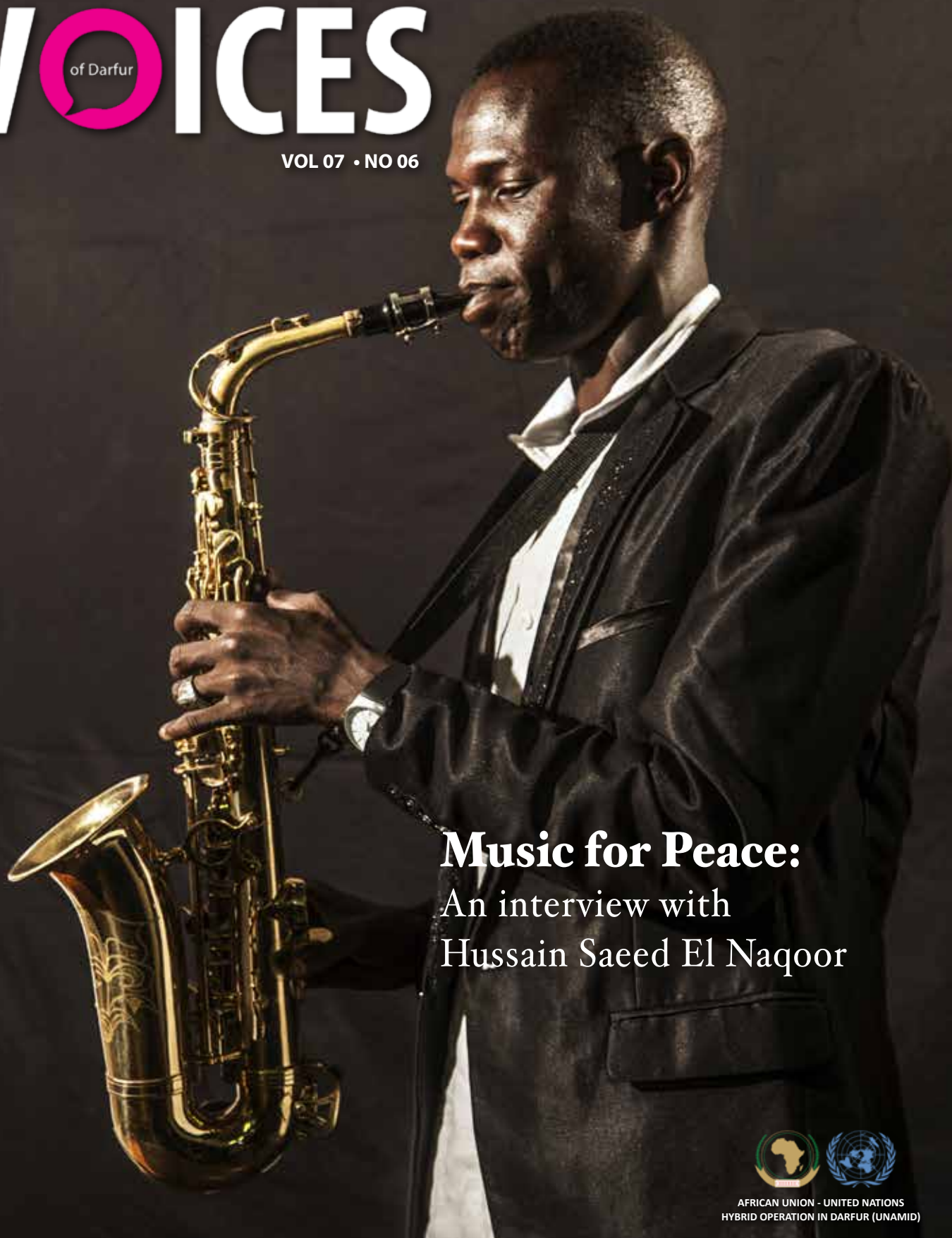


VOICES

of Darfur

VOL 07 • NO 06



Music for Peace:

An interview with
Hussain Saeed El Naqoor



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR (UNAMID)

UNAMID's reconfiguration
explained

Building peace, one dialogue
at a time

Education situation improves
for girls in North Darfur

Editor-in-Chief
Carlos Araujo

Editor
Musi Khumalo

Staff Writer
Salah Mohammed

Graphics & Design
Mutaz Ahmed

Photographers
Mohamad Almahady
Amin Ismail
Hamid Abdulsalam

Contributors
Priyanka Chowdhury
Emmanuel Emasealu
Matilda Moyo
David Youngmeyer
Mohamad Almahady

Translation
Nabil Mohamed
Rindala Eid
Eltahir Nourain Mohammed
Alawad Alawad
Ahmad Ibrahim
Abdalla Abdulraheem
Adam War

 facebook.com/UNAMID
facebook.com/UNAMID.arabic

 twitter.com/unamidnews

 gplus.to/UNAMID

 flickr.com/unamid-photo

Publications and Multimedia Unit (PMMU)
Communications and Public Information
Section (CPIS) - UNAMID
Email: unamid-publicinformation@un.org
Website: <https://unamid.unmissions.org>

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNAMID concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Content in this publication may be freely quoted or reprinted, provided credit is attributed to UNAMID.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

I'm quite pleased to introduce the December 2017 issue of *Voices of Darfur*, which 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 an interview with *Voices of Darfur*, senior leadership of UNAMID's Mission Support Division speaks about the current reconfiguration of UNAMID following the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2363, which continued UNAMID's strategic priorities and extended the Mission's mandate until 30 June 2018 and sets out a reconfiguration which includes a two-pronged approach that combines peacekeeping and stabilization.

The feature article entitled: 'Building peace, one dialogue at a time', focusses on the perennial conflict that exists between farmers and herders in west Darfur and touches on UNAMID Civil Affairs Section's role in identifying dialogue-based fora to ease tensions between these two groups and ensure a successful harvest season.

In another feature entitled: 'Education sit-

uation improves for girls in North Darfur', we highlight the fact that despite having barriers such as conflict, poverty and cultural norms impeding girl education, the situation is improving, at least in North Darfur where the gap between girls and boys education has been reduced to only 2 per cent in 2017.

The collation of photographs, focusing on the recent closure of eleven UNAMID Team sites in Darfur, gives a pictorial glance on the implementation of the recently adopted UN Security Council Resolution 2363 which led to the ongoing reconfiguration of UNAMID's operations.

Finally, in our cover feature, 'Music for Peace', *Voices of Darfur* presents an interview with the Saxophonist Hussain Saeed El Naqoor, who speaks about his passion for music, his interest in performing traditional songs as well as the challenges faced by musicians across Darfur.

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.

