

HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

A quarterly publication by UNAMID's Human Rights Section

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Note from UNAMID Head of Mission

I would like to extend my very sincere congratulations and commendation to the UNAMID Human Rights Section on the release of this second issue of their quarterly newsletter under the theme "partnership". This theme is very critical at a time when UNAMID is going through structural and mandate reviews both of which require continued inputs and collaboration with the Government, AU Commission, United Nations and the larger civil society. It is pertinent because all UNAMID HRS' activities should, more than ever, be geared toward ensuring not only the sustainability of what has been achieved to date, but also and, perhaps more importantly, ensuring the creation of a credible and popular human rights space in which all Sudanese, including all Darfuris, will thrive and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms as outlined in the DDPD. My travels to the various States of Darfur, which started in October 2014, have been a great opportunity and rewarding experience because I was able to engage with state authorities, local communities, as well as humanitarian and other actors working closely with the communities on the ground. These visits will always be an important part of my work as I lead and continue to discharge my current functions as Acting JSR/JCM of UNAMID.

UN peacekeeping operations are complex processes with serious challenges but, at the same time, can be inspiring. Indeed, peacekeeping operations are a mix of challenges and opportunities. It requires all of us to be at our best and dedicate all our activities fully in our belief in humanity and apply that focused belief on a daily basis. The concept of peacekeeping has evolved over the years. However, an important and critical factor that determines the success of a peacekeeping operation is the support from a host government and its determination to relentlessly join all peace initiatives and play the role of the important partner in settling crisis. As the Head of UNAMID, I have continuously engaged with the host government in order to facilitate the effective implementation of our mandated activities. I'm pleased to note that the cooperation and support of the host government,



On 12 January 2015, The Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, addresses the ninth meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission (IFC), established by the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), that took place in Nyala, South Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

even in tense and difficult situations, are commendable. The engagement with the opposition armed groups who are yet to sign the peace agreement has, in that vein, also been a priority in my role as Joint Chief Mediator ad interim.

The most recent UN resolutions have identified three main priorities for the Mission that include PoC, mediation with non-signatory groups and mediation to resolve conflicts. At the same time, the Mission, is going through a streamlining and down-sizing process. Notwithstanding these developments and other challenges and constraints, the Mission has made strategic plans to meet its obligations under the three major priorities. Among the recent challenges was the unfortunate closure of our Human Rights operations and activities at the Khartoum Liaison Office. This has in some ways affected our collaboration and capacity-building support for national human rights institutions. It is my fervent hope that the decision will be reviewed and rescinded in the near future in the larger interests of collaboration and coordination between GoS, CSOs, armed groups and UNAMID, in our collective efforts and aspirations to restore sustainable peace and stability in Darfur.

The support and collaboration with embassies and other diplomatic enti-

ties accredited to the Sudan continue to be a very important part of my work. Whether in terms of conveying the realities on the ground in Darfur to major local and international stakeholders, or in seeking continued support and understanding for the challenges faced by the mission, these contacts and exchange of views remain invaluable. We shall continue to count on the support and contributions of these major stakeholders, in particular the donors, in the fulfilment of our mandate to protect civilians and to facilitate and enhance the efforts of Government and civil society organizations to ensure that the Sudan meet all its human rights obligations.

Sustainable peace can be built in any region only when there is respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and when those rights are being observed by all citizens and protected by law enforcement officials and security apparatus. In this respect, the hybrid mission that is UNAMID will continue to rely on the set of international instruments under the UN, as well as regional human rights instruments established under the auspices of the AUC which have been signed and ratified by the GoS. With these remarks, I invite you to enjoy the various articles and snippets in this second issue of UNAMID's Human Rights newsletter. HRS

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Letter from the Director's Desk



This second edition of Human Rights First—UNAMID's human rights newsletter—focuses on the importance of partnership as well as highlights how the Mission's Human Rights Section (HRS) works together with various partners and stakeholders to promote respect for human rights in Darfur.

