Designing Sudanese Thobes

An Interview with Darfuri Artist Salwa Mukhtar Saleh

Strengthening Ties with Darfur Communities
Humanitarian assistance through quick-impact projects

Reactivating Traditional Justice Mechanisms
Judyia and Ajaweed making a comeback in Darfur

Toward Resolving Land Disputes Peacefully
Easing political and economic tensions in the region
Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh, a Darfuri woman, shows a thobe she designed with chiffon. Dr. Saleh says she drew on traditional and modern styles to make this design for evening occasions. This piece is accessorised with crystals that together form wavy lines. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.
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In a seven-day thobe exhibition in El Fasher, North Darfur, a local designer displays her work, which is influenced by both traditional and contemporary Sudanese fashion.
As part of our move to continue developing *Voices of Darfur* as a credible news magazine that not only details UNAMID’s efforts in Darfur but also tells the many human stories of the region, we’ll be increasing the page count of the magazine in the coming months to accommodate several new sections. The new format will give us the space to invite guest columnists, offer data graphs and charts on recent developments in Darfur and strengthen our in-depth coverage with theme issues that will present several articles on a particular topic.

As part of a broader strategy in which we remain committed to the magazine’s tagline, “UNAMID’s publication for the people of Darfur,” our intention is to establish an external editorial board that consists of academics and other members of Darfur’s brain trust. Through a peer-review process that will facilitate contributed articles for publication in *Voices*, externally written pieces will focus on conflict resolution, sustainable development and other issues of lasting importance to the region.

It is my personal hope that as the magazine expands in the coming months, the multitude of Darfur’s voices will be echoed loudly and clearly in its pages through effective reporting and through the valuable contributions of external writers. In line with this objective, we will soon launch a Letters to the Editor page, where we will publish reader comments.

Letters for publication may be submitted in Arabic or English, should be no longer than 150 words, and must refer to an article that has appeared in recent issues of the magazine. In addition, letters to the editor must include the writer’s name, address and phone number. We regret that we cannot return or acknowledge unpublished letters. We will notify writers whose letters have been selected for publication in the magazine, and we may shorten letters for space considerations.

To send a letter to the editor by email, put “Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur” in the subject line and send the email to unamid-publicinformation@un.org. To send the letter by post, please address the letter as follows: Head of Publications; Communications and Public Information Division, UNAMID; ARC Compound D2.1; El Fasher, Sudan.

On another note, I am pleased to announce that, due to a new contract coming online soon, we will be able to start printing *Voices* rather than merely distributing it electronically. The last issue of the magazine to roll off the presses was June 2011, so the Publications team is looking forward to the new contract with a great deal of enthusiasm. We will once again be able to put the magazine—Arabic and English editions—in the hands of those who do not have easy access to electronic media.

Kirk L. Kroeker
Head of Publications

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**EDITOR’S NOTE**

Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh shows a thobe she designed. Dr. Saleh draws on traditional and modern styles to make her thobe designs. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

A child from Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons performing a traditional dance at UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, Darfur, during the commemoration ceremony for Peacekeepers Day on 29 May 2012.

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Regional Meet Focuses on Small Arms
BY GUIOMAR PAU SOLÉ, CATERINA VIOLANTE AND ARIEL RUBIN

A regional conference on small arms concluded on 23 May in Khartoum with an agreement reached between Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo and Libya to improve their cooperation through the creation of a regional mechanism designed to control, manage and safeguard against the proliferation of small arms.

With the support of the Embassy of Germany, the UN Development Programme and UNAMID, the five neighbouring countries came together to promote a set of initiatives in border security, training programmes, information sharing, institution building and the development of new interregional bodies for arms control, conflict reduction and economic development.

In the keynote address, the Sudanese Second Vice President, Dr. Alhaj Adam Yousif, said that there can be no sustainable development as long as citizens persist in carrying illegal small arms. “We want to put into practice what we’ve said here today: a real, effective and active mechanism from which all nations here can collect its fruit,” he said.

The final declaration, signed by the Ministers of Interior and Security of Sudan, Chad, Libya and Central African Republic and a representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo, called for the continued support of the UN system and the international community in this initiative.

The two-day conference, organized by the Sudan Ministry of Interior and Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC), was attended by the Ministers of Interior and Security of the participant countries and accompanied by representatives from the diplomatic community, international organizations, national officials, security and law enforcement agencies, and academics.

Prison Staff, Inmates Empowered
BY ABDULLAHI SHU AIBU

UNAMID, in collaboration with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), on 9 May launched a series of vocational skills training programmes for prison staff and juvenile inmates in North Darfur. The training consists of courses in welding, masonry, electrical work and auto mechanics.

Mr. Germain Baricako, Head of UNAMID Rule of Law, spoke at the ceremony at El Fasher Technical School, noting that the six-month course for the prison staff and 45-day training for juvenile offenders represents “an important step that will ensure sustainability of prisons.” Mr. Baricako said the Mission is committed to working with the Government of Sudan and other partners to strengthen the prison system in the country.

The representative of the Wali of North Darfur, Dr. Tigani Seinin, said North Darfur is ready to work with UNAMID to improve the prison administration system in the region. The Minister pointed out that training in vocational skills would enable the inmates to become more useful to society after serving their various terms.

Also speaking at the event was Mr. Alemu Kidane Tekie, Officer in Charge of UNDP Rule of Law in North Darfur. “The projects are designed to support the empowerment of local communities as part of the process of restoring the confidence in rule of law, while concurrently strengthening rule-of-law institutions,” he said.

Doha Document Dissemination Continues
BY SHARON LUKUNKA

On 15 May, in West Darfur, more than 200 people, including former Chadian refugees, internally displaced persons and nomads from Masteri and Kongo Harasa attended a workshop on the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD).

Similar workshops were held across Darfur during the month, including on 14 May in Kulbus, West Darfur, where
more than 180 participants attended a session to discuss reconciliation, development funds and the implementation of the DDPD.