Carlos Araujo

Chief

Communications & Public Information Section

ON THE COVER



Hussain Saeed El Naqoor, the Darfuri Saxophonist is pictured playing music at UNAMID studios in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



A student from El Fasher Secondary School for Girls while playing music at a function organized by UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section to disseminate the culture of peace in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID

NEWS

PAGE 2 UNAMID Joint Special Representative visits Central Darfur

PAGE 3 UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office wins coveted UN Secretary-General's award for innovative Darfur project

PAGE 4 UNAMID trains community policing volunteers and police officers in West Darfur

PAGE 5 Sustainable steps for lasting peace in Darfur focus of Khartoum conference

PAGE 6 UNAMID collaborates with Office of

the General Prosecutor for Darfur Crimes on transitional and criminal justice workshop

PAGE 7 Sensitization on UNAMID mandate focus of school visits in North Darfur

PAGE 8 Role of social media in conflict resolution and peacebuilding focus of El Fasher debate

PAGE 9 UNAMID marks UN Day with internally displaced community in North Darfur

10 INTERVIEW

**UNAMID's
reconfiguration
explained**

16 PEACE BUILDING

**Building peace,
one dialogue at
a time**

20 EDUCATION

**Education situation
improves for girls
in North Darfur**

MISSION LEADERSHIP



Jeremiah Nyamane Kingsley
Mamabolo (South Africa)
Joint Special
Representative/
Joint Chief Mediation



Lieutenant General
Leonard Ngondi
(Kenya)
Force Commander



Priscilla Makotose
(Zimbabwe)
Police
Commissioner

UNAMID Joint Special Representative visits Central Darfur



UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, visited Zalingei, Central Darfur, where he met with the Wali (Governor), Mr. Jaffer Abdul Hakim, and discussed the opening of a temporary operating base in Golo as part of the Mission's ongoing reconfiguration. Mr. Mamabolo also updated UNAMID staff at the Mission's headquarters in Zalingei on current achievements and challenges. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.

ON 7 OCTOBER 2017, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR), Jeremiah Mamabolo, visited Zalingei, Central Darfur, where he met with the Wali (Governor), of Central Darfur, Mr. Jaffer Abdul Hakam, and members of the State Security Committee. Mr. Mamabolo discussed with them the establishment of a Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in Golo and the future Jebel Marra Task Force.

The JSR also congratulated the government of Sudan on the lifting of the US administration's eco-

nomie sanctions, which, according to him, represents an opportunity for all Sudanese to work together towards peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict and an occasion for non-signatory movements to come on board the peace process to achieve lasting peace in Darfur.

On his part, Mr. Abdul Hakam expressed the Government of Sudan's readiness to cooperate with UNAMID and all UN agencies in realizing sustainable peace and development for the Darfuri people and thanked the Mission for its con-

tribution to peace process in the region. Additionally, Mr. Hakam requested UNAMID's support in the ongoing weapons collection campaign, particularly with regard to safe storage of arms and awareness raising among local communities.

Lt-General Carlos Loitey, Military Adviser, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, accompanied Mr. Mamabolo to the meeting with the Wali and discussed operational issues related to the establishment of UNAMID's temporary base in Golo.

UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office wins coveted UN Secretary-General's award for innovative Darfur project

NEW YORK – UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO) has been recognized by the UN Secretary-General for a project that is helping to raise awareness in Darfur about the dangers of explosive remnants of war.

The ODO 'Solar Powered Risk Education Talking Device' (RETD) project was among a portfolio of four UNMAS projects that received the 2017 Secretary-General's Award in the 'Innovation and Creativity' category.

The award category honours UN staff who have achieved exceptional results by thinking "outside the box" and using creativity, innovative methods, and fresh perspectives to implement ideas or projects which improve our results or the way the UN works.

UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, said that the award recognizes ODO's very considerable achievement in partnership with UNAMID for the protection of civilians in Darfur.

The RETD device is a solar-powered audio talking device which has the ability to play multiple pre-recorded explosive remnants of war awareness materials such as songs, drama, interviews and focus group discussions. It is particularly suitable for use when engaging non-literate people across the vulnerable communities in Darfur.

Through the application of improved and risk education and innovative methods such as the RETD, at-risk communities across Darfur are able to receive messages in a more cost effective manner. The first phase of the project is designed to benefit 75,000 people and by June 2018 the project will cover over 200,000 at-risk people across



UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office staff member, Abel Tesfai, displays examples of the 'Solar Powered Risk Education Talking Device' (RETD) which was among a portfolio of four UNMAS projects that received a 2017 UN Secretary-General's Award on 24 October 2017 (United Nations Day). The device – which was acknowledged in the award's 'Innovation and Creativity' category -- has the ability to play multiple pre-recorded explosive remnants of war awareness materials and is particularly suitable for use with non-literate people across vulnerable communities in Darfur. Photo by UNAMID.

Darfur, mainly children and women.

Jeffrey McMurdo, Programme Manager, UNAMID ODO, said that the RETD project aims to disseminate risk education messages widely across Darfur. This includes areas that have traditionally been hard to reach by the national risk education teams, either due to lack of road infrastructure or because of the security situation.

Abel Tesfai, an ODO staff member who developed the project concept, explained that raising awareness through technology is a good fit for insecure areas, with the RETD being an effective tool for reaching isolated communities.

The award ceremony took place

on 24 October – United Nations Day – at UN Headquarters in New York, with ODO being represented by New York-based UNMAS colleagues. The annual awards involved some 120 submissions on inspirational projects that reflect the extraordinary dedication and achievement of UN staff around the globe.

UNMAS began its operations in Darfur in 2005 and through the UNAMID ODO has delivered risk education to conflict-affected populations. They particularly focus on vulnerable groups such as hosting communities, returnees, internally displaced persons and children, along with peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel.

UNAMID trains community policing volunteers and police officers in West Darfur



UNAMID, in partnership with the Government of Sudan (GoS) police, trained on 14 November 2017, some 32 Community Policing Volunteers (CPVs) and Sudanese police officers on community policing and gender mainstreaming in El Geneina, West Darfur. Photo by Elsadiq Daud, UNAMID.

ON 14 NOVEMBER 2017, UNAMID, in partnership with the Government of Sudan (GoS) police, trained some 32 Community Policing Volunteers (CPVs) and Sudanese police officers on community policing and gender mainstreaming in El Geneina, West Darfur.

Speaking at the workshop, Lt.-Colonel Mohammed Obeidat, Police Commander, UNAMID Sector West, emphasized the importance of supporting the national police through efforts to improve their capabilities. Furthermore, in terms of the ongoing weapons collection campaign, Lt.-Colonel Obeidat noted that the community's willingness to hand over arms shows their commitment to achieving peace and security. He urged the participants, especially

the CPVs, to continue their support to local authorities in addressing security issues and raising community awareness on the importance of maintaining law and order.

Colonel Musa Mahdi, Acting Director, State Police, appreciated UNAMID's continued efforts to support the national police forces. "This support has contributed to the stable security situation that we are enjoying at the moment," he averred.

On his part, Mohamed Hafiz, Community Policing Coordinator, West Darfur, described their partnership with UNAMID as "remarkable," adding that it had contributed significantly to building the capacity of the CPV committees and police officers in the region.

"We acknowledge the good work

UNAMID is doing by supporting the Sudanese police force to achieve their goals," stated Mr. Hafiz.

In conclusion, Elsadiq Mohamed, a spokesperson for displaced youth and a newly-recruited CPV from Al Hujaj camp for internally displaced persons spoke on behalf of the participants. "We have learnt how community policing volunteers can play a vital role as good citizens in their communities, as well as how to gather information and report crimes when they occur," said Mr. Mohamed.

The one-day workshop aimed at building the capacity of the Sudanese police force, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2363 which mandates the Mission to support the state government in capacity building endeavors.

Sustainable steps for lasting peace in Darfur focus of Khartoum conference



More than 350 people took part in the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC) Conference held in Khartoum on 30 October 2017, working together to identify sustainable steps for a lasting peace in Darfur. Photo by Ahmed Abdelrazik, UNAMID.

