

Refugees stranded as wind destroys school structure

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RAKAI. Pupils at Sango Bay Resettlement Camp learning centre in Kakuuto Sub-county, Rakai District, remain stranded after strong winds destroyed a tent that has been serving as a classroom.

According to Mr Eris Byaruhanga, the Sango Bay Resettlement Camp chairperson, the tent was destroyed a week to the opening of the new school term, which opened on Monday.

"The tent was too old and when strong winds came, it was blown off and got damaged beyond repair," Mr Byaruhanga said in an interview yesterday.

The tent, which was partitioned to create several classes, was donated by United Nations Children's Fund at the opening of the learning centre in 2014 to enable refugee children attain education within the camp.

Mr Byaruhanga said although some 180 pupils had turned up on the first day of the school term, they lacked where to accommodate them and the pupils were eventually sent back home.

The centre has a population of 1,632 children of schoolgoing age, but less than 800 were attending classes by the end of last year. Last year, pupils at the centre rarely at-

tended classes due to lack of food at both their homes and school. Others decided to abandon school in search of food together with their parents.

According to Ms Immaculate Nanyondo, a class teacher for Primary Four, the pupils are likely to remain home until 'good Samaritans' help them erect another temporary shelter to act as classrooms. Initially, the centre had more than 14 teachers but by the end of last year, only four teachers were still serving at the centre, implying 10 had deserted the school after complaining of delayed salaries.

When contacted, Mr Abubaker Mutaaya, the district education officer, said he had heard about the situation at the camp over a local radio but the camp authorities had not yet reported the matter to him.

"Their (refugee pupils) situation calls for urgent intervention and with the help of other humanitarian partners, we shall fix that problem so that pupils can start attending classes," he said.

The refugees at Sango Bay were expelled from Tanzania in 2013 over illegal entrance into the country and settling in Kagera region and Misenyi District that are bordering Uganda. However, government of Uganda decided to temporarily resettle them at Sango Bay Camp.