Earlier that week, on 12 May, some 200 people gathered in Khartoum for a similar DDPD event to discuss human rights and transitional justice, among other topics. Participants at the event included representatives from women’s and youth groups, nongovernmental organizations and leaders from the Darfuri community in Khartoum.

UNAMID continues to facilitate similar workshops throughout the region to promote the DDPD, which was finalized at the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference in May 2011, in Doha, Qatar. In July 2011, the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement signed a protocol agreement to indicate their commitment to the Document, which is now the framework for the comprehensive peace process in Darfur.

UNAMID has supported more than 100 DDPD dissemination workshops across Darfur and in Khartoum. More than 20,000 people have participated in the events.

**Abu Shouk, North Darfur**

By signing the plan, LJM has committed to end any recruitment and use of child soldiers; release all children found in its ranks; fully cooperate with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Commission; take measures to prevent the recruitment of children; designate a senior-level focal point to interact with the UN; and grant full access to UN teams to monitor compliance.

LJM is the fifth armed movement in Darfur to have submitted an action plan on child soldiers. UNAMID is in discussion with other armed movements, as well as with the Government of Sudan, to develop additional action plans.

“UNAMID is here to assist the parties to the conflict and local communities to guarantee effective protection of the children of Darfur,” said Boubacar Dieng, Head of UNAMID’s Child Protection Unit.

**Child Soldier Agreement Signed**

**Abu Shouk, North Darfur**

On 10 May, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), a signatory to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, signed an action plan to prohibit the use of child soldiers in LJM and bring the movement into compliance with Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

By Rania Abdulrahman

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**Legislative Caucus Addresses Gender**

**By Sharon Lukunka**

On 17 May, UNAMID and the Darfur Women’s Legislative Caucus concluded a three-day advocacy seminar. The forum was set up to assess the challenges faced by women in Darfur, identify gender gaps in Sudanese laws, and examine relevant international and regional human rights instruments for effective sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention in the region.

More than 45 women representatives from North Darfur and local legislatures, including members of the constitutional committee, the judiciary, the bar association and various government institutions attended the session that took place in El Fasher, North Darfur.

Ms. Halima Tabin Bosh, the North Darfur Advisor to the Wali (Governor) on Women and Child Affairs and the Deputy Chairperson for the North Darfur Committee on SGBV, said the seminar will help strengthen women legislators’ role in the State Legislative Council and enhance their capacity in promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls in North Darfur.

**On 17 May 2012 in Abu Shouk camp for displaced persons in North Darfur, Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed, age 37, teaches his son Adam, age five, to write sentences of the Koran. Mr. Ahmed is a “fakih,” one who practices traditional medicine and rituals. His speciality is a popular potion that is said to give special protection against danger, disease and broken hearts. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.**
Commission Assesses Peace Document

BY RANIA ABDULRAHMAN

On 28 May in Doha, Qatar, the third meeting of the Implementation Follow-Up Commission (IFC) considered the progress made in implementing the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

The meeting took note of achievements such as the inauguration of the Darfur Regional Authority, the establishment of the Special Court and the creation of the High Committee on Darfur chaired by the President of Sudan.

Members expressed concern over the slow pace of the implementation process, mainly occasioned by delays in the disbursement of funds and adequate provisions of required logistics to the Darfur Regional Authority. Members also expressed concern about the fighting between the non-signatories and the Government of Sudan.

The IFC meeting was chaired by Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, Deputy Prime Minister of the State of Qatar, and attended by the Government of Sudan, the Liberation and Justice Movement, representatives of Burkina Faso, Canada, Chad, China, Egypt, France, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Conference and UNAMID.

Forog, North Darfur

On 30 May 2012, girls from Forog, North Darfur, welcome the arrival of UNAMID. Deputy Joint Special Representative (Political) Aicha-tou Mindaoudou Souleymane inaugurated a UNAMID-sponsored clinic and three schools in the area. Photo by Albert González Farran.
On 29 May, UNAMID paid tribute to the sacrifices of those who have served in the name of peace, commemorating the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. This year’s occasion, which honoured the 120,000 peacekeepers serving in 17 missions around the world and mourning those who have died in service, focused on the theme “Peacekeeping Is a Global Partnership.”

At UNAMID’s headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur, Deputy Joint Special Representative (Political), Ms. Aichatou Mindaoudou Souleymane, presided over the ceremony and was accompanied by representatives from the Government of North Darfur and Mission officials. The programme included a military and police parade, cultural performances and a solemn laying of wreaths.

The representative of the Wali (Governor) and Minister of Environment and Tourism, Mr. Adam Mohamed Ahmed Alnahla, expressed his condolences “for those who lost their lives serving peace in this country.”

“The ultimate goal of any UN peacekeeping mission is to no longer be necessary,” said Ms. Mindaoudou, conveying the UN Secretary-General’s message for the day. “Until we reach that objective, we make every effort for peacekeeping to be as effective and efficient as possible.”

The DJSR added that UNAMID is a peacekeeping mission that represents a close partnership between the African Union and the United Nations. “This partnership, with peacekeepers from both institutions working together side by side, is unprecedented,” she said.

The ceremony paid special tribute to the departing peacekeepers of Thailand. Similar events were held at UNAMID’s offices around the region.
On 30 May 2012, a delegation from UNAMID headquarters, led by Deputy Joint Special Representative (Political) Aichatou Mindaoudou Souleymane, visited Forog village, roughly 140 kilometres northwest of El Fasher, to inaugurate the completion of the first set of quick-impact projects (QIPs) in a Movement area in North Darfur.

Hundreds of men, women and children, as well as members of Sudan Liberation Army /Abdul Wahid, received the delegation to inaugurate Forog’s UNAMID-sponsored projects, chiefly the village’s newly constructed health centre. The implemented QIPs, which were facilitated by UNAMID’s South African contingent, also include projects in education and sanitation.