KHARTOUM – More than 350 people took part in the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation (DIDC) Conference held in Khartoum, working together to identify sustainable steps for a lasting peace in Darfur. Among the participants at the 30 October, UNAMID supported meeting, were the Vice-President of Sudan, Hassabo Mohamed Abdurrahman, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, and Chair of the DIDC Implementation Committee, Saddiq Adam Abdalla (Wadha).

Other participants included state government officials, native administrators and university authorities, along with represen-

tatives of civil society, women, youth groups, and the international community.

The DIDC is designed to consult local stakeholders to identify the root causes of the Darfur conflict, and highlight sustainable steps for lasting peace in Darfur. The main topics discussed included security, resettlement and compensation for the Internally displaced People, land ownership and use, restoration of the native administration, and a comprehensive peace agreement for Darfur. Mr. Abdurrahman described the DIDC as a significant dialogue process for cohesion in Darfur and reiterated the Government's commitment to implement-

ing the DIDC. He urged all Darfur states and local administrators to make DIDC outcomes a priority.

Mr. Mamabolo thanked all stakeholders for making the DIDC a reality and challenged all leaders -- including government, political parties and signatory groups -- to be responsible for peace in Darfur. The Joint Special Representative reiterated UNAMID's commitment to the DIDC, pledging to provide necessary technical and logistical support to the process, within the capabilities of the Mission. He welcomed the continued support of members of the diplomatic and international community to the DIDC process.

UNAMID collaborates with Office of the General Prosecutor for Darfur Crimes on transitional and criminal justice workshop



UNAMID Human Rights Section, in collaboration with the Office of the General Prosecutor for Darfur Crimes, concluded a two-day workshop on the role of transitional and criminal justice in achieving peace, held in El Fasher, North Darfur, On 12 October 2017. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

ON 12 OCTOBER 2017, UNAMID Human Rights Section, in collaboration with the Office of the General Prosecutor for Darfur Crimes, concluded a two-day workshop on the role of transitional and criminal justice in achieving peace. The workshop was held in El Fasher, North Darfur. Some 30 participants, including prosecutors, judges, police, lawyers, civil society organizations and representatives of transitional justice mechanisms attended the event.

In the course of the workshop, participants underlined the need for a comprehensive peace agreement in Darfur to enable effective implementation of transitional and criminal justice. They also

called on the Government of Sudan to continue its weapons collection campaign as a means of ensuring greater community stability and security.

Addressing the occasion, Francoise Simard, Acting Deputy Joint Special Representative, UNAMID, stated that such workshops are designed to enhance participants' knowledge of transitional and criminal justice, thereby enforcing accountability and promoting social remedy, in line with international human rights standards.

"Such workshops also serve as platforms to discuss practical challenges related to the work of the Special Prosecutor, Special Court of Darfur Crimes, as the Court is

one of the key transitional justice mechanisms in Darfur. Additionally, participants can make recommendations in the area of criminal justice," added Ms. Simard.

On his part, Al Fatih Tayfour, General Prosecutor, Special Court of Darfur Crimes, commended UNAMID for its consistent efforts in building the capacity of local stakeholders in rule of law institutions.

Dr. Salih El Nour, a representative from the Center for Peace, Development and Human Rights Studies, El Fasher University, highlighted the importance of transitional and criminal justice systems in achieving social peace across Darfur, particularly in terms of inter-communal conflict.

Sensitization on UNAMID mandate focus of school visits in North Darfur



UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit visited Almustagbal Basic School for Girls in El Fasher, North Darfur. Information and educational materials incorporating peace messages were distributed to students during the occasion. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit (COU) recently conducted visits to Almustagbal Basic School for Girls and El Fasher Secondary School for Girls in North Darfur; these took place on 2 and 4 October 2017, respectively. Information and educational materials incorporating messages on UNAMID's activities across Darfur were distributed among the students during these visits, while

COU representatives spoke with them about the Mission's mandate.

More than 2,000 students, teachers and members of the Student Activity Department, El Fasher, attended both events, which included musical performances and quiz competitions on the Mission's interventions as well as the ongoing peace process in Darfur. Additionally, students were giv-

en exercise books, volleyballs and school bags that carried the slogan, "No Life without Peace."

Abdul-Aziz Salim, Director, Student Activities Department, commended UNAMID for supporting education in Darfur and emphasized that the Mission is playing a vital role in sensitizing communities on the culture of peaceful coexistence. ■

Role of social media in conflict resolution and peacebuilding focus of El Fasher debate



UNAMID commemorated the International Day of Peace with a debate on the role of social media in conflict resolution and peace building in El Fasher, North Darfur. During the event, UNAMID Force Commander, Lieutenant-General, Leonard Ngondi, read out the UN Secretary-General's message on the day. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

EL FASHER - The role of social media in conflict resolution and peacebuilding was the topic of a UNAMID-supported debate to mark the International Day of Peace.

Held under the theme 'Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All', the 24 September event was organized in partnership with the Centre for Peace and Development Studies at Omdurman Islamic University and held in El Fasher, North Darfur. Similar events were held in other parts of Darfur.

The Deputy Wali (Governor) of North Darfur, Mohamed Beraima, and UNAMID Force Commander, Lieutenant - General, Leonard Ngondi, were among the participants, who also included university students, civil society organization representatives, government officials and UNAMID staff.

The event included a photo exhibition

and a Darfuri village to illustrate the Mission's activities across Darfur, a painting competition and the distribution of peace messages.

Dr. El Sadig Omer, one of the debate participants, said that social media plays an important role in disseminating a culture of peace and conflict resolution, along with contributing to freedom of expression and supporting distance education.

Another debate participant, Omer Abdulhameed, highlighted the negative role of social media, particularly in being a vehicle for the dissemination of rumours amongst communities.

Hamza Rasheed, the winner of the painting competition, pointed to the importance of peace for development, security and stability in Darfur.

Lieutenant-General Ngondi shared a message from UN Secretary - Gen-

eral, Antonio Guterres, who called for a global ceasefire: "We must never -- ever -- stop pressing for an end to armed conflict", said Mr. Guterres in his message.

Mr. Beraima commended UNAMID and the Centre for organizing the debate. He encouraged participants to explore positive ways to use social media in support of peace.

Dr. Emad Salim, Director of the Centre, highlighted the university's objectives, which include activities associated with community development, peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly as a period of non-violence and ceasefire. Celebrated around the world on 21 September, it is commemorated through education and public awareness on issues related to peace. ■

UNAMID marks UN Day with internally displaced community in North Darfur



United Nations Day is celebrated each 24 October to mark the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter. In his message, UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, said that “our world faces many grave challenges”, but that we have the tools to overcome them: “All we need is the will”. UNAMID marked the day with a cultural event at Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced people, in North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

EL FASHER – More than 3,000 people attended a UNAMID-supported UN Day cultural and information event at Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons in El Fasher, North Darfur on 24 October.

Participants -- including Omda's (traditional chiefs), students, teachers and other community members – came together under the theme ‘Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All’.

Organized by UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit, the event included cultural and drama performances, a student carnival, a replica Darfuri village and a photo exhibition of the Mission's activities across Darfur. Darfuri musician, Halima Sasa, performed traditional peace songs. Information and educational materials on the

ongoing peace process were also distributed among the audience. Similar events were organized across Darfur.

