

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

DECEMBER 2011 - JANUARY 2012

**Creating an enabling
environment for Darfur's
disabled persons**

**UNAMID encourages
human rights in Darfur**



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VOICES

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UNAMID Joint Special Representative Gambari's New Year's Message



On the occasion of the New Year, which coincides with Sudan's Independence Day, and on behalf of the African Union and United Nations, I would like to extend my sincere wishes to the people of Darfur and the Government of Sudan for a happy and peaceful new year.

Before we bid farewell to 2011, let us remember some of the significant developments of the past 12 months: following the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference, which was supported by UNAMID, the Doha Darfur Peace Document (DDPD) was signed by the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement on 14 July. The DDPD has signaled a new start to the peace process. Several entities called for by the DDPD have been established, and on 27 December, the Darfur Regional Authority was announced. UNAMID will work closely with this new partner with the goal of a strong, inclusive and effective DRA.

UNAMID also worked in support of the United Nations Country Team in providing humanitarian assistance and facilitating access to remote areas of Darfur like the Jebel Marra. We have also supported the Government as it facilitated the slow but steady progress of voluntary returns of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. With the Government of Sudan playing a major role, we put on the highly successful Darfur International Conference on Water for Sustainable Peace in June. In 2012, we will turn increasingly to supporting more of these activities for early recovery and development in close coordination with the UN Country Team, to further the chances for lasting stability in Darfur.

During the past year, UNAMID increased its presence throughout Darfur, nearly doubling our daily patrols. In addition, the continued efforts by the governments of Sudan and Chad to secure their common border have decreased tensions and violence. Violence has cooled in several parts of Darfur. Unfortunately, we also lost seven peacekeepers in this effort to restore security. As you well know, fighting continues in some places, most dramatically with the recent clashes in North Darfur which spilled over into North Kordofan where JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim was killed on 24 December. Our ability to monitor and respond has also been restricted in the past few days due to the heightened insecurity in parts of North and South Darfur.

I deeply regret this violence and the lives lost. I would like to state with my utmost conviction that the parties must honour their stated commitments to a political solution to the Darfur conflict. They owe the people of Darfur a better future.

I commend the Government and LJM for their moves towards peace made in 2011. And I continue to call upon all the non-signatory movements to re-commit themselves in the coming year to the peace process and to making permanent peace a reality. In this respect, all parties will continue to find in UNAMID an unwavering partner.

Ibrahim Gambari
Joint Special Representative

NOVEMBER AT A GLANCE

NOVEMBER 3 More than 20 members of the Zalingei Disabled Union receive self-powered radios donated by UNAMID as part of the Mission's efforts to assist the most vulnerable of Darfur's society. Self-powered by rewinding or solar energy, the radios can play for many hours when charged fully and operate on AM/FM and SW frequencies.

NOVEMBER 6 A UNAMID patrol is attacked by unidentified armed persons near Nyala, South Darfur. One soldier is killed and two others are wounded. The peacekeepers were all from Sierra Leone. A suspect was later apprehended and handed over to the Government of Sudan police.

NOVEMBER 8 UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari participates in the High-level Meeting on Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Kigali, Rwanda. The conference, organized by the Government of Rwanda, the African Development Bank and the UN Peacebuilding Commission, draws on Rwanda's experience in addressing peacebuilding challenges.

NOVEMBER 10 UNAMID Deputy JSR (Management and Operations) Mohamed B. Yonis, accompanied by South Darfur Minister of Health Ibrahim Elkhaleel, leads a memorial ceremony in Nyala for the Sierra Leonean peacekeeper killed on patrol on 6 November.

NOVEMBER 11 JSR Ibrahim Gambari, in the United Kingdom, seeks British support for the peace process in Darfur which, he says, is on the cusp of making real progress. He outlines progress on the implementation and dissemination of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), the result of two years of negotiations among the parties to the Darfur conflict. He stresses the importance of early recovery and development activities: "There is need to concretely address the challenges of early recovery and development, with the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations country team in the lead, so as to bring the dividends of peace to

the people of Darfur," JSR Gambari says. The JSR also appears on Al Jazeera's David Frost show.

NOVEMBER 15 JSR Gambari attends a two-day conference on the Darfur peace process, sponsored by the U.S. Department of state and the U.S. Institute for Peace, in Washington, D.C., which brings together stakeholders involved in ending the eight-year conflict in the western Sudan region.



NOVEMBER 17 In El Fasher, UNAMID organizes an "open day" on progress in the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. More than 100 women from Darfur's three states participate, including officials from state governments, legislators and UN agencies. UNAMID Deputy JSR - Political, Aïchatou Mindaoudou Souleymane, highlights the drive by Darfuri women for active engagement in the peace and political processes, their work to prevent gender-based violence and their support for livelihoods projects and skills to help chart Darfur's road to recovery.

