

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

NOVEMBER 2011

WOMEN COUNT FOR PEACE

UNAMID'S HUMANITARIAN
OPERATIONS -- SERVING
ALL DARFURIS



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
MISSION IN DARFUR
(UNAMID)

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VOICES of Darfur

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OCTOBER AT A GLANCE

OCTOBER
05

On 25 October 2011, the Sudan Liberation Army's Historical Leadership, a breakaway group from the armed movement SLA/Abdel Wahid, submits an action plan to the United Nations, through UNAMID Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari, committing to end recruitment and use of child soldiers. The group will present a list to the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission for registration and reintegration of the children concerned and agrees to conduct similar assessments in West and North Darfur to identify other child soldiers.



OCTOBER
10

At approximately 8.15 p.m., an African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) on a regular nightly patrol comes under attack by armed assailants in Zam Zam internally displaced persons camp some 10 kilometres south of El Fasher in North Darfur. Three peacekeepers -- two soldiers and one police advisor -- are killed, and five -- four Rwandese soldiers and one Gambian Police Adviser -- are injured. One assailant is also killed.

OCTOBER
06

UNAMID peacekeepers stationed in Nertiti, West Darfur, intensify patrols around Arkis and Habad East internally displaced persons camps after receiving information about harassment of the local population by unidentified armed personnel. Reportedly, there are casualties among civilians there and freedom of movement has been severely restricted.



OCTOBER
07

Canada's help could be critical in assisting the development of a "new roadmap" for the Darfur peace process, the head of the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur, Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari, says in talks with senior Canadian Government officials during a three-day visit to Ottawa. Alluding to the role of the country in the Darfur peace process, he later tells Margaret Biggs, President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that "Canada has played an important and substantial role in the development of a comprehensive peace in Darfur. We now have a unique opportunity for a new beginning, an enduring peace and a way forward towards a better future for all Darfuris."

OCTOBER
19

Fourteen special envoys from countries around the world, the European Union and African Union meet with UNAMID JSR and interim Joint Chief Mediator, Ibrahim Gambari, in a fourth retreat in El Geneina, West Darfur. The envoys agree to call on the movements who have not signed on to the Doha peace deal on Darfur to cease military hostilities and join the peace process now without preconditions. They also note the need to take targetted measures against those who continue to undermine the peace process. Further, they welcome the signing on 14 July of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) between the Government of the Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) as an important step in advancing peace in Darfur. They also express concern about the continuing insecurity in some parts of Darfur and call on the Sudanese Government to curb criminality and bring

perpetrators to justice. In that light, the envoys strongly condemn the 10 October attack against UNAMID patrol teams near Zam Zam IDP camp in North Darfur.

OCTOBER
20

UNAMID meets with youth in Nyala, South Darfur, to get their views on the dissemination of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), as well as to explore ways to form an independent forum that will represent all youth entities so they can have a voice in planning activities and programmes for their communities. Participants request the Mission to support their development plans and call for more capacity-building programmes to enhance their skills to allow them to effectively contribute to their communities.

OCTOBER
21

UNAMID JSR Ibrahim Gambari uses the opportunity of the Africa Human Rights Day to "extend the Mission's continued commitment to advancing human rights in Darfur and to strengthen its cooperation with the Government of Sudan and the people of Darfur to implement its human rights mandate." Twenty-five years ago on this day, the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.



OCTOBER
24

UNAMID and the UN family in Darfur celebrate UN Day on this sixty-sixth anniversary of the Organization. Government and civil society partners in all three Darfur states join in the celebration. Famous Sudanese singer, Omer Ihsas, in collaboration with UNAMID releases a song dedicated to peace in Darfur, New Era, to commemorate the event.

OCTOBER
09

A UNAMID Sudanese staff member working in El Fasher, North Darfur, who was detained on 3 September 2011 by the Sudanese Security Services, is released without charges against him.

