

VOICES

of Darfur

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Darfur's Shapes: An Interview with Artist Sayida Musa Adam

**"Public Service Is Particularly
Difficult For A Female Police
Officer..." An Interview With
Priscilla Makotose**

**Shattering The Glass Ceiling:
Darfuri Women Venture Into
Business And Politics**

**Explosive Remnants Of
War: A Major Threat To
Civilians In Darfur**



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

I'M PLEASED to introduce our latest 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 article "Explosive Remnants of War: A major threat to Civilians in Darfur" the writer, Salah Mohammed, talks about the armed conflict between rebel movements and Sudan Armed Forces, along with inter-communal clashes, which have left a vast number of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) across Darfur. These dangerous leftovers – including undetonated bombs, rockets and projectiles -- have maimed or even killed hundreds of civilians. The feature story "Shattering the glass ceiling" highlights how Darfuri women have ventured into income-generating projects and the political arena. This story shines a spotlight on four women who have taken over the role of breadwinners in their households and one who is an active participant in the deci-

sion-making processes affecting internally displaced persons in her region. The collection of photographs titled "UNAMID facilitates the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Darfur" portrays the Mission's support to humanitarian operations in Darfur, through facilitating the timely delivery of assistance to conflict affected populations. Through the provision of UNAMID armed escorts, humanitarian actors are able to deliver assistance to areas at risk and in some areas of ongoing conflict. Finally, in our cover feature, "Darfur Shapes", Voices of Darfur presents an interview with artist, Sayida Musa Adam, who sheds light about her art, the creative scene in Darfur and the role of local artists in spreading the culture of peace across the Darfur region. As Voices of Darfur continues to evolve as a news magazine, we welcome your feedback. Send your comments by email, to "Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur" in the subject line and send the email to: unamid-publicinformation@un.org.

Carlos Araujo
Chief
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Sayida Musa Adam, a renowned Darfuri artist is pictured at her studio in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.



A member of a Darfuri cultural group is pictured while performing at a photo exhibition and handicrafts market organized by UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

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UNAMID Organizes Parade In Honor Of Outgoing AU-UN Joint Special Representative

On 4 January 2017, UNAMID organized a farewell parade in honor of the outgoing AU-UN Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur, Martin Uhomoibhi.

Mr. Uhomoibhi, a Nigerian national, was appointed by the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission as the Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of UNAMID; his responsibilities including that of the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator. Mr. Uhomoibhi served as the Head of Mission in Darfur for 12 months.

The event took place at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher,

North Darfur, and was attended by the Deputy Joint Special Representative - Political, Kingsley Mamabolo, senior leadership and members of UNAMID's military, police and civilian personnel.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Uhomoibhi, expressed his appreciation to all staff members for their support and dedication to the Mission's mandate in Darfur. "This team has been professionally committed, full of integrity and honor, committed to the course of the United Nations and the African Union and determined to work for the hope of a better life for the Darfuri people," he stated.

In the course of more than

30 years of service in the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Uhomoibhi served as Ambassador of Nigeria to Switzerland and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva, among other roles.

He also held positions in the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations in New York, the Consulate-General of Nigeria in Atlanta and its embassies in Ethiopia and the former Yugoslavia.

From 2008 to 2009, Mr. Uhomoibhi served as the third President of the United Nations Human Rights Council and Chair of the World Intellectual Property Organization General Assembly.

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Outgoing AU-UN Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur, Martin Uhomoibhi, is pictured with uniformed personnel during his farewell ceremony at the UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.



UN Integrated Assessment Team visits Sortony, North Darfur

A UNITED NATIONS INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT TEAM, led by UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR)-Protection, Bintou Keita, travelled to Sortony, North Darfur from 29-31 January 2017.

The mission conducted an assessment of the situation at the UNAMID

Team Site, the adjacent Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Gathering Site and the nearby Kube water point. Extensive meetings were held with Team Site and humanitarian personnel, displaced women and leaders as well as nomadic leaders at the water point. Representatives of the displaced communi-

ty expressed their appreciation to UNAMID and the humanitarian agencies for providing protection and humanitarian assistance to them the past year.

The Mission's peacekeepers, through short- and long-range patrols, provide continuous protection to residents of the Gathering Site. Additionally, specific

UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative-Protection, Bintou Keita, visited Sortony, North Darfur, from 29-31 January 2017. In the Picture, Ms. Keita hold dialogue with nomadic community leaders in Biya area, to discuss the security situation and their needs and concerns. Photo by Emmanuel Emasealu, UNAMID.

patrols were instituted for women undertaking livelihood activities such as firewood collection and farming. UNAMID Police also patrol within the Gathering Site, including on foot, to maintain regular contact with the residents.

