

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

# VOICES

of Darfur

NOVEMBER 2013

## Darfur Dances

Interviewing  
Elfadhil Khatir

### Darfur's Young Entrepreneurs

*Finding success in a  
challenging job market*

### The Struggle to End Child Malnutrition

*Meeting the needs of the  
most vulnerable*

### The Grand River Valleys of Darfur

*Highly valuable but  
underused resource*



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS  
MISSION IN DARFUR  
(UNAMID)



*On 10 October 2013 in the El Fasher Cultural Centre in North Darfur, a member of the Sarafi drama group performs a traditional Darfuri dance under the guidance of Mr. Elfadhil Khatir, a lecturer at El Fasher University. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

I'm pleased to introduce the November 2013 issue of *Voices of Darfur*, which, like other recent 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 "Darfur's Young Entrepreneurs," Mr. Mohamad Almahady offers an in-depth look at how Darfur's ongoing conflict has complicated the economic situation here, putting a strain on the region's fragile job market. In examining how the global economic downturn has affected Darfur, Mr. Almahady characterises the economic reality of the situation through interviews with graduates who have been unable to find employment in their areas of expertise. Despite high unemployment rates, many of Darfur's young graduates are making their way toward success, fulfilling their ambitions by launching small ventures designed to meet the needs of their communities.

In "A Community Comes Together to Protect Street Children," Mr. Albert González Farran presents a photo essay designed to highlight how 50 young people are building a first-of-its-kind centre in El Fasher, North Darfur, to provide assistance to more than 3,000 street children in the area. While the completed centre no doubt will have a tangible impact, the construction process itself is no small achievement. Some 50 young men and women from El Fasher and neighbouring communities are learning vocational skills as they build the centre, which is being constructed as part of UNAMID's community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs) programme.

In "The Grand River Valleys of Darfur," Mr. Emadeldin Rijal describes the social and economic importance of Darfur's seasonal rivers—the *nadis*. These temporary rivers are a signature aspect of the

region's stark landscape, and a foundation on which the social and economic lives of many of Darfur's people are built. Mr. Rijal describes how these under-used seasonal resources not only are sustaining those living in the nearby lands with the water they need for farming and caring for their animals, but also are playing a role in fostering economic development and stability in the region.

In "Darfur's Struggle to Eliminate Child Malnutrition," Ms. Sharon Lukunka writes about how, in the conflict-torn region of Darfur, where a decade-long struggle has led to widespread population displacements, food shortages and public health issues, child malnutrition remains an ongoing problem. With food shortages a daily reality for many of Darfur's displaced families, children suffering from malnutrition have become commonplace in the region's health centres. Ms. Lukunka describes how UN agencies, the Government of Sudan and non-governmental organisations are working diligently to address this pressing issue.

Finally, in our cover feature, "Darfur Dances," Ms. Ala Mayyahi presents an interview with El Fasher University lecturer Elfadhil Khatir, who is one of a small group of Darfuri academics conducting research on Darfur's cultural performances to develop a deeper understanding of their historical development and social impact. In the interview, Mr. Khatir offers insight about the unique focus of his scholarship and teaching, including the traditional dances in Darfur, their various forms and their relation to the social lives of Darfuris.

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](mailto:unamid-publicinformation@un.org).

**Kirk L. Kroeker**  
Head of Publications

## ON THE COVER



Mr. Elfadhil Khatir is one of a small group of Darfuri academics who conducts research on Darfur's cultural performances to develop a deeper understanding of their historical development and social impact. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



On 5 October 2013 in Forobaranga, West Darfur, a child fetches water at a water point built by a group of young farmers working as part of a UNAMID-funded project designed to teach vocational skills to at-risk young people. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## VOICES of Darfur

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## UNAMID Head Urges Progress on Doha Document

On 23 September 2013 in Doha, Qatar, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative (JSR) and Joint Chief Mediator (JCM), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, attended the sixth meeting of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) Implementation Follow-up Commission (IFC). Mr. Chambas also attended, earlier the same day, the inaugural meeting of the Council for Reconstruction and Development in Darfur, which reviewed achievements in capacity-building and institutional development.

Both meetings were chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Qatar, H.E. Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, and were attended by Sudanese Minister of State Amin Hassan Omer, Darfur Regional Authority Chair El Tigani Seisi and Mr. Osman Nahar of the Justice and Equality Movement - Sudan (JEM/Bashar).

In his opening remarks at the IFC meeting, Mr. Chambas told those in attendance that achieving substantial progress on the ground is critically important to the success of the peace process, as the DDPD had raised expectations. "The absence of such progress could lead to scepticism and diminishing faith in the Doha Document," he said, noting that the deteriorating security situation, increasingly marked by localised inter-tribal fighting in many parts of Darfur, could undermine the DDPD implementation and stall development programmes.

The JSR expressed satisfaction with the progress made in the area of justice, particularly with regard to the Special Court and the intention of the Special Prosecutor for Darfur to investigate the killing of the leader of JEM/Bashar and of seven UNAMID peacekeepers in Khor Abeche in July. He noted that more progress is required in the



On 23 September 2013 in Doha, Qatar, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas (right), attended the sixth meeting of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur Implementation Follow-up Commission. Photo courtesy of Qatar.

areas of justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Mr. Chambas spoke of his hope that the consultations he held in Arusha with two non-signatory movements "will lead to a more realistic outcome, which will bring an end to violence and usher in a stable environment and durable peace in the region and in Sudan as a whole."

The JSR reaffirmed UNAMID's commitment to the peace process in Darfur: "I can confirm to you that UNAMID

will do everything within our capacity to facilitate and bolster the efforts of this Council, the signatories to the DDPD and the implementing humanitarian agencies to make the Darfur development strategy real to the people of Darfur." The JSR expressed his appreciation to the Government of Qatar for its "unwavering support to the peace efforts through its work as part of the Darfur mediation" and through hosting both meetings. ■

## UNAMID Chief Pays Tribute to Fallen Senegalese Peacekeepers

On 15 October 2013, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Mohamed Ibn Chambas visited the Mission's regional headquarters in El Geneina, West Darfur, following a 13 October ambush that led to the death of three UNAMID peacekeepers from the Senegalese Formed Police Unit.

During the commemoration ceremony, the JSR commended the bravery of Mission personnel who died while trying to bring peace to Darfur. "We are here to remember these brave peacekeepers who made the ultimate sacrifice while helping the vulnerable people of

Darfur," the JSR said. "Their sad loss is painful to all of us, but we are here to remember them on this holy day, the first day of Eid al-Adha."

The JSR noted that he is carrying a personal message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon and Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous. "They both asked me to convey their deepest sympathies and encourage you to continue to resolutely discharge the noble duty you came to perform of protecting the vulnerable populations and working for peace in Darfur," he said. ■



On 15 October 2013, UNAMID Joint Special Representative Mohamed Ibn Chambas visited the Mission's regional headquarters in El Geneina, West Darfur, following a 13 October ambush that led to the death of three UNAMID peacekeepers from the Senegalese Formed Police Unit. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## UNAMID and Youth of Darfur Launch Peace Campaign

On 23 September 2013, thousands of people gathered in the Al Zubair Stadium in El Fasher, North Darfur, to participate in the launch of UNAMID's "We Need Peace Now" campaign. The event, organised by UNAMID and the National Sudanese Youth Union, not only kicked off the new campaign but also served to commemorate the International Day of Peace. The event's activities included a parade in the city centre, traditional performances and a music concert.

UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative Joseph Mutaboba urged the participants to start acting as ambassadors of peace. "Lasting peace in Darfur will not be achieved without your participation and commitment," he said. "Peace in Darfur is

your hope for a brighter future; peace in Darfur is your right." Mr. Mutaboba went on to express his hope that the parties to the conflict and every peace-loving person in Darfur not only will listen to what the young people have to say but also will play an active role in restoring lasting peace in Darfur.

The Chair of North Darfur's Youth Union, Mr. Salih Ahmed Elshaikh, said that time had come for Darfur's young people to discard tribalism. "Young people are strong enough to build peace and achieve security and prosperity, and it is time to sit with the armed movements to discuss the issues of the homeland," he said.

UNAMID's "We Need Peace Now" campaign, which is being rolled out across Darfur, is designed to encour-



On 23 September 2013 in El Fasher, North Darfur, women wearing traditional Darfuri outfits dance in Al Zubair Stadium to help launch UNAMID's "We Need Peace Now" campaign. The event, organised by the Mission and the National Sudanese Youth Union, drew thousands of people and served to commemorate the International Day of Peace. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

age young people to become committed participants in the peace process. UNAMID is planning seminars for young people across Darfur to raise

awareness about fundamental principles of justice, equality and conflict prevention through collective participation and dialogue. **11**

### El Fasher, North Darfur



On 20 October 2013, members of UNAMID's Police component load a coffin containing a fallen Senegalese peacekeeper to be repatriated to Senegal. Three Senegalese peacekeepers lost their lives in an ambush in West Darfur on the morning of 13 October, while escorting a water convoy from El Geneina to UNAMID's regional headquarters in West Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## El Fasher, North Darfur



**On 1 September 2013**, inmates of Al Shallah Federal Prison dance during the opening ceremony of "Prison Social Week," a series of events sponsored by UNAMID in collaboration with the State Prison Administration of North Darfur to raise awareness about the role of prisons in facilitating the rehabilitation on inmates and preparing them for community reintegration. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## Darfuri Leaders Discuss Ways to Address Conflict

**O**n 9 September 2013, prominent Darfuri leaders took part in a conference to discuss the root causes of the recent tribal conflicts in Darfur and find possible solutions for sustainable peaceful coexistence amongst tribes. The forum, which was held in Khartoum and organized by UNAMID, brought together more than 114 Darfuris residing in Sudan's capitol.