NOVEMBER 17 A week-long polio vaccination campaign conducted by World Health Organization (WHO), with the support of UNAMID, begins in North Darfur, targeting more than 460,000 children under five years old. The campaign is important as neighbouring Chad has recently reported an outbreak of polio. UNAMID transports personnel and cargo to the remote areas of Tine and Um Barru near Chad, as well as 300 kg of vaccines and vitamins.



NOVEMBER 20 In its continued efforts to engage local communities, UNAMID presents sports equipment to five secondary schools from Abu Shouk, Al Salaam and Zam Zam internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in North Darfur, to facilitate their participation in a tournament beginning on 21 November.

NOVEMBER 24 At the invitation of the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, JSR Gambari meets Russian officials in Moscow including the Special Presidential Envoy for Africa, Mikhail Margelov, to discuss the Darfur peace process and seek the further support for UNAMID's efforts to advance peace, security and stability in the region.



NOVEMBER 29 JSR Gambari, in Addis Ababa, tells the African Union Peace and Security Council that Darfur currently faces an important moment of transition, and the AU along with the international community needs to act decisively and collectively to consolidate the political and humanitarian gains made recently as well as encourage further progress.

DECEMBER AT A GLANCE

DECEMBER 1 UNAMID facilitates the transportation of a medical team from the World Health Organization (WHO) and State Ministry of Health to El Taweisha locality, North Darfur, where an outbreak of diphtheria has been reported. The aim is to reinforce the health personnel on the ground to contain the spread of diphtheria in area.

DECEMBER 4 The UNAMID's Womens Police Network commemorates its first anniversary under the theme 'strength through unity'. The Network launches a forum as part of ongoing efforts to reinforce professional and social contacts to strengthen bonds with local counterparts and to encourage more female peacekeepers to serve in the Mission.

DECEMBER 10 UNAMID, in collaboration with the South Darfur State Advisory for Child and Women Affairs, distributes self powered radios to vulnerable people of the local community in Nyala. The handover of the sets to widows and girls takes place in the Office of the State Advisor for Women and Children, Fatima Tahir Kenjoum, who thanks UNAMID and describes the units as an added value toward empowering women in South Darfur.



DECEMBER 11 The United Nations Country Team and UNAMID officials meets in El Fasher, North Darfur, to discuss future collaboration between both, particularly in early recovery activities for Darfur. UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari highlights that "a stronger partnership is essential in implementing our mandates.

DECEMBER 12 UNAMID provides logistics support to an environmental campaign organized by local authorities in El Fasher town, North Darfur. The campaign, to last two months, is aimed at maintaining a clean environment and reducing health risks among the population. The Mission is assisting the initiative with the provision of dump trucks and graders for the solid waste collection and transportation to the dump site. A similar campaign was organized with the collaboration of UNAMID in July and August.



DECEMBER 15 Human Rights International Day, commemorated globally on 10 December, is celebrated in El Fasher, North Darfur as a joint event of UNAMID and the North Darfur Bar Association under the theme: "Respect the rights of others, preserve your rights." UNAMID's Head of Human Rights Ms. Marie Therese Keita emphasized the need to increase the access of the disabled in Darfur to health care and education.



DECEMBER 18 The inaugural meeting of the Joint Commission, a key institution that will ensure the effective implementation of the Permanent Ceasefire and Final Security Arrangements provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), is held in Khartoum. Its role is to resolve disputes referred to it by

the Ceasefire Commission. The Joint Commission is chaired by UNAMID JSR Ibrahim Gambari, and includes the two parties to the DDPD – the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement - as well as representatives of the State of Qatar, the League of Arab States and the European Union. Canada, China and Norway also serve as observers in the Commission.

DECEMBER 19 UNAMID loans various broadcast equipment items to the Sudan National Public Radio Corporation as part of its technical assistance to the State broadcaster, which has been airing UNAMID programming daily as part of the Sudan Radio's Al Salaam channel.

DECEMBER 19 Five secondary schools compete at the Abu Shouk internally displaced persons camp outside El Fasher, in the "Back to School Tournament for Peace," jointly organized by schools' management and UNAMID under the auspices of the North Darfur Minister of Education.



DECEMBER 20 The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Erastus Mwencha, visits Darfur and calls for continued international support for the Darfur peace process. International support for UNAMID is more critical than ever at this stage, as the peacekeeping mission is supporting implementation of the Doha peace deal, he says.

