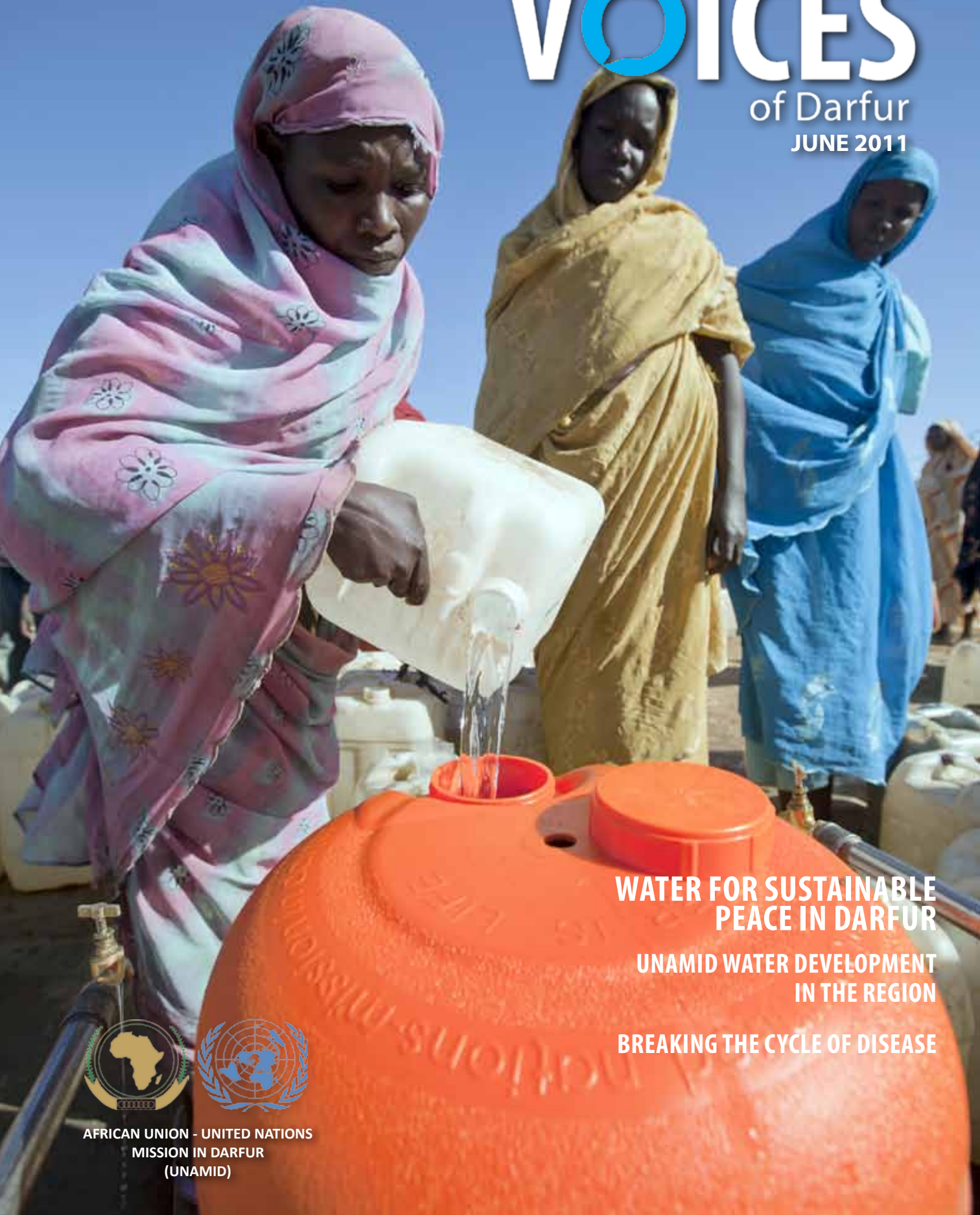


UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

JUNE 2011



**WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE
PEACE IN DARFUR**

**UNAMID WATER DEVELOPMENT
IN THE REGION**

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DISEASE



**AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
MISSION IN DARFUR
(UNAMID)**

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Darfuri women use water rollers to transport this valuable resource

The soil cracks during the dry season in Darfur

Front Cover Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran



Back Cover by Olivier Chassot



VOICES of Darfur

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

Kemal Saiki

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Susan Manuel

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sharon McPherson

STAFF EDITORS/WRITERS

Ala Mayyahi
Sharon Lukunka
Guiomar Pau Sole
Mayada Umbadda

CONTRIBUTOR

Priyanka Khanna

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Olivier Chassot
Albert Gonzalez Farran

