



KERE

CITY



**ANNUAL
REPORT 2021**



MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER AND CEO

Warmest greetings from
Okere City!

It is my greatest delight to present to you our annual account of the year 2021. What a year it has been!

We started the year with unprecedented amount of energy and passion. We had learnt in 2020 that despite the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, we should reimagine better possibilities of building community resilience in Okere Parish.

Therefore, in 2021, we gave our best, working hand-in-hand with the people of Okere and our friends and supporters in Uganda and around the world. We consolidated and reshaped old projects whilst initiating new ones. Among others, we collaborated with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to implement Okere Leadership Lab, a grassroots agenda to develop a new breed of community and local political leaders in Okere. We also started the Okere Community Tourism project to build Okere City as a destination for tourists. To generate more revenues and strengthen our bid to become a sustainable organization, we added a local restaurant, a Shea Butter shop, a village bank, and a barbershop to our fleet of social businesses. To strengthen our internal governance, we welcomed onboard Maureen Agena and Edward Kiruluta as our inaugural advisory board members.

To continue building the physical structures of Okere City, we proceeded with many infrastructural projects such as the community storage facility which is surrounded with 18-single rooms to accommodate staff members of Okere City. We also started the construction of Umutesi House, a girls' dormitory mostly funded by the Future Generations Trust.

And as we prepare to welcome pupils back to school early in 2021 after almost 2-years of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also started constructing classroom blocks and drilled a borehole to provide clean drinking water.

If there is anything we couldn't be more proud of in 2021, it is the fact that our work gained global prominence due to the incredible journalistic works of Caleb Okerereke and John Okot whose efforts enable our work to be reported in The Guardian and the Daily Science Monitor respectively. Indeed being described as a real-life Wakanda means that our work has only begun.

I welcome you to not only flip through the pages of our 2021 Annual Report but also learn a thing or two from work. Most importantly, do not hesitate to reach out to us for any kind of support and/or collaboration.

Ojok Okello



Ngwenyu John Bosco, Chairperson LC1, Abar Yao Village,

I was not only able to recount the milestones I have achieved as the Chairperson but I also reflect so deeply about how best I could improve my performance to be a more effective local leader. My performance as a local councillor has significantly improved due to the project



Scovia Abwangao

“Due to the increasing sale of Okere Shea Butter, my household income has significantly improved. Compared to the past, I can now afford a decent meal for my children and even buy for them clothes and other essential needs”



Norah Ochen

“Okere City has created multiple opportunities for us to come together as community through VSLA groups. These groups have enabled us to overcome many challenges and build our resilience”

Highlights From Our Projects in 2021

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1. Okere Leadership Lab

The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and the Local Government Act, 1997 empowers Local Councilors in Uganda to play key leadership roles in ensuring the effective functioning of local democracy and decentralization. Specifically, Section 24 of the Local Government Act, 1997 mandates the Chairpersons LC I, II, III to serve as the political head at that level Village, Parish, Sub-County levels respectively. Among others, the Chairperson should preside over the council and executive committee meetings and; monitor the general administration, projects, and government services in the area under his or her jurisdiction. The committees of local councils are also mandated by the constitution to assist in the maintenance of law, order and security; initiate, encourage, support and participate in self-help projects and mobilize people, material and technical assistance in relation to self-help projects; vet and recommend persons in the area who should be recruited into the armed forces; serve as the communication channel between the Government, the district or higher local council and the people in the area.



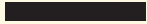
ADVANCING POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Dongo tela me tedero

IMPLEMENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



To be able to achieve the above constitutional mandates, lower local councils should be equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. It is the desire to provide these skills and knowledge to the LC1 chairpersons and their committees that Okere City with support from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, a German political foundation collaborated to support grassroots and local council leaders in Okere Parish in 2021.



Altogether, 600 local councillors in Okere Parish attended the training workshops which focused on different topics, such as; conflict management, parish development model, local courts operations, among others. Whilst its unrealistic to quantify the impact of these trainings already, our local leaders already feel empowered to improve on their ability to lead and deliver on their different mandates. For Mr. Okello Jaspher, the Chairperson LCI of Akwala-Akwala village, the workshops enabled him to have a better understanding of how and why some of the challenges he faced as a leader as persisted overtime. For instance, “I had never taken stock of my monthly performance. If I did every month, I am sure I would have done much more as a local leader”, he said. “From now onwards, I will take stock and document/track my work as a local leader” he pledged.



Group photo with all the LC1 Chairpersons of Okere Parish



Andrea, Youth Councillor of Abar-Yao village making a plenary submission during one of the workshop sessions.