As the principal focal point for human rights in the Mission, UNAMID HRS is mandated to provide human rights protection for civilians, mainstreaming human rights in UNAMID and United Nations Country Team (UNCT) programming, including the peace process, humanitarian assistance; implementation of the human rights and justice elements of the DDPD and human rights main streaming in the mediation of community conflict to address its root causes.

In order to fulfill this mandate and optimize impact, UNAMID HRS engages widely with partners within and outside the Mission to provide a forum to continuously identify, highlight, and develop responses

to human rights challenges in Darfur. Within the Mission, these efforts include information gathering, verification and analysis, training of military, police and civilian components, who are frontline responders to incidents of human rights violations and abuses.

Externally, partnerships have been built through regular engagement with state and national authorities including the Sudanese police, national intelligence agencies, human rights state forums, as well as gender-based violence working groups and related mechanisms at the state level. Non-state actors such as civil society groups including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), international organizations, are also equally engaged to highlight and facilitate provision of humanitarian assistance and the right for a dignified existence for the people of Darfur.

Particular focus is also given to strengthening of state human rights forums and National Human Rights Institu-

tions (NHRIs) with due regard to the principles relating to the status of national institutions (the Paris Principles). Collaborations between UNAMID HRS and United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes in implementing activities on promotion of human rights are grounded on the need to make efficient use of financial resources, complimentary skill sets for maximum outputs and limiting duplication where mandates overlap.

Through training activities, policy development and implementation as well as mainstreaming human rights into long term development, UNCT shares responsibility of supporting national partners as well as exchanging information and undertaking joint reporting where feasible. Additionally, UNAMID HRS advises the Resident Coordinator on policy and strategic issues including the implementation of the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy and the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front initiative.

Civil society actors, including NGOs, are critical in the promotion and protection of human rights in Darfur and collaborating with UNAMID HRS becomes an entry point in harnessing their contribution to this cause. Through capacity building individuals and groups are able to claim their rights including how they can engage with national and state human rights mechanisms as well as United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms.

UNAMID-HRS hopes that these partnerships will grow exponentially over the years to leave a significant footprint on the human rights situation in Darfur. More importantly, it is our firm belief that working together creates better synergy, greater impact, saves money and avoids duplication of efforts in realizing rights for every Darfuri, everywhere, every day. 

"... no single business entity can create the stable environments necessary to prosper and grow. We need to cooperate across national borders and the public/private divide, to be able to cope with threats. Above all, societies today must be built on solid foundations or what I call the three pillars. There can be no long-term security without development; and there can be no long-term development without security; no society can remain prosperous for long without respect for human rights and the rule of law..."

Kofi Annan

NEWS IN BRIEF

Appointment of New High Commissioner for Human Rights

On 16 June 2014, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Secretary General's appointment of Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Mr. Al Hussein assumed duties as High Commissioner in September 2014.

He brings a wealth of experience in the areas of diplomacy, peacekeeping and international justice. This includes services

as Political Affairs Officer with the United Nations mission in the former Yugoslavia; Jordan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations; Jordan's Ambassador to the United States of America, as well as advisory roles with several international organizations.

Mr. Al Hussein holds a Bachelor of Arts from The Johns Hopkins University and a PhD in philosophy from Cambridge University. [HRS](#)

Appointment of Independent Expert for Sudan

The United Nations Human Rights Council appointed Dr Aristide Nononsi, a citizen of Benin, as the Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Sudan. Dr Nononsi succeeds Professor Mashood Adebayo Baderin, who had held the position from March 2012 to September 2014. In announcing the appointment, the Human Rights Council noted that Dr Nononsi, 'has extensive experience in technical assistance

and capacity-building activities on human rights systems and procedures in the region for that position.' This experience includes services as the Executive Director of the Banjul-based Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa; conducting human rights training, rights advocacy, consultation roles as well as litigation work in Africa. Dr Nononsi holds a PhD in law from the University of Bordeaux, France. [HRS](#)

Leadership Appointments in UNAMID



In November 2014, the United Nations Secretary General appointed Abiodun Bashua as the Acting Joint Special Representative of UNAMID.