Nilar Kyi - Holding the key to transform inspiration into action

BY NATALIA HERRERA ESLAVA

On 12 January 2010, the world was jolted by the news about Haiti's earthquake, one of the strongest at 7.0 magnitude since the year 1770. Most of us were alerted and followed the developments, hoping for the best for the Haitians. Nilar Kyi, a UN volunteer working as an Information Technology assistant for the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) did not hesitate to approach colleagues who were in charge of raising funds to send to Haiti. She donated US\$1,000 to bring relief to the devastated Caribbean island. In fact, since her deployment to Darfur in June 2008, Nilar has been saving \$50 every month and was waiting for the opportunity to spend it on the right cause. Haiti was just about right. And she keeps on saving.

Born in Myanmar (also known as Burma), Nilar came to Darfur encouraged by her beliefs -- to do good to all, to avoid what is bad and to purify herself. Being a Buddhist, she believes in volunteerism, not as an experience, but as a core human value. Therefore, to have the opportunity to come to the Sudan and help to bring peace and development to Darfuris offering all her knowledge on Information Technology sounded like a fair next step after being a teacher for almost 30 years in Myanmar. With this background, Nilar joined UNAMID, the largest peacekeeping operation as of today, and started a journey that not only changed her life but also the lives of 15 children in Myanmar this far. And this is how the story of "Lucky Bees" evolved from inspiration into action.

In February 1997, the Burmese Government allowed a third party trust to acquire interim ownership of the Sabetaung-Kyisintaung Copper Mine, located in central Myanmar. When the Ministry of Mines of the Union of Myanmar reduced the strength of employees to transfer to the joint venture organization, this action affected nearly 400 families. Their incomes drastically decreased when they were asked to leave their jobs or to take early retirement. The communities living on the outskirts of the mine were soon facing a financial crisis which affected the children the most. Forced



Nilar Kyi

to keep expenses to the minimum, some families stopped sending their children to school.

On becoming aware of these difficulties and believing that education is a key to

bringing social change in Myanmar, Nilar took action. She chose eight children from the Mine School in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, and paid their tuition and other school expenses for the 2009 to 2010 academic year out of her Volunteer

Living Allowance (VLA). In order to do the deed properly, she created a small foundation called "Lucky Bees" with a vision to "reward the hard working children in school –who are like bees– and make them lucky enough to be able to shape their future the best way possible," Nilar explained.

At the same time, being very much committed to her UN volunteer assignment, which involves assisting the Server Management Unit and Training Unit, in UNAMID Communications and Information Technology Section Administration, in several ways, Nilar had to implement her dream to help the Mine Town community remotely. She asked one of her ex-colleagues back home for help.

"The first year, we had resources to help eight kids who had to leave school even though they showed an outstanding performance in all subjects. However, as I am currently serving in Darfur, I had to ask a friend to choose the beneficiaries on my behalf. The criteria: only select those who needed the most help and were truly excellent at school. I did not meet any of the eight students until two years later, in April 2011, when there were already eleven of them. My friend did a great job and the results have been amazing for me and for the children. Some of them already graduated and are planning to go to University, also with our assistance".

"I love children. Since I was 17 years old I have been a teacher. In the course of my life I have realized that if we educate our children to have good thoughts, they will be good people. This creates a positive environment anywhere".

Recalling her first meeting with her beneficiaries, Nilar was filled with emotion. She did not realize it, but she held her hands together, and pressed her chest as she explained, "When I arrived in Mine Town on 6th April 2011, I was picked up by a motorcycle that the community rented to bring me to their place. There, they offered me a soft drink and some cakes. Then, one of the little girls gave me a scarf that she was making herself. The

scarf was not finished yet but she wanted me to have it. I gave them the reason for the foundation. It is because I know one person cannot change the whole world, but each one of us can change what is around -- the environment around us. And you are evidence, I told them". After this, the children promised Nilar that once they grow up they will try to change at least one life for the better.

"Lucky Bees" was not planned to be a temporary solution. In 2010, Nilar took in another three students and by the beginning of 2011, she was already supporting 15 children.