Furthermore, four observation posts have been constructed at strategic points inside the Gathering Site to provide peacekeepers with a clear view into the camp and surrounding areas.

The Assessment Team also engaged community leaders on the desirability of working with UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section (CAS) to address urgent issues, especially those which could potentially degenerate into serious inter-communal conflicts. For its part, CAS collaborates with local opinion leaders, who have played a positive role in ongoing reconciliation efforts between IDPs in Sortony. Moreover, the Section sup-

ports native administration in bringing feuding parties to the negotiating table.

The visiting team included UNAMID staff from Civil Affairs, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Liaison, Gender, Legal Affairs, Rule of Law, Communications and Public Information sections, as well as the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Darfur and members of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

UNAMID Leadership Visits South Darfur



On 9 January 2017, a UNAMID delegation headed by the Acting Joint Special Representative, Kingsley Mamabolo, met with the Wali of South Darfur, Adam Al Faki, during a two-day visit to the region. During the meeting, they discussed issues related to peace, security, development and cooperation between the Mission and state authorities in support of ongoing peace processes in the area. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

ON 9 JANUARY 2016, UNAMID Acting Joint Special Representative (AJSR), Kingsley Mamabolo, conducted a two-day visit to South Darfur, accompanied by the Mission's Police Commissioner, Priscilla Makotose, and other senior officials.

Upon arrival, UNAMID leadership paid a courtesy call on the state's Wali (Governor), Adam Al Faki, where both sides exchanged views on different issues related to peace, security, development and cooperation between the Mission and state authorities in support of ongoing peace and reconciliation activities in South Darfur.

In his remarks to the Media following the meeting, AJSR Mamabolo expressed appreciation of the state authorities' efforts to transform South Darfur into a stable and peaceful community and transitioning from post conflict to development. "With commitment and passion to move forward, South Darfur can become a model of peace that all Darfur communities would look up to," he stated.

AJSR Mamabolo and his delegation also met a United Kingdom government delegation at the Mission's headquarters in Njala and briefed them on UNAMID mandated activities, overall security situation, challenges faced and aspects of

cooperation between the Mission and the Government of Sudan.

Additionally, Mr. Mamabolo held a Town Hall meeting with UNAMID staff and the sector's senior management, where he emphasised the importance of focusing on the Mission's mandated priorities.

On the second day of the visit, the Mission's HQ delegation visited Kass locality, about 80 Kilometres north west of Njala, where they met with the locality commissioner, Mohammed Yahya Haroun, the Emir of Kass, native administration and representatives of the internally displaced persons.

■

UNAMID commemorates World Radio Day in North Darfur



13 February is World Radio Day. To mark the occasion, UNAMID Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) distributed solar powered wind-up radios to the students of Al Salam 26 Basic School for Girls at Al Salam IDP camp, in El Fasher, North Darfur. In the picture, a CPIS's radio unit staff member explains how to operate the radio. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

AS PART OF GLOBAL EVENTS commemorating World Radio Day on 13 February 2017, UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section organized an outreach event at Al Salam 26 Basic School for Girls, Al Salam camp for internally displaced persons, North Darfur.

More than 700 students and their families, teachers and senior members of the Al Salam Camp Education Council attended the event, which included cultural performances, peace songs and a quiz on World Radio Day as well as UNAMID's mandated activities

in Darfur. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on the Mission's radio programmes, broadcast on state radio stations. Additionally, solar-powered wind-up radios, school bags, books and volley balls were distributed among the school's students.

Addressing the gathering, Jumbe Omari Jumbe, Head, UNAMID Radio, highlighted the importance of radio as a platform for information exchange in Darfur, especially during times of conflict and called for greater participation of audiences and communities in policy and

planning of radio broadcasting.

On her part, Mona Abdallah, Headmistress, Al Salam 26 Basic School for Girls, expressed her gratitude to UNAMID for choosing the school as a venue for the event.

Eltigani Ishag, Head, Al Salam Camp Education Council, requested the Mission to plan similar activities for other schools in the area.

World Radio Day is celebrated throughout the world to remember the unique power of radio to touch lives and bring people in remote corners of the globe onto a common platform.

■

UNAMID organizes Open Day on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security



On 23 January 2017, UNAMID's Gender Advisory Unit organized an Open Day in El Fasher, North Darfur, to discuss the implementation progress of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The event brought together some 100 women, from the five Darfur's states, representing government entities, academia, civil society organizations and UNSCR 1325 state committees. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

ON 23 JANUARY 2017, UNAMID's Gender Advisory Unit, in collaboration with state committees and the Ministry of Social Affairs in all five Darfur states, organized an Open Day in El Fasher, North Darfur, to discuss the progress in the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The event brought together some 100 women and men from across five Darfur states, including members of the states' legislature, women's civil society organizations, women from political parties, academia and UNSCR 1325 state committees. The event was also attended by Fatima Mohamed, Minister of Social Affairs, North Darfur, members of the United Nations Country team (UNCT) and UNAMID staff.