DECEMBER 24 The leader of the Justice and Equality Movement, Khalil Ibrahim, is killed in North Kordofan by Sudanese Armed Forces

The “Silent Gun”: HIV and AIDS from the perspective of demobilization

BY YUSUF KAGGWA



A female ex-combatant asks a question during an HIV and AIDS awareness session in El Fasher

UNAMID PHOTO

In any peace building initiative in war torn regions, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is a core activity on the road map to sustainable peace. These exercises involve a lot of ground work, some of which includes rigorous negotiations with commanders of armed groups to convince them to release their combatants. Not to be underestimated is that the combatants themselves have to willingly participate in the process for it to have a lasting impact.

Awareness-raising of HIV/AIDS, briefings and voluntary confidential counseling and testing are some of the services that are offered to ex-combatants in the early days of their formal demobilization. One wonders why HIV/AIDS becomes so critical an intervention during DDR. The fact that Darfur is a low HIV-prevalence area and, further, that there is Islamic Sharia law in place that prohibits involvement in extra marital sexual activity could underplay the emphasis on the disease in a region like Darfur.

It is known that conflict and post-conflict settings are high-risk environments for the spread of HIV/AIDS. The age range, mobility and dangerous ethos of armed forces and groups make them a high-risk category for contracting and spreading the disease. Child soldiers are often (though not always) sexually active at a much earlier age and are therefore potentially exposed to HIV/AIDS without

much prior awareness that counterparts in the “outer world” may have. Female combatants (women associated with fighting forces), abductees and dependants are also frequently at high risk, given the widespread sexual violence and abuse. In these situations of insecurity and destitution, sexual favours are sometimes exchanged for basic goods and protection. Many times, mutual consent is a dream for especially women and girls. For the most vulnerable, such as internally displaced persons, living in fear of sexual abuse is not just part of everyday life, but a real occurrence which takes a lot of resilience to overcome.

During the DDR sessions, it is amazing to listen to some of the comments and questions that ex-combatants have. Some of the concerns reflect a lack of prior access to information, the fear of stigma and discrimination, and a phobia of the unknown. Questions encountered may include:

“What is my HIV/AIDS status?”

“Would my family accept me if they become aware that I am HIV positive?”

“Why is there is no cure for AIDS?”

“Why should I think about an infection that can last in my body for many months or even years without any medical intervention?”

UNAMID's Senior HIV/AIDS Advisor, Margaret Masenda-Simbi, said these sessions during the DDR exercises “provide a rare opportunity for ex-combatants, especially those at the junior ranks in their armies, to voice matters that pertain to their own personal confidential health and matters in a society where cultural and religious values are not open to discussion on issues of sexuality”. According to her, over 3,000 adult and child ex-combatants have so far benefitted from interventions all over Darfur.

Ex-combatants are also introduced to other relevant topics, such as sexually transmitted infections at the forums. This service to ex-combatants is one of those initiatives that are presently being executed in response to the mandate of HIV/AIDS components in peacekeeping operations. United Nations Security Council resolution 1983, of June 2011, clearly encourages incorporation of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support, including through counseling and testing programmes, assistance to national institutions, to security sector reform and to DDR processes.

Within the realms of operations during DDR exercises, success cannot be achieved without strong collaboration from various actors. Therefore, UNAMID's HIV/AIDS unit has so far achieved what it has through concerted efforts. One of the Mission's major partners, the Sudan National AIDS Programme, is actually charged with the responsibility to follow up with ex-combatants to ensure that they receive adequate support afterwards. The North Sudan DDR Commission specifically highlights HIV and AIDS in its requests for support form UNAMID. The role of UNAMID's own DDR Section cannot be underestimated. In reflecting on this year's World AIDS Day theme, “Getting to zero”, it is extremely important that those serving humanity take a moment to think of their own perceptions of this silent threat to life, and work towards zero new HIV infections and zero AIDS related deaths.



UNAMID HIV/AIDS poster

Battling with stigma

BY ASHRUF ISHAG MOHAMAD

This is the story of a real person living with the HIV/AIDS in Darfur. Youssef is a pseudonym for his protection.

Youssef's life was very ordinary. He was a married shop owner, but then he started to experience symptoms and complain of skin disease and other ailments. One of his friends advised him to get tested for

the HIV virus. At first he was hesitant. He consulted a doctor who also advised that he should be tested. He then went ahead and took the test which came out positive. It was very difficult in the beginning. At that time, Youssef was away from his family so he decided to return to his hometown. One year after he was diagnosed, he lost his wife in a traffic accident. She was not

aware of his status. Although he had tried repeatedly to tell her, he found it difficult to do so. Finally, he stopped trying. He now bears all of the responsibility for his children and has decided not to marry again. Eventually he told his family and they accepted him and he has not encountered any problems with them so far. However, he did not tell his friends at work for fear of stigma. He thinks that he's been very fortunate to be supported by his family. This is so unlike one of his friends whose family has disowned him and is constantly rebuked by his brother as a result of his HIV positive status.