“Let me assure you that it will be our constant endeavour to find additional ways and means to help your community,” said Ms. Mindaoudou in a speech delivered at the ceremony. “All our efforts are now focused and looking toward a lasting peace for all Darfuris.”

In addition, Ms. Mindaoudou expressed the commitment of the Mission to continue facilitating the work of UN Agencies and humanitarian actors. She went on to stress the Mission’s dedication to advancing its mandate throughout Darfur and supporting all those in need.

In restructuring its QIPs programme and ensuring that projects are priority-led and community-based, UNAMID has reinvigorated its efforts in local communities. The quick-impact projects—geared at improving health and sanitation, empowering women and youth, promoting education, and protecting the environment—have become a foundation for consolidating UNAMID’s engagement with Darfuri communities, including nomads, returnees and internally displaced persons.

On 3 June 2012, women leaders of Krinding camp in West Darfur meet with Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet, who announced that 29 quick-impact projects had been approved for West Darfur. The ASG’s three-day visit to Darfur included meetings with community leaders, the Government and UNAMID officials. Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran.
Taiwanese President and then AU President, Olusegun Obasanjo, moved the negotiations to Abuja, Nigeria, where six rounds of peace talks were held in the run-up to the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) on 5 May 2006 by the Government of Sudan and SLA Minni Minawi. Unfortunately, while the talks resulted in two protocols, a declaration and an agreement, the agreement was not supported by the two major movements, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and SLA Abdul Wahid, or other smaller movements.

The Darfur peace process was deadlocked after the Abuja meetings, as other movements refused the Abuja Peace Agreement, claiming it did not meet all their demands. Still, since that time, developments toward peace in Darfur have included the appointment of Salim Ahmed Salim and Jan Eliasson in November 2006 as AU and UN joint mediators whose mission was to unify the rebel ranks and have a single mediation process. As a result of their work, meetings were held in Arusha and twice in Tripoli.

In October 2007, the AU and UN envoys organized the Sirte Conference, which brought together several armed movements, Darfur civil society groups and representatives from the Government of Sudan to forge a peace agreement. The conference was boycotted by SLA/ALW and JEM Khalil Ibrahim, but attended by SLA Unity, SLA Khamis Abbaker, and JEM Collective Leadership. Negotiators sought to find answers to issues that were not resolved by the Abuja deal, but the conference did not achieve any results.

Consequently, in June 2008, in the absence of progress in negotiations, Mr. Salim and Mr. Eliasson resigned as mediators, saying that the parties to the conflict were not “ready to sit down and make the necessary compromises.” The following month, in July 2008, the AU
appointed a Panel for Darfur, which later became the AU High Level Panel headed by Presidents Thabo Mbeki (South Africa), Abdulsalam Abubakar (Nigeria) and Paul Buyoya (Burundi). The panel was set up to study the Darfur situation and recommend measures to promote peace, justice and reconciliation.

Subsequently, in August 2008, Djibril Bassolé was appointed AU and UN Joint Chief Mediator to move the process forward. But the Darfur situation and the need for enduring peace continued to attract the attention and involvement of countries and regional organizations, including the Arab League. In September 2008, a League of Arab States resolution proposed that Qatar host the peace negotiations. The negotiations, which were intermittent, stalled on several occasions.

It was not until November 2009 that Darfur civil society representatives were invited to Doha, Qatar, to participate in the Doha 1 and later the Doha 2 talks as well as the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference, a series of meetings that were finalized in May 2011.

On 14 July 2011, the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement signed the Doha Darfur Peace Document in Doha, Qatar. From left to right are Djibril Bassolé, Joint Chief Special Mediator (Burkina Faso), Ahmad Abdulla Al Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (Qatar), Dr. Ghazi Salah Eldeen Atabani, Presidential Advisor, Dr. Elitigani Seisi Mohamed Ateem, Chair of the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and Ibrahim Gambari, UNAMID Joint Special Representative. Photo by Olivier Chassot, UNAMID.

“We want this particular agreement to pave the way for concrete peace in the whole of Darfur because it is time to end the conflict and to promote growth and development.”

—Hauwa Hamid

Meanwhile, in February 2010, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), a coalition of small armed movements, was formed through the combination of the Tripoli and Addis Ababa groups, while JEM suspended its participation in talks with the Government of Sudan. In June 2010, negotiations between the Sudanese government and LJM commenced
On 28 May 2011, talks were stalled at the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference in Doha, Qatar, after representatives of displaced persons and civil society initially refused to participate. The refusal was brought on by delays in the arrival of several leaders. AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé and Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud addressed the representatives’ concerns, assuring them of the mediation’s efforts to ensure the full participation of all invitees. The discussions later resumed. Photo by Olivier Chassot, UNAMID.

“We can’t still be living this way; we need a holistic peace for all of our people.”

— Mohammed Hamdan

in Doha and concluded on 14 July 2011 with the adoption of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), which was signed by GoS and the LJM on the same date.

The document covers several social and political aspects of the situation in Darfur, including power-sharing, wealth-sharing and compensation; the return of refugees and displaced persons; and human rights and fundamental freedoms, among other factors. The DDPD represents years of negotiations, culminating in the All Darfur Stakeholders Conference that brought together more than 500 people, including internally displaced persons, refugees, civil society representatives, political parties, special envoys from more than 13 countries and representatives of international and regional organizations.

As a landmark achievement, the Doha conference provided a forum for face-to-face engagement between LJM, JEM, GoS and Darfuri civil society groups. “Indeed, a cross-section of stakeholders endorsed the DDPD precisely because it is recognized as addressing the root causes of the conflict and its consequences,” says UNAMID Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari.

