

Through the Lens

An Interview with
Mohamed Noureldin

**Darfur's Hairdressers Rally
for the Environment**

*Unique initiative to improve
health and hygiene*

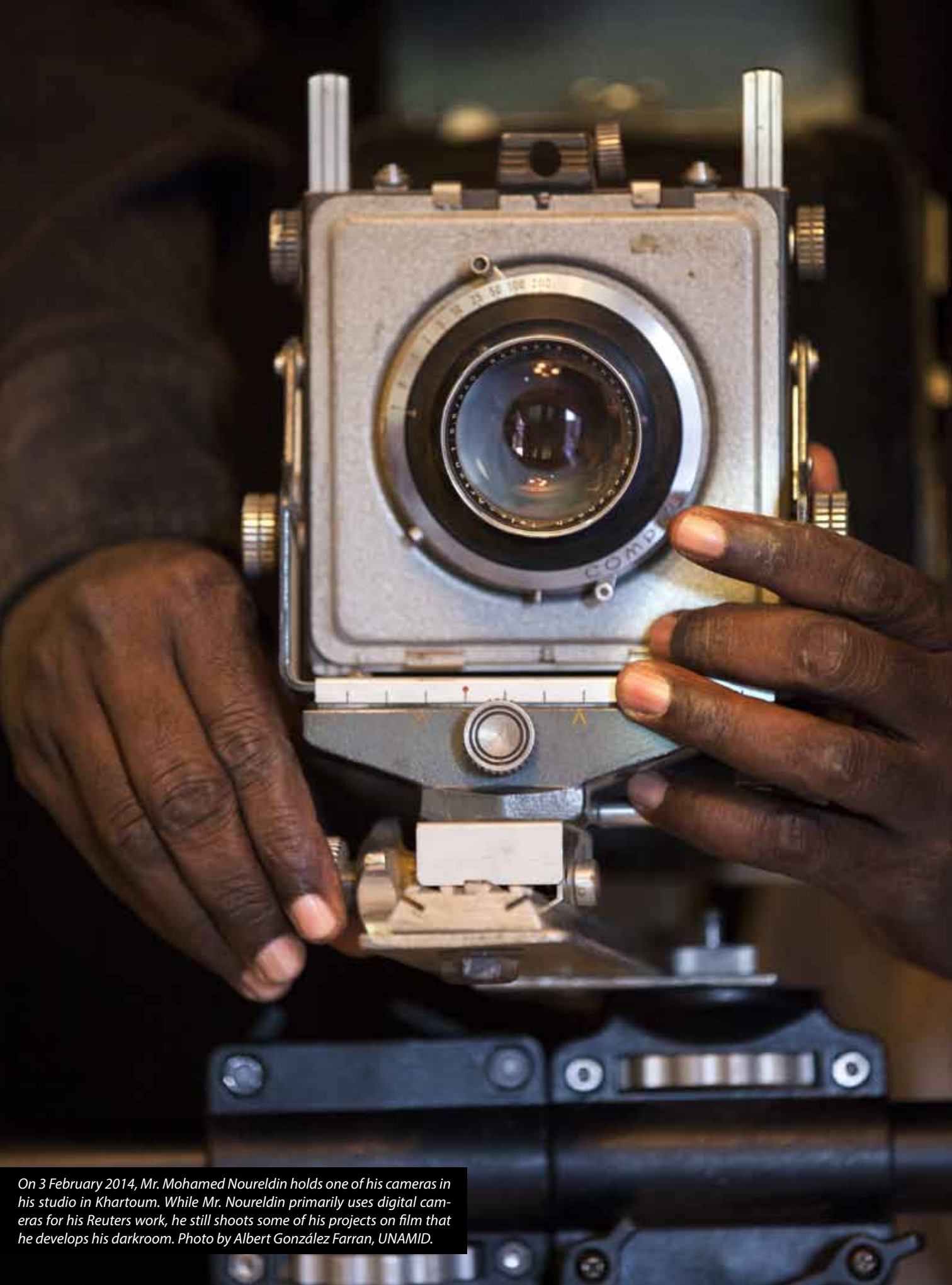
**New Technology Helping to
Build a Culture of Peace**

*Innovative systems bring
communities together*

**Young Volunteers Focus on
Economic Recovery**

*Small programme has
exponentially large upside*





On 3 February 2014, Mr. Mohamed Noureldin holds one of his cameras in his studio in Khartoum. While Mr. Noureldin primarily uses digital cameras for his Reuters work, he still shoots some of his projects on film that he develops his darkroom. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

I'm pleased to introduce the May 2014 issue of *Voices of Darfur*, which, like other issues of *Voices*, contains news, features and interviews not only about unique aspects of life in Darfur but also about UNAMID's ongoing efforts to facilitate lasting peace in the region.

In "New Technology Helping to Build a Culture of Peace," Ms. Sharon Lukunka describes how, despite infrastructure challenges created by the ongoing conflict, new communications technologies are proliferating in Darfur and contributing to social change. In addition to highlighting the dramatic increase of mobile phones in the region, Ms. Lukunka outlines how UNAMID, the Government of Sudan and others are capitalizing on the increased prevalence of communications technologies to reach rural areas with innovative systems that are bringing communities together.

In "Working Toward Community Stabilisation," Mr. Emadeldin Rijal offers an inside look at UNAMID's community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs) programme, which is designed to create unique socioeconomic opportunities for Darfur's at-risk young people, providing them with a platform to foster community development in this conflict-torn region. Mr. Rijal outlines how these projects are positioned within the framework of what has come to be known as second-generation disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), a collection of strategies and policies designed to address peace and security at the local level to help reduce conflict and set the stage for formal DDR activities.

In "Young Volunteers Focus on Economic Recovery," Mr. Albert González Farran writes about how more than 100 university graduates from across Darfur are working to help pass on newly learned skills to farmers and traders as part of a livelihood project conducted by UNDP with the support of UNAMID and the Government of Sudan. In this programme, the training-of-trainers process has an exponentially large upside. Just as the young volunteers have been

encouraged to share their newly acquired knowledge, more than 6,000 community members are passing on what they have learned from programme participants to their relatives, friends and colleagues.

In "Darfur's Hairdressers Rally for the Environment," Mr. Rijal describes how hairdressers in North Darfur not only have formed a union to help raise standards of health and hygiene in salons across Darfur, but also have created an association to encourage environmentally friendly business practices. In this unique initiative, more than 1,500 hairdressers, men and women alike, have registered to become members of the union, and in regularly held meetings are discussing professional safety, waste disposal, the environment, infectious diseases and other issues related to their work.

In "A Multifaceted Approach to Community Support," Mr. Farran presents a photo essay designed to highlight a project conducted by WFP for Tawila women, who are learning not only how to make fuel-efficient stoves, but also how to cook more nutritious food for their children with locally sourced ingredients. The photo essay illustrates how WFP officials and volunteers are working daily with Tawila's residents to ensure the nutritional needs of mothers and their children are met.

Finally, in our cover feature, "Through the Lens," Ms. Ala Mayyahi presents an interview with Mr. Mohamed Noureldin, one of Sudan's most accomplished photographers, who talks about his approach to his work and expresses his ideas about the differences and similarities between art photography and photojournalism. Mr. Noureldin, a Reuters photographer, has won national and international awards, achieving widespread recognition through what he characterises humbly as dedication and hard work.

As *Voices of Darfur* continues to evolve as a news magazine, we welcome your feedback. To send comments by email, please put "Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur" in the subject line and send the email to unamid-publicinformation@un.org.

Kirk L. Kroeker
Head of Publications

ON THE COVER



Mr. Mohamed Noureldin, pictured posing in his studio, has won numerous awards for his photography. Photo by Albert González Farran.



A child is pictured in a makeshift school shelter in Al Salam camp following recent displacements. Photo by Albert González Farran.

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UNAMID Chief Urges Dialogue in Chad Forum



On 26 March 2014, displaced people are pictured inside UNAMID's base in Khor Abeche, South Darfur. In anticipation of an attack on their homes, about 3,000 IDPs sought refuge inside the UNAMID compound. The Mission provided protection, shelter and water to the IDPs, and worked with the humanitarian community to offer other emergency support. Photo by Mubarak Bako, UNAMID.

To move the peace process forward, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Mohamed Ibn Chambas, at the invitation of Chad President Idris Deby, attended the Um Jaras Forum. The gathering of leaders, also attended by Sudan Vice President Hassabo Mohamed Abdul Rahman and held on 26 March 2014, was designed to build consensus on the Darfur peace process.