As Nilar viewed volunteering as a service, not as a job, she knew that her foundation could not rest only on her allowance. Hence, in January 2011, she established a company to provide financial support to the foundation. This company also plans to employ some of the beneficiaries who already graduated, thereby, helping to ensure that these fresh graduates could have their first work experiences soon after graduation.

"At first what I did was just to give the money from my own VLA to support the children. Later on, I realized that I need to find a way to make sure that the foundation will continue even if I don't have the means to support it in the future. So, we started making some blouses, shirts and bags. We started with 15 sewing machines and industrial irons. There are now 17 employees, with one supervisor, a manager and a consultant. The purpose of the factory is to support the beneficiaries of "Lucky Bees". I don't want the foundation to depend only on me or my work status. I also do not want our mission to end when the children finish school. I have also made the commitment to help them to go to public university - those who want and are accepted. So this is why I started the business".

Today, Nilar's garment company is not yet profitable. Nevertheless, she remains optimistic that within a year this enterprise will sustain itself.

On top of her current efforts to ensure

that fewer children from the Mine Town drop out of school, Nilar has started a project to be developed within the 2011-2012 timeframe. She is aiming to educate small children on self and environmental care, and, in the meantime, is also keeping those beneficiaries who already graduated busy and productive while they wait for university enrollment. "I don't want them to waste time. So I have designed a project, based on educational videos, to teach small kids to take care of themselves. The focus would be on health so that these children would have some understanding of their bodies, as well as how to relate with their environment. These videos need to be translated from English into Burmese, and I can take care of that but I want the young ones to become involved also. In Myanmar, people don't speak English as much, so I want them to improve as much as they can and be proficient in English hoping that in the future they can apply to whatever job openings there are, and compete fairly in the international arena".

Listening to Nilar, one understands the challenges ahead when one talks about peace and development, and volunteerism. There is a lot of thinking being done around these topics and people are being inspired every second to do something good and to help one another; nevertheless, the rate at which we all transform our good intentions into reality does not meet the pace at which our communities need to be helped.

So let us be inspired by Nilar Kyi and start conquering the borders of thinking versus doing.

THE AUTHOR IS A UNV OFFICER WITH UNAMID

Academic and Fashion Designer – A profile of Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh

BY ALA MAYYAH



Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh

From childhood, she wanted to teach like her father. She also loved art and always watched with passion while her mother used natural materials for her art and crafts, and tailored clothing with an artistic touch. With the steadfast support of her parents, Salwa Mukhtar Saleh is now a successful Darfuri woman -- since 1995, she has lectured at the University of El Fasher. She is also a well known fashion designer. "It's not only through ambition," she says. "I believe I can achieve my biggest dreams with the support of my beloved ones; my husband, my only son Mohamed, parents and friends."

Salwa was born on 24 December 1959 and grew up in El Fasher, North Darfur. A PhD

graduate and scientist by profession, she is renowned for her accomplishments in both fields of science and art. Her project for her PhD dissertation drew the attention not only of the tutors in her university (University of the Sudan in Khartoum), but also of the local media and it was covered by six local magazines and three newspapers. She designed a specially made bed for pregnant women. Although the project was so highly acclaimed, it couldn't be executed industrially due to a lack of funds. Since her graduation, Salwa has been teaching Educational Science in El Fasher University for graduate and under-graduate programmes and is reportedly one of the most liked tutors by the students.

"While teaching science subjects, I try to promote perceptions of peace, forgiveness, and co-existence among my students. They are the youth of Darfur and one of the most affected groups due to the conflict, which has caused serious damage to the social ties between tribes and neighbors," Dr. Salwa says. "It's the youth who shape the future with their education and skills, but also by supporting each other, by halting hostilities and by working as one unit in developing our beloved Darfur," she added.

Although teaching has been her major career, she stayed faithful to art and kept improving her artistic skills by practice -- designing and making handbags, table

covers and hats out of natural materials such as leaves from the palm tree and leather. She held her first exhibition in 1984 at the Cultural Council in El Fasher, where she sold most of her work. Three more exhibitions followed, one individual, while the other two were held jointly with other Darfuri artists.

