

My biggest worry right now is paying school fees. As my children progress in their education, the cost of keeping them in school also rises. I struggle to meet the cost of educating them and I am not able to clear their school fees at once; I pay in instalments as the money comes in.

To supplement my small earnings, I have also ventured into farming. I planted groundnuts and maize, but the harsh weather destroyed them. I only harvested a sack of groundnuts and the maize crop did not yield anything because the heat hampered its growth. I am now waiting for the next planting season with the hope that the weather will be better.

The people I live with know I am an ex-inmate, but I mix feely with them. I also know other ex-inmates and occasionally we meet and talk about life. We are all doing something to make our lives better.

***I was taught about managing small businesses, how to treat customers, how to live with other people at home, including the complainants once released, among other topics.***

## **BOSCO OJOK**

Bosco Ojok was a peasant farmer who also dealt in produce on a small scale in Parabongo, Agago district before going to prison. His neighbour's cattle always destroyed his crops and every time he reported the case to the authorities, no action would be taken. On 23 January 2014, three of his neighbour's cattle destroyed his garden and, seething with anger, he cut the cattle with a machete. The owner of the cattle reported him to the local authorities, who had him arrested immediately and taken to the police, where he spent five days. He was then referred to the Patongo Grade One magistrate's court where he was charged with malicious damage and remanded for three months at Patongo Prison. He was later bailed out but kept reporting to the police for two years until he was convicted on 21 January 2016.

Bosco was trained in 2016 after getting to know about Advance Afrika during the expanded SREE programme implemented in all prisons in the Lango and Acholi sub-regions. When he was released, a team from Advance Afrika visited Bosco to check on how he was reintegrating and was later provided him with support for the bakery business that he had come up with a proposal for while in prison. He said that he chose this business because there was no one doing it in his area and he felt that he would gain a lot from it. Although he did not have the skills needed for the business, he consulted a friend in the nearby village who trained him and helped him run the business before he could be independent. Bosco also engages in sugarcane growing on a large scale and other sugarcane sellers and other people in the community buy sugarcane from him. He said that he grows sugarcane to boost his bakery business. Now Bosco usually bakes in the evenings when the trading centre is busy and works in his sugarcane garden the mornings and afternoons.



***Bosco was trained in 2016 after getting to know about Advance Afrika during the expanded SREE programme implemented in all prisons in the Lango and Acholi sub-regions.***



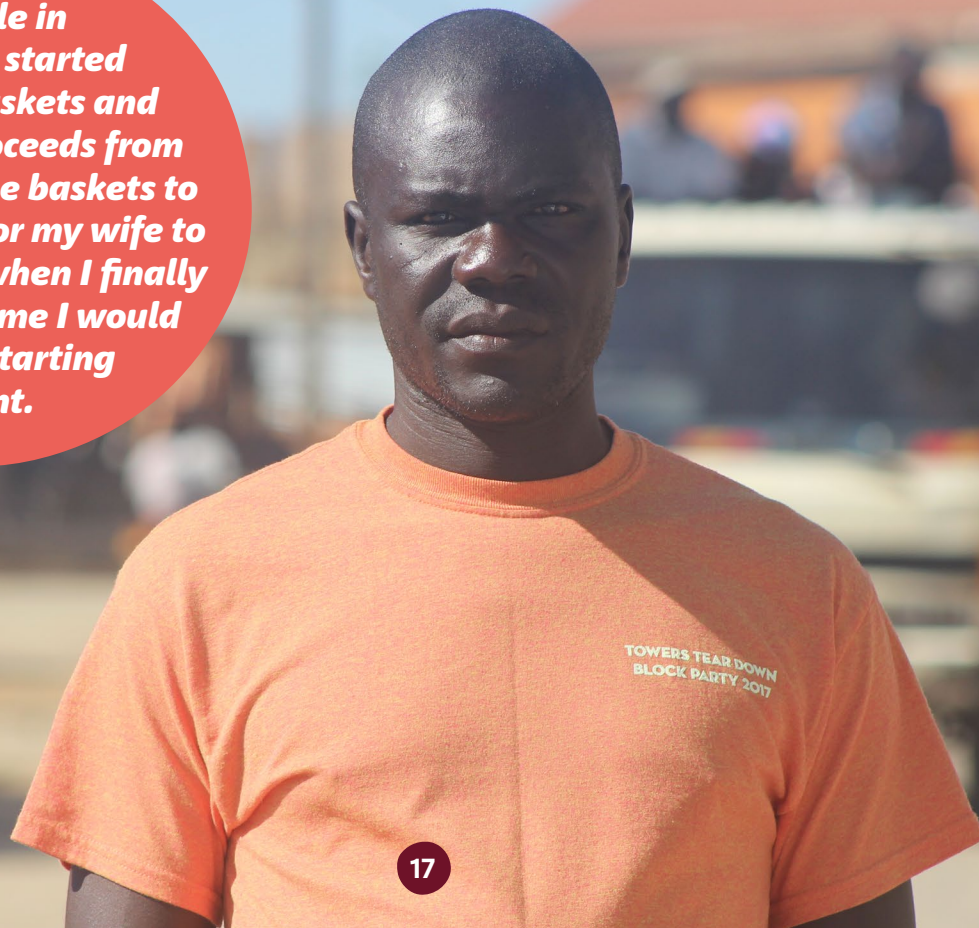
## REAGAN OUMA

My name is Reagan Ouma. I am 31 years of age and a resident of Amida sub-county in Kitgum district. I am a driver by profession. I used to drive along the Kitgum-South Sudan route but then got a job as a driver for Horizon Primary School. One day, the school hired a truck to take the pupils for a scout camp but, unfortunately, during the journey the truck's brakes failed, resulting in an accident. The truck overturned, and many pupils were injured. Out of fear, I ran away and took refuge in Nakasongola district for three months. After that, I returned to Kitgum since I was worried about my family as there was no one to take care of them. I reported to Kitgum Central Police Station since my attempts to negotiate with the headmaster of the school had proved futile. The headmaster claimed to have repaired the vehicle and paid for the treatment of the injured pupils and yet it was I who should have footed the bill. I was charged with malicious damage, remanded to Kitgum Main Prison on 14 October 2014, convicted on 23 April 2015, and sentenced to three years in prison.

While in prison, I started making baskets and used the proceeds from the sale of the baskets to buy piglets for my wife to rear so that when I finally returned home I would have a starting point. Upon being released on 27 November 2017, I began rearing pigs and got support from Advance Afrika to boost the piggery business that I now run in Amida. I also started driving again but this time on the Kitgum-Lira route. Besides driving and rearing pigs, I also started a makeshift pork joint in Amida to complement our income as a family.

The training I took part in while inside prison is very good. It helped me understand how to run a business and plan for my life after imprisonment. I hope the training will continue and be extended to all prison units because it is helping many ex-prison inmates to reintegrate into the community.

***While in prison, I started making baskets and used the proceeds from the sale of the baskets to buy piglets for my wife to rear so that when I finally returned home I would have a starting point.***



## **MOSES TABU**

Before I went to prison, I was a driver with Uganda Breweries Limited in Kitgum district. One day, my supervisor assigned me to take a consignment of beer to Kalongo in Agago district. However, I decided to first have lunch before setting off. At the restaurant, I invited a woman over to join me. Everything seemed fine until a man who was seated a distance away from us in the same restaurant called the woman over. When she returned to me, she did not tell me what the man had told her. As we were leaving the restaurant, the man harassed me to the extent of swinging the gate at the bumper and side mirror of my company's truck. When I told my supervisor about the incident, they decided to report the incident to the police. At the police, we found out that the man who had harassed me at the restaurant was the officer in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department (OC CID) at Kitgum Central Police Station and that the woman I had interacted with was his girlfriend.

On 24 May 2014, after a month had elapsed, as I was spending my leisure time with friends, I was arrested and taken to the OC CID, who ordered that I should be locked up and that no visitors be allowed to talk to or see me. I was then taken to court and charged with assault, speeding and lack of third party insurance. After that I was remanded to Kitgum Main Prison and was convicted on 18 April 2016. A five-year sentence was handed down and the remand period deducted from that. However, life in prison was difficult, but I did not give up. Instead, I took up leadership inside prison.

Upon release in November 2017, I set up a serious business with the skills and knowledge that I had acquired in prison. As I was leaving prison, I was given 180,000/-, part of the money I had made doing farm work in prison. With this, I bought a pig and employed three people whom I pay per working day. I am now able to cater for my essential needs and help my family. I own a pork joint and also sell fresh pork for which I get large orders from various hotels around Kitgum town. These range from 10 to 30 kg of pork. On a good day, I make between 50,000/- and 80,000/- profit.