Addressing the gathering, Margaret Masenda-Simbi, Head, Gender Adviso-

ry Unit, UNAMID, reiterated the Mission's commitment to continue engaging women through community dialogues to build consensus on practical ways to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in camps for the displaced and other communities across Darfur. "Some important work has been undertaken in Darfur to engage and promote women in peace building and decision-making," noted Ms. Masenda-Simbi.

On her part, Ms. Fatima Mohamed stated that the government will continue its support to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, in line with the National Policy on Women's Empowerment (2007) and the National Action Plan (NAP) on implementation of SCR 1325 that is due to be launched on 8 March 2017. "We have many initiatives to enhance the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and to reduce maternal and child

mortality," said Ms. Mohamed.

During discussions at the forum, participants recommended the establishment of a High Council on Woman and Child Affairs in all five states in Darfur and increasing education opportunities for girls. They also requested the UNCT to extend support to state governments in women's empowerment programmes.

Participants also underlined the challenges facing the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which included lack of budgetary allocations for the implementation of the provisions of 1325 in all Darfur states; insecurity and inaccessibility of some places to disseminate the provisions of UNSCR 1325; the limited participation of women in decision-making positions in state governments and limited presence of UNCT and international NGOs to support the implementation of the Resolution.

DIDC Conferences conclude in Beida and Kulbus, West Darfur



The Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations (DIDC) Follow up Mechanism and UNAMID's DIDC Secretariat organized a conference on 17 and 18 January 2017, in Beida, West Darfur. These meetings aimed at consolidating peace by promoting confidence-building and reconciliation amongst the people of Darfur, in particular, and Sudan, in general. Photo by Mohammed Ahmed Ali, UNAMID.

THE DARFUR INTERNAL DIALOGUE AND CONSULTATIONS (DIDC) Follow up Mechanism (FUM) and UNAMID DIDC Secretariat recently concluded two DIDC conferences in Beida and Kulbus localities, West Darfur.

Provision of basic services, strengthening the native administration and implementing activities such as mobilizing people to promote a culture of peace, are some recommendations drawn from the two conferences.

The DIDC conference, held on 17 and 18 January 2017, in Beida, West Darfur, brought together some 127 people, including native administration officials, women, youth, displaced persons, nomads and religious leaders.

Addressing the gathering, Osman Yousef, Commissioner, Beida, said that the outcome of the DIDC will contribute to peace, stability and development in Darfur. He also disclosed plans of

similar conferences in the region aimed at encouraging community leaders to end violence in their various localities.

In his remarks, Tarig Ibrahim, Director, Peace Studies and Development Centre, University of El Geneina, expressed appreciation to the international community for its contribution towards promoting peace and stability in Darfur. "I call on all participants to address the root causes of the conflict and put an end to the Darfur crisis," stated Dr. Ibrahim.

Ezeldin Khalil, representative, DIDC-FUM, emphasized the importance unified efforts by all parties to enhance peace initiatives among different communities. He reminded all participants of the importance of the DIDC programme which is enshrined in Chapter 7 of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). For his part, Adam Bashar, Commissioner, Kulbus, urged participants to explore ways to promote peace by ensuring ac-

cess to social services as well as development initiatives. "To build a new Sudan, we must consult and negotiate with each other. Then we must draw a road map for peace," he said.

Suaad El Barjo, Deputy Chair, FUM, Beida, encouraged all participants to embrace their socio-cultural diversity and offer recommendations that promote peace and stability. She also expressed appreciation to UNAMID and UNDP for their contributions to DIDC activities.

Another DIDC conference, attended by some 150 participants, was successfully held in Kulbus, West Darfur, from 29 to 30 January.

The internal dialogue and consultations meetings are conducted in line with the DDPD; they are aimed at consolidating peace by promoting confidence-building and reconciliation amongst the people of Darfur, in particular, and Sudan, in general.

Child rights and protection focus of UNAMID - supported SAF officers training



On 18 January 2017, UNAMID's Child Protection Unit conducted a training session on "child protection in conflict areas" for 49 Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) officers in El Fasher, North Darfur. The session focused on strengthening the capacity and sensitivity of the SAF toward child rights and child protection. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

STRENGTHENING the capacity and sensitivity of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) toward child rights and child protection was the focus of a UNAMID-supported workshop held in El Fasher in northern Darfur last week.

Some 49 SAF officers took part in the training on 18 January 2017, conducted by UNAMID's Child Protection Unit (CPU). Aimed at strengthening cooperation with SAF towards the protection of children, the training included details of the "No Child Soldiers-Protect Darfur" campaign. The event was organized within the Mission's wider framework of advocacy, sensitization and capacity-building of external partners. Similar training workshops will be conducted for SAF officers across Darfur during the year.