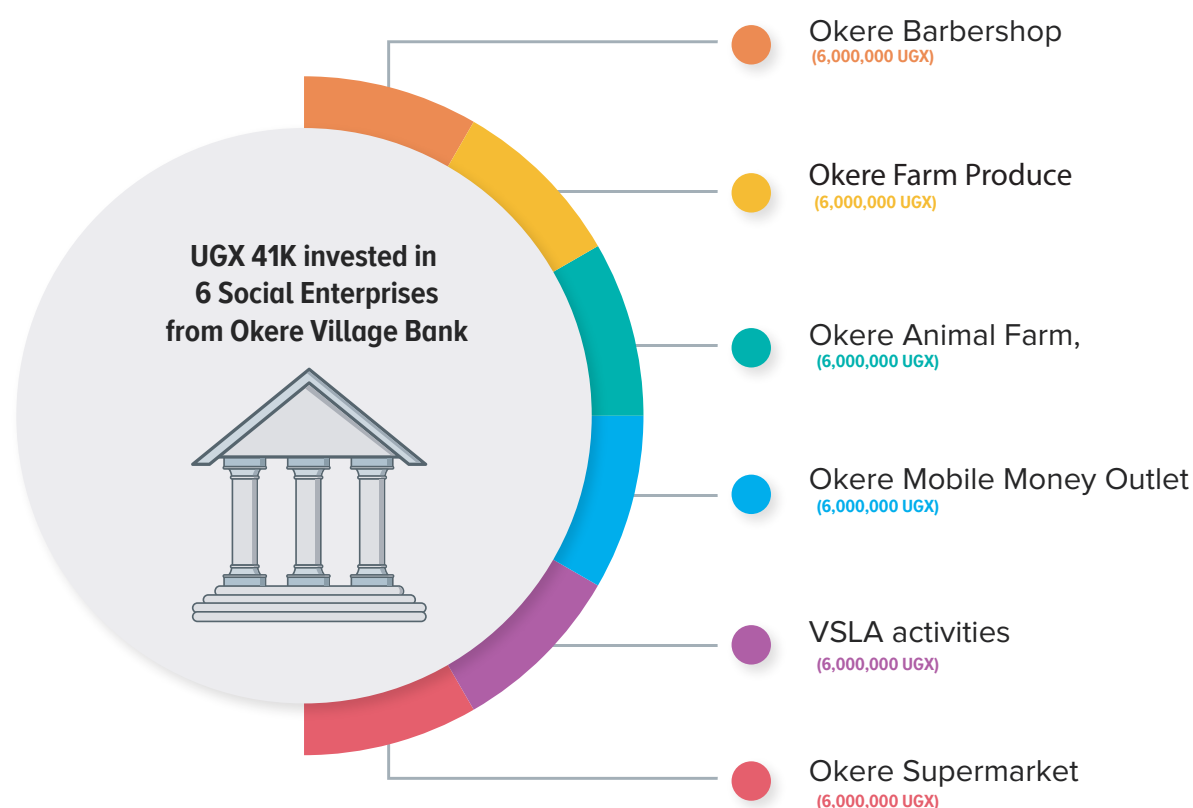


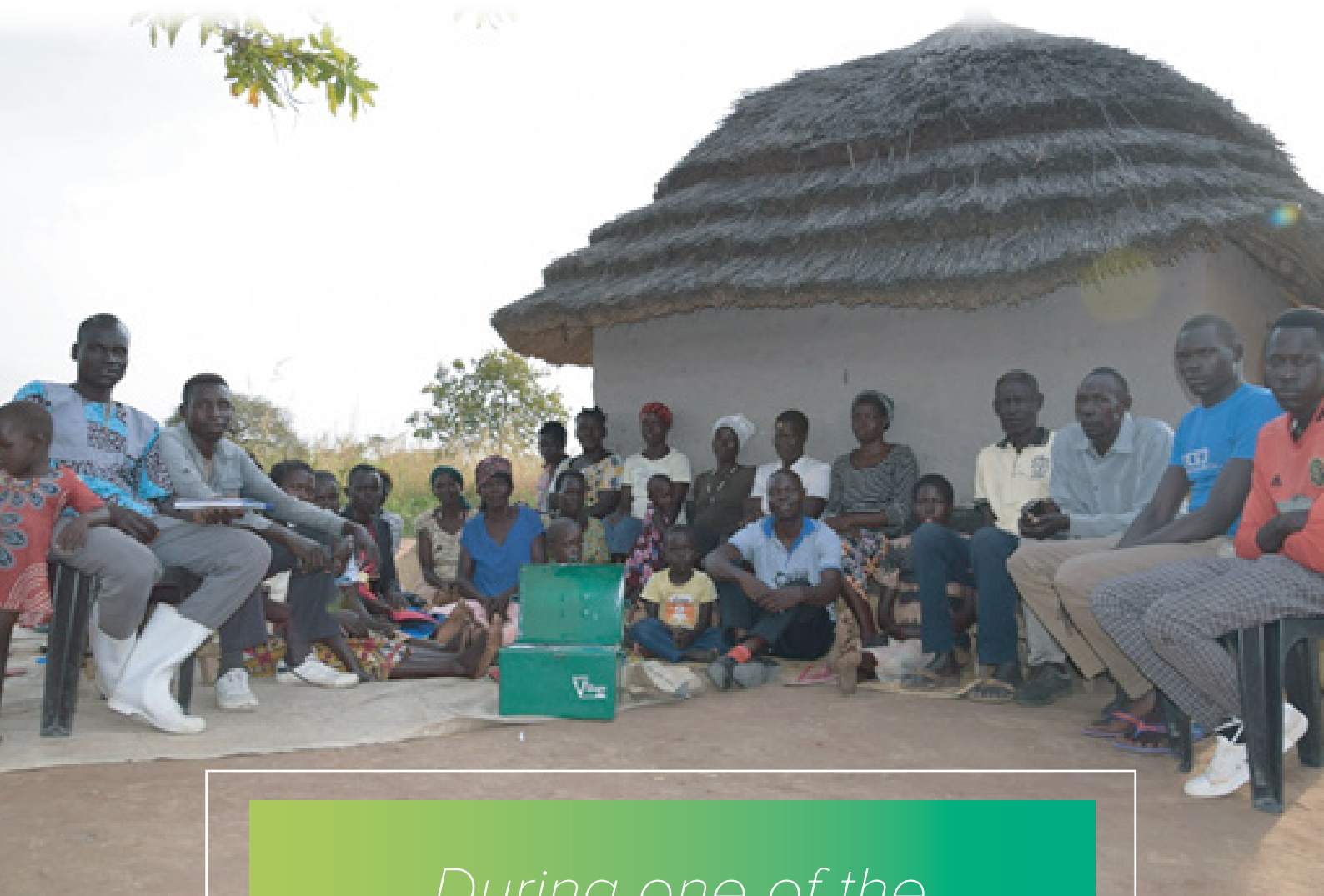
Local councillors participating in a role play during one of the workshop sessions