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Arie Cahyadi Santoso

PUBLISHED BY :

UNAMID Communications
and Public Information Division (CPID)
Phone: +249 92 244 7705 or 3415
Email: unamid-publicinformation@un.org
Website: <http://unamid.unmissions.org>



facebook.com/UNAMID

twitter.com/UN_AUinDarfur

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MAY AT A GLANCE



MAY 01 UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari announces a project designed to significantly increase accessibility for humanitarian agencies to meet the needs of hard to reach communities in conflict-affected areas of Darfur. Dubbed Operation Spring Basket, the project is organized by UNAMID and the UN Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

MAY 03 JSR Ibrahim Gambari meets with African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson Jean Ping, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He briefs on recent developments in UNAMID, including the current security situation in Sudan and the ongoing peace process.



MAY 04 United States Special Envoy to the Sudan, Princeton Lyman, visits UNAMID's El Fasher headquarters for the first time. He was briefed on the ongoing Doha mediation talks, the security situation in Darfur, recent efforts by UNAMID to ensure expanded access for delivery of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected areas and the Darfur political process.

MAY 10 More than 500 leaders from villages around Niertiti and Zalingei in West Darfur meet in Nila Beida market for a conference organized by recent university graduates. The meeting, the first of its kind, brings together representatives of civil society, native administration leaders, women's groups, local government officials and community leaders.



MAY 13 A new UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (Political), Aïchatou Mindaoudou Souleymane of Niger, is appointed by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Jean Ping, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

MAY 14 More than 6,000 people attend the graduation ceremony for 3,000 students of the Open Sudan University, organized with the support of UNAMID, in El Fasher, North Darfur. JSR Gambari tells the graduates that they have a special responsibility to use their knowledge gained at the university to work for peace in Darfur. Also addressing the crowd is the Sudan Federal Minister for Higher Education, Khamis Kajo Kunda and the Wali of North Darfur, Osman Mohammed Yusuf Kibir. The graduation celebration began on 12 May with a musical concert, organized by UNAMID, featuring renowned Sudanese musician Abdelgadir Salim.



MAY 19 A joint security operation centre, aimed at harmonizing efforts made by UNAMID and the Sudanese Police to bring about a safer environment for the population of El Fasher, North Darfur, is inaugurated by JSR Ibrahim Gambari and the Government of the Sudan Police Commissioner for North Darfur, Omar al-Amin. The JSR expresses his hope "to replicate this type of centre in other Darfur states."



MAY 22 Security, humanitarian and political developments, as well as support to peace negotiations in Doha, are raised during the briefing by JSR Gambari to the UN Security Council in Khartoum. The JSR tells the Council that UNAMID has increased the number, scope and intensity of its patrols. However, air strikes have also increased.

A disarmament campaign is launched in Nyala where more than 1,000 ex-combatants hand over their weapons. The event is organized by the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee, with logistical and technical support from UNICEF, UNDP and UNAMID. The former fighters were members of Government armed forces and a number of rebel movements.



MAY 29 UNAMID celebrates the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers in Darfur's three states. The occasion is to pay tribute to the more than 120,000 military, police and civilians serving worldwide under the blue flag and to remember those who lost their lives in the cause of peace. This year's theme, "Law. Order. Peace," focusses on the efforts to strengthen the rule of law.

MAY 31 The establishment of an internal Darfur dialogue and consultation, to be supported by an international monitoring committee, is among the main points agreed on at the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference in Doha, Qatar. During the five-day discussions, 500 representatives from the Sudanese Government, armed movements, political parties, civil society groups, displaced persons and refugees discussed key issues in the conflict.

Water for sustainable peace in Darfur

International conference to appeal for \$1 billion

BY ALA MAYYAH

Water is one of the fundamental causes of the conflict in Darfur. Underdeveloped resources, long years of conflict and drought have made it ever more valuable, costly and hard to fetch for the people of Darfur.

The growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the conflict has added more pressure on the limited water resources and infrastructure in the towns and contributed to their exhaustion.