Carlos Araujo, Chief of UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section, read out a message from UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. The message highlighted the many grave challenges facing the world, such as widening conflicts and inequality, extreme weather and deadly intolerance, and security threats including nuclear weapons.

“We have the tools and wealth to overcome these challenges. All we need is the will,” said the Secretary-General in his message. “We have to transcend our differences to transform our future.”

Mounira Badawi, the Minister of Education and representative

of the Wali (Governor) of North Darfur commended UNAMID and UN agencies for their support to the stability of education in Darfur, particularly in North Darfur.

Abubaker Idriss, Headmaster of Taiba Secondary School for Girls, called upon all stakeholders to support education at Abu Shouk camp, where his school is based. Mr. Idriss highlighted the challenges in improving the education environment.

Yahiya Adam, the Chief Omda at Abu Shouk camp, encouraged students to celebrate UN day by focusing on education and he called for all people to work for peace in Darfur.

United Nations Day is celebrated each 24 October to mark the anniversary of the entry into force in 1945 of the UN Charter.

UNAMID's reconfiguration explained

An in-depth interview with three members of UNAMID's Mission Support Division on the current reconfiguration of UNAMID



The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix accompanied by Senior Mission Leadership including Victoria Browning, Director, Mission Support Division, visited on 22 July 2017, Golo, a town in the vicinity of Jebel Marra, Central Darfur. During the visit, Mr. Lacroix met with local authorities and community representatives. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

BY EMMANUEL EMASEALU

IN JUNE, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2363, which continued UNAMID's strategic priorities and extended the Mission's mandate until 30 June 2018. At the same time, set out a reconfiguration which includes a two-pronged approach that combines peacekeeping and stabilization.

Voices of Darfur (VoD) sat down with three members of UNAMID's Mission Support Division to find out more about the reconfiguration and what it will mean

for the Mission's work in Darfur.

Interviewed were Victoria Browning, Director, Mission Support Division; Ebrima Ceesay, Deputy Director, Mission Support Division; and Andrea Charles-Browne, Senior Mission Support Officer, Sector North.

VoD: UN Security Council Resolution 2363 focuses on the reconfiguration of UNAMID, especially on the two-pronged approach based on peacekeeping and stabilization in Darfur. How is UNAMID Mission Support actualizing the UN Resolution

in terms of planning and strategy?

Victoria Browning (VB): The UN Security Council Resolution, indeed, has a two-pronged approach of peacekeeping in the Jebel Marra area and stabilization in other parts of Darfur. At this stage, the substantive side of the Mission is in the process of providing an operational concept which will guide us in providing support to the Mission as our name, Mission Support, implies. This would mean adjusting our operations in relation to that concept.



print is concerned, this is definitely a downsizing and some troops have been drawn out.

VoD: Is the Mission Support Division facing any challenges in moving UNAMID from peacekeeping to stabilization/peace building?

VB: One of the challenges is that the Government and local authorities in different states are expecting that some of the funds we have now in terms of assets should be transferred easily to peace building. That will not be easy. I think stabilization/peace building is more about capacity building, training, support for state plans and policies, and so forth. There could also be the challenge of perception that there may be more support coming from the Mission than can actually be provided. The Mission has a mandate for peacekeeping and peace building which does not cover development. So, we have to be very clear on that and I think it may become a challenge at some point if we are not able to meet their expectations.

VoD: What are the implications of the reconfiguration for infrastructure?

VB: We are supporting the local community in a major way because with the closure of some Team Sites we are basically handing over assets. An assessment is to be conducted in January 2018 which will determine the direction to follow in the second phase of the reconfiguration. This may lead to the closure of additional Team Sites. If what you have described as downsizing continues, we may have to look at giving out more infrastructure. The direct impact of the reconfiguration of UNAMID, in line with the UN Security Council Resolution, is that we are handing over infrastructure which is an aspect of the closure of some team sites.

Andrea Charles-Browne (ACB): The Mission was pretty upfront re-

garding its objective, which is to handover Team Sites for the benefit of the local community. So, from the beginning, some Team Sites had land ownership issues. Great effort was made to have discussions and negotiations with the Government with a view to enabling the private landowners to permit UNAMID to handover to the Government authorities. In that way, the community can benefit from the continued use of the Team Sites for their community use, while the Government would make arrangements with the landowners regarding compensation.

The overall strategy, from the beginning, gave the negotiation team directives as to how best to approach the closure process, especially within the timeframes.

VoD: How did the Mission communicate the reconfiguration with the Government of Sudan?

VB: Mission Support works more at the technical level engaging with the Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) through technical meetings in Khartoum and sending them information on the progress of work, timelines, and objectives and strategy. We have ensured that the heads of offices in the states are engaged through the Integrated Planning Team (IPT) and that all key stakeholders from our side are engaged so that the right communication goes out. The message has been carried outside by the Joint Special Representative and his Deputy.

ACB: UNAMID Heads of Offices and Senior Mission Support Officers in the Sectors are involved in direct communication with their local communities, particularly at the level of the Wali's (Governors) and the representatives they put forward. That helped to get the message across externally. Internally, senior management held regular town hall meetings with UNAMID staff.

VoD: How would you describe the current reconfiguration?

VB: For the moment, there is downsizing and I think the objective is to have a smaller Mission footprint. We have been asked to repatriate Military battalions and to close down some Team Sites. There is a definite downsizing, but what happens beyond that will depend on the UN Security Council Resolution.

Ebrima Ceesay (EC): We don't have an end state finally for the Mission. In as far as reducing our foot-



Ebrima Ceesay, Deputy Director, Mission Support Division (left), attended on 14 December 2017, the graduation ceremony for 32 participants from the Mission's national staff who completed Small Business Management training organized by the Integrated Mission Training Centre (IMTC) at El Fasher University, north Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

EC: What Mission Support also did, which was very effective, was that from the onset, we sent out communication to all stakeholders including the Government and Heads of Offices. There were Note Verbales to the Government of Sudan informing them of our plans in the reconfiguration exercise. Letters were sent by the Joint Special Representative to Heads of Offices directing them to get in touch with their Wali's and establish technical committees at local levels. So, everything was done to facilitate the closing of some team sites, repatriation of certain peacekeepers and seeking the cooperation of stakeholders in facilitating clearances. It worked very well, as we were more in touch with those who were going to be directly impacted by the closure of certain

Team Sites and disposal of assets.

VoD: What is the impact of the reconfiguration on service delivery?

VB: The reconfiguration has taken a big toll because it was not anticipated. The Security Council Resolution arrived on 29 June, 2017 and UNAMID's budget kicked in on the first of July. We were also under pressure of a major budget cut which meant that as soon as the Security Council called for closure of some Team Sites, we were under pressure to close them immediately.

People have had to work doubly hard in the last few months. Many people may not have noticed the amount of work that has gone into the reconfiguration exercise. We have gone through a Civilian Staffing Review (CSR) and have since completed the Comparative Review Process (CRP). I think Mission

Support has shone through all of this and has been able to maintain standards in the provision of services throughout this difficult period. I would say that the impact has been more on the staff than external service delivery. It has been an incredibly complex, difficult and intense few months.

VoD: How does the Mission Support Division go about supporting UNAMID?