Subsequent to these developments, the United Nations Security Council, on 29 July 2011, through resolution 2003, welcomed the DDPD signing and demanded that “all parties to the conflict make every effort to reach a permanent ceasefire settlement […].” The Security Council recognized the potential complementary role of a Darfur-based political process led by the AU and the UN and called on the Government of Sudan and armed movements to contribute to creating the enabling environment for its implementation.

JSR Gambari has said that, while the signing of the DDPD by the two parties represents an important step forward in the search for sustainable peace,
many daunting challenges remain, including how to continue engagement of the holdout armed movements. JSR Gambari continues to urge the Government of Sudan and armed movements to come to an agreement. “The DDPD could be considered an important step forward in the search for peace and stability in Darfur,” he says.

UNAMID has provided technical expertise and logistical support for the dissemination of the document, and has urged nonsignatory movements to sign the DDPD. UNAMID currently chairs the Ceasefire Commission, set up by the DDPD to meet periodically and conduct verification-of-forces exercises as part of the final security arrangements set out by the peace agreement.

UNAMID has worked across Darfur and in Khartoum with local authorities and civil society organizations to conduct more than 130 workshops to disseminate the DDPD. Workshop participants continue to express support for the document and for UNAMID’s role in promoting it. Members of Darfuri society, including women, youth and internally displaced persons, are actively participating in the dissemination workshops.

“We want this particular agreement to pave the way for concrete peace in the whole of Darfur because it is time to end the conflict and promote growth and development,” says Ms. Hauwa Hamid, a woman leader in El Fasher. “In spite of any obstacles in the participation of other Darfuris in the workshops and the nonsignatory groups not joining us in this endeavour, we are keen in making it a success story and call on the parties to join the DDPD implementation.”

Lamecke Kawiche, Officer-in-Charge of UNAMID’s Civil Affairs section, points out that the DDPD dis-

“Indeed, a cross-section of stakeholders endorsed the DDPD precisely because it is recognized as addressing the root causes of the conflict and its consequences.”

—Ibrahim Gambari
Semination activities are likely to amount to the most widespread consultation ever held in Darfur, drawing more than 23,000 participants to date. “The DDPD workshops have included many more Darfuris than any previous peace process and the effort is still ongoing to lure the other holdout movements to join in ensuring lasting peace and security in the region,” he says.

Mr. Kawiche noted that there have been no reported incidents during the workshops, and no efforts by the Sudanese government to curb anyone’s freedom of speech or expression. “This is a success story for the DDPD,” he says.

“The key institutions provided for in the DDPD have now been established and some budgetary provisions made to the Darfur Regional Authority and its programmes.”

Out of the new administrative entities established by the DDPD framework, the Darfur Regional Authority is arguably the most notable. The DRA, which is chaired by Eltigani Seisi, is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the DDPD stipulations and post-conflict development activities. Its 12-member executive organ includes the governors of the now five states of Darfur, 10 ministers, four commissioners and the chair of the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund. The members, appointed by the President of Sudan, have the status of State Minister. Five of them are members of LJM.

In a recent interview in Khartoum, Mr. Seisi said that the implementation of the document is for all the people of Darfur and expressed his commitment to work with everyone to ensure the full implementation of the document and to address the issue of voluntary return of those who are internally displaced. “Despite the challenges, we are optimistic that the people of Darfur will make achievements in changing the situation in the region,” he said. “The international community has assured its support to help us develop our states.”

On the prospects of the DDPD achieving its ultimate purpose, Cajetan Banseka, a UNAMID Political Affairs Officer, says that UNAMID will continue to focus on those who have not signed. “The window of opportunity must not be allowed to close,” he says. “The dissemination exercise aims at delivering the DDPD text and communicating its content to increase greater awareness of the peace agreement and what it holds for the people of Darfur.”

Mr. Banseka, who has urged the government and other parties to ensure that the DDPD message is taken to every corner of Darfur to boost its acceptability and ensure proper implementation, cites the Darfur Regional Authority, the establishment of the Special Court and the creation of the High-Level Commit-
“The DDPD workshops have included many more Darfuris than any previous peace process and the effort is still ongoing to lure the other holdout movements to join in ensuring lasting peace and security in the region.”

—Lameck Kawiche

tee on Darfur chaired by President Omar Al-Bashir as several milestones in the movement of the DDPD. “In terms of power-sharing, a lot has been done, and we are making efforts to see that the parties and Government of Sudan live up to expectations,” he added.

Even as measurable progress is being made in the dissemination of the DDPD, observers have expressed concern over the slow pace of its general implementation, mainly occasioned by delays in the disbursement of funds and adequate provisions of required logistics to the DRA. Others have voiced concern about the fighting between the nonsignatories and the Government of Sudan in some parts of the country.

Still others have said there is great need to focus on building consensus among international partners, and have pointed to the dire situation of Sudan’s economy and the risk posed by the skirmishes on the border between Sudan and South Sudan as impediments to the progress of the DDPD. “The real challenge, however, is whether we have the ability to address these challenges and confront them with the desired political will rather than shy away from them,” says Mohammed Hamdan, a Darfur-based human right activist. “We can't still be living this way; we need a holistic peace for all of our people.”

Meanwhile, JSR Gambari has been briefing UN member states and the international community on the progress made in the dissemination and implementation of the Doha Document. He has been pressing key international actors to lend concrete support to UNAMID’s efforts to move the peace process forward while encouraging the holdout movements to return to the negotiating table.

The Mission’s leadership has described UNAMID’s work in protecting civilians in Darfur and facilitating protected access to humanitarian workers as resulting in a substantial reduction in combat-related violence in the region and allowing more displaced people to return to their homes. Still, despite some gains, there is more work to be done. An estimated 1.7 million people remain sheltering in camps across Darfur and more than 350,000 refugees are living in Chad and the Central African Republic.

While there are still several detractors and holdouts, there are many others who are looking to the DDPD as the most viable way to address the needs of Darfur’s displaced and the others living in the region, and to solve the core problems that created the conflict.

