

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

APRIL 2011



DISPOSING OF UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN DARFUR

THE CONTROVERSIAL
MOUNTAIN RANGE



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
MISSION IN DARFUR
(UNAMID)

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UNAMID mine action office locates a UXO

Land mines left behind after an outburst of fighting

Front Cover Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran

Back Cover - UNAMID Photo



VOICES of Darfur

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MARCH
07

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, Justice Mohamed Chande Othman, arrives in El Fasher, North Darfur, to assess progress of UNAMID and the Government of the Sudan in the area of human rights. He is briefed on the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, and later meets with representatives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and human rights advocates.

**MARCH**
08

In collaboration with the local authorities and UN agencies, UNAMID celebrates International Women's Day in all three of Darfur's states where solidarity marches and cultural events are organized.

MARCH
09

A team of UN agencies, along with Government and UNAMID representatives, visits Malha, North Darfur, to assess the humanitarian needs of the Sudanese nationals who arrived in the locality from Libya. The migrant workers fled in the wake of that country's current crisis.

**MARCH**
10

More than 300 students participate in a debate organized by the Center for Peace and Development Studies of the University of El Fasher and UNAMID to discuss peace and development.

MARCH AT A GLANCE

**MARCH**
15

United States Ambassador Dane Smith concludes a five-day visit to Darfur, which was facilitated by UNAMID. He met local authorities, native administration leaders, civil society organizations, representatives from UN agencies and the Mission leadership. The visit included trips to the three state capitals, in addition to other localities.

**MARCH**
18

JSR Ibrahim Gambari leads a field mission to Jawa and Fanga Suk in East Jebel Marra, respectively strongholds of the Sudanese Armed Forces and an alliance of armed movements comprising the Liberation and Justice Movement and the Abdul Wahid and Minni Minnawi factions of the Sudanese Liberation Army.

MARCH
22

Two UNAMID military peacekeepers receive multiple gunshot wounds after being ambushed while driving in West Darfur. They had just completed escort duties when their vehicle was fired upon by unknown men in Masteri, a village located 45 kilometres south of El Geneina.

**MARCH**
23

Approximately half a tonne of food and medical supplies, including vaccines, is delivered by air to Fanga Suk, in East Jebel Marra, from El Fasher, North Darfur. The inter-agency mission, led by UNICEF, OCHA and UNAMID, administers vaccinations to more than 100 children under 5 years old.

MARCH
27

An inter-agency team led by OCHA, UNAMID and the North Darfur Humanitarian Aid Commission visits five villages near Shangil Tobaya in North Darfur and finds the majority of homes deserted.

**MARCH**
28

UNAMID begins the first daily delivery of more than 30,000 litres of water to students in El Fasher, many of whom had travelled from smaller villages to take their Secondary Certificate Examinations. At the request of the North Darfur Ministry of Education, the Mission will provide potable water to nearly 12,000 students at examination centres and dormitories over 16 days.

MARCH
31

About 600 beneficiaries, including prisoners, their families and prison workers, receive medical attention during a two-day medical camp organized by UNAMID in collaboration with the State Prisons Administration, State Ministry of Health, UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Health Organization (WHO) at Shallah Federal Prison in El Fasher. The programme culminates today.

Disposing of unexploded ordnance in Darfur

Committed to creating a safe and conducive environment

BY SHARON LUKUNKA



UNAMID Mine Action team conducting a risk awareness exercise on mines/UXOs in Darfur

PHOTOS: MINE ACTION SECTION

More than 7 years of conflict has left most of Darfur riddled with unexploded ordnance (UXO) and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Byproducts of aerial bombardments and ground attacks, UXOs and ERW continue to threaten civilians and impede economic recovery and development, impact key logistical supply routes thus hampering safe and free movement of aid convoys, and endanger the lives of the population.

To reduce casualties, teams from UNAMID's Mine Action Office join their uniformed colleagues on patrol to check that UXOs would not interfere with their operations.

"We locate the threats and dispose of them," said the Head of the El Geneina office, Phillip Rowe.

UNAMID Mine Action teams also conduct

route and area surveys and assessments, marking UXOs for destruction or dangerous areas for future clearance.