At the forum, the JSR emphasized the need for all parties in Darfur to commit to dialogue without preconditions and to resolve differences through political not military means. "There is imperative need to recognize that after 10 years of fighting and attendant bloodshed in Darfur, nobody has emerged victorious," he said. "The lesson from this is very clear and simple—parties have to unconditionally find each other across the negotiating table and talk, and reach agreements."

UNAMID's Chief said that the suspension of hostilities is

essential and that mere promises to talk cannot inspire confidence if, at the same time, fighting continues and intensifies, adding that the recent spate of violence has displaced some 200,000 civilians in Darfur in the past month alone.

"Also, the military attacks of the rebel movements must stop; they have proven incapable of

defeating Sudan's Armed Forces and only increase the suffering of the people of Darfur," he continued. "Similarly, we must do all within our means to end the inter-tribal clashes, which caused the displacement of more than 400,000 people in 2013 and continue to be a source of death and destruction this year."

On 7 April 2014 in Khor Abeche, South Darfur, UNAMID engineers work to build a community centre for displaced people who had sought refuge in the Mission's camp. The community centre, one of two, is located inside a secure 70,000 square metre area that the Mission set up for the Darfuris who took refuge inside UNAMID's premises. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



The Head of UNAMID highlighted the need to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations. "Darfur has been experiencing one of the worst man-made humanitarian crises in the world," he said. "Without enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the multitudes of Darfuris who need it, finding a durable solution to the conflict is bound to flounder."

UNAMID's Chief mentioned that it is imperative to support and promote Darfur's participation in the national dialogue announced by President Bashir in January 2014. "The political gains of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur should feed into the national dialogue process and, in turn, a successful national dialogue process should also create an enabling environment to implement the positive aspects of the DDPD and, in particular, the Darfur Development Strategy, with total national consensus and support." ■

UNAMID Assists as Darfur Continues to Face Water Shortages



On 25 March 2014 in Mellit, North Darfur, UNAMID provides potable water to internally displaced people. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

World Water Day, celebrated annually on 22 March, this year focused on promoting the theme “Water and Energy.” In his message for the day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon high-

lighted the importance of water and energy in eradicating poverty and pointed out that water and energy interact with each other in ways that can help—or hinder—efforts to build stable societies.

Darfur is largely arid, and demand for water in the region has increased in recent years due to the growth of urban areas coupled with the pressure of droughts. While the region has a brief rainy season, usually from June to October each year, a decline in the water table has occurred near urban centres and camps for displaced people, making access to water a source of conflict between communities.

UNAMID and UN agencies have been working with local partners and relevant institutions to increase access to, and improve the management of, water resources for local communities. Recently, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) launched the Wadi El Ku project in a catchment west of El Fasher. The project, designed to help the communities in the area save and use water more efficiently,

is expected to help an estimated 90,000 people and, later, to be scaled up and replicated in other parts of Darfur.

“Water is a key driver of economic and social development along with its primary function in maintaining the integrity of the natural environment,” says Ms. Magda Nassef, a UNEP representative. “However, water is only one of many vital natural resources and it is imperative that water issues are not considered in isolation.”

In addition to its other work related to water preservation and management, such as the rehabilitation of dams, UNAMID has been conducting a programme to drill wells to provide water to local communities. “So far, six boreholes have been drilled in Tulus, El Sereif and Nertiti in Central Darfur,” says Mr. Emmanuel Mollel, Chief of UNAMID’s Water and Environmental Protection section. ■



On 23 March 2014, a child dances during a celebration at the Taiba School for Girls in the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced people in El Fasher, North Darfur. The event, organized by UNAMID as part of the “We Need Peace Now” campaign, drew more than 500 children from the IDP camp. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



On 16 March 2014, members of the Sarafi drama group perform for a photo shoot at El Fasher's Cultural Centre in North Darfur to promote World Theatre Day, which was established in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

UNAMID Head Briefs Security Council on Darfur Violence

On 3 April 2014, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Mohamed Ibn Chambas briefed members of the United Nations Security Council on what he described as an “alarming escalation of violence” in Darfur during the past three months, resulting in more than 215,000 civilians being displaced.

The JSR explained that there are several factors at play. Of particular concern, he said, are the activities in the region of a Government counter-insurgency force known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF has perpetrated attacks on communities, particularly in South Darfur, he noted, with several villages looted and destroyed, and their populations displaced with an as yet unknown number of casualties.

UNAMID’s Chief also noted that there has been an increase in attacks by non-signatory movements on villages and against Government forces. He highlighted that inter-communal fighting, mainly over access to natural resources, had increased along with criminal activities, causing an increase in suffering for the civilian populations in Darfur.

The Head of UNAMID expressed concern about access restrictions enforced by all the parties to the conflict and the insecurity continuing to hamper the provision of humanitarian assistance to affected populations. The JSR emphasized that the current security situation in Darfur is serious and has the potential to undermine ongoing efforts to seek a political settlement of the conflict.



On 3 April 2014 at United Nations headquarters in New York, UNAMID JSR Mohamed Ibn Chambas speaks to journalists following a Security Council meeting at which a resolution was passed revising the strategic priorities for UNAMID. Photo by Paulo Filgueiras, UN Photo.

“A cessation of hostilities is a first and vital step toward constructive dialogue, and I sincerely hope that the modalities of the initiative for an all-inclusive national dia-

logue by the Government of Sudan will materialize soon and complement our efforts to bring about durable peace, security and development in Darfur,” he said. ■

UNAMID Celebrates International Women's Day

This year's International Women's Day celebrations, held across Darfur and around the world, focused on the theme "Equality for Women, Progress for All." In El Fasher, North Darfur, hundreds of women, men and children took part in festivities organized by UNAMID, the United Nations Country Team and the North Darfur Government. The event, held on 12 March 2014, was attended by the Governor of North Darfur and other senior officials.

The day began with a solidarity march from the El Fasher Midwifery School to the office of the Ministry of Social Affairs. During the event, musicians sang traditional songs, a local drama group

performed short sketches, and Ms. Aisha Abdullahi, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, delivered UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's speech for the day.

"This International Women's Day, we are highlighting the importance of achieving equality for women and girls, not simply because it is a matter of fairness and fundamental human rights, but because progress in so many other areas depends on it," she said.

The Secretary-General's message notes that countries with more gender equality have better economic growth and that companies with more women leaders perform more effectively. "Peace agreements that include women are more durable," Ms. Abdullahi said,



On 12 March 2014 in El Fasher, North Darfur, a group of women participate in a march to commemorate International Women's Day. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

quoting the Secretary-General. "Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues, such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support."

Similar events organized by UNAMID, in collaboration with local authorities and UN agencies, took place in El Geneina, West Darfur; Nyala, South Darfur; and Zalingei, Central Darfur. ■



On 25 March 2014, children from Mellit, North Darfur, look at the remnant of a mortar projectile abandoned in the Alabassi camp for internally displaced people. Government forces and armed movements clashed in the area on 13 March. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



On 29 March 2014, UNAMID military peacekeepers from Rwanda and community volunteers participate in a clean-up campaign in El Fasher's Amdafasu market area in North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

Follow-Up Commission Convenes on DDPD Progress

On 28 April 2014, the Implementation Follow-Up Commission for the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) held its eighth meeting at UNAMID's El Fasher headquarters. The meeting, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, was attended by delegates from around the world, along with representatives from the Government of Sudan (GoS), the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and the Justice and Equality Movement-Sudan (JEM-Sudan).

Topics discussed at the meeting included progress made regarding the provisions of the DDPD since the last meeting in December 2013, challenges faced and the way forward. All those present acknowledged the continued commitment and efforts of GoS, LJM and JEM-

Sudan toward the implementation of the DDPD.

UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Mohamed Ibn Chambas observed that the parties to the DDPD have made some progress in several areas since the last meeting. He nevertheless expressed concern that the first quarter of 2014 had been tumultuous due to an increase in violence in parts of Darfur, resulting in more displacement.

UNAMID's JSR explained his efforts to gather regional support for the peace process in Darfur. "I have held consultations with the Foreign Ministers of Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development and a number of envoys for Darfur and Sudan, briefed the President of Uganda and President of Chad



On 28 April 2014, the Implementation Commission held its eighth meeting in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

and sought their support for the peace process," he said.

The meeting's participants welcomed the national dialogue initiative announced by President Bashir and appealed to the armed movements to cease hostilities and participate in the national talks.

