

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

MAY 2012

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Working Together for Peace in Darfur

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AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
MISSION IN DARFUR
(UNAMID)

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APRIL AT A GLANCE



APRIL 1 More than 600 students from El Fasher University in North Darfur celebrate their graduation with the signing of a Pledge for Peace in a ceremony organized jointly by the institution and UNAMID.

APRIL 2 The first workshop on the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, involving the Darfuri community residing in Khartoum, is organized by civil society leaders and UNAMID, in coordination with the Darfur Regional Authority. Nearly 200 Darfuri participants attend the event.

APRIL 4 On the occasion of the International Day of Mine Awareness, UNAMID joins the “Lend Your Leg” campaign with a simple gesture of rolling up a pant leg to draw attention to the damage landmines still cause and to demonstrate solidarity with all survivors of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

APRIL 7 UNAMID Peacekeepers and the Darfur community in El Fasher pay tribute to the victims of Rwanda’s genocide that left an estimated 800,000 people dead in 1994. The tribute, tagged “Learning from Our History to Build a Bright Future,” was part of the 18th commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus, who were murdered in Rwanda, mostly by machete.

APRIL 10 The newly appointed Chairperson for the National Commission for Human Rights, Ms. Amal Hassan Babiker Altinay, arrives in El Fasher, North Darfur, as part of a five-day visit to the region. The purpose of the trip is to meet people who have been affected by the conflict and to raise awareness of the protection of human rights under the country’s laws.

APRIL 11 Nomadic groups from across Darfur call for a more coordinated and systematic approach to international assistance to ensure that all communities can benefit from the aid. The proposal comes during a forum in El Fasher, North Darfur, organized by the international nongovernmental organization Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. While the Centre has been organizing several workshops for Darfur’s nomadic communities, the event is the first to gather groups from around the region. UN agencies and UNAMID, which highlighted their support of Darfur communities during the forum, pledged to ensure that the necessary assistance reaches all Darfuris.

APRIL 12 Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, UNAMID Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator ad interim, briefs the press in Khartoum on the latest security, political and humanitarian development in Darfur.



APRIL 19 UNAMID inaugurates 10 classrooms in three schools at the Abu Shouk internally displaced persons camp near El Fasher, North Darfur. The schools were built by Rwandese peacekeepers as part of the Mission’s quick-impact projects.

APRIL 17 JSR Gambari expresses concern over developments in southern Darfur, following attacks by armed movements on three towns. “In the climate of ongoing tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, I am deeply concerned that armed movements are seeking to destabilize Darfur,” he says. “Such actions could undermine the precious peace which has been advancing in Darfur since the signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.”

APRIL 20 Unidentified gunmen attack a UNAMID formed police unit (FPU) patrol from Togo, injuring two FPU officers. The team of 32 officers had been patrolling in the Sisi IDP camp and were returning to their base camp in Mourne, West Darfur, about 70 kilometres southeast of El Geneina. After the arrival of a rescue team, the combined units started to move back to the base at Mourne and were ambushed again by gunmen, who shot and injured two additional FPU officers. On 22 April one of the four FPU members dies from his injuries in UNAMID hospital in EL Geneina, West Darfur.

APRIL 22 Nigerian Minister of Defence, Dr. Bello Mohammed, says Nigeria will soon upgrade its military-owned equipment in line with UN standards and explore ways to increase its support to UNAMID. Dr. Mohammed led a delegation to El Fasher, North Darfur, to review Nigeria’s operations in the Mission and to map out new strategies to help contribute to peace and security in Darfur. “Nigeria has committed a lot of efforts and men to UNAMID because we feel this is an African situation and we have a responsibility to contribute to resolve it,” the Minister says.

APRIL 24 In his 26 April briefing to the UN Security Council, Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, outlines developments in Darfur and proposes changes for UNAMID in the coming year. He calls on signatory parties to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur to implement their commitments to it.

AU, UN WORK TOGETHER FOR PEACE IN DARFUR

Different organizations have different approaches to any partnership; the question in the AU-UN partnership has been how to manage those differences most effectively.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA



PHOTOS BY ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

In recent years, the African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) have been working toward developing a durable partnership designed to facilitate peace, security and stability in Darfur. While detractors in the media have been quick to call attention to aspects of the AU-UN partnership in Darfur that have been less than successful, others have pointed to the hybrid mission as the most viable paradigm for addressing the challenges associated with modern-day peacekeeping operations in Africa.