A total of 492 UXOs were destroyed last year through access by more than 2,000 kilometers of road to 164 villages and areas. Contamination was found in more than 20 villages and areas. In addition, Mine Action raised the awareness of close to 19,500 persons on the risks posed by these devices. Currently, mine affected areas have been identified in Samaha, which is located along the border between South Darfur and South Sudan on the banks of the Bahr Arab/Kirr River.

Unexploded ordnance have recently been removed from an area 20 kilometers east of Shangil Tobaya in North Darfur. The munitions were left following clashes in December 2010 between Government forces

and rebel movements. On 5 March, UNAMID's Mine Action Team similarly disposed of an unexploded rocket in Meresa, 33 kilometres southeast of Kulbus, West Darfur.

More efforts continue to be undertaken by Mine Action to ensure a safe environment for civilians and aid convoys in the area. Recently, a team destroyed several devices in the the Kushiny area and Um Laota village southeast of Tawilla, North Darfur. In the Kolge Mountains, 34 kilometres southeast of Tawilla, another team located and destroyed 50 items consisting of UXOs and UXBs (unexploded bombs).

Operational areas in Darfur

The teams operate in known areas of military action in the Darfur conflict and are deployed strategically to respond to any reports of UXOs. Recently, they have been working in North, South and West Darfur

Mines are munitions placed under, on or near the ground or other surface area to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person or a vehicle.

Unexploded ordnance (UXOs) are military weapons- explosives that have been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use. They may have been fired, dropped, launched or projected, yet remain unexploded either through malfunction or design or for any other reason. UXOs or UXBs (unexploded bombs) vary in size and can weigh more than 200 pounds. They can be fatal on contact.



A member of the Mine Action team conducts risk education for school children in Darfur

following fighting in the region. While major routes in Darfur have been cleared of unexploded ordnance, areas where the devices threaten civilians, as well as affect aid distribution and development efforts, still remain.

Head of the Mine Action Office in Darfur, Robbie Roberts explained that, "Although faced with various restrictions and the security situation in Darfur, our teams continue deploying into areas of concern to verify and clear the threats as reported; therefore ensuring freedom of movement to UNAMID and all UN agencies. Meanwhile, risk education teams give lectures and training sessions to the affected communities in all three Darfur states as part of our efforts to prevent and reduce UXO related accidents or incidents."

Major incidents encountered

Recently, UNAMID peacekeepers in Khor Abeche, South Darfur treated a 13-year old who was injured while playing with a UXO. She is reported to be in stable condition but is still undergoing treatment.

Last year, Mine Action in West Darfur recorded three major accidents in the area. The first was between Misteri and Kabila and three others occurred in Kulbus where children were killed or injured. The most serious involved four children -- one was killed, another lost his arm and two others were injured.

Main Concerns

The northern corridor in West Darfur, from El Geneina to Kulbus, mainly between Sileia and Kulbus, and the Jebel Marra area remain a concern. Both of these areas have

been reported to be heavily contaminated with UXOs, but insecurity, fighting and banditry there have delayed the required operations for clearance. Ongoing fighting increases the level of contamination and, in many cases, areas already cleared have to be revisited.

Risk Awareness Activities

UNAMID Mine Action and local partners also continue to conduct UXO and ERW risk awareness exercises throughout the region to sensitize the local population on

the dangers of the devices. Mine Action teams will continue to undertake activities in support of UNAMID's priorities in order to create a safe and secure environment. "We are working to ensure that the areas to which internally displaced persons return are clear and safe for them to move back into," Rowe said.

UXOs marked for destruction by Mine Action in Darfur





Members of the Sudanese Army in Jawa village, in East Jebel Marra, South Darfur

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

The controversial mountain range

Humanitarian access to Jebel Marra

BY GUIOMAR PAU AND MAYADA UMBADDA



One of the most fertile and breathtaking regions in Darfur has for the last decade also been the site of some of the conflict's most violent battles. Standing at over 3,000 meters, the dormant volcanic mountain peak of Jebel Marra is among one of the highest in Sudan and is famous for fruit orchards, waterfalls and year-long vegetation. Long years of fierce fighting over these strategic mountains have made humanitarian relief unreachable for the thousands of affected civilians.