Haja Su'ad, who used to have a farm in her village Tarna, located 20 kilometers southwest of El Fasher, said they relied on rains and wells for water, but a sufficient supply had been always a major problem for them. "We had to dig very deeply to get to the water in the dry season," Haja said. In 2003, she and her family fled the village to Abu Shouk internally displaced persons (IDP) camp on the outskirts of El Fasher. "Now I collect water in ten jerry cans every four days. I go to the water point at 7:30 in the morning and wait patiently in the queue; sometimes till past noon; other times until evening to get my containers filled," she says.

The same daily practice is carried out by a very large number of displaced Darfuris in IDP camps. But the situation in the villages is no better as farmers need water for their crops as well as for their own personal use. "Even when we return to our villages, in addition to security, we'll need proper water resources," Haja Su'ad declared.

The dire need for modern and equitable water resources in all parts of Darfur will be brought to the attention of the international community when, for the first time, a conference on water in Darfur will take place in Khartoum on 27 and 28 June under the theme 'Water for Sustainable Peace'. More than 300 international and Sudanese water experts, economists, development specialists and donors are anticipated to participate in the two-day gathering. They will discuss ways of identifying the challenges facing the water sector, and mobilizing the financial resources needed to meet them.

Sponsored by the Sudanese Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources together with the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and United Nations agencies in the country, the conference will appeal for \$1 billion to fund a six-year series of projects in water sector. Among the participating UN agencies are the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

"This is a pivotal moment in efforts to achieve the optimal use of water because for the first time the will is there from the Government and the international community to work together on joint solutions," said Mohamed Yonis, UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative during a recent briefing to reporters in Geneva.

"We in the UN and AU are determined to address this fundamental issue which has driven conflict in Darfur. At the same time, we are also on the ground working to protect civilians while our mediators are pressing for a peace agreement in Doha. No matter the outcome, achieving the wise use of water will remain a major issue to be resolved for a sustainable peace in Darfur."

Sixty-five projects are planned to be funded through the conference appeal, such as rebuilding the water infrastructure affected by conflict and neglect, introducing innovative technologies and systems, and creating policies for drought preparedness.

UNAMID has been working to address the scarcity of water in Darfur. It is involved in large scale projects such as rehabilitating dams and devastated infrastructure, and developing policies to deal with drought. On a smaller scale, noting the difficulties of Darfuris, especially women and children, in fetching large amounts of water over long distances, it recently distributed

rolling water containers to a number of villages around the region.

"Without water there is no life in Darfur," stated Director-General of the Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry in North Darfur, Mohamed Ahmed Sulaiman. "We hope the water conference will be the generous hand to provide the region with the funding it needs for projects required in water sector. This will go a long way in solving the problems of Darfur."

"One of these projects -- Um Bayada -- covers 210,000 acres in the north and aims to provide food security through the cultivation of wheat and animal feed. According to a Khartoum University study, it will cost \$89 million. It has not yet been implemented due to a lack of finance. Three other major projects in the agriculture and water sectors are planned for the state; without donations none of them can be done," Mohamed Sulaiman added.

The conference will kick off a major initiative that will not only rehabilitate and expand water infrastructure, but also fully integrate water resources management and water services to meet the short and long-term needs of the affected population in terms of survival, livelihood and environmental protection. The meeting will specifically increase awareness of the challenges to the Darfur water sector, identify ways of addressing those, and mobilize resources to build sustainable water services for all communities in Darfur.

The theme 'Water for Sustainable Peace' expresses a promise that will bring a better lifestyle, stability and peace in Darfur.

"What we're aiming to do is to transform water from being a trigger for conflict into a peace building instrument," UNICEF Representative in Sudan, Nils Katsberg, recently explained. "It's an approach that recognizes the unique importance of a resource which is fundamental to all of us, and which is a human right as much as a humanitarian and developmental necessity."

As Haja Su'ad says hopefully, "I would like to ask the participants in the water conference to do their best to help us, the people of Darfur, to have access to better water resources. We need that as much as we need sustainable peace. And I believe they will."

WWW.DARFUR.WATERCONFERENCE.COM ■

*Darfuri women and children
wait in line to collect water*





An internally displaced woman prepares a meal in Zam Zam camp, North Darfur

PHOTO: OLIVIER CHASSOT

Breaking the cycle of disease

How UNICEF's water and sanitation programme is helping to save children's lives in conflict-affected Darfur

BY PRIYANKA KHANNA

Saima says she's 15, but looks much older. In the last five months, her family has had to move three times because of the ongoing instability in North Darfur. Her mistrustful eyes hint at the hardships she has faced in her short life.