***Upon release in November 2017, I set up a serious business with the skills and knowledge that I had acquired in prison.***

## **POLYCARP KIKOYA**

One day, while he was spending leisure time with his friends and a clan uncle in Acholibur, Pader district, a fight erupted between Polycarp Kikoya and the uncle over a woman they both were interested in, but they were separated by onlookers. They then went their separate ways. Unfortunately, in the morning, the uncle was found dead by the roadside, with an injury to his head. Polycarp was accused as a prime suspect in the murder, so he fled to another village for fear of his life. He then called the police to rescue him on 11 November 2011 and was remanded to Patongo Prison before being convicted of manslaughter on 29 June 2012. He was transferred to Gulu Main Prison, where he served out his sentence.

While in prison, Polycarp heard about an organisation that trained inmates who were about to be released after serving a long sentence. He was very interested and immediately enrolled in Advance Afrika's training programme in June 2017.

After his release on 9 November 2017, his family members welcomed the 32-year-old. Polycarp was then given 1,300,000/- by Advance Afrika to help him start a new life and a business. After the support, he received from Advance Afrika to start his salon business; he used the money he was given to buy a battery, inverter and power adaptor. However, he still struggles as the area has no electricity, so he is unable to charge the battery and cannot afford a solar panel.

He is currently not in a position to go back to Acholibur where his salon was before he went to prison, as he is scared that the hunt for him is still on and he does not know what the relatives of the deceased think about him. What has made his situation even more difficult is that he was told that the relatives are not happy with him. However, he hopes that with the reconciliation process of mato-oput that is being initiated by their clan leaders, he will be able to move freely and take his business back to Acholibur where there is hydro-electric power, and where the population is higher.

For the time being, Polycarp continues his salon business and grows cotton. He is looking forward to being a centre farmer who will be buying the cotton from other farmers and selling it to the cotton companies. He believes that the training with Advance Afrika has improved the way he does his business and he is very happy to have been part of it.

A portrait of Polycarp Kikoya, a young man with short dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt. The t-shirt features logos for Caritas, Advance Afrika, and a small circular logo. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

**After his release on 9 November 2017, his family members welcomed the 32-year-old. Polycarp was then given 1,300,000/- by Advance Afrika to help him start a new life and a business.**

## ANGELO NYEKO

I was a peasant farmer and cultivated crops mainly for home consumption. One day, I had a misunderstanding with my wife and while fighting her, I picked up a spear and threw it at her. Unfortunately, she dodged the spear, which then hit and killed our four-year-old child instantly. For fear of being killed by the community, I fled home to Pabbo, Amuru district and sought refuge in Bungatira in Gulu district. While in Bungatira, I handed myself over to the police. I was detained at the police on 19 February 2010, where I spent a week before being taken to court.

After the court hearing, I was remanded to Gulu Main Prison. I first spent one year and seven months there, after which, on 20 September 2011, I was convicted of murder and sentenced to nine years in prison. At first life in prison was hard, especially when I was on remand, but after conviction, I was assigned the role of cleaning the health centre. This kept me busy most of the time before I was transferred to Lugore Prison Farm. I first learnt of Advance Afrika in 2015 under their earlier project of Advancing Youth Entrepreneurship in Gulu Main Prison. In 2016, I decided to be part of the training in entrepreneurship while at Lugore Prison Farm.

Upon release on 30 September 2017, I returned home. My family members welcomed me warmly, and they forgave the mistake that I had made. In order to make some money, I continued making baskets for sale as I had been doing in prison. Out of this, I have been able to set up a small retail shop in Pabbo trading centre, which supports me to buy more materials for basket making. Advance Afrika also supported me to boost my basket-making business. I plan to continue with basket making and, in the near future, open a craft shop where I can sell them on a large scale.

***I first learnt of Advance Afrika in 2015 under their earlier project of Advancing Youth Entrepreneurship in Gulu Main Prison.***



## COLBERT OPIYO


Before going to prison Colbert Opiyo, 24 years old, used to sell phones and phone spares, do phone repairs and run a video library. This business was located in Kapedopong in Gulu district. However, he was involved in a crime that got him arrested on 23 February 2016. He was convicted of impersonation and obtaining money by false pretence in the same month. He then handed over the business to a friend to run when he was in prison. Unfortunately, however, after he had served his sentence, he found that the business had collapsed. In addition, the friend had sold off most of the business equipment and run away with the money he had made and some portable items.

Upon release on 28 November 2016, Colbert tried to search for his lost property but could not find it and his friend would not compensate him. He decided to use the little capital that had been left over to start a fresh business. He later got support from Advance Afrika in the form of 20 phone mouthpieces, five batteries, four screen guards and five phone cases. He then rented a verandah at Koro Abili where he bought phone screws and core extension cables. He later transferred his business to Acet trading centre where he also sold charcoal. Unfortunately, the people he employed misused the money he had put into the business and so the business collapsed.

Colbert relocated to Bobi trading centre in Omoro district to continue with the business of selling phones and doing phone repair. He also opened other branches of the business in Palenga trading centre where he has a barbershop and in Opit trading centre where he has a photo studio and sells phones and phone accessories. He believes that his business has been able to grow because it does not require much capital and needs one that is skill-oriented in what they do. He added that the business brings 100% profit compared to the capital injected in starting it and he has been reinvesting his profits and so has opened two other businesses.

In future, Colbert plans to open a business similar to the one in Minakulu trading centre in Omoro district so that he can sell other electronic goods such as televisions and woofers and buy a vehicle to be used as a special hire cab within Gulu town. Colbert added that the knowledge he received from the entrepreneurship training in prison has helped him a lot in managing and growing his business. He is able to plan for his business and self-analyse himself to improve his relationship with the customers.



A man in a white and red shirt and black pants is watering plants in a field. He is holding a large green watering can and pouring water onto the ground. The background shows a wooden structure made of logs and trees.

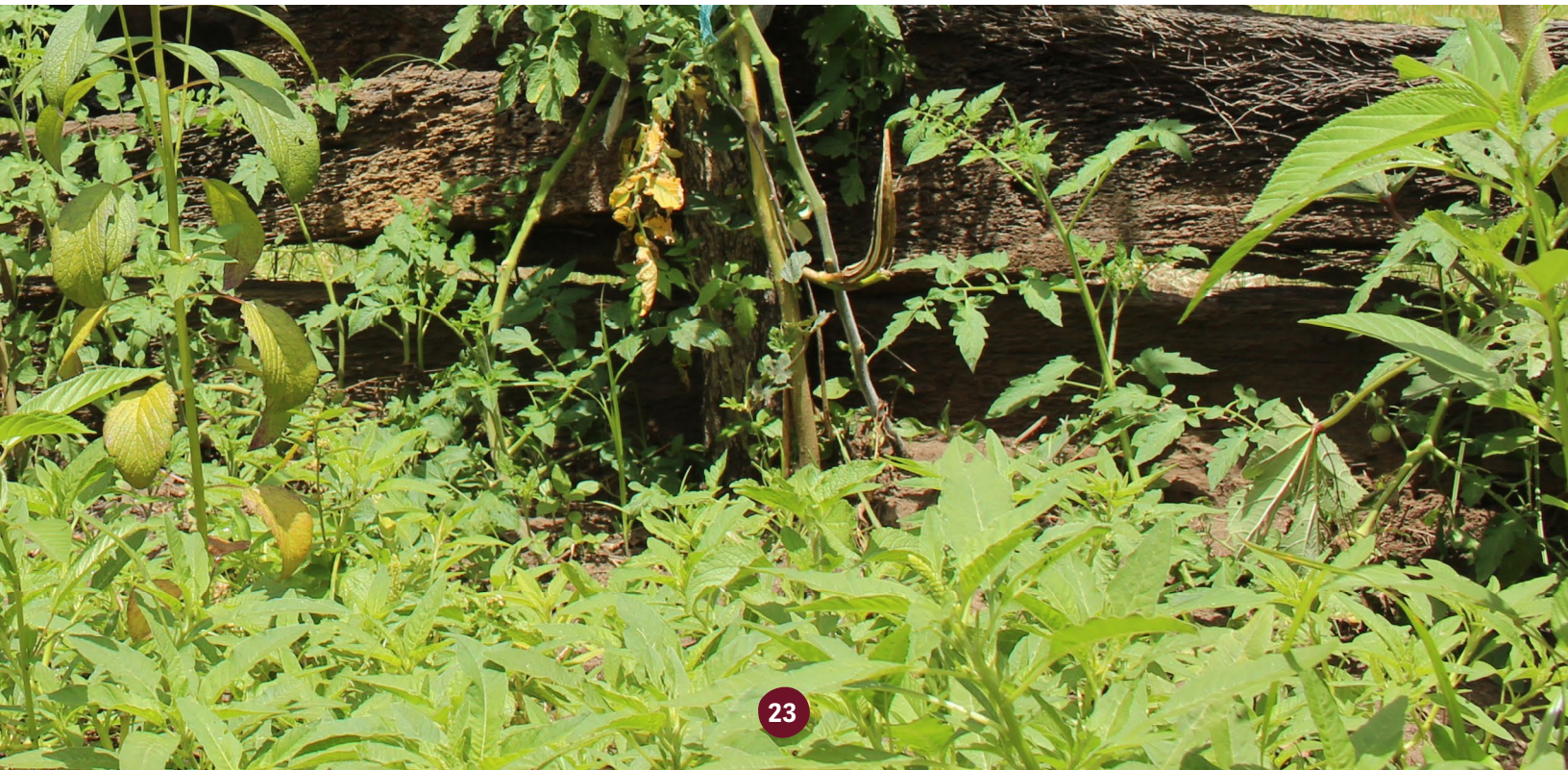
*The lessons I learnt during the entrepreneurship and life skills training inside prison is very relevant to my family now. I learnt the value of hard work, I learnt how to save which, by the way, now I do with commitment, unlike before.*