It all started in March 2005 when former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented his “In Larger Freedom” report to the UN General Assembly. The report called on donors to devise a 10-year plan with the AU, which, at that time, was developing a standby force for peacekeeping operations. In April 2008, building on Mr. Annan’s plan, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on peace and security in Africa.

Nine months later, an AU-UN panel, led by former Italian Prime Minister and

former European Commission President Romano Prodi, submitted a report suggesting ways to enhance cooperation between the two organizations. The report proposed developing the strategic relationship between UN and AU, in particular between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council; having the UN provide resources to AU peacekeeping; funding UN-authorized AU missions for six months before the UN takes over such missions; and establishing a trust fund to finance such missions.

In September 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Chairperson of the African Union Commission Jean Ping launched the UN-AU Joint Task Force on Peace and Security to enhance the relationship between the two organizations. The task force led to the creation of the UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), an agency established to strengthen the ties between the organizations.

In the Security Council meeting held in January 2012, the 15-member body committed to taking steps to enhance

the relationship between the UN and regional organizations, especially the AU. The Council adopted resolution 2033 (2012), reiterating the importance of establishing a more effective relationship between it and the AU’s Peace and Security Council.

The relationships the UN has fostered in Africa—which include cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community—have focused on enforcing peace or mediating conflict, as in the case of the UN’s support to the AU Mission in Somalia. Arguably, the most well-known partnership between the two organizations is UNAMID, the AU-UN Mission in Darfur, which was created in July 2007 with the handing over to the UN of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) through an agreement with the AU.

Forming the UNAMID partnership was no small undertaking, particularly with challenges stemming from differences in approaches to peacekeeping. Political scientists, such as Dr. Solomon Dersso, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, have characterized the relationship between the AU and UN as more ad hoc than systematic, a trait that is typical of peacekeeping missions in the start-up phase.

While some might consider certain aspects of the AU-UN partnership still to be ad hoc, Joachim A. Koops, a Senior Associate Researcher at the Institute for European Studies (IES), points to progress in the AU-UN relationship in a paper titled “Peace Operations Partnership.” But in the paper he also points to the challenges that remain, especially in terms of political issues and doctrine. “Doctrinal issues include questions about whether it is useful or not to intervene even if there is no peace to keep, but instead a peace to be enforced,” he writes.

It’s common for different organizations to have different approaches to any partnership; the question in the AU-UN partnership has been how to manage those differences most effectively. To gain insight into how the AU and UN have managed those differences in

“The primary objectives of both the UN and AU in promoting peace, development, rule of law and democracy constitute the main strength and the glue that bind them together in this partnership.”

—Lt. Gen. Patrick Nyamvumba

UNAMID, *Voices of Darfur* spoke with several senior UNAMID officials.

Lt. Gen. Patrick Nyamvumba, UNAMID’s Force Commander, points out that the AU and UN have managed their differences through closely aligned objectives. “The primary objectives of both the UN and AU in promoting peace, development, rule of law and democracy constitute the main strength and the glue that bind them together in this partnership,” he says, noting that the organizations have established good coordination on issues related to the development of the Mission and on policy and strategic matters as they affect peace support operations.

“From an operations point of view, a great deal has been recovered in Darfur over the last four years since the hybrid operation was established,” he says, citing the number of displaced persons a few years ago versus the current figures released by the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “There seems to be a drop from the initial figures of more than two million,” he explains. “It means there is a lot happening; people are returning home or they have settled where they are.”

Lt. Gen. Nyamvumba also points out that in terms of the appointment of senior officials and troop selection, there is a high level of coordination because of the principles to which both the AU and the UN are committed. “There are always consultations between the two organizations,” he says, explaining that UNAMID has not encountered any insurmountable challenges in the

relationship, largely because the AU has a major role to play as it relates with the troop-contributing countries (TCCs).

Still, he notes there is room for improvement in communications with TCCs. “I think in terms of regular briefings to the TCCs, the AU could do better than we are doing at the moment,” he says.

The Force Commander also points to the tripartite mechanism as a good example of the strong partnership between the AU and UN. This mechanism effectively brings together the African Union, the United Nations and the Government of Sudan to meet on a quarterly basis. “We have observed in these meetings that both organizations tend to have a common position with regard to issues that affect the operation of the Mission,” says the Force Commander.