VB: Through everything, including the chair you are sitting on! We do not define the mandate or define the priorities, but we enable the mission. Mission Support provides appropriate information and we support those defined priorities. We enable in terms of logistics, accommodation, administration, human resource, finance, budget, aviation, movement control and IT, whether at headquarter



Andrea Charles-Browne, Senior Mission Support Officer (right), participated in the handover of the Mission's team site in Mellit, North Darfur to the Government of Sudan. The handover is part of UNAMID's ongoing reconfiguration as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 2363. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

ters or Sector levels.

EC: There is also the issue of delegation. It is the Director, Mission Support and her team who are permitted to commit the funds and assets of the organization, and are accountable for the control of those resources. Mission Support helps by enabling others to function effectively, from the Force and the Police to the substantive, and sometimes, the country teams.

VB: The task is enormous. We will not tell the Force Commander what to do when in a combat zone, for example, but the administration behind all Mission operations is enabled by Mission Support.

VoD: The core values of the UN are professionalism, integrity and respect for diversity. How has UNAMID Mission Support promoted these core values through its operations?

VB: There are several forms or processes which include the formal performance appraisal system and broadcasts to staff on subjects such as independence of procurement. Another way is leading by example, by being accountable right from the top management level. In doing this, you embed the culture of integrity and professionalism at all levels of the organization. Staff also receive training on topics such as conduct and discipline. Apart from that, there is also the personal dedication of each manager in embedding the proper culture.

VoD: The United Nations is committed to gender equality, zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, the protection of human rights, and respect for the rule of law among others. How is Mission Support encouraging these values?

VB: We have formal entities that

are mandated to do training and inductions. There is a whole set of values provided for members of staff before they assume duty. Apart from that, in our daily work, there is implementation of the performance management system.

EC: Our work in this area is not limited to staff, but extends to everybody we do business with. We do everything possible to uphold and enforce these core values even with the contractors we work with.

VoD: How has Mission Support engaged with police and military components within the mission to ensure coordinated, high-quality support in accordance with their operational requirements?

EC: The Integrated Planning Team mechanism was a very effective tool for this in that it included representatives from the Force and Police, with some meetings attended

INTERVIEW

by the Chief of Staff, Force Chief of Staff and Deputy Police Commissioner. That really helped in having collective plans and in coordinating the parties. The Force and Police gave their fullest cooperation.

Battalions and formed police units come from troop contributing countries and police contributing countries. They are under the overall command of the Force Commander or Police Commissioner, and there is coordination with New York. This was a difficult exercise for them too because it meant, in some cases, forty percent of their capacity going away. They have had to readjust and develop substitute plans to fill the gaps. That discussion is still ongoing as we look ahead to phase two of the reconfiguration.

VoD: What are some of the challenges involved in the reconfiguration process?

VB: United Nations rules clearly stipulate that as the first option, we have to sell assets at those Team Sites earmarked for closure. The funds realized goes into the miscellaneous account of the member states, of which Sudan is a member. Because of economic considerations, we cannot take everything out of a Team Site, as it sometimes costs more to repatriate an asset than to leave it in place. We tried our best to be accommodating, where feasible, as we understand that assets left behind will benefit the local community. There was some level of flexibility in leaving assets in place.

SMSO: Another challenge was the short timeframe involved in closing Team Sites. Commercial sales involve a lengthy process with associated costs. This is where our position that the Government of Sudan should speak with private landowners in order to move the process forward proved helpful. ■



The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix accompanied by Senior Mission Leadership including Victoria Browning, Director, Mission Support Division, visited on 22 July 2017, Golo, a town in the vicinity of Jebel Marra, Central Darfur. During the visit, Mr. Lacroix met with local authorities and community representatives. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.





People from 14 villages gather in Bir Kilab to discuss local solutions to the challenges they face. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

Building peace, one dialogue at a time

Most Darfuris depend on agriculture to make a living and, as such, conflicts between farmers and herders, fuelled by crop destruction, frequently erupt. UNAMID Civil Affairs has identified dialogue-based fora to ease tensions between these two groups and ensure a successful harvest season.

BY MATILDA MOYO

A CROWD rapidly builds up as communities from 14 neighbouring villages gather at Anasir school in Bir Kilab village, West Darfur. The gathering has been called to bring pastoralists and farmers together to discuss how best to exist peacefully alongside each other, and ensure a successful harvest following incidents of crop destruction on farms by livestock owned by pastoralists during migration.

As the crowd swells, a distraught elderly man carrying a large blue plastic bag empties the

contents onto the ground, drawing sympathetic expressions from on-lookers. He tells those around him that a camel herd cleared his field the previous night and ate his entire harvest.

"Animals invaded my farm and ate my crops last night. This is all that remains," 80-year old Ismael Abdalla from nearby Fakunda village laments, while he shows the remains of a cucumber partially eaten by a camel. He adds that he has no choice but to plant afresh in order to avoid hunger, although a good harvest is not guaranteed, as

he relies on rain-fed agriculture and the rainy season has ended.

Abdalla's plight aptly illustrates a recurrent challenge experienced by farmers and herders annually during the harvest season in November, sometimes resulting in clashes.

"Crop destruction, caused by the migration of livestock during the harvest season, is so rampant that if we are lucky, we only harvest half of what we planted," says Senin Mustaf Yagoub, a youth leader from Bir Kilab, a hamlet inhabited by pastoralists in mountainous Sirba locality. Surrounded by

about 14 villages occupied largely by farmers, most of whom are returnees from camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), the area is very fertile, has the potential to be productive and can be food secure in the event of a successful harvest. Crops grown include beans, millet, water melon, tomatoes and a variety of vegetables.

“The animals are released at night and feed on our farms so when we wake up in the morning we find our crops gone,” says Shiek Sheriff Atim from neighbouring Sisi village. He adds that since the first week of November, a different farm has been affected every night.

“It happens every year at this time, the end of the rainy season and harvest time, the pastoralists come, feed their animals from our farms until our crops are finished, then they leave,” he says.

On the other hand, pastoralists face challenges, such as theft of livestock, prompting them to migrate to other areas during this period, which coincides with the harvest season. Medaikhier Omad, a pastoralist, says during this season, they move closer towns and security points for protection from armed robbers. His views are reinforced by Sheik Arabia Barka Suleiman, a pastoralist.

“Everyone is at risk, yet we all need to survive. The herders fear armed robbers, while the farmers are afraid to lose their crops, which results in clashes. We need each other and we live together, so let us find a way to mitigate these risks and co-exist,” he says.

As part of the solution, UNAMID through its Civil Affairs Section (CAS), has over the last two years facilitated dialogue between pastoral and agricultural communities to discuss and resolve common problems collectively. Through local conflict resolution mechanisms, both communities identify ways to

ensure peaceful coexistence and a successful harvest, and thus find outcomes that are fruitful and favorable for everyone. The forums also strengthen the capacity of community leaders to resolve issues through inter-communal dialogue in an environment that is conducive for participants to identify viable local mechanisms.

The dialogues are part of a broader strategy to promote peace, in line with the Mission’s new mandate, which incorporates a two-pronged approach of peace keeping and peace building. They are aligned to peace building, through which UNAMID supports local mediation of communal conflicts, including addressing its root causes in collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

The forums complement other

initiatives underway to promote peaceful coexistence such as the conference for Native Administration leaders held in May 2017.