UNAMID's JSR and Mr. Al Mahmoud responded to me-

dia inquiries during a joint press conference held at the end of the meeting with regard to the State of Qatar's US\$88 million grant agreement to finance recovery and reconstruction priorities of the Darfur Development Strategy, which was launched at the International Donors Conference in Doha in April 2013. ■



Residents of El Sereif, North Darfur, take photos with their mobile phones at a cultural and sports event organized by UNAMID as part of a “We Need Peace Now” campaign. An increasing number of young Darfuris, especially students in secondary schools and universities in the region, are using mobile phones to communicate with friends and family. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

New Technology Helping to Build a Culture of Peace

Despite infrastructure challenges posed by the ongoing conflict, new communications technologies, such as smartphones and social media, are proliferating in Darfur and contributing to positive change.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

An increasing number of young Darfuris, boys and girls alike, especially students in secondary schools and universities, are using mobile phones not only to talk with family and friends, but also to access social media, listen to radio shows, read news, download videos and message people with smartphone apps such as Skype, Viber and WhatsApp.

Sadiq Mohammed, a secondary school student at Al Wathirk private

school in El Fasher, North Darfur, uses a mobile phone to keep in touch with his family and friends. “I usually call my mother to let her know my whereabouts before and after school,” he says, explaining that his phone is an essential feature of his life in Darfur, especially because of the conflict.

Similarly, Osman Ahmed Abdalla, a university student who lives with his uncle in El Fasher, received his first mobile

phone three years ago as a gift from his father so he could stay in regular contact with his parents. Prior to owning a phone, Osman says he would visit his family and friends in person, which required the expense and time associated with travel.

In many respects, Darfur reflects the global escalation in the use of new information and communications technologies. A 2013 report, published jointly by the United Nations Devel-

opment Programme (UNDP), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Peace Institute (IPI), places the number of mobile phones in the world at a staggering six billion, and estimates that almost one third of the world's population is now online.

These numbers, according to the report, are increasing exponentially, especially in developing nations, and illustrate an unprecedented level of global interconnectivity. The report indicates that in 2012 alone, humans generated more content than all the years of recorded history combined.

More than four decades after the launch of the first mobile phone in 1973, the current total number of mobile phone accounts corresponds to a global penetration rate of 86 per cent of the world's population, with the number of mobile phones now eclipsing the number of fixed-line phones in developing nations. The report also indicates that the number of smartphones, which combine computing capabilities with telephone functions, has steadily increased in developing nations. This increase in the number of smartphones, equipped with cameras, Internet functionality and third-party apps, has changed the cultural and political life around the world.

Darfur is no exception. Most markets in Darfur have shops that display the latest phone models, including those made by Samsung, Nokia and Apple. The phones on sale in Darfur's shops are usually purchased first from the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, or from traders in neighbouring countries. Mr. Hamad Suliman, a mobile phone shop owner in El Fasher, says he often visits Dubai to acquire the latest phones, laptops and accessories, which he then sells in his store. Mr. Ahmed Abdulkarim, another mobile phone shop owner in El Fasher, says that many Darfuris are purchasing "feature phones" equipped with MP3 players, radios, cameras and social media apps.

Capitalizing on the increasing popularity of mobile phones, Mr. Moham-

med Saleh came to El Fasher from Kabkabiya in 2007 to start his business. His venture is designed to facilitate the use of these devices among displaced communities who have been separated from their friends and families. Due to frequent power outages in camps for internally displaced people, charging mobile phones remains an ongoing challenge. Mr. Saleh's business specifically caters to those who need to charge their mobile phones. He receives a small fee for a full charge.

Apart from facilitating personal communication and providing entrepreneurial opportunities, new communications technologies are also playing a role in helping to address community issues.

As one example, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Sudanese Ministry of Health and their partners have set up an early-warning system to address health concerns in rural areas. The system uses mobile phone networks to receive reports of potentially infectious diseases. The reports are designed to make it easier for healthcare providers to monitor issues in rural areas and alert relevant partners.

Speaking to *Voices of Darfur*, Dr. Muneer Matar, a coordinator at the Sudanese Ministry of Health's Emergency and Humanitarian Aid Office, describes how the early-warning system is helping to monitor the health situation in Darfur. "Our healthcare partners in

"It is evident that mobile phones continue to play a vital role in enhancing communication, particularly in towns around Darfur, making a huge impact on the social and cultural interactions within communities."

—Osman Fadul

Mobile phones on display at a shop in El Fasher's city centre. Most markets in Darfur have shops that display the latest phone models, including those made by Samsung, Nokia and Apple. These phones on sale in Darfur's towns are usually purchased from the Sudanese capital of Khartoum or from traders in neighbouring countries. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.





Students of the Faculty of Technology Science at the University of El Geneina, West Darfur, work in the computer lab on equipment funded through UNAMID's quick impact projects (QIPs) programme. Infrastructure rehabilitation targeted at facilitating greater access to technology for Darfuris remains a key target for UNAMID, the Government of Sudan and nongovernmental organizations working here. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

the field collect information regarding important cases in particular areas and report via text messaging or e-mail," says Dr. Matar. This information is then compiled in the form of a bulletin and is addressed during weekly coordination meetings. "More than 48 areas in North Darfur use this early-warning system," he says. "It has been of great help in monitoring and addressing emerging health risks promptly."

According to Dr. Matar, this early-warning system is running in more than 100 health facilities in South Darfur alone, and is resulting in more than 10 disease incidents being reported and addressed each week. The monitoring agents are equipped with mobile phones to send daily text messages to respective focal points. Rather than being merely a one-way alert mechanism, the communication in this programme is two-way. The Ministry of Health has partnered with respective service providers to send customized alerts to mobile-phone users about health campaigns or issues of concern.

The impact of such technology-driven initiatives is being felt at the community level. In one notable project, young people from across Sudan collaborated with nongovernmental organizations to develop a Facebook page called "Nafeer," a Sudanese

word that means "helping hands." This initiative, which began in 2013, is linking thousands of people in need of assistance with those who have the will and capacity to help.

Despite the rapidity with which new communications technologies have spread across Darfur, there are still significant challenges to overcome. The Ministry of Information, Technology and Capacity Building in the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) continues to face problems with access and funding. The ongoing conflict in the region not only has displaced thousands but also has destroyed existing infrastructure. This, in turn, has led to limited and, in some cases, no Internet connectivity in remote areas of Darfur.

"It is evident that mobile phones continue to play a vital role in enhancing communication, particularly in towns around Darfur, making a huge impact on the social and cultural interactions within communities," says Mr. Osman Fadul, the DRA's Minister of Information, Technology and Capacity Building. "However, there is still a need to assess the actual level of impact on the life of the community."

Working with its partners here to facilitate greater access to technology for Darfuris remains a key goal of the Darfur Regional Authority. "We have plans to develop and rehabilitate more communication resources,

including establishing radio stations in rural areas," says Mr. Fadul. "Many people in Darfur still rely on the radio to catch up on the current news."

As part of its strategic plan, those working in the DRA's Ministry of Information, Technology and Capacity Building are planning to organize Darfur-wide workshops to address communications issues, such as basic network coverage. "Apart from ensuring the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, we remain determined to improve technological infrastructure and awareness across the region," says Mr. Fadul. "We want to ensure that everyone benefits from easy and consistent access to new technology and we are looking at means to connect people in a host of different ways so that messages of peace and development can be disseminated to the Darfuri society at large."

The Minister's statements reflect the many efforts made by various stakeholders, both national and international, and by Government authorities, to enhance the technological infrastructure in Darfur. As one example of such efforts, UNDP provided computers to El Fasher University's Centre for Peace and Development Studies. UNAMID, similarly, has been working to help improve access to information and new technologies. Through its quick impact projects (QIPs)

programme, UNAMID rehabilitated the El Fasher Public Library and Cultural Centre. The project included general repairs, new furniture, more than 20,000 new books and the installation of 15 computers.

The Mission has implemented several other technology-oriented projects across Darfur, in universities and community centres, in collaboration with its partners here and in the interest of fostering economic recovery and development. One recent example is a project, jointly conducted with UNDP, to install computers in Darfur's prison administration offices to assist Sudanese officials in recordkeeping.

