Art as a tool of Peace: Interview with artist Yehia Mohammed

“We must uphold the human essence in every Darfuri”
—An interview with Deputy Joint Special Representative- Protection, Bintou Keita

Mariam—giving women a voice in Darfur’s peace process

Reinforcing rule of law by building capacity of national mechanisms
I’m pleased to introduce the June 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 the interview “We must uphold the human essence in every Darfuri” with UNAMID’s Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR)-Protection, Ms. Bintou Keita speaks about the uniqueness of her current job, how she defines the Mission’s protection of civilians mandate and the warmth and love she has experienced from the people living in this conflict-torn region.

The article “Mariam—giving women a voice in Darfur’s peace process” describes Mariam Adams Hussein as an inspiration to many women across West Darfur in her role as a leader for displaced women as well as her conviction that every individual must contribute to the peace process across the region.

The article “Reinforcing Rule of Law in Darfur by building capacity of National Justice Mechanisms” reflects the Mission’s work in partnership with Sudan National Judicial authorities to improve the performance of justice institutions, such as rural courts for mediation of disputes, prosecution offices and prison services across Darfur.

The collection of photographs titled “UNAMID Outreach: Peace Through Sports” portrays sports as a tool that contribute to strengthening ties and enhancing relations between various communities at different strata of society. Sports cut across all social barriers and brings people together in harmonized fashion, regardless of their social status, ethnic or political affiliations. Finally, in our cover feature, “Art as a Tool of Peace”, Voices of Darfur presents an interview with the Nyala-based artist, Yehia Adam Mohammed, where he speaks of the art scene in South Darfur, what inspires him and the role of local artists in bringing about social peace and cohesion in 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

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Joint Special Representative/ Joint Chief Mediation

Bintou Keita (Guinea)
Deputy Joint Special Representative- Protection

Lieutenant General Frank Mushyo Kamand (Rwanda)
Force Commander

Priscilla Makotose (Zimbabwe)
Police Commissioner

**ON THE COVER**

On 25 May 2017 UNAMID, CPS Communication and Public Information Section (CPIS), in collaboration with Open University of Sudan, organized a Photo Exhibition in Khartoum as part of the commemoration of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. Photo by Mohamad Almahady UNAMID

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EL DAEin - UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Kingsley Mamabolo, on 7 May 2017, met the Governor, tribal leaders, and community representatives during a two-day visit to El Daein, East Darfur. Local issues were canvassed during a meeting with the state Wali (Governor), Anas Omar, and members of the Native Administration on local issues. On 7 May 2017. The JSR also met with representatives of South Sudanese refugees at Kario camp and listened to their concerns. Photo by Abdul Rasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Kingsley Mamabolo, conducted a two-day visit to El Daein, East Darfur, where he engaged with the state Wali (Governor), Anas Omar, and members of the Native Administration on local issues. On 7 May 2017. The JSR also met with representatives of South Sudanese refugees at Kario camp and listened to their concerns. Photo by Abdul Rasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

The session emphasized the importance of peace and urged non-signatory movements to put down their arms and join the peace process. A former combatant said that his group considers peace a strategic option, so he and others signed the document to bring about peace and alleviate the suffering of the people of Darfur from the scourge of war.

Another former combatant echoed the call for peace, saying it would improve conditions for refugees and enable internally displaced people to return to their homes.

UNAMID provided logistical, technical, and financial support to the session including a payment to each ex-combatant to assist with their move to civilian life.

WFP provided the ex-combatants with food rations for three months. In addition, the UNDP will facilitate assistance after the demobilization exercise, including support through income-generation projects.
Milestone achieved in clearance of Explosive Remnants of War in West Darfur

FOROBARANGA, WEST DARFUR - Thousands of people from Forobaranga, West Darfur, gathered to mark a milestone in the safety of their community this week. In an event on 24 April, UNAMID and the National Mine Action Centre joined with locals in Forobaranga town to celebrate the clearance of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from all registered contaminated areas.

The project is part of the Mission’s mandate to protect civilians. Photo by Muntasir Sharafadin, UNAMID.

UNAMID’s Ordnance Disposal Office, in partnership with the National Mine Action Centre and the local community, celebrated on 24 April, 2017, all registered contaminated areas being clear of Explosive Remnants of War and unexploded ordnance in Forobaranga, West Darfur. The project is part of the Mission’s mandate to protect civilians. Photo by Muntasir Sharafadin, UNAMID.

HUNAID’s Communications and Public Information Section, in partnership with UNESCO and the Sudanese Union of Journalists, concluded on 16 May 2017, a three-day “Safety in conflict zones” workshop for female journalists in Darfur. Some 24 journalists, from all Darfur states – including eight UNAMID personnel – participated in the event, which took place at the Mission’s headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Mohamed Almahady, UNAMID.

EL FASHER – Women journalists from across Darfur took part in a ‘Safety in Conflict Zones’ workshop in El Fasher recently, supported in part by UNAMID.