Currently, 16 dialogues facilitated by UNAMID are scheduled for hotspots across West Darfur between November and December. So far, five have taken place in Tonvoka, Tarbiba, Nouri, Bir Kilab and Um Sebeika villages in West Darfur’s various localities, building on more than 30 similar activities conducted in previous years.

Communities welcome the initiative, with hundreds of people, including farmers, pastoralists, native administration leaders, women and youths, attending to share views on how best to live in harmony and reduce losses caused by crop destruction.

Addressing the community at one

“Crop destruction, caused by the migration of livestock during the harvest season, is so rampant that if we are lucky, we only harvest half of what we planted.”

–Senin Mustaf Yagoub

Eighty years old - Ismael Abdalla shows what was left on his farm following the destruction of his crops by a herd of camels. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.





Community leaders from both farmers and pastoralists sit together during the dialogue, demonstrating the unity they would like to see between their communities. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

such dialogue in Bir Kilab recently, Rommel Dela Rosa, UNAMID Sector West Civil Affairs Section team leader, said last year in November the area witnessed crop destruction caused by early migration of pastoralists with their livestock. However, conflict was prevented due to the resilience of the community members coupled with efforts by the Native Administration in the area.

“Now the harvest season has started and unfortunately this is also a period when tensions between farmers and nomads rise. This disturbing trend not only hampers relations between communities but also affects food security due to cases of crop destruction,” Mr. Dela Rosa says.

“It is our hope that you will discuss the recurring incidents between farmers and pastoralists and especially the issue of land ownership which remains a primary cause of conflict between the two communities,” he adds.

With neither police posts nor military presence in some of the areas, such as the Bir Kilab, affected farmers often report to community leaders, who offer little solace, hence

the importance of such dialogues.

Zainab Yagoub, a 23 year old mother of seven children, says although security forces made efforts to drive away the animals this season, losses were still incurred, which indicates the need for more permanent solutions.

“This season security forces came to help provide protection and drove some of the livestock towards the Wadi (riverbed), but the situation remains unchanged,

as animals still invade our farms at night and set off at dawn,” she says. “We were lucky to harvest some millet, but we lost everything else,” she adds. Further, she feels insecure because women are harassed when performing daily tasks like collecting firewood, while gunshots are occasionally heard, which instils fear in farmers.

Mr. Dela Rosa emphasizes that peace and security are essential for sustainable development, hence the importance of discussions as a peaceful way forward for such communities and the rest of West Darfur.

Settling differences between farmers and herders has other benefits. It enhances security, thereby encouraging more people to leave IDP camps and return to settle in their villages. Already, hundreds of families who previously only went to the villages to plough during the rainy season but preferred to live at IDP camps, have already moved back to settle in the villages permanently. While the security situation in some of those areas is often reported as relatively calm, in some villages such as Nouri, it is compromised by the presence of

Twenty three year old Zainab Yagoub says although security forces made efforts to drive away the animals this season, losses were still incurred, which indicates the need for more permanent solutions. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.



armed herders.

Communities value the dialogues and appreciate their impact, with leaders commending the initiative and support by UNAMID, as such forums provide a common understanding and enhance peaceful coexistence, while building confidence and promoting inter-communal relations between the farmers and pastoralists. This helps them to resolve disputes peacefully. They appealed to UNAMID to continue with such visits and expand to other parts of the state in order to curb similar challenges.

Fursha Mohamed Ibrahim, who represents farmers, commended UNAMID for organizing the forum and highlighted the positive impact of previous dialogues.

Omda Midikhir Al Shain, a pastoralist leader from Bir Kilab village, hailed the forums, particularly their appropriate timing during the harvest season when tension between farmers and pastoralists arise.

The communities where dialogues have taken place so far have come up with recommendations to help maintain peace.

Key issues agreed on were the need for animals to be kept away from farms until crops have been harvested. Communities agreed that farmlands should be far away from water points so animals do not stray onto fields. There was also need for the demarcation of migratory routes and provision of water and veterinary services for livestock.

Security was a major concern in all villages visited so far. The communities appealed to government to increase the number of police deployed in areas such as Um Se-bika and establish police stations in places like Bir Kilab where they don't exist. They also urged government to monitor and control the border with Chad by deploying more military personnel.



Medaikhier Omda, a pastoralist, acknowledges that farmers and pastoralists need each other and we live together, hence the need to co-exist peacefully. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

“Everyone is at risk, yet we all need to survive. The herders fear armed robbers, while the farmers are afraid to lose their crops, which results in clashes. We need each other and we live together, so let us find a way to mitigate these risks and co-exist.”

— **Medaikhier Omda**

There was consensus to end the harassment of farmers and women as they conduct their livelihood activities.

Leaders from both communities also agreed to communicate regularly, resolve issues through dialogue, as well as strengthen and activate local mechanisms to address local disputes. They appealed for the provision of basic services in the various villages, in order to reduce competition over limited resources and thereby curb tensions.

They also suggested establishing crop protection committees where they don't exist and strengthening existing ones by increasing members and supporting them with resources to enhance their effective-

ness with the help of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO). In some villages, participants pledged to resolve disputes through peaceful coexistence committees. The communities recommended that UNAMID should continue conduct confidence building missions around farming areas.

Additionally, they training in conflict resolution and peace building from UNAMID. Both communities agreed to sensitize their members on the recommendations and fully implement the decisions made.

It is hoped that there will be incremental gains, with the dialogues contributing towards harmonious and productive communities. ■

Education situation improves for girls in North Darfur

Girls in Darfur have faced many impediments to their education, including conflict, poverty and cultural norms, but the situation is becoming more positive, at least in North Darfur.







In mid-2004, then 13-year-old Hawa Adam and her family of seven sisters and three brothers fled their village in the Tarni area, in east Jebel Marra, Darfur. They found themselves in the midst of a conflict: gun shots rang out and fire razed there thatched homes. The family walked through the desert for what seemed like an eternity, eventually reaching Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El Fasher, North Darfur, joining thousands of others who had likewise sought refuge.

BY SALAH MOHAMMED



UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section hands over school furniture to Golo Um Basic School in Golo, Jebel Marra area, Central Darfur. The project was funded through the Mission's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

her education as she got married at 14 and had to stay at home looking after her children.

This is a typical story of many young girls in Darfur, who -- through no fault of their own -- fall victim to external circumstances and traditional norms, such as early marriage, that impede their education.

Some members of the community are not firm believers in investing in girl's education, seeing this instead as a waste of their limited funds. Given this situation, some opt to send a boy to school instead of a girl, as they see boys as future heads of families.

Undeterred, however, Hawa persevered with her studies, graduating in 2016 with a Diploma in Social Service and Voluntary Work from the Sudan University for Sciences and Technology.

Says Hawa: "The IDP camps have some form of education system unlike some of the remote villages where we came from. Once you're in an IDP camp, children stand a better chance of accessing education, as the families understand the importance of education."

"Education is very important for girls nowadays, as educated women can look after their families and even support their husband financially," says Hawa. "Some of my peers were forced to marry early and now they have between 7-8 children each, when they are still children themselves. They have missed out on their youth."