In another example that demonstrates the efficacy of Darfur's communications infrastructure as a tool for conducting outreach and promoting a culture of peace among communities here, UNAMID recently launched *Voices of Children*, the first Darfuri radio programme made by children, for children. This initiative, officially inaugurated on 15 April 2014 in El Fasher, North Darfur, is a collaborative venture with the Sudanese Ministry of Social Affairs. The programme itself, produced by six children from El Fasher and the Zam Zam and Abu Shouk camps for displaced people, is broadcast in a format designed

“Contemporary communications technologies, especially the Internet and social media platforms, help connect different components of Darfuri society quickly and effectively.”

—Khalil Adam

to provide entertainment and information, and encourage the involvement of children in the peace process.

To support the young journalists in their work, UNAMID established a scholarship to help fund their annual school fees. Taj Alasafia, a 15-year-old secondary school student, says he enjoys his work in public-service broadcasting. “I am happy to be part of *Voices of Children*,” says Taj, who recently won a national award for Best Radio Producer for his role in the programme. “I want to be heard on radio discussing issues of concern within the community.”

Voices of Children, aired on Al Saalam Radio each week, is supported by UNAMID personnel, who provide the young journalists with studio equipment and office supplies, along with training in interviewing and editing. The programme is running in a pilot phase in El Fasher, North Darfur, and is expected eventually

to expand to other Darfur states and possibly also across Sudan.

Speaking at the event, the Sudanese Minister of Social Affairs, Mr. Khalil Adam, expressed his appreciation for the innovative use of communications and information technology to reach out to Darfuris. In an interview with *Voices of Darfur*, he describes how the proliferation of communications technology is making a significant impact in Darfur, even in remote areas.

“Contemporary communications technologies, especially the Internet and social media platforms, help connect different components of Darfuri society quickly and effectively,” the Minister says. “We have begun to rely on the potential of technology in Darfur to act as an agent for positive social change; utilized fully, new technology can be an invaluable tool to push the peace process forward.” ■

A girl takes a picture with her phone during the opening ceremony of a new library at the Cultural Centre in El Fasher, North Darfur. Despite inadequate network coverage across Darfur and frequent power outages that inhibit people's ability to keep their phones constantly charged, reports indicate mobile phone use in Darfur is increasing rapidly. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



Young Volunteers Focus on Economic Recovery

More than 100 young volunteers from three different Darfur states are working to help pass on newly learned skills to farmers and traders as part of a livelihood project conducted by UNDP with the support of UNAMID and the Government of Sudan.

BY ALBERT GONZÁLEZ FARRAN



On 2 July 2013, at the Centre for Peace Studies at Nyala University, South Darfur, young Darfuris attend training as part of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project called Youth Volunteers Rebuilding Darfur. The UNDP project is designed to boost economic recovery in Darfur through relying on the energy and enthusiasm of Darfur's young people. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

The situation in Darfur, as in many other conflict-affected regions of the world, has prompted a common question in media outlets, in peace talks and in universities here: Is peace a requisite of development or will development lead to peace? The answer to this question likely will be debated for years to come, as peace and development here have become inextricably linked in political and social discussions. While there are some two million people living in camps for displaced people and many

villages still suffer from the results of armed clashes, the Government of Sudan, UNAMID, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations have been implementing projects to help rebuild Darfur's economy in the interest of creating a stabilising environment for peace.

Many local communities have taken the lead on these development projects, and have become the main agents of change. The people of Darfur—women and men, young and old, students and professionals, farmers and nomads—are

moving, step by step, to rebuild Darfur's infrastructure, economy and social bonds. Although most Darfuris consider a cessation of the conflict the main priority, the people of Darfur say that economic development, where it is happening, is contributing to peace.

"Before any economic development, we need to focus only on the peace process; this is crucial," says Ms. Najwa Adam, a young graduate from Katila, South Darfur. However, she also says development projects designed for a sustainable future are critical.

With Darfur's conflict largely confined to specific geographic areas of Darfur, many of the communities now in desperate need of development assistance are well positioned to take advantage of some of the recovery programmes that UNAMID and its partners are working to implement.

One such project, undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is specifically designed to boost economic recovery in Darfur through relying on the energy and enthusiasm of Darfur's young people. The programme, called Youth Volunteers Rebuilding Darfur, involves training young people—mostly in their twenties and thirties—who later serve as teachers themselves, providing training to people in their communities. The young men and women participating in this programme are beneficiaries themselves while also serving as agents of change for Darfur's economic recovery.

In addition to providing training, the programme equips these young graduates with laptops and Internet connections so they can work effectively in their home communities. Essentially, they become the links between UNDP development experts and the local community. Prior to serving as partners to engage local communities, the young people receive training in a broad variety of business-related topics so they can play an active role in linking suppliers, purchasers and wholesalers into local, national and international markets.

The Youth Volunteers Rebuilding Darfur programme started in early 2012, when UNDP, with the support of the Government of Sudan and local nongovernmental organizations, selected 205 university graduates to receive the intensive training at the University of Nyala on subjects such as community mobilization, resource management, green business opportunities, micro-finance, entrepreneurship, climate change adaptation and reforestation. "We learned how to solve problems and how to apply this knowledge to our communities," says Mr. Aljeeb Abdulgabi, a programme participant originally from Dreege, South Darfur.



On 4 January 2014 in Dar Al Salam, North Darfur, Mr. Mohamed Hassan Hamid and Mr. Abdala Ahmed Mohamed, members of the Voluntary Network for Rural Helping and Development, stand in a storage warehouse of the Hibiscus Development Project, funded by UNDP and El Fasher University as part of the Youth Volunteers Rebuilding Darfur programme. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

“Part of our conflict is due to the lack of resources. The problem to solve is how to deal with it.”

—Amina Mustafa

While the one-month programme focused on training, the students described the experience as much more than that. Sharing accommodations provided by the Government, traveling together in UNAMID buses to the University each day, having meals together, socializing, and, of course, attending classes together and participating in lively discussions were all part of the daily experiences of these young students. The programme was an opportunity not only to learn new skills, but also to interact with other people, all from different backgrounds but facing similar challenges. "I really enjoyed all that time," says Mr. Mohamed Abdul Al Jabbar, a programme participant who came from El Daein to attend the sessions in Nyala.

The programme's facilitators were Sudanese professors sponsored by the Centres for Peace Studies from the

Universities of El Fasher, Zalingei and Nyala. Ms. Nagla Mohamed Bashir, a professor at Nyala University, says the programme serves as a conflict-prevention mechanism because it teaches social skills useful for resolving disputes. "Young generations want to contribute," says Ms. Bashir. "But they need to learn how to do so."

Students participating in the training sessions passionately engaged the topics in the course of their studies, debating issues that they face in their daily lives. In the end, they came away with information that they were then able to apply in their home communities. Such information included how to work with micro-credit transactions and how to manage natural resources effectively. "Part of our conflict is due to the lack of resources," says Ms. Amina Mustafa, one of the programme's participants originally from Al



On 14 January 2014, in Dar Al Salam, North Darfur, local farmer, Mr. Bashir Alduma Ibrahim, shows hibiscus flowers stored in a warehouse of the Hibiscus Development Project, funded by UNDP and El Fasher University as part of the Youth Volunteers Rebuilding Darfur programme. Hibiscus is popular in Darfur for making tea. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

Arfisen, South Darfur. “The problem to solve is how to deal with it.”

Out of these 205 young people who received the Youth Volunteers training, UNDP selected 139 to continue the programme as active contributors not only in their home communities but also in other parts of Darfur. Individuals in this group were deployed to 47 remote villages in North, West and South Darfur to work with the communities there and share their newly gained expertise. UNDP calculates that, since the programme commenced, those 139 volunteers have interacted with more than 6,000 community members, and have trained them on entrepreneurship and natural resource management.

The training-of-trainers process ultimately has an exponentially large upside. Just as the young volunteers were encouraged to share their knowledge, these 6,000 community members are passing on what they learn from the programme participants to their relatives, friends and colleagues. “I am sure we’ll bring change to our communities after all,” says Ms. Neimat Abduljabar Abdala, from Ka-

bum, South Darfur. “This new information is already building peace and development in my community.”

While Darfuris have a reputation for relying on time-tested tradition, communities are embracing and adapting to the new ideas with enthusiasm. Mr. Bashir Alduma Ibrahim, a farmer from Dar Al Salam, North Darfur, attended several workshops conducted in his village by the Youth Volunteers graduates. While he has relied on traditional farming methods in the past, he says he is developing new skills based on this new training but is struggling with the business aspect of his work. Dealing with credit requests to financial institutions is a daunting prospect for those not well versed in the practice. “It’s out of my capacity,” Mr. Ibrahim admits. Some of the training received by the young volunteers was designed to help farmers like Mr. Ibrahim specifically deal with such issues.