The three-day workshop involved 16 Darfur-based women journalists, along with eight female UNAMID public information staff. During the workshop, participants learned to recognize the circumstances that entail risks for personal safety; to assess major safety risks; and how to effectively deal with public disorders or emergencies. They also acquired skills that will enhance their safety and security, and were exposed to best practices for conflict reporting.

Safety in conflict zones focus of workshop for Darfur-based female journalists

Milestone achieved in clearance of Explosive Remnants of War in West Darfur

Mr. El-Haja highlighted the Government’s commitment to support peace, enhance security and provide the local population with basic services. Lt. General Ali Salim, State Minister of Defense, praised the Darfuri people for their support of peace and stability. He noted the importance of the entire community being involved in programmes that mitigate the effects of war and contribute towards development.

“As part of our responsibility, we are committed to free Sudan from ERW in line with the Ottawa Treaty,” said Lt. General Salim, referring to the convention signed in 1997 that placed an international ban on anti-personnel mines.

Abdulhamid Naheed, a representative of the local community, commended the role played by all parties towards the clearance of ERW and expressed his hope that development projects would follow.

Oumar Kane, Head of UNAMID Sector West office, reiterated the Mission’s commitment to work with the Government of Sudan and the community to achieve the goals of peace and security in the region. He urged the community to refrain from engaging in conflict, which would re-contaminate the area with ERW and UXO.

Mr. Kane called on locals to be an example of a community that promotes peace and supports development, security and peaceful co-existence among diverse groups of people.

Jeffrey McMurdo, Programme Manager for the UNAMID Ordnance Disposal Office, said that Forobaranga is the first locality in Darfur to complete removal of all reported ERW. This milestone underlines the readiness of UNAMID and the centre, along with State and Local Government, to work together to clear the remaining areas of contamination.

“For nine years UNAMID has been clearing and sometimes re-clearing those parts of Darfur affected by conflict. With the current ceasefire there is hope that there will not be any new ERW,” said Mr. McMurdo. Similar ERW and UXO clearance projects are planned for the rest of West Darfur.

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Nagla Jumaa, a participant and journalist from Nyala, South Darfur, noted: “The workshop was very important for us in terms of protecting ourselves as journalists, because in Darfur we have been suffering for more than 13 years from war and conflict.”

Another journalist, Reem Abdalla, from Zailingei, Central Darfur described the workshop as the most important she had ever attended.

“It brought together journalists from all the five states of Darfur and created a spirit of harmony and cooperation between us as a group,” said Ms. Abdalla.

The training was supported by UNAMID’s Communications and Public Information Section, in partnership with UNESCO and the Sudanese Union of Journalists.

UNAMID has trained more than 70 local journalists in 2017 in a major contribution to the development of a strong media in Darfur.
UNAMID celebrates the International Day of UN Peacekeepers at the Mission Headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The event included a military and police parade; observing a minute of silence and laying of wreaths in honour of the peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

EL FASHER — Remembering fallen peacekeepers was a key part of a ceremony observing the International Day of UN Peacekeepers held on 29 May 2017 at UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur.

Attended by Mission leadership, a representative of North Darfur and UNAMID military, police and civilian staff, the event included a military and police parade. Peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty were honoured with a minute of silence and laying of wreaths in honour of the peacekeepers who lost their lives in the line of duty. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

From 13 to 14 March 2017, UNAMID’s Civil Affairs Section, in collaboration with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Oxfam America, local authorities and native Administrations, jointly organized a two-day peace conference in El Sereif Locality to create a platform to discuss inter-communal conflict issues between the Beni Hussein, Northern Rezeigat, Zahagawa, and Bediats tribes to manage pastoralists’ movement and shared natural resources in Abo-Jidat Area, and the need to establish early warning systems to prevent inter-communal conflicts. The restoration of state authority, rule of law and public order through empowerment of law enforcement institutions such as police and judiciary in a manner that will facilitate control of outlaws, were also discussed.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Hassan Gibril, UNAMID Head of Office, Sector North, indicated that the peace conference was organized in line with the Mission’s mandate and priorities. He also encouraged all participants to continue to embrace mutual dialogue and to share limited resources in the area.

Mike Dzakuma, Acting Head of Civil Affairs Section, reiterated UNAMID’s readiness to continue the good collaboration with the state government, local authorities, the native administrations and commu- nities to promote peaceful coexistence in the locality and across Darfur. He encouraged participants to actively contribute to the discussions and make recommendations for durable solutions to curb inter-communal conflicts and enhance social peace in the locality. “Recurrent tensions over access to shared limited natural resources including land, water, pasture and minerals is a major trigger for inter-communal violence, especially in localities west of El Fasher, North Darfur,” added Mr. Dzakuma.