## **SIMON ERICK OKUMU**

My name is Simon Erick Okumu. By the time I went to prison in 2015, I was in Senior 3 at Awach Secondary School. While at home for holidays I fought with a neighbour's son during a football match. The neighbour was trying to claim part of our land and our families had been at loggerheads for sometimes now. Out of anger, I hit the boy so hard that he lost some of his teeth. I was remanded to Kaladima Prison Farm, where I received training in entrepreneurship from Advance Afrika. On 13 January 2016, I was convicted of assault and sentenced to two years in prison.

While in prison, I was mainly involved in agriculture and was allocated a small plot of land where I planted vegetables for consumption by the inmates in the unit. This made me get used to tilling the land and I learnt the techniques for planting various types of vegetables. I was released on 24 May 2017 and went back home to Palaro, Gulu district, where I immediately embarked on large-scale vegetable growing for both commercial and subsistence use. I now spend a lot of time in my garden and only come home for lunch. This is because I do not want to be idle and find myself getting involved in crime again. I grow various types of vegetables such as eggplants, garden eggs, green vegetables, cabbages and tomatoes, among others. Besides farming, I also do piggery, which I established using money that my wife gave me after selling some cassava that she had harvested.

The lessons I learnt during the entrepreneurship and life skills training inside prison is very relevant to my family now. I learnt the value of hard work, I learnt how to save which, by the way, now I do with commitment, unlike before. The training equipped me with the skills and mindset to manage a business and now I am more committed to turning my life around. My farming venture has helped me to keep away from any crime or bad peers. I also teach other youths in Ribe Aye Teko group about how one can benefit from backyard vegetable farming, something that would, besides, keep them busy. In addition, I work jointly with the agricultural officer of Palaro to get a market for their products. I am also occasionally invited by Advance Afrika to train interested beneficiaries who are also fellow ex-prison inmates in ways to earn more money from small-scale farming through using backyard vegetable growing techniques.



## ***NIGHTY AJOK***

Nighty Ajok owned a retail shop before going to prison. One day, in March 2016, a woman came to her shop to buy millet flour, but she told her that she did not have it. Instead of moving on to the next shop, the woman started insulting Nighty, calling her a prostitute and telling her that her shop was useless because every time she came to buy something she was told that it was not available. Nighty got out of her shop and asked the woman why she was insulting her, before asking her to leave her shop. Instead, the woman picked up a stone and flung it at her. Nighty dodged it. Out of anger, she picked up a brick and threw it at the woman. The brick hit her on the forehead, injuring her eye. The woman was rushed to a nearby health centre and returned with police officers, who arrested Nighty so she could make a statement about the incident. She kept reporting to the police until 10 June 2016, when she was sentenced to six months in Gulu Women's Prison on a charge of assault.

While in prison, Nighty left her business in the hands of her son, who managed the business until her return on 10 October 2016. Nighty said that the training she received by Advance Afrika while in prison helped her to improve on her business management skills and to diversify her business through animal rearing, for which venture she purchased some piglets and goats to raise more capital for her business. Nighty received support from Advance Afrika to help her boost her business further and was given items such as salt, sugar, soap, cooking oil and matches. Nighty also mentioned that the business is helping her to take care of her seven children and to keep them in school so that they can become useful citizens in the future. She further appreciated the work that Advance Afrika is doing to help inmates in their reintegration process and to reduce stigma from the community members.





# ***REINTEGRATION AND BUSINESS CHALLENGES***



## JOEL KASIBANTE



I am Joel Kasibante and am 25 years old. I was charged with housebreaking and theft and sentenced to three years in prison. Before going to prison, I was a very successful baker in Pader district. Near my business was a wholesale shop where the workers used to steal baking flour, cooking oil and sugar, which I would then buy from them cheaply. One day, when the owner of the wholesale shop was away, he left his son in charge and the workers stole some more merchandise. As they were bringing the stolen items to me, the son caught them and reported the theft to the police. As a result, the workers were arrested. Since the stolen

property was recovered from my business premises, I was also arrested on suspicion that I was the one who had broken into the wholesale shop a few months earlier. I tried to explain and proclaim my innocence, but the police would have none of it.

I was convicted on 16 October 2014 and started my sentence at Pader Prison before I was transferred to Lugore Prison in Gulu district. During my trial, none of my relatives appeared in court. I lost my mother when I was 16 years old. After her death, I tried living with my uncles in Agago district for a few months, but I always felt like I didn't belong there. It was then I decided to leave home and start a new life in Pader district so that I could fend for myself better. I got to know about Advance Afrika in 2015 during the Advancing Youth Entrepreneurship project which was also implemented in Lugore, but because I did not meet the requirements, I couldn't participate in it. In that year, I was asked to prepare breakfast for the trainees, which I did well and occasionally eavesdropped on the lessons taught. It wasn't until the following year – 2016 – that the deputy OC recommended me to participate in the training organised by Advance Afrika. I was recommended on account of my discipline and the time left to serve out my term, which was within the timeframe required by Advance Afrika.

After being released, I insisted that I did not want to return home because I felt neglected by my relatives as none of them had visited me in prison even though they were aware that I had been arrested and convicted. I wanted to start a new life in Gulu, but later decided to go home to Opyelo village in Agago district. Unfortunately, I was not welcomed as I had expected. I was always viewed as a thief and people did not want to associate with me. After a post-release visit from Advance Afrika, people's attitude became slightly more positive towards me, though I still felt unwanted in the village. Nobody openly expressed their dislike for me but their actions showed it. As a result, I moved to Patongo trading centre where I now live with another uncle who was away from the region at the time of my incarceration. Here, I got a job in a restaurant in Atekilwak, where I helped with preparing breakfast. I was later promoted to cashier, a position I held for three months. Then I left and set up my own bakery business with support from Advance Afrika and the little capital that I had saved from the job, which I used to buy some of the equipment that I lacked. Out of this business, I used to get between 40,000/- and 50,000/- per day. Then one unfortunate day, I was robbed and I lost everything, including the money I had saved in the house. As a result, my business collapsed. However, my uncle asked me to help him at construction sites as a porter so that we could raise some money to revive my business. At the construction sites I am paid 7,500/- per day and I am still very much interested in restarting my bakery business soon since I had already attracted many customers.

# MOSES OKONYA

Moses Okonya from Lagotcugu village in Kitgum district was a student at Kitgum Town College when his family had a land wrangle with Lagot Primary School that borders their land because the school kept extending the land boundaries into their land. One day, some school furniture was stolen, and the school accused Moses of the theft. Later, they reported the case to the LC1 chairperson, who took him to the police and proceeded to take him to court as the complainant, since the school had handed the case over to him. At court he was charged with housebreaking and theft and remanded to Orom Tikao Prison. Later, however, the case was dismissed for lack of evidence. Instead, Moses was charged with malicious damage to property, convicted on 6 June 2015, and sentenced to six months in prison after serving four months on remand.

While in jail, Moses was informed by the prison social worker about the training that was to be provided by Advance Afrika. He was interested in this and participated in the training in 2016. After the training, he wrote a business plan for a piggery business and was supported with four piglets and vaccines by Advance Afrika. Unfortunately, he has been struggling in his business as he lost one piglet, and the second was stolen, leaving him with only two piglets. Moses said that he got to know the people who stole his pig but his witness refused to testify because of the close relationship he had with them. Yet another pig was taken by the LC1 of Central ward under unknown circumstances. He added that people are jealous of him because of the support and the certificate that he received from Advance Afrika and that they, therefore, want to see him lose everything.