Boubacar Dieng, Head of UNAMID's CPU, reinforced to participants the importance of their guaranteeing, in the course of their work, the maximum protection for children.

Mr. Dieng underlined that significant

efforts have been made in Darfur to end recruitment and use of child soldiers since 2009, noting that there had been no case-load in the past three years that substantiate continued recruitment and use of child soldiers by the parties to the conflict. He added that all parties should continue to work with UNAMID/UN to strengthen prevention and ensure child soldiering is stopped permanently in Darfur.

Colonel Mohamed Almutrada, a liaison officer with SAF, commended UNAMID for organizing the training, indicating that such initiatives serve to enhance cooperation between UNAMID and SAF. The Colonel emphasized the need for further training, which would help to address issues related to peace and the protection of children.

Major Mahmoud Abass, one of the participants, said that the workshop highlighted the importance of child rights, particularly the need to stop child recruitment and the use of children as soldiers. Major Abass said that he

planned to share what he had learned at the training with subordinates.

Another participant, Major Awad Ahmed, noted that the definition of child soldier is not limited to child combatants, but includes anyone under the age of 18 who serves with an armed group in any capacity.

UNAMID has engaged with parties to the conflict in Darfur on numerous occasions, resulting in the establishment of six Action Plans and the issuance of nine Command Orders to end child recruitment and the use of children as soldiers, and to stop other violations including abduction, killing and sexual abuse.

The Mission has supported a Darfur-wide campaign "Protect Children/Support Efforts of UNAMID – No sexual relations with minors." The campaign -- part of global United Nations' efforts to protect children -- aimed to raise awareness among the Mission's peacekeepers regarding child sexual abuse and exploitation, and establish a zero tolerance policy. ■

The minimum international standards for prisons focus of joint Government of Sudan-UNAMID seminar



UNAMID's Rule of Law Section, in collaboration with the Sudanese Directorate of Prisons and Reforms, sponsored a two-day seminar on the minimum international standards required in prisons. Held in Khartoum on 22 and 23 February, the workshop discussed a UNAMID-drafted policy document designed as guidance for the Sudanese prison system in matters concerning inspection and training. Photo by Mohammed El Hadi, UNAMID.

KHARTOUM – Sensitizing senior Sudanese prison and police officials about the minimum UN Standards of Operation involved in managing prisons, also known as The Mandela Rule, was the aim of a recent workshop held in Khartoum.

The two-day meeting -- organized jointly by the Government of Sudan's Directorate of Prisons and Reform, and UNAMID -- took place on 22-23rd February.

Major-General Abu Obeida Suleiman, Director-General of Prisons and Reform (Centres) in Sudan joined senior Sudanese prison and police personnel, along with officials from UNAMID's Rule of Law section. Participants deliberated on policy documents that serve as guidelines for the Sudanese prison system, with a focus on inspection, standard operating procedures and training.

Major-General Suleiman said Sudan has made significant strides in complying with international minimum operation standards throughout its prisons, with

no major violations of human rights recorded in a long time.

"Had it not been for the scarcity of resources which handicap training, Sudan would have been streets ahead of (international) counterparts," said Major-General Suleiman.

Mary Okumu, a Senior Corrections Advisor with UNAMID said, "The fight

against crime would be ineffective unless prisons are safer, secure and geared towards rehabilitation rather than repression."

As such, observing the UN minimum standards was indispensable, said Ms. Okumu.

A follow up seminar, to validate and adopt the documents discussed, is planned for El Fasher in March. ■





UNAMID Police Commissioner, Priscilla Makotose. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

“Public Service Is Particularly Difficult For A Female Police Officer...”

An Interview With Priscilla Makotose

In her first interview with Voices of Darfur, UNAMID Police Commissioner, Priscilla Makotose, speaks of her policing responsibilities, her role in UNAMID and her views on gender equality within policing communities.

BY EMMANUEL EMASEALU

UNAMID Police Commissioner, Priscilla Makotose boasts of a stellar policing career spanning 30 years along with the distinction of being among the officers who served in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2005. Voices of Darfur caught up

with Ms. Makotose to discuss her component's work with local counterparts across Darfur, her views on gender balance within policing communities and the unique role female police officers play in Sudan.

VoD: Your appointment in March

2016 to your current position as Police Commissioner, UNAMID, makes you the highest-ranking female police officer in the United Nations system. How have you used your passion to serve people within the context of Darfur and your current role?