After months of talks with both rebel groups and Government forces, UNAMID and UN agencies were finally able to gain access to large parts of Jebel Marra and have secured humanitarian access that will ensure the delivery of much needed aid to the region.

UNAMID's Joint Special Representative (JSR), Professor Ibrahim Gambari, with elders and community leaders in Fanga Suk village, East Jebel Marra

PHOTO: OLIVIER CHASSOT



A peacekeeper from the Nepalese Special Forces patrols Jawa village

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari in March led an interagency field mission to Jawa and Fanga Suk in East Jebel Marra, to meet with parties on both sides of the conflict and secure their cooperation to help aid workers gain access to the mountain.

Gambari's first stop was Jawa, a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) stronghold located 9 kilometres west of Deribat in South Darfur. Constant clashes have left nearby villages mostly empty, the market abandoned and the orange groves untended. The ground is still littered with ammunition casings and the school and clinic have been closed for years. The JSR, accompanied by UNICEF's regional director, met with the local SAF commanders and emphasized the Mission's neutrality in the conflict.

Later in Fanga Suk, situated on the border between North and West Darfur, 60 kilometres southwest of Tawilla, JSR Gambari was greeted by more than 100 residents, pleading for UNAMID's help in stopping aerial strikes and asking for the urgent

provision of water, food, health, education and other basic services. He also sat down with commanders of an alliance of armed movements comprising the Liberation and Justice Movement and the Abdul Wahid and Minni Minnawi factions of the Sudanese Liberation Army.

In both villages, JSR Gambari urged full support to be given to UNAMID patrols and activities in East Jebel Marra, in order to enhance the Mission's protection to civilians and facilitate the delivery of aid.

Both parties promised to support UNAMID and work toward the free movement of the Mission, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations in the region.

The JSR emphasized that, "One of the foremost priorities for UNAMID is facilitating safe and free access for humanitarian agencies and NGOs into areas such as Eastern Jebel Marra. UNAMID will provide security and logistical support to any agencies and INGOs needing to access the region. However, to be completely effective,

we also need the cooperation of all parties to the conflict to create space for the movement of humanitarian supplies and personnel so that the people of Jebel Marra are not left to suffer in the middle of conflict."

Less than two weeks later, the first delivery was made. More than half a tonne of food and medical supplies, including vaccines, was delivered by air on 23 March to Fanga Suk, in East Jebel Marra. Aid workers vaccinated more than 100 pregnant women and children under 5 years and began work on helping to resume the operation of medical facilities.

With relief slowly reaching them, the residents of Jebel Marra have started taking steps toward rebuilding their lives and making plans to return and tend to their long abandoned orchards.

Khartoum artists bring joy to El Fasher

BY ALA MAYYAH



Khartoum artists perform at El Naga stadium in El Fasher, North Darfur

PHOTO: ALA MAYYAH

Believing that art leads life, some Sudanese artists travel long distances to share their creativity with other audiences who often meet them for the first time.

On 29 March 2011, a convoy of 39 artists from Khartoum landed in Darfur to perform and exhibit their arts to Darfurians. The event was part of a cultural festival organized by the Association of Sudan Artists and supported by the Government of the Sudan, independent local initiatives, and business organizations.

The four-day trip included shows in El-Fasher, North Darfur, and in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps such as Abu Shouk and Abuja. Artists from various genres joined the cultural convoy: poets, musicians, dramatists, actors, and popular singers, in addition to the Sudanese Aerobics Group.

Internally displaced persons in Abu Shouk camp gathered around the artists and enjoyed free shows for one afternoon. The special programme for the IDPs included musical concerts, aerobics shows, and a dramatic play.

In the evening, the artistes performed in Naga arena, in the centre of El Fasher. The seats were all taken by the audience an hour earlier before the programme was to start. One could see groups of youth, women with their children, and elderly people. Everyone was dressed for the evening. The elated atmosphere extended beyond the arena. Many street sellers came with their portable carts and parked few meters from the main gate. Their carts were decorated with colorful lights and equipped with a radio set broadcasting lively songs, while snacks, tea and soft drinks sold out fast.