***While in jail, Moses was informed by the prison social worker about the training that was to be provided by Advance Afrika.***



## GLORIA ACAN

I did not intend to be a single mother. I am only 24 years old. However, my partner left me when I was four months pregnant, claiming he was going on a long journey and would return after two weeks. He didn't return and I decided to go back to my parents' home in Unyama, Gulu district in the hope that one day he would answer one of my numerous phone calls that he constantly rejected. However, after my baby turned six months and there was no hope of my partner coming back, I took the baby to my mother-in-law's place in Pece Acoyo and left her there. Then off I went to look for a job. I did find a job at Hometown restaurant as a server. However, one week into the job, my mother-in-law came with police officers from the Family and Child Protection Unit and accused me of child neglect. I was taken to the police and later to court, where I was convicted to six months' imprisonment for child neglect.

I was released from prison on 13 September 2016 and I returned to my parents' home. My mother-in-law had left our child there, claiming she did not have time to look after him. My life is hard, as I cannot associate with anyone for fear of being stigmatised as an ex-prison inmate. However, my mother asked me to help her sell tomatoes and bedsheets in Unyama market. While helping my mother with her business, I was supported to set up a business that deals in second-hand clothes. However, the business did not do well as most of the clothes were very large and the customers did not like them. As a result, the business collapsed.

After I had stayed at my parents' home for some time, my mother asked me to go and look for the father of my child, as she did not have enough resources to cater for an extra person. I tried to contact my mother-in-law to get support for the child, but I got no positive feedback. My life became very hard as I stopped receiving support from my parents and I was now always referred to as an ex-inmate both at home and in the neighbourhood. Therefore, when I got another man, I decided to move away to Adokonyero trading centre. At Adokonyero I was welcomed warmly as people did not know about my history and I feel at peace. I currently do simple bakery to raise money to cater for the basic needs of my child and I plan to take him to school in 2019.

***My life is hard, as I cannot associate with anyone for fear of being stigmatised as an ex-prison inmate.***



***REINTEGRATION  
SUCCESS AND  
CONFLICT  
TRANSFORMATION***



# BONNY ACUMA



Bonny Acuma, 34 years old, who lives in Anigo village in Dokolo district, served a 10-year sentence at Erute Farm Prison for murder. In 2008, before his arrest, he had misunderstandings with his uncle, the late Levis Obonyo, connected to accusations of witchcraft allegedly practised by the uncle's wife, Alice Apio, and the use of his property without permission. The misunderstandings, which lasted for seven years, resulted in a bitter split between Bonny Acuma's family and his uncle's family. In August 2008, Bonny's wife died under unclear circumstances. He remarried in 2009, and his wife lost their first baby and almost lost the second baby as well during pregnancy. This prompted him to call a family meeting. In the meeting, they decided to call an urgent clan meeting and conduct customary rituals to find out the causes of constant deaths in his home. After the rituals were performed, Alice Apio was alleged to be the person responsible for all the deaths in Bonny's family. The clan organised a reconciliation meeting. During this meeting, the late Obonyo defended his wife and even uttered vulgar words against Acuma. He convinced his wife not to apologise to Bonny's family and the clan at large. This prompted Bonny to get up and kick both his uncle Levis and wife Alice. Whereas Alice only fainted and broke her right hand, Levis died. This was what led to the arrest and imprisonment of Bonny Acuma in Erute Prison for 10 years. He was released on 27 July 2018.

While Bonny was still in jail, efforts were made to reconcile the two families. Prison social workers and staff members of Advance Afrika met with Bonny's family and that of the victims in Anigo village, Dokolo district in February, June and October 2018 and held another meeting with the elder son to the late Obonyo in Gulu town on 11 July 2018.

Alice said she was accused wrongfully and without any proof and that the kick ruined her future as she now could not work or even cook properly owing to the pain she felt in the broken hand. Her clan members, who also attended the meetings, said that Alice had been in constant pain and that

taking care of her had turned out to be expensive and time-consuming since she could not do most work by herself. They remarked that Bonny, on the other hand, was being given a second chance to reintegrate in his community without any pain and, in addition, his family members still insisted that he was innocent. "He will come and get us here; we are ready for him," threatened Alice's uncle. Each meeting took over three hours, with the first two meetings ending on a note of bitterness.

Bonny's reintegration efforts met with a breakthrough when Advance Afrika staff, a prison social worker and a Dokolo district councillor again brought up the need to give him a second chance and support to return home. A report from a previous meeting with Bonny while in prison in which he regretted having allowed anger to take hold of him was shared with the participants. His message read: "I have been feeling the pain of being in prison up to now, especially since I'm now 34 years old. I feel my years have been wasted in prison and my entire family has lost direction, making it difficult for them to succeed in future. But, above all, the bloodshed in my hands is already a curse for my entire family. My great fear is that the late Obonyo son, who is a lawyer and has money to fund court processes, might kill me in revenge for his father's death. Please send my sincere and humble apology to the entire family of Alice Apio, my family, my clan members and the community."

This report helped the family and the community members understand his current condition and wishes. They started talking more rationally and advising on what Acuma was to do upon returning home.

Alice Apio also agreed to forgive Acuma if he came himself and apologised, and then paid the hospital bills for treating her hand. She also said Acuma was still young and, therefore, it had been easy for him to be misadvised by some people and his ignorant parents, who held personal grudges against her late husband. She committed to forgiving him. The clan elders communicated their conclusive views about the customary rituals to be performed that would allow Bonny to be fully accepted again as a child in that clan. They said that on his first day of return to the village, Bonny should step on two eggs for cleansing and then be bathed with midda, a weed meant for cleansing curses. Then later, kayo cuk between the two families had to be performed and witnessed by the selected elders, community leaders and both families. The clan elders later concluded that Acuma should be supported by the community members because the pain he went through owing to the death of his late wife and child made him commit the crime. Furthermore, he had apologised to the community and both families. They also noted that his case should teach the entire community the importance of accepting mistakes, seeking forgiveness and being transparent in what they do.

Upon his release from prison, Bonny was welcomed back home, and his parents organised prayers to cleanse him.

Bonny is a mason by profession and a single father of four. While in prison, he took part in the entrepreneurship and life skills training organised by Advance Afrika and drew up a business plan for a bakery. When he got out of prison, he was warmly welcomed back home, and his parent's organised prayers to cleanse him. Present were cultural and religious leaders as well as members of the community. He said that his cousin, the lawyer, did not attend as he was away, but called him on the phone, welcomed him back and said that he had forgiven him, and went on to advise him. However, when he returned home from prison, things were not the way he had left them. Since his elderly parents could not take care of his children, other relatives had taken in some of them. His first-born (21 years old) had been married off to raise funds for the upkeep of her younger siblings and the grass-thatched house in which he had lived had been destroyed by termites. However, he did not give up. He started making bricks for sale to raise money to set up the bakery, and continued with his job as a mason.





# ***BUSINESS CHALLENGES***



## **AMBROSE OLELE**

Ambrose Olele originates from Dokolo district where he also runs his business. Before going to prison, he was working at a produce store as a procurement intermediary. One day, he was given 1,000,000/- to buy more stock but he was cheated by the sellers and, therefore, incurred a loss of 570,000/-. The owner of the business arrested him and took him to Dokolo police station where he filed a case of theft against him. Olele said that he pleaded with the business owner to accept the 400,000/- cash that he had with him, but the man did not listen to him and insisted that he wanted the full amount back in lump sum. Ambrose was sent to court, convicted of theft on 11 November 2016 and sentenced to one year in prison.

Upon release on 21 November 2017, Ambrose was welcomed home with prayers before he could enter his house. This was meant to cleanse him of any 'dirt' that he could have carried from prison. When the complainant heard that he had been released, he went to the area LC1 of and said he wanted to meet Ambrose and his parents so that he could be compensated with the 570,000/-. However, the LC1 asked him to get a letter from court that showed that Ambrose had to pay a fine after being released. He went back and never returned to ask for his money.

Advance Afrika then visited Ambrose and supported him to set up a vegetable growing business by providing him with tomato and onion seeds, a hoe, a spray pump and pesticides. Ambrose said the business was doing very well and helping him get his life back on track. However, the venture was hit by the dry season, so he had to invest in the produce business as he waited for the rains to come. He is able to support his wife's drug shop, a business he opened for her before going to prison. He has also been able to pay school fees for his child who is currently in nursery school. From the training that Advance Afrika gave him while in prison, Ambrose has been able to proficiently keep his records and gain some more confidence and respect for himself.