Now that the programme is well into its second year, its impact is evident not only in the knowledge-passing work the young volunteers are still undertaking in

their communities, but also in the many agricultural and business projects that have emerged in line with concepts taught in the month-long, intensive-training programme. These projects include new ways to manage food grown on farms and new microfinance services. UNDP indicates that these new initiatives alone have created some 2,500 new jobs, many of which are staffed by women.

Some of the young volunteers likely will continue their work in private organizations or local administration, says UNDP Project Officer Narve Rotwitt. It is the expectation of UNDP officers, and all those supporting similar development projects across Darfur, that young Darfuris will continue to put their hope for peace into action, taking ownership of Darfur’s economic recovery and development and leading this troubled region of Sudan into a brighter future. In the end, when peace does come to Darfur, the question of whether peace led to development or development led to peace will be left for historians, sociologists and political scientists to answer. ■

ENVIRONMENT

Darfur's Hairdressers Rally for the Environment

Hairdressers in North Darfur not only have formed a union to help raise standards of health and hygiene in salons across Darfur, but also have created an association to encourage environmentally friendly business practices.

BY EMADELDIN RIJAL



On 29 April 2014, Mr. Al-Mardi Nooreldin cuts a client's hair in his salon in El Fasher, North Darfur. Mr. Nooreldin, in addition to being a popular hairdresser, is the founder of the North Darfur Hairdressers Union and the Environmental Friends Association. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

Each day, on a bustling street in the largest market area in El Fasher, North Darfur, a beauty salon named Titanic fills with regular patrons, who sometimes must wait in long queues to be seen by one of the salon's busy hairdressers. Mr. Al-Mardi Nooreldin, the salon's owner, says the reason for his salon's popularity is because of the standards of hygiene and care maintained by his staff. "We ensure that any aspect that affects the grooming process and the general wellbeing of every visitor is taken into consideration," he says.

This focus on customer welfare, says Mr. Nooreldin, involves careful attention to

details such as hygiene, sterilization and the use of protective clothing. Titanic's owner points out that his hairdressers follow international standards in preventing exposure to infections, with special attention paid to the disposal of used materials and sharp objects. He says this approach is designed to create an appealing, sanitary and aesthetic environment in which his patrons can enjoy the benefits of world-class grooming.

Mr. Nooreldin explains that his focus on health and hygiene issues and his incorporation of internationally recognized practices inspired him to create what has come to be known as the North Darfur

Hairdressers Union. This union, says Mr. Nooreldin, is the first of its kind in Darfur. It is designed not only to bring together hairdressers to rekindle interest in the profession and the art of styling hair, but also to encourage high standards and best practices in salon operations.

One issue faced by hairdressers in North Darfur is the absence of official recognition by local authorities. This problem became evident when several salons were gutted by a fire in El Fasher's market. The authorities could not compensate the salon owners and staff affected by the fire because the businesses were not officially

recognized by the Government. “This incident made us feel the lack of official representation acutely,” says Mr. Nooreldin. “And it also directly led to the establishment of the union.”

Since its inception, the union has inculcated a sense of shared responsibility among its members, serving as a platform to mobilize change. Mr. Taha Ali, a young hairdresser, says he believes that the union works well as a way to raise common concerns. “It means a lot to us to have established the union,” he says. “Now we have a system in place that can govern our work and address the problems we face.”

Ms. Maysa Hussein, a salon owner and a member of the union, says she believes that the union’s efforts have significantly contributed to her work. In Darfur, unlike in many other parts of the world, female patrons are solely served by female hairdressers and aestheticians. Ms. Hussein notes that, consistent with this custom, the role hairstylists play also includes styling. Female hairdressers must therefore have knowledge of makeup and garment-draping in addition to expertise in cutting and styling hair.

Ms. Afaf Ahmed, an El Fasher resident, says the women in Darfur, even as the conflict continues, remain conscious of their appearance, particularly when it comes to social occasions and community gatherings. “Many women tend to pursue current styles, I can tell,” she says, adding that Darfuris typically attend large events wearing the latest fashions. “I always try to emulate the stylish modes that I come to recognize during these gatherings,” she says.

In her salon, Ms. Hussein works with such clients to style their hair and attire according to the latest trends, and says her staff is benefitting from the union. “The union takes care of our rights and has provided an opportunity for us to improve and update our skills,” she says, noting that her interaction with union members has led her to evaluate her operations and work toward modernizing them.

According to a survey carried out by members of the union, many of those who are working as hairdressers in North Darfur are not fully aware of international hygiene standards for hairdressing and salon operations. But the survey results also indicate that many North Darfur hairdressers believe their



On 29 April 2014, Ms. Mariam Sharafadeen, a hairdresser in El Fasher, North Darfur, creates an elaborate hairstyle for a client. Although the Darfur conflict continues, many people visit hairdressers in advance of large social occasions and community gatherings. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

“The connection between our daily activities as hairdressers and the environmental health of Darfur is fundamental. A hairdressing salon must be attractive and follow strict health and hygiene procedures; by extension, hairdressing is one of the most environmentally sensitive professions.”

—Al-Mardi Nooreldin

jobs must be practiced in a healthy and clean environment.

More than 1,500 hairdressers, men and women alike, are registered members of the union, and in regularly held meetings discuss professional safety, waste disposal,

the environment, infectious diseases and other issues related to their work. Despite the change generated by such meetings, says Mr. Nooreldin, much more remains to be done to transform the hairdressing community. This work, he explains,

involves cultivating a greater sense of responsibility for environmental issues.

“The connection between our daily activities as hairdressers and the environmental health of Darfur is fundamental,” he says. “A hairdressing salon must be attractive and follow strict health and hygiene procedures; by extension, hairdressing is one of the most environmentally sensitive professions.”

To enable Darfuri hairdressers to gain a better understanding of health issues and contribute to an increased awareness about the environment and human health, dedicated members of the union have partnered with key members of the community to form a group called the Environmental Friends Association. “The major focus of the Environmental Friends Association is individual health and overall environmental welfare,” says Mr. Nooreldin, who is the Chair of the association.

The new association, which operates in

tandem with the North Darfur Hairdressers Union, includes not only hairdressers, but also environmental experts and activists who are working to highlight issues related to health, waste disposal and the environment. Members of the association have developed strategic partnerships with several relevant bodies, including the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources; and the Ministry of Environment, Antiquities, Tourism and Wildlife.

Through close collaboration with these and other established Sudanese institutions, the association is working to create greater awareness about the use of environmentally friendly energy and increase an understanding of environmental and health issues. The association also works with Sudanese Ministries to develop regular reports on the environment and create plans that will lead to real change.

As one example of its recent work, the

association conducted a day-long clean-up campaign in El Fasher’s market areas. Among those who participated in the event were students from El Fasher University’s Faculty of Environmental Science and Resources; staff from the North Darfur Ministry of Environment; and UNAMID peacekeepers.

To garner additional support for its efforts, members of the association launched a weekly radio show called “People’s Taste Magazine,” which is broadcast on El Fasher Radio. The programme, prepared by the association members who are knowledgeable about the environment and general health issues, is designed to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility in community and individual health issues.

“The Environmental Friends Association is among one of the most active associations in Darfur,” says Mr. Mohammed Al Nahla, the North Darfur Minister of Environment, Antiquities, Tourism and Wildlife. According to Mr. Al Nahla, who helped establish and is actively supporting the Environmental Friends Association, the association’s members are effectively increasing Darfuris’ understanding of environmental issues.

Despite support from several Sudanese Ministries, which recently took the form of a training programme for more than 100 North Darfur hairdressers, Mr. Nooreldin says funding remains a critical issue. Although members of both the North Darfur Hairdressers Union and the Environmental Friends Association contribute personal funds to advance key projects, the work of the union mostly relies on the support of its partners to function.

“We have the will and the focus to achieve great things, but the lack of funding is proving to be detrimental to the pace of our work,” says Mr. Nooreldin. “At times, it is a massive stumbling block.”