On 8 February 2012, in El Fasher, Darfur, hundreds of people attended a rally as part of the launch of the temporary headquarters of the Darfur Regional Authority. The DRA is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the DDPD as well as all post-conflict development activities and projects. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.
For many years now, land disputes in Darfur have heightened the political and economic tensions in the region. Land disputes between seminomadic livestock herders and those who farm the land were one of the foundations for the Darfur conflict, which has continued now for many years. To address this issue, the African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and its partners have been working with communities across Darfur to address land disputes and encourage peaceful coexistence.

UNAMID’s Civil Affairs section has been working directly with the Darfur Land Commission, which was formed under the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority and is now under the Darfur Regional Authority (DRA). The Darfur Land Commission was set up in 2006 under the terms of the Darfur Peace Agreement, which stipulated, among other things, that those who had seized land by force during the hostilities should not automatically retain the right to settle there.

Toward Resolving Land Disputes Peacefully

UNAMID and its partners have been working with communities across Darfur to address land disputes by revitalizing traditional mechanisms for resolving such conflict.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA
According to UNAMID Legal Affairs, individuals from other tribes that do not own land may be allowed by another tribe to settle on a particular piece of land and use it. “The universal principle of law dictates that one cannot gain land by force,” says Clemens Bessem-Asu, a UNAMID Legal Affairs Officer.

In an effort to address the root causes of land disputes, UNAMID has been developing a comprehensive database designed to provide information about the natural resources in Darfur. The information is expected to be useful in formulating policies regarding the governance of natural resources in the area.

In addition, UNAMID Civil Affairs has been working with communities across Darfur to revitalize traditional mechanisms for resolving conflict and help Darfuris solve land disputes more efficiently than they would otherwise be able to do through the court system. (See “Reactivating Traditional Justice Mechanisms” in this issue of Voices of Darfur.)

The Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), signed between the Government of Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement, was a culmination of two years of negotiations. Chapter three of the DDPD addresses land development and management. “Mechanisms shall be established to ensure the sustainable management and use of lands and other natural resources,” the document stipulates. “All citizens affected by land development and natural resource use shall be consulted and their views taken into consideration.”

The DDPD also addresses compensation issues by stating that individuals whose property or means of livelihood have been adversely affected because of development and exploitation of natural resources are entitled to compensation. In addition, the DDPD addresses traditional rights, and indicates that no individual or group of individuals should be deprived of any traditional or historical rights to their land.

Despite the presence in the DDPD of mechanisms for dealing with land issues,
not all movements in Darfur have signed the DDPD, leading to a politically complex environment for dealing with land disputes. Displaced persons in Darfur cite land occupation as the main reason for not returning to their place of origin. “Most of the IDP communities living in camps may have owned land before they were forced to flee, and therefore others may be occupying their land,” says Mr. Bessem-Asu.

In addition, in some areas of Darfur, conflicts have arisen between traditionally sedentary farming communities and the nomadic communities that now have resorted to farming as a result of changing lifestyles. To address this situation, UNAMID continues to promote inter-community dialogue, in partnership with local leaders, so decisions about resource sharing and land use can be reached amicably.

On 11 May 2012, 128 countries in the UN Committee on World Food Security unanimously adopted a policy to protect local populations. The document calls on governments to be transparent about land deals, consult local communities and defend women’s rights to own land and to protect the rights of indigenous peoples who use the land. The document also emphasizes the responsibility
Darfur was an independent state ruled by Sultans until 1916, when the last Sultan, Ali Dinar, was overthrown by the British. Darfur is unique among the regions of Sudan when it comes to laws that govern land relationships.

In Sudan, in general, land acquisition and ownership is governed by statutory laws, customary laws and general principles of Islamic law in cases where there are no legal provisions. The Sudanese transitional constitution of 2005, the Civil Transactions Act of 1984 and the Origins of Judgments Act of 1983 all serve as mechanisms for determining land acquisition and ownership in Sudan.

According to the Civil Transactions Act, all land unregistered by 6 April 1970 is considered government land. Therefore, any person granted land by the Government of Sudan is said to have a legal right to use it.

Customary law, which was developed by the Fur Sultans of Darfur, is still in force and followed by courts and administrative organs of government in Darfur, as well as by tribal leaders and elders of the communities. Elders and tribal leaders use these customary laws to resolve disputes and determine appropriate land settlement. The rules of customary law are not written; rather, they are memorized by the elders and tribal leaders.

In Darfur, customary law, or hawaheer, applies to lands that are granted by Darfur Sultans to tribal leaders, nobles, religious figures, warriors and others who serve the Sultans. Every tribe or family that acquires land, according to customary law, has a Sheikh or someone elected to collect revenue from the farmers or those who use the land for grazing their cattle.

Those who own land in Darfur are governed by customary law that prohibits them from abusing their ownership. This specific customary law is called the Dali Code, named after one of the Fur Sultans who introduced it.

of businesses and multinational corporations to respect human rights when they move into an area.

The people living in Darfur, whether nomadic or sedentary, depend on land for their sustenance, not only for food but also for the traditional medicines they use for healing. And among its many other uses, the land is of course where the people of Darfur build or set up their homes and raise their families. It is for these reasons that UNAMID’s leadership continues to stress that resolving ongoing land disputes and developing more efficient mechanisms for dealing with them are crucial factors in fostering durable peace in the region.
Strengthening Ties with Darfur’s Communities

UNAMID’s leadership is steering the Mission into more quick-impact projects that focus on humanitarian assistance across Darfur, as a way to facilitate recovery and development in the region.

By Abdullahi Shuaibu

In December 2011, as part of an effort to reinvigorate the African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) mandate, the Mission restructured its quick-impact projects (QIPs) programme. The new programme consists of six priorities: health; early recovery and livelihoods; empowerment of underrepresented populations; environmental protection; education; and water and sanitation.

