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UNHCR hands over newly built sports facilities funded by Japan to district authorities in Adjumani

ADJUMANI: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency with financial support from the Government of Japan, has completed construction of sports facilities at the Paridi Stadium in Adjumani District, which will provide shared space for sports, social and economic interactions for some 393,000 refugee and host community youth.

The facility was handed over to district authorities in a colourful inaugural ceremony, which was presided over by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Gen. Moses Ali and attended by the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Uganda, H.E. Kazuaki Kameda; Deputy Representative of UNHCR, Mahoua Parums; Head of UNHCR Adjumani, Orkhan Nasibov, and a large number of refugees and members of the host community. .

The stadium was established in 1997 and was the only sports stadium in Adjumani district. The Paridi stadium project is part of the Refugee Host Community Empowerment Programme (ReHOPE), and was selected as a priority by Adjumani District Local Government (DLG) for financial support from UNHCR. The project was designed to improve the stadium facilities including the construction of a perimeter wall, toilets, dressing rooms (for teams and officials), a sports hall, drainage system and installation of solar security lights.

The improvement work was a result of Japan's commitment to Uganda's refugee response programme at the Solidarity Summit held in Kampala, in June 2017. The project commenced in December 2017 and concluded in March 2019.

First Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Gen. Moses Ali, the chief guest at the event thanked the Government of Japan for being one of the most consistent donors to Uganda's refugee programme. He said,

"Africans have broken new ground in many sports worldwide. We see them shine at the Olympics, at football World Cups and in athletics, among others. I am very optimistic that Paridi stadium will provide the opportunities needed for the talented youth here to develop their sporting skills and compete successfully."

Ambassador H.E. Kazuaki Kameda, speaking at the inaugural ceremony, noted that this accomplishment could be attributable to both the diligent work by UNHCR's staff and the self-help effort by the host-communities and refugees.

"I am very pleased especially with the commitments made by the beneficiaries, both host-community members and refugees, who will strengthen peaceful co-existence between the two." He added.

Speaking at the occasion, UNHCR's Deputy Representative, Mahoua Parums said,

"Youth constitute 21% (15-24 years) of the refugee population. Sports for them is an opportunity to be included and protected – a chance to heal, develop and grow. Sport can also be a positive catalyst for empowering refugee communities, helping to strengthen social cohesion and forge closer ties with host communities."

From inception to completion, the project was closely supervised and monitored by UNHCR together with Adjumani district engineers under the Ministry of Works and Transport.

At the end of the ceremony, all dignitaries and refugees planted trees at the Paridi Stadium as part of UNHCR's commitment for making the environment greener and healthier.

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