Like UNAMID’s Force Commander, Abubakar Rufai Ahmed, Officer-in-Charge of UNAMID Political Affairs, points to the values shared between the organizations as essential to the partnership. “Both the AU and UN remain committed to peace, development, rule of law and democracy in the world and in Africa,” he says, noting that the two organizations have encountered challenges at the strategic level not because there are significant divisions but because their perspectives differ on certain aspects of peacekeeping.

While UN peacekeeping has worked with organizations in Africa since the 1960s, since the establishment of the United Nations Liaison Office, coordination with organizations in the region has developed around certain specific initiatives. The AU, for its part, has partnered with the UN on several fronts, but mostly through UN agencies. UNAMID represents the first collaborative effort between the two organizations in peacekeeping.

Despite initial challenges, the AU-UN partnership is facilitating a strategy that goes well beyond military and police protection operations and focuses on assistance designed to strengthen the



AU Chairperson Jean Ping visits UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur, 6 June 2011.

PHOTO BY JALLOW KEBBA / UNAMID

community. For example, in a broad variety of quick-impact projects (QIPs), peacekeepers have sought to enhance the living conditions of Darfuris. Even the UNAMID military component has gotten involved in the QIPs work.

“The essence of our involvement in QIPs is that our troops have been conducting security patrols on a daily basis, during which we have interacted with the local communities and have learned about their problems and needs,” says Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Samura, Chief of Civilian-Military Coordination (J9 CIMIC). Lt.-Col. Samura explains that the military’s focus on QIPs not only enhances the relationship with the local communities but also fosters confidence in the peacekeepers. He notes that, so far, the military component has completed

a total of 25 QIPs projects in Darfur.

It is not unusual for IDPs to come out in droves to welcome visiting peacekeepers. Children and elderly alike typically extend a friendly hand or give the peacekeepers a thumbs-up, now a common feature in Darfur. Across Darfur, UNAMID is working to create functioning and lasting relationships through similar projects. As a result of these recovery-and-development activities, security has improved in most



African Union Chairperson Jean Ping and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

PHOTO BY RICK BAJORNAS

of Darfur, and the frequency of inter-tribal fighting is now at a minimum.

It is for these and other reasons that Ambassador Mahmoud Kane, Head of the AU Liaison Office in Sudan, calls UNAMID “a big achievement” and says the collaboration with the AU represents the right direction for the UN. “It is now the aspiration of many that this collaboration can be replicated in other conflict areas of the continent and equally in other regions of the world as per the UN Charter,” he says.

Ambassador Kane also says that there are many lessons to be learned from this partnership, despite what he calls “the teething challenges,” the differences in approaches to peacekeeping that have, from time to time, caused some friction. “The teething challenges notwithstanding, as can be expected, UNAMID has so far been a successful venture,” he says, explaining that the regular consultations between the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, along with the tripartite meetings, have contributed to the Mission’s success.

Whether the partnership will serve as a model for future peacekeeping operations in Africa remains to be seen. What’s certain is that, at least for the foreseeable future, the AU and UN are committed to continuing to partner through UNAMID to focus on protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian assistance and implementing projects designed to have a lasting impact on the lives of Darfuris. ■

“It is now the aspiration of many that this collaboration can be replicated in other conflict areas of the continent and equally in other regions of the world.”

—Ambassador Mahmoud Kane



Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari in Addis Ababa briefing the AU Peace and Security Council on UNAMID activities, 28 November 2011.

UNAMID DJSR MOHAMED B. YONIS ON EARLY RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

DJSR talks about the challenges the Mission has faced, and its successes so far, in helping to foster an environment of peace and stability.

BY ABDULLAHI SHUAIBU

In 2009, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and African Union Chairperson Jean Ping appointed Mohamed Yonis, a Somali diplomat, as the Deputy Joint Special Representative for Operations and Management. In his previous role in UNAMID, he served as Director of Mission Support, where he addressed the Mission's operational, administrative and logistical support challenges.

Prior to working for UNAMID, Mr. Yonis served as the Head of the Darfur Planning Team in New York during the Mission's planning stage, and later as the Mission Support Adviser to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

As Mr. Yonis brings to the Mission extensive management and operational experience, particularly in relation to Darfur, he is in a unique position to speak about UNAMID's role in facilitating early recovery and development, one of the Mission's major objectives. In an interview, *Voices of Darfur* talked with Mr. Yonis about the challenges the Mis-

sion has faced, and its successes so far, in helping to foster an environment of peace and stability in which early recovery and development can take place.