QIPs are part of UNAMID’s focus on early recovery and development, and are meant to support initiatives oriented on basic aspects of life. By extension, QIPs are designed to address the underlying problems that have contributed to the situation in Darfur.

“The populations affected by the crisis [in Darfur] require lifesaving support,” says Zurab Elzarov, a UNAMID Humanitarian Affairs Officer. “Their communities, institutions and livelihoods have often been physically destroyed and weakened, so recovery programming works to restore services, livelihood opportunities and governance capacity.”

Since December of last year, the Mission’s leadership has been reinvigorating its focus on QIPs with a sweeping strategy designed to facilitate humanitarian intervention across Darfur. In a recent town hall meeting in El Fasher, North Darfur, UNAMID Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari identified QIPs as essential in supporting UNAMID’s drive for social integration, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and that, as such, they are contributing to the Darfur peace process.

UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (Political) Aichatou Mindaoudou Souleymane is chair of the QIPs committee and has taken on an active role in seeing the projects to completion. In February 2012, for example, Ms. Mindaoudou launched nine development projects in Kuma Garadayat, North Darfur. Kuma Garadayat is a constellation of 11 villages with a population of more than 4,000 people who returned to the village in 2009 after being displaced by the conflict.

“UNAMID is committed to helping communities like Kuma Garadayat rebuild and restart,” said DJSR-P Souleymane, speaking to the community during the inauguration for a quick-impact project in the area. “UNAMID will continue to support you in your efforts to advance peace and prosperity in your communities.”

UNAMID facilitates each project by providing up to $25,000 directly to a nongovernmental organization (NGO), which works with UNAMID and the community to see the project to completion. The local community typically shares in the labour and implementation. In the case of one Kuma Garadayat building project, the villagers provided 36,000 bricks and manual labour, while UNAMID provided cement and tools, as well
as overall support through UNAMID’s Senegalese engineering company and Rwandan troops.

The Mission finances such projects and reports on their implementation to the UN’s Security Council, Second Committee and General Assembly. Accountability for the implementation of the QIPs rests with UNAMID, which works with a wide range of partners in the UN family as well as with national and international agencies to achieve the desired objectives.

UNAMID has sponsored more than 500 QIPs in Darfur alone, and has completed almost 350. Those that have not yet been finished are in various stages of completion or are in the process of being initiated by the UNAMID’s various divisions. All projects are undertaken with the direct involvement of the men, women and children of the communities, which actively participate in the work.

“We really appreciate the efforts of UNAMID and its workers for bringing amenities and services to our people; we are very delighted,” says Malam Mohammed Omer,
a resident of the Abu Shouk internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in El Fasher, North Darfur. He says that UNAMID’s cooperation with the local population will enhance the peace process and help people refocus their minds on development instead of conflict.

Nafisa Mohammed Ismail, a Dafuri activist, says she is happy with the development projects being implemented by UNAMID to raise the living standards of IDPs, as well as the communities around Darfur. “It is really gratifying and commendable,” she says.

As one of the essential enablers of QIPs in Darfur, UNAMID’s military component has gone well beyond its core protection mandate to focus on humanitarian activities in support of local communities. These activities have included improving schools, grading roads, constructing bridges, clearing unexploded ordnance, digging water boreholes and training locals on new techniques for farming and construction.

So far, from 2011 to date, UNAMID military peacekeepers have worked on 23 projects altogether. On 18 April 2012, Rwandese Battalion 29 (RwanBatt 29) dedicated 10 completed school classrooms to the Abu Shouk community. At the ceremony, the camp residents thanked UNAMID in general and especially the Rwandan peacekeepers, called “blood brothers” that day by the residents of the community.

Early this year, members of RwanBatt 23 helped the local community build a fully furnished school. The aim was to support the sustainable development of Turba village, a few kilometers south of El Fasher, North Darfur. The residents of the village were full of praise for the troops, for what they considered a great achievement that will have a lasting impact.

Other UNAMID military components continue their engagement with the Dafuri population, assisting in the implementation of various QIPs. Several such projects were inaugurated in April 2012 in North Darfur by UNAMID Force Commander Lt.-Gen. Patrick Nyamvumba.

“UNAMID is committed to bringing sustainable peace to Darfur; investing in education is investing on the future generation,” said the Force Commander, assuring the people at the camp that UNAMID will continue its support to the communities. In addition to its QIPs work, the military component has continued to facilitate implementation of its security protocol though routine patrols and other security measures to ensure the protection of civilians and create easier access for UN agencies and humanitarian organizations to provide succour to those in need.

In El Fasher, UNAMID and El Fasher Rural Development Network, an NGO, built a theatre and a teachers’
Despite the absence of a comprehensive peace in Darfur, there is growing recognition among humanitarian organizations of the need to increase the number of recovery and development activities that directly support durable solutions for IDPs.

conference hall at Umm Ayeman Basic School for Girls. The initiative was designed to enhance children’s learning skills and improve the understanding of literature through drama performance. In collaboration with the North Darfur Minister for Education, UNAMID equipped El Fasher with a computer training centre for secondary school teachers and students. The centre can accommodate some 100 people. UNAMID provided 28 computers, a screen, a projector and furniture.

In March, in West Darfur, UNAMID sponsored two QIPs in Mukjar town to facilitate work opportunities for communities in the area. The projects, which collectively cost about US$50,000, include construction and agriculture training and were undertaken by the Thailand Battalion (ThaiBatt),
which has demonstrated practical experience in conducting similar community-based training in and around Mukjar. ThaiBatt has successfully completed construction of a drinking water project and the rehabilitation of the main bridge in Mukjar town.