2.Okere village bank

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Okere Village Bank is the financial arm of social businesses operated and supported by the Okere City project. In 2021, the bank supported 15 groups in Okere Parish comprising of 500 members to conduct voluntary savings and lending (VSLA) activities. The bank invested 41,000,000 UGX (11,000 USD) in 6 social businesses, namely; Okere Barbershop, Okere Farm Produce, Okere Animal Farm, Okere Mobile Money Outlet, VSLA activities, and Okere Supermarket. On average, each business received a soft loan of 6,000,000 UGX. The bank lends to Okere City projects at an interest rate of 12% per annum. Over the past 12 months, the 6 businesses supported by Okere Village Bank have provided different products and services to 2,000 clients. 10 people have been directly employed by these businesses. By Dec 2021, only 15% of the loan had been repaid. The low repayment rate is owing to the fact that most the funds were lent were invested in biological assets such as cattle and farm produce which have not yet been sold. The low repayment rate is also attributed to the fact that drought affected 90% of the maize seed given on credit to 200 farmers who are members of our VSLA groups.





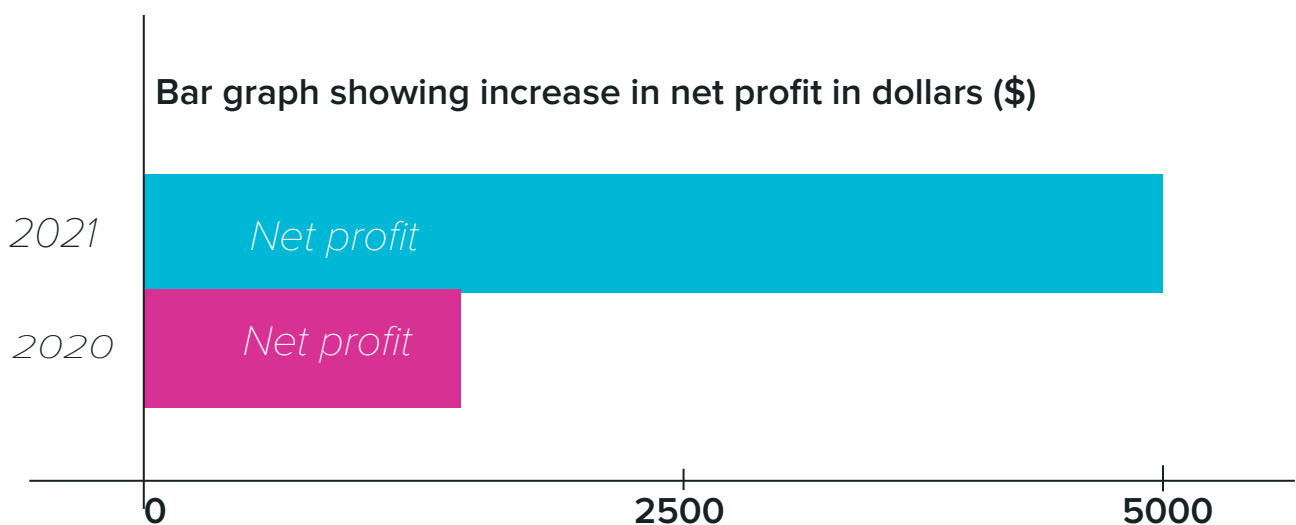
*During one of the
Lending and
Saving activities*

3.Okere Shea Butter

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After introduce Okere Shea Butter to the marketplace in 2020, we continued soaring reaching more clientele and selling upto 1ton of Shea butter. With its oils extracted from Okere City's giant nilotica shea nuts, Okere Shea Butter has the kind of smoothness and finesse that is unbridled. It is an organic, natural and perfect solution for most of your hair and skin care needs. In total, 7,000 clients bought Okere Shea Butter enabling us to register a net profit of \$5,000 in 2021.



4. Our Shea (Yao Waa) Project

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In September 2020, we started implementing Our Shea Project through a small grant from CivSource Africa's Zishaye Fund. Fast forward to 2021, the project is significantly contributing towards the protection, regeneration and conservation of shea trees, while at the same time bringing together a community of women to build a movement to ensure promote the sustainability of Shea trees and harness its socio-economic and natural benefits. At one of the community engagement forums, a participant suggested that all members present at the meeting had to make a commitment pledging never to cut down any Shea tree. The idea was unanimously seconded, and members pledged to protect the shea trees and become ambassadors for the community protecting and conserving of the trees.