VoD: How has UNAMID addressed some of the root causes of the Darfur conflict?

Yonis: There are many root causes of the conflict, but it began with the issue of marginalisation; the people took arms against the Sudanese government. One of the major problems has to do with water resources, so we have ramped up efforts to deal with the problem of water. We recently got support from the African Development Bank (AfDB), which approved US\$4.6 million to help develop capacity and also to rehabilitate some of the boreholes, as well as some of the Haffirs (the embankments for capturing water for domestic use) in parts of the region that required rehabilitation.

We are working with the AfDB to see how we can get a grant of US\$60 million to further address the issue of

water and undertake other water-related projects. As you will recall, during the International Water Conference, more than half a billion U.S. dollars were pledged. The Government of Sudan (GoS) has pledged US\$216 million and has expressed its commitment to pay. So far, we are working hand-in-hand with the Qatari government, which wants to call for a donor conference to help mobilise more resources to resolve the problems confronting Darfurians. Qatar has committed to bringing in US\$2 billion and has committed to trying to assist the Qatari authorities to identify areas of urgent need.

Right now, we are making positive strides from the International Water Conference held in June 2011. GoS has appointed a Minister of Water Resources; we have held a series of meetings with him and other Sudanese officials. We are working hand-in-hand with the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) on water-related issues. We have travelled to Doha, Qatar to have talks on some of the proposals submitted. We have just recently discussed it with the World Bank to see how we can get some grants and trust funds to carry out water projects.

GoS is committed to paying the US\$216 million and is foregoing VAT and other import taxes on water management, development and supply investments, as well as on equipment for projects being undertaken in Darfur. In addition, we have set up a committee to follow up on some of the funds pledged.

On issues relating to the environment, we are working with UN Environment Programme (UNEP). And for land and other problems between the nomads and farmers, we are working with UN-Habitat to address the thorny issues. In addition, we are working closely with the communities and other partners to bring the communities together. Our civil affairs unit is working to engage the



UNAMID South African peacekeepers, based in Kutum, provided 30,000 liters of water for the local population in Forog, North Kutum, North Darfur, to help them build a clinic, 28 March 2012.

PHOTOS BY ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

“We are trying to see how we can mobilise resources to improve the lives of the Darfuris and alleviate their poor living conditions.”

—DJSR Mohamed B. Yonis

people to foster dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

VoD: How is UNAMID assisting early recovery and development in Darfur?

Yonis: As you know, the core mandate of UNAMID is the protection of civilians, but to have peace and stability in Darfur, it is equally important for there to be development projects in the region. Even though UNAMID is facilitating and working hand-in-hand with several organisations and other UN agencies on stabilization programmes, including recovery and development activities, we are enhancing communities’

place. We have established a partnership with UN agencies, the World Bank and AfDB, and we are taking our mandate seriously to ensure effective protection of civilians in the region.

We are trying to see how we can mobilise resources to improve the lives of the Darfuris and alleviate their poor living conditions. We are catalysts and facilitators of developmental projects, using our Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) to implement projects for the people. Recently, Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari approved a new management structure and implementation concept for the QIPs programme in Darfur to have a better impact on the people.

underrepresented populations, environmental protection, education and and water and sanitation.

VoD: How is UNAMID using its resources to stimulate early recovery and development?

Yonis: There is financial crisis world-wide. The UN is concerned about the current financial situation. We in UNAMID are striving to be very prudent and make efforts to use the limited resources at our disposal more effectively and have a positive impact on the workings of the Mission. Therefore, the Mission has been reviewing its available resources to stimulate the recovery and development activities in the region.

We are getting support from Chinese and Ethiopian engineers who are building a lot of boreholes to alleviate the water crisis. Also, some of our troops are doing various projects in their sectors and team sites to assist early recovery and ensure development gets to the people. We are building bridges and roads to complement the ones here, which are either in bad condition or damaged due to our presence and frequent usage. Further to this, we are rehabilitating some airport terminal buildings and runways in the region to make them accessible to aircrafts and useful to passengers.