Being infected with the HIV virus has affected Youssef's ability to work due to the deterioration of his health, but because of his determination and persistence and with regular treatment, his condition has improved.

Stigma against HIV/AIDS patients is even perpetrated in health institutions in the region. This was the case of a young mother who revealed her positive status. She was refused support in one of the local hospitals during childbirth. In another incident, the patient revealed her status to her doctor who, in turn, wrote on her file "HIV POSITIVE" thus disclosing her status.

Treatment with antiretroviral drugs is available in Darfur, but the integrated management centre where the HIV/AIDS clinic is located at the entrance of the hospital does not guarantee anonymity. At one point, Youssef was afraid to go to the centre for treatment as one of his neighbours had been admitted to the hospital and he could be stigmatized if anyone saw him going there.

In Darfur, people living with HIV and AIDS are suffering more from poverty than from the disease. Food is scarce and they need support with income generating projects to be able to fend better for themselves. In many other parts of the world, the impact of the disease is continuously being controlled and victims are receiving support. However, in Darfur, the situation remains dire because of insufficient dissemination of information about the ravages of HIV/AIDS and limited or no availability of protection for those who suffer from it. ■

North Darfur's HIV/AIDS coordinator on the state's prevention and treatment programme:

Interview with Najowa Mohammed Ahmed

BY ASHRUF ISHAG MOHAMAD



Ms. Najowa Mohammed Ahmed -SANP coordinator being interviewed

UNAMID PHOTO

Voices interviewed the North Darfur State Coordinator of HIV/Aids Najowa Mohammed Ahmed on how the state has responded to the challenge of treating and preventing HIV/AIDs. We first asked her to give some background on how the State of Darfur's programme developed:

Voices of Darfur How did North Darfur's HIV/AIDS work begin?

Najowa Mohammed Ahmed Work on HIV/AIDS in the state of Darfur started in 2000 as a program in the State Ministry of Health. In 2002 Sudan's National AIDS Programme (SNAP) was established at the federal level followed by the establishment of HIV/AIDS programmes in the three states. Initially, the state coordinator and the counseling and voluntary testing coordinator were the only staff. Later a care and treatment coordinator as well as

a monitoring and evaluation coordinator and surveillance coordinator were added. After the programme was set up we then began working with communities in awareness-raising. This also encompassed state institutions such as high schools.

The first centre for voluntary counseling and testing in the state was established in 2004 in the police hospital in collaboration with the police forces, the military

and the Ministry of Education. Then we introduced the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases as one of the strategies against HIV/Aids.

In 2008, a centre to prevent vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child was opened in a specialized hospital in El Fasher for obstetrics and gynecology to provide counseling services and voluntary testing for pregnant women. The positive cases were referred to the service for treatment, care and psychosocial support. The hospital also counseled couples and families. After that, three voluntary counseling and testing centers were opened, one in the primary health care centre in El fasher town, one in the military hospital and one in the women's prison

We also provide services in the localities of Mellit, Kabkabiya, Malha and SarafUmra in North Darfur, such as the training of paramedics in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, counselors training, peer education training and training on interpersonal communication. This is in addition to the voluntary counseling and testing centers set up in internally displaced persons camps where awareness-raising activities are conducted through health centers. Also, trained peer volunteers and youth deliver messages to their peers and families in the camps. In 2010, voluntary counselling and testing centers were established across North Darfur, in Kutum, Um-kadada, Mellit, Malha and Kabkabiya, with trained coordinators and counselors.

VoD What is the main objective of the programme for in the coming period?

Najowa The overall objective is to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDs in the general population from 1.6 % to less than 1%, and in the most at risk populations (female sex workers and men who have sex with men) to less than 5%. The rates currently are 9.8 % for men who have sex with men and 4.4 % for FSW.

We also want to consider vulnerable groups such as people in the uniformed services, health workers, tea and food sellers who spent 12 hours outside home, in addition to prisoners and homeless people.

VoD Some people living with HIV/ AIDS in Darfur have raised con-

cerns about the location of the integrated management centre in El Fasher Teaching hospital. How are you going to deal with this issue?

Najowa The term "Integrated management centre" means that all the services such as counseling and testing, diagnosis and provision of services such as medical treatment, care and physical and in-kind support are offered under the same roof. So the integrated management centre must be present in the hospital where lab technicians and general practitioners can follow up the cases and where specialists can determine when to start treatment and when to increase or reduce therapeutic medications.

Previously we had a small office for testing and treatment, and our clients needed to go to other sections of the hospital such as the central lab or pharmacy. But now we have finished construction of a big integrated centre within the hospital and separated it from all other sections. All the services are contained inside. This centre will be opened shortly and we expect it to contribute to reducing the social stigma the client may risk in going to other parts of the hospital.