Prior to this appointment, Mr Bashua was the Deputy Joint Special Representative of UNAMID. In September 2014, the United Nations Secretary-

General and the African Union Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma announced the appointment of Abdul Kamara of Sierra Leone as Deputy Joint Special Representative for UNAMID. Mr Kamara has extensive experience working in various capacities with the African Development Bank. He served as the bank's Resident Representative in the Sudan

Country Office; Manager of the bank's Research Division as well as Senior Agricultural Economist. He had also served as Research Scientist at the International Water Management Institute in South Africa. Mr Kamara holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development from the Institute of Rural Development of the Georg-August-Universität of Göttingen, Germany. [HRS](#)

Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict

Two representatives of UNAMID Human Rights Section participated in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict on 10-13 June 2014, in London. The summit was co-chaired by William Hague, the former British Foreign Secretary, and Angelina Jolie, the Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Summit reinforced the current international drive to

confront conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), and was the largest such gathering with 1,700 delegates and 123 country delegations including 79 government ministers.

Participants unanimously agreed to put in place mechanisms to confront impunity which is manifested in the use of rape as a weapon of war. Participants also agreed to initiate urgent action to change global attitudes to CRSV. [HRS](#)

Publication of Joint Public Report on Human Rights in Sudan

In October 2014, UNAMID and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) jointly published a public report on the human rights situation in Darfur for the period 2013.

The report examines the progress and challenges of human rights in Darfur with

a focus on civil and political rights. The report also provides recommendations to the Government Sudan and armed opposition movements on steps to take to improve human rights in Darfur, and comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. [HRS](#)

EU Ambassadors Visit South Darfur

On 5 November 2014, a delegation of EU Ambassadors, accredited to Sudan, visited South Darfur as part of a two-day fact-finding mission. During the visit, the UNAMID Human Rights Team in Nyala accompanied the Ambassadors to Kalma IDP camp, where they held a meeting with IDP leaders, during which

the Ambassadors urged the leaders to align their priorities and work on a peaceful and durable solution to the Darfur conflict, and called for the unification of all armed opposition groups to work toward lasting peace.

The IDP leaders expressed their willingness to participate in the peace process. [HRS](#)

Why Partnership Matters in Human Rights Work

Since its emergence as an organized normative reference for post-war international legal order, human rights continues to shape and influence the direction of international politics as well as state behavior and thinking. More than ever, the language and ethos of human rights provide the baseline upon which the past is measured, the present negotiated, and the future imagined. Human rights have become so pervasive, so indispensable, that a human project of whatever kind, becomes inadequate if it lacks elements of human rights socialization. The universal and indivisible credentials of human rights are perceived by many as the closest to the realization of a secular religion, one that is accepted by many and recognized across the world in the interest of all. Although the elevation of human rights to the pinnacle of international recognition owes as much to its universal claims, the role of partnership has been and continues to remain critical.

Partnership in human rights denotes a constructive collaborative relationship between various actors and stakeholders. The relationship is often built around mutual respect, shared concerns and recognition of the strength and limitations of individual capabilities, especially those of state institutions. The power of common concerns triggers a kind of collective introspection which helps to mobilize actions and resources toward addressing limitations that hinder the enjoyment of human rights. The grammar and assumptions upon which partnership is conceived thrive on an acceptance of what the International Human Rights Network calls a 'fundamental shift in attitude toward a constructive partnership,' which 'conveys assisting and reinforcing rather than replacing or duplicating local efforts.' The particularities of the interfaces between partnership and human rights are such that there is an obligation on the part of the actors and stakeholders to operate in a manner that causes least harm to beneficiaries and the host state.