Thus far, the community of Okere city are holding up to their pledge of not cutting shea trees and are vocal in reporting cases of shea destruction. As community members strive to conserve Shea trees, it is increasingly becoming clear to the community members, that the involvement of local community members in monitoring, surveillance, sensitization is a key mechanism for ensuring sustainable management of the shea natural resources in Okere Parish.

5. Okere Boxing Club

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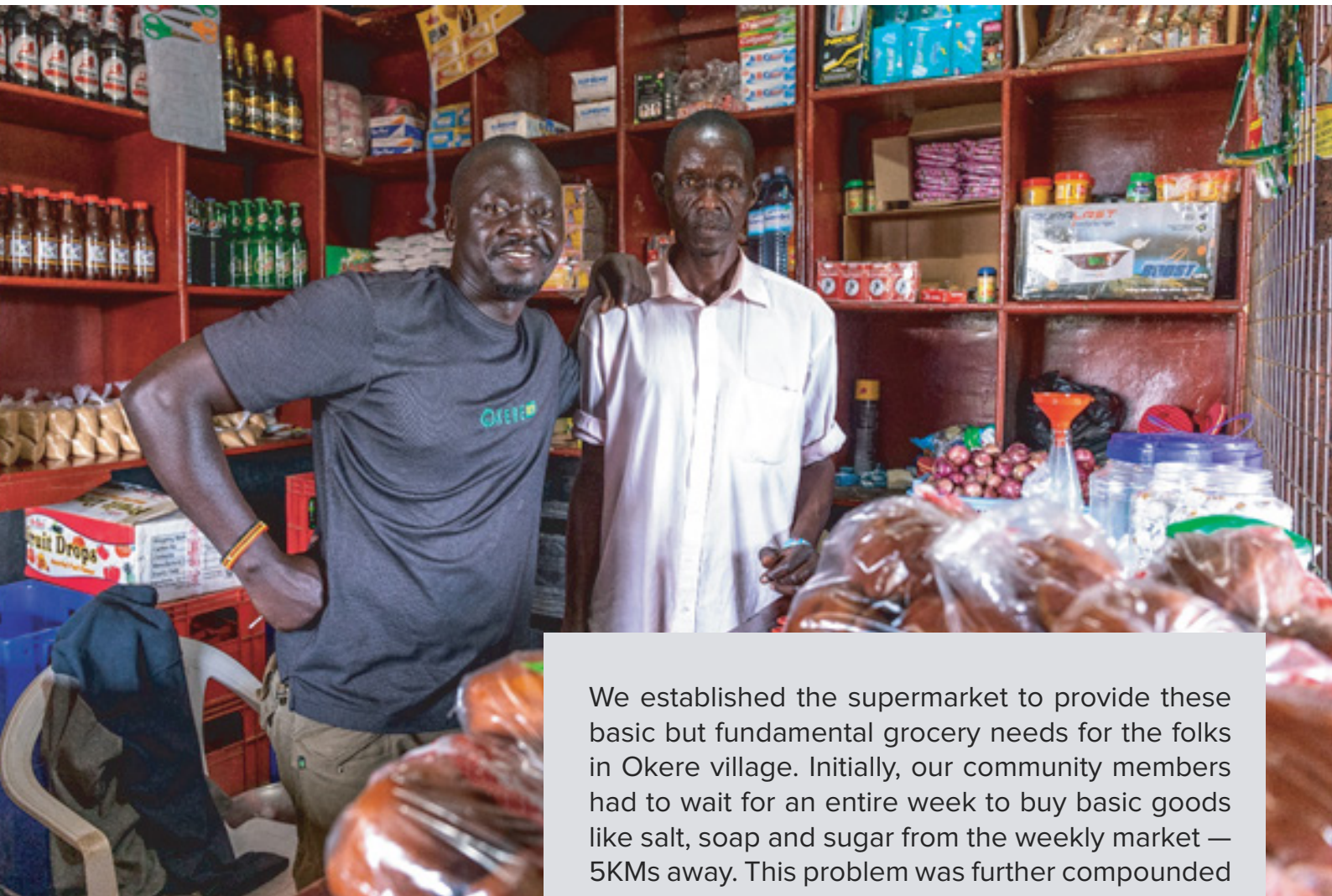


We excitedly launched Okere Boxing Club in 2020. There is a unique story behind the formation of this club. Over a decade ago when we found ourselves in the IDP camps in Lira town, hundredths of youth and children without much to do resorted to boxing classes which were then offered by Lira Boxing Club. We wanted to be strong. To defend ourselves and perhaps fight the LRA rebels. Alas, our skills were misdirected. We returned home years later and could only use our special skill-sets to continue disturbing the peace of our community. We became petty criminals, stealing whatever we could to survive. But the youth of Okere are reimagining a new path.

In 2021, we organized 5 boxing tournaments inviting other local boxing in neighbouring villages. Slowly, boxing as a sporting activity is being appreciated and the tournaments provides an exciting and reinvigorating space for gathering community members. .

6. Okere City Supermarket and Pub

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Okere City Supermarket isn't just a grocery store, it is inspired by actual needs of the community and its mission driven.

”

We established the supermarket to provide these basic but fundamental grocery needs for the folks in Okere village. Initially, our community members had to wait for an entire week to buy basic goods like salt, soap and sugar from the weekly market — 5KMs away. This problem was further compounded with COVID-19 lockdown which led to the closure of the weekly market. Similarly, most rural households wouldn't have enough disposable income to purchase an entire week's stock. Thus, the unholy trinity of long distance, COVID-19 lockdown and low levels of disposable income among the rural community in Okere village enabled us to quickly innovate and ensure a continuous supply of basic household needs and supplies. Through the shop, we haven't only brought these goods closer, we also offer goods on credit with trust as the most important currency.