“The Mission’s Police component works closely with the local police and is increasing capacity-building efforts that canvas for active female participation.”

envisaged myself as a police officer. In fact, my father brought me the application forms from local Police Headquarters and I simply applied to please him. He took the forms back and the police recruiting team came knocking at my door. The training was tough. I vividly recall going to my Deputy Chief Inspector during training and wanting to give up as I was struggling to cope. He convinced me to stay. I am glad I listened to him because I have come to love my job very much.

VoD: Could you tell us a bit about the local policing mechanisms in Darfur?

PC: I came to build on the good work set in motion by my predecessors. Basically, as UNAMID police, we are working to reestablish a policing system that aims to provide safety and security of the local population in the Mission’s area of responsibility, in accordance with our protection of civilian mandate. As UNAMID police, we are working with our local counterparts, training them in areas such as community policing, human rights, investigation, public order and management. We work directly with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). We work with the local police to create awareness among Darfuris on the role of the police. We sensitize communities on the importance of reporting acts of infringement. Furthermore, we are creating community policing volunteer groups who assist in police patrols as well as help IDPs understand when there is an infringement

PC: The passion to serve is the driving force one derives from the psychological satisfaction one gets after doing everything you can to help people in dire need of overcoming injustice or infringement of their basic human rights. In Darfur, this holds especially true when it comes to UNAMID’s mandate to protect civilians. The passion to serve often stems from your background, the sum total of your life and work experience. Public service is particularly difficult for a female police officer due to attendant prejudices and attitudes in the workplace.

VoD: What made you to join the police force, a male-dominated profession?

PC: My destiny, perhaps. I never

against them; they assist affected civilians in gaining access to local police.

At the strategic level, we have helped create structures to ensure best practices in local police operations to be replicated Darfur-wide. In this regard, we coordinate our activities with the Director of International Cooperation in Khartoum and have managed to establish development committees at the Sector level, which are tasked with planning efficient policing methods.

VoD: How has UNAMID’s Police component included the concept of gender sensitivity within its dealings with local policing institutions?

PC: We have developed the concept of the Family and Child Protection Unit to provide a receptive environment. There must be patience and tolerance on the part of society to enable the affected women to make their reports in a conducive environment. With the support of the host police, we have also had the opportunity to take some of our Sudanese female counterparts to international fora such as the International Association of Women Police Conference, earlier this year in Barcelona, Spain. Three Sudanese women officers travelled with us; it was a good experience for them to observe how other police women function in a professional environment. We sincerely hope they will, in turn, share their experience with their Sudanese counterparts back home.

VoD: Some IDPs returning to their places of origin for farming during the rainy season have requested community policing centres in their localities. Does UNAMID have the capacity to provide such support?

PC: This is one of our main areas of interest. We are now working with the host police to develop and implement community policing in areas most likely to receive influx of returnees. Shataya locality, in North Darfur, is one such area we have identified to which people have returned recently. If successful, the idea will be replicated in other areas across Darfur.



On 27 June 2016, UNAMID Police Commissioner, Priscilla Makotose, inaugurated a kindergarten school constructed by the Mission's Police Women's Network at Khor Omer camp for the displaced, East Darfur. Photo by Abdurashed Yakubu, UNAMID.

VoD: What challenges does UNAMID face in its efforts to assist the local police component in Darfur?

PC: UNAMID Police programmes are funded by different organizations, particularly UNDP. Sometimes, when fund disbursement is delayed, people seriously question the reasoning behind the delay. There are also infrastructural challenges that hinder implementation of improved practices. However, the impact of our presence in Darfur will be significant if some of our projects, such as the Joint Rule of Law, a collaborative effort with UNDP, finally takes off the ground.

VoD: What is your opinion on the recruitment of women into the local police force?

PC: Statistics reveal that UNAMID had only 200 women police officers upon its inception. Now we have 625. Similarly, we have been encouraging local women to join the Sudanese police force because we feel that people who

have been impacted by the conflict are mostly women and children. Taking the culture of Sudan into consideration, we notice that the interaction between men and women is limited. Female police officers provide that platform.

VoD: Is there a mechanism put in place by UNAMID police to sensitize the people, women in particular, to the UNAMID mandate?

PC: Our community safety committee sensitizes local communities about UNAMID's mandate, especially in relation to the protection of civilians. Expectations are quite high from the local community, given present economic conditions. They have needs that go far beyond UNAMID mandate. They express these needs during our patrols and in our interactions with them. We collate the concerns and deflect them to the appropriate UN Country Team partner to determine own scope of support. Individual Police Officers (IPO) are making a lot of contributions

through income-generating projects to the local populace, thereby promoting an awareness of individual and collective social responsibility.

VoD: What have UNAMID Police, under your watch, done to build female capacity in the national Darfur police force?