VoD What else is SNAP offering to people living with HIV/AIDS?

Najowa We are offering training opportunities in positive living and income generating activities. Also, we are working to raise awareness of the community in dealing with HIV/AIDS patients, because the condition is a chronic disease like other chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, and HIV/AIDS patients can have the same lives as patients of other chronic diseases if they are committed to treatment.

HIV/AIDS is not a problem, but dealing with the disease requires raising the awareness of the community in order to avoid infection and to be protected. Some progress has been realized among the people living with HIV/AIDS in terms of the acceptance of the disease, and some have established an association for people living with HIV/AIDS with assistance of SNAP, and they have their own regular meetings as well as meetings with partners. They have shown great understanding of their condition and deal positively with their problems. Some of them have undergone the SNAP positive living workshop, which resulted in

greater adherence to treatment. The role of the programme at state level is to coordinate the provision of services such as access and treatment, but the Ministry of Health alone will not be able to provide all the support needed for people living with HIV/AIDS. So we need the cooperation of civil society organizations, UN agencies and voluntary organizations to support them with income-generating projects.

VoD How is the strategy of building partnerships in response to HIV/AIDS working in NorthDarfur?

Najowa HIV/AIDS is not the responsibility of the State Ministry of Health alone, but of all society and the bodies working in the State. The State's response is based on partnerships and coordination with other ministries and sectors such as the military, prisons, education, culture and media as well as UN organizations that support SNAP technically and materially and participate in its events.

It is important to mention that voluntary associations are also providing HIV/AIDS services in the localities and IDP camps especially in raising awareness and providing training, together with local NGOs. The HIV/AIDS working group in El Fasher is a good example of a partnership that includes all sectors and voluntary organizations who work in HIV/AIDS in the State, as well as the HIV/AIDS State committee, which includes ministers and commissioners, under the chairmanship of the governor.

VoD What has been UNAMID's role in this work?

Najowa UNAMID's HIV/AIDS unit is part of the North Darfur working group, and it is an active member which has given continuous support to SNAP, particularly in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration exercises, prison inmates support and services to IDP camps.

UNAMID also continues to support us in public events and with facilitating access to faraway localities so that we can implement activities and supervise projects. We expect joint work to advance the response to HIV/AIDS in the State.



UNAMID encourages human rights in Darfur

BY ALA MAYYAH

After the Second World War ended in 1945, the United Nations was established and became the first global forum to protect universal human rights, largely to prevent any recurrence of the horrors which millions of civilians had suffered during the war. Enshrined in the UN Charter, human rights are one of the Organization's three pillars, together with security and peace. In 1946, the UN established the Commission on Human Rights, the principle policy-making body for human rights in the UN system. In 2005, the UN established the Human Rights Council, replacing the former Commission. Since its creation, the UN has been supporting human rights worldwide and working to advance social progress and protect and promote the fundamental freedoms and liberties guaranteed by international law for all people.

Human Rights Day is observed each year on 10 December.

In line with UN policy, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) supports the protection and promotion of human rights in the region through its Human Rights Section, which works within the Mission's mandate derived from Security Council resolution 1769 that established the Mission on 31 December 2007.

Through the provision of legal advice and assistance in drafting legislation, UNAMID contributes to strengthening human rights and the rule of law in Darfur. The section conducts a wide range of activities, such as investigating, monitoring, verifying, documenting and reporting on human rights violations and abuses in Darfur in an impartial manner. Such abuses may include unlawful, extrajudicial

and arbitrary killings, torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, sexual violence including rape and harassment, arbitrary arrest and illegal detention, threats and intimidation of NGOs. UNAMID then recommends corrective actions to the Government and other entities.

The Section engages in dialogue with the Government of the Sudan, the three Darfur state authorities and other entities on human rights issues pertaining to Darfur in order to remove all obstacles to securing respect for, and improve protection of, human rights.

"The work of the Human Rights Section with the local authorities is essential to ensure that human rights are applied in all Darfur and that individuals and groups are treated with fairness and enjoy the same



left. Human Rights Team Leader in Sector west Mr. Christian Mikala in training course for police human rights officers, on 12 December 11

right. some participants in training course for police human rights officers in Sector West, on 12 December 11

UNAMID PHOTOS

rights,” says UNAMID’s Director of Human Rights, Marie-Therese Keita.

HRS also conducts joint work with the Government on monitoring activities based on the joint communiqué signed between the Government and the United Nations on 3 July 2004 as part of international efforts to stop the crimes against civilians suffered during the ongoing conflict in Darfur.