Soon, she started fashion designing, producing thobes (the traditional Sudanese dress) with her own colorful patterns using special techniques for drawing on fabrics. "I wanted to produce good quality thobes like the imported ones we see in the markets. I used fine fabrics like silk and chiffon and my eagerness drove me until one design led to another and one dress inspired another. Eventually, I had my own collection of thobes. I started making thobes for my relatives and friends on request. Then, I thought of having a fashion show, like the ones I see on TV," Salwa said.

It was therefore in 2010 that she held her first fashion show featuring her custom designed thobes in Marsilan Hall in El Fasher. It was covered live by the local TV channel, Al Shurouq, and her female relatives and friends were among the attendees. Salwa was gratified. "More than 100 women came to see the show. I presented 42 thobes, 38 of which were sold right there and prices varied between 100 to 150 Sudanese pounds. Even women from other Arab countries called me while watching the show on TV, to congratulate me and place orders. I couldn't be happier," she says.

"As for the models, they were beautiful, self-confident and cheerful which contributed to the show's success. They were between 20 and 28 years old," she added.

Salwa intends to hold another fashion show soon, using updated modern designs and trendy colors." I believe

one day soon, I'll be able to present the Sudanese thobes regionally and even in Europe," she says expectantly. "My biggest challenge now is time. Between work, family responsibilities and my art, I am busy. I sometimes feel that 24 hours a day are just not enough for all the things I want to do," she added laughingly.

In addition to designing clothing and tapping into her creativity, Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh also found the time to become an accomplished academic. She has two Bachelors degrees in Accounting and Industrial Design, and Graduate degrees in Education. Her accomplishments have set Salwa aside as an example and reassurance for all Darfuri women.

Modelling thobes designed by Dr Salwa at her first fashion show



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SALWA MUKHTAR SALEH



Women count for peace

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

"A woman is a mother, an educator, sister and friend, and she is the one who prepares meals, takes care of her family and maintains peace," said Shukrالنaim Ishag, a woman leader in Saraf Umra locality, North Darfur, during a mid-November open day session on United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Such a forum would help the women of Saraf Umra to build the future, she explained.

"We are far from tribal clashes and discrimination among the community and we work together with the men as well as the youth groups."

The session was one of 14 that UNAMID, in collaboration with the North Darfur

Committee on UNSCR 1325, has been organizing in localities throughout the state to create awareness and assess the implementation of the resolution in the region.

These open day forums are providing an opportunity for women leaders to interact and discuss its impact on their daily lives and identify challenges affecting effective implementation.

At the regional event in El Fasher in November, UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative - Political (DJSR-P), Aïchatou Mindaoudou Souleymane, highlighted some of the achievements made by Darfuri women, such as the drive for active engagement in the peace and political processes, their work to prevent gender-based violence and

the support for livelihoods projects and skills that will help chart Darfur's road to recovery.

"It gives me great hope and courage to see that in Darfur, you are holding half of the sky. Your voices are being heard and your influence is expanding.

This, in my opinion, is UNSCR 1325 in action. Its essence is being realized," DJSR Souleymane stated.

"The resolution aptly defines the importance of women both in conflict and post-conflict situations; women as agents for positive change and women as citizens needing special protection. In Darfur, women have embraced UNSCR 1325 and are running with it," she noted. "I am deeply impressed. The number of



left. A cross-section of Darfuri women at the 1325 day in El Fasher, North Darfur - November 2011

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALES FARAN

top. International Women's Day march in El Fasher, North Darfur

PHOTO: OLIVIER CHASSOT

participants at this year's open day has doubled. This is no mere coincidence."

At the same event, the government representative, Chief of the Higher Council of Youth, Mr. Tijani Ahmed Sinin, called on the Mission to assist in the implementation of the resolution and to continue to support women's groups in the state. "Women are the ones who pay the bills of war," he stressed.

"They have lost their husbands, brothers and sons, and are capable of playing different roles in all sectors."