According to latest World Food Programme and International Organization for Migration census, some 1.7 million IDPs reside in various camps across Darfur. Many, if not most, of these IDPs have benefitted from UNAMID’s QIPs programme. Such humanitarian assistance is designed to promote self-reliance and pave the way for more elaborate recovery activities.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 140,000 IDPs and refugees returned to Darfur in 2011. This number includes 31,000 verified refugee returns from Chad, mostly informal settlements along the Chadian-Sudanese border, and 109,000 verified IDP returns. The IDP returns are divided as follows: 43,000 returns in West Darfur, 52,000 in South Darfur and 16,000 in North Darfur.

Despite the absence of a comprehensive peace in Darfur, there is growing recognition among humanitarian organizations of the need to increase the number of recovery and development activities that directly support durable solutions for IDPs. UNAMID’s leadership, for its part, is continuing to stress that UNAMID will do what it can to facilitate the improvement of basic services to help make returns sustainable.

“Let me assure you that it will be my constant endeavour to find additional ways and means to help the Darfur community,” said DJSR-P Souleymane in a recent speech to inaugurate several quick-impact projects in North Darfur. “All our efforts are now focused on and looking toward a lasting peace for all the people of Darfur.”

“UNAMID is committed to helping communities like Kuma Garadayat rebuild and restart.”

—Aichatou Mindaoudou Souleymane
Internally displaced persons, especially women and children, are vulnerable to human rights violations in conflict areas. The international community has dedicated a great deal of effort to frame laws and conventions for their protection. Despite these efforts, atrocities against children and gender-based violence against women continue to be committed around the world.

One of the challenges faced by victims of human rights violations has been the perceived lack of action by law enforcement agencies. Several factors contribute to this situation, including limited technical skills of personnel, the lack of equipment for efficient response to the plight of the victims and the high turnover rate of some law enforcement officials, who leave their duty stations before they are able to use their acquired knowledge.

In Darfur, gender-based violence continues to be reported even as progress is made to move from a conflict phase to a recovery-and-development phase. In this transition period, and as a key priority of its mandate to protect civilians, the African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is providing support to the Government of Sudan in seeking to eradicate violence against women and children.

UNAMID’s efforts and the relentless advocacy of the international community have resulted in Darfur’s first Family and Child Protection Unit (FCPU), a gender-sensitive and women-friendly police operation that addresses cases related to women and children.

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Since 2008, the FCPU has become a platform for joint activities between UNAMID, UN Agencies and Sudanese Police. The Unit has appointed women social workers and has trained officers specifically to investigate and deal with sensitive cases. FCPU relies on a programmatic strategy that offers direct access to medical services and legal redress for victims. FCPU officers do not regularly wear uniforms; instead, they are more often in civilian clothes to add to the openness and friendliness of the Unit.

Far from being a pro forma or perfunctory outfit, the Unit not only is dedicated to its mission but also is expanding in terms of personnel and skillsets. Currently, several women social workers are being trained to provide psychosocial support to victims, and the Unit’s three women investigating assistants are undergoing special training.

Plans for additional expansion include opening four new help desks in different localities—specifically Foro Barganga, Habila, Kulbus and Jebel Mun—in an attempt to bring the Unit’s services closer to the rural population. Meanwhile, UNAMID’s Human Rights section has been working closely with FCPU and has held workshops that cover topics ranging from pretrial rights and treatment of detainees to principles for juvenile justice and techniques for monitoring and documenting.

There is more work to be done. The Unit is gradually gaining the trust of El Geneina’s population, and it is registering an increasing number of complaints for investigation and action. As FCPU continues to evolve in its capacity to address some of the cases of gender-based violence and violence against children, and especially in its ability to foster an open and trusting environment that encourages reporting, it is quickly becoming a success story for human rights and for capacity- and institution-building. FCPU shows what is possible when multiple organizations focus on common goals.

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Through a series of meetings, representatives of the African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) have been working with local communities to revitalize Darfur’s traditional mechanisms for resolving conflict, and in doing so, help Darfuris solve local problems more efficiently than they would otherwise be able to do through the court system.

For centuries, Darfur, like other parts of Sudan, has known Judyia and Ajaweed as interdependent social mechanisms for resolving disputes that arise in and among communities. While such mechanisms are now seen by legal experts to have fallen short in functioning effectively to settle certain kinds of differences, recently some 1,000 people across Darfur have taken part in a series of workshops that are highlighting the strengths of these traditional strategies.

Participants at the workshops have received training not only on the background, importance and methodology of Judyia and Ajaweed, but also on communications and negotiations skills. “Such workshops will help raise the community’s awareness of the importance of traditional approaches to conflict resolution and help facilitate ways of settling disputes,” says Adam Ismaeil Abbaker, Sheikh of the Ardamata camp for internally displaced persons in West Darfur.

Judyia, a Sudanese term, indicates the framework for settling differences through local institutions rather than through the country’s courts. An Ajaweed, then, is the group of people acting as the mediators between the quarreling or disputing parties. An Ajaweed consists of people in a high social position who are expected to treat each dispute impartially. Communities typically accord an Ajaweed panel a great deal of respect.

“Judyia and Ajaweed are among the best, most useful and most effective methods of eradicating disputes, wiping out hostilities and inspiring peace and tranquility among people,” says Abdurrahman Yagub, North Darfur’s Chief Prosecutor, explaining that these traditional mechanisms can be much more efficient and timely than the court system.

Mr. Yagub points out that plaintiffs and defendants in the Judyia system
usually willingly accept and are satisfied with an Ajaweed decision. Moreover, according to Mr. Yagub, the traditional mechanisms for resolving disputes have been especially relevant in remote areas where there is a vacuum in the system of justice and the rule of law.

However, despite what appear to be distinct advantages of traditional justice mechanisms over the government’s courts, Mr. Yagub explains that some Ajaweed decisions are not followed, leading to a breakdown in what would otherwise be a peaceful end to a dispute. This problem is compounded by the fact that certain segments of Darfur society have been revolting against social norms, weakening the power of the traditional civil structures.