The value of partnership in human rights education, mainstreaming, and advocacy has been highlighted from cross-disciplinary perspectives by scholars and practitioners. Kwesi Wiredu, the distinguished Ghanaian philosopher, has for instance, argued for the reflection of 'otherness' in human rights practice as a conscious effort in achieving a kind of culturally sensitive epistemological consensus in the social construction project of human rights. Similarly, in reimagining the normative foundation of human rights, Upendra Baxi, emphasizes

that the primary objective of human rights is to confront human suffering of all forms. He notes that 'it is axiomatic that the historic mission of 'contemporary' human rights is to give voice to human suffering, to make it visible, and to ameliorate it.' According to Baxi, the focus on suffering is anchored on what he calls the 'politics for human rights,' which seeks to make the 'state more ethical, governance progressively just, and power increasingly accountable.'

Although such calls are quintessentially philosophical yearnings for inclusion in the determination of the cultural orientation and contents of human rights, there is an

"Human Rights defenders, nongovernmental organizations and all other civil society stakeholders carry out their human rights work in a variety of ways: they share information; advocate and scrutinize implementation of human rights, campaign for development of new human rights standards. They do so by taking the pulse of their communities and constituencies. They give voice to the powerless "

Navanethem Pillay

understanding that confronting human suffering presupposes possibilities for and existence of partnership in human rights culture and practice. Formulations on partnership in human rights, while unanimous on the value of partnership, do however vary on the modalities of partnership. In the mid-1990s, the International Human Rights Network (IHRN) flirted with the Sustainability Principle as a conceptual guideline for partnership in human rights work and advocacy. According to the IHRN, the sustainability principle requires that 'human rights operations must be based on the assessed needs of a host society, and coordinated with other complementary initiatives, so as to best contribute to a sustainable improvement of the human rights situation as part of an overall human rights strategy. This requires the active participation of the host society.'

The sustainability principle resonates, to some degree, with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which was adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993 in Vienna, Austria. The Declaration affirmed that the 'enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights is essential for the full achievement of the purposes of the United Nations.' The Declaration further emphasized that 'there is a need for States and international organizations, in cooperation with nongovernmental organiza-

tions, to create favorable conditions at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the full and effective enjoyment of human rights.' For this partnership to acquire meaning, the Declaration allowed for each host state to determine its own human rights priorities. This does not, of course, mean that prioritization should lead to selective determination of whose rights to be respected.

Human rights field missions, by their very nature, rely on partnership to implement mandate through advocacy, mainstreaming and capacity building activities. In Darfur, where prolonged conflict has

impacted on institutions and social infrastructure, building peace and promoting rights are only relevant when implementation of programmes take into account the role and needs of the host state. In the context of UNAMID's Human Rights Section, partnership with community leaders, IDPs, Government of Sudan authorities, and law enforcement agencies has been key in the Section's reporting and monitoring obligations; human rights field missions, IDP camp visits, access to sites of incidents, trial monitoring, and interaction with authorities, require partnership.

In the past months, UNAMID Human Rights Section has increased the capacity of the transitional justice mechanisms in Sudan by delivering training workshops for the Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Darfur. The Section has also partnered with UNDP to identify and provide training for the National Human Rights Commission. Through the United Nations integrated Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements (MARA), UNAMID HRS continues to highlight sexual and gender-based violence and conflict related sexual violence in Darfur. While it remains uncertain as to when and how the conflict in Darfur will be resolved, it is clear however, that whatever the challenge, partnership will almost certainly play a critical role in achieving the larger human rights objectives in Darfur.

Benefits of Partnership between Darfur's JTRC and UNAMID Human Rights Section

When the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) was created in April 2007 and subsequently reformed in July 2011, there was recognition on the part of the Government of Sudan to strengthen institutions in Darfur as part of the Darfur Peace Agreements. The Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (JTRC) forms an important part of the DRA. The JTRC was established in 2013 by Presidential Decree No.19 pursuant to the Darfur peace process, and mandated to address justice and reconciliation issues in Darfur.

The JTRC is comprised of specialized departments, and is headed by a Secretary General under the supervision of the Chairperson of the DRA. Implementation of the JTRC mandate is largely done by the Justice Committee and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. Their composition is drawn from 48 representatives of community leaders across Darfur.

