

A NEW TREATMENT PLANT IS TO BE SET UP TO INCREASE SUPPLY OF WATER IN THE SETTLEMENT AREAS

Water crisis hits refugee camp

YUMBE

By Benedict Okethwengu

Defying the scorching sun, Joyce Kana, 17, walks around the water point at Ariwa zone 5 settlement, in Yumbe district, waiting for the water tanker to arrive.

Kana had spent six hours at the water point waiting. She appreciates the opportunity since she knows she has no other place to fetch clean water from.

Kana, a South Sudanese from Kola and her three siblings, arrived at the settlement last month, after navigating their way out of civil war, avoiding both government and rebel soldiers.

Ariwa is among the five zones under Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Yumbe. Other are Bididi zone 1, Swinya Zone 2, Yoyo zone 3 and Abiryamajo zone 4.

Water scarcity

Rashid Abeka, 56, the caretaker of water tank 175 at Ariwa zone 5, says access to water has become a problem for many refugees in the area.

Abeka adds that the majority of refugees are going hungry due to lack of water to cook food.

He explains that there is need to put more water tanks and boreholes in the settlement to meet the rising demand for water by the refugees.

Paddy Muwonge, the project



A child stands by jerrycans in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Yumbe. Photo by Benedict Okethwengu

manager for Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Uganda, a Seventh Day humanitarian organisation in the settlement, admits that water supply remains a big

challenge for women and young girls in the area. He adds that the shortage of water has been due to the influx of fleeing refugees.

"Water is a big problem here, and

yet every activity around hygiene needs water. However, it is something different partners are working hard to mitigate," Muwonge explains.

Some refugees walk for 50km from

Obongi landing site in Moyo district in search of water.

Grace Kyagaba, the Uganda Red Cross Society WASH co-ordinator, said they supply water to two zones hosting refugees in Bidibidi settlement.

Treatment plant

Kyagaba adds that they are planning to set up a new treatment plant to increase the supply of water in the settlements from 600 cubic metres to 1,500 cubic metres per day. He added that land for the project has already been acquired and work is likely to start this month.

Charles Aguilar, the country director, for ADRA Uganda, says everyone should be able to work towards providing safe and clean water for humanity.

Jena Toma, the deputy refugee desk officer, Arua region, explains that there is need for partners to have unique interventions in addressing water challenges in refugee communities.

Background

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, people at Bidibidi settlement have been fleeing to Uganda since fighting broke out in South Sudan.

Phillip Mondi, from Kuku, Central Equatoria, says: "They have given us the peace but what we want from them is water."