Those present at the event included parliamentarians; former Walis (Governors) and Ministers; Government officials, civil society representatives and community leaders; and representatives from women's and youth groups. The Chair of the Darfur Regional Authority, Dr. Eltigani Seisi, and UNAMID's Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR), Mr. Joseph Mutaboba, delivered re-

marks to open the conference.

In his opening speech, the DJSR emphasized the importance of the conference. "As key political, social and intellectual leaders of Darfur, your meeting today demonstrates your readiness to address the recurring tribal conflicts and find solutions for sustainable peaceful coexistence in Darfur," Mr. Mutaboba said, adding that social peace and reconciliation are key prerequisites for security, stability and development.

"We should all work together and cooperate effectively in preventing further bloodshed and tribal conflicts," he said. "Help us to help you."

Following the meeting's general discussion, which focused on helping reverse the recent escalation of tribal vio-



*On 9 September 2013 in Khartoum, Sudan, UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative Joseph Mutaboba delivers a speech at a conference to address the root causes of the tribal conflicts in Darfur. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

lence, the participants recommended the disarmament of armed people, the establishment of laws that regulate relations between farmers and pastoralists and the settlement of disputes over land resources.

This event was the first of

a series of conferences that UNAMID's Civil Affairs section has been organising in the five states of Darfur to address the causes of tribal clashes in the region and to chart the best ways of promoting social peace. ■

## UNAMID Inaugurates Secondary School in Shangil Tobaya

On 3 September 2013 in Shangil Tobaya, North Darfur, UNAMID's Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) section formally handed over a newly built Secondary School for Girls to the community. The finished school, constructed as part of DDR's community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs) programme, consists of three classrooms, an office, a latrine and a surrounding fence. The new school, whose implementation was facilitated by local non-governmental organisation Al-naha, is one of many such projects undertaken across Darfur.

UNAMID's DDR section has been implementing CLIPs as a violence-reduction strategy designed to support the efforts of the Government of Sudan in addressing the needs of at-risk youth and other vulnerable groups in communities and in camps for displaced people. The projects focus not only on building vocational skills, and

in many cases facilitating infrastructure development, but also on fostering reconciliation across Darfur.

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—which mostly consist of rebuilding community infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed—acquire the kind of livelihood and life skills that will enhance their employability and social integration.

The handover ceremony in Shangil Tobaya was a festive occasion that drew members of the local community and representatives from the North Darfur Ministry of Education. Mr. Ahmed Miski, a representative from the Ministry of Education, expressed gratitude to UNA-



On 3 September 2013 in Shangil Tobaya, North Darfur, students celebrate the opening of the new Secondary School for Girls built in UNAMID's community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs) programme. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

MID for supporting the project and bringing about positive change in the community.

The new school's Headmaster, Abdalla Ishaq, praised the project and noted that education is the backbone for development, peaceful coexistence and stability in Darfur. "We used to share the Boys School in the evening, but now we have a school for girls," said Headmaster Abdalla Ishaq. "This new school will encourage teachers and students to perform well."

Mr. Freddie Bategereza, an officer in UNAMID's DDR section, spoke during the handover celebration and noted that while protecting civilians, supporting the peace process and providing security for the humanitarian work across Darfur are the primary objectives of the Mission, UNAMID is dedicated to implementing similar development projects in collaboration with the community members and local partners as a way to facilitate lasting peace and stability. ■

## Forobaranga, West Darfur



On 14 September 2013, internally displaced children attend class in the Bakht Alrida Primary School. The school, which has only four teachers for more than 300 students, lacks desks and chairs and is in need of rehabilitation. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



## Forobaranga, West Darfur



**On 5 October 2013**, a trader ties the leg of a camel at the animal market in Forobaranga. This animal market is said to be one of the largest of its kind in Africa. Animals are exported from this point to Libya, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## Conference Brings Tribal Leaders Together

**O**n 30 September and 1 October 2013, more than 100 leaders from North Darfur tribes, along with representatives from North Darfur's native administration, participated in a conference to discuss the causes of tribal conflicts in Darfur and to propose possible solutions for sustainable peaceful coexistence. The conference, sponsored by UNAMID, took place in El Fasher, North Darfur.

"I believe that Darfur is rich both above the ground and under the ground," said Ms. Retta Reddy, Head of UNAMID's Civil Affairs section, in her opening remarks. "It is rich above the ground through its human resources—all of you, the great intellectuals and technocrats with wisdom and skills to meet all the needs of Dar-

fur." Ms. Reddy added that, to address the causes of the conflict inclusively, Darfur needs effective resource management to ensure that all people of the region benefit equitably.

The Head of the Darfur Regional Authority's Legislative Council, Sultan Saad Bahr-Eldein, said that this conference is a step toward solving tribal conflicts in Darfur. "The Darfur Regional Authority Council would like to assure that it will carry out its tasks on endorsing laws and legislation that help all the people of Darfur in organizing their land, routes and animal pastures," he stated.

Conference participants recommended setting up clear rules to manage land and natural resources; reform the rural courts; invest in livestock; re-



*On 30 September and 1 October 2013 in El Fasher, more than 100 leaders from North Darfur participated in a conference to discuss the possible solutions to tribal conflicts. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

settle nomads; include land use in Sudan's constitution; implement the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur; and build institutional capacity to address displaced young people.

This event was the second in a series of conferences organized by UNAMID's Civil Affairs section to find a way out of the tribal conflicts in Darfur. ■



On 23 March 2013 in El Fasher, North Darfur, students at El Fasher University prepare for their graduation ceremony. Darfur's ongoing conflict has complicated the economic situation in the region, putting a strain on the already overburdened education system that is struggling with limited funding and rising enrolments. In Darfur, the global economic downturn has affected businesses and institutions alike, a reality that is perhaps most evident by talking to qualified university graduates who have been unable to find gainful employment. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.

## Darfur's Young Entrepreneurs

Despite significant unemployment rates, many of Darfur's educated young university graduates are making their way toward business success, fulfilling their ambitions by launching small ventures designed to meet the needs of their communities.

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

**S**table jobs offer independence and freedom of choice. Jobs not only provide a sense of pride and accomplishment, but also create the economic security that is a foundation for parenthood and other aspects of responsible adult life. While stable jobs offer hope for a bright future, the business world has been hit in recent years by a massive economic downturn that has forced

families globally to tighten their belts. In developing nations, and especially in conflict-torn regions such as Darfur, the economic downturn has had disastrous consequences, compounding the problem of scarce vocational opportunities with staggering inflation rates.

During the past 10 years, when the conflict began in Darfur, unemployment was a serious issue in Sudan. The forma-

tion of South Sudan as a separate nation contributed to Sudan's domestic problems, leading to Government-initiated austerity measures designed to help the country recover more quickly from its financial burdens. These austerity measures have taken their toll on families in Darfur, and especially on the young graduates of Darfur's university system, many of whom finish advanced degrees

but are unable to find gainful employment in this troubled region.

“The number of job seekers exceeds the job opportunities offered every year,” says Ms. Faiza Haroun, the Director of the Labour Office in El Fasher, North Darfur. Ms. Haroun explains that economic and political factors have resulted in an increasing number of job seekers and a decreasing number of employment opportunities. “Economic and political factors are among the main causes of the increase in the number of unemployed people, particularly university graduates,” she says.

Government officials working to solve the unemployment problem in Darfur say that proper planning and investment in the private sector and in development projects are essential components in the strategy to address the issue. “There are some qualified graduates, even as far back as 2000, who still haven’t found jobs, especially those with degrees in education and economics,” says Mr. Mohamed Haroun, Director of the Civil Service Selection Committee in North Darfur.

Mr. Haroun, who has worked as a Government official for more than 30 years, has a significant amount of experience in the issue of unemployment and its impact on the social and economic aspects of Darfur’s communities. One of the biggest issues Darfur faces, he says, is that university graduates must often work in vocations that are very different from their educational backgrounds. “Instead of being able to pursue careers consistent with their degrees, many graduates have to take positions in menial jobs to earn very little money,” he says.

Mr. Adam Sulieman, one example of the thousands of qualified Darfuri graduates looking for work, has been on the job hunt for three years since completing his Master’s degree. In his undergraduate work, Mr. Sulieman studied geography at the University of El Fasher. He went on to do graduate work with the goal of landing a job as a secondary school teacher.