The three-hour evening programme started with aerobics shows followed by live concerts which played to a very enthusiastic audience.

Aerobics coach, Mr. Jamal Ali Radwan, was standing with his team, giving instructions and guidance to each player before doing their part in the show. He was a co-founder of the Sudanese Aerobics Group in 1971 which now consists of 61 players, including children. They have performed in many international festivals in 12 countries in the Middle East and Africa, including in the Al Marbid festival in Iraq in 1991, and twice in Cairo in 1981 and 1983.

Voices of Darfur spoke to Mr. Radwan and to popular singer, Ahmed Sharif.

VoD: In this event, what do you hope for Darfur?

Radwan: I hope there will be soon an aerobics band that represents North Darfur State. Aerobics is an art that involves sports which makes it quite a positive activity for the youth.

VoD: Are you dedicated to working with the aerobics group?

Radwan: Yes fully.

VoD: So does this work pay off well for you?

Radwan: Fortunately, yes. We are supported by the Government. We receive monthly salaries that include accommodation and food allowances. In addition, our children's education is fully covered until graduation from college.

VoD: In your opinion, what does art add to life?

Radwan: Art leads life. This is the theme under which this event is organized, and I believe it is totally true.

The popular singer Ahmed Sharif was among the artists at Al Naga arena. He sang some traditional songs originally from Darfur, which are his favourites.

VoD: Is this your first visit to Darfur?

Sharif: No, actually I visit Darfur often. I love Darfur and the Darfuris.

VoD: How was the attendance and response to your shows in the camps?

Sharif: We visited Abu Shouk and Abuja camps. Quite a few displaced persons attended and enjoyed the concerts. Yet, I saw many sad faces among them, and I totally understand that as their living circumstances are not easy. I am sure many more of them would have attended if their situation were better.

VoD: So do you think art can or cannot make a difference in people's lives?

Sharif: I believe art can make all the difference. Art is the language of all nations. If the world's problems were addressed through art they would have been solved in a peaceful way, and there would be no more wars.

VoD: What is your current musical project?

Sharif: I've recently produced, with my band, a new album called Damary Azoom. It consists of nine songs, produced by us alone with no outside financial support.

VoD: You achieved success and fame in your country: what is your ambition now?

Sharif: I look forward

to performing abroad. I would like to take Sudanese songs to the world.

VoD: How do you describe Sudanese music?

Sharif: It has various types of beats and shares with western countries what is called the fifth tone, which is also used in Somali and Ethiopian music. But, some are pure Sudanese like the Tumtum and Deluka beats.

Some artists from El Fasher were invited to the evening such as the singer Abdul Rahman Jidu. He sings modern and traditional songs.

VoD: What does this event mean to you?

Sharif: It is significant because we need these kinds of activities in our city. It brought great joy to me and to everyone in this big audience. El Fasher is an ancient city in the Sudan; rich with cultural traditions but the people here appreciate also all kind of arts.

VoD: Do you have your own band or do you perform with different bands?

Sharif: Currently, I perform with the Darfur Arts Band. It is one of the best in Darfur, established in 1948, before independence of the Sudan. Many artists from different generations performed in it and learned from it. The band has participated in many local and national festivals. It is also known in many African countries.

VoD: How do you explain art?

Sharif: "Art is the kind word that washes out anger and makes the artists blessed with joy while performing," Abdul Rahman said.



One of the many artists from Khartoum who performed in El Fasher



Female mosquito that causes malaria infection

PHOTO: GABOR BIBOR

Malaria in Darfur

BY ALA MAYYAH

As the world prepares to observe World Malaria Day, Darfur has recorded close to 5,800 cases of the disease from January to March this year; 603 were severe with 6 recorded deaths, says North Darfur Malaria Programme Manager, Ahmed Mohamed Eldoma.

The epidemic is the number one cause of death in Africa today. United Nations agencies, as well as international and national non-governmental organizations, have been working around the clock to ensure that people are informed of the dangers of the disease.

Dr. Maurice Ezeoke, who currently works in UNAMID's medical service, disclosed that there had recently been a decrease in the number of malaria infections in Darfur.