**Advance Afrika then visited Ambrose and supported him to set up a vegetable growing business by providing him with tomato and onion seeds, a hoe, a spray pump and pesticides.**

## **BONNY OKAO**

I am Bonny James Okao. I live in Aguri village in Dokolo district. I was accused of obtaining money by false pretence after I failed to pay a debt of 400,000/- that I had borrowed from a friend. My friend asked me to pay back the money, but I did not have it, so I asked him to give me some more time. However, the second time he came to ask for the money, he came along with police officers and he ordered them to arrest me. I was sentenced to one year in prison but served only eight months at Dokolo Prison.

Before going to prison, I had left behind a wife and two children (four and six years old). However, while I was in prison, my wife was impregnated by someone else. When she heard that I was going to be released in two weeks' time, fearing what I might do to her, she burnt the grass-thatched houses that we had been living in and went back to her parents' home, abandoning the children with my father. Although I no longer want her, I have forgiven her. When I was released on 9 August 2017, my family welcomed me back home with prayers. After one month, a family meeting was called where I was advised to avoid getting myself into conflicts and crime. I was also advised to meet the complainant and ask for forgiveness. I did this, and the good relationship between us has been restored.

Advance Afrika supported me with a bale of second-hand clothes as a start-up for my business and right now I am a second-hand clothes vendor. I have been able to provide for my children, and to keep them in school. I also move from market to market to sell these clothes. Here business booms mainly on Thursdays at Chwagere market because it draws very many people, including those from neighbouring villages. On good days, I get between 70,000 and 80,000/- in profit, while on bad days I get as little as 10,000/- or even nothing.

A portrait of Bonny Okao, a young man with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored striped button-down shirt. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

***Advance  
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I am a second-hand  
clothes vendor.***



## **DENIS OGWAL**

Denis Ogwal, a resident of Dokolo district, was arrested and convicted of assault and grievous bodily harm on 15 July 2016, and then sentenced to one year in prison. Denis said that his uncle had borrowed some money (4,000/-) from him but refused to pay it back, which resulted in a serious fight since the uncle had said that he would not pay the money unless they fought. During the fight, Denis bit off one of his uncle's thumbs. The uncle was rushed to the police, where he reported the case. On the basis of this, Denis was arrested and taken to prison.

Denis said that he left behind a wife and four children when he was sent to prison. His wife took care of their children with the help of her mother-in-law who provided their basic needs. When he was released on 10 August 2017, Denis went back home and was welcomed with prayers and counselling to keep him out of trouble. Advance Afrika paid a post-release visit to Denis and recommended that he should be given support. He was given a bale of shoes to launch him into the business of selling second-hand shoes. He also went ahead to invest in farming, and currently has a farm in Nwoya district where he carries out rice growing as his wife helps with selling used shoes. Denis said that on good days they

get a profit of about 20,000/- and on bad days, 10,000/-. However, he admitted that the business is struggling to grow though he is trying the best he can to make it succeed.

***Advance Afrika paid a post-release visit to Denis and recommended that he should be given support.***

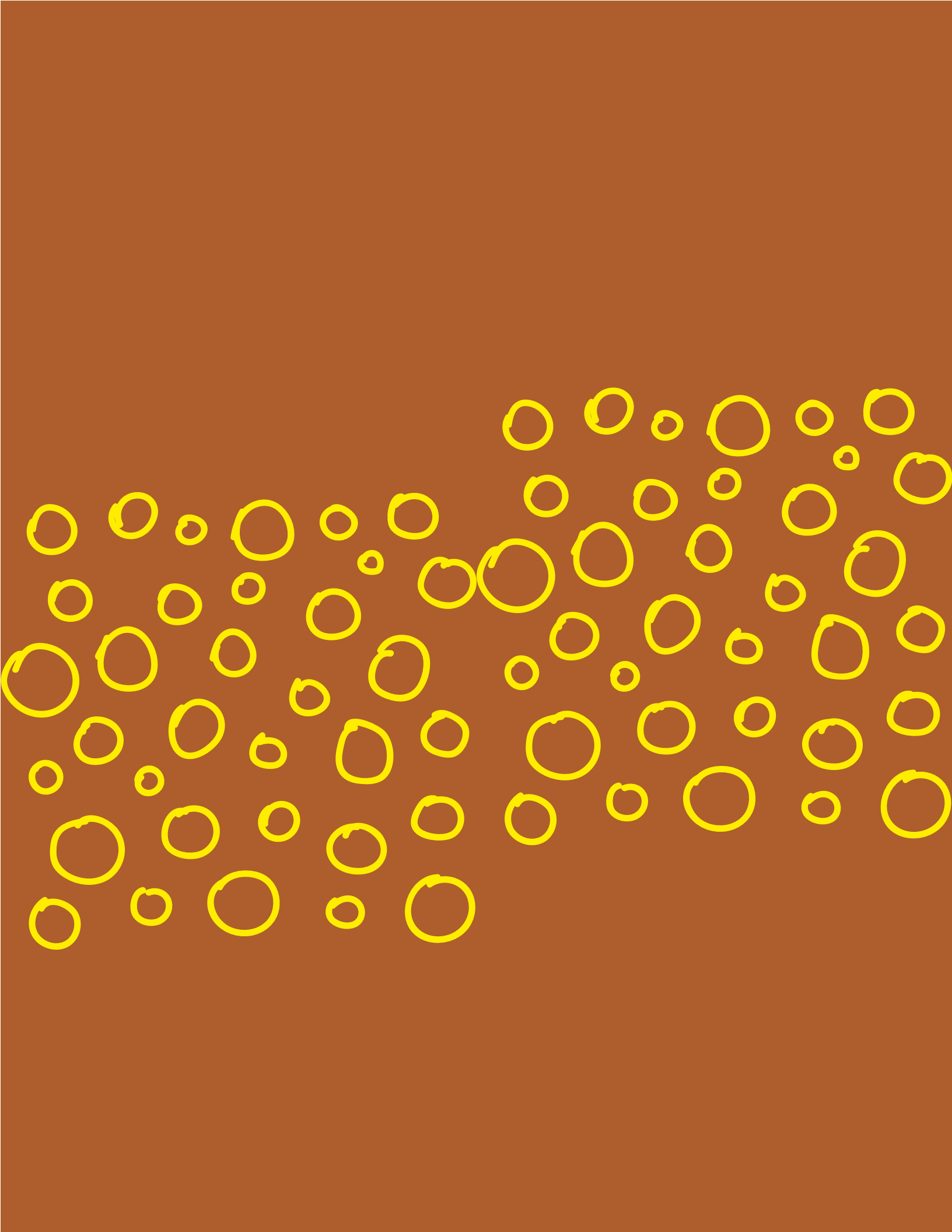
## **FIONA ABALO**

I had misunderstandings with my husband and decided to go back to my parents' home in Kitgum town. However, after one month, I heard that my husband had brought another woman to our home. Out of anger, I went back to my marital home, got hold of my husband's academic documents and burnt them in his absence. When he returned, he claimed that there had been six million shillings in the envelopes that I burnt. So he had me arrested and accused me of theft and child neglect. I was taken to Kitgum Main Prison and later transferred to Gulu Women's Prison where I spent a year on remand before being convicted on 8 June 2016 to two years in jail. I went to prison with our child but the father took the child away after one month. I never heard from them again until I completed my jail term.