Representing UNDP, Mr. Osman Ahmed Ali, explained that his organization is currently implement- ing a project to promote reconciliation and coexistence for sustainable peace in Darfur. He added that the UNDP will contribute to all efforts aimed at resolving conflicts through peaceful mechanisms of reconcilia- tion and mediation across Darfur.

Ahmed Ali, a representative of the organizing committee called on participants to discuss the establish- ment of Ajaweed committees to achieve positive results. The representative of the native administrations, Mr. Ismail Salei- man touched on the critical need to empower native administrations and the Ajaweed Councils to build
social cohesion in Darfur. He also urged the government to collect arms from civilians and to form follow-up mechanisms for the effective implementation of reconciliations outcomes.

At the end of the Conference, Traditional leaders’ signed an agreement on co-existence and rebuilding the social structures including denunciation co-existence and rebuilding the social structures including denunciation of conflicts and all types of violence and culture of war and working towards disseminating the culture of peace. The agreement further commits all concerned to take all measures available to them to prevent the eruption of conflicts, denounce tribalism and embrace the spirit of acceptance of the other people’s concerns in order to regain trust and mutual cooperation.

UNAMID trains South Darfur women in making fuel-efficient stoves

UNAMID’s Gender Advisory Unit in Nyala, South Darfur, recently concluded a two-month capacity-building programme for women in Kateela locality, South Darfur, on making fuel-efficient stoves. More than 1,000 women have benefited from the training which is aimed at protecting the environment and minimizing domestic accidents to which Darfuri women are exposed by using firewood. Photo by Hanemeskel Nega, UNAMID.

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UNAMID hands over women center to local community in West Jebel Marra, Central Darfur

On 30 May 2017, UNAMID Sector Central handed over a constructed Women’s Center and Meeting Hall to the local community in Nertiti, West Jebel Marra Locality in Central Darfur. The project is part of the Mission’s continued efforts to empower women and improve their working environment and wellbeing. Photo by Kote Mouroulaye, UNAMID.

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“We must uphold the human essence in every Darfuri”
— An interview with Deputy Joint Special Representative-Protection, Bintou Keita

UNAMID’s Deputy Joint Special Representative, Bintou Keita, speaks to Voices of Darfur about the uniqueness of her current job, how she defines the Mission’s protection of civilians mandate and the warmth and love she has experienced from the people living in this conflict-torn region.

BY EMMANUEL EMASEALU

Bintou Keita was appointed as Deputy Joint Special Representative in charge of UNAMID’s Protection of Civilians pillar in November 2015. Since then she has hit the ground running, traversing through the length and breadth of Darfur, interacting with its people and demonstrating her own special brand of hands-on peacekeeping.

In this candid interview with Voices of Darfur, Ms. Keita shares her views on the quest for sustainable peace across this conflict-ridden land, gender issues at the workplace and the importance of every individual embracing the concept of a better tomorrow for the people of Darfur.

VoD: Your appointment in 2015 as DJSR in charge of the Protection pillar is an inspiration for women in the United Nations and elsewhere. What does this appointment mean to you? Do you see this as a call to duty, a problem-solving opportunity or even as a challenge that must be confronted?

DJSR Keita: It is a mixed bag. I was appointed in November 2015 as soon as I finished serving in West Africa during the Ebola crisis. I was very happy to come to Darfur for several reasons. First of all, three times in my career I had been called to work in Darfur and all three times I had considered it not the opportune moment because I had young children and was not sure if it was the best move at the time. The second consideration is the interesting fact that I am being interviewed by Voices of Darfur. It is very interesting to me because when I was sixteen years old, I thought of becoming “a voice for Africa”, someday. So, being interviewed by Voices of Darfur, one region in Africa, is interesting. Perhaps, someday, I could become a voice for Africa as a continent. Another reason why my appointment is a source of joy is that I have been serving in the UN since 1987 in different countries, including my own country, Guinea Conakry.

In the context of this Mission, there is something unique about it. There is the uniqueness of working for both the United Nations and the African Union. So, I said to myself, perhaps, this is an opportunity provided by the African Union to learn more about my continent. So, I would describe my appointment as a mixed bag because it is a call to duty in my professional capacity and a source of joy to me, personally. It is the combination of these considerations that make me happy that the Secretary-General appointed me to this position.

I even found my designation, the title of Deputy Joint Special Representative for Protection, interesting. Initially, I thought of protection in the sense of my previous experience as UNICEF Representative or even in the context of the peace-building Mission in Burundi. But here, I have come to understand that protection has a very different meaning. I have worked in a
context of the new environment includes the environment. Even the protection to civilians which also to be involved in providing physical protection and women protection. But this is the first time I have had familiar with was the rule of law, child protection of civilians. What I was facing are dealing with the physical protection of civilians. The military and police components who where you also work with the military and police to provide protection in UNAMID?