PC: The Mission's Police component works closely with the local police and is increasing capacity-building efforts that canvas for active female participation. Women police officers and cadets have participated in all UNAMID-supported training sessions. We have, at different fora, encouraged the recruitment and deployment of more women police officers in the local police. We remain optimistic that we will see gradual increase in female participation in the future. We are also working towards having a greater number of female police officers in the deep field where their representation is currently grossly inadequate compared to towns. However, there are challenges. For instance, we are often told that working in the police force is not a profession of choice for most Darfuri women. So, one of our approaches is to conduct training programmes that help generate interest among women to join the police force.

VoD: What have you done specifically to change the attitude of Darfuri women towards joining the police force?

PC: UN female police officers in Darfur are role models for gender equality. They are deployed to all our Team Sites. This action may appear simple but we believe that by merely seeing policewomen in their localities, local Darfuri women would be inspired to follow the same path. Some of our Formed Police Unit (FPU) members are female, carry weapons and operate in strategic positions doing our work of protection of civilians. Local women see me in my position as Police Commissioner holding meetings and consultations with other ladies in leadership positions during visits to Team Sites. They draw inspiration from our presence and our positions.

UNAMID Police now has female Team Site Commanders. They are making a difference on the ground. We are thrilled that we are part of the agents of change in that regard. Additionally, we have the UNAMID Police Women's Network, which has been working very hard with the community police and within the community. Male and female police counterparts must work together to make a difference in their communities.

VoD: What is the role of UN female police officers in addressing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse?

PC: Ignorance, particularly in sex-related offences, can cause a lot of problems. There could be stigmatization and stereotyping. So, we use our female police officers to sensitize people on sexual harassment. Female police officers also sensitize the host community on procedures to be followed when making a report on sexual harassment or abuse.

These female officers have been instrumental in the dissemination of information to people who are vulnerable to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. We feel that, as women, we have a greater role to play in advocacy because a woman is likely to have confidence in another woman. Through our advocacy, we assist local women to explore their entrepreneurial potential by engaging in income-generating projects and discover how they can mentor each other to take up leadership positions at the community level.

Within UNAMID, at the moment, the reported cases are almost zero and we would want to keep it that way. There must be zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse in accordance with the UN Secretary-General's policy.

VoD: Does UNAMID Police conduct any grassroots awareness campaigns designed to sensitize the male host population in regard to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse?

PC: UNAMID has now incorporated men into its Women Police Network. Some male police officers have volunteered to be part of this group as they



On 19 February 2017, UNAMID Police Commissioner, Priscilla Makotose, visited Mukjar, Central Darfur, where she handed over a bakery to the residents of the Four Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.

are motivated by the whole concept of women's empowerment and are anxious to put a stop to the sexual exploitation and abuse of women. We even have men as our gender toolkit training officers. We realized that we will not make much impact if we continue to speak to the converted only. Additionally, we dramatize information on sexual exploitation and abuse.

VoD: Is there a police counseling programme for female victims of violence such as rape? If there is, how is this programme managed?

PC: We do not have one in place in UNAMID as we usually channel these requests through the Child Protection Unit who will alert or liaise with relevant UN Country Team partners who render services in areas such as counselling and medical support.

VoD: What is your advice to female police officers?

PC: I would like to thank the Mission's female police officers for the role they

are playing. I encourage them to do even more. They should serve with passion. Female police officers are conspicuously absent in leadership and decision-making capacities. The situation needs to change as society needs women at all levels of the professional sphere in today's world. Never give up, regardless of the challenges. I want to encourage my fellow Sudanese female police officers to work for their own emancipation, growth and development within the police force so that at the end of the day, and in keeping with the provisions of the Sustainable Development Goals, we will have a comparative ratio to the population. UNAMID police officers, both male and female, are doing a great job. I am confident that we will build the capacities of the Sudanese police and look forward to the time when the local community will comfortably return to their villages to live in a safe and secure environment.

1to say that the UNAMID Police served its purpose in Darfur fully. ■

CONTRIBUTORS: ABDULRASHEED YAKUBU, MATILDA MOYO, MOHAMAD MAHADY AND SAEED SALIM

Shattering the glass ceiling Darfuri women venture into business and politics

DURING THE 14-YEAR CONFLICT

in Sudan's Darfur region, husbands, fathers, sons have either joined military groups, died, disappeared without a trace, or fled the war-ravaged villages with their wives and children, losing not just their homes but the ability to provide for their families.

Before the conflict, men were predominantly the breadwinners taking the lead in social, economic and political settings. Existing social structures dictated that women play caregiver roles and perform household domestic tasks. Loss of life and the displacement of those who have survived the war has broken down fami-

lies, disrupted social structures and irrevocably shifted the traditional roles held by men and women. In this edition, Voices of Darfur focuses on three women who have taken over the role of breadwinner and one who is an active participant in the decision-making processes affecting internally displaced persons in her region.