In addition, the Mission has been providing support to UN agencies, NGOs and line ministries by making available its logistics assets and security escorts for early recovery initiatives and projects in Darfur. For example, UNAMID recently facilitated the air transport of animal vaccines from Khartoum to El Fasher for a Darfur-wide livestock vaccination campaign organised by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Ministry of Animal Resources. In addition, we transported UNICEF personnel and cargo (300 kg of vaccines and vitamins), via air, for a Darfur-wide polio vaccination campaign organized by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health and facilitated the air transport of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) non-food items to Seyhjana and Tawilla/Tabarat in North Darfur.



Children in Abu Shouk camp for internal displaced persons, North Darfur, pose in a classroom sponsored by UNAMID as a quick impact project, 18 April 2012.

self-reliance, exploring durable solutions and fostering the enabling conditions for comprehensive peace.

We are also working to ensure that recovery takes place. We have done a major assessment with the UN Country Team to map out where the projects will take

The new programme is priority-driven, sector-based and focused on thematic priorities.

For 2012, we have identified six priorities, which largely focus on support to early recovery in Darfur. They include health, livelihoods, empowerment of

VoD: How has UNAMID sought out partners and donors to help Darfur in early recovery and development?

Yonis: UNAMID is all over Darfur and very much represented in Darfur, so therefore is in a better position to advise on where intervention and development projects should take place. UNAMID has been working closely with bilateral and multilateral donors and has already developed and submitted a number of project proposals on funding early recovery projects in Darfur.

For example, UNAMID is expecting to receive funding soon for implementation of peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and early recovery projects, which will be financed by grants from the Government of Japan to the African Union Commission in the total amount of nearly US\$3 million. Also, project proposals have been prepared and submitted to the governments of Italy, Canada, Qatar and other traditional and nontraditional donors to fund the Mission's early recovery initiatives in Darfur.

In addition, we have interactions with civilians and know their needs and demands, so that we can have better planning, coordination and implementation of projects for their well-being. We have regular meetings with the UN Country Team and other international organizations and NGOs to better serve the people of Darfur.

VoD: How is the tripartite mechanism facilitating the work of UNAMID?

Yonis: The tripartite is made up of the UN, AU and GoS; it has helped in resolving a lot of issues affecting the smooth operations of the Mission. We are in close contact with the government on the issue of deployment, movement of troops and equipment. It is a forum that has been very useful, and an avenue to interact with the Sudanese government on touching areas to ensure effective discharge of our duties and responsibilities. The level of cooperation is supportive and cordial. We are always engaging them to resolve our differences toward an amicably working relationship.

VoD: UNAMID was established in 2008 in a harsh environment. What has the Mission done to elevate living conditions across Darfur?



A UNAMID-sponsored rotating water pump, designed to draw water by children spinning at play in Abu Shouk internally displaced persons camp, North Darfur, 21 February 2012.

Yonis: The presence of UNAMID has brought peace and security to the people of Darfur. Prior to the coming of the Mission, the situation here was bad, but now the security situation is much better than it used to be, thanks to UNAMID and the support of the UNAMID workforce—military, police and civilian components—as well as the people of Darfur. The UN has really and immensely contributed in human and material resources to improve the situation here.

Also, in the Mission headquarters, sectors, and team sites, we have been

able to provide a better working environment to ensure the wellbeing and welfare of the staff members. People are now comfortable and satisfied with the facilities on the ground, and the UN liberty flights are taking the staff members to Entebbe and Addis Ababa for their rest and recuperation, free of charge. We also have a gymnasium and games facilities, as well as a counselling office for staff members. Overall, the staff members are now happy and the atmosphere is generally conducive for working and socializing. ■



School rehabilitated by Rwandan battalion 23 as part of UNAMID's continuing efforts in early recovery and development, 3 April 2011.

UNAMID South African night patrol in Kutum, 26 March 2012.

PHOTO BY ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN



PEACEKEEPERS BOOST SECURITY WITH NIGHT PATROLS

South African peacekeepers stationed near the IDP camps in Kutum have begun to conduct night patrols.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

In response to attacks against women in and around the Kassab and Fataburno internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, and in the Kutum market in North Darfur, the 380 South African peacekeepers stationed in the area have begun to conduct night patrols.

During the patrols, the UNAMID teams drive through one of the three areas, interacting with the community and the local police. Children typically appear at the sound of the engines, waving and sticking their thumbs up.

“Our country sent us to help bring peace and stability in Darfur,” says Lt. Col. Martin Feni, Team Site Commander, Kutum. “We are committed to executing the work of the African Union and United Nations in ensuring peace in

the region.”