INTERVIEW

So, to answer your question in a nutshell, I see my appointment as UNAMID DJSR as an inspiration for women generally, a call to duty and a good opportunity to contribute my quota in the effort to solve the situation in Darfur. Indeed, my appointment could rightfully be described as a challenge that must not be shied away from but confronted. VoD: You have expressed that there is a difference in perception of how the protection of civilians mandate is handled in Darfur compared to how protection is handled in other conflict and post conflict regions. What is this difference?

DJSR Keita: The difference is that in other posts, I did not work with the military and the police to provide protection of the civilians. The only time I worked with the military and the police was during the fight against Ebola. There were no arms because this was not fighting another person or an enemy but fighting a virus. We had military and police expertise. But this is the first time I see people in uniform carrying weapons and playing the role of preventing or deterring attacks. This is new to me.

VoD: You have served in several senior management and leadership positions with the United Nations in Chad, Congo, Madagascar, Cape Verde, Rwanda, Burundi, New York, Sierra Leone, Guinea and now, Darfur. What would you consider to be your personal achievements in the discharge of your duty as DJSR - Protection in UNAMID?

DJSR Keita: I would say it is a bit early to assess personal achievements. But from the comments I receive, most people are not used to having, quote and unquote, “VIPs” at my level going to the deep field, connecting with the people, running around in the Mission Headquarters or even going to the sectors to meet the people. For me, this is part of the job. You cannot understand if you are not mixing with the people. You must mingle with the people to understand their thinking, gauge their temperament, determine what they represent, ascertain their dreams and despair, and also engage them in dialogue in order to further your own understanding and vision of what their needs are. I believe that this is why we are here, to support and serve the people. I would say that this is a personal working style. In the end, it is transforming the lives of people that matters and you do this by connecting, communicating, dialoguing, advocating and by relating to the people through your physical presence even when language may appear to be a barrier. Indeed, there is a non-verbal language which I use to connect with the people everywhere I go. I believe in connecting with the people and this makes the difference.

VoD: In your current role as DJSR, have you met with any challenges, both as a woman and a leader? If so, how did you deal with such challenges?

DJSR Keita: Well, in every professional journey, one is bound to encounter challenges. In my current role, I have had to unpack and display what protection means. This Mission has the unique mandate of the protection of civilians. Because my title reflects protection, people tend to confuse the overall mandate of the Mission (which is the protection of civilians) with the personality of DJSR (Protection) as appointed by the Secretary-General and it only happens that I am a woman, a leader. It should not mean that my position is a secondary role because I am not a man. Sometimes, one’s performance can be assessed through the gender lens, consequently one is expected to deal with “soft” issues; it is often a perception that women should deal with soft issues and not weighty political issues. But actually, the role in itself means that one is dealing with politics, negotiation, and every other thing which at the end should bring about the protection of the rights of the citizens of Darfur in the context of their communities. It is all about bringing peace at the end.

VoD: Do you have any special number of conflict and post-conflict countries but never in a place where you also work with the military and police components who are dealing with the physical protection of civilians. What I was familiar with was the rule of law, child protection and women protection. But this is the first time I have had to be involved in providing physical protection to civilians which also includes the environment. Even the context of the new environment presents a unique situation in Africa as both the African Union and the United Nations are partnering to engage with the Sudanese authorities in a bid to restore peace to a place which has been known for its internal fighting and the wounds of the people received at the airport by community leaders, women’s rights activists, state ministers and others active in the political arena. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.
message for the people of Darfur whom you interact with, literally, on a daily basis?

**DJSR Keita:** In the context of the recent message of the UN Secretary-General on International Day of UN Peacekeepers, I would say to Darfuri men, women and children that the peacekeepers are here because it is a calling. It is their duty and obligation to serve the continent and in this regard, they are serving Darfur with zeal and commitment.

So, how do we walk the talk? It is by trying as much as possible each day to rise above the wounds and scars in order to pursue peace in every endeavour through our attitude and behaviour and through the words we use. We must uphold the human essence in every Darfuri or anyone having dealings with Darfur. We must do this because we care and because tomorrow is best prepared for, today. I know life can be very difficult particularly when the basic social amenities are not available. But one thing I notice, virtually everywhere I go and which makes me very emotional, is that despite the poverty, despite the challenges and difficulties are, people are still welcoming and warm. We cannot put a value tag to this. This is the gem that must be treasured in spite of the absence of certain material things. These are the values that would help us to carry on and must be bequeathed to generations to come. So, the message I would like to give to my fellow brothers and sisters in Darfur, is the importance of preparing for tomorrow in the context of all seeking durable and sustainable peace.

**VoD:** You have just made two powerful philosophical submissions. The first is that the best time to prepare for tomorrow is today. The second is the philosophical message of hope, hope that nobody should give up, hope that when tomorrow comes, thing will be better. How is your daily routine as DJSR - Protection?

**DJSR Keita:** (Laughs) I will tell you a story. On one occasion, I went to the field with some members of Mission staff including Zakaria, one of our interpreters. Zakaria is a great guy. Somebody came to me with the feedback that they understand I could work from early morning to very late in the night and not bother about eating or doing anything else. However, Zakaria wanted me to kindly note and remember that other people needed a break so they could eat and be refreshed.

