



Background story: Education

The forced migration of a large number of South Sudanese has seen over one million refugees seek safety in West Nile, Uganda. The fighting in South Sudan that

broke out in December 2013 between government forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and former vice-president Dr Riek Machar, has left many needy and vulnerable. For the next one month,

New Vision... to highlight the... under the campaign 'Be a Keeper' to encourage Ugandans to support refugees in all ways possible.

Refugee children plead for scholarship opportunities 'We have no money FOR EDUCATION'



By Benedict Okethwengu

Deng Miyong, 19, is the community leader of refugees in Tika Zone, Rhino Camp settlement, which is home to thousands of South Sudan refugees.

I stumbled upon him at Tika Police post, where he had brought a suspect to record a statement. The suspect was being accused of wife battery.

"Whenever I introduce myself as the community leader of the refugees, you hear murmurs. Most people feel that I am too young and, therefore, should be in school, but here I am," he says.

Miyong completed his O'level at Nsambya Secondary School in Kampala, but could not proceed with his education because of lack of fees.

His cousin, who was sponsoring his education, was forced to withdraw after he ran out of money. Miyong wanted to become a doctor and still hopes that he can get a scholarship to fulfil his dream.

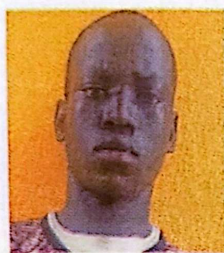
Miyong's mother was killed during the South Sudan's civil war and his father's whereabouts remain unknown. Miyong arrived in Uganda in 2016.

The war in the oil-rich South Sudan, a country founded in 2011, has forced more than a third of its 12 million citizens to flee their homes.

Tens of thousands have died, some in ethnic killings, others in starvation and disease.



South Sudan refugee children washing clothes in Tika Zone. Most of them fail to go to school because they cannot afford fees. Photos by Benedict Okethwengu



Boy Attiti

In the settlement, he takes care of six of his siblings, two of them in secondary school and four in primary school.

Miyong says whereas he enjoys the peace in Uganda, he faces the difficult task of paying school fees for his siblings.

As a refugee, he is entitled to a sh182,000 monthly stipend for upkeep from the World Food Programme (WFP). This money, Miyong says, is too little to pay fees and buy food for his siblings.

He needs at least sh600,000 each term to cater for school fees for his siblings.

"And due to high inflation, the money hardly meets our basic



Deng Miyong

In September last year, WFP substituted half the cereal ration with money in some camps, so refugees could buy food on their own.

"I find myself having to choose between paying school fees and buying food for my siblings. We need scholarships if we are to survive," Miyong says.

Like Miyong, Boy Attiti, 17, a refugee in Lubole settlement, could not hide his frustration with the hardships refugees of school-going age face to attain education.

Attiti says they have to sell part of their food rations to pay school fees and buy scholastic materials.

of Uganda would provide scholarship opportunities for refugees.

"I want to continue with my education, but I see no hope. Selling our food is not sustainable. We need scholarships," he says.

OPM on scholarships

Solomon Osakan, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) desk officer in Arua district, says the Government currently has no scholarship opportunities for refugees.

He says refugees should make use of the free Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme.

"We do not offer scholarships to refugees. Those in primary school have the opportunity to study under the UPE programme," he says.

Refugees in school

According to Windle Trust, one of the organisations helping refugees in the area of education, there are over 1,000 refugees pursuing secondary education.

Refugee policy

Uganda's asylum policy framework is considered to be one of the most progressive in the world, providing refugees with plots of land, integrated with local host communities, on which to build new homes and grow crops.

Refugees in Uganda share public services, including healthcare and education with Ugandan nationals, who have consistently welcomed them with generosity and hospitality. They are also given the right to work and start businesses, as well as freedom of movement.

Uganda has seen the size of its refugee population rapidly increase in recent years as it continues to welcome new arrivals from three ongoing emergencies in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi.

Currently, Uganda is the largest refugee host nation in Africa, with an estimated 1.4 million refugees.

field co-ordinator at Arua office, says most of them are not on scholarship.

He says there was a scholarship programme, but it was phased out because it was not sustainable.

Ocen, however, says they plan on constructing secondary schools in the settlements to cater for the high number of refugees seeking higher education.

Ocen did not disclose whether these schools would offer free education.

scholastic materials for school-going refugee children.

Lauben Mwetware, the project co-ordinator of Finn Church Aid in Arua, acknowledges that more needs to be done so refugees can access quality education.

"For example, there is need for a school feeding programme for the refugees," he says.

Situation overview

The UNICEF Uganda Humanitarian Situation Report for January 2018 indicates that the number of South Sudan refugees arriving in West Nile region greatly reduced to an average of 40-50 individuals per day, compared to 100 individuals per day in December 2017.

Despite the ceasefire agreement signed in December last year between the warring parties, the new arrivals report indicates that the humanitarian situation remains unpredictable and people prefer to seek refuge in Uganda.

Most of the new arrivals are reported to be reuniting with family and are being settled in Omugu, Rhino camp, in Arua district.

What is being done?

According to the report, UNICEF, UNHCR, education partners and donors have been supporting the education ministry to develop the Uganda Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities.

This national three-year implementation plan sets out realistic and implementable targets to ensure improved learning outcomes for the increasing numbers of refugees and host-community children and adolescents across Uganda.

It aims to align the priorities of the education emergency response among all partners. Currently the plan is with the