Eldoma said this was a result in part due to control measures that local health officials had put in place. "They regularly treat all standing water in localities with larvicide, a chemical used to control mosquitoes, provide early diagnosis of cases and treatment, and conduct continuous training of health staff," he explained.

Furthermore, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has distributed mosquito nets in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and the International Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria supplies free drugs for the treatment of malaria cases.

Malaria is an infectious disease caused by a parasite called Plasmodium that is carried by a female Anopheles mosquito of which there are more than 40 species. The disease is transmitted via the bites of infected mosquitoes. It is widespread in tropical and subtropical regions, including parts of the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Malaria transmission is affected by climate and geography and often coincides with the rainy season.

The disease can cause serious health problems such as anaemia in children and pregnant women, low birth weight, premature birth, and neurological damage, although a patient with malaria can be cured when properly treated, especially at the early stage of infection.

Each year, World Malaria Day is commemorated on 25 April worldwide. This year's theme focussed on examining the progress made so far and renewing efforts to reduce malaria cases to zero by 2015. Reports indicate that malaria currently causes about 790,000 deaths annually worldwide. Four years ago, that figure was just over one million, which meant that there was at least one death every 30 seconds.

Some of the prophylaxis use to cure of malaria





Halima Al-Tibin Bosh

PHOTO: SHARON LUKUNKA

A self-made Darfuri woman

BY ALA MAYYAH

If one asks about her in the city, people tend to answer: "She is the owner of Burj El Fasher (Darfur's only business centre). A very kind woman."

Like many other women in El Fasher, North Darfur, Halima Al-Tibin graduated from the institution of Quran for Islamic Studies. She was dreaming of seeing the whole world and thought of becoming a stewardess. But, as she later found her passion in business, she spent most of her time on the ground in El Fasher, where she earned her widest success, served her people, and became the first businesswoman in her hometown.

She is the daughter of Mohammed Tibin Bosh, a wealthy merchant and an honoured politician in his time, who is still remembered for his nobility and fine reputation. And, like her father, Halima lives through her love for people, for life, and for her country.

To her, success needs many elements. "Hard work, faith, enthusiasm, optimism...

you need all that, with family support, to succeed," she says. "And you need to help people from your heart without expecting a favour in return. God will then be on your side."

Her first business was a telecommunication centre, which she started in 1997, offering various services such as access to overseas calls, faxing, photocopying, and printing. After establishing the centre, she started another project, followed by others, making as reputable a name as and gaining acknowledgment of men who preceded her in the market.

"During the armed conflict in Darfur, most businessmen transferred their money outside of the area. Not many people were willing to invest here, but that was the era when I made my biggest move. I bought land in a strategic spot and contracted an engineering company from Khartoum to build a business centre on it. I named the building Burj El Fasher (El Fasher Tower). No one, particularly men, encouraged me or expected that I would succeed in run-

ning this centre. I didn't listen to them, and made it," Halima said. The building consists of 16 furnished apartments and 17 offices, all of which are usually leased throughout the year.

In 2003, she established an institution for women and children's development in Darfur. Through her institution she has been supporting empowerment projects for women and helping orphans and others who are in need.

A year later, Halima invited renowned businesswoman from Abu Dhabi, Salwa Al Shebani, to visit El Fasher. She met her in 1974 at a summit on women's issues and they became good friends. Her guest was touched by the kindness of Darfuris and, as she loved Darfur, she bought many properties in different areas. Based on trust and friendship, Halima then became a partner in all Salwa's investments in the Sudan. "I extend to her all respect and gratitude, for she is the first woman who encouraged me in business," Halima says.

Since 2010, Halima has been the Wali's consultant on women and children's issues. Through this post she works on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 by arranging workshops for women's groups to share and discuss their concerns, provide education on related issues and seek support from humanitarian organizations and the Government.

"I hope the day will soon come when the women of Darfur can fulfill all of their needs, especially in education and health. That can be achieved with the support of the organizations and the Government," she says.