Some male heads of households in Darfur have been forced to search for economic opportunities in neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad or Egypt, or to illegally migrate to Europe. As a result, some women and girls have taken over as heads of families, facing difficult choices on which children to send to school. This has led some

families to opt for early marriage for their daughters or for girls to drop out of school in the middle of their studies.

Abubaker Hassan, the Headmaster of Taiba Secondary School for Girls at Abu Shouk, explains that some of the students face serious challenges in getting food and rely largely on support from United Nations humanitarian agencies.

"More than a third of the students in our School do not have the money to even get a morsel of food for breakfast, which is an important meal of the day," said Mr. Hassan.

"The Parent Education Council at our School is doing its best to source funds to lessen the burden for parents struggling daily to pay school fees and provide at least one meal a day for girls. This fee exemption takes the pressure off the girls and reduces the likelihood they will quit school, or to stay at home to do household chores, or get married early," said Mr. Hassan.

Lack of access to quality education, including a lack of adequate teaching staff, is another hindrance to the education of girls. For nomadic communities in Darfur, frequent movement from place to place hinders girls' education access, leaving them instead to tend animals and do other household chores.

Mr. Hassan said that the conflict in Darfur had affected girl students, reducing their ability to absorb information in the classroom: "We have requested the employment of school psychologists who can help to improve the education environment, along with the provision of more teachers and teaching materials."

Awatif Abaker, Head of the Department responsible for Girls Child Education in the Ministry of Education, North Darfur, said education is critically important, empowering

EL FASHER - From 2004 to 2007, Hawa found a job, working in the evenings at Al Mawashi market in El Fasher. She sold different types of household wares to not only raise pay for her own school uniforms and fees, but also to sustain her younger brothers and sisters through school. This burden on Hawa was compounded by the sudden departure of her mother to South Sudan and her father also leaving the family. The youngest sister, Mona, was unable to complete



girls through basic skills, knowledge and self-confidence.

Ms. Abaker said that statistics point to an apparent decline in the absorption of girls in schools both at the national and local levels.

"A concerted push for early education for girls started recently in North Darfur," said Mrs Abaker, who notes that family perceptions of the importance of girls' education is becoming more positive.

"Illiteracy of parents in these affected families; traditional perceptions that girls' education is not im-

portant, that they do not have the right to go to school; war and conflict; poverty; financial constraints; unconducive learning environment; and crowded classrooms are just some of the factors that contribute to the drop out of girls from school," said Ms. Abaker.

"The gap between girls and boys education in 2012 was more than 6 per cent, but in 2017 the gap has reduced to only 2 per cent in 2017 in North Darfur state," she said.

Ms. Abaker said that the Government of Sudan has provided

its support to girl's education in Darfur, with the aim of creating a conducive environment. The Girls Education Department is conducting campaigns to raise awareness among communities on the importance of the education of girls.

Registration campaigns aimed at boosting school enrolment of girls -- implemented by the Girl Child Education Department in the Ministry of Education, North Darfur -- have significantly reduced the number of girls dropping out in affected localities, IDP camps and nomad areas.



“We strongly encourage families to send their girls to school so as to prepare them for a better future when they enter the workforce or become mothers,” said Ms. Abaker. “We encourage donors, the international community and Government of Sudan to continue to support girls’ education, which will ultimately contribute towards development, peace and stability in Darfur.”

UNAMID has been implementing Quick Impacts Projects (QIPs) in support of education through-

out Darfur. The more than 400 education projects – at a cost of in excess of 9 billion Sudanese pounds -- represent almost half of all the Mission’s QIPs in Darfur. The projects include construction of kindergartens, classrooms, offices, fences and latrines, along with the provision of school furniture such as desks, benches, office tables, chairs and cupboards. The projects also include the rehabilitation of schools and provision of computers and computer tables to universities in Darfur.

1

2

On 4 October 2017, UNAMID’s Community Outreach Unit visited El Fasher Modern Secondary School for Girls, North Darfur in El Fasher, North Darfur. Information and educational materials incorporating peace messages were distributed to students during the occasion. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID

3

On 2 October 2017, UNAMID’s Community Outreach Unit visited Almustagbal Basic School for Girls in El Fasher, North Darfur. Information and educational materials incorporating peace messages were distributed to students during the occasion. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



UNAMID Closes Eleven Team Sites in Darfur

THE RECENTLY adopted UN Security Council Resolution 2363 has led to the ongoing reconfiguration of UNAMID's operations. This is based on a two-pronged approach, combining peacekeeping and stabilization efforts. The Resolution also called for closing 11 team sites across Darfur, a task completed by the Mission at the end of October 2017. These include Tulus and Eid El Fursan in South Darfur; Forobaranga and Habila in West Darfur; Muhajerla in East Darfur; and Abu Shouk, Malha, Mellit, Um Kadada, Tine, Zam Zam in North Darfur.



PHOTO STORY







Hussain Saeed El Naqoor, the Darfuri Saxophonist is pictured playing music at UNAMID video studios in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

Music for Peace: An interview with Hussain Saeed El Naqoor

Saxophonist Hussain Saeed El Naqoor speaks to *Voices of Darfur* about his passion for music, his interest in performing traditional songs as well as the challenges faced by musicians across Darfur.

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

27-YEAR-OLD Hussain Saeed El Naqoor, was born in Kutum, North Darfur. He pursued his basic and secondary school education in Kutum before moving to Khartoum to study music at the College of Music and Drama, Sudan University for Sciences and Technology (SUST), where he graduated as a saxophone and piano player in 2015. While studying at SUST, Mr. El Naqoor also studied jazz and blues music at the Yes American Academy, Sudan, from 2013 to 2015. During this period, he ventured into soundtrack composition for movies and plays and actually won first prize at the community theatre in Khartoum.

Subsequently, Mr. El Naqoor participated in a number of student innovation festivals and music festivals, such as the 4th Jazz Festival at the French Cultural Centre in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

After graduating, Mr. El Naqoor became a teaching assistant at the College of Music and Drama at SUST. Parallely, he taught at the El Segana Youth Center and at the military music department in Khartoum. In addition to composing a number of highly-acclaimed musical pieces, Mr. El Naqoor is the founder of the Moon Wakar Cultural Group in Kutum, North Darfur; a member of the El Fasher Amasi Band; and author

of a number of theatrical dramas. He is also a member of the Sudaniyat traditional music group in Khar-toum, which plays traditional music as well as dabbles in contemporary ballroom dancing.

VoD: How did you become involved in the world of music?

El Naqoor: I firmly believe I was born with music in my veins. In my early years, I was drawn to painting.

My Mother encouraged me to study music. When I grew up, I joined the Children's Friends and Theatre Group in Kutum; this experience inspired me to write stories and plays based on notes I wrote in my diary at home. Another mo-

tivating factor was my admiration of Sudanese music. I hoped to use music to address the innermost feelings of the human spirit. I endured much suffering while pursuing a formal degree in music because, at the time, there was no precedent for such a profession where I came from. I even thought of leaving my education unfinished for a time as I couldn't find anyone who understood my quest. However, I persevered with my studies and returned to Darfur to address the gaps I saw and felt in the world of music.

VoD: Tell us a bit about your compositions.