7. Okere Community Health Centre

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In 2021, Okere Community Health Centre successfully provided health care services to 2,000 community members. Up to 25 community members visited our health facility on a daily basis



We also quintessentially provided essential health services such as testing and treatment of infectious diseases like malaria, typhoid, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs). We have also provided voluntary guidance and counselling, especially to 200 HIV/AIDS patients, in addition to conducting 250 free and voluntary HIV/AIDS testing.

To promote water and sanitation (WASH) services, we have drilled 2 boreholes and rehabilitated 1 borehole resultantly eliminating the once common challenge of waterborne disease infections in the village.



8.Okeme Festival

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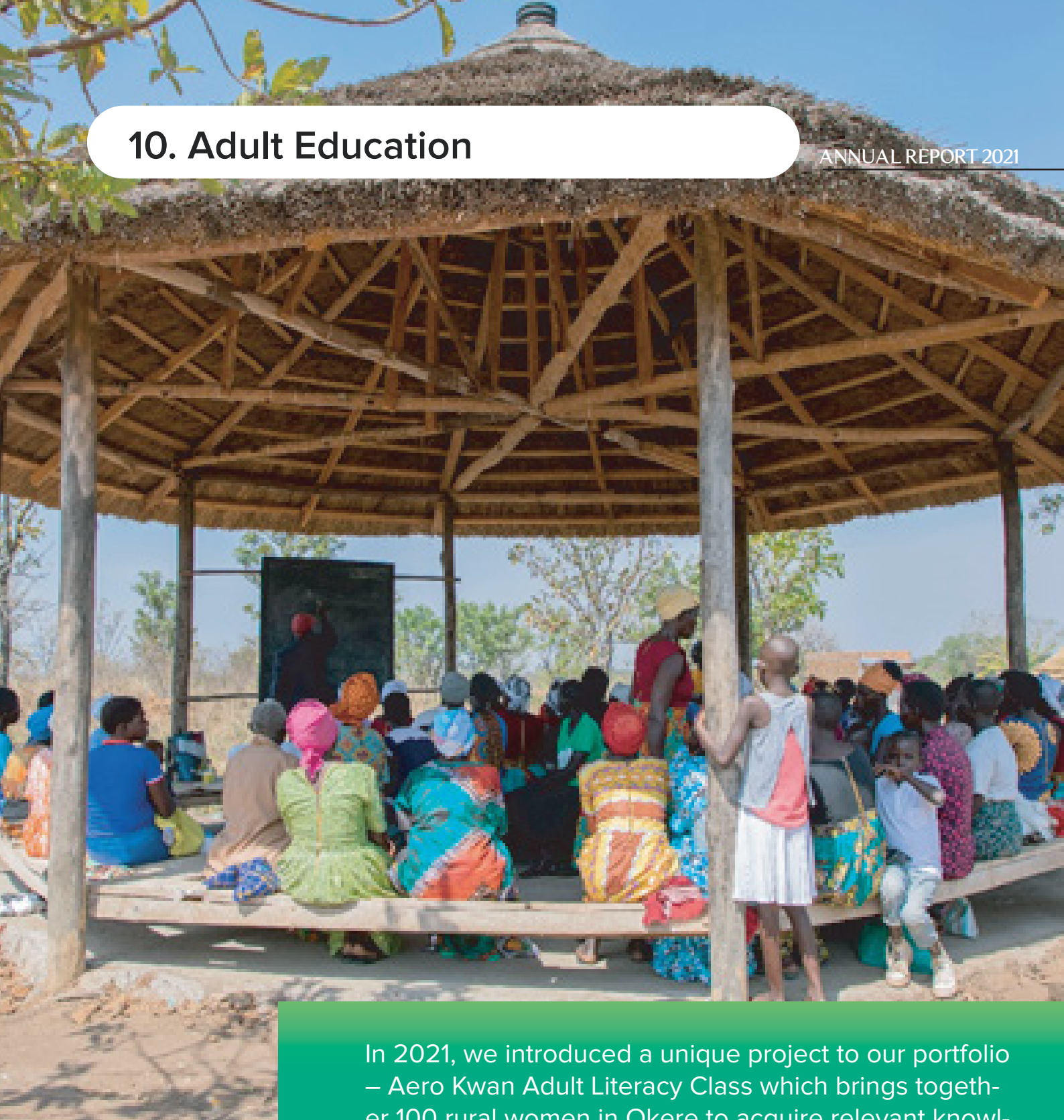
To crown off 2021, we organized the Myel Kwaro/Okeme Festival (Lango Cultural Dance and Music). The event attracted 3,000 community members.

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10. Adult Education

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In 2021, we introduced a unique project to our portfolio – Aero Kwan Adult Literacy Class which brings together 100 rural women in Okere to acquire relevant knowledge and skills through a functional adult literacy curriculum. The class is facilitated by Mr. Munu Samson, a renowned and experience adult educator. Already, the project has started reigniting hope and giving rural women of Okere the opportunity to learn, relearn and unlearn to become more prepared in shaping a better future for themselves, families and community at large.