**“The number of job seekers exceeds the job opportunities offered every year. Economic and political factors are among the main causes of the increase in the number of unemployed people, particularly university graduates.”**

**—Faiza Haroun**

Like his fellow graduates, when he received his final diploma, he started shopping his credentials around town and regularly visiting various job boards where nongovernmental organisations and UN agencies post vacancies. He has been doing this now for three years, without results. “In the past, we didn’t have access to the Internet to check for online postings, but now it’s possible to apply for jobs online,” says Mr. Sulieman, who notes that he is still optimistic he will land a job in his area of expertise.

Mr. Sulieman explains that, in addition to the problem of generating income without having a stable job, he and other unemployed graduates face significant social pressure. Families in Darfur who have supported their children, many through advanced graduate degrees, expect them to be able to contribute not only to their families but also to their communities. “We suffer a lot in asking for our families to support us with educational fees,” says Mr. Sulieman. “Limited income and the conflict are the main factors contributing now to the current plight of students and unemployed graduates.”

Darfur’s ongoing conflict has complicated the economic situation in the region, putting a strain on the already overburdened education system that is struggling with limited funding and rising enrolments. The economic downturn in Sudan has resulted in high prices that have broadly affected traders and consumers in the region. The formation of South Sudan more than two years ago and the ensuing disputes over oil rights have deeply affected the economies on both sides of the border, leading to in-

flation, austerity measures and protests. Exacerbating the downturn’s impact in Darfur are several other factors, including the general security situation, less than bountiful harvests and the temporary closing of border trade routes.

Rising costs, which have cut across all businesses in Darfur, have affected higher institutions in the region too. University students have staged demonstrations in Darfur to express their concern over tuition fees and an increase in their cost of living. While the downturn is affecting businesses and institutions alike, the effect on the economy of Darfur is perhaps most evident by talking to qualified graduates who have been unable to find gainful employment. While some businesses in Darfur are thriving, many have had to scale back their staffing and are not looking to hire new personnel.

Despite these realities, some graduates are fortunate to find work in their areas of expertise. Others have resigned themselves to the reality that there won’t be a lively job market for many years to come and instead are forging ahead to put their entrepreneurial ideas into action, fulfilling their vocational ambitions by launching small ventures designed to meet the needs of their communities.

One such success story is 33-year-old Mr. Mustafa Othman, who postponed completing his university degree due to his family’s economic situation, and instead began to market his skills in drawing, painting and sculpture. Eventually, he opened a small El Fasher print shop where he does graphics and design work, and is now able to support his parents and pay for his brother’s medical school tuition. Work at the shop also enabled

On 27 October 2013 in Nyala, South Darfur, Mr. Mohamed Ishaq is pictured in one of the pharmacies owned by young entrepreneur Mr. Yasir Abdulgadir, a veterinarian who graduated from the Darfur university system. Upon graduation, he found no viable job options in the veterinary world, so he started his own business. He now runs several pharmacies in South Darfur, and is currently expanding his business to the international level. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.



On 8 October 2013, Mr. Mohamed Zakaria, age 27, is one of Darfur's young entrepreneurs. Mr. Zakaria graduated from the University of Zalingei, West Darfur, but has been working as a street vendor, selling various goods such as cigarettes and mobile phone credit. Mr. Zakaria received a Bachelor's degree in education, but was unable to find a job as teacher, so he opened his own small business to be able to support his family. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.



him to support his sister so she could complete her university degree.

The idea of opening a graphics and design shop was at first only a passing whim for Mr. Othman. "Initially, I was thinking of it simply as a place where I could practice my skills," he says. "But when I opened the graphics shop, people started coming in to request my services, especially for special occasions and national festivals."

In addition to his graphics and design work, he makes and sells bridal gowns and other wedding-related items. "Despite a lack of materials, the burden of taxes and high rental costs, I am satisfied with what I earn," he says, noting that eventually he might return to finish his university education, but only if he can still meet his family's basic economic needs. Mr. Othman says he is like many Darfuris who value education and the wellbeing of their families. "For me, money is just a tool that enables me to reach my goals," he explains. "Education is my main objective, so I can ultimately ensure the wellbeing of my entire family."

In a culture that places a high value on advanced education, Darfuris are graduating from the university system in droves, but are finding few job opportunities suited to their newly developed

skills. Many are like Mr. Othman—fully qualified and capable of contributing to business ventures—but with the rising costs of living and an increase in the number of qualified applicants already in or just entering the job market, the competition for the few available jobs is severe. Thus, many university graduates have been settling for alternate vocations that can help them through these difficult times.

Mr. Adam Bashar, age 34, graduated from the university system in Darfur and found no viable job options, so he started his own company. During school holidays, he had been working as a barber to earn a little extra money. He did not know at the time that developing his skills cutting hair would serve him well after he graduated from the university

system. When he found no viable job suited to his degree, he rented a salon in El Mawashi Market in El Fasher, North Darfur, and is now making enough money to meet his personal needs and those of his wife and two children.

"I am very pleased that I didn't wait for an ideal government job," he says. "I had to adapt to the difficult situation facing my family."

Mr. Bashar, who initially earned a university degree in geography, is making enough money to be able to fund his graduate degree courses. "My plan is to continue my graduate studies while I run my business," he says. "I am registered in the Master's degree programme at El Fasher University, and then I will work on a doctorate."

Ms. Samiha Muni'em is another ex-



Mr. Mustafa Othman, who postponed completing his university degree due to his family's economic situation, began to market his skills in drawing, painting and sculpture. Eventually, he opened a small El Fasher print shop where he does graphics and design work, and is now able to support his parents and pay for his brother's medical school tuition. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

Pictured is a wood carving created by Mr. Mustafa Othman as a decoration for households in Darfur. In addition to his graphics and design work, he makes and sells decorative items, along with bridal gowns and other wedding-related goods. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.



Pictured is an art piece for sale in Mr. Mustafa Othman's El Fasher shop. Mr. Othman says that eventually he might return to finish his university education, but only if he can still meet his family's needs through the money he makes at his print shop. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

sponsorship that she has not yet been able to achieve.

Given that she pays each of her theatre troupe's performers for their work in each production, establishing a theatre company at a large venue and selling tickets to regular plays would be the next step for her career, she says. In the meantime, Ms. Muni'em says she intends to continue her education in theatre arts by doing post-graduate work, with the intention of refining her directorial skills and depth of knowledge of the theatre arts. "All of these ambitions require money," she says. "But I believe that everything is possible with determination and dedication."

Another of Darfur's young entrepreneurs is Mr. Yasir Abdulgadir. He earned his Bachelor's degree in veterinary science from Nyala University in 2008, but was unable to find gainful employment in a private practice or in the Sudanese Ministry of Animal Resources. So he opened a small veterinary pharmacy in his home village in South Darfur with start-up funds from his mother and a friend. He quickly developed good relations with pharmaceutical representatives, who encouraged him to move to Nyala, the main city in South Darfur, to expand his business.

ample of a Darfuri success story. Ms. Muni'em, a native of El Fasher, North Darfur, studied theatre arts in Khartoum at the University of Sudan, where she graduated in 2011. By the time she left the university system, she had already achieved a respectable portfolio of productions, so when she did not find gainful employment as a teacher or in an already existing theatre company, she started her own.

Ms. Muni'em contracts with Governmental and nongovernmental organisations to put on drama performances during national holidays or special occasions. Her theatre productions are all done without any words. "It is a choice I made after some thinking about how language is an issue in Darfur," she says, explaining that she wants her plays to be

understood by everybody, regardless of the languages or dialects they speak. "A silent play can be an international expression, just like music."

Despite her many accomplishments as a young entrepreneur, Ms. Muni'em says that, to a certain extent, she still struggles to make ends meet and find venues and sponsors for all the performances she develops. For instance, she has been developing a theatrical performance to raise awareness about the plight of Darfuri street children. However, the performance is elaborate and will take a significant amount of money to produce. While her regular performances remain in high demand, and she is able to earn a modest living by continuing to meet these needs, the larger productions she designs require a level of funding or



On 17 October 2012. El Fasher: (center wearing a colorful thobe) Director Samiha Abdul Munim, surrounded by the members of the drama group "Ashwaq Al Salam" (longing for peace), pictured at the cultural Centre in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

In 2009, he made the move to Nyala, hired two employees to help him run the company, and bought a chicken farm. "I started my business based on my background in veterinary work," he says. "I identified the needs of the market, and tried to meet those needs."

Mr. Abdulgadir has managed to become one of the largest pharmaceutical providers in South Darfur, and recently opened two new branches of his business in Central Darfur, creating job opportunities in the process. "Although it was very difficult at the starting stages, things have gone well and I succeeded in expanding my business horizontally and vertically," he says, explaining that his dream is to start doing business on the international level. He says he intends to travel abroad and plans to run a business office in Khartoum to facilitate his international trade.