Mr. Sinin also reiterated his Government's full commitment to playing its role. "We will provide the necessary support towards the implementation of resolution 1325," he said.

"I encourage the participants to make use of open day through dialogue so that we will achieve the goals of resolution 1325." For their part, the participants called for women to be allowed to participate in the peace process as well as for their development at the locality level. They also wanted more support for agricultural activities for women, focus on issues of early marriages and the promotion of education, training for midwives and recruitment of more doctors, among other needs.

Shukralnaim Ishag aptly underscored that, "Open day sessions benefit the women of the community, to create a better environment for them to work together". In that light, she emphasized that Darfuri women needed training and "most importantly, need to participate in peace process".

Resolution 1325 was unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 31 October 2000 and it calls for women's needs and human rights, among other provisions, to be taken account of and incorporated in conflict resolution and peace processes.

Darfuris join in celebrating UN's sixty-sixth anniversary

BY ALA MAYYAH



Omar Ihsas (left) and Shumoos Ibrahim (middle) singing at the evening concert while a band member (right) beats his drum during the performances

PHOTOS: OLIVIER CHASOT

On the sixty-sixth anniversary of the United Nations on 24 October 2011, hundreds of Darfuris celebrated with UNAMID in the three Darfur states.

Renowned Sudanese musician, Omer Ihsas, in yet another collaboration with UNAMID, launched a peace song on the occasion in El Fasher, North Darfur at Al Zubier Volleyball Stadium. The song, *A New Era*, was performed with a band and other famous Darfuri singers, including Fat'hi El Mahi, Shumoos Ibrahim and Safaa Hamid. A mixed audience comprising local youth, UNAMID staff members and representatives from various UN agencies, as well as Government officials, all cheered at the concert. A spirit of peace and joy was felt among all attendees. That was a bright day in El Fasher.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the Day, delivered by the Mission's Head, Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari, boosted the motivation in the hearts of the participants to support the peace process. For his part, Gambari stated that, "On this UN Day, we salute not only the UN as an institution, but also the people who are at its heart. We recognize and deeply appreciate the efforts of every unpaid community policing volunteer patrolling the IDP camps, of all the national and international staff, and of each and every person working to assist those in need and to promote reconciliation, justice and peace."

Darfuri artists in El Fasher expressed their happiness for participating in the UN event. "I am so encouraged that UNAMID exists in Darfur and by the important role that it's playing – be it in promoting peace

or supporting humanitarian aspects of this process," Omer Ihsas said. "Bringing us together on this occasion is proof of the Mission's commitment. It has supported many art projects to deliver messages among the youth of Darfur on social and development issues. We have to interact with UNAMID in taking initiative and creating such projects aimed at all who can serve Darfuris in the region."

Shumoos Ibrahim, a young woman in her twenties, started singing publicly in 2009 through a TV programme, *Tomorrow's Stars*, produced by the national Blue Nile Channel and is preparing to launch her first album during the Eid El Adha celebration. "This is the first time that I have participated in a UN event. As a Darfuri singer, I am beyond happy for this opportunity since the UN is contributing to delivering peace messages to youth of Darfur, a cause to which I'm committed," she stressed.

Thanking the international community for its support and for facilitating their performances at such an "auspicious" event, Safaa Hamid, another young woman who has been singing professionally since 2008, said she chose to be a singer with the support of her family and many Darfuris who encourage women artists to succeed in their society. "As it is my first time participating in a UN event, I hope I performed well. It is gratifying to represent Darfur through our art and culture," she noted.

Fat'hi El Mahi, one of the Darfuri singers who is widely acclaimed in the region for his two albums on peace, was among the artists in the event and stood next to Omer Ihsas singing with all his heart. "I have participated in other UN occasions

and would definitely like to celebrate with them some more. I hope people will live in peace soon, not only in Darfur, but all over the world," he said. Another concert was held by the Darfuri musicians on the evening at the same location as part of the UN Day celebration.