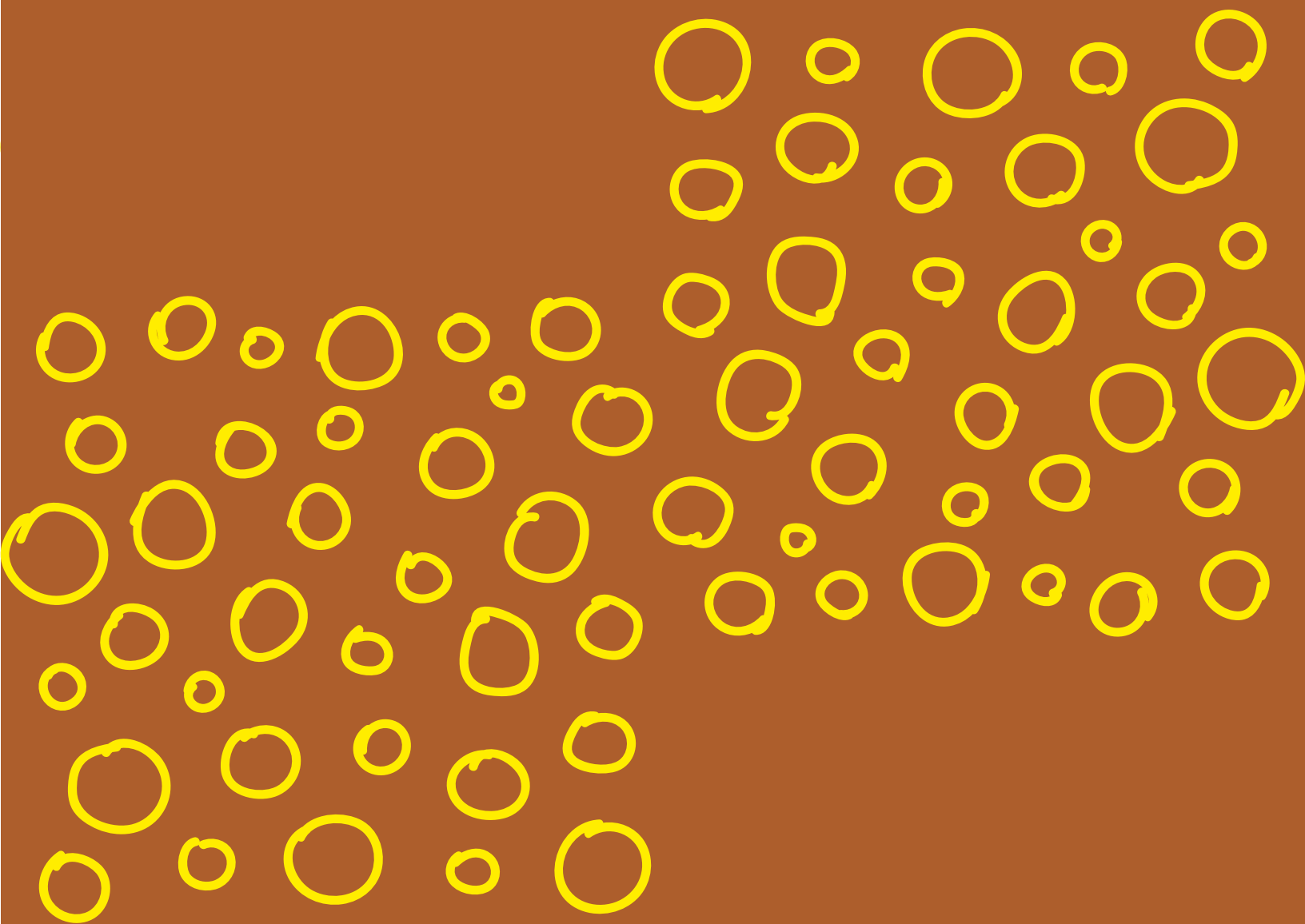
Upon release on 13 June 2017, I went back home, and my family organised a meeting with the family of my ex-husband to sort out our differences and so that we could live in peace with each other. After the reconciliation, I moved to Gulu town to start a new life and got a job with a sports betting centre where I worked as a cashier. I was then supported to set up a business dealing in silver fish (omena/mukene) that I did alongside my formal job. However, the business did not do well as my sister, who had allocated space to me in the market, became jealous of my success and started stealing my money. When I realised this, I moved out of her house and started doing my business at a new place. However, the business did not do well either, so I decided to reinvest the money I had got by opening a similar business in Kitgum town for my mother.

My plan is that once my mother has made enough money from the business, she will refund the capital I gave her plus interest so that I am able to start a business dealing in second-hand clothes. Currently, I work at Don petrol station as a pump attendant and am one of the music academic students at Advance Afrika.





# ***REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES***



## **EDMOND ANGWERI**

From being a drug addict to a reformed youth, Edmond Angweri's plight started when one day he dug a small portion of land to plant some maize and his nephew took to playing in the garden once the seedlings sprouted. He warned his nephew the first time, but the nephew did not listen, so the next time Edmond caught him, he slapped the boy. In retaliation, the boy's mother hurled insults at Edmond. Out of anger, Edmond picked up a radio that was next to him and threw it at her but it did not hit her. Instead, the radio hit the ground and broke into pieces. After this, his nephews ran to the police and reported that Edmond had tried to beat their mother and added cases of malicious damage to property, threatening violence and drug abuse. As a result, Angweri was sent to prison for six months, from February to August 2016. He served his sentence at Lira Main Prison.

After serving his sentence, Edmond looked for a job to keep him away from home and busy. No sooner had he found the job than he was accused of theft. His sister's money (300,000/-) got lost in her house and when his uncle's wife heard the sister and Angweri arguing about this, she reported to the police that Edmond had stolen the money. He was taken back to prison, where he stayed from April to July 2017. This time, he served his sentence at Erute Prison Farm. When he was released, a meeting involving the clan leaders and the local leaders in the area was held. The case was resolved, and the leaders recommended that Angweri's uncle and his family should go back to the village instead of fighting over the property Angweri's late father left for his children. However, the uncle's wife insisted that they would not go anywhere. The leaders then demarcated the boundaries of the land and allocated the other possessions to specific individuals.

When Angweri's sister, Diana, was contacted about the incident, she confirmed that they really had no problem with their uncle, but that they had problems with his wife instead. She added that she treated them like trash and kept telling them to go and look for another place to stay. She added that the uncle's wife usually got her son to get into their house through the windows to steal food and other things and that he had recently broken the padlock that they used to lock their doors. She added that his wife kept calling Edmond a mentally disturbed person and that this made him very angry.

Edmond said that he planned to get a job that would keep him busy and he was in the process of acquiring a national identity card so that it could be easy for him to get a job.

***After serving his sentence, Edmond looked for a job to keep him away from home and busy. No sooner had he found the job than he was accused of theft.***





## **TEDDY MOLLY ADONG**

Teddy Molly Adong, 37 years old and a resident of Kole, was charged with murder and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Teddy stated that she was a victim of constant gender-based violence (GBV) as her husband beat her and the children every time he was drunk and would chase her away from home. She frequently reported such incidents to the clan leaders, but no action was taken as the husband insisted he had already resolved the problems they had. She added that one time, when her child was one month old, her husband pushed the house on to her and the baby, but she managed to save the baby though she herself was injured.

One fateful day, Teddy was pounding millet in the compound when her husband, drunk as usual, came and grabbed the pestle from her, and then hit her on the left upper arm. In trying to protect herself, she managed to wrestle the pestle away from him. However, she accidentally hit her husband on the head and he died instantly. She then reported the incident to her mother-in-law, who advised her to report to the police as – since they did not know he was already dead – they arranged to take her husband to hospital. However, on handing herself over to the police, her file was immediately forwarded for prosecution. She added that there was no one to plead her case in court. She went to prison with her one-month-old baby, leaving the rest of her children with her mother-in-law.

While in prison, her other children were not allowed to visit her, and she felt that her infant was not safe because of the actions and inappropriate conversations that she noticed among her fellow inmates. At two and a half years, the child was taken back home by her brother, who took care of her until she was released from prison. Teddy went to live with her brother upon her release on 13 July 2018. She then tried to get in touch with her other children, but her eldest son asked her to first put on hold her constant attempts to contact them. Teddy has never been granted permission to see her children nor have the children been permitted to visit her.

When Teddy's brother, Bonny, was asked about the situation, he stated that a pre-release visit had been paid by Advance Afrika, during which a meeting was held in which Teddy's in-laws agreed that Teddy could return to her marital home and care for her children. However, upon her release, she was denied access to her children. He added that Teddy was still afraid that the in-laws could be planning something bad for the children but all she wants is to have her children back with her.

To earn a living, Teddy now digs other people's gardens for money. With the money, she buys a small quantity of cereals which she sells in the market. In addition, her brother offered her a plot of land where she has built a house in which she lives with her daughter.

***She went to prison with her one-month-old baby, leaving the rest of her children with her mother-in-law.***



## FIONA AKULLU

Fiona Akullu is 22 years of age and is a single mother of one. She is a resident of Obatto village, in Lira district. She dropped out of secondary school because she was pregnant, and her brother gave her a job as a mobile money agent in his mobile money shop. Unfortunately, one day a woman came to her and wanted to send money (500,000/-) to a friend. After the transaction, she realised that she was given fake cash, but the woman denied having given Fiona fake money. She tried explaining to her brother what had happened, but he would not listen. So, in fear, she ran away from home, staying away for two weeks. That was when her brother accused her of theft, even though 250,000/- had already been recovered. After the two weeks had elapsed, she returned home because she had left her son (who was one year and seven months old) with her parents. A neighbour advised her to report the case to the police for safety purposes. When her brother learnt of this, he took her to Lira Central Police Station, accused her of theft and child neglect, and asked that she be locked up in a police cell. She was later taken to court where she was convicted of theft and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Lira Women's Prison, but was later transferred to Oyam Women's Prison. Much as their mother pleaded with her son to bail out Fiona so that the issue could be sorted out at home, her pleas were ignored. Their father supported her brother's decision, as he claimed it was a way of training/disciplining her and of teaching her a lesson on how to behave.