Mr. Yasir Ahmed, age 23, is another of Darfur's young entrepreneurs. Mr. Ahmed is still an undergraduate student at the University of Zalingei, West Darfur, but has been working for two years building a business as a street vendor, selling various goods such as cigarettes and mobile phone credit. "I don't have to rely on other people any longer to fund my education," he says, pointing out that eventually he hopes to become his fam-

ily's main provider. "Instead of being fully dependent on my parents, I have now become an independent person by making my own small business."

Mr. Ahmed is putting into practice the ideas that he is learning in the university, where he is studying business administration. "I have been applying theories about how business can be managed," he says.

Stories like these are not uncommon in Darfur, where necessity has become the mother of invention. In all sectors, young graduates are starting small businesses in the absence of more traditional career paths. Ms. Sanna Adam, a graduate from the University of El Fasher's Human Development College with a diploma in psychology, faced the difficult job market, was unable to find gainful employment here, and decided instead to start a small business. She runs a small restaurant where she has several dozen customers each day. She earns enough money to provide for herself and her family.

"The work I am doing now isn't what I have been hoping for at all, but it will help me make a reality out of a bigger hope," says Ms. Adam, explaining that she intends to work as a psychologist in the future. To achieve her dream of becoming a well-known psychologist, she

says, she intends to continue her studies, which will require her to earn more money in her small business first so she can afford to go back to school. In the meantime, her small business enables her to support herself and her family, while also being able to set aside savings to fund her future education.

While there might not be a sizeable market for graduates in certain classic disciplines, Darfur's reconstruction and development projects have created a class of job vacancies that are suited to those who have specific training in construction, welding and other labour-intensive professional work. As in other regions of the world, there are many Darfur institutions that offer an education path for vocational skills training beyond high school. The university system itself offers some vocational training.

But the vocational programmes offered in Darfur have limited class sizes and haven't yet caught up to the demand. 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.

To help address this shortfall, UNAMID has been implementing a programme called community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs). The CLIPs programme is designed to address several issues in Darfur, including competition over access to vocational training services. Since the commencement of the CLIPs programme in July 2012, UNAMID has implemented more than one dozen CLIPs throughout Darfur, engaging more than 2,300 young people. The projects focus not only on developing vocational skills, and in many cases facilitating on-the-job training through community infrastructure rehabilitation and construction, but also on fostering reconciliation across Darfur.

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. The young people working in the projects—which mostly consist of rebuilding community infrastructure that has been damaged or destroyed—acquire the kind of livelihood and life skills designed to enhance their employability and social integration. In the process of acquiring these skills, the young people 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. Aderemi Adekoya, Chief of UNAMID’s Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) section, citing as one example Althoura Shemal, a community located on the outskirts of El Fasher, North Darfur.

“The people of Althoura Shemal are enthusiastic about the new community centre built by 80 local young men and women,” he says. “During the course of this project, the participants developed new skills as masons, painters and electricians; more importantly, they learned how to work as a team.”

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 will lead to potential new careers. Once the Althoura Shemal project ended, Ms. Huda Abdallah Mohamed, a 32-year-old who had never worked outside her home, began looking for a job immediately. “I learned from this project how to build and how to work with other people,” she says.

Mr. Mutawakil Mahmud, age 18, landed a job immediately after finishing the CLIPs programme in Althoura Shemal. “I didn’t have anything to do before,” he says. “Now that I learned many skills, I can be useful to the community.”

UNAMID’s DDR section is now implementing more than one dozen additional CLIPs across Darfur, link-



*Mr. Adam Bashar, age 34, graduated from the university system in Darfur and found no viable job options, so he started his own business. During school holidays, he had been working as a barber to earn a little extra money, and developed skills cutting hair. After graduating from the university system, he rented a salon in El Mawashi Market in El Fasher, North Darfur, and is now making enough money to meet the needs of his wife and two children. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

**“The people of Althoura Shemal are enthusiastic about the new community centre built by 80 local young men and women. During the course of this project, the participants developed new skills as masons, painters and electricians; more importantly, they learned how to work as a team.”**

**—Aderemi Adekoya**

ing the projects to violence-reduction programmes and other initiatives designed to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and an increasing number of ex-combatants. “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,” says Mr. Adekoya. “Without recourse to proper vocational training—a fundamental problem these programmes are designed to address—many young people continue to be drawn into the Darfur conflict in one way or another.”

While UNAMID is doing its part to meet the needs of those young Darfuris seeking vocational training, Sudanese officials say that much more needs to be done to address the job shortage. Foremost on everybody’s agenda here, including the Government of Sudan, nongovernmental organisations, UN agencies, and UNAMID itself, is the need to focus on the root causes of the conflict to help stabilise the region, leading to the kind of economic recovery that will contribute to a lively job market in which Darfur’s young graduates will be able to find vocational opportunities suited to their advanced university training. ■

## A Community Comes Together to Protect Street Children

With the support of UNAMID, 50 young Darfuris are building a first-of-its-kind centre in El Fasher, North Darfur, to provide assistance to more than 3,000 street children in the area.

BY ALBERT GONZÁLEZ FARRAN

The population of El Fasher, one of the largest cities in Darfur, has increased dramatically during the past few years. The city's reputation for stability, safety and economic growth has drawn thousands of people from rural areas across Darfur. While El Fasher's population growth is contributing to a bustling economy, it's also contributing to an abundance of street children. Not all new arrivals in El Fasher can easily find jobs, making life for some families difficult. In situations like this, the most vulnerable suffer the most.

The presence of kids on the streets of El Fasher has increased in recent years, despite the efforts of UNAMID, the Government of Sudan and other partners in Darfur. Many street children work to help their parents make ends meet. They wash cars, sell food, polish shoes or even beg.

The United Nations has introduced various initiatives, such as the Education First strategy, the aim of which is to ensure that every child around the world is able to go to school and receive a quality education. While such initiatives are likely to help continue the global momentum in getting more kids to attend class, here in Darfur the infrastructure problems are compounded by population displacements, country-wide austerity measures and several other factors that are crippling an adequate response to the issue.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international treaty to incorporate a full range of human rights for children. The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention and opened it for signatures on 20 November 1989. In 1990, Sudan signed the UN Convention, and in 2010 signed into law its own Child Protection Act. According to the Sudanese Child Protection Act of 2010, the Sudanese States are responsible for the care and protection of children, and must facilitate the infrastructure for their proper upbringing, from all sides, in the framework of freedom, human dignity and spiritual and social values, and in a healthy environment.

In this context, local authorities and community leaders have called for the construction of a centre to provide street children with much-needed assistance and psychological support. In North Darfur, only the villages of Kabkabiya and Mellit have such centres. But if everything goes as planned, El Fasher will soon have the biggest centre of its kind in the state.

In coordination with the Sudanese Ministry of Interior and local nongovernmental organisation Plan Sudan, UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) section sponsored the construction of the new centre dedicated to helping street kids. More than 3,000 children in the area are expected to benefit from it once it is completed. The Sudanese National Police, through its Child Protection Unit, will run the centre, providing the street children with the assistance needed to steer them away from violence and toward educational opportunities.

While the completed centre no doubt will have a tangible impact, the construction process itself is no small achievement. Some 50 young men and women from El Fasher and neighbouring communities are building the centre as part of UNAMID's community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs) programme. The CLIPs programme is designed to cultivate vocational skills among its many young participants, helping them achieve gainful employment with careers in welding, construction, electrical work and other professions.

It is easy to see in the faces of those working on this project both determination and enthusiasm. Some say they are hopeful that their newly developing vocational skills will translate into stable jobs following the project's completion. Others, some of them internally displaced people, say they are eager to learn and are excited to improve their professional options. Whatever their motivation, in the act of building this centre for street children, each of these young men and women is making a contribution to Darfur's communities and to the younger generation of children whose very lives are at risk.



- 1 Ibrahim Ahmed Abbakar (left) and Ibrahim Abderrahman (right) are two of the 50 young people working to build a new centre for street children as part of a programme run by UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) section.
- 2 Ismail Adam Ibrahim (left) and Ibrahim Al Duoma (right) work to build the new centre that will provide guidance to street children in and around the El Fasher area. The new centre is being built as one of DDR's community-based, labour-intensive projects (CLIPs)
- 3 Halima Abderrahim Abdala (left) and Yakub Ibrahim Sinin (right) finalise one of the walls of the new centre. In addition to benefiting street children, the building process is providing vocational training to the young people participating in the CLIPs programme.









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4 Adawiya Adam Ahmed (right) is among the many young women participating in the construction of this facility. The CLIPs programme is helping to rebuild Darfur's infrastructure while providing vocational training to at-risk young people in Darfur.

7 Sahra Isa Abdala (left) is one of the many young people building the centre for street children. Like many other participants in this CLIPs programme, she says she is hopeful she will find a job after completing the project, having learned valuable work skills.

5 Yakub Ibrahim Sinin moves construction materials inside the centre that is scheduled to open soon. Run by the Sudanese Police's Child Protection Unit, the new centre will offer support to the several thousand children living or working on El Fasher's streets.