Alawiya Altom works for UNAMID to support her family



MOTHER AND WIFE, Alawiya Altom is an internally displaced person (IDP) residing in Abu Shouck camp near El Fasher, North Darfur.

The 37-year-old is currently the sole breadwinner for 10 family members including her husband, three surviving children and six relatives from her extended family. Alawiya has a temporary job with Facilities Management in UNAMID, one that she handles with pride and dignity and puts food on the table for the family. "Life in the IDP camp is hard. This job has turned the life of my extended

family around at a time when my husband cannot venture out to look for a job," said Alawiya. Before they were displaced, she said, her husband, Abdulkareim Ali, provided for the family by farming sorghum, millet and groundnuts. However, with the continued conflict in Darfur, Abdulkareim is no longer able to farm and provide for his wife and children. Venturing out of the IDP Camp, she said, puts him at risk of abduction, conscription by armed militia groups or even worse, death.

Dar El-Naim Abullah makes perfumes for a living



Based in El-Geneina town in West Darfur, Dar El-Naim, makes and sells perfume from her home to support her nine children and husband.

She produces five litres of liquid perfume weekly and with the money she earns, she is able to feed and meet the needs of her family. With the proceeds from the sales, Dar El-Naim said, she has managed to return two of her children to school after they dropped out because she could not afford to pay fees.

Forty-two-year-old Dar El-Naim began her trade in January 2014 after participating in a Community Based-labour Intensive Project organized by Sudan

Red Crescent with sponsorship from UNAMID.

"I acquired perfume making skills. After the training we formed a group and were given some materials to start practicing what we had learnt," she said.

However, Dar El-Naim, who is an internally displaced person, said the challenges she faces are lack of capital to buy materials and to expand her business. She appealed to both government and partners for financial support to help young businesses like hers.

"I would like to encourage women to engage in such training so they can improve their economic conditions," she said urging other women to become entrepreneurs.

Hajja Tirab runs a food retail business



HAJJA TIRAB, 47, is a widow, supporting 13 children including nine nieces and nephews and her elderly mother. She sells meat, beans and Sudanese traditional food such as porridge and kissra (a thin fermented wheat bread) among other food items at her food stall in Nyala, South Darfur, which she established in 2006, with assistance from a local business man.

Originally, from Shangil Toba'y village in North Darfur, Hajja, her sister Um El-Hassan and their family members fled the area for Nyala following an aerial bombardment that resulted in

the death of their two brothers.

Hajja's husband had died of natural causes prior to the start of the Darfur conflict in 2003, leaving her with four girls and her elderly mother to care for. Following the death of her sister, Um El-Hassan who was also a widow and mother of nine, Hajja took over the care of her nieces and nephews.

"I make at least 300 Sudanese pounds a day. I have to stretch that to cover school fees and welfare needs of all family members. It's not easy but it's better than nothing," revealed Hajja.

Magbola Mustafa woman leader in Neem Internally Displaced Persons Camp



Despite the challenges posed by the Darfur Conflict, Magbola Mustafa, 38, is proud of her work championing the rights of internally displaced women.

Originally from Kilikili village, approximately 59 kilometres from El Daein, East Darfur, the mother of two was displaced in March 2004.

Magbola, a trained midwife and employee of East Darfur Ministry of Health Reproductive Health Care Department, is a resident of the Neem Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp where she chairs the Women Committee.

The uprooting of families, breakdown of social support structures, lack of education for children in IDP camps and the anxieties faced by those forced to start a new life far away from their original home are the concerns that motivate Magbola to do what she does.

"My engagement with the IDP Women Committee has empowered me to voice the concerns of internally displaced women and participate in communal decision-making at all levels of public and political life," she said

Before settling in Neem IDP Camp in 2006, Magbola said she was a member of the Voluntary Returns Committee, Coordination Committee for IDPs in five Darfur States and participated in the Doha Document for Peace of Darfur process where she voiced the concerns of IDP women in various formal and informal settings. She urged the Government of Sudan to come to the aid of women to alleviate their sufferings.

Magbola is also a participant of Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation process, where she is a voice of displaced women in East Darfur.

Gender inequality undermines women's participation in social, political and economic spheres and fails to recognise the importance of women in the economy and as bread-winners.

"When women participate fully in the labour force, it creates opportunities and generates growth," said Secretary-General António Guterres in his 2017 International Women's Day message.

Gender equality is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global plan agreed by leaders

of all countries to meet the challenges we face. "Increasing the proportion of women in public institutions makes them more representative, increases innovation, improves decision-making and benefits whole societies," the Secretary-General added.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 calls specifically for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Among the (SDG) 5 targets are commitments by governments to:

- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities

for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Explosive Remnants of War: A major threat to Civilians in Darfur

The armed conflict between rebel movements and Sudan Armed Forces, along with inter-communal clashes, have left a vast number of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) across Darfur. These dangerous leftovers – including undetonated bombs, rockets and projectiles -- have injured or killed hundreds of civilians.