Fiona was released in January 2018 and was picked up by her brother. Upon settling down back at home, Fiona found life very difficult. She began isolating herself from the rest of the family and would rarely eat. This pushed her father to call the clan and the local leaders so that there could be reconciliation between her and her brother. Their father made this decision basing on recommendations from the Advance Afrika team who visited that the family organise a clan meeting and have the two parties air their grievances since the conflict was causing tension within the entire family. During the meeting, Fiona's mother pleaded with her to forgive her brother. Because of the amount of anger that she had, she did not say anything. Still, she went ahead and forgave her brother.

However, Fiona Akulla still feels bitter towards her brother for getting her imprisoned and feels that she has not yet fully forgiven him. She feels that there should be a meeting where she can pour out her heart to her brother so that he can get to know what hurts her. The father confirmed this when he said, "They aren't fully reconciled. If the brother isn't around, she is so lively but when he is around, her life is so hard, and she doesn't feel safe." When her brother was asked how he felt towards her, he stated that he was deeply disappointed by her actions, but he had forgiven her and he would not give up on her. He said that that was why he had got her a job at Equator Seeds as a seed packer so that she could earn some money to take care of her son.



# CATHERINE APOK

Catherine Apok, 33 years old and a single mother of six, was convicted of theft and sentenced to three years in prison. Before being jailed, Catherine was a peasant farmer and sold cash crops to cater for her children's needs. She had divorced her husband and gone back to her father's home where she was able to participate in crime preventers' training in Masindi district. Upon returning from the training, she found out that her brother had sold off her only cow. She talked to him about it and even called a clan meeting to try to sort out their differences but the clan leaders told her that a woman who has returned to her own people from her marital home has no right to talk about anything that happens in her father's home. Therefore, even the 2.5 million shillings that she had earned from selling fish and had given to her brother to keep was not returned to her. She tried following up, but her efforts yielded nothing.



One day, her elder sister accused her of stealing raw tomatoes from her garden. She was brutally beaten by her brother, to the extent that she fainted and only came to after two hours. Upon gaining consciousness, she went to the Inomo police outpost to report the case of brutal assault but was told to return in the morning of the next day. However, when she went back to the police outpost the next day, she found her brother and sister already there and they had already written statements about her theft of tomatoes. She was transferred to Aduku Central Police Station where she was forwarded to court and convicted of theft, and then sentenced to three years in prison. She served the first year of her sentence in Kwanja Prison before being transferred to Oyam Women's Prison. Her husband came for their children when he heard that she had been convicted. When asked why the brother was so bitter towards her, Catherine stated that one day her brother's house got burnt and he said that a witch doctor had told him that it was Catherine who had burnt it.

After Catherine had served out her sentence, her brother and sister warned her never to return home, but she was not told why. Therefore, after her release she talked to her clan leaders in an attempt to have her accepted back home but was not successful. Her brother said that he would kill her if she tried to go back home or to engage in further negotiations with them. With the possibility of returning to live with her people now non-existent, she found shelter with a distant family friend who offered to help her until she could find where to live on her own. At that point, she met a catechist, who announced her problems in church and asked the congregation to help her out. She was given food items and 80,000/- in cash to rent the place where she currently lives. The catechist also went ahead to ask Hands Across Nations, a non-governmental organisation, to help and they gave her 20,000/-, 4 kg of maize and 3 kg of beans since she was also a member of the FAL class at the church.

Catherine was supported by Advance Afrika to set up a restaurant. However, she has not established the restaurant yet; instead, she runs a bakery with the aim of raising money to rent for the restaurant premises. Although the community she lives in has helped to reintegrate, Catherine fears that her children do not have a future because they will be unable to achieve anything in life since they have all dropped out of school.

## NANCY KAYENYPARWOT



I am Nancy Kayenyparwot, 30 years old. I served one year and seven months in Gulu Women's Prison for "attempted suicide". I come from Kitgum district where I had lived with my biological parents since my childhood. In 2016, I left my parents and started cohabiting with my partner who is an engineer in Palabek Ogili, Lamwo district. Trouble started when I conceived our first child. My partner's behaviour suddenly changed; he started insulting me, accusing me of being violent and disrespectful. As I neared my expected date of delivery, he took away every household item, including those we had purchased together as a family. Further, he insisted that I should leave his home and return to my parents, as he could

no longer tolerate my aggressiveness. This angered me. Being pregnant, I lost hope, I was depressed, and psychologically disoriented for weeks. Owing to this prolonged depression, I decided to take my own life. I took rat poison. I was only saved by my partner when he returned home and found me in a critical state. He called the police, the LC 1, and the community members nearby who rushed me to a nearby health centre. At that time, I did not know that the attempt to take my own life together with that of our unborn child was an offence against the law. My situation worsened when my partner filed a case of attempted suicide against me. Before I could give birth, I was convicted and sent to Gulu Women's Prison. Life was not easy in prison. I felt neglected, ignored and abandoned. At first, I struggled to adapt to life in prison because of what had happened to me. However, as time went by, I slowly started to come back to my senses owing to the routine counselling and guidance given by the prison social workers/wardresses.

On 5 July 2016, I gave birth to a baby boy at Gulu Main Prison health centre II. I named him Jonathan Mugabe. The prison social workers/wardresses gave me lots of support. They got in touch with my partner to seek additional support. My partner confessed that he still loved me, and he begged the prison social workers/wardresses to counsel and make me learn to control my emotions. He continued to support me while in prison up to the time I was released. In fact, he offered me transport, bought me a phone and gave me money for treatment whenever the prison social workers/wardresses contacted him. When I got out of prison, he requested that I should not go back to my family (in Kitgum). He said we should instead rent a house in Gulu town and settle down as a family. However, I disagreed with the suggestion and this made him stop rendering any form of support to my child and me.

In December 2016, a post-release team (PRT) from Advance Afrika and the Uganda Prisons Service visited me to understand my situation after prison. The team met with my family who had taken me in after prison and I was later given support in the form of a bale of second-hand clothes