8 Women prepare sand for cement that is being used to build the new centre for street children. Apart from the vocational training each participant receives, the young men and women participating in the project earn a modest stipend for their work.

6 Young vocational trainees learn the process of making cement for the construction of the new centre for street children. In CLIPs projects, participants learn vocational skills such as carpentry, welding, electrical work and construction.

9 Once completed, the new centre is expected to have a measurable impact on the estimated 3,000 children living or working in and around El Fasher's streets, polishing shoes, washing cars, selling food and even simply begging for money.



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## The Grand River Valleys of Darfur

Each year during the rainy season, Darfur's valleys flood with rushing water, a highly valuable but underused resource that could play a key role in fostering economic development and stability in the region.

BY EMADELDIN RIJAL



Most of Darfur's river valleys are fed by the rainwater that flows from the Jebel Marra mountains, located in the heart of Darfur. The Jebel Marra mountain range climbs to an elevation of more than 3,000 metres at its highest points. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

Darfur's seasonal rivers—the *wadis*—remain a signature aspect of the region's stark landscape, and a foundation on which the social and economic lives of many of Darfur's people are built. These seasonal resources sustain the region's farmers and pastoralists, providing those living in the nearby lands with the water they need for farming and caring for their animals. In addition to supporting life in this region, the rushing waters provide relief from the heat of the desert and even entertainment for the children living near their shores.

Most of Darfur's river valleys are fed by rainwater that flows from the Jebel Marra mountains, located in the heart of Darfur. The Jebel Marra mountain

range climbs to an elevation of more than 3,000 metres at its highest points. The biggest valleys fed by the Jebel Marra rainstorms include the Kaja valley in West Darfur, the Berli and Bulbul valleys in South Darfur, and the Golo and Wadi Al-Kuo watersheds in North Darfur.

When the waters flow into the valleys, children gather to swim and enjoy some relief from the desert's heat. While the seasonal rivers may provide entertainment for the children and young adults living nearby, the waters rushing from the mountains present a certain amount of danger. The currents of the seasonal rivers are strongest immediately following large rainstorms. Swimming against the raging currents of the Kaja river in

West Darfur, for example, is regarded as an extreme test of endurance.

"My friends and I usually go swimming across this river, although we can't predict when it will turn dangerous," says Mr. Ahmed Madani, a 19-year-old who lives in El Geneina near the shores of the Kaja. Mr. Madani says that he enjoys himself when the river is active, and likes to practice swimming. But he says he knows there is a significant risk to swim when the river is heavily flooded from strong storms. When this happens, he says, he and his friends exercise extreme caution.

Flooding is common in the rainy season, with the rivers overflowing their banks and damaging nearby houses and

other buildings. In the recent rainy season, the Abubaker Al-Sidiq School's buildings near the Kaja river were completely swept away by the floods. The impact of the annual flooding is not merely the destruction of property. Each year, despite an abundance of precautions and warnings, many Darfuri children drown in the strong and unpredictable currents each year. During the rainy season this year, several UNAMID peacekeepers lose their lives attempting to cross a flooded river to reach the rural area of Masteri in West Darfur.

Despite the dangers of seasonal flooding, many people have settled in areas adjacent to these temporary rivers. It is common, especially in the rural areas, for small villages to be situated directly alongside riverbeds so villagers have easy access to water for growing crops or caring for animals. "I grew up by the shores of the Bulbul river, where I have worked as a farmer and pastoralist," says Mr. Adam Mahady, a resident of the Abu Ajoura village in South Darfur, noting that the river is an essential part of life for each member of his community.

Mr. Mahady explains that the location of Abu Ajoura means the people living there don't have to worry about water supply when it is time to plant crops. In addition to being useful for farmers, the seasonal river is essential for pastoralists, who use the nearby greenery for feeding their animals. "Life is fantastic in the Bulbul river valley, where locals not only are able to tend to their goats, cows and sheep, but also can get a lot of enjoyment," he says.

Despite a decade-long conflict that has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, the river valleys' reputation for being beautiful and fascinating landmarks in Darfur's landscape draws tourists from different parts of the region. The Bulbul river valley is surrounded by dense evergreen trees, some of which are estimated to be more than 100 years old. The green area on either side of the seasonal Bulbul river ranges in width from 500 to 700 meters, with the vegetation being

so dense some places that the sunlight cannot penetrate to the ground. These green areas are teeming with wildlife, which is part of the appeal to tourists.

"It is almost impossible to characterise the fascination people have with the Bulbul river valley," says Mr. Mahady, who points out that hordes of people gather around the valley each year to enjoy themselves when the river is active.

In addition to their recreational value and the usefulness for the people living directly adjacent to these seasonal resources, the river valleys help mitigate the water problems the entire region has been facing. During rainy season, which begins in May or June of each year and ends around October, those who live in the areas near the river valleys come to collect and store water to help them through the dry season. The people of Darfur have adopted innovative meth-

ods for storing water, such as in the hollow cavities of baobab trees, plastic containers and ponds near agricultural areas.

"The wadis continue to form the backbone of our lives," says Mr. Mahady, explaining that without the generous seasonal supply of water from the river valleys, life in Darfur would be much more difficult. "While a large part of Darfur is rich in natural water resources, such as these seasonal rivers, unfortunately these water resources are still not ideally used and managed."

To help make the seasonal rivers more useful to Darfuris, particularly those living in rural areas, Sudanese water authorities have launched what have come to be known as water-harvesting projects. Water-storage techniques, which include large dams and water basins, are being implemented across Darfur to help sustain and build economic

## Despite a decade-long conflict that has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, the river valleys' reputation for being beautiful and fascinating landmarks in Darfur's landscape draws tourists from different parts of the region.

*The biggest river valleys fed by the rainstorms in Darfur's mountainous region include the Kaja valley in West Darfur, the Berli and Bulbul valleys in South Darfur, and the Golo and Wadi Al-Kuo watersheds in North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*





*A seasonal river runs through El Geneina, West Darfur. When the waters flow into the valleys and the waters of the seasonal rivers rise, children gather to swim and enjoy some relief from the heat. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

development in rural areas. Several of these projects have been engineered not only to save water, but also to divert it from areas that typically flood.

With the assistance of UNAMID, UN agencies and nongovernmental organisations, the National Dams Implementation Project, a programme spearheaded by the Sudanese Ministry of Water Resources and Electricity, has been building dams across Darfur with the ultimate goal of easing the burden on Darfuris during the dry season. In addition to benefitting the lives of the people living in the areas where the water projects are being implemented, these projects are expected to play role in reducing the movement of people from rural to urban areas, and also to encourage the people who have moved to urban areas to resettle their original home areas. Most importantly, the new water-harvesting projects are designed to reduce tensions between the agriculturalists and pastoralists, which have traditionally had issues with access to this scarce resource.

Darfur's conflict, especially the tribal conflict that has emerged during the past year, leading to the displacement of more than 100,000 people, can be attributed directly to competition over natural resources. One of the most important natural resources in the region

is water. In the more than 10 years of conflict here, infrastructure has been systematically damaged or destroyed, leaving many Darfur communities still lacking basic water services. The basic services that do exist have either been overstretched or have collapsed completely due to lack of maintenance. Rebuilding Darfur's water infrastructure and strengthening access to this valuable resource have been agenda items in local, national and international meetings during the past several years.

A large international water conference was held in June 2011, bringing together UNAMID, UN agencies, the Government of Sudan and international partners to address Darfur's water issues on a broad scale and try to develop innovative solutions to the problem. The conference brought together more than 250 experts and donors to mobilize support for the creation of a sustainable water supply and service system for all communities in Darfur. The initiative raised more than US\$500 million in pledges.

It was expected that new technologies and systems for managing water, preparing for drought and helping Darfur's farmers and nomads adapt to climate change would be implemented as part of the conference's outcomes. While many had high hopes for the conference, the

pledged funding did not materialise and the innovative projects discussed at the conference were not implemented. Today, the water situation has grown more complex, due not only to heavy droughts in recent years but also to desertification, which has made potable water an increasingly scarce resource.

To help ease the burden on Darfuris who don't have access to water, UNAMID has been offering short-term assistance, either through direct distribution of water by peacekeepers on patrols or through other approaches, such as handing out rolling water containers. The containers, each of which holds 75 litres of water, are designed to help Darfuris transport large amounts of water with little exertion. To date, UNAMID has distributed several thousand water rollers.

Beyond short-term interventions, UNAMID has been implementing a systematic programme to address the water problem in Darfur on a larger scale. A key part of the programme is to drill water boreholes across the region. So far, UNAMID has drilled more than 50 such boreholes. "Recognizing that lack of access to water is one of the major causes of the conflict in Darfur, the objective of UNAMID's water source search programme is to minimize conflict over water resources and thereby contribute to the objective of the Mission's mandate," says Emmanuel Mollel, Chief of UNAMID's Water and Environmental Protection section.