Academics, such as Dr. Yousuf Khamees Abu Faris, a professor at the Africa International University in Khartoum, have attributed the failure of Judyia in addressing Darfur’s current problems to the evolving reality of Ajaweed’s role in settling disputes impartially. Critics of the system argue that Ajaweeds are being transformed into a mechanism that serves the interest of the governing authorities rather than the people. This transformation, or even the perception of it, has cost Judyia its status as a credible and influential framework for resolving community conflict.

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"The emerging conflict in Darfur led to a disintegration and deterioration in the inherited smooth native administration system," says Abdulwahab Mousa Ali, a UNAMID Political Affairs Officer. Mr. Ali explains that the deterioration in the system has given authorities an opportunity to play a larger role in steering Judyia proceedings.

Despite these apparent downsides, Mr. Yagub says that Judyia may still serve as a viable mechanism for settling family or tribal differences in Darfur, especially in remote areas that do not have easy access to the government’s court system.

The people of Darfur, for many years, have relied on Judyia as a mechanism to resolve conflicts between individuals, family members, groups and tribes. While its status as a mechanism for resolving conflict and dispensing justice has come into question recently, many Darfuris see the framework as the most effective method for knitting together the diverse social tapestries of Darfur’s communities.

UNAMID’s Civil Affairs officers are planning to conduct additional conflict-resolution workshops across Darfur, with the goal being to enhance the judicial capabilities of Darfur’s communities. "We do increase the capacity of the native administration leaders in applying Judyia to resolve disputes among communities," says Civil Affairs Officer Ana Maria Valerio.
Salwa Mukhtar Saleh on Designing Sudanese Thobes

In a seven-day thobe exhibition in El Fasher, North Darfur, a local designer displays her work, which is influenced by both traditional and contemporary Sudanese fashion.

BY ALA MAYYAHI

To display more than 50 Sudanese thobes made of fine fabrics and designed in both contemporary and traditional styles, Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh, a Darfuri fashion designer, held an exhibition in early May in the Cultural Centre in El Fasher, North Darfur. During the seven days of the exhibition, the show’s visitors were able to view a variety of new and old styles, all designed by Dr. Saleh.

In addition to being a designer, Dr. Saleh is an academic holding a Masters in educational media and a Doctorate in educational development. She has lectured at El Fasher University since 1995, and is a high-profile woman in her hometown, El Fasher, maintaining ties with her family and community.

In an interview, Voices of Darfur spoke with Dr. Saleh about her exhibition, the second such show she has put on, and about the cultural and social factors that have contributed to the modern-day Sudanese thobe.

VoD: Can you tell us about your start in designing thobes and how you learned to paint on fabric?

Salwa: It goes back to my early age, as I grew up in a family that always appreciated art. Since my childhood, I’ve been used to seeing female family members making nice arrangements and colouring, which gave me a keen sense for art.

As for learning, it was by natural talent first, as well as the desire to improve my art skills. Then my academic education helped me greatly refine my skills. I
studied industrial design at the University of Sudan for Science and Technology. There I learned colouring principles and engineering drawing. I also took courses in human anatomy in the Medicine College, carpentry and blacksmithing in the Engineering College, and packaging in the College of Commerce.

All these subjects are art-related and contributed significantly to mastering the skills needed for working on different materials, including fabrics and clothing.

VoD: How long did it take to prepare for this exhibition, and what was the biggest challenge you faced?

Salwa: It took me nearly six months. Managing time was the only challenge I faced, but it put me under enormous pressure, as additionally I have administrative and academic responsibilities at the University of El Fasher, in addition to my commitments with the family and the community.

VoD: Do you have assistants help you in the drawings or in the preparations for the exhibition?

Salwa: No, actually I did all the work by myself, including preparations for the exhibition.

VoD: How is this exhibition different from the first one?

Salwa: The first exhibition, held in May 2011, consisted of 42 thobes that were displayed through models. In this one, I had 52 thobes in new designs exhibited on walls and manikins. Also, the first one was a show for a few hours. This exhibition lasted for seven days, which provided a better opportunity for a larger audience to see my collection.

VoD: You presented both contemporary and traditional designs. Which style is more liked by Darfuri women?

Salwa: All the designs were liked by women who came to the exhibition, as I combined both contemporary and traditional styles using fabrics with inlaid accessories and various colours and patterns.

VoD: Are thobes different from one area to another in Sudan, in terms of designs and the way of wearing the thobe?

Salwa: No. The thobe is the only element in our culture shared by all women of Sudan, in all the states and tribes, and at all levels and ages.

VoD: But the Sudanese thobe is different from the Islamic dress code for women in the Arab countries, so...
what are the historic or social factors that contributed to shaping the local thobe?

Salwa: The Sudanese thobe was originally inspired by the African dress back in the mid-19th century, in 1858. We see women in some African countries, such as Mauretania, Chad and Nigeria, wearing a thobe but the designs and colours differ from one country to another as the culture differs as well.

Also, in the beginning, the Sudanese thobe was made of locally manufactured cotton yarn (those fabrics are called Al-ferdah, Alguenjeh and Alzuraq), but with time, and as imported fabrics were brought to the local markets, women started using, and preferring, those imported fabrics because of their good quality.

VoD: Does the family encourage your work in this line?

Salwa: Yes. Actually I find great encouragement from my family and others in our society, which gives me moral support to continue working in this art field.

VoD: What would you like to achieve in the future?

Salwa: I hope my project of designing thobes will expand to establish a workshop for training women and to increase production capacity to export the Sudanese thobes abroad.

VoD: Being also a lecturer at the University of El Fasher, and a wife and a mother, how do you manage your time?

Salwa: I usually complete my office and academic work during working hours at the university, and I give what's left of my time to my family, to my art work and to social commitments.
A Sudanese woman in a traditional thobe made of chiffon and accessorized with shiny material stitched on the fabric. The thobe is designed by Dr. Salwa Mukhtar Saleh. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.