Even without regular funding for the union or the association, Mr. Nooreldin says he and the other hairdressers, along with their partners, remain committed to raising awareness about progressive environmental policy and implementing programmes designed with the environment and human health in mind. “Our ultimate aim through the establishment of the union and the association is to contribute to economic rehabilitation and social cohesion in Darfur,” he says. ■

“Our ultimate aim through the establishment of the union and the association is to contribute to economic rehabilitation and social cohesion.”
—Al-Mardi Nooreldin

On 29 March 2014 in El Fasher, North Darfur, UNAMID peacekeepers and members of the Environmental Friends Association, a volunteer organization consisting mostly of hairdressers from the North Darfur Hairdressers Union, participate in a clean-up campaign in one of the markets in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



Working Toward Community Stabilisation

UNAMID's community-based, labour-intensive projects are designed to create unique socioeconomic opportunities for Darfur's at-risk young people, providing them with a platform to foster community development in this conflict-torn region.

BY EMADELDIN RIJAL



On 5 October 2013, Abdala Abbakar collects tomatoes on a tract of land cultivated by a group of young farmers working as part of a programme sponsored by UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration section in Forobaranga, West Darfur. This agricultural project involved training 75 young men and women in modern agricultural practices so they could farm during Darfur's dry season using minimal water. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

The decade-long conflict in Darfur, which has had a devastating impact on the region's existing infrastructure, has become a matter of growing concern for UNAMID, Sudanese institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies working in the region. This increasingly complex situation has led to an escalation of violence and massive new population displace-

ments. Fierce competition over access to basic services and natural resources continues to impede the overall peace process. Infrastructure rehabilitation, vocational training and community stabilisation have come to be seen as effective methods to address this volatile situation.

As one aspect of its work here to rehabilitate infrastructure, offer vocational training to at-risk young people and in

the end help stabilise communities, UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) section has been implementing a programme called community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs). Such projects fall within the framework of what has come to be known as second-generation DDR—a collection of strategies and policies designed to address peace and security at the

local level to help reduce conflict and set the stage for formal DDR activities.

Because the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) has not yet been signed by all armed movements, meaning no formal disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration can take place, UNAMID's DDR section has been implementing its violence-reduction strategy through CLIPs that include the construction of youth centres and schools, and involve vocational training in electronics, welding, handcrafts, brick-making and so forth. These projects focus not only on vocational skills training and in many cases facilitating infrastructure development, but also on fostering reconciliation across Darfur.

"Inequitable access to livelihood opportunities heightens tensions at the community level and fuels local conflict, especially in those communities that are receiving a large number of returnees," says Mr. Aderemi Adekoya, Chief of UNAMID's DDR section. Mr. Adekoya explains that, so far, the CLIPs conducted across Darfur are designed to address issues associated with large groups of at-risk young people who lack employment opportunities and thus may turn to armed movements or criminal behaviour to earn a living.

"We estimate that the average number of young men and women who are unemployed in Darfur is upwards of 40 per cent," he says. The education system in Darfur, while steadily improving following years of conflict that damaged or destroyed basic infrastructure, does not yet have sufficient facilities or offer enough programmes to meet the needs of all the young Darfuris requiring vocational training beyond primary and secondary school. Competition over access to those educational services that are offered has been a source of tension that the CLIPs programme is designed to address.

Since the commencement of the programme in July 2012, DDR has implemented 59 CLIPs in more than 50 communities across Darfur, directly engaging



On 5 October 2013 in Forobaranga, West Darfur, young men and women work the land as part of a programme sponsored by UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration section. Following its launch in January 2013, residents of Forobaranga became indirect beneficiaries, as the project led to the proliferation of agricultural products in local markets, even in the dry season. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

“Inequitable access to livelihood opportunities heightens tensions at the community level and fuels local conflict, especially in those communities that are receiving a large number of returnees.”

—Aderemi Adekoya

more than 5,000 individuals and indirectly benefitting tens of thousands of people. Those working in the CLIPs projects are young men and women typically between 18 and 35 years old. Participation in the projects does not depend on political, movement or tribal affiliation; people with disabilities are encouraged to join in.

The young people participating in the projects acquire the kind of livelihood and life skills designed to enhance their employability. In the process of acquiring these skills, those involved in these projects have been rebuilding the infrastructure of their fragile communities. “We have focused the CLIPs programme in

areas where a high rate of unemployment and scarce community facilities have increased the levels of small-scale criminality and fostered social conflict and instability,” says Mr. Adekoya

Ms. Fatima Al-Tahir, a 24-year-old, is one example of a CLIPs participant. Ms. Al-Tahir was selected to be a member of an agricultural project consisting of 75 young people in Forobaranga, West Darfur. Divorced, with four children, Ms. Al-Tahir says she felt fortunate to be included in the project. She originally worked as a farmer, which in Darfur is, at best, an unstable profession; the rain here is unpredictable, and desertification has affected



On 25 March 2014, a group of young Darfuris participate in a training session on electronics at the Mellit Technical School in North Darfur as part of a three-month programme sponsored by UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration section. The Mellit programme provided vocational training in seven different fields, benefitting 150 at-risk young people in the area. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

“The young people’s attitudes have changed through the introduction of new ideas and values, such as solidarity, teamwork and cooperation—all necessary for promoting peaceful coexistence in Darfur.”

—Al-Sanoosi Yousif

the ability of farmers to cultivate in certain areas. “At times, we couldn’t harvest much of what we planted,” says Ms. Al-Tahir.

As part of the CLIPs programme, Ms. Al-Tahir, together with the rest of the group, received training in modern agricultural practices. The group worked on a piece of land, leased with UNAMID funding, and received tools for their work, including water pumps and generators. Using the skills gained from the training sessions, the members of this project cultivated the land during the dry season in Darfur. “In the past, we used to suffer in our agricultural activities, especially during

the dry season,” she says. “But with the help of UNAMID’s agricultural project, we have made use of even the winter season because of the new methods we have learned for using water.”

Following its launch in January 2013, Forobaranga residents themselves became indirect beneficiaries. “The project helped address the issue of water scarcity for the people living in the surrounding areas,” says Mr. Al-Sanoosi Yousif, Head of Forobaranga’s Social Welfare Department, noting that the project led to the proliferation of agricultural products, such as onions, beans

and sugar cane, in the local markets, even in the dry season. According to Mr. Yousif, the project provided many families with the prospect of generating a better income and contributing to the overall development of the community.

Speaking in general about the CLIPs programme, Mr. Yousif says the projects are tangibly helping reduce conflict, especially because the programme is bringing young people together from different tribes so they can achieve a shared objective, side by side. “UNAMID’s CLIPs programme has resulted in a growing sense of harmony among Darfuri youth,” he says, calling the projects an agent of positive change.

Mr. Yousif also says that because the projects are providing the young participants with vocational training, their confidence about the future is growing. “The young people’s attitudes have changed through the introduction of new ideas and values, such as solidarity, teamwork and cooperation—all neces-

sary for promoting peaceful coexistence in Darfur,” he says.

While a core goal of the CLIPs programme has been to reduce violence and promote peace among Darfuri communities, these projects also are serving as a solid foundation for economic and social recovery. Cutting across different fields, such as agriculture and trade, CLIPs are creating career paths for young people in an environment in which vocational training is a scarce commodity.

The case of Mr. Mohammed Hussein, a 26-year-old who is part of a 15-member group of young people selected to run a restaurant as part of the CLIPs programme in Forobaranga, illustrates how the programme works as a fulcrum for changing socioeconomic dynamics for individuals and communities. Mr. Hussein describes how the CLIPs programme has provided him with economic opportunities in his hometown, close to his family. “Prior to the CLIPs programme, for several years, I had been travelling across Darfur, working menial jobs,” he says. “Because of this programme, I have learned new skills and I’m now gainfully employed, working near my family.”

Another focus of the DDR section’s CLIPs programme is to construct youth centres to mobilize Darfur’s young people. With many of them now built, these centres are serving as places where young people can meet, discuss ideas and engage in educational activities, such as classes to counter illiteracy and workshops that address HIV/AIDS.

The Ardamata youth centre, on the outskirts of El Geneina, West Darfur, is among several dozen centres that have been constructed with the support of UNAMID’s DDR section to create spaces where young people can talk together. “Establishing this youth centre was a dream come true,” says Mr. Mustafa Mohammed, Chair of the Ardamata Youth Association. “Such centres for young people can actually help prevent them from using drugs and from getting involved in unlawful activities and conflict.”

While the profiles of CLIPs participants are diverse, the young workers all share a similar passion for acquiring new vocational skills and having a rewarding experience that leads to potential new

careers. “We have focused the CLIPs programme in areas where a high rate of unemployment and scarce community facilities have increased the levels of small-scale criminality and fostered social conflict and instability,” says Mr. Adekoya, citing as one example Althoura Shemal, a community located on the outskirts of El Fasher, North Darfur. During the course of building a community centre there, the participants in the project developed new skills as masons, painters and electricians.