In the communiqué, the Government of the Sudan committed to undertake concrete measures to end impunity and begin immediate investigations of all cases of violations, including those brought to its attention by the UN and the African Union. The Government would also ensure that the Independent Investigation Committee, established by a presidential decree in May 2004, received

the necessary resources to complete its work and that all individuals and groups accused of human rights violations would be brought to justice without delay. Further the Government agreed to allow the deployment of human rights monitors and the establishment of a fair system, respectful of local traditions that will allow abused women to bring charges against alleged perpetrators.

Capacity building of national stakeholders

The UNAMID Human Rights Section supports the provision of training on human rights issues for Government and other national entities. The trainees run the gamut of law enforcement officers, security forces, judicial authorities, legislators, and civil society organization representatives.

In 2011, the Section conducted 40 courses for Sudanese authorities during which more than 800 officials were trained, including a number of women. The section also facilitated awareness raising activities on gender-based violence with state committees in Kutum and Mellit. Prison officials and members of the Sudan Liberation Army (Minni Minawi) were among those who benefitted. The Section also visits and monitors places of detention with a focus on legal issues and the physical condition of detainees and access to legal aid.

Sudanese senior police officers also received training to help them understand the rights of suspects in relation to arrests, detentions and investigations. They expressed positive reviews, and some offered opinions on how this training would impact their work, such as:



UNAMID PHOTO

"I learned from the workshop how to deal with accused persons, women detainees, the difference between international law and the Sudanese Constitution and the interaction between policemen and citizens."

"From the presentation of papers, I learned various ways to secure a crime scene area, arrest, detain, investigate and collect evidence from the scene of a crime without affecting the rights of the detainee."

"This workshop will have an effect on all of my human interactions especially on criminal matters. It shows us how to interact with the public and preserve ethics, the general standards of behaviour and public order."

Focus on protection

The protection of vulnerable groups is central to work of the Human Rights Section, which collaborates with UN agencies and civil society organizations in developing specific mechanisms targeting internally displaced persons, disabled and elderly persons, and children. Similarly, it monitors the human rights situation of returnees and supports the operations of the three State committees for combating violence against women as well as the Government's action plan. The section monitors economic, social and cultural rights with a specific focus on poverty, education, health and adequate living conditions, and it works to mainstream human rights in the peace process, including by follow-up action to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which was signed by the Government and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) earlier this year.

UNAMID remains hopeful "that the conflict in Darfur will end soon so that all Darfuris will be able to participate in the development process of their homeland, and enjoy prosperity, security, and live in dignity and peace," said Ms. Keita.

Did you Know?

1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of humanity. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 by General Assembly resolution 217. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and promoted. 10 December is now celebrated around the world as International Human Rights Day. At present, there are 381 different translations of the UDHR, available in HTML and/or PDF format on the United Nations website. www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/Cached

2 Following the World Summit at the UN in 2005, the General Assembly established the United Nations Human Rights Council by adopting a resolution (A/RES/60/251) on 15 March 2006. The Human Rights Council replaced the Commission on Human Rights and is an inter-governmental body within the UN system made up of 47 States responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. The Council is to address situations of human rights violations and make recommendations. The Council's Universal Periodic Review which will assess the human rights situations in all 192 UN Member States. Its Advisory Committee provides expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues which pertain to all parts of the world. The Complaint Procedure which allows individuals and organizations to bring complaints about human rights violations to the attention of the Council.

3 The UNAMID Human Rights Section also serves as the principal human rights adviser to the Joint Special Representative (JSR) and representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the UN country team. Its main office is in UNAMID HQ in El Fasher, with regional offices in El-Fasher, Nyala, El-Geneina and Zalingei and a liaison office in Khartoum, tasked with ensuring close coordination with other UN agencies in Khartoum, donors and with the Government of the Sudan. Plans are afoot to deploy human rights officers to key UNAMID military outposts and team sites.

Forced marriage highlights relevance of Human Rights Day in West Darfur

BY EMADILDEN RIJAL



Drama presentation on unwanted marriage in Nyoro village.

UNAMID PHOTO

"will burn the house to the ground," exploded Amina, a girl of about 20, in response to an unwanted marriage arranged solely by her father. Amina declared that she would never accept to be party to a marriage that was not of her free will.

Having lost sympathy for the father's attitude towards marriage customs, friends and family members witnessing this dramatic scene felt for the girl and demanded that the father back off from his insistence on the marriage.

This scene, however, not only reflected the serious consequences of a marriage arranged at the parents' sole discretion, but also recalled what came to be known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which is enshrined the rights to dignity, justice, participation, equality and freedom.

No sooner had the supportive cast joined Amina in her protest, than the father retreated from his position, and the idea of the unwanted marriage collapsed.

