

PLACE

Torit

DATE

11 February 2022

Back to business in Eastern Equatoria: UNHCR reopens office in Torit, helping to build hope and solutions in South Sudan

Friday 11 February 2022 – On Friday 11 February the Governor of Eastern Equatoria State, Honorable Gen. Louis Lobong Lojore, and UNHCR Representative in South Sudan, Arafat Jamal, officially inaugurated the UNHCR Torit Field Office joined by Ambassador Mohammed Affey, UNHCR Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa.

Torit, strategically located along South Sudan's borders with Uganda and Kenya, has seen significant numbers of South Sudanese refugees returning home spontaneously. The Torit office is to serve as a hub for UNHCR's inter-agency support to building peace, development and solutions with the people and government of South Sudan. Its re-establishment is part of the Pockets of Hope strategy, an area-based approach that honors the decisions of those choosing to return, and works to better futures in line with the needs and wishes of the communities themselves.

'We have promised the people of South Sudan that we will provide protection and security so that they can safely take their children to school,' said Governor of Eastern Equatoria State, Honorable Gen. Louis Lobong Lojore. 'We are here to work together and provide the necessary support to UNHCR to carry out their mandate in a peaceful environment that will benefit the people of South Sudan who have returned.'

The Governor, UNHCR Special Envoy and UNHCR Representative ceremonially unveiled a plaque, cut the ribbon and planted two trees while national communities showcased the rich culture of Eastern Equatoria. The ceremony comes on the occasion of the Special Envoy's visit to galvanize national, regional and international support to efforts being made by the Governments of South Sudan and Sudan in implementing the IGAD-led Solutions Initiative for refugees and displaced people.

'With this reopening, the United Nations further reinforces its commitment to the future of South Sudan,' said Arafat Jamal. 'The people have spoken, through the act of returning, and we follow their lead and build their capabilities, in partnership with development, peace and humanitarian actors.'

Together with the Government, UNHCR will work towards strengthening resilience and livelihood capacities of spontaneously returning refugees, internally displaced people and local communities through implementing partners and in collaboration with development and peace actors. Peaceful co-existence will be fostered in collaboration with the local Government and UNMISS.

The presence of the Special Envoy underscores the wider regional context that links peace and solutions. On this leg of a regional tour, Ambassador Affey said that 'we need to keep working on peace and finding durable solutions. Finding durable and sustainable solutions for displaced people in the region is a contributing factor to stability and peace, and is an essential part of the High Commissioner's mandate for protection and solutions.'

Eastern Equatoria is one of the states with the highest number of refugee returnees that have returned on their own accord. Since the signing of the Revitalized Peace Agreement in 2018, over 100,000 of the total amount of 500,000 South Sudanese returnees have come back to Eastern Equatoria.

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[FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:](#)

Mary-Sanyu Osire | +211 90 211 01 2118 | osire@unhcr.org

Gift Friday Noah | +211 922 654219 | noah@unhcr.org

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