I understand that my daily routine is very tough. For me, I just keep carrying on. I have the energy. My energy level increases as the day evolves. Those around me in the office wonder at the hectic schedule I keep which includes a lot of travelling. I thank God because I believe that the energy we expend in responding to our calling is not a drain on our bodies. We should experience a sense of certain material things. This is the gem that must be treasured in spite of the absence of certain material things. These are the values that would help us to carry on and must be bequeathed to generations to come. So, the message I would like to give to my fellow brothers and sisters in Darfur, is the importance of preparing for tomorrow in the context of all seeking durable and sustainable peace.

**VoD:** You have said that the best time to prepare for tomorrow is today. In specific terms, what is your message for Darfur in preparing for tomorrow, today?

**DJSR Keita:** I believe we should lay down all the weapons that are in our minds because the weapons outside are a reflection of the weapons that we have inside. This is the message I want to give. If everyone works on himself then it is possible to attain peace. I believe that this is what we all, including Darfuris, should be doing no matter what the challenges and difficulties are. It is my general thinking that men, women and young people in Darfur states must have seen reason not to continue fighting.
Mariam--giving women a voice in Darfur’s peace process

Mariam Adam Hussein is an inspiration to many women across West Darfur in her role as a leader for displaced women as well as her conviction that every individual must contribute to the peace process across the region.

BY MATILDA MOYO

MARIAM ADAM HUSSEIN has become a household name in West Darfur, as she is among the women that have dedicated their lives to contributing towards peace in the region. This is a major achievement for a woman in a place like Darfur, where women are still conspicuously absent from decision-making processes. Driven by hope and the conviction that peace is not only possible, but also important for the advancement of Darfur, Mariam has been involved in the peace process at various levels.

Mariam is currently the Chairperson for West Darfur State internally displaced persons (IDP) Women’s Union, a post she has held since 2009. She is also the Head Woman Sheik at Abuzar IDP Camp.

“I believe that peace is essential for providing a decent life for all human beings,” she says, noting with concern that women in IDP camps are unhappy and struggling to cope with life. Over the years, Mariam has been engaged in advocating for the rights of displaced women and ensuring that their voice is heard.

Being a wife and a mother of eight children (five boys and three girls), Mariam understands the needs of the women she represents.

Born in Nory, West Darfur in 1969, Mariam was displaced from there in 2003 and moved to El Geneina town where she currently lives. After completing higher secondary school, Mariam engaged in various income generating initiatives such as making bricks among other activities. However, her passion for change propelled her to get involved in activities where she could make a difference, such as the peace process during the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). She was a key participant at all Doha peace talk forums.

“On behalf of IDPs and refugees, we engaged in the peace negotiation in Doha 1, 2 and 3. I represented IDP women and was selected with two other IDPs to participate in the negotiations,” she says, adding that some of the issues of concern that she raised included women’s rights, as well as the impact of armed conflict and displacement on women.

During her participation in the negotiations, she and two other IDP representatives contributed to some articles that were included in the peace document under the supervision of the international community. Mariam believes this inclusivity is one of the reasons why the people of Darfur embraced and feel a sense of ownership over the DDPD.

“Our participation in the negotiation was in the interests of peace and we conveyed our message, but unfortunately the DDPD is not fully implemented on the ground so we are still living in IDP camps,” she says.

While acknowledging that the DDPD is an acceptable to most people, Mariam notes that there are many challenges facing its im...
“I believe that peace is essential for providing a decent life for all human beings.”

“I hope that peace will prevail in Sudan, especially in Darfur, so that all the people can enjoy a good life,” she says.

“Men can actively engage in the peace process through the programmes that have been set in the DDPD.”

“A ceremony in Doha, Qatar where the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) was signed on 14 July, 2011. Mariam participated in the DDPD discussions as a representative of the internally displaced persons community in West Darfur. Photo by Olivier Chassot, UNAMID.

Mariam currently works at Abu zar IDP camp’s Health Center as a Health Educator under the state Ministry of Health and has been involved in various decision-making roles within West Darfur. She served in West Darfur’s State Legislative Council under different portfolios, as a Member of Women Legislators from 2012 to 2013 and as Head of the Agriculture and Animal Resources Committee. She is also a member of West Darfur’s State Women Follow-up Mechanism, on the International Women’s Day and sits on the UN-SCR 1325 Committee.

Despite the challenges, Mariam still hopes that the peace agreement will be wholly implemented on the ground so that all the IDPs can return safely to their areas of origin. However, she believes for this to be achieved, the Government of Sudan needs to disarm all people and leave the weapons only with the security apparatuses.