In Nyala, South Darfur, UN staff members and Government officials joined in the celebration. The State Wali, Dr. Abdul Hamid Mussa Kasha, reiterated his Government's commitment to cooperate with the Mission. The celebration in Nyala included cultural performances by UNAMID's Bangladeshi and Nigerian contingents, modern and traditional songs by Sudanese, and by the local Elmashish drama group which presented messages on peaceful coexistence. The West Darfur celebration was held at UNAMID's football pitch in Zalingei. A number of local entities attended the ceremony. They included women's groups, youth, locality leadership, and representatives from internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps in the area.

The Secretary-General's message was delivered and echoed at all of the Darfur events. He said, "In these turbulent times, there is only one answer: unity of purpose. Global problems demand global solutions. They compel all nations to unite in action on an agenda for the world's people. That is the very mission of the United Nations: To build a better world. To leave no one behind. To stand for the poorest and most vulnerable in the name of global peace and social justice... In our increasingly interconnected world, we all have something to give and something to gain by working together."

Eyes of Darfur: The spirit of youth

BY ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

Nearly 700 young students of El Fasher (North Darfur) became photographers for their first time. In June, they participated in the ambitious project EYES OF DARFUR, taken pictures with disposable cameras given by UNAMID.

They produced 15,000 photographs reflecting their surroundings, such schools, neighborhood, animals, religion and social life in general. The final result of this project has been an impressive reflection of Darfur coming from the eyes of all these teenagers.

Suda Abubakar Ishak, 13 years old, from Al Zahara school, was one of the 30 selected finalists of the project and she assured that EYES OF DARFUR has been "a great idea to encourage Darfuri youth to develop their hobbies and ambitions". Ma'as Maki Adduma (14) loves sports and that's why he took a picture of his friends playing football. Safa al Arrufai (13) set up a portrait of her little sister praying at home and titled it "The believes". Another participant, Sarra Hassan (15), took a photograph of a tailor working in the market "because it is a real hard job".

Pilots, doctors, engineers, teachers and even journalists... All the participants of EYES OF DARFUR have dreams for their professional future and, some of them, right after using the given cameras, are now thinking to become photographers. "This project has been a great opportunity to show our traditions," said Hiba Al Amin (11), who took a portrait of a lady making tea.

Among all 15,000 pictures, UNAMID, with the support of UNICEF and after a massive collaboration of visitors in its Facebook account, has selected 12 pictures to illustrate the Calendar 2012. Now, UNAMID is planning to extend the project to other parts of the region and give other youth the opportunity to explore and develop their talent in photography.



Ma'as Maki Adduma (14) is signing the copyright for of his photograph



Mustafa Alfadi Attaib (12) with his friends in Al Midgad School shows his winning photograph



Photo taken by ABDALAH YOUSEF (12 years old), titled "Rope game"



Picture by ZURHAL ABDURRAHMAN (13 years old) titled "Children for life"



UNAMID's Humanitarian Operations – serving all Darfuris

Interview with Oriano Micaletti, Head of Humanitarian, Protection Strategy Coordination Division (HPS)

BY ALA MAYYAH

UNAMID's Humanitarian, Protection Strategy Coordination Division comprises three units -- Humanitarian Recovery Assistance, HIV/AIDS and Gender Advisory -- with staff based in the mission's offices in all three of Darfur's sectors, as well as in the Zalingei sub-office and Khartoum. Currently, the Division is in the process of deploying some of its staff, both international and national, to remote areas in Darfur where they will be co-located with the units in the UNAMID military team sites.

Voices of Darfur interviewed Mr. Micaletti to highlight the work and challenges of this vital Division in UNAMID.

VoD: Describe the core activities of HPS, its partners and objectives.

Micaletti: HPS has a number of functions in the implementation of UNAMID's mandate. They cover a wide area of responsibility intrinsic to the Division as well as derived from the Mission's priorities set by UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Ibrahim Gambari. The Division focusses on implementation of the Mission's protection strategy and coordination of our activities in support of aid agencies,

which is predominantly to open and secure humanitarian space in the area. We also support other UN agencies, funds and programmes in early recovery activities for returns and reconciliation, and arrange medical evacuations on humanitarian grounds, among others.