Halima is married and is raising four children -- her nieces and nephews. She returns home early afternoons, and exchanges stories of the day over a good meal with her husband and the children. A strong personality mixed with compassion, big hopes, and a bright sense of humour, Halima has become a valued person among Darfuris as well as her many friends from countries outside of the Sudan.



An unexploded bomb on the way to Tabit from Shangil Tobaya, North Darfur



UNAMID personnel is marking the location to warn the local population and to start the process for its destruction

Dangerous remnant of conflict

PHOTOS BY ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN

In March 2011, an inter-agency team, led by OCHA and UNAMID to five villages near Shangil Tobaya in North Darfur, found that the majority of homes were deserted due to the recent outbreak of fighting in the area.

They also detected unexploded ordnance (UXO). In such cases, the Mine Action team demarcates or fences off the contaminated areas to enable the removal or destruction of the devices.

Although Darfuris, including children, have been injured or killed in several instances from contact with UXOs, young boys from the area could be seen playing with the remnants of the conflict -- leftover explosives and ammunition.

UNAMID's Mine Action office regularly conducts awareness raising programmes for Darfuris on the danger of these devices.

Remnants of a bomb in Alashu, a village located about 15 km north of Shangil Tobaya, North Darfur



UNAMID personnel identifying UXOs before marking them for destruction



UN Volunteers taking the arms out of Darfuri combatants' hands

Caterina's contribution to peace in Darfur as a UN Volunteer

BY NATALIA HERRERA ESLAVA



Caterina Violante

The vital transition period from conflict to peace and development is one of the key factors that are at stake during a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process (DDR). Being a very complex process, with political, military, security, humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions, DDR is at the core of peacekeeping and is therefore key for the implementation of any peace operation. And this is precisely what Caterina Violante, a UN Volunteer colleague in UNAMID – African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur – feels more comfortable doing in her contribution to peace and development.

After six years of humanitarian work in Colombia, where Caterina explored the complex conflict between the Colombian government, national guerrillas – Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) – and paramilitary factions, she joined UNAMID and became an active member of the DDR Unit as a Public Information Officer. “I have to document and report all activities related to DDR, performing mainly two roles: internally, keeping my team updated with any relevant information regarding security, peace process and DDR activities in Darfur; and writing and helping to implement a communications strategy to spread the word among Darfuri communities about what is DDR and why it is so important for the peace, while attracting future beneficiaries and ensuring continuity of participants and keeping them posted about the benefits they receive,” she explained.

Voluntary removal of weapons from the hands of combatants is no easy task, as this includes taking these fighters out of military structures and helping them to reintegrate socially and economically into communities to which they once belonged. To do so, Caterina's team seeks to support all ex-combatants so they can become active participants in the peace process. Nevertheless, while the main objective of any DDR process is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments so that recovery and development can begin, Darfur's process has remained a very special one since not all parties involved have signed a peace agreement.

“We are supporting what is called an Interim DDR process, mainly because there isn't a comprehensive Darfur Peace Agreement yet. In fact, some parties to the conflict have signed while others remain outside of the process or have decided to opt out after signing, or have decided to start a late participation,” stated Caterina while portraying the challenges that UNAMID's DDR Section faces when addressing all parties in the peace process.

“One of our current activities is to explain the purpose of this Section and what can be expected from the work of DDR officers to other substantive units in the Mission as well as to UN agencies. We have been conducting awareness raising workshops to explain and disseminate the meaning of DDR, and emphasizing its implications on gender, child protection and public information. For example, last January we held one of these workshops in Nyala, South Darfur, inviting policy advisers and peacekeepers from UNAMID. Our colleagues from National Commission of DDR and UNDP also participated,” she noted.

As for how the DDR process is structured and delivered to Darfuris, Caterina explains that “DDR is an activity led by the Sudanese Government and supported by UNAMID with technical advice and logistic support, as well as by other Government partners. The Sudanese Government also participates in the workshops, explaining

its role, while UNAMID explains the concepts behind, and its support for, the DDR programme.”

Notable in Darfur's conflict is the participation of children. “Due to the nature of the conflict, combatants and child soldiers are never completely away from their families and communities. Some children belong to a group, but still live with their families and might attend school. The common image of child soldiers around the world is of those living in the mountains or hiding with the rest of the rebels, with no education, away from their family, but in Darfur that is different,” Caterina said.