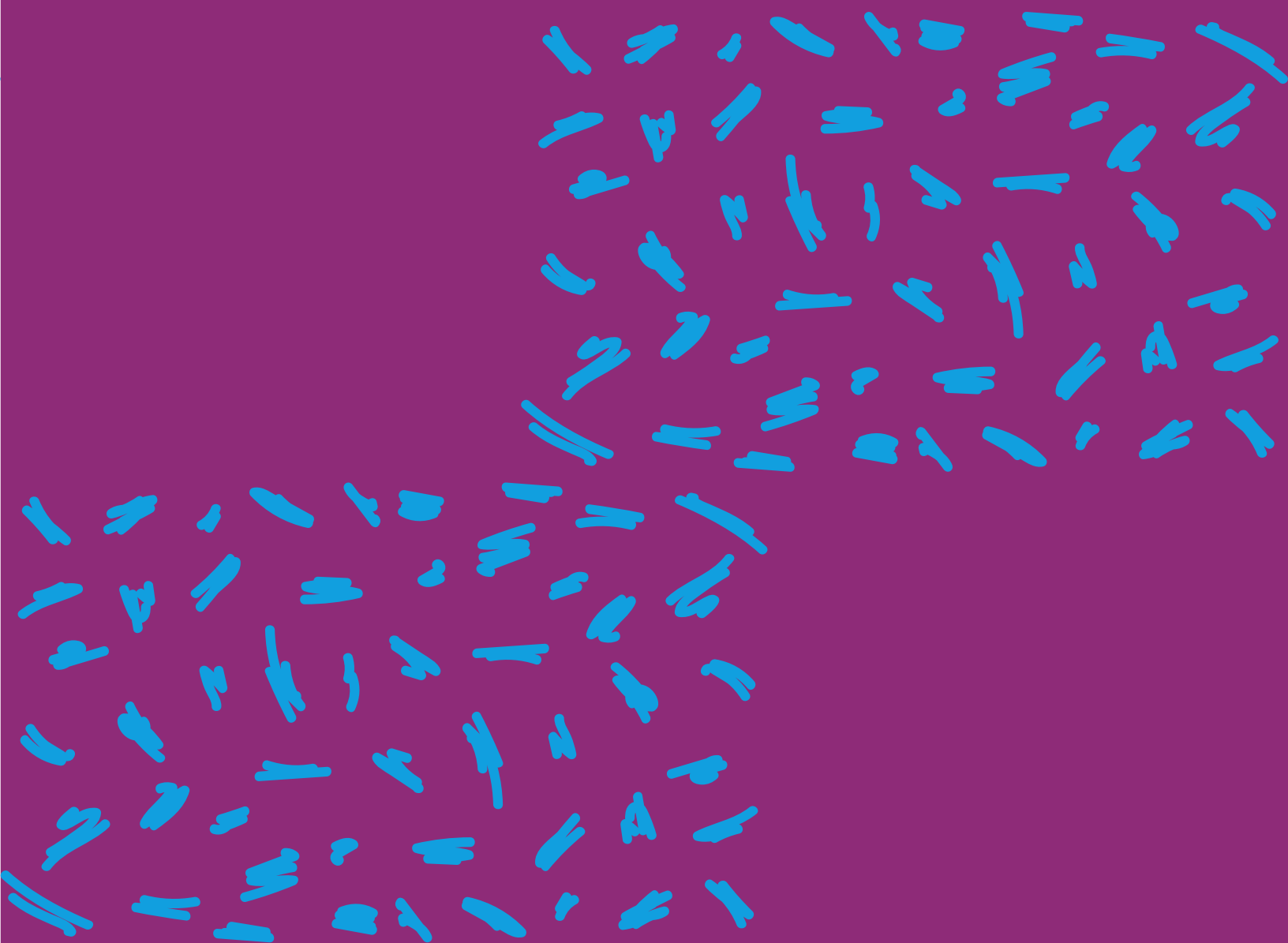
(as a start-up kit). I set up my business and was able to make significant profits. In one week, I was able to make a profit of 150,000/-. This continued for two months. Fresh trouble started when my brothers, who were plumbers with National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), Kitgum office, borrowed some money from me and promised to pay it back but did not. Instead, they kept on dodging me. My own parents also started demanding support from me towards the purchase of some basic domestic and food items. In addition, they wanted me to go back to my partner. I started experiencing challenges arising from all this pressure on me. One day, when I returned from my business place, I found all my things scattered around the house. As I tried to find out who had scattered my clothes on the floor, no one replied. However, my mother came over and started hurling insults at me. She accused me of insulting her after finding the clothes scattered on the floor. This continued for some time. When I could not tolerate it anymore, I retaliated and we fought. My father joined her and, together, they beat me up and told me to leave their home and go back to my partner since I was already a grown-up woman and a mother. I left home immediately. I was confused. I first thought of joining my disreputable peers in town. However, something came to mind, and I decided to go back to the village (Palabek, Ogili) with my child. On reaching the village, my grandmother and uncle welcomed me, and allocated to me a small plot of land to construct a grass-thatched house. While in the village, I could not continue with my second-hand clothes vending business as all the money I had saved had been spent on house items for my parents and borrowed by my brothers. I instead found work in a quarry where I sold sand at 40,000/- per trip. I would spend 10,000/- to pay the casual labourers for loading and offloading and save 30,000/-. After a while, I was able to save 150,000/-

On 24 August 2018, I contacted Advance Afrika again. I was in a very difficult place. Before I got in touch with Advance Afrika, Grace, my uncle's wife, had accused me of stealing her simsim seeds and summoned all the nearby community members to search my house. However, no simsim was found in my house. The following day, I left for work in the quarry as usual. Unfortunately, I left my house open and the padlocks on a kitchen utensils stand. In my absence, Grace came and exchanged the padlock to my house. When I returned home in the evening and tried to open the padlock on my door, it could not open. I decided to borrow a hacksaw from the nearby trading centre and cut the padlock. To my surprise, I found all my household items scattered inside the house. I later found out that my Certificate for Entrepreneurship and Life Skills (from Advance Afrika), 150,000/-, bed sheets, saucepans, plates and dishes all missing. I asked the children who were at home if they saw anyone enter my house while I was away. They confessed that it was Grace who had entered my house and carried away a basin of maize. I reported the incident to the LC 1 and Grace was summoned together with her husband. However, she confessed to only taking the certificates but not the other items, and she and my uncle threatened not to give back my certificate until I called my parents in Kitgum town to confirm if the certificate belonged to me.

I think the hostility towards me is related to land issues. Grace discovered that I am not a biological daughter in this village. Therefore, she and other family members want me to leave and return to my parent's village. They accuse me of paying young children in the family to sleep in my house while I am away at night. They also claim that I am a short-tempered woman who is difficult to live with. Right from the time my property was stolen, I have felt that my life here is not safe. No one is willing to stand up for me. From the time I went to prison, I have never felt well, but I have no one to talk to. Therefore, I live in fear for my life as well as my child's, who is just two years old.



# ***REFORMATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING***



## **MOSES ADELO**

I am Moses Adelo, a 23-year-old inmate at Loro Prison. Before I got into trouble, I was a Senior 1 student but dropped out owing to financial constraints on the part of my parents. I ventured into farming to earn some money to pay school fees for my two siblings and to take care of my son.

One day, as I was grazing some cows, I came across an abandoned gun magazine loaded with bullets. I picked it up and told my friend Walter, who was a bicycle mechanic, about the magazine. Walter advised me to keep it. Unfortunately, one day a customer's bicycle was stolen after being repaired and he went to investigate at Walter's house. There he found the gun magazine and reported the discovery to the police. The police asked Walter where he had got the magazine and he told them that I gave it to him. That night, I was arrested and interrogated by the police, but I denied ever having been in possession of the magazine. This resulted in us being taken to Apac Central Police Station and later to court where I was charged with and convicted of illegal possession of firearms. I was then sentenced to six years in prison. My term would end in March 2019.

I am so excited about going back home and feel ready to take care of my siblings, son and elderly parents. I am also very grateful to Advance Afrika for equipping me with knowledge about how to manage a business through the entrepreneurship and life skills training I received. In the course of the training, I did a plan for a piggery business as well as goat and chicken rearing, which is contrary to what I thought before going to prison. I used to think I can't do business because I thought I was very young and needed a lot of money to do it, but with the knowledge and experienced that I have acquired through this training, I am more than eager to start a business when I go home. I have learnt business and entrepreneurship skills, how to start and manage a business and how to always set achievable goals in the business one does. I also learnt that I can save money, however small the business I own. This is something I did not know before, as I thought that the sole purpose of running a business was to fulfil one's personal needs.

I feel hopeful that the community is ready to receive me, since I believe that I do not have any problem with the community.

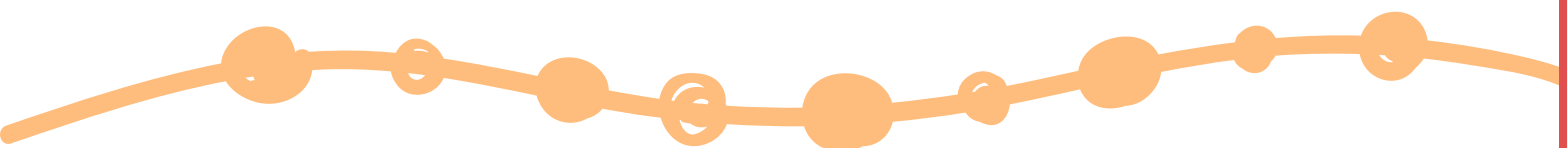
A portrait of Moses Adelo, a young Black man with a short haircut, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a bright green t-shirt. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage and a white fence. A blue speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

***I am also very grateful to Advance Afrika for equipping me with knowledge about how to manage a business through the entrepreneurship and life skills training I received.***



# Conclusion

The stories shared reflect our work in prison and efforts that have been made in rehabilitating and reintegrating youth ex-offenders in the Lango and Acholi sub-regions of northern Uganda. Whereas some have been reintegrated into their communities, accepted by their families and started small and medium businesses for their self-sustenance, a challenge still remains for the majority of ex-offenders. They still face challenges with their reintegration as they have to grapple with stigma and find it hard to come to terms with their past. This difficulty stems from the fact that they have to live together with the persons they offended against and those who led to their incarceration. Despite the numerous efforts made by several stakeholders to change the situation, a lot still needs to be done to help ex-offenders become better, beginning with rethinking the justice system to finding better ways of rehabilitating inmates, and providing psychosocial support and employment, among others. Considering that ex-inmates come from homes and communities, it is important that the community, local leaders and any well-meaning person join hands to complement the mandate of the Uganda Prisons Service and Advance Afrika to redress the root causes of vulnerability among young people and to break the cycle of recidivism. Everybody deserves a second chance, including those who have offended.





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