“I hope that peace will prevail in Sudan, especially in Darfur, so that all the people can enjoy a good life,” she says.
Reinforcing rule of law by building capacity of national mechanisms

UNAMID’s Rule of Law Section works in partnership with Sudan National Judicial authorities and Attorney General Office to improve the rule of law in Darfur by promoting mediation efforts to resolve conflicts by building the capacity of justice institutions, such as rural courts for mediation of disputes, prosecution offices and prison services across Darfur.

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

Across Darfur, the traditional criminal justice mechanism, commonly known as ‘Judiya,’ is based on local customs and traditions. Rural courts which utilize the ‘Judiya’ system have historically played a significant role in the early resolution of community conflicts across the region, through mediation activities. In most cases, conflicts are caused by seemingly minor disputes, such as livestock theft or disputes over ownership of small properties. This informal justice system often helps solve inter-communal conflicts by empowering native community leaders known as umdas who preside over such rural courts. Local native administration is, thus, the lynchpin of this system and criminal justice is mostly based on the involved parties agreeing to a compromise solution.

Salahudden Abbas, Chief Judge, North Darfur, is of the view that rural court judges play an important role in resolving disputes amicably. Francoise Simard, Head, Rule of Law, UNAMID Rule of Law expresses of a similar view. “Mediation, unlike other forms of litigation, is by far the least costly, better understood by ordinary people and more expeditious mode of resolving disputes, whether between individuals or communities,” says Ms. Simard.

Increasingly, however, most judicial officials are of the opinion that traditional justice systems across Darfur need to operate in synchronicity with state or federal laws to facilitate early and amicable resolution community conflicts, without involving formal courts which, in reality, are available only in towns and cities.

UNAMID, through its Rule of Law section, Justice Advisory Unit (JAU) continues to support the Government of Sudan’s efforts to enhance the capacity of rural court judges in Darfur. For instance, in 2015 and 2017 UNAMID, in conjunction with Sudan federal judiciary authorities, conducted a trainings course for rural courts judges across states of Darfur. This training empowered participating judges to mediate disputes that could have escalated into armed conflicts which would have resulted in loss of lives and property.

Other success stories have been recorded by rural courts. The Coordinator of rural courts in North Darfur stated recently that an armed inter-communal conflict which erupted in Mellit between the Bertt and Zayadlya tribes and resulted in fatalities on both sides, was resolved through the intervention of community leaders, including rural court judges. Growing confidence and trust in rural courts, which started functioning in earnest recently after years of hibernation due to the ongoing Darfur conflict and the willingness of Darfuris to resort to legal means to resolve their disputes, is beginning to fully reflect in the host community. Therefore, building the capacity of the rural courts to enable them to mediate conflicts and disputes in their communities remains a key priority of the Mission’s Rule of Law Section. In this regard, an intermediate training course was organized in May 2017, for the rural court judges and judicial officers in Darfur on the principles of amicable means for settlement of disputes.

The criminal justice system currently faces a number of challenges. This includes the fact that existing rule of law efforts are still characterized by a climate of impunity and lawlessness which leads to weak state...
law enforcement mechanisms or weak justice institutions. The absence of sufficient personnel, such as police, prosecutors and defense lawyers, particularly in the more remote areas of Darfur, means that people in those areas have no access to formal justice institutions and they resort to illegal means or violence to resolve disputes mechanisms. The Rule of law section, Justice Advisory Unit in 2017, conducted workshops and trainings for Prosecutors and Judicial police for better investigation and prosecutions of cases, across two Darfur states. The section also supported construction of infrastructure of prosecution offices through Quick Impact Projects (QIP’S). Also apart from the main cities, justice infrastructure is generally very poor and in many remote areas, the different components of the criminal justice system are compelled to share premises. The lack of knowledge of the law and human rights remains a great barrier to people accessing justice. Also the fear of reprisal from perpetrators has also prevented many victims of sexual and gender based violence and human rights violations from reporting cases to law enforcement and the justice system. This has necessitated the need for complaint mechanisms which are independent from detention and enforcement authorities and are empowered to receive, investigate and take appropriate action on allegations of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The strengthening of prosecution mechanisms in Darfur will go a long way to prevent the culture of impunity and to provide justice to victims of crimes. The work of UNAMID Rule of law section is important in Darfur as it assists the justice institutions including courts, prosecution, police, prison officials etc., to strengthen their institutional capacity for an independent and accountable justice system that delivers justice and empowers the people of Darfur, especially the vulnerable, to enjoy access to justice and encourage them to demand other fundamental human rights. Rule of law can also address drivers of conflict by supporting equitable governance of land and ensuring that land issues are addressed through the justice system and resolved amicably through mediations and conciliations and the Rule of law section thus provides assistance to rural courts and local conflict resolution mechanisms to provide justice by settlement of disputes before they escalate to major conflicts. During the earlier years the section also organized workshops for lawyers, paralegals, tutorial sessions for law students, civil authorities and facilitated the movement of justice actors across Darfur including transportation of witnesses to court. The section also do court monitoring of sensational cases. UNAMID Rule of Law Section also provides support to the local criminal system through its Prison Advisory
Vocational training offered is part of the reformation programme for inmates aimed at equipping them with income-generating skills. Through UNAMID-supported rehabilitation and reformation programmes, a total of 350 prisoners have benefited from this project, some of whom have resettled within their communities and are able to sustain their livelihoods through self-employment. This certification is very important as it will enable inmates compete favourably with others of similar trade skills in the outside world especially if they decide to look for employment in the formal sector. UNAMID, through its Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) has also supported the reformation programme for inmates. A QIP was conceived to accommodate female prisoners who have been relocated from the Kheir Khanaga Prison. Such facilities have helped to create a humane, safe and secure environment addressing life threatening conditions in the prisons.