In support of the functions of the com-

mittees, the JTRC provides technical and administrative support from its allocated resources. In 2014, the JTRC embarked on a mapping of the Darfur conflict with identification and classification of the conflicts in all the states in Darfur, focusing on the nature, types and causes. Part of this project includes the creation of a comprehensive database on the conflict. This and other projects of the JTRC require cooperation, which helps in bringing expertise and resources.

A case in point is the JTRC's partnership with UNAMID's Human Rights Section. This partnership is based on the principle of shared responsibility, which prioritizes and provides support to the Darfur peace process. For example, in collaboration with the JTRC, UNAMID HRS successfully organized a number of specialized training workshops for members and staff of the JTRC. Skills learned from these training programmes are now being used by the

JTRC to perform its functions in line with international standards.

However, in light of the resource limitations faced by the JTRC, we continue to seek partnership and support from UNAMID HRS especially in the areas of capacity building and training workshops. We also seek support to undertake study tours in the region and beyond, so as to learn from others. Critical issues for us include staff training, skills acquisition for members of the committees, as well as funding for awareness-raising programs for victims and the general population.

Finally, on behalf of the JTRC, I would like to register our appreciation for the fruitful partnership with UNAMID's Human Rights Section. We hope that this will be strengthened, and that other UNAMID sections will follow this partnership example. HRS

By Ibrahim Adam Ibrahim

Secretary-General of the Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Darfur

Training on Transitional Justice for the Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission



A group photo for Truth and Reconciliation Committee members who attended a workshop organized by UNAMID's Human Rights Section in Khartoum from 24-25 January 2015. Photo by UNAMID HRS

From 21-22 January 2015, UNAMID's Human Rights Section, in partnership with the Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Darfur, conducted a two-day workshop on transitional justice for members of the Justice Committee (JC) of the Justice, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (JTRC). The workshop took place at the Grand Holiday Villa in Khartoum, and brought together 25 participants (19 men and six women), among them 18 members of the JC, six technical staff of the JTRC and one staff of the United States of America's

Embassy in Sudan. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Kamal El Gazouli, a practicing lawyer in Khartoum.

The overall objective of the workshop was to equip the JC members with basic knowledge with regard to the justice pillar of Transitional Justice so as to enable them to effectively carry out the Committee's mandate. This included enhanced technical knowledge on transitional justice and also practical frameworks regarding the implementation of the Committee's mandate. Participants were also trained on the

identification of challenges/gaps, areas for improvement and key requirements regarding the implementation of the JC mandate in line with international human rights standards as well as developing strategies for implementation and achievement of the Committee's mandate based on lessons learnt from various transitional Justice Mechanisms in the region.

While addressing the participants, the head of the JC of the JTRC, retired Lt. General Alteyb Rahman Mukhtar, thanked UNAMID's Human Rights Section for its continued support to the JTRC and urged the members of the JC to use the opportunity to discuss in depth the justice mechanism of transitional justice using experiences from other countries such as South Africa and Rwanda.

On his part, Adam Ibrahim, Secretary General of the JTRC, encouraged participants to discuss the mandate of the JC, challenges faced as well as develop practical recommendations for the implementation of the JC in order to achieve its goals. Other speakers included Abdulkarim Musa Abdulkarim, the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) Minister of Information and Culture, and Christian Mikala, Deputy Chief of UNAMID's Human Rights Section. HRS

UNAMID Human Rights Section Partners With AU's Gender Is My Agenda Campaign



A group photo of participants at the AU Gender is My Agenda Campaign held from 20-23 January 2015 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo by Femme Africa Solidarite (FAS).

Promotion and protection of human rights is a collective responsibility. While states have the primary responsibility to ensure the realization of human rights for all, non-state actors have increasingly appropriated roles in the promotion and protection of human rights. A significant part of this development has been the growing emphasis on partnership between the human rights community and state organs and international organizations. This was demonstrated at the January 2015 consultation meeting of the Gender is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC), held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the aegis of the African Union (AU).