Reluctantly and quietly she recounts how she and her family recently moved from their home in Shangil Tobaya to a nearby camp for internally displaced persons (IDP). Violence in the area forced them to walk for days before arriving at Zam Zam, North Darfur's largest IDP camp, only to be told that they had to move again to a new site identified for thousands of other new arrivals.

In Darfur -- an area equivalent to the size of France where decades of conflict has undercut the wellbeing of children -- stories like Saima's are all too common.

In her strange new surroundings, Saima says she felt embarrassed to use the



A family from Ghareiga village (North Darfur) spends almost 2 hours every day collecting water from Zam Zam camp, the only place where they can find potable water

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

toilet in the open. "This is what we girls all use now," she says. The temporary pit latrine she points to was constructed by community members with support from the Government of Sudan's Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) project and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It is one of over 1,500 pit latrines constructed in Zam Zam over the last two months.

"Disease outbreak is what you fear most when you have this kind of mass influx of people," says Nils Kastberg, UNICEF Sudan Representative "Which is why providing adequate safe water and sanitation facilities tops our list of emergency response."

Providing a safe water supply and sanitation facilities to places like Zam Zam is all the more challenging because the underground water – with its high fluoride and nitrate concentration -- is largely unfit for consumption.

"In situations like this it's vital that we adapt and innovate while negotiating with various Government and non-governmental actors in order to overcome the various challenges," adds Kastberg.

Those efforts have paid off. The provision of water and sanitation along with health and hygiene promotion campaigns have helped minimize disease outbreaks, officials say. In particular, there has been no outbreak of cholera since 2007.

At the same time, there are now improved prospects that the Sudan will meet its Millennium Development Goal targets in terms of water accessibility by 2015. In North Darfur State, 58 per cent of the population is using improved sources of drinking water, a 10 point increase from 2006, while improved sanitation facilities are reaching nearly all IDP camps. The challenges, however, remain as more than a third of the population using improved water must travel long distances to reach it.

To meet some of these concerns, UN agencies and the Government is organizing a major donor conference this month under the theme "Water for Sustainable Peace in Darfur". The conference will appeal for USD1.4 billion to address climate change, sustainability, water resources management and water supply issues in Darfur.

If that target is achieved, it will go a long way towards helping address the needs of Saima, and thousands of children like her.

PRIYANKA KHANNA IS BASED IN
UNICEF'S OFFICE IN THE SUDAN



Children taking water rollers to a water point in Abu Shouk IDP camp

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

Water rollers assist in easing a burden on Darfuri women

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

Mariam Ali Abdallah Mahmoud is a mother of five living in Zuma village, located about one kilometre from Kuma Garadayat in North Darfur. Each day she prepares her children for school, and then walks for about one kilometre to the nearest water point the only source of water in her village carrying two jerry cans. She collects about 40 litres of water to meet her family's needs for the day.

Like many other women living in her village, Mariam owns a donkey to transport water but she sometimes carries it on her head. Halom Osman Ibrahim, Mariam's close friend and neighbour, was among several persons that received the first set of water rollers UNAMID distributed to families in North Darfur. She shares with her friend Mariam. "I collected water twice every day but now with the water roller, I only need to go to the water point once," Mariam said.

Women in Darfur are responsible for collecting water for their families, most



JSR Gambari (right) and his Advisor Richard Berman (left) distribute water rollers in Kuma Garadayat

PHOTO: OLIVIER CHASSOT

of the time walking great distances or riding on donkeys with four or more jerry cans. Many face the risk of attack. To assist in protecting the women, UNAMID peacekeepers conduct regular water and firewood escort patrols in and around the villages and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari recently launched a pilot project when thousands of high-volume specialized rolling water carriers were distributed to returnee villages with limited access to water resources across Darfur. These containers have a capacity of about 75 litres and will free women and children from having to spend a large portion of every day dedicated to collecting water for their households. While a gallon of water weighs more than 20 liters, the water roller can hold more than 4 jerry cans of water at once and requires less effort to roll on the ground. UNAMID distributed about 3,000 of these water carriers to eight returnee villages throughout Darfur.

"This project is to make life easier and safer for women, as well as to underscore the fact that water hasn't only been a source of the conflict, it is also the solution," said JSR Gambari. "It is our hope that their use will not only support former displaced persons but also help protect civilians as they return to resume their normal lives.

