

Refugees reap big from coffee project

PHOTO BY JONAN TUSINGWIRE

KYELEGWA

By Jonan Tusingwire

As humanitarian aid to refugees continues to shrink, a new initiative in Kyegegwa district is shifting the focus from dependence to self-reliance, equipping thousands with practical skills to earn, invest and build sustainable livelihoods.

The Agriculture Growth and Innovation for Livelihood Enhancement Project is positioning refugees and host communities as active players in Uganda's agribusiness sector, with a strong focus on the coffee value chain.

Under the two-year programme, beneficiaries are being trained in skills ranging from production and nursery bed establishment to post-harvest handling, processing, and marketing – critical areas that determine earnings in the coffee business.

Parwez Anis, the country director of War Child, said the project aims to go beyond basic farming by building a complete ecosystem of skilled actors.

"We will be working with approximately 3,500 youth, skilling them across the value chain," Anis



Different stakeholders after the meeting about the refugee project at Kyegegwa district headquarters recently

said.

He added that Kyegegwa's intervention is deeply rooted in coffee, bringing together different actors to strengthen the entire system.

"We are working across the value chain with various stakeholders like farmers, nursery bed owners, businessmen, factory owners, and those involved in processing," he said.

A TIMELY SHIFT AS AID DECLINES

The project comes at a time when many refugees are facing reduced

BUILDING A SELF-RELIANT FUTURE

Beyond skills training, the project is organising beneficiaries into village savings and loan associations, enabling them to save, access credit, and invest in agribusiness.

This model is expected to reduce dependency on aid while strengthening resilience among both refugees and host communities.

In 2023, the World Food Programme introduced the Food Prioritisation Assistance Programme among refugee communities to support the most vulnerable. The programme places refugees into three categories: the first receives 60% of food assistance, the second 40%, while the third receives none.

humanitarian support.

Martin Maku, an agricultural policy strategist, said the changing funding landscape has made such interventions urgent.

"Funding for refugees has reduced, with many organisations closing. There is, therefore, a need to find sustainable ways of survival for these refugees," Maku said.

He said the project is focused on equipping refugees with employable skills that can translate into real income.