Special acknowledgement



***THANK YOU MUTESI FOR
ENABLING US BUILD
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS***

Ojok Okello and Linda Mutesi sharing a
light moment during her visit to Okere City



Ojok Okello @OjokOkello_ · Mar 6

Anyone in Kampala got a spare iPhone I can borrow just for today? A series of Club Houses (only supported by iOS) are desirous for me to join and share the Okere City story and I am handicapped. Help a brother!



2



5

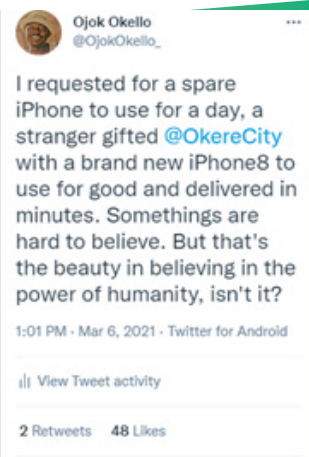
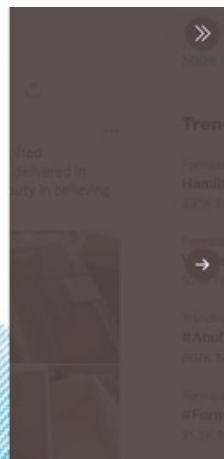


8



Our work in 2021 was marked by incredible highlights. But our special encounter with Linda Mutesi was the kind of highlight deserves a special mention. In March 2021, our work had been featured in The Guardian Newspaper, and there were massive interests by several people across the world to interview, listen to or have a conversation with our CEO. This particular group called Uganda House on Club House, an audio social media platform only supported by later versions iOS operating systems. This basically means that you can only be on Club House if you have an iPhone 7 and above. Unfortunately for our CEO, he owned an old iPhone 6 which could not be supported on Club House. Randomly, he thought of asking for help on social media. A single tweet was enough to endear Linda, then a complete stranger to come to our rescue.

Within minutes, Linda had contacted Solomon King, a mutual friend whether he knew our founder to which he responded in the affirmative. King contacted us and gave us Linda's contact. We quickly contacted Linda and she was so excited to help. "It's the little act of kindness I am happy to provide to support you advance your impactful work" Linda said. In a span of less than two hours, Linda had delivered to us a brand new iPhone 8. It was surreal. Almost unbelievable. But like our founder Ojok Okello always says, "never underestimate the strange power imbued within the human spirit".



But the story of the iPhone is just but the beginning of what has evolved into one of the most important and meaningful relationships in our life as an organization. Words would never be sufficient to ably capture what this relationship means to us! For, the relationship has given us wings to fly.

Due to the strange act of Linda's generosity, our founder attempted severally to meet her in person, and luckily she was so kind – again to grant our request. We heartily expressed our gratitude to Linda to which she welcomed but insisted again and again that “your work deserves much more support”. During the meeting, Linda shared with us that she had started her local philanthropic foundation called the Future Generations Trust whose mission is to support homegrown solutions to local challenges. It was as if FGT's mission was directly speaking to our work

We are passionate about supporting home grown solutions to community challenges

Future Generations Trust

The relationship with Linda Mutesi evolved into a special partnership between Okere City and the Future Generations Trust (FGT). Since then, the support offered to Okere City by FGT has been relentlessly unwavering. Particularly, the FGT has given us the moral and financial support to build a girls' dormitory at Okere Community School. Umutesi House as we have christened the dormitory shall provide accommodation to 100 rural girls thereby enabling them to receive a quality education from our community school. Together with the Future Generations Trust, we are particularly investing girl-child education because we strongly believe that it is one of, if not the surest way to guarantee their future. By Dec 2021, Umutesi House was about 70% nearing completion.

But Linda didn't stop there, she has continued to mobilize resources through her networks to make sure that dormitory is fully equipped with bed. In another act of extreme of generosity, Linda requested her friends to donate a bed to Okere City as her 2021 birthday wish. Instead of expecting wrapped physical gifts from her friends, she instead requested them to gift us with a bed so that we can continue advancing the noble cause of supporting girl-child education. And by Dec 2021, we had already received funds to purchase 20 beds for the dormitory.



Umutesi House in June 2021



Umutesi House in Dec 2021

A Birthday Wish



Okere City Primary School is finishing up the Umutesi Girls' Dorm, which shall give **100 girls** the opportunity to become boarding pupils at their community school.

The next task is to acquire **50 beds**, and I am calling upon you to support them by donating a bed.

Each bed costs **250,000 UGX**

DONATE VIA BANK DEPOSIT:
 ACCOUNT NAME : Okere Community Development Project (Okere City)
 ACCOUNT NUMBER : 1029201319787
 BANK NAME : Equity Bank

OR THROUGH MOBILE MONEY:
 0774547023 (Donnas Ojok)

A PROJECT OF  **OKERE CITY**

www.okerecity.org    Okere City

Again, when it came to promoting sustainability in Okere, Linda never gave up on us. When we explained to her how worried we were because of cutting down trees to burn bricks to facilitate infrastructural development projects, she had a solution for us. She wholeheartedly funded the purchase of an interlocking bricks-making machine. We have been tinkering with soil testing and making trials and significant strides have been made. We are excited that this machine will make an immense contribution to enable us build a sustainable city.



The kind of generosity exuded by Linda Mutesi went extreme and beyond what we would ever expect. And that radiation of Ubuntu has not only supported us to get the work done, but most importantly, it has empowered and motivated us to never relent in our pursuit of building a resilient community working.