Al Fadil Mohamed Shaibo from Hassan village, five kilometers from Kuma Garadayat, says his village has one hand pump, but that it had been destroyed. "The women have to walk to the nearest village to collect water. The water rollers which they received have been very helpful and easier to move." UNAMID presented 375 water rollers to the community for use by the more than 400 families who reside there.

Residents of Gurrer village, a nomadic settlement located about 52 kilometres north east of Kutum in North Darfur received 170 water carriers. The community was displaced to Kabkabiya in 2003 and some began returning in 2009.

They have been receiving assistance from non-governmental organizations to help them resettle.

Director of the nomadic organization, Hassan Abdul-Aziz Hassan has been working with local authorities, humanitarian agencies and UNAMID to assist the nomads with basic services such as water, health care and education for their communities. Lack of water continues to be the cause of frequent clashes between pastoralists and farmers, he pointed out.

JSR Gambari stated that, "One of our main priorities is to help communities who want to return to their homes continue with their lives and this pilot project is a demonstration of our commitment to seeking durable peace and providing access to water for the people of Darfur."



UNAMID delivers 40,000 litres of water to Tora village in North Darfur

UNAMID Water development in the region

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

Understanding that the scarcity of water is one of the leading causes of conflict in Darfur, UNAMID is assisting Sudanese authorities to plan a number of projects aimed at helping rural and urban communities in the region gain access to this invaluable resource.

Before the conflict erupted more than seven years ago, the majority of inhabitants now living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps relied on agriculture for their livelihood. Tensions between displaced persons and local host communities heightened as the former settled on agricultural land to stay close to relatively safe villages. UNAMID has

been working to reduce the burden the population has to face as a result of the crisis and, since the Mission began its work in Darfur, progress has been made in developing water sources in the region. "The Mission has been incorporating its own resources with those of troop contributing countries and outsourced drilling capabilities in order to develop a planned 192 water sources," said Head of UNAMID's Water and Engineering Section, Emmanuel Mollel.

Recent efforts include helping to organize an international conference on water – a collaboration between the Sudanese Government, UNAMID and the UN

country team – which expects to bring together more than 300 participants and experts on water use and distribution, as well as leading development specialists and donors in Khartoum on 27 and 28 June 2011. This is the first major international effort to build an innovative and sustainable water service system for all communities in Darfur.

To address the scarcity of water for the region's more than 7 million inhabitants, the Mission, along with local authorities and UN agencies on the ground, is also identifying suitable borehole drilling sites for developing new sources and rehabilitating existing local ones

to increase water supply coverage. Furthermore, UNAMID is working with agencies, such as the African Development Bank (ADB), to help with funding for capacity building projects for the local stakeholders. The Mission also assists in distributing water to displaced populations in Zam Zam and Shangil Tobaya in North Darfur, and Khor Abeche in the south. Earlier this year, UNAMID troops in Shangil Tobaya installed a high-capacity water pump to assist the thousands of internally displaced persons who set up camp outside the UNAMID team site following unrest in the area.

The Mission's peacekeepers are also engaged in civil military cooperation projects in the region, mainly drilling boreholes to alleviate the scarcity of water. So far, in Mellit, Malha and Kutum in North Darfur and in Um Barru and Tine in West Darfur, troops have been providing water to the local community on a daily basis. The Mission plans to drill more boreholes in Malha. Every day, peacekeepers in Saruf Umra travel more than 10 kilometres from their base to reach out to nomadic communities and pump water with the Mission's equipment. Chinese peacekeepers also share the water they have accessed with local communities in South Darfur.

UNAMID's Thai battalion stationed in Mukhjar, West Darfur, has been drilling a well at the site of a nearby elementary school. Once complete, the borehole will have the capacity to provide thousands of liters of potable water each day for the community. This initiative is the latest in a series of projects completed by the Thai peacekeepers, who have been finding innovative ways to facilitate easy access to water points as well as drilling boreholes and supplying water, since their arrival in Darfur in December 2010. The Thai contingent also helped restore a water reservoir in Mukhjar using funds from the Mission's specially designed quick impact projects (QIP). Consequently, women and children in the community no longer have to walk more than six hours each way to find a two-day water supply. These reservoirs, known as hafirs, are designed for storing rain water carried by streams and used for domestic supply and agricultural purposes in rural areas in the Sudan. Plans are afoot to rehabilitate

more such water storage facilities and earth dams.