Yasin Mohammed Adam Yusef, one of the Kassab camp residents, says that since the patrols began, the area has experienced fewer criminal incidents at night. Even so, she points out the need to establish greater communication between the IDP community and UNAMID to ensure quick response to incidents.

In one such incident, on 26 March 2012, Mariam Suleiman Idris, a resident of Kassab camp in Kutum, North Darfur said she was beaten by men on her way to collect firewood. The men remain unidentified. Kassab camp is located 15 kilometers east of UNAMID’s Kutum base and is the largest IDP camp in the area with a population of 37,000.

“We have seen the patrols in the night and are very happy because since the patrols began there has been a decrease in the level of criminal activities,” says Umda Yusef Nduma. “We want the patrols to carry on and also request the Mission to set up checkpoints.”

Given the size of the area, it is not possible for the patrols to move through the entire sector every night. Still, Lt. Col. Feni, who served in 2005 as Company Commander during the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), points out that the South African peacekeepers serving under his watch remain vigilant. “Our peacekeepers are committed to ensuring a peaceful and stable environment,” he says.

The Rwandese battalion in Sortony and the Egyptian troops based in Um Kadada, North Darfur also conduct night patrols in their area. More than one dozen night patrols are conducted in South, West and Central Darfur each week. ■

BORDER CONFLICT AND THE THREAT TO CIVILIANS

The ongoing conflict between Sudan and South Sudan has taken on a regional dimension.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA & ABDULLAHI SHUAIBU

On 9 July 2011, the world welcomed the newest state, the Republic of South Sudan, following a referendum in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement to end decades of civil war.

Sudan, which formerly was the largest country in Africa, covering an area of approximately 2,505,816 square kilometers, lost part of its territory to the new nation and about 75 per cent of its oil revenue.

“The peaceful separation of Sudan and South Sudan is a classical case, albeit after several years of war that left behind many unsettled issues (border demarcation and natural resources) that have now come back to haunt their relationship and derail efforts to meaningful cooperation,” said Abubakar Ahmed Rufai, Officer-in-Charge, UNAMID Political Affairs.

“These issues have contributed to a deterioration of relations between the two countries, which is made manifest through fighting along the borders and through the use of proxy armies,” he added.

The African Union-led negotiations mediated by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, with support from the United Nations and the United States, broke down in March 2012. The two parties could not come to an agreement on issues of mutual concern, although as of May 2012, the negotiations have resumed.

Less than a year after the independence of South Sudan, the two neighbors resumed fighting in the oil-rich region of Heglig, which is being contested by the

two countries. The African Union Peace and Security Council adopted a seven-point roadmap demanding that the two countries resume talks and reach a negotiated settlement within three months.

Heglig, a disputed town in South Kordofan, Sudan, is claimed by South Sudan as a part of Warrap. The area was contested during the Sudanese Civil War. In April 2012, the South Sudanese army captured the Heglig oil field from Sudan. Sudan managed to take back the region in South Kordofan after a 10-day occupation by South Sudan’s army. Officials in South Sudan have denied being forced out and insisted that they voluntarily withdrew.

This tussle between the two coun-

JSR Gambari says that UNAMID is closely monitoring the situation and taking measures to protect the civilian population in the region.

tries has taken on a regional dimension, with the building of alliances that include Uganda and Kenya for South Sudan, and Egypt, Chad and some Middle East countries for Sudan. This regional development has created tensions in both countries. According to UNAMID Political Affairs, the evolving situation not only is likely to lead to increased insecurity in Darfur, but also may dampen enthusiasm for the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD).

UNAMID Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator, ad interim, expressed serious concern about

developments in southern Darfur, following the April attacks. “In the climate of ongoing tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, I am deeply concerned that armed movements are seeking to destabilize Darfur,” he said. “Such actions could undermine the precious peace which has been advancing in Darfur since the signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.”

Mr. Rufai points out the situation represents the first real prospect of an international war. “Sudan now considers itself in a state of war,” he says. “Both countries have been involved in unhelpful rhetoric.”

According to UNAMID Political Affairs, the Darfur rebel factions that have

hoped to take advantage of the situation might now have their hopes dampened because the conflict has not sufficiently pulled the attention of the Sudanese Armed Forces away from Darfur.