Mr. Abdulatif Hassan, a staff member working at the Water Corporation in El Fasher, North Darfur, explains that in order to mitigate conflict, build peace and sustain livelihoods in Darfur, hundreds more wells need to be drilled. "We need to construct more waterworks to treat the water for consumption, build hundreds of storage dams, extend several hundred kilometres of pipes and, most importantly, train many technicians and managers to handle water in the region," he says.

Mr. Hassan expresses only guarded optimism about whether such achievements are feasible. "We need millions of dollars to ensure the possibility of

such accomplishment and guarantee sustainable development in the region,” he concedes.

Another aspect of UNAMID’s water programme is to enhance Darfuris’ ability to harvest water by rehabilitating dams designed to store water from the rainy season. In coordination with the Government’s own water programmes, the Mission has rehabilitated many dams, most recently a South Darfur dam capable of storing 360 million litres of water. The dam will be used by farmers and nomads in the area. UNAMID’s efforts are not merely outwardly directed. On UNAMID bases, the Mission has been implementing water-conservation methods, such as using high-efficiency toilets and other such devices, and reusing recaptured sewage water for greening.

Another part of the Mission’s strategy to address water scarcity in the region is working on projects in partnership with financial institutions. One such initiative is with the African Development Bank, which launched water projects across Darfur in late 2012. The projects, funded through a grant from the bank’s African Water Facility, are designed to develop better water infrastructure for nearly 20 Darfur towns and their neighbouring farming and nomadic communities.

Rather than merely strengthening physical water systems, the fund is designed to address the factors that have contributed to the inequitable distribution of water in Darfur, with the ultimate goal being to enhance the capacity of Darfur’s water-management institutions so they can manage and deliver water and sanitation services more effectively. UNAMID facilitated the visits of the African Development Bank team to the region in 2012 and is supporting the projects as they roll out.

Meanwhile, UNAMID continues to champion water initiatives with its local partners to develop short-, medium- and long-term water projects, operating under the theory that adequately addressing access to water not only will promote peace and foster more cordial relations between the various ethnic groups in the region, but also will further ensure economic growth and development.



*Darfur’s seasonal rivers provide entertainment for the children and young adults living nearby. The currents of the seasonal rivers are strongest immediately following the largest rainstorms. Swimming against the currents of the Kaja river in West Darfur, for example, is regarded as an extreme test of endurance. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

**“While a large part of Darfur is rich in natural water resources, such as these seasonal rivers, unfortunately these water resources are still not ideally used and managed.”**

**—Adam Mahady**

In April 2013, a major international donors conference, held in Doha, Qatar, addressed Darfur’s reconstruction and development issues. On 24 October 2013, following the proposals made at the Doha conference, the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA) and the European Union (EU) announced the Wadi Al-Kou water-harvesting project. Addressing the media, Dr. Tigani Sesei, chair of the DRA, said that the project not only will support development, but also will enhance stability in the region. He also said the project is designed to provide water for agriculturalists and pastoralists equally, and thus will help reduce tribal conflicts in Darfur.

The project, funded by the EU at a cost of nearly US\$9 million, will be implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with the DRA and the Government of Sudan. Mr. Amin Hassan Omer, Head of the Sudan’s Darfur

Peace Follow-up Office, described the new project as a historic moment of transition for Darfur, from an emergency phase to early recovery. At the press conference, the head of the EU Mission in Sudan, Ambassador Tomáš Uličný, said the project will help support development in Darfur, directly and indirectly benefitting some 500,000 people.

While many such projects—completed, underway and planned—are designed to help mitigate the water problem here, solving this problem in a region as large as Darfur remains a daunting challenge. However, what is clear to everyone working to address the pressing issue of water in Darfur is that the seasonal rivers, flowing abundantly each year from the region’s austere mountains, will play a key role, but only if the engineering and environmental challenges associated with harvesting this valuable resource can be overcome. ■



On 30 September 2013, in one of the health clinics in the Abu Shouk camp, a nurse examines a child. The health clinic is run by nongovernmental organisation Patients Helping Fund, with the support of UN agencies and the Government of Sudan. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## Darfur's Struggle to Eliminate Child Malnutrition

In the conflict-torn region of Darfur, where a decade-long struggle has led to widespread population displacements, food shortages and public health issues, child malnutrition remains an ongoing problem.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

**A**t the in-patient ward of one of the health centres in the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced people in North Darfur, the staff nutritionists say the condition of 21-month-old Mustapha has improved significantly since he arrived two weeks earlier. When his mother checked him in, he weighed a mere 7.8 kilogrammes. He was admitted to the centre for severe acute malnutrition and skin eczema. Mustapha's case, unfortunately, is not uncommon in Dar-

fur, where a decade-long conflict has led to widespread population displacements, food shortages and public health issues.

Dr. Nazir Abdulmajid, the officer in charge of the children's health centre in Abu Shouk where Mustapha is receiving treatment, explains that the number of malnutrition cases among children under five years old increases from June to October each year. This period in Darfur, he says, is when farmers plant their crops and work

the land. "A lot of mothers, especially those in camps for displaced people, have no means of making a living, so they must rely mostly on the crops they grow for food," he says, explaining that during the dry season, which runs from November to May, many families run short of food.

Ms. Khadija Abdallah, Mustapha's mother, is one of many thousands of mothers living in camps for displaced people. She says that during the rainy



season, she must return to her home area of Korma, North Darfur, to cultivate her land so she can put food on her family's table. When she travels to Korma to work the land, she brings young Mustapha with her. "I don't have anyone to care for my child while I am away," she says. "I try to bring as much food and water as I can to sustain him."

With food shortages a daily reality for many of Darfur's displaced families, children suffering from malnutrition have become commonplace in the region's health centres. Dr. Abdulmajid says his centre receives at least three children each day suffering from malnutrition. "When the kids come in, they are assessed on the basis of weight and height, as well as checked for any complications such as diarrhoea, vomiting and fever," he explains. "For moderate cases, they are referred to the outpatient centre to collect supplementary foods, while severe cases are admitted for in-patient care."

When the children are admitted, the doctors and nurses working at the centre, along with a resident nutritionist, closely monitor their patients. Ms. Sawid Altibe, the nutritionist working at the Abu Shouk children's centre where Mustapha was admitted, says she works with mothers and children to ensure they not only receive adequate nutrition and care, but also understand nutrition issues. "When the children are first brought in, they are sent to the stabilization room, depending on their condition and the test results," she says. "Then we give them medication and monitor them."

The admitted children suffering from malnutrition move through two phases. In phase one, they are given a certain milk formula until they begin to show signs of improvement. Then they move to phase two and are given a high-energy, high-protein formula. When they improve beyond this phase, they are discharged or sent to the outpatient program.

There are three such children's health centres in Abu Shouk and two in the nearby Al Salaam camp. In addition to



*On 25 September 2013 in the Abu Shouk camp, volunteers prepare a food mixture, provided by the World Food Programme, for malnourished children. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

these stationary centres, there are five mobile centres in the area. All these health centres are run by the Patients Helping Fund (PHF), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that operates in Darfur with the support of Sudan's Ministry of Health and UN agencies. The mobile centres focus specifically on children suffering from malnutrition. They offer 24/7 care to children under age five, and are equipped to care for children and monitor their treated patients. The mobile centres provide milk, medicine and a peanut-based paste designed specifically to treat malnutrition.

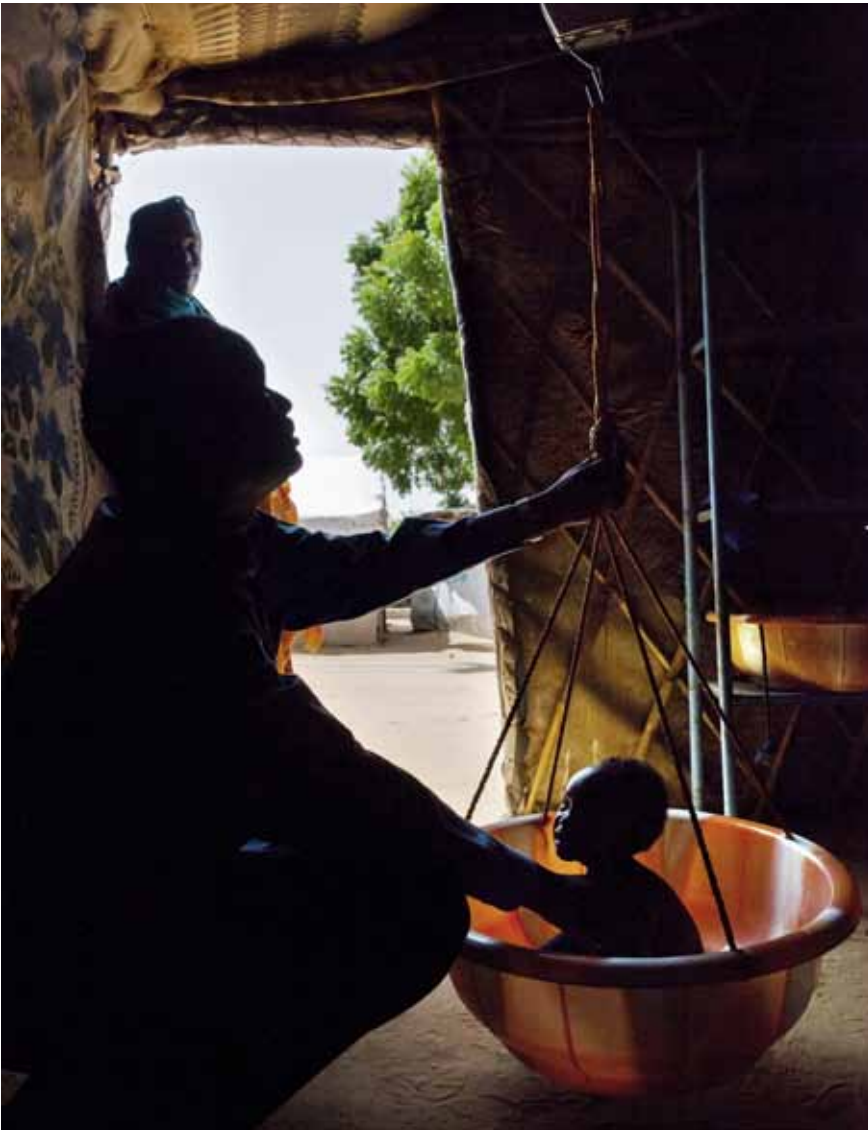
Mr. Abubakar Adam, a PHF medical coordinator, explains that, apart from providing care to children, the PHF workers and the doctors and nurses working in the stationary health centres track the children they've treated to review their progress and counsel their mothers about nutrition and feeding. "We have health advisors and nutritionists who offer advice to all the mothers," says Mr. Adam, noting that PHF organizes regular workshops on nutrition and hygiene for residents of the nearby camps.

