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Office of the Prime Minister, UN agencies and humanitarian organisations in Uganda issue appeal to end suffering of South Sudanese refugees

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On the third anniversary of the outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013, the Government of Uganda Office of the Prime Minister, six UN agencies and eleven humanitarian organisations in Uganda are appealing to the world to bring an end to the suffering of the South Sudanese people. With 527,472* South Sudanese refugees having fled to Uganda over the last three years, including more than 338,000* since July alone, it is vital that the international community comes together to support humanitarian organisations in delivering life-saving assistance to those who have been forced to flee their homes, and to take urgent action to find a solution to the conflict.

Thousands of people continue to flee South Sudan to Uganda every day, 64% of whom are children under 18, leaving behind them tales of horrific violence. Refugees report that armed groups operating in the Equatoria region are attacking villages, killing civilians, burning down houses, raping women and girls, and kidnapping young men and boys. People are reportedly being prevented from using major access roads out of South Sudan, forcing many to walk through the bush for days, often without access to food and water. New arrivals report that in the weeks and months ahead, they expect thousands more will follow them to Uganda.

New arrivals are provided with shelter, food, water and an environment where they can live in safety however, the humanitarian response to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda continues to face significant challenges due to chronic and severe underfunding. Currently, just 36% of the US\$251 million needed for 2016 has been received. This is creating significant gaps in the response which threatens to compromise the abilities of humanitarian organisations to provide life-saving assistance and basic services.

In August, this year, a new settlement was opened in Bidibidi, Yumbe district to accommodate the thousands of new arrivals. In the space of a matter of months, humanitarian organisations have transformed Bidibidi from empty bushland in to one of the largest refugee-hosting areas in the world.

Uganda continues to show outstanding generosity and hospitality towards South Sudanese refugees, at a time when the country is hosting the highest number of refugees in its history and is receiving two additional refugee influxes from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Uganda has maintained open borders to allow refugees to reach safety and, as part of its settlement approach, provides them with land to build new homes and grow crops. Refugees in Uganda enjoy a range of rights and freedoms that allow them to gain employment, start businesses and make positive economic contributions to their host communities.

* Figures are based on biometric registrations in the Government's Refugee Information Management System, and manual emergency registration, headcounts and wrist-banding for the emergency influx of new arrivals.

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Host communities in northern Uganda are to be particularly commended for having donated the land on which settlements hosting South Sudanese refugees are located. In recognition of the solidarity shown by host communities, as a guiding principle, approximately 30% of the humanitarian response directly benefits Ugandans through improvements to local infrastructure.

We are grateful to our donors for their contributions so far but more must be done to end the suffering of the South Sudanese people. We urge the international community, both those already engaged and new partners to the response, to expedite their contributions of funds and expertise to ensure we can meet the needs of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. With political solutions to the crisis in short supply, further efforts are needed to find long-term solutions that will allow these refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. It remains vital that those with influence over the political leadership in South Sudan use all available channels to encourage the warring factions to come together in dialogue and bring an end to the bloodshed. For the sake of the South Sudanese people, the world cannot afford to fail.

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

World Food Programme (WFP)

ACTED

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Food for the Hungry (FH)

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