The year 2015 is designated by the AU as the year of women's empowerment and development and 2010-2020 as the decade of women. The AU/GIMAC consultation meeting brought together more than 50 civil society organizations, the African Union Commission (AUC), Gender Ministers from across Africa, UN entities including UN Women, UNDP, UNECA and UNAMID's Human Rights Section. The participants shared their experiences and visions of an Africa where women's rights and fundamental freedoms are protected and respected.

In a statement addressing the meeting, the AU Chairperson, Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, stressed the need for joint efforts toward enhancing women's empowerment. Ms Dlamini-Zuma high-

lighted several factors which negatively impact on women in Africa including poverty, inequality, poor governance, conflict and impunity. She went on to describe how the Ebola crisis has exposed the unpreparedness of Africa to deal with major health crises, all of which necessitate a major force for action especially in 2015. Ms Dlamini-Zuma stressed the need for homegrown solutions and joint efforts with states, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

Discussions at the AU/GIMAC meeting emphasized the need to have peace and security in Africa as a prerequisite to women's empowerment and development. Participants highlighted the vulnerability of women and children, and concluded that during times of conflict, this vulnerability exposes them to human rights violations and abuses. It follows then, that if peace building initiatives are not gender sensitive, dividends from peace processes may not be sustainable.

On the issue of culture, participants observed that there is a cultural aspect in Africa which continues to penalize women despite ratification of a number of protocols on women's rights by most states. A call was therefore made to focus on changing mindsets and making use of regional mechanisms and protocols to build a more peaceful and stable Africa. It was also established at the forum that member states need to have the right political

will to ensure that regional protocols and mechanisms are enforced on the ground.

UNAMID's Human Rights Section will play its part to strengthen the aide memoire of the AU/GIMAC consultation meeting by drawing from regional mechanisms to highlight women's rights. Partnership with the AUC, its Political Affairs department, and the AU Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security to embed a more effective human rights programme were discussed.

The Special Envoy of the AU Chairperson on women, peace and security is developing a legal framework with indicators for member states to report on. The reporting obligations of member states of the AU on the solemn declaration index and scoreboard is yet another mechanism being developed by the AUC for the promotion and protection of human rights. These regional mechanisms would be an additional advocacy outlet for UNAMID-HRS to anchor its work in Darfur.

A consensus was reached at the meeting, among others, to mobilize resources through partnership toward the realization of Agenda 2063; protect girls' rights to universal primary and secondary education; enhance access to land, capital and technological skills for women; establish a database on gender-based violence in Africa as well as advocate for increasing number of member states to fulfil their obligations toward women's rights and empowerment.

Building Partnership to Highlight Disability Rights in Darfur



The Association of Persons with Disabilities organizes a march across El Geneina town led by the West Darfur Minister of Social Affairs. Photo by UNAMID HRS.

Disability rights have gained international traction in the past years. Sudan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol as well as enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2009 with provisions to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Other legislations exist within the national legal framework with particular relevance to disability rights. Additionally, a National Disability Council was created with subsidiaries in all states in Darfur to examine the extent to which policies and legislations reflect the needs and sensibilities of persons with disabilities and make recommendations to that effect. Subsidiaries of the National Disability Council function under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs at the state level, in coordination with the Association of Persons with Disabilities.

While the Disability Act (2009) and the

National Disability Council represent relatively positive developments, implementation of disability rights has remained a challenge. The Association of Persons with Disabilities has made calls for their voices to be heard and for the Government of Sudan to implement existing legislations and policies to realize improvement in the conditions and plight of persons with disabilities. To this end, the Association has advocated for the enactment of disability rights legislation at the state level with implementation structures and adequate budget allocation to sustain operations and allied activities. States are currently making some progress toward the realization of the recommendations of the Association.

To complement the efforts of the Association, UNAMID's Human Rights Section has embarked upon a partnership with the Association by providing technical and financial support to facilitate awareness-raising

activities on disability rights. Workshops are held for members of the Association to improve understanding of the national and international regime of disability rights so that they are aware of their rights.