Poor living conditions and a shortage of water and food have affected the more

than one million Darfuris living in temporary camps, making severe malnutrition a life-or-death issue that the Government, UN agencies and NGOs like PHF are working to address. To monitor this issue, Sudan's Ministry of Health has been working with UN agencies and NGOs to conduct nutrition surveys twice each year in Darfur. According to the results of the most recent survey, the malnutrition rate (acute and severely acute) was 36.9 per cent in North Darfur alone.

Ms. Nefisa Mohammed, a resident of Abu Shouk, recently volunteered to be part of a survey team led by the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Sudan's Ministry of Health to review the situation of pregnant women and the children living in several North Darfur camps for displaced people. "We asked questions related to the children's ages, their feeding habits and water-related illness," says Ms. Mohammed. "We measured each child's malnutrition by using a ratio of weight versus height, and determined the severity by how much the measurements deviate from the norms."

In a region as large as Darfur, determining the exact number of malnour-



*On 25 September 2013, in the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced people, Dr. Nazir Abdulmajid weighs a malnourished child. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

ished children is no small undertaking, but the data derived from such surveys helps determine the most effective ways to offer assistance to those in need. According to one recent survey conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Sudan's Ministry of Health in North and West Darfur, the child death rate among displaced people is up to 10 times higher than it is for the rest of Sudan's population. The survey data indicates that thousands of children are dying each month from diseases that are easily treatable.

Research from the WHO's Global Health Observatory indicates that substantial progress has been made globally on the issue of mortality rates for

children under age five. Worldwide, the figure has declined from 12.6 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 2012. WHO research also indicates that, globally, the risk of a child dying before age five is still highest on the African continent, and roughly eight times higher than it is in Europe. Inequities in child mortality rates in high-income and low-income countries remain large. In 2012, the under-age-five mortality rate in low-income countries was 82 deaths per 1,000 live births, which is more than 13 times the average rate of high-income countries.

Ms. Amna El Zein, a WFP Nutrition Officer working in El Fasher, North Darfur, says the situation in Darfur is improving. Today, she explains, WFP

has more than 50 nutrition centres operating throughout North Darfur alone, and many others in other parts of Darfur. "Proper nutrition for children, their environment, their feeding practices, access to clean water and proper care all contribute to children's health," she says, explaining that one of the most difficult issues for displaced women is the need to put food on the table by going to the field to farm the land.

Some mothers, as in the case of Ms. Abdallah, will take their babies with them if they have no other option. Others will leave their youngest ones at home with their siblings. In this context, without the watchful eye of a parent nearby, even minor health issues can have tragic consequences. In Darfur, diarrhoea is linked to 75 per cent of the deaths among children under age five. The other causes include fever, respiratory disease and malaria.

Ms. El Zein notes that the cases where death is linked to diarrhoea are preventable, but only if mothers seek medical attention in time. She says that, while UN agencies, NGOs and Sudan's Ministry of Health have a lot of work left to do, the situation is steadily improving, thanks to education campaigns and the many health centres that now offer guidance and training to young mothers.

In North Darfur alone, the Sudanese Ministry of Health has several dozen nutritionists on staff, monitoring malnutrition and providing counseling in the Ministry's many health centres spread across the state. "Thanks to education programmes, mothers are taking care of their babies more effectively than before," says Ms. El Zein. "They are learning to feed their children with appropriate nutrition."

While UNAMID's primary mandate is the protection of civilians and providing a stable security environment in which humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF and WFP can operate, Mission personnel also play a direct role in monitoring the health and wellbeing of Darfur's children. UNAMID's military and police patrols are typically accompanied by Police Advisors who are focused on issues related to families and children. These Police Advisors regularly interact with the families in the camps, gathering

information about residents' concerns and relaying that information to Mission headquarters to coordinate assistance with UN agencies and other partners.

Sgt. Delphine Karasira, one such UNAMID Police Advisor, works near the Zam Zam camp for internally displaced people. While on patrol, she talks with the residents of the camp, and in particular the mothers. If their children are having health issues, she guides them to one of the health centres in the camp where nutritionists are able to provide assistance. "When we witness health issues, we advise the mothers to seek medical attention and also report to the relevant agencies," says another UNAMID Police Advisor, Sgt. Chargeie Jamanka.

UNICEF, the lead agency for children's issues in Darfur, conducts regular meetings with UNAMID, Sudan's Ministry of Health, NGOs and other partners in Darfur, including members of the local community. To help reduce malnutrition in the region, explains Mr. Ismail Olushola, Chief of UNICEF's field office in El Fasher, North Darfur, the agency not only has been facilitating technical support, but also has been offering financial aid and nutrition supplies.

"All our partners have a significant role in the reduction of malnutrition in Darfur," says Mr. Olushola. "The ultimate goal in UNICEF, when it comes to reducing child malnutrition here, is to ensure that supplies are available and delivered on time to meet the needs of the Darfur's children."

Here in Darfur, and around the world, the United Nations is making a concerted effort to address the issue of child malnutrition. On 23 September 2013, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with world leaders, business representatives and members of philanthropic organizations to fuel a final push to propel the world toward achieving all the objectives in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programme, a massive undertaking focused on the addressing several of the world's most pressing issues. The MGDs range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.



*On 30 September 2013 in the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people, a nurse who is monitoring child malnutrition in the area provides a health record to a mother before she is seen by healthcare professionals at one of the three children's clinics in the camp. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

During the September meeting, the Secretary-General noted that much remains to be done, especially in terms of addressing extreme poverty and child mortality. Gains have been made in child survival since 1990. Worldwide, the mortality rate for children under age five dropped by 47 per cent—from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 48 per 1,000 live births in 2012. Despite this accomplishment, more rapid progress is needed to meet the target of a two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality by 2015.

A new component of the MDG programme is the "Every Woman Every Child" campaign. Launched at the UN MDGs Summit in 2010, the "Every Woman Every Child" campaign is a global movement spearheaded by the Secretary-General to mobilize and intensify global action to save the lives of women and children around the world and improve the health and lives of millions more. Working with leaders from more than 70 governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and civil society, the "Every Woman Every Child" campaign has secured commitments from nearly 300 partners.

In support of "Every Woman Every Child," a total of 176 governments have renewed their promise to children by pledging to redouble efforts on child survival. Partners are pledging to work

together to scale up high-impact strategies, monitor progress and mobilize grassroots action and advocacy aimed at ending preventable deaths among children under age five. So far, commitments to the complete set of MDGs have included more than US\$2.5 billion in pledged funds.

While such programmes have been making an impact globally, in the conflict-torn region of Darfur, the ongoing fighting has placed a burden on the region's already overextended infrastructure. Compounding this problem are several factors, most notably being the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement that would enable the region's residents to move beyond the conflict into economic recovery.

Meanwhile, Sudan continues to struggle with inflation in a harsh global economy that has led to the Government implementing austerity measures that have had an impact at all levels of Darfuri society. Securing funding to rehabilitate Darfur's basic vital services, such as hospitals and schools, continues to be a challenge for Sudan's Education and Health Ministries. In this context, internally displaced families, many of whom now have no access to vocational opportunities, are struggling to survive. As in all conflict situations, the most vulnerable will inevitably be the most affected. ■

## Darfur Dances: Interviewing Elfadhil Khatir

*Voices of Darfur* talked with Elfadhil Khatir, a lecturer at El Fasher University, about the traditional dances in Darfur, their various forms and their relation to the social lives of Darfuris.