To conserve water and reduce its abstraction, UNAMID is recycling waste and has procured more than 150 treatment plants to that end. The Mission's 43 wells throughout Darfur supply water to its personnel as well as to local communities surrounding its offices.

Because UNAMID is committed to ensuring that all Darfuris live in peace, working with its local and international partners, it will continue to support the development of additional water points in the region to improve access to safe water and sanitation services for Darfur's conflict affected displaced population and host communities. ■

Thai troops in Mukhjar, West Darfur digging a bore hole for the community

PHOTOS: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN



Water - Darfur's most valuable resource

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

Maria James Atak, originally from South Sudan and now living in Abu Shouk internally displaced persons (IDP) camp, is among several women who regularly queue at the water point.

"The water is good. Nothing is wrong with it. It is sweet. The problem is that it is expensive. The water is healthy. It doesn't make us sick or give us diarrhea. We need assistance. Please provide more wells, because we have only one water source. That's why the water is so expensive."

Forty litres of water cost almost US\$1 – more than 3 Sudanese pounds – in this camp and the price continues to increase.

The scarcity of water is one of the reasons for the conflict in Darfur. In this region, the rainy season lasts just two or three months and, for the remainder of the year, Darfuris have to survive with little or no water resources. While a Western citizen uses a reported 400 litres of water each day, an entire family in Darfur must manage with less than 150 litres.

According to a report dating back to 1999 and sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the scarcity of water over the next 25 years will possibly be the

leading reason for major conflicts in Africa, not oil.

UNAMID faces this issue as it implements its mandate. While facilitating peace and development and promoting new ideas to improve the daily life of Darfuris, UNAMID peacekeepers have been undertaking water projects in a number of communities and providing this resource in times of emergency and in places where its wells are based.

In Abu Shouk, the more than 84,000 people living there all collect from the same water point, which they fetch by donkey or on foot. Each family collects water twice per week and, on mornings, women and children can spend hours in a queue.

"Worse still, we don't have enough fuel to run the pump," Maria explains. "So water has got expensive. The well is crowded. My children go to collect water from the well and they spend half an hour doing so. The water lasts for three or four days. When it is finished, we go back to the well. We carry the water on our heads because we don't have a donkey or a wheelbarrow. We use the water for the bathroom, to wash our faces and feet, clothes and dishes."

Abu Shouk camp, north Darfur: 84.000 people collect water every day from the only water point in the area. Each family has the right to collect water twice per week. In the morning, mothers and children spend hours on the queue and after filling their receptacles, take them to their homes (some kilometers away) usually by donkeys or on foot.



Moringa – a grassroots approach to water purification

BY GUIOMAR PAU



A Moringa tree at the National Forest Corporation nursery in El Fasher

Practical Action, in collaboration with local community based organizations, distributes seedlings of diverse trees to 13 communities in North Darfur. This initiative joins collective efforts to promote the importance of replanting to help in the greening of the environment.

Awadalla is very interested in spreading the multiple benefits of Moringa and researching its possible use for water purification in Darfur. Its leaves are an excellent source of vitamins, minerals and protein. In them, you find the benefits of many fruits and vegetables, as well as the nutrients needed for a healthy diet. They are also helpful in controlling diabetes and high blood pressure. In many countries, Moringa leaves are recommended in the fight against malnutrition because it contains amino acids, which are particularly adequate for infant nourishment.

Moreover, most important for Darfuris, Moringa seeds are a proven source for water purification. If the seeds are ground

into powder and mixed with a little water until it becomes a paste, then added to dirty water, after two hours the water will be potable.

Dr. Mohamed Suliman Adam is passionate about this tree. A water engineer from Nyala, South Darfur, he learnt about Moringa two years ago and thought it would be a great solution for Darfur "because we have suffered from many years of drought and starvation". He has started a plantation in Nyala. "Its tiny leaves have the potential to save the lives of millions of people on our planet and in my community," he remarks. Mohamed is also part of a group of experts who are working on the promotion of Moringa in Khartoum.

Experts attending the Darfur water conference being held in Khartoum on 27 and 28 June may wish to tap into the possibilities of the fast growing Moringa tree and consider its benefits in addressing access to pure water for Darfuris.

Not only can the leaves and pods of the Moringa tree be eaten, but its seeds have been known to be used to purify water.

Even if the tree is not native to the Sudan – it's originally from India -- it is well suited to the Sudanese terrain and climate. Known in Arabic as "rawag", it could go a long way especially in addressing the scarcity of and alleviating access to pure water sources in Darfur.

