

MANDELA DAY CELEBRATED AT LUZIRA WOMEN AS UGANDA PRISONS SERVICE STRENGTHENS REHABILITATION AND HUMAN DIGNITY



Every year during the month of July, prison communities around the world commemorate Nelson Mandela International Day to honour the legacy of the late Nelson Mandela and promote the values of human dignity, hope, rehabilitation and respect for the rights of people deprived of their liberty. The day also highlights the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, commonly known as the Mandela Rules, which guide humane and professional correctional services worldwide.

The Uganda Prisons Service, in partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Justice Defenders, joined inmates, staff of Luzira Women Prison and other partners to commemorate Nelson Mandela International Day under the theme: "It's Still in Our Hands to Combat Poverty and Inequality".

In her remarks, the Head of Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Uganda Ms. Winnie Jeptum Bargoria, encouraged inmates to use their time in custody to transform their lives through education, vocational training and positive behaviour. She reminded them that every individual has the potential to change and become a responsible member of society.



Ms. Bargoria commended the inmates for the neatness, smartness and discipline they displayed throughout the celebrations, describing it as a reflection of the positive rehabilitation efforts taking place within the Uganda Prisons Service. She also commended the Uganda Prisons Service, under the leadership of the Commissioner General of Prisons, for its commitment to rehabilitation and the

humane treatment of prisoners. She pledged UNODC's continued support in strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice programmes in Uganda.



Representing the Commissioner General of Prisons, Commissioner of Prisons Xavier Francis Elubu, the Regional Prisons Commander, urged inmates not to wait for the future before deciding to transform their lives.

"Do not let the date on the calendar determine your transformation. Start today and rise now to make a positive change," he said.

He also commended UNODC, Justice Defenders and other partners for their continued support in empowering female inmates through access to justice, legal empowerment, education and rehabilitation programmes that prepare them for successful reintegration into society.

Ms. Deo Patience Candia, Country Programme Manager at Justice Defenders, encouraged the inmates to remain hopeful and embrace the opportunities available to them while in custody. Aligning her remarks with the day's theme, she said addressing poverty and inequality begins with empowering individuals through access to justice, education and skills development.

May the spirit of Nelson Mandela strengthen you to remain hopeful, disciplined and determined to build a better future," she said.

The Uganda Prisons Service has continued to implement the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules) by promoting respect for human dignity, access to healthcare, education, legal aid, vocational training, counseling, family contact and rehabilitation programmes. These interventions have strengthened prisoner welfare, safeguarded human rights and enhanced successful rehabilitation and reintegration.

The celebrations featured a range of rehabilitation and awareness activities, including access to justice and legal awareness sessions conducted by staff and inmate paralegals, counseling and guidance, practical court demonstrations to equip inmates on remand with knowledge of court procedures and etiquette, sporting activities involving staff, inmates and partners, exhibitions of hand-made products produced through vocational training, and music, dance and drama performances by inmates.



The partners also toured the prison paralegal offices, where they interacted with inmate paralegals who voluntarily provide legal awareness and support services to fellow inmates. The visitors appreciated their commitment, professionalism and the important role they play in improving access to justice within the prison.

To crown the day's celebrations, inmates, prison staff and partners shared meals, refreshments and entertainment in an atmosphere of unity, hope and fellowship, reflecting the spirit of Nelson Mandela's legacy of compassion, dignity and inclusion.