To effectively fulfill our mandate, we work with a large number of partners. A few of our UN system partners are OCHA [UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs], WFP [World Food Programme], UNHCR [Office of the UN Commissioner for Refugees], UNICEF [UN Children's Fund], and UNDP [UN Development Programme], as well as the Sudanese Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, the Humanitarian Affairs Commission and a number of international non-governmental organizations.

Germane to all of our activities, our aims are smooth implementation and coordination of the various activities related to the Mission's mandate and successful delivery of various programmes to the population of Darfur.

VoD: How are these connected with the Mission's mandate?

Micaletti: All of our activities are derived from UNAMID's mandate and are at the very core of our protection of civilians strategy. Our efforts are also focused on creating a secure environment for both civilians and aid workers in order to deliver humanitarian assistance and support Darfur-wide returns.

VoD: What are the challenges that your office or escorts usually face when carrying out your duties?

Micaletti: Some of the challenges can be attributed to the general geographic demands of serving in such a large territory and harsh environment. This impacts communications and coordination activities, as well as physical capacity. Physical presence on the ground in general presents the most challenges. This is also true for other partners. In addition, attacks on peacekeepers and general criminality compound the challenges we face in Darfur.

VoD: Does the Division provide assistance to individual Darfuris, such as air transportation for medical reasons, and what if someone wants to send aid materials to a village, would you provide assistance if requested?



Left. JSR Gambari interacts with the local community at En Siro, North Darfur

PHOTO: OLIVIER CHASOT

Right. Spring basket operation at Kuma Garadayat, North Darfur

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALES FARAN

Micaletti: The Division is the primary interface for the use of UNAMID air assets in the medical evacuation process for those Darfuris who have absolutely no other option. What the Division does is facilitate the flow of information on a particular case and bring the request to the attention of other UNAMID units involved.

When it comes to the transport of aid to remote areas, HPS is greatly involved and is supporting the activities of other UN agencies as well as the work of the Sudanese Government. In two very recent cases, the Division facilitated the airlift of vaccines for the WHO [World Health Organization] and the Sudanese Ministry of Health, as well as animal vaccines for the Sudanese Ministry of Animal Husbandry in collaboration with FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization]. This is crucial for Darfuris who have expressed their gratitude for UNAMID's help.

VoD: What about the Mission's role in the early recovery stage in Darfur and how is HPS involved?

Micaletti: The situation in Darfur has greatly evolved in the past years and it requires more than just simple delivery of humanitarian aid.

UNAMID supports UNCT [the UN country team] in early recovery projects in the areas where the conditions are favorable for this type of activity, allowing for a more substantial intervention to be made. On a large scale, the Mission was involved in advocating for the organization of the International Darfur Water Conference and is supporting the UNCT and the Sudanese Government working on a number of return related projects. HPS is coordinating consultations with the Government and Sudanese Government to plan model and return villages funded by the Arab League. On a smaller scale, but equally significant, through the QIPs [quick impact projects] mechanism, HPS is involved in small scale activities, but highly beneficial for the communities, including the revitalization of the El Fasher Public Library and engagement with nomadic tribes in addressing some of their critical needs associated with the reconciliation process. Likewise, the Division is involved in the identification of the QIPs for urgent intervention in support of most vulnerable groups and communities. Additionally, HPS is currently considering support for the work of a medical clinic in El Geneina, which specializes in ophthalmology and is

the only one serving the entire population in West Darfur.

VoD: What message would you like to send to all Darfuris?

Micaletti: We know that there is no greater priority for Darfuris than protection and UNAMID is very determined to fulfill its responsibility. We are also here to help all Darfuris to start a new life in dignity, outside of the IDP [internally displaced persons] camps, if they choose to do so. UNAMID will continue to be close to all Darfuris, and help them in their daily efforts to create a Darfur where peace and social coexistence will persist.