It is important to have strong and independent criminal justice institutions which respect and act in accordance with the law, human rights and international standards, areratified by Sudan, and must always be taken into account at all stages of the justice process. The capacity development of national staff in all criminal justice components and law enforcement organs also helps justice and sustainable peace because it ensures access to justice and equality before the law, and interpretation of the laws and functioning of judiciary in combating impunity. This is because no crime will remain unpunished and perpetrators will face criminal sanctions in accordance with the law.

The cause of sustainable peace across Darfur will be well served by equal treatment for all people in the eyes of the law. Having competent and adequate number of trained judges, enhancing the capacity of rural court judges for effective mediation of disputes and community conflicts, a well-functioning formal court system with sufficient infrastructure, increasing the capacity of prosecutors for better investigations and prosecutions, a humane, safe and secure prison system and finding ways to incorp orate traditional mediation systems, such as Jidnya, into state law systems will ensure effective and functioning of rule of law with respect to the judiciary. While UNAMID Rule of Law continues its efforts in supporting local justice and prison systems to attain this improved level of functionality for the benefit of all Darfuris, a lot more remains to be done.
Sport is one of the most effective tools in strengthening ties and enhancing relations between communities and at different strata of society. Sports cuts across social barriers and brings people together in a harmonized fashion, regardless of their social status, ethnic or political affiliations. The United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) recognizes the significance of sports in restoring peace, stability and resettlement among conflicted communities in the Darfur region, its area of responsibility. Annually, the Mission’s Communication and Public Information Section (CPIS) organizes at least fifteen regular sporting events across Darfuri villages, towns, cities and especially in Camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). These activities which are aimed at promoting the spirit of peaceful coexistence target Darfuri youth as the activities provide a veritable platform for their active participation in events that promote networking as well as enhance human health. Sports also provides youth with the opportunity to learn health and vocational skills as well as offers them viable alternatives to engaging in unproductive ventures or identifying with shady characters in society. Horsemanship, for instance, has a very noble value in society because it is associated with advocating for the weak, defending honor and protecting the vulnerable in the Darfuri society. Sporting activities which include football, volleyball, horseracing and camel racing are unique cultural elements capable of bringing communities together rather than divide them. UNAMID CPIS utilizes these grassroots level sporting competitions to disseminate the message of peace amongst local communities.
Art as a tool of Peace: Interview with artist Yehia Mohammed

Nyala-based artist, Yehia Adam Mohammed, speaks of the art scene in South Darfur, what inspires him and the role of local artists in bringing about social peace and cohesion in Darfur.

BY SAEED SALIM

Yehia Mohammed was born in New Halfa, eastern Sudan, on 6 January 1975. His family migrated before his birth from Kulbus, West Darfur, to New Halfa, a town known for its fertile lands, where they became farmers. Mr. Adam, was drawn to painting from childhood and went on to study fine arts at the Design Department, Aljazeera University, Sudan. After graduating, he moved back to Darfur and settled in Nyala. Mr. Adam helms an art workshop where he undertakes graphic design work and also educates children in art, enabling them to paint with a purpose—establishing peace across Darfur.

Voices of Darfur spoke with Mr. Adam about his experiences working with children and how art has the potential to play a crucial role in educating Darfuri people regarding sustainable peace across this troubled region.

Voices of Darfur (VoD): When did you start painting?
Mr. Adam: I started painting when I joined the kindergarten school in New Halfa. We used to draw using clay; later I joined the Design Department, Aljazeera University in an effort to receive a formal degree in art.

VoD: What does the fine arts mean to you?
Mr. Adam: The fine arts, signify a reflection of life, love and tolerance.

VoD: In your opinion, do you believe that Darfuri people attach special value to the fine arts?
Mr. Adam: Definitely yes! Darfuris naturally love colour and use them in their daily life, be it in their attire, their houses. Furthermore, Darfuris also greatly enjoy music and dancing. They find it easy to interact with all types of art.

VoD: How can artists use their work to convey peace messages across Darfur?
Mr. Adam: Art, in its different forms, can function as a powerful tool to convey messages related to bringing about social peace and harmonious coexistence. It elevates human values and contributes to fostering tolerance among different communities in Darfur.