El Naqoor: After becoming a specialized musician, I started composing during my visits to various parts of Sudan. During one such trip, I saw falling leaves from a tree forming colorful pattern on the ground—this became the inspiration for one of my pieces titled “Falling of tree leaves in spring.” I also composed another piece, “Gandala,” based on the Kirang rhythm during one of my visits to the Nuba Mountains. I have dabbled in writing plays and am an avid music researcher looking forward to producing more saxophone-based pieces. Currently, I am part of a traditional performing band which has enabled me to produce a collection of music pieces. Darfur as a region is very rich in its traditional rhythms, but they are fast disappearing, due to the lack of documentation.

VoD: In your opinion, how can Darfuri music be successfully documented?

El Naqoor: Darfuri rhythms are unique and diversified. The rhythms currently found in Darfur differs from modern Darfuri music, because musicians here use completely local instruments such as Qaraa, Bokhsa, and Fondok. These instruments create unique rhythms for popular music. Such music can be documented by searching for local experts who play these instruments and are keen on preserving their heritage. Darfur has some very popular singers who are well-

known locally but lack country-wide exposure. We should reach out and make concerted efforts to document their knowledge of Darfuri music.

VoD: How many instruments do you play and which one do you like the most?

El Naqoor: I play the saxophone, the piano, and the flute, but I like the saxophone best.

VoD: What is your opinion on the current state of art and music in Darfur?

El Naqoor: Darfur is currently witnessing remarkable development within the Sudanese music scene. More than ten traditional cultural groups have been created in our local area because the community anticipates marked improvement in security, peace and development. These groups constitute a cultural movement that reflects development in traditional systems, which include open discussions and musical forums.

VoD: What challenges do most artists and musicians face in Darfur?

El Naqoor: Artists and musicians in Darfur lack financial support to fully promote and nurture the arts. What is most required is transportation to enable artists and musicians to perform their activities in various parts of the region.

VoD: Describe the role that, you believe, art and music play in peace building?

El Naqoor: Music has no specific language. It is the language of all and it plays a big role in peace building through addressing the conscience of people. Music draws a bright picture in people's minds and communicates required messages without words. Music can achieve what dialogue fails to do. Drama is another artistic form that embodies the drastic impacts of the conflict and contributes to the return of combatants to their homeland.

VoD: Have you written plays or composed music pieces for spreading the culture of peace in Darfur or Sudan in general?

El Naqoor: Yes. I wrote the play “The Peace” in the Ain Siro area in

Kutum, North Darfur, which focusses on the impact of conflict there. The dialogue of the play was in the local dialect which had a specific impact on peaceful coexistence in the area. Such endeavors contribute to the achievement of peace and development because in the past tribalism and regionalism were unheard of in our area.

VoD: Can traditional Darfuri songs contribute to peaceful coexistence in Darfur?

El Naqoor: When our band performs in a market area or when we organize a concert, we are always pleasantly surprised at the positive response we get from people across different societal backgrounds. They sing, shake hands and express love for each other. The voice of peace can be heard in these gatherings.

Music touches the deeper conscience of people. My music is a reflection of the traditions and the local environment. Therefore, people do interact in the spirit of peace at my shows.

VoD: Could you share your experiences performing traditional Darfuri songs?

El Naqoor: I formed a special band for traditional songs called “Maryouma”. I am not a specialist in traditional Darfuri sounds but I incorporate Sudanese music in general into my songs. Therefore, broadly speaking the focus is more on traditional music, but the overall sound of the band is a fusion between conventional and modern music. Performing traditional songs has added more depth to my music and to my recitals.

VoD: How does Sudanese music differ in terms of characteristics and sound from other African music?

El Naqoor: Every country uses certain musical tunes. For example, we in Sudan use the fifth tune though we do not assert that this tune is Sudanese; however we use it in all Sudanese songs. We can also add an Eastern flavor which is now present in Darfur as a result of Arab migration from Tunisia and other Arab states for the purposes of trade



The Saxophonist Hussain Saeed during his first interview with Voices of Darfur Magazine. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

and grazing of animals. Different nationalities and Sudanese tribes have integrated—this has led to a harmonization in language as well as music. In addition to this, the impact of the presence of the Shami and Egyptian communities in Sudan has also led to synchronization between Eastern and Sudanese music. I have a spiritual connection with Eastern music, because this style reflects my abilities and the abilities of the instrument I play in all pieces created around one tune.

VoD: You are also involved in talent search projects across Darfur. Tell us a bit about this.

El Naqoor: Yes. After I returned to Darfur, my hope was to establish a music school in Kutum to spread the culture of music amongst people. It is a well-known fact here in Darfur, that anyone who decides to embark on studying music, will face many obstacles from the family and the community. Despite challenges, I succeeded in establishing this school in Kutum; the idea was well received and I had 27 male and female students across various instruments such as lute, saxophone and piano. The entire group has graduated now. In collaboration with my colleagues Nasr Abdallah, Al Ameen Abdallah, and Ameen Abdul Rahman, I established the Moon Wakar

Band in Kutum. This band is not only an entertainment-driven music band but is also a voluntary charity group. The first activity of the group was the cleaning of the local hospital. We have used our music as the lynchpin for social activities that bring people together, especially youth, because there were no cultural activities in the area. We have also used our music to encourage the local youngsters to refrain from drug use through a campaign conducted in the markets and youth clubs.

VoD: Have you noticed any change in youth behavior after these programmes and campaigns?

El Naqoor: We received the support of the community for such initiatives, which is reflected in their effective participation in these activities. At the outset, we offered such activities free of charge which led to large-scale youth participation. There are community activities aimed at promoting youth awareness of security issues and discouraging young people from engaging in harmful behavior. We organized these events in the evenings at venues patronized by young people to allow them to feel safe and know that there would be no repercussions from participating in such campaigns.

The objective was to acknowledge

problems being faced by young people and find collective, productive solutions to these, as young people are the future of any country.

VoD: Can the idea of establishing a music school be replicated in other parts of Darfur as a way of changing youth perceptions about music and addressing social issues?

El Naqoor: Yes. The principal objective for establishing a music school was to introduce a project that can spread to other parts of Darfur. Many other crucial needs can be fulfilled by such projects such as preservation of Darfuri culture and traditions and spreading the culture of music among people from different backgrounds. Take my case as an example. When I went to study music in Khartoum, I did not find a single student from Kutum. I met only one student from El Fasher. This is a rough indicator of the low interest in music among Darfuris. My other objective in setting up a music school was to try and document the diversity of Darfuri music.

VoD: How do you view UNAMID's support to cultural and artistic activities?

El Naqoor: Indeed, UNAMID has organized several music festivals and photo exhibitions on certain international days. These festivals are organized in a coordinated way, in partnership with various cultural groups to reflect Darfuri heritage. This is an important mode of interacting and communicating with the host community, and using local artistic talent and traditional customs to trickle down peace messages. These festivals have created a cultural and artistic movement which alleviate the suffering of the displaced living in the camps, including local artists and musicians.

VoD: Lastly, do you have any special message for the people of Darfur?

El Naqoor: My message to the people of Darfur is that they must be tolerant towards each other because nothing productive comes out of conflict. Tolerance is key in spreading peace and stability across Darfur. ■



Hussain Saeed El Naqoor, the Darfuri Saxophonist is pictured playing music at UNAMID studios in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Hamid, Abdulsalam, UNAMID.



UNAMID Communications and Public Information Section
Email: unamid-publicinformation@un.org
Website: <https://unamid.unmissions.org>