UNAMID HRS has also organized workshops for state actors, particularly members of parliament, to increase awareness on the obligations and commitments of the Government of Sudan under the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This has helped state assemblies, especially members of the West Darfur State Assembly, to enhance their understanding of human rights standards on disability rights for the purposes of legislation.

The International Day for Persons with Disabilities is celebrated annually on 3 December in all five states of Darfur. The Human Rights Section works jointly with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Association of Persons with Disabilities to organize advocacy and awareness-raising events on disability rights on this occasion.

In some states in Darfur, the Association arranged public marches across town centres to highlight disability rights. Training and skill-building programmes have been initiated by the Association, which have created employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Darfur.

However, challenges and needs do exist. For example, special schools are critical to help improve access to education for persons with disabilities but such facilities are largely absent in Darfur. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted, 'persons with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty and deprivation and are twice as likely to lack health care.' To address this problem in Darfur, more is required to strengthen implementation of legislation and policies. **HRS**

UNAMID's Human Rights Section and UNDP Jointly Support National Human Rights Commission

As part of activities to strengthen local capacity, UNAMID's Human Rights Section, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized a training workshop on the human rights situation in Sudan and the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism (UPR) from 11-13 January 2015. The UPR is a unique mechanism that reviews human rights compliance of United Nations' member states with the participation of relevant stakeholders. The training focused on the role of the media in the promotion of human rights at both the national and local levels. De-



A group photo of participants at a workshop organized by UNAMID's Human Rights Section in Khartoum in January 2015. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

tailed reports from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), UN mechanisms and the Government of Sudan on the UPR were also presented and evaluated.

Addressing the opening session of the workshop, Mr. Christian Mikala, Deputy Director of the Human Rights Section, reiterated the Mission's concerns about human rights as stated in the global conventions across the world. 'Promotion of human rights is the cornerstone of community development; thus, awareness-raising on human rights is a vital element in the prevention of violations and implementation of human rights,' said Mr. Mikala. He expressed his appreciation for

the support extended by Sudanese human rights experts to such workshops and training initiatives and urged participants to observe human rights, justice and equality in order to protect all community members.

In another partnership between UNAMID's Human Rights and UNDP, a 5-day training workshop on national and international human rights mechanisms was organized for the National Human Rights Commission from 1-5 November, 2014. The workshop was attended by the Deputy Chairman of Sudan's Human Rights Commission, the UNDP Country Director, Chief of UNAMID Human Rights, Isha Dyfan, in

addition to national and international human rights experts and facilitators.

During the course of the training, facilitators and experts presented papers centered on identifying the different elements of international human rights mechanisms (IHRMs), their functions and processes, as well as on possible roles of national institutions. Key recommendations were shared including the formation of a joint workgroup from the national commission and the civil society organizations. Both workshops were attended by representatives from Government of Sudan, civil society organizations, and NGOs.

HRS

Promoting Human Rights Education through Partnership with Cultural Groups



On 10 December 2014, a local musical group performs during the commemoration of International Human Rights Day in El Geneina, West Darfur. Photo by Muntasir Sharafadin, UNAMID.

The mood was festive, but the message was clear as participants danced with the Ajaweed Cultural Group while singing 'I have rights, you have rights, we all have rights 365 days,' during the celebrations commemorating Human Rights Day on 10 December 2014 at the open stadium in the University of El Geneina, West Darfur. The song echoed the slogan 'Human Rights 365,' which encompasses the fundamental proposition in the Universal Declaration that each one of us, everywhere, at all times is entitled to the full range of human rights, that human rights belong equally to each of us and bind us together as a global community with the same ideals and values.

UNAMID's Human Rights Section works jointly with cultural groups to train

them on human rights concepts and use drama and songs to create awareness among the people. The Section collaborates with various stakeholders on the ground to create awareness on key human rights concepts and the existing national and international mechanisms that could be utilized to pursue individual rights and freedoms.

In many parts of Darfur, where literacy is low, the use of music and drama as tools for human rights education has the advantage of resonating with local communities, with the power to persuade and make a lasting impression on people's minds. This possibility has encouraged the Human Rights Section to forge a partnership with West Darfur's Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs, to draft in

cultural groups with the aim of spreading human rights values and concepts.