The international non-governmental organization, Practical Action, is presently cultivating Moringa trees in 15 nurseries in North Darfur. Since 2008, they have planted 5,000 seedlings and its capacity for rapid growth makes it possible for sprouts to be ready for transplanting in only a month.

Awadalla Hamid Mohamed of Practical Action recommends cultivating the seed in June, when the rainy season starts in the region. "It is highly resistant to the drought and can survive without water for an entire year after the rains," he explains.

Moringa seeds are extracted from dry pods

PHOTOS: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN



Local talents embrace Darfur's legacy - Profile of a cultural group

BY ALA MAYYAH



Performers from the Council for development through cultural reality

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

Twelve years ago, a group of 10 friends got together in a public park every week to share concerns about their communities in Darfur. They were poets, musicians and fine artists, and had a common interest in maintaining Darfur's heritage and contributing to the development of the region.

On 31 December 1999, they established a centre calling it "The council for development through cultural reality". As years went by and the conflict took its toll on the region, these friends grew more committed to their cause and their numbers grew. Today, the group comprises 250 members who work in the centre voluntarily, giving of their best skills and efforts to maintain and promulgate the heritage of Darfur.

Located near El Naga arena in El-Fasher, North Darfur, it is considered a nest for Darfuri talent and, moreover, a home where care and encouragement bring together this large family regardless of tribal origin or religion.

Evenings of poetry, art exhibitions, theatre shows, musical concerts, are all performed regularly in the council. "We try our best to carry on, produce cultural shows, and arrange art and literary activities in the evenings," says the centre's Secretary

General, Qasim Abdulla. "If the electricity is off, we gather in the candlelight."

Because of their reputation in the region, UNAMID collaborated with the council to produce two audio-visual documentaries on Darfur's heritage to be shown as part of awareness raising exercises in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and to university students and other youth, especially those who were disconnected from their hometowns and villages, or displaced due to the conflict and are no longer exposed to traditional rules, regulations and practices.

One of the films -- Al Judiayah -- portrays actual cases of arbitration, interviewing people as well as members of the panel who decide on such cases impartially. The Al Judiayah process is common between Darfuris who wish to solve their problems internally.

The second film, called "Al hawakeer", is about land plots that were granted to several families as gifts during the era of the Sultans, from 1640 until the fall of Ali Dinar in 1916. The film depicts a ten-acre farm that was given to a Darfuri family by the Sultan Terab in 1740, which the family still owns today. Many families who are owners of such landholdings are interviewed in the documentary. Also,

one of the original documents, almost 120 years old, that was issued by a sultan granting a piece of land to a family is shown in the film.

The entire production process was completed in a Sudanese studio in Khartoum; one month for each film. Currently, final touches on English subtitles are underway before their release. UNAMID plans to distribute them to local TV channels. After six months, all rights for the films will be granted to the council.

"We chose the subject of land possession in Darfur as it is one of the critical issues in the peace process. And we are pleased to have the chance to produce these documentaries, even if they did not bring a profit. We want to tell our people about the importance of solving their problems peacefully and also to show the external audience, especially those from other countries, the Sudanese-Darfuri culture in solving their civil issues internally," Qasim says.

The centre also produced two albums in 2007 to promote peaceful co-existence. The first album consists of songs, while the second one is an audio recording of several old Darfuri sayings relevant to peace.

Not only does the centre provide an outlet for artists committed to peace in Darfur, it also devotes special attention to female talent. "We are well supported here. Ayda Ahmed Abdul Qhader [a well-known Darfuri poet] participated in many poetry evenings, which were organized by the management of the centre at no charge," says Awatif Ahmed, a practicing journalist. "As for me, I represented the group in Cairo in 2008, during the Darfur festival for literature as well as in Holland in 2009, where we promoted and distributed our albums on peace."

The group has built a name that has gained trust and respect, while its members continue to make ambitious ideas become a reality by keeping their doors wide open to all Darfuris. "We manage to cover the costs of our weekly activities and exhibitions from monthly subscriptions. We haven't received any financial support from outside, but with our friends, the members and their love of Darfur, the centre will stay open," Qasim says hopefully.



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UNAMID Communications and Public Information Division

Phone: +249 92 244 7705 or 3415

Email: unamid-publicinformation@un.org

Website: <http://unamid.unmissions.org>



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