It was against this dramatic backdrop that the people of Nyoro village, 47 kilometers south of El-Geneina in West Darfur, celebrated the 63rd International Day of Human Rights and the conclusion of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence on 12 December 2011.

The drama of Amina and her father was performed by a local theatre group of three girls and two boys from the village in front of a crowd that included government officials taking part in the proceedings.

Addressing the ceremony, the Commissioner of El-Geneina Locality, Hassan Ahmed Mohammed Mattar, and the Wali's Advisor for Child and Women

Affairs, Ferdous Hussein Saleh, reaffirmed their commitment to support the rights of women and recommended the establishment of a women's development center in Nyoro.

Roda Sube, representative of UNAMID Gender Advisory Section at the event, called for a change that could help eliminate all forms of violence against women.

UNAMID human rights and gender advisory sections in West Darfur conducted a series of workshops on gender-based violence and human rights in various localities of West Darfur State to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence and International Human Rights Day.



Creating an enabling environment for Darfur's disabled persons

BY ALA MAYYAH

With his index finger, he wrote his name on the sandy floor -- Habib Hamdoon Adam. Then he smiled and started waving his hands in expressive sign language. Habib, who lives in El Fasher, North Darfur, is one of hundreds of disabled members of the Sudanese Centre for Disabled Persons.

Established in 1987, the centre has been the only care facility for disabled Darfuris where they can be assured of compassionate treatment and support.

"Disabled Darfuris suffer more than any other group in the region. They are vulnerable to severe poverty and, because of their situation, they need support in almost every aspect of their lives," says the centre's Secretary General, Mohamed Adam Ibrahim. He is 36 years old and has a physical disability in his right leg. He has embraced and accepted it positively rather than giving up. "Actually, my condition has motivated me to help other disabled persons in the community. I advocate for their rights and network to get them the

support they need," he says. In addition to his work for his peers, Mohamed has been teaching in primary and high schools since 1992. He is also an active participant in several youth activities.

The World report on violence and health, published by the World Health Organization in 1992, states that while millions die as a consequence of injuries due to violence, "many more survive..., but live with a permanent disability". This is certainly true in Darfur. Although there



Sheikh Aldine makes crutches at the workshop of the center.

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

are currently no official statistics, there was a remarkable increase of disabled persons as a result of the conflict. According to Mohamed, the centre was able to provide basic services and medical care for the disabled who came with the first group of internally displaced persons to El Fasher in 2003. They came from Tawilla, Korma, Jabal Siy and Tarti in North Darfur. And it continues to serve and support these survivors. "So far, we try to provide services for all kinds of disabled persons in spite of our limited resources," he explained.

Building capacity through training and care

In addition to daily meals, physical therapy and medicine, the centre trains male disabled members through its in-house workshop to produce walking sticks, special wooden shoes for disabled children and manual wheel chairs. Sheikh-Eldin Abdullah Ahmed, a 33 year- old polio victim, is a long-term member who has benefitted from the workshop. "I joined the centre in 1995 and there I made many friends and learnt a useful craft. However, we need modern machines to be able to manufacture better quality products," he said. Sheikh-Eldin is married and has two children.

Women also receive training to create handmade crafts, such as the traditional and world famous Darfuri baskets, embroidered table linen and handbags. They are able to earn some money from the sale of these goods, including through exhibitions organized by the centre. Deputy Manager in the centre's women section, Salma Mohamed Ahmed, says ninety-five per cent of the actual cost of the products goes to those who create them. Salma was appointed by the North Darfur state government as part of its support for the facility.

As for disabled children, the child care section receives all cases -- from physical to mental disabilities. Parents from all over Darfur bring their children. Three months ago, Fayza Al Tayib, brought her daughter, Nabaa Al Mutasem, so she could receive therapy for her feet, which were debilitated since birth. Fayza is now optimistic about her daughter's situation. "The therapists put wooden shoes on her feet and gently exercise them. It's been almost three months now and I can see that she has improved and is now able to stand with little help."

Three-year old Khattab Khaled has a mental disability. He has been receiving treatment from the centre since he was 6 months old. His mother, Nawal Umar, from El Geneina, says her son got his disability due to a lack of oxygen at birth and she takes him for medicine and mild physical exercises.