As for the impact an escalation of the conflict might have on Darfuris, JSR Gambari says that UNAMID is closely monitoring the situation and taking measures to protect the civilian population in the region. “All parties must refrain from violence,” he says. “There is no military solution to this conflict.” ■





Thai peacekeepers in Mukjar, Central Darfur State, teaching methods for making microorganisms using local materials.

A NEW AGRICULTURAL THEORY COMES TO DARFUR

Thai peacekeepers are sharing new, comprehensive strategies for agricultural development with Darfuri farmers.

BY EMADELDIN ALI RIJAL

People in Darfur live by cultivating. However, the traditional farming methods on which they have relied are susceptible to water shortages and other vicissitudes of the region's weather system. According to Mustafa Abdullah, an agriculturist at the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Central Darfur State, these traditional practices not only have contributed to fears about food security but also have created a great burden on agricultural workers and the communities they serve.

In Mukjar, Central Darfur, Thai peacekeepers have been conducting training on new strategies for agricultural development. Since they were first deployed in December 2010 as part



More than 300 farmers in and around Mukjar have taken part in several training sessions conducted by the Thai Task Force, which has been providing information about agricultural methods that were developed in Thailand.

enable people to lead a sustainable life, which promotes self-sufficiency and helps them have enough food,” says Khanchit Wichaworn, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Thai peacekeeping Task Force and a well-versed agriculturalist.

More than 300 farmers in and around Mukjar have taken part in several training sessions conducted by the Thai battalion. The peacekeepers have been demonstrating their techniques to Darfuri farmers with a plot of land that they have developed as an experimental field for education. Lt. Col. Wichaworn says that after practice on the field, the participants in the training sessions have been adopting and circulating these new techniques with the hope of gaining better results.

“This theory can enhance the knowledge we have about cultivation,” says Mohammed Zhakaria Mohammed, a farmer from Kubum, approximately 40 kilometers south of Mukjar. He says he plans to extend the idea to the members of his community.

The new theory is an approach to agriculture that is comprehensive in its focus and is designed to address many aspects of community life. For example, the theory requires establishing a pond on part of the available land so that sufficient water will be available, year round, for agricultural operations.

The theory addresses many other community and agricultural factors, in-

cluding climate variables so that the farming methods can be adjusted according to environmental conditions of each area. The theory encourages multiple cropping—for example, the cultivation of millet as the primary crop and fruits, vegetables and herbs as secondary crops—to help reduce household expenditures and create supplementary income for each farming family.

Mohammed Ahmed Fadul Al-Moula, a teacher and farmer in Mukjar, has applied the theory on his farm and says it is “amazing.” He explains that the systematic cultivation techniques he learned in the training sessions are contributing to the growth of his vegetables and grains.

This new theory was developed in 1993 by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand. Reportedly, Thailand saw a great deal of agriculture-related economic growth following the implementation of this theory in the country.

In addition to doing training in agricultural techniques, the Thai peacekeepers have trained local communities in techniques for making mud bricks and building stronger shelters. Lt. Col. Wichaworn says the architecture training is designed to help residents build safer shelters, even though they are built predominantly of straw, bamboo and millet stems. ■

of UNAMID, the Thai peacekeepers have furnished the Darfuri community with information about what has come to be known as the “New Theory” of agriculture.

This theory, developed in Thailand, includes comprehensive guidelines for efficiently managing land and water resources to create optimum benefits for communities of different sizes. In addition to offering ways to use microorganisms derived from existing materials as natural fertilizers instead of using chemicals, the theory outlines a complete production system designed to help farmers, and their local communities, become more self-reliant.

“We have initiated this project to

On 4 May 2012, a UNAMID-sponsored horse race in Nyala, South Darfur, was held to promote peaceful coexistence among the many communities of the region.



HORSES DRAW PEOPLE TOGETHER IN DARFUR

Horse racing, a passion in Darfur, brings people together from various tribes and communities.

BY SUSAN MANUEL

In the parched and often conflict-plagued region of South Darfur, horse racing around a hot, sandy track remains a passion that brings people together from various tribes and communities. The love of horses in Darfur is evident not only in the crowds who gather for a weekly race in Nyala or El Fasher, but also in the shining coats and spirited dancing of the animals.

“All communities and tribes enjoy it; 10, 20, 30 different tribes may come for a race on Friday in Nyala,” says Omar Musa, secretary of the South Darfur Equestrian Union.

