**NEWS NOTE**

**His Excellency Hideki Ito, Ambassador of Japan to Sudan visits Japanese-supported UN projects in conflict affected communities in West Kordofan State**

**Khartoum, January 25th, 2018:**  His Excellency Hideki Ito, Ambassador of Japan to Sudan, visited conflict affected communities (internally displaced persons, refugees and host communities) in West Kordofan state from 15 till 17 January 2018. The purpose of the visit was to gain firsthand experience on the implementation of health, nutrition, and community stabilization projects implemented by the United Nations’ agencies, UNICEF and UNDP respectively with Japanese funding.

During the visit, the delegation met with members of the state government cabinet led by H.E. Mr Ahmed Adam, Acting Wali (Governor) and Minister of Finance, Mr. Abuelgasim Younis, the Abyei Muglad Commissioner and other local leaders. Discussions focused on strengthening partnerships and exploring opportunities between the Government of Japan and West Kordofan state.

Ambassador Ito and his delegation visited the Stabilization Center for severely malnourished children, the Reproductive Health Unit and the Extended Programme for Immunization unit at the Muglad Hospital, where the team met with mothers and health care providers. The delegation also visited the Nazeheen OTP Centre in the suburbs of Muglad city. The center was established in September 2017 with the support of the Government of Japan, to expand coverage of nutrition services to the newly settled internally displaced persons (IDPs) and South Sudanese refugees to ensure easy access to much needed health care.

“*Children are the future of the community and need to be the first to be protected. This is especially true in the communities that are affected by poverty and conflict such as Muglad locality. Today, I was given an opportunity to see the important work of UNICEF in health and nutrition, and the efforts being made to ensure that necessary aid can identify, reach and save children in need*,” H.E. Mr. Ito said.

Thanks to the Japanese funding, UNICEF has also in 2016-17 provided 11,200 school children (50 per cent girls) teaching-learning materials and recreational kits. In addition to this, some 3,678 previously out-of-school children (42 per cent girls) were enrolled and are now learning in basic and Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) classes through community sensitization campaigns.

*“The Government of Japan’s generous support has been critical in providing much needed lifesaving support to children in need, especially those affected by conflict. For example, in the three localities of West Kordofan that have benefitted from the projects, more than 2,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition have been reached with timely nutrition treatment. Half of these children could have died without any form of treatment”,* says Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF Sudan Representative. *“We are grateful to the people of Japan for their continued support in benefit of the children in West Kordofan and other conflict affected states.”*

The Ambassador was also welcomed by the community leaders and beneficiaries of the Government of Japan supported “Community Security and Stabilization Programme” (C2SP) implemented by UNDP Sudan. Japan has been a solid partner of C2SP since the beginning of the programme. The aim of C2SP is to contribute to the stability and resilience of communities which are at risk of being drawn back into conflict. Interventions include, the provision of tools and seeds and intermediate technology (tractors and implements) for agricultural production, targeting 180 direct beneficiaries’ mainly unemployed youth, IDPs, women at risk and other vulnerable community members.

The Japanese ambassador described C2SP as one of the strongest projects contributing to development and stability in Sudan having an important role in achieving peace and stability in the region. He further restated Japan’s commitment to further support the programme in the coming future .

During the visit, an exhibition of agricultural products and photos of the C2SP was officially launched by the delegation headed by H.E. Mr. Hideki Ito theJapanese Ambassador and Mr. Abulgesim Younis, Abyei Commissioner who commended the Japanese contribution in supporting communities in the state by saying “*We thank the United Nations and the Government of Japan for their great support of our community through the C2SP activities and their contribution to creating job opportunities, increasing the income for the local community and creating seasonal labor opportunities for the refugees. These efforts have contributed to the increase of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation in the area and we hope that this project will be replicated in other localities in the state.”*

The Japanese Ambassador expressed his appreciation of the results on the ground and the positive impact of the project on the representatives of the local community of Muglad area and representatives of the Community Management Committee “*Two years ago; I attended the handover ceremony of this project in Khartoum with the presence of Vice President H.E. Hassabo Mohamed Abdulrahman. On that occasion, I saw the tractors and harvest machines being handed over from the Japanese people to the Sudanese people. Today, I am very pleased to see the same tractors and harvest machines being used by the local people of Muglad–* *Abyeilocality. I hope that this equipment will continue to increase production and alleviate poverty and empower communities, H.E. Mr. Ito said”*

The authorities in West Kordofan renewed their commitment and support to all initiatives that intend to improve the situation of the communities in the state. They also expressed their appreciation of the tremendous support to vulnerable populations by UNICEF and UNDP , thanks to the continued partnership of and contribution from the People of Japan.

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**About UNICEF:**

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

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