

Refugees in Koboko decry limited income opportunities

KOBOKO

By Adam Gule

Self-settled refugees in Koboko municipality, commonly referred to as urban refugees, have raised concerns over limited access to income-generating opportunities, saying the situation is making it increasingly difficult to sustain their livelihoods.

The concerns emerged during a participatory stakeholders' forum organised by the South Sudanese Refugee Association (SSURA) at Country Motel in Koboko.

According to a study conducted by SSURA under the Local Leadership East African Return and Re-integration Network (LLEARN), only 32% of urban refugees in Koboko are engaged in income-generating



Dankan Onzima

activities, while 68% survive mainly through dependency. Dankan Onzima, team leader at SSURA, said the disparities in economic integration continue to leave many refugees vulnerable.

"The high variations in economic integration mean that a significant number of refugees are struggling to meet basic needs and remain



Maridoshe Kambale

economically excluded," he noted.

Onzima added that, unlike refugees in gazetted settlements, urban refugees receive no food aid or financial support from NGOs.

A recent survey by VNG International shows that more than 24,000 refugees have settled in Koboko, increasing pressure for sustainable economic inclusion.

Maridoshe Kambale, a Congolese refugee living in Koboko, described the harsh conditions many face.

"Low-income opportunities have forced many of us into overcrowded housing, surviving on one meal a day, and failing to support our children's education," he said.

Kennedy Batali, a South Sudanese refugee, blamed policy barriers, saying strict conditions for business registration and access to soft loans limit refugees from engaging in productive activities.

Koboko Municipality Town Clerk Patrick Ogweng acknowledged the challenge, but said refugees are being integrated into municipal plans, including allocation of market stalls.

Resident District Commissioner, Emmy Mitala, urged the private sector and development partners to support refugees through skills training and financial assistance.