Working for the HPS is sometimes like working in the emergency services. You never know what awaits you in the next moment. But, we know that our work will greatly assist the people of Darfur and they will understand that we are here for them.

In the Philippines, “Many were called, but few were chosen”

BY PCINSP RUDY L ELANDAG/UNAMID POLICE



A Filipino police advisor and a Rwandese peacekeeper with children at the Sortoni IDP camp

PHOTOS: UNAMID PHILIPPINE POLICE CONTINGENT

“Many were called, but few were chosen. Among the chosen few, only the best and the brightest remain”. This adage has become the standard that the Philippine National Police is adopting in selecting police officers with exceptional talents and skills to be sent to UN peace operations. This does not preclude those officers whose best wasn’t good enough during the screening process but, instead, they should be even more encouraged to do even better the next time around.

The rigorous process has been put in place to select the kind of police officers who are prepared to face the challenges awaiting them in the mission area and to live up to international standards as expected because mission life can be demanding.

The notion that to be deployed on the ground is to have fun while learning can be debated. The stressors are countless – starting from the new dimensions of workload, environment, diverse culture of colleagues, languages, kind of food and the curfew, among others. A bizarre feeling of being in a labyrinth of new experiences, objectives, vision and goals dawns with the application of your knowledge and skills to the people who need your sincere and dedicated public service and as you begin appreciate the beauty of common things.

Contributions to UNAMID

Since the establishment of UNAMID in 2008, the Philippines has been deploying Police Officers to the Mission. Currently, 70 Filipino police personnel are now serving in the different offices and team sites of

UNAMID and in community police centres. Leading the cabal of young officers is the nimble and enthusiastic Contingent Commander Police Superintendent Glenn Oliver Cinco who is now assigned as Formed Police Unit Coordinator at UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher. Even more Filipino police officers are expected to be deployed to UNAMID shortly.

In every batch, female police officers are equally considered for deployment. At present, four bold and valiant women are serving in various roles both at UNAMID headquarters and in the communities.

“Being treated equally as our male colleagues in this job gives me the opportunity to demonstrate my best skills. And like other female colleagues, I

consider myself privileged to be a woman police in UNAMID,” Inspector Cheryl Yatar says.

“We must fulfill our job”

Being deployed to UNAMID gives us the opportunity to show off our talents and prowess in report writing, community policing and investigations as well as knowledge and skills in other areas of the Mission’s operations. UNAMID provides the place to show one’s ability of being a well rounded individual who is set to adapt to a new situation and ready to face the challenges of field operations. Modesty aside, Filipinos are doing very well, excellently executing their respective tasks, be it in the office or in the field, while embracing the United Nations core values of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity.

Facing a tenuous situation with a high threat level because of attacks on peacekeepers, among other dangers, has not affected the determination of every Filipino in the field. Discipline, dedication and commitment have been enshrined and a burning fervor is felt in every Filipino police officer to always be on the top of their duties in helping UNAMID to achieve its goal to bring a lasting peace to Darfur.

“It is an utmost priority to us, as Filipinos, to be active and effective in every task we do. We came to UNAMID to help the people of Darfur to be safe and secure and to support them in the achievement of peace. It’s a job that we must fulfill at the highest level of performance regardless of the risks and challenges we face while doing our duties,” Inspector Jesus Solares stated.

Our part

Despite the challenges that peacekeepers may encounter, Filipino officers are committed to serve the people of Darfur with courtesy and professionalism. Diligence always emanates from the embodiment of civility that reverberates through the entire Mission. At the end of the day, every Filipino police officer could say with pride and honour that he or she has done his part to help the people of Darfur, with the hope that lasting peace can be attained so that every Darfuri will savour the true essence of living in a peaceful and progressive society.

THE AUTHOR IS A POLICE ADVISOR WITH UNAMID



A Filipino police advisor with his colleagues as they interact with community members in Masteri, West Darfur



The police contingent from the Philippines



A female Filipino police advisor with women of Zamzam IDP camp in El Fasher, North Darfur



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