Our Special 2021 Guests



The award winning photographer and cinematographer Zahara Abdul and Jeff Mulongo visited us to do probono production to showcase our work. We cannot wait to see the product when it finally comes out in 2022



Our friend Susan Nanduddu (middle) from the African Centre for Trade and Development (ACTADE) also paid us a courtesy visit



Victor Ochen and a team from AYINET also visited us as part of the community transformation fellowship programme

Our Special 2021 Guests



Aijuka Edman, the founder and CEO of NorthRhodes, a clean energy firm also visited us understand explore possibilities of future collaborations



Luke Wilms, a Canadian documentary producer also visited us to document our village banking project as part of his "Unbankables" documentary film. You watch the trailer [here](#)

How Okot and Okerere's Solutions journalism lifted us up

Towards the end of 2019, two incredibly talented young journalists paid us a courtesy visit. The outcome of their excellent journalistic craft has forever changed the trajectory of our work – for the better. To Caleb Okereke and John Okot, what we owe you can never be quantified or paid back. But the least we can do is to shine a light on you and express to you in writing how your work has catapulted our work to unimaginable heights.

Ojok Okello and Caleb Okerere



Let's delve a bit deeper into how John Okot's published in The Christian Science Monitor article entitled: "How Ojok Okello is transforming a village he never knew" lifted us up. First of all, there was something unique about the depth and detail imbued within the article. You see, Okot had visited Okere and spent over 24 hours to interview our founder and other rural folks in Okere to get a first-hand glimpse into our work. Severally, Okot was emphatic that he was interested in writing about the solutions we were offering to rid of the multiple rural development challenges we faced as a village still reeling from the legacies of protracted conflict and war. "Your work is a classic example of a solutions story and I would like to gather more facts, evidence, and perspectives on what's working and why" Okot told us when he called requesting to come over to Okere.

Menu

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— DIFFERENCE MAKER —

How Ojok Okello is rebuilding the hometown he never knew



Okot's visit to Okere was followed by over ten phone calls and WhatsApp exchanges to verify certain facts over a period of three months. At one point, we thought the questions were too much and unnecessary. But we were a million times wrong. Okot and Ryan (a South African based editor) were slowly crafting the story to make sure that every word mattered. That every sentence could make a succinct and meaningful description of our work. No wonder, within 24 hours of publishing the article in Feb 2021, traffic to our website had increased ten-fold. And for the first time, a donation was sent through our online crowdsourcing platform that was created a year ago and had never received a single penny in donations.

Similarly, the article also gave us another rare privilege of being featured in The Christian Science Monitor's People Making a Difference Podcast hosted by David Scott

— PODCAST: PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE —

How a remote Ugandan village became a hub of progress

Ojok Okello has transformed a small Uganda village into a hub of progress by listening to what the community needs. Episode 8 of our "People Making a Difference" podcast.

Okere City: A Ugandan hub of progress

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Donations

Over the course of 2021, up to 20 donors contributing up to a total of \$15,000 were inspired to do so because of the incredible storytelling craftsmanship of John Okot.

Global development

Global development is supported by

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About this content

Caleb Okereke in Okere City

Wed 3 Mar 2021 08:00 GMT



'It's radical': the Ugandan city built on solar, shea butter and people power



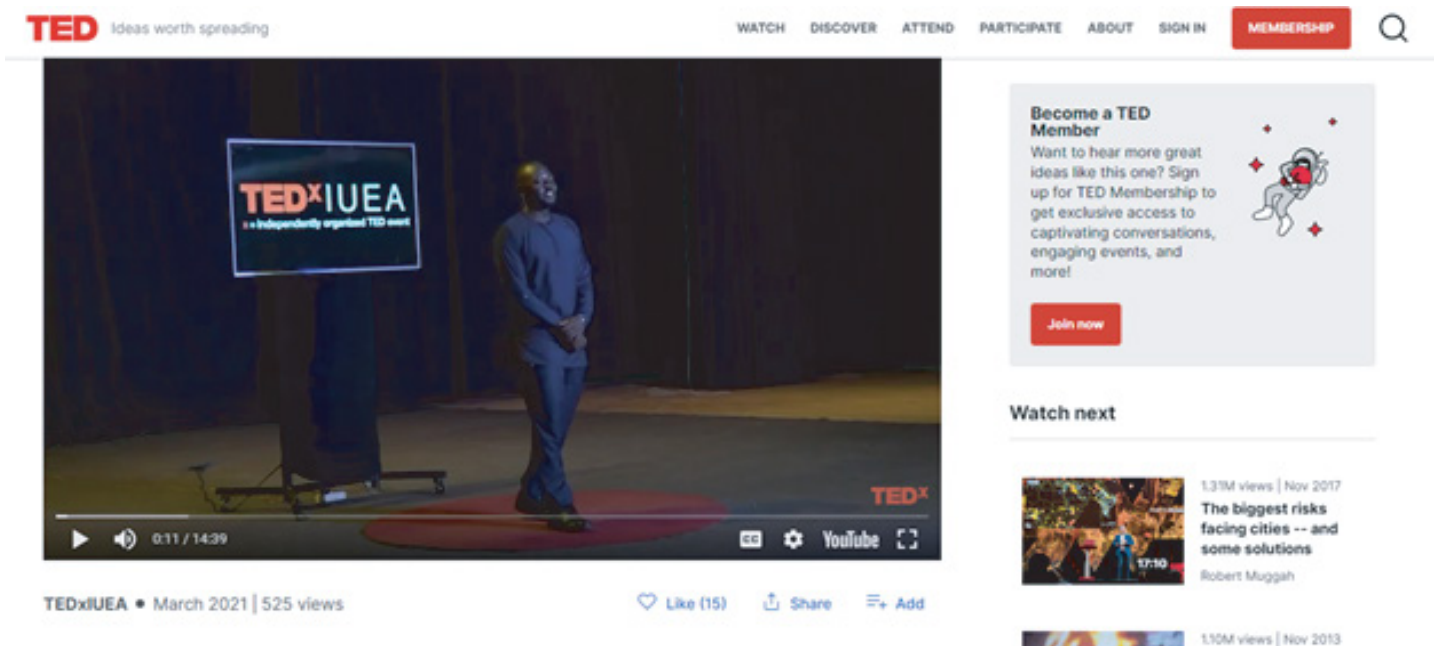
Just after a week of our work featuring in The Christian Science Monitor, there was another media bombshell: a feature story of Okere City was making headlines in The Guardian Newspaper. The weight of the story was a bit overwhelming. The article compared our work to Akon City arguing that while indeed Akon City had benefitted from all the media limelight, the little known Okere City was making a radical difference in the lives of thousands of village folks in Okere. Moreover, the article, likened Okere City to fictitious nation of Wakanda in the Marvel blockbuster movie Black Panther that used vibranium to facilitate their development. Accordingly, we would position and utilize our abundant Shea trees to power the radical rural transformation that our community so much desires.