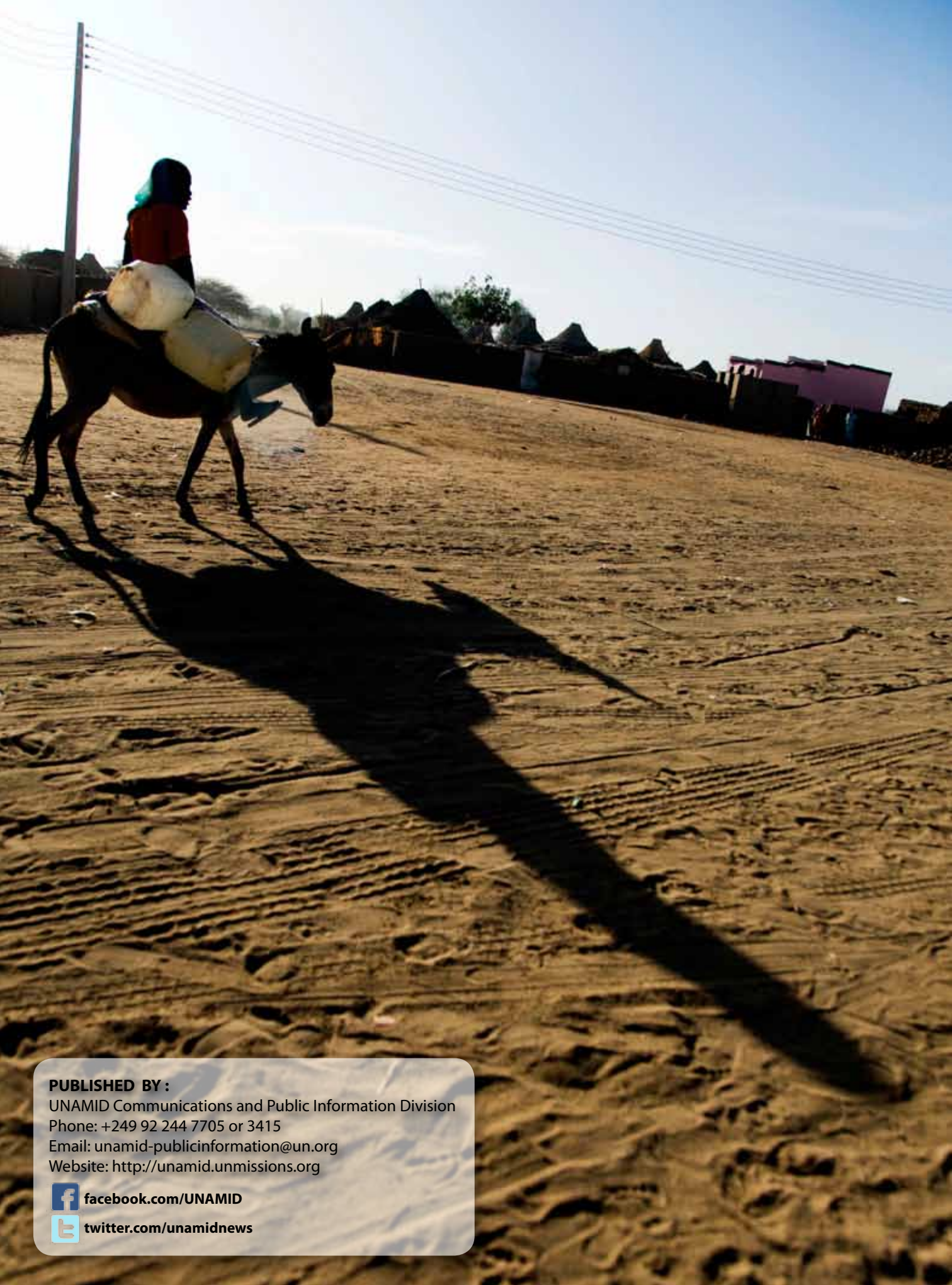
The facility networks, advocates and organizes awareness raising activities in the attempt to draw the attention of the outside world to its dire needs and to gain

better recognition for the rights of the disabled in Darfuri society. "We've received assistance from, among others, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Leprosy Mission, as well as from the local charitable organization, Al Zakat Union, which gave us specialized motorcycles. But we still severely lack resources. I'm using this opportunity to call on the Sudanese Government and the international community to visit our centre to assess the humanitarian needs of our members and to support us," Mohamed says.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities – what it means in Darfur

Every year, as the world observes the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, all of the centre's members look forward to celebrating jointly with disabled persons worldwide. This year, plans are afoot for several activities, including an exhibition of their handmade crafts, poetry readings and dissemination of messages to promote the rights disabled persons.

The African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) will also ramp up its awareness raising activities to ensure that the world becomes a better place in which disabled persons can live productive lives. Keeping in mind the theme, "Together for a better world for all: Including persons with disabilities in development", the Mission plans to continue to raise awareness through dissemination of locally themed material to communities throughout the region to improve the lot of this still largely marginalized group in society. Since the first Day was observed some thirty years ago, experience has shown that when disabled persons are empowered to participate in and lead the process of development, their involvement creates opportunities for everyone -- those who are disabled and those who are not. Including disabled persons in development discussions and in addressing disability issues when creating policies will ensure their full participation in society.



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