As a pilot project, members of cultural groups in El Fasher and El Geneina were trained on basic human rights and the functions of corresponding national legal mechanisms. Members of the cultural groups then used the knowledge acquired from the training to write songs and short plays to communicate human rights values and the right for redress for human rights violations and abuses. The result has been impressive so far with commendations from state authorities. The Section will continue to build on this partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs and cultural groups to achieve more through unconventional modes of outreach such as music and drama.

HRS

Combating Gender Based Violence in Central Darfur through Partnerships

Under the theme 'From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World,' the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence was launched in Zalingei, Central Darfur, on 25 November 2014. The event was jointly funded by UNAMIID's Human Rights Section, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Central Darfur State Government.

The Unit to combat Violence Against Women (VAW) provided logistic arrangements, while local partners arranged the events. More than 1000 people attended the event including the Advisor on Women and Children for the Governor of Central Darfur, Sector Central Darfur Head of Office, representatives from the Government of Sudan armed forces, police, national intelligence, and community leaders. Civil society groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP were also represented.

Statements read at the event condemned violence against women in the domestic sphere and all other settings in Darfur—in conflict, in the workplace, in society and in schools. In particular, the statements urged men to be partners in the fight against gender-based violence and help enlighten other men who perpetrate acts of violence on women and girls. Representatives of the State government reiterated the Government of Su-



On 25 November 2014, a woman participant speaking on gender-based violence as part 16-days activism against gender-based violence in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Photo by UNAMID HRS.

dan's commitment to adhere to all United Nations treaties Sudan ratified in this regard and acknowledged the support given by the international organizations to empower women in Central Darfur.

The messages of the United Nations Secretary-General and that of the High Commissioner for Human Rights were read by the OIC of the Human Rights Section in Central Darfur, which called on ending violence against women and to protect their rights. Part of the message continued: 'Everyone has a responsibility to prevent and end violence against women and girls, starting by challenging the culture of discrimination that allows it to continue. We must shatter negative

gender stereotypes and attitudes, introduce and implement laws to prevent and end discrimination and exploitation, and stand up to abusive behavior whenever we see it. We have to condemn all acts of violence, establish equality in our work and home lives, and change the everyday experience of women and girls.'

Actors, mainly men, took part in drama to highlight the forms and impact of violence against women and girls. Songs and poems urging peaceful coexistence of men and women were also recited. Certificates were given to eight women who were selected and noted for their advocacy work in promoting women's rights in communities in Central Darfur. HRS

Localizing African Human Rights Day Celebrations in Darfur



On 22 December 2014, a cross-section participants at the African Human Rights Day celebrations in Saraf Umra, North Darfur. Photo by UNAMID HRS.

On 22 December 2014, UNAMID's Human Rights Section, in collaboration with the Locality Commissioner of North Darfur, celebrated the African Humans Rights Day in Saraf Umra. The celebrations, though focused on

highlighting the values of the African human rights system, were also meant to develop partnerships with local authorities and communities, bring diverse groups and communities together as well as strengthen partnerships

between local communities and the Human Rights Section.

Such activities with local participation have the potential of bringing about result-oriented interventions and advocacy with minority groups. The Saraf Umra locality was selected for the event, because of the difficult period it has experienced in 2014 which has had a negative impact on the human rights of individuals and communities.

The celebration was attended by some 2,000 people, who were entertained with music and dance with strong human rights themes. The experience clearly underlines the importance of partnership especially in creating a neutral and conflict free space for communities to come together and participate in cultural and social activities. This not only augurs well for peace at the local community level but also provides a good opportunity to promote human rights themes. HRS



On 18 March 2015, popular Darfuri singer Halima Sassa performs at an event organized by UNAMID's Human Rights Section in Umhajalleg village, located some 35 kilometers west of El Fasher, North Darfur. The Human Rights Section engages with various partners to address human rights and protection of civilian concerns. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.