Furthermore, most of these children have no records of personal information, such as birth certificates or school system status, in which case UNICEF assists the Government with their registration.

“Registration has been key to our activities because it is the first step of the Government's DDR programme, by which those children who are released become beneficiaries of the reintegration programme. The process includes a briefing on sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. They are then given a medical examination to ensure they are in good health. If not, they receive medical treatment. The DDR Section was also part of the supporting team for the North Sudan DDR's Commission in implementing the exercise,” she added.

In overcoming the difficulties that dealing with so many different actors and stakeholders during a DDR process brings along the road of post-conflict intervention, with patience and commitment, Caterina Violante is another of the close to 500 hundred UN Volunteers working for peace and development in Darfur. She is eager to share her professional experience and knowledge to help ex-combatants to re-adjust into society and, ideally, start promoting peace in their communities.

NATALIA HERRERA ESLAVA IS A UNV OFFICER IN UNAMID

The Spirit of Giving

BY SHARON LUKUNKA



UNAMID peacekeepers meet with the Director of prisons in North Darfur at the handover ceremony

PHOTO: SHARON LUKUNKA

UNAMID peacekeepers who spent their time away from their homes, families and friends at Easter found a way to give to those for whom they are working.

In collaboration with the Prison Advisory Unit of the UNAMID Rule of Law Section, the peacekeepers presented about US\$60,000 worth of items and amenities, including food, cooking utensils, sleeping mats, mattresses, clothing and mosquito nets to meet the needs of all seven prisons in North Darfur, to the Director of Prisons Brigadier Babikir Ali Ahmed. The ceremony was held in Kheir Khanaga women's prison in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur.

Speaking on behalf of the peacekeepers, UNAMID Judicial Affairs Officer, Leda Li-

mann said, "We are giving a few things because we want to try and make the lives of all in prison, particularly the women and their babies who were born while they were imprisoned are more comfortable. We thank you very much because you have given us an opportunity to demonstrate that everyone deserves to be loved, even though they may have made mistakes or wronged their society. We hope that these few items will serve as a reminder of their continuing value to society."

Brigadier Ali Ahmed expressed appreciation to UNAMID for such a unique gift. "It is unique because although we have received much assistance from UN Agencies and UNAMID in the past, the spirit of giving is being expressed, even to the extent

of the women of UNAMID are offloading so many heavy items from the trucks."

He was also pleased that the peacekeepers who were present at the ceremony represented many different Sections in UNAMID and many nationalities of the world. "I assure you that this will have an impact on the prisoners," Brigadier Ali Ahmed added. He hoped the donation would mark the beginning of fruitful and ongoing collaboration between the prison system of North Darfur and this group of peacekeepers.

THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS AND ASSISTANCE IN MINE ACTION 4 April 2011

The International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is a timely reminder that clearing land of explosive remnants of war saves lives and protects livelihoods.

Mine clearance prevents an indiscriminate weapon from causing harm and havoc long after conflicts have ended, while also creating jobs, transforming danger zones into productive land and setting societies on course for lasting security.

Last year, hundreds of thousands of people received United Nations mine risk education that prevented tragedy for individuals, families and communities. In Afghanistan alone, 14,400 people were employed in the mine action sector, helping to destroy more than 1 million explosive remnants of war.

UN development agencies are striving to connect mine action with broader development plans to promote agricultural production, strengthen infrastructure, improve water supply and provide better education and health services. These are all essential to reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite its many well-documented successes, mine action remains underfunded. The 2011 portfolio of projects has secured only about a quarter of the needed resources, leaving a funding gap of \$367 million.

While this is a significant sum, the cost is far outweighed by the benefits of removing explosive hazards, creating awareness, providing mine risk education, assisting survivors and helping communities.

I thank all those who have contributed to international mine action. I also applaud the 156 States which are party to the Mine Ban Treaty, the 54 that have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the 98 that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On this International Day, I call for universal adherence to these important treaties, increased support for mine awareness and mine action, and greater global solidarity in support of this crucial element in our drive to build a safer and more prosperous world for all.



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