BY ALA MAYYAH



On 10 October 2013 in El Fasher, North Darfur, Mr. Elfadhil Khatir, a lecturer at the University of El Fasher, teaches traditional Darfuri dance to his students. Mr. Khatir is one of a small group of Darfuri academics who conducts research on Darfur's cultural performances to develop a deeper understanding of their historical development and social impact. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

**B**orn in 1986 in Tarni, a small village in North Darfur's Tawila locality, Mr. Elfadhil Khatir is one of a small group of Darfuri academics conducting research on Darfur's cultural performances to develop a deeper understanding of their historical development and social impact.

Mr. Khatir studied in the Darfur school system before traveling to Khartoum, where he narrowed his focus to music and drama in Sudan University. Shortly after graduating, Mr. Khatir, whose Bachelor's degree thesis focused on the variety of rhythm and song types in Darfur, received an offer of a teaching position at the University of El Fasher in the College of Education.

*Voices of Darfur* talked with the young lecturer about the unique focus of his scholarship and teaching, including the traditional dances in Darfur, their various forms and their relation to the social lives of Darfuris.

**Voices of Darfur: Would you tell us about the traditional dances in Darfur and when they first appeared here?**

**Khatir:** Darfur's traditional dances are an ancient form of art. They are part of the Darfuri legacy and tied deeply to the lives of Darfuris. They are all done by groups of people, and they're usually accompanied by rhythms and songs that reflect emotions related to different circumstances and events, whether celebratory or tragic.

There are so many traditional dances in Darfur. There is a certain dance for each occasion. For example, there is a dance for weddings, another for harvests, a dance for war, one for circumcision, and so on. Each tribe in Darfur has its own traditional dances, which vary from one tribe to another. The wide variety of these dances is due to elements including tradition, social environment and even weather.

Historically, these dances have appeared since the first people existed in this area. So we can say that the traditional dances we see today among Darfur's tribes are rooted in the rhythmic body movements that were done in ancient times.

**VoD:** Would you explain why these traditional performances are so different from one tribe to another although these tribes all live in one region?

**Khatir:** The difference we see between dances among Darfuri tribes is because the tribes themselves are originally from different areas. So tribes of African origin dance differently from the tribes of Arabic origin. Even the African tribes differ in their dances from one to another, because some of them come from different African countries that have their own general dance styles. For example, traditional dancing in Chad is different from dances in Central African Republic, and the traditional dancing in Morocco differs from dances in Egypt. Darfuri tribes come from all these various areas.

**VoD:** Have some of these dances changed with time in terms of body movements and the accompanying rhythms?

**Khatir:** There has been some change, but mostly in the music that accompanies the dances. The change occurs naturally when new musical instruments appear with time, adding new elements to the music and the rhythms of the local dances. But the dancing movements remain generally the same.

**VoD:** Is it possible to quantify the specific number of the traditional dances in Darfur?

**Khatir:** It's difficult to identify a specific number that includes all types of traditional dances in Darfur. In the case of the Fur tribe, there are at least 32 traditional dances, each for a unique occasion. So if there are 200 tribes in Darfur, with each one having at least 10 unique dances, on average, we can surmise that there are some 2,000 traditional dances in the region altogether. But the actual number could be much larger. Some sources indicate there are some 500 tribes in Darfur using 600 distinct dialects. If this is true, then the number of the traditional dances in Darfur could be more than 5,000.

**VoD:** Does each dance have a



On 10 October 2013 in El Fasher, North Darfur, Mr. Elfadhil Khatir (centre) offers guidance on traditional Darfuri dance styles to members of the Sarafi drama group at the El Fasher Cultural Centre. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

**“Generally, war dances are not popular in Darfur, and people are not affected by them due to the overall willingness among Darfuris to work toward peace and peaceful coexistence.”**

**specific song that goes with it, or can different songs be used for different dances?**

**Khatir:** Actually, a dance doesn't have to have the same song played with it each time. A different song can go with a dance when it is performed for a different occasion, but it should reflect the dance's rhythm. The lyrics should also match with the occasion or the atmosphere when the dance is performed.

In Darfur, we have rich legacy of songs for a wide range of occasions. For example, the Nafeer occasion is a social activity in which the people of a village volunteer to help a family facing a dilemma. The songs that go with the dance for Nafeer usually have a fast rhythm to energize people while they're making efforts to help those in need. Other dances, such as the one called Al Jarary, are done by nomads who have camels. The associated songs have a slow rhythm that mimics the slow pace of camel movements.

**VoD:** What about musicians? Are songs and beats usually done by a

**music group that performs alongside the dancers?**

**Khatir:** Yes, but not for all dances. In some dances, the dancers do the singing and make the rhythm themselves by clapping or beating the ground with their feet.

**VoD:** Is there a general indication about how many performers are required for the traditional dances here?

**Khatir:** Some of them require a specific number of dancers. These dances can't be done with a fewer number of dancers than tradition requires. For example, the Rishat dance is done on the occasions of receiving sultans and kings, and requires a specific number of dancers. But there are dances that can be done by any number of people, such as the Hijoory, which is for happy occasions attended by large groups.

**VoD:** Do dancers need to have a significant amount of training to perform in these dances, or should they be a specific age?

**Khatir:** Only some of dances require lots of training, such as the dances for war. These dances involve complicated movements that can't be learned quickly. Some other dances are quite easy, such as those for weddings or harvests.

As for the age of dancers, there are some issues with certain dances. We have dances that could be dangerous. In dances for war, the dancers carry sharp weapons called Kurbaj. The dancers should not touch each other during the performance. If one dancer touches another, the consequences could be disastrous. Thus, the dancers should have a high level of skill in performing this dance. This skill comes only with practice and age. So young men, naturally, haven't had enough time to practice that dance and are not encouraged to perform it.

**VoD: Are there Darfuri dances for women only?**

**Khatir:** There are women's dances, such as those for wedding and henna occasions. These dances are done inside homes where only women can watch. There are other dances where both men and women can participate. But most of Darfuri traditional dances are done by men, probably because the society here is conservative. Men's dances are usually performed outdoors where anyone, including men, women and children, can watch.

**VoD: What about costumes? Does each dance have a certain outfit associated with it?**

**Khatir:** Costumes usually match the movements in a certain dance. For example, dancers wear long trousers for a dance called Juju, while in other styles the dancers wear suits. And in many dances, the outfit is the Galabiya and Imma, the traditional body and head attire commonly worn in Sudan.

**VoD: Are traditional dances for war still practised in some areas in Darfur?**

**Khatir:** Only to a certain extent because of the traditions in Darfur and due to some conflicts that still happen among some tribes. So there are still some war dances that are carried out with songs that urge people to defend their lands in case of disputes with other tribes. Some other dances are done to urge people to defend their honour.



On 10 October 2013 in El Fasher, North Darfur, Mr. Elfadhil Khatir, a lecturer at the University of El Fasher, offers guidance on traditional Darfuri dance to members of the Sarafi drama group at the El Fasher Cultural Centre in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**“This deeply rooted art in Darfur’s societies can effectively contribute to promoting peace among tribes. New group dances could be designed by mixing movements from different tribes.”**

Generally, war dances are not popular in Darfur any longer, and people are not affected by them due to the overall willingness among Darfuris to work toward peace and peaceful coexistence.

**VoD: In general, are the traditional dances still practiced widely in Darfur’s cities and villages in comparison with the past years?**

**Khatir:** Unfortunately, many traditional dances are not practiced as often as in the past, before the conflict. The reason for this is that lots of people were displaced due to the conflict and have been going through tough times. So many tribal communities have had to abandon their dances, as they don't have the luxury of free time to practice. Many families and entire communities are struggling merely to stay alive. But there are many areas where traditional dances are still performed, especially the areas that have good security around the main cities with sizeable populations.

**VoD: Do you think new group dances could be designed by Darfur’s young people to help promote peace and reconciliation?**

**Khatir:** Definitely. This deeply rooted art in Darfur’s societies can effectively contribute to promoting peace and reconciliation among tribes. New group dances could be designed by mixing movements from different tribes. These dances could involve symbolic movements expressing unity and brotherhood among these groups. Such a project could indeed be implemented by the musicians and dancers here to reflect the need of the young people in Darfur to have a better life. A better life can't be achieved through war, but rather through social peace and prosperity.

Artistically, traditional dances could be transformed into new, contemporary styles to promote peace and social development. Such dances could be performed during happy occasions that are typically attended by large audience.

**VoD: Finally, what is the message you would like to send to all Darfuris?**


**Khatir:** I would like to tell them that social unity, not dispersion and division, is the basis of good life. So let's unite to have one country for all of us, regardless of race, religion or colour.



*On 10 October 2013 in El Fasher, North Darfur, Mr. Elfadhil Khatir plays his violin while teaching traditional Darfuri dance to his students at El Fasher University. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*




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