The Guardian article about Okere City spread like wildfire across all corners of the world. In the month of March and April 2021, we had to averagely correspond to fifteen inquiries per day. So powerful was the article that 85% of the traffic to our website was driven by it. The article also gave us the opportunity to be invited to speak at TEDx stage. Again, the article was turned into an examinable essay by Macmillan Education for teachers around the world to use it as a case study for their students. We also did 10 interviews with other media organizations and podcasts all because of the powerful article beautifully and selflessly written by Okereke. And as if to ice the cake, USD 30,000 was raised, thanks to the article.

The two articles wittingly written by Okereke and Okot were an excellent showcase of solutions journalism because they didn't only focus on the multiple and systemic challenges the people in Okere have to grapple with on a daily basis but our holistic and catalytic response to those challenges. For instance, the articles emphasis how and why we are investing everything within our means to tap the benefits from our natural resource – the Shea trees, protect them, and to use them to emancipate our community. Again, the articles demonstrate how we are putting ordinary people at the center-stage of shaping their own destinies and making sure their voices and perspectives matter at every stage of our radical interventions. Most importantly, the articles focus on fundamental questions and ideas behind how we are trying our best to become a sustainable and self-reliant community project.

Of course, the two articles opened other possibilities for us as well. For instance, our work got recognized and we were offered a unique opportunity of sharing our story on a TEDx stage.



Some of the key lessons we learned in 2021



a) Building on existing community assets is key for community development:

Whether they are our natural resources like shea trees or the cultural and social activities that bind us together, we have cautiously invested in them and used them as key ingredients for our success.

b) Always listen to the authentic community voices:

Listening to local and authentic voices is a key prerequisite for any community development effort to succeed. We thus invests and organize community engagement platforms just to listen because it's create a basis for lasting social change.



WE ARE EXCITED ABOUT 2022. HERE'S WHY AND HOW;

1

We shall further strengthen Okere Village Bank and position it as a financing arm of the Okere City project

2

We shall also build a successful and robust primary school with excellent boarding facilities.

3

We shall expand the scope of Okere Community Health Centre to include Laboratory and Maternity Services.

4

In addition to strengthening our operations of building a Shea movement in Okere and beyond, we shall also set-up a Shea Butter Village. .

5

We shall strengthen the operations of Okere Boxing Club and work towards organizing many boxing matches in Okere and beyond.

6

We shall also strengthen our socio-cultural and community artistic projects.

7

We shall also work with local community leaders and councillors to build their leadership capabilities.

8

We shall establish a community library to provide an excellent space for children in Okere to study from.

JOIN US IN WELCOMING MAUREEN AND EDWARD TO OUR INAUGURAL ADVISORY BOARD

In 2021, two incredibly passionate individuals - Edward and Maureen joined our advisory board. They bring a wealth of expertise in communications, impact investment, and sustainable development. We are so excited to learn from them to continue building Okere City as a futuristic organization.



Edward Kiruluta is head of the Research Informatics Systems Engineering Team at Celgene. Prior to joining Celgene, Edward was the Founder and CTO at Fabric Genomics, Vice-President of Development at Symyx Technologies, Team Leader at Merck Research Labs, DoubleTwist, 4D Inc, and MacSys. He studied Electrical Engineering at Memorial University in Canada. Edward's interest in Okere City stems from a deep desire to create sustainable and prosperous communities in E/Africa.



Maureen Agena is a communications specialist. She has consulted for and worked at ICIPE, RUFORUM, UNFPA, CTA, and the World Bank. She holds a BA in Information Technology, an MSc in Information Systems, and an MA in Development Communication. She also is the founder of Tune Communications. Agena is involved with Okere City because of her passion for building community development and using communication to drive rural transformations.



Thank You