Other examples include the construction of two community centres in Tawilla, North Darfur, during which dozens of young people learned new vocational skills, and a dedicated training programme for 150 young people in Mellit, North Darfur. Like other CLIPs, the Tawilla and Mellit programmes were set up to em-

power participating young people and to promote peace at the community level.

Mr. Adekoya says he is hopeful that the CLIPs programme, along with the many other programmes run by the Government of Sudan and nongovernmental organizations working in Darfur, will help stabilise communities and, in doing so, directly contribute to Darfur-wide peace efforts. “Despite the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement, we are seeing real benefits of such projects, particularly as they help young people turn from violence and rebuild their communities,” he says. “Without recourse to vocational or economic opportunities—one of Darfur’s fundamental problems these programmes are designed to address—many young people continue to be drawn into the conflict in one way or another.” ■

“We have focused the CLIPs programme in areas where a high rate of unemployment and scarce community facilities have increased the levels of small-scale criminality and fostered social conflict and instability.”

—Aderemi Adekoya

On 25 March 2014, two young women attend a computer course at the Mellit Technical School in North Darfur. The programme, sponsored by UNAMID’s Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration section, provided vocational training in different fields. These programmes, which provide participants with vocational training, are designed to stimulate economic recovery and stabilise communities. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



A Multifaceted Approach to Community Support

In a project conducted by the World Food Programme, women from Tawila are learning not only how to make fuel-efficient stoves, but also how to cook more nutritious food for their children with locally sourced ingredients.

BY ALBERT GONZÁLEZ FARRAN

In a conflict zone, humanitarian aid and development programmes typically work in tandem, with the idea being that, when both happen simultaneously, communities become more independent in facing new challenges as they emerge. In Darfur, as the conflict continues, the people living here are struggling with drought, malnutrition and disease, among many other challenges. The more prepared they are for dealing with these issues directly, the less they will be forced to rely on assistance from the agencies and organizations working to help them here.

As part of its core work in Darfur, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributes food to the people, but the agency also runs innovative initiatives that are uniquely designed to help communities across Darfur become more self-sufficient. Several of these programmes, implemented at the same time, are helping the people of Darfur face their challenges more effectively. In these programmes, WFP has been teaching residents in camps for displaced people how to use environmentally sustainable cooking methods, in a hygienic environment, to make locally sourced, nutritious food.

The work of WFP in the Rwanda camp for internally displaced people, located in the Tawila locality of North Darfur, represents one good example of this multidimensional strategy. Working in the camp since 2011, WFP personnel have conducted several training programmes designed to help women, men and children become more independent in the camp. While several people have participated in the workshops, WFP personnel estimate that more than 8,000 camp residents have learned the skills, while those who have been trained also have been training others.

The WFP training focuses on developing environmentally friendly approaches to cooking and nutrition. It involves showing residents how to make highly efficient stoves from local materials and how to fuel them with fire briquettes made from animal and household waste. WFP designed this project to offer a safe, simple

and inexpensive way to cook food in Darfur's desert conditions. Because these stoves use 70 per cent less firewood than standard stoves, they reduce the number of times women must walk long distances to collect wood and therefore also diminish the risks the women sometimes face on these trips.

The stoves can be made in several different shapes and dimensions, depending on the final intended use and the size of the pots. In addition to working to help save time and fuel, the stoves have become an income-generating product for those who have learned how to make them. The stoves typically sell for 10 Sudanese pounds (a little more than one U.S. dollar).

In addition to conducting training on how to make these stoves, the WFP workshops involve education on using local ingredients and cooking nutritious meals with cereals, legumes, sugar and oil. The training not only involves instruction on how to prepare these ingredients efficiently to maximize their nutritional benefit, but also includes information about health practices related to food.

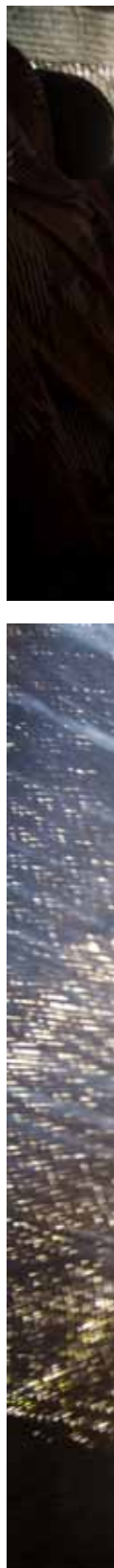
The Rwanda camp's community centre, which has served as the location where much of this training takes place, functions as a versatile facility. Apart from using the centre for workshops, the displaced families living in the camp typically visit the centre each day to discuss their concerns and share information. As a result of the workshops conducted by WFP personnel, and the information shared across the community, malnutrition is no longer an issue in Tawila, unlike in many other parts of Darfur.

Still, despite the positive results of the programme, WFP officials and volunteers are working daily with camp residents to check pregnant women, new mothers and children living in the camp. Closely monitoring the size and weight of newly born children, and checking on the progress of pregnant women, is all part of the approach WFP is undertaking in the camp to ensure the nutritional and health needs of the residents are being met. ■

1 A woman and her child wait to meet with World Food Programme personnel, who are working in the food-distribution centre in the Rwanda camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Tawila, North Darfur, to ensure the health needs of residents are met.

2 Two community volunteers measure Mahadia Hussein, age two, in a food-distribution centre in the Rwanda IDP camp. WFP officials and volunteers work daily with camp residents to check children living in the camp for malnutrition.

3 A child rests while her mother works to construct a fuel-efficient stove in the Rwanda IDP camp. Since 2011, WFP personnel have been conducting workshops on how to make the stoves, which use 70 per cent less firewood than traditional stoves.





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4 A woman lights the briquettes in a fuel-efficient stove. These fuel-efficient stoves not only offer a safer, less expensive and more environmentally friendly way to cook food, but also offer a way for camp residents to generate income. In the market, the stoves typically sell for 10 Sudanese pounds (a little more than one U.S. dollar).

5 Women use fuel-efficient stoves to cook their meals in the Rwanda IDP camp. While several people have participated in the WFP workshops to learn how to make these stoves, WFP personnel estimate that more than more than 8,000 camp residents have learned the skills, while those who have been trained also have been training others.

6 A woman helps her child wash her hands before eating in WFP's food-distribution centre in the Rwanda camp for IDPs in Tawila, North Darfur. WFP's seminars in the camp not only have involved instruction on how to prepare local ingredients to maximize their nutritional benefit, but also how to handle food safely and hygienically.

7 A community volunteer prepares a tray with food for WFP's food-distribution centre in the Rwanda IDP camp. In addition to conducting training on how to make fuel-efficient stoves, WFP workshops in the camp involve education on using local ingredients and cooking nutritious meals with cereals, legumes, sugar and oil.

8 A child eats lentils made by local volunteers in the WFP food-distribution centre in the Rwanda IDP camp in Tawila, North Darfur. The food was made using fuel-efficient stoves that use 70 per cent less firewood than regular stoves.



Through the Lens: An Interview with Mohamed Noureldin

In an interview with *Voices of Darfur*, Mr. Mohamed Noureldin, one of Sudan's most accomplished photographers, talks about his approach to his work and expresses his ideas about the differences and similarities between art photography and photojournalism.

BY ALA MAYYAH



On 3 February 2014, Mr. Mohamed Noureldin stands in front of one of his award-winning photos in his studio in Khartoum, Sudan. Mr. Noureldin, who has won numerous national and international awards for his photography, currently works for Reuters. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

Originally from El Fasher, North Darfur, Mr. Mohamed Noureldin studied graphic design at the College of Fine and Applied Arts in Khartoum, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in 1986, and later obtaining a Master's degree in photojournalism. Mr. Noureldin, who currently works for Reuters, has become one of Sudan's most well-known and well-respected photographers. Throughout his career, he has won national and international awards, achieving widespread recognition through what he characterises humbly as dedication and hard work.

While his base of operations in Khartoum might be geographically distant from Darfur, he says that living in the Sudanese capital has not diminished his connection to the region of his birth and the struggles and concerns of the people living here. He frequently travels to Darfur on assignment and for photography-related humanitarian projects.

Voices of Darfur spoke to Mr. Noureldin to gain insight into his approach to his work and to hear his thoughts about the differences and similarities between art photography and photojournalism.