Horse breeding and racing have long been endemic to Darfuri culture. “Equestrian races are perceived as being related to environment and history,” wrote Mohamed Al-Haj in a *Sudan Vision* story earlier this year.

During the Sultanate of Darfur (1595-1916), the Fur were known for their cavalry. While armed militias have used horses to attack villages in Darfur, today horses are enjoyed more for sport, sometimes with a little illicit gambling on the side.

“They don’t use horses for war anymore,” says Mr. Musa. “They prefer the motorcycle and SUV for that.”

The sport of horse racing, in its current form, began to grow after British colonizers imported thoroughbreds as gifts to umdas and sheiks, who crossbred them with Arab steeds. While the practice can be found across Darfur, horse breeding and racing are most popular in South Darfur, where 250,000 horses reside and where, according to *Sudan Vision*’s Mr. Al-Haj, the Bani Halba and various other Reizegat tribes are best known as horse breeders.

Even the cart horses in Darfur, straining to pull rusty barrels of water and loads of firewood, bear a handsome resemblance to their British or Arabian forebears. They are the rejects of a careful breeding process that has produced horses that draw buyers from as far away as Nigeria. The prices for the prized animals suited to polo or racing can reach hundreds of thousands of Sudanese pounds.

Still, conflict brewing in and around Sudan may discourage prospective buyers. One military commander serving with UNAMID called off his plans to purchase a polo pony and truck it to Nigeria. While regional conflict may be slowing the international trade, the prized animals are still traded in local markets. Darfur horses have been known to walk 500 kilometres to be sold at the Omdur-

man cattle market near Khartoum.

Darfur horses, known locally as “barbs,” are strong and able to endure hot, dry climates. One Nyala breeder last year imported four thoroughbreds from Miami, Florida, in the United States. They are acclimating to the climate in an air-conditioned barn and mating with local horses to produce tomorrow’s competitors for African tracks.

Mohammed Saleh Mustafa, a retired teacher who is deputy head of the North Darfur Horse Racing Union, is eager to display a prized horse stabled in El Fasher and brought from Chile by El Sadiq Sidig Wada, a Darfur businessman, who gave it to the North Darfur Horse Racing Union to improve the local lineage.

It’s not uncommon for the wealthy to contribute to maintaining the Darfur horse breed, as a sign of good community relations. The Wali of North Darfur was said to have been so excited with the June 2011 derby that he gave a car to the owner of the winning horse, which was immediately sold for a large sum to a Khartoum buyer.

Races are from four to 12 furlongs. An old English term still used in horse racing globally, one furlong is equivalent to 200 metres. The racing season is generally from November to July, normally on Fridays.

“Before the conflict, horse racing was everywhere and every week,” says Mr. Mustafa. “Now it only goes on in the capital towns.”

Many of the people who owned horses were forced to sell them during the conflict to survive. These days, many people are too busy or too poor to devote the time, skill and knowledge to maintaining race horses. “I am poor; I have no horse but I have lots of experience,” he says. “I grew up with horses in my family and it was a dream to get involved with horses.”

While Darfur’s Arabs tend to own horses more than other groups do, ownership varies from region to region. “All tribes in El Fasher engage in horse racing in some way,” says Mr. Mustafa. “There is no discrimination—Arabs, Fur, Zaghawa, any people can take part.”

The leaders of the unions are from



The Nyala Derby, rebranded on 4 May 2012 as a “race to peace,” is the second biggest racing event in Sudan, attracting prize horses, their owners and jockeys.

different tribes, he explains, suggesting that the best thing to keep people together may be horse racing. “If you go to a race, you know how many tribes are here, all laughing and enjoying it,” he says. “No one talks about politics or government, only horses; it is a social link between people.”

At a horse race organized by UNAMID in Nyala in early May, the Wali (Governor) of South Darfur State, Hammad Ismail Hammad, hailed the peacekeepers as well as the Equestrian Union for their role in “consolidating

the social fabric.”

In addition to the horse race, a camel race was held at the event. “Camel-racing builds bridges,” says Ali Halid, the Commissioner of Camel Racing.



Hakkamat singers, women clad in brightly colored thobes and decorated with symbolic armor, traditionally urge men into war. But at the Nyala horse race, they sang to encourage the horses and riders toward victory and to motivate the crowd to cultivate peace and reconciliation through the love of horse racing. ■



More than 2,000 spectators, along with UNAMID officials, troops and police attended the Nyala event on 4 May 2012.



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