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Government takes over the management of water supply in Ugandan refugee settlement

KAMPALA: National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed today a landmark agreement that will ensure reliable water provision for more than 84,000 refugees and local Ugandans in the south-west of the country.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding, the NWSC will take over the management of the water distribution system and assets from UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in Rwamwanja refugee settlement, Uganda's Kamwenge district. The system has been managed and maintained by UNHCR and OPM since 2012, when the settlement was reopened to receive new refugee arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In Rwamwanja settlement, water is currently supplied through six motorized boreholes (five solar-generator hybrid and one fuel-driven), 82 manual boreholes and shallow wells and six protected springs, which now will be integrated into the national water supply system.

While this is the first pilot of this kind in Uganda, refugee and local communities in and around the settlement will receive an average of 20 litres per person per day (l/p/d) once the scheme becomes fully operational, up from the current supply of 17.5 l/p/d. As part of the initiative, the existing water network will be further extended, bringing water closer to the communities and reducing the waiting time at water collection points.

"We are grateful for the ongoing efforts of the Government of Uganda to integrate refugees in government service delivery systems," said Joel Boutroue, UNHCR Representative in Uganda. "This is in line with the spirit of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the need to leverage government institutions in providing more sustainable solutions for refugees and their hosts," said Boutroue adding that the support from development partners is critical to take initiatives like this to scale.

"We are happy to be able to provide water to this vulnerable section of our population. We will provide safe clean water and guarantee efficient and reliable service. NWSC is committed to providing water for all," said Dr. Eng. Silver Mugisha, Managing Director of NWSC adding that this initiative is in line with NWSC's current Service Coverage Acceleration Project (SCAP100), seeking to connect water to 12,000 villages by the end of 2020.

Uganda is currently home to approximately 1.34 million refugees, with more than 79,000 new arrivals since January this year. The government launched the CRRF in March 2017, calling for a whole-of-society approach to better manage refugee influxes and find long-term solutions to address the needs of refugees and the communities that host them.

For further information, please contact

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