

UNHCR seeks Shs2 trillion for 1 million S. Sudan refugees

Shortfall. The \$539m needed is part of the \$674m (Shs2.4 trillion) that UNHCR had budgeted this year to provide aid to South Sudanese refugees but only 21 per cent or \$135m (Shs480b) has been received.

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KAMPALA. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Uganda urgently needs \$539m (about Shs2 trillion) to cope with the growing unprecedented influx of South Sudanese refugees who now number one million.

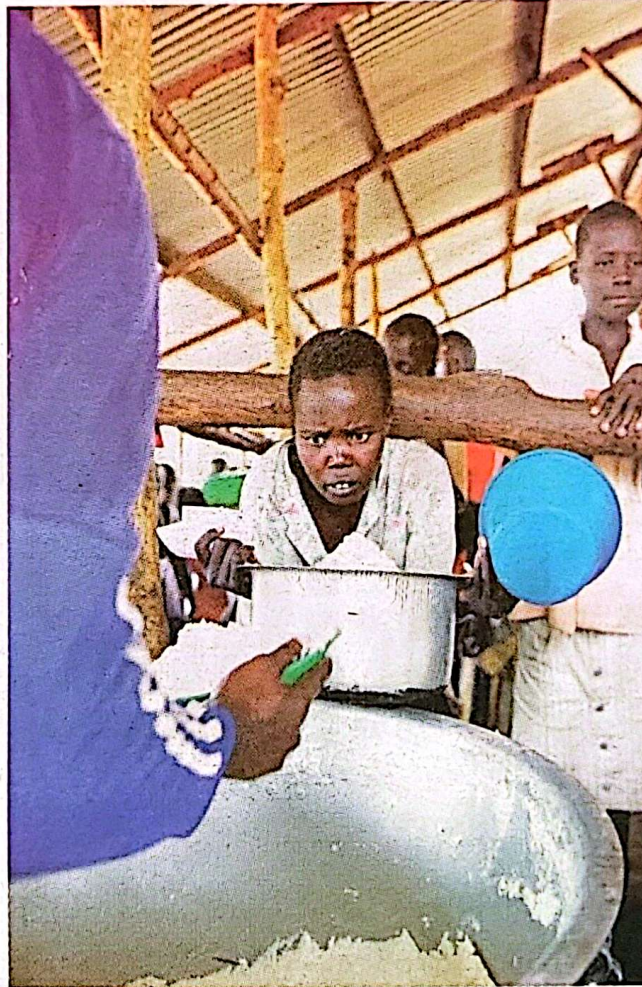
The \$539m needed is part of the \$674m (Shs2.4 trillion) that UNHCR had budgeted this year to provide aid to South Sudanese refugees but only 21 per cent or \$135m (Shs480b) has been received. Last year, the UN agency received only 40 per cent of its \$251m (Shs893b) budget.

"The funding shortfall in Uganda is now significantly impacting the abilities to deliver life-saving aid and key basic services," Mr Charlie Yaxley, the UNHCR's communications manager, said yesterday.

Early in June, the World Food Programme (WFP), which is charged with distributing food relief, was forced to cut monthly food rations from 12kg to 6kg per person because of \$64m (about Shs226b) budgetary shortfall.

WFP, had according to earlier estimates, put its monthly food bill to \$12m (Shs42b).

Over the last 12 months, Mr Yaxley said an average of 1,800 South Sudanese have been arriving in Uganda every day to make one million today. More than 85 per cent of the arrivals



Meal time. South Sudan refugees line up for food in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in Yumbe District. FILE PHOTO

are women and children below 18 years.

The nearby countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, DR Congo, the Central African Republic, and the Sudan, also host another one million or more refugees.

Uganda is currently ranked fifth among countries with the largest refugee population in the world, according to UNHCR's 2016 estimates. However, the new arrivals could put Uganda among the top three refugee hosting countries be-

hind Turkey.

"With refugees still arriving in their thousands, the amount of aid we are able to deliver is increasingly falling short," Mr Yaxley said.

But as the situation stands, Uganda's hospitality is under immense stress. Already there have been multiple reports of skirmishes over land or locals living near the settlements registering as refugees to enjoy some of the perks they only hear about.

The unprecedented refugee influx is likely to amplify intermittent conflicts with host communities in districts in West Nile and northern Uganda, some of which see themselves as worse off—without access to clean water, grappling with food shortages, and broken schools/health facilities—compared to the refugees.

President Museveni, the chief proponent of the open door policy for refugees and UN Secretary General António Guterres, convened the 'Solidarity Summit' on June 23 to mobilise \$2b (Shs8 trillion) to assist both the refugees and host communities. The drive managed to collect only \$358.6m (Shs1.25 trillion) in pledges.

The deficits reinforce the growing displeasure with the unending political crisis in South Sudan.

Shs2.4t

Funding. Amount of money UNHCR had budgeted this year to provide aid to South Sudanese refugees

According to the UN, the renewed war has pushed some 6.1 million South Sudanese, half of the country's population, to the brink and in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

President Museveni, under auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), is leading the main process to broker middle ground between President Salva Kiir's SPLM and rebels groups loyal to his sacked deputy Riek Machar.