Voices of Darfur: How did you become interested in photography?

Noureldin: My interest in photography was kindled in college. I was studying graphic design, but in the second year of my Bachelor's degree, I found myself drawn to photography. I wanted to tell stories and express my thoughts through photos. At first, I started with photography as an art form, backed up by my familiarity with various types of artistic photography and other subjects, including aesthetics.

I started mixing different art forms in my photos and developed a personal style

of artistic expression without following any specific trend. I applied my artistic touch to various kinds of photos, which I included in most of my graduation projects. After I graduated, I began working for newspapers as a news photographer and, eventually, as an art director. To date, I have been working as a photographer while also undertaking graphic design projects. Both fields are the pillars that shape my professional identity.

VoD: Today you do both news and artistic photography. Which one do you relate to more?

Noureldin: I relate to both equally. I started with visual art, after which I worked in photojournalism. But I make sure that my news photos incorporate the human element, which is an important aesthetic value in professional news photography. I stressed this aspect of photography in my Master's degree thesis, which was titled "Photojournalism: Between Professional and Creative Value."

VoD: Could you expand a bit on the importance of the human element in news photography?

Noureldin: The human element in news photos adds aesthetic value to a photo and makes it stay in people's minds. Actually, most international photo agencies take this element into account when they pick a photo of the day, of the month or of the year. It is the human component in a photo story that attracts the audience and stimulates public acceptance and compassion toward the subject.

Such photos can serve as a bridge between nations. For example, many iconic photos on starvation in Africa display a mother and her child suffering in dry, arid surroundings. This is an example of the human element. This is an example of humanizing a photo story.

But a good photo doesn't necessarily have to be about suffering. Documentary photos of difficult areas should depict all aspects of life, including moments of joy. People can experience happiness and laugh even in tough circumstances. This often helps them endure difficulties more effectively. Therefore, positive messages can be communicated by showing human resilience in news photography.



A photograph by award-winning Darfuri photographer Mr. Mohamed Noureldin. Mr. Noureldin says he tries to focus on the human element in his work, both in his news photography and in his art photos, to engage audiences and inspire compassion.

VoD: How has your work for Reuters added to your experience?

Noureldin: I've been working for Reuters since 2005. To me, Reuters is like an open window and a platform through which many of Sudan's issues can be showcased to the world. As for professional experience, my involvement with Reuters has definitely contributed to enhancing my skills as a photographer. A large number of photographers from across the globe work for Reuters; the competition between us is intense. The agency is selective, choosing only 24 of the best pictures every day. This always motivates me to deliver my best work in order to achieve recognition among other international photographers.

VoD: You have designed many artistic posters that include an amalgamation of photos and poetic text, such as the one that says "We call you, you who are forgotten... We retain you." Do such words serve a purely design-oriented purpose or is there a deeper message contained within them?

Noureldin: Actually, my work relies on philosophy expressed aesthetically. The storytelling you mentioned, for example, is one of 14 photos designed to express the life of an ordinary person, who faces stress, chaos and

negativity. This person could be insignificant, but can play an effective role in the course of life to transform his or her harsh reality into a better one. Because the loss of humanity is so difficult, my message is designed to sow the seeds that will germinate and grow something that will regain what is lost. By being active and positive, one can start life anew. My message here is to show the importance of the ordinary forgotten people because they can be active players in their own lives, rather than lead a passive existence.

Similarly, my other photos are also structured in groups. Each group tells a story or articulates an opinion about a subject. I favour conveying meanings indirectly through symbolic photos and text. Also, I merge multiple photos to create one main picture that states my idea creatively.

To me, the camera is a tool, among others, to express my vision or philosophy. Photography can be an expressive art, one that serves as a conduit for the photographer's opinions and vision regarding life. Any art that depicts merely the aesthetic without an underlying philosophy is incomplete, because the purpose of art is to communicate.

VoD: Tell us about some of the awards you have won for your photographs.

Noureldin: I have won both international and national awards in photography. I received my first international award in 1995 at a contest organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Tokyo, Japan, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the UN. The contest, conducted under the theme “Living Together,” received thousands of photographic entries from more than 24 countries. This award is of great value to me, not only because it was my first award but also because of the importance of its theme—coexistence.

Coexistence can happen in Africa only through educating our children. Proper education teaches them respect for diversity and enables them to get along peacefully with those who are different; this is how they can create a better future. I illustrated this concept by picturing a young boy and girl standing together under a large book used as an umbrella. This photograph greatly resembled the UNESCO logo.

Another award I won was in 2010 at the African Film Festival in Spain. My selected photos were part of 14 sequenced photographs I produced to reveal the loss of humanity and the right of every person not just to be alive but also to lead a decent life. Also, I have been the recipient of national awards, such as the award for Best Photographer of the Year, in 1995, from the National Council of the Sudanese Press and Publications. I value these awards immensely.

VoD: Could you tell us a bit about your photography related to humanitarian work?

Noureldin: As a photographer, I have covered numerous humanitarian projects for UN agencies, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund and the World Food Programme. I have done photo work for Doctors Without Borders. And I have worked with the World Bank on a book on development.

VoD: Has your stay in Khartoum detached you from Darfur emotionally?

Noureldin: Not at all. Although I’m settled in Khartoum, I often go to Darfur for work. I provide photo coverage for a range of events in Darfur, with Reuters, UNAMID or one of the UN agencies. I am intimately acquainted with Darfur’s issues and profoundly sympathetic with the people of Darfur for the difficult times they are going through.

VoD: How has the ongoing conflict



On 25 March 2014, Reuters photojournalist Mr. Mohamed Noureldin takes pictures at the Alabassi camp for internally displaced people in Mellit, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

affected your life or your work?

Noureldin: Like all sincere Darfuris, I’m sad to see our land torn by conflict, and I long for peace and stability. Moreover, I find myself divided between two critical lines when I am on a photographic assignment in Darfur. On the one hand, I feel deeply touched by the suffering of Darfuris and the large number of displaced. On the other, my job requires me to be neutral when I take photos because I usually represent a neutral third party, such as a news agency or an organisation.

VoD: Do you think Darfuri photojournalists can contribute to advancing peace in Darfur?

Noureldin: In general, there are only a few photographers in Darfur and, unfortunately, most of them lack the professional requirements for photojournalism. It is important that news photography delivers an event neutrally. However, many photographers solely serve their employer’s policy, focusing on the officials of the institution in their photos rather than the actual event. So, sadly, we don’t see Darfuri photographers playing an effective role in addressing Darfur’s issues or in contributing to advancing peace. On a different note, news photographers also face challenges, such as the difficulty in accessing an event’s location for security or logistical reasons, especially in remote, rugged areas.

VoD: Would it be possible to establish a centre for teaching and supporting photography in Darfur, similar to

the Sudan Photography Network in Khartoum?

Noureldin: Yes, I think it would be a successful venture and would interest many young Darfuris. Photography is an art form as well as an income-generating craft. So I believe a photography centre would be well received among young Darfuris. But such a centre needs support from either a government institution or another such organization to cover costs and keep it going.

VoD: What are your thoughts about digital cameras versus traditional film?


Noureldin: Digital cameras are a technological revolution. However, the foundations of this revolution were laid by the older cameras. Digital cameras are much faster than the older ones, and provide more photos in less time. They can take photos in low light, unlike older cameras, because they are designed to work in all circumstances. Additionally, they provide greater storage space. But the older cameras give you more control over the subject, with a personal touch, in terms of light and shade.

VoD: Do you still use the older types of cameras on occasion?

Noureldin: Yes, I shoot some of my art photography projects with older camera models that use different film sizes. I also use a darkroom for developing film.

VoD: What message would you like to send to the people of Darfur?

Noureldin: I hope all of us, as Darfuris, show the world our generosity, bravery and love for life by living together peacefully. ■



مد الجدار لسانه
أراه لا ريب
إلي يقصد
وربما الى الشيخ الذى أولاه
ظهره.
واليه بوجهي اجهت
أما روحى
فقد كانت
تلمس الحجرة والمكان

An example of Mr. Mohamed Nouredin's photographic artwork. The piece here is part of a group of 14 images that Mr. Nouredin created to depict a book of poems published by Professor Ali Almak. The poem presented here translates as "The wall stretched out its tongue / I see that it is certainly for me / And maybe also for the old man who turned his back to it / And I turn my face to him / As for my soul, it was groping in the chamber and the space."



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