VoD: Have you portrayed the reality of Darfur after the conflict started in your work?
Mr. Adam: Yes, though only partially. In most of my paintings, one can see that peace dominates as a theme. Currently, I am working on a project in which I want to reflect the transformation from war to peace.

VoD: What in your opinion, is the most inspiring aspect of Darfuri life that you have depicted in your current project?
Mr. Adam: I find that Darfuris wear extremely colourful attire and this makes them, visually, almost a multi-coloured community. Immense diversity in terms of culture is reflected in the local costumes of this region. I find this inspiring and an indication that Darfuris are naturally artistic, expressing their cultural diversity through their clothes.

VoD: How can this rich cultural diversity play an effective role in maintaining a social fabric that could lead to sustainable peace?
Mr. Adam: Darfuris are a communal, festive community. They celebrate all occasions—a good harvest, weddings, circumcisions, farewells and so forth. This celebratory zeal finds expression through music, songs, poetry and drama. Therefore, art is a primary medium through which we can send messages on peaceful coexistence between the different ethnic groups living in Darfur.

VoD: Can you tell us about your work with children in Nyala?
Mr. Adam: The idea originated when I organized a workshop on the use of colour and its significance in painting for the students of a basic school in Medani town, Aljazeera State. During the workshop, children identified topics they wanted to draw; young children are naturally artistic. I merely taught them how to mix colours and fill in the empty gaps. The workshop was so successful that I replicated it in Nyala where children from different schools drew and painted subjects of their own choice. I was amazed by the imagination and vision of these children.

Based on this, I decided to make young children draw on the walls of “It is time now for the artists to express in their artworks the real peace that all the Darfuris are awaiting for a long time to come.
the public streets in Nyala town. I wanted to fill the empty walls with paintings that reflect children’s perceptions on life, peace, combating harmful practices, reviving Darfuri cultural heritage and consolidating Darfuri identity. This dates back to historically peaceful relationships between different ethnic groups in Darfur. I wanted to show the speciality of Darfur by reflecting African-Arab mixed colours to create a rich picture full of warm colours.

VoD: In your opinion, how can we bring back, by using art, a smile on the faces of Darfuri children who have suffered for more than a decade due to the ongoing conflict here?

Mr. Adam: Art can be used to address children’s psychological needs. Their drawings usually are an accurate reflection of their inner feelings. If we work towards creating a peaceful, healthy community where the arts are enjoyed, I can assure you, every child will be smiling.

VoD: What was your first impression of the drawings created by the children in Nyala?

Mr. Adam: I was totally stunned! Even trained adult artists could not do better. This proves that children are artists by nature! The only thing they need is tools. Their imagination is limitless.

VoD: Do your future plans include any plans of organising an exhibition reflecting the Darfur crisis and its humanitarian consequences?

Mr. Adam: Actually, I do, but I don’t want this exhibition to be in an enclosed gallery space. Instead I would want to be held at a public yard or a market space in one of the displaced camps.

VoD: Tell us a bit about the current art scene in South Darfur.

Mr. Adam: Traditional arts, which include, but are not limited to, singing, dancing, engraving, carving and handicrafts with locally made materials are the most common arts in Darfur; South Darfur is no exception to this. Additionally, modern music, acting and painting are also being practiced by the younger generation nowadays.

VoD: Has Sudanese art been influenced by art from neighboring countries?

Mr. Adam: Because of the open borders between Sudan and neighboring countries, there has always been interactions between Sudanese culture and the cultures of these countries which, have definitely, influenced Sudanese and Darfuri culture. A new, mixed culture between Arabic and African cultures has emerged, giving Sudan its current cultural identity.

VoD: Are there any active, well-known female artists in Nyala?

Mr. Adam: Traditionally, Darfuri women excelled in singing, dancing and handicrafts. It is the women of Darfur, who historically, encouraged men to go to wars and cultivate farms through their songs. Women’s songs also lamented the lack of social cohesion and ongoing conflict, calling for peace. Two good examples of Darfuri female singers are Mariam Ammo and Hawwa Ramadan, who are well known across Sudan. Nowadays, women have actively participating and creating their own art, expressing their hopes and aspirations regarding development and stability.

VoD: Tell us a bit about the local art industry in Nyala.

Mr. Adam: Art as an industry does not as yet exist in Darfur on a large scale. However, local arts such as food coverings, mats and ornamental pottery are sold widely. A famous area is Mensawashe village, located some 75 kilometers north of Nyala, where locally made artistic materials are sold. Nyala has held art exhibitions for Darfuri arts which bring together most Darfuri ethnic groups to display their traditional arts.

VoD: Do you think the current situation in Darfur is conducive for art to contribute to the cause of peace, development and stability?

Mr. Adam: There will be no art if there is no peace! It is time now for artists to depict the comprehensive peace that all Darfuris have aspired to for a long time. It is time for the ongoing conflict to stop and for Darfur to start the process of recovery. When we celebrate life, we support peace.