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

A safe destruction of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) undertaken by UNAMID ODO in Sirba, West Darfur. More than 11,000 UXOs and over two million small arms and ammunition have been identified in Darfur and disposed of safely. UNAMID ODO Photo.



IN THE 12 YEARS BETWEEN 2005 AND 2017, a total of 225 ERW incidents occurred across Darfur, resulting in the deaths of 137 people and injuring a further 315. Many of the injured have been left disabled, adding to the long-term impact on people's lives.

A 2012 survey conducted by UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office (ODO) indicates that most of the victims are women and children. During outdoor activities such as farming, firewood collection and herding livestock, this demographic may be attracted by unusual objects on the ground which they believe may be of value. The survey also highlighted ERW as a major threat to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who may

return to their villages to cultivate the land during the rainy season.

Quite apart from the statistics and survey data, it is important to stress the individual human tragedy of ERW. Fadol Saeim, 62, sons Sulaiman, 19, and Musa, 15, seriously injured by an ERW incident that occurred in Mellit, North Darfur in 2006. Seven other people were injured in the same incident, in which the young people played with an unexploded remnant of war.

In another example, a young pastoralist in El Geneina, West Darfur, found a metallic object while grazing the family animals. He brought the object – which turned out to be a live hand grenade – home, following which his elder brother pulled the

pin and three children were killed in the resulting detonation.

"The war has affected all the communities in Darfur, particularly the herders in the desert," says Mr. Saeim. "Many people were killed in ERW accidents because they didn't have enough information about the danger of these objects."

Mohamed Adam Ibrahim, Head of the Society for Persons with Disabilities, North Darfur, says that ERW accidents are a major threat to the population, particularly women and children. According to Mr. Ibrahim, the number of disabled people in Darfur, in particular children, has increased. In order to protect communities, Mr. Ibrahim says public awareness campaigns are urgently needed. In addition, ERW

training is a must for teachers, community leaders, officials of native administration and Imams. "I urge all people in Darfur not to touch strange objects and to report any incident to local authorities", says Mr. Ibrahim.

The ODO contributes to UNAMID's core mandate of protection of civilians and the creation of a safe and secure environment for UNAMID and humanitarian agencies to function effectively. The Office has continued its sensitization on explosive remnants of war in Darfur by conducting activities including clearance, surveys, risk education, victim assistance, weapons and ammunition management, and training programmes.

Since 2008, the ODO conducted general explosives hazard assess-



"The war has affected all the communities in Darfur, particularly the herders in the desert"
— Fadol Saeim.

ments in over 2,000 villages covering 3,870 square kilometers. This includes areas suspected of re-contamination. The Office has also assessed 23,329 kilometers of roads. In carrying out this work, more than 11,000 items of unexploded ordnance and over two million small arms and ammunition have been identified and disposed of safely.

Jeffrey McMurdo, Programme Manager of UNAMID's ODO said,

1 UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office conducted an awareness session on unexploded ordnance for orphaned students in El Daein, East Darfur. The event, part of the Mission's ongoing initiatives to raise awareness among local communities on the dangers of explosive remnants of war (ERW), included drama performances, songs and distribution of relevant information materials. Photo by Hassan Ibrahim, UNAMID.

2 A UNAMID ODO team preparing for safe destruction of explosive remnants of war (ERW) found in Forobaranga, West Darfur. UNAMID Photo

3 Pictured here is a hole created after explosive remnants of war (ERW) were been successfully destroyed in Muhajeria, East Darfur. The Development Initiative Organization (TDI) Photo.



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“For the people, peace only comes once the last ERW is removed”
— Jeffrey McMurdo.

“The work of the Office is to save lives – both of the civilian population and of humanitarian actors who are responding to their needs.”

“This is done through reaction and prevention: We clear explosive remnants of war, assist victims of ERW and provide risk education, especially to children, who are often most at risk of ERW”, says Mr. McMurdo.

Great strides have been made in sensitizing the host community to the dangers of unexploded ordnance (UXO) as a result of the recent partnership between ODO and UNAMID Police, who conduct daily patrols throughout the Darfur region. Between 2016 and 2017, UNAMID Police reached around 11,800 people at IDP camps through sensitization and interaction patrols. The aim was to mitigate the risks of ERW, small arms and light weapons (SALW), and UXOs.

Similarly, UNAMID Police, in partnership with the United Nations

Country Team and ODO, has conducted training workshops for 357 Sudanese police officers on risk management of ERW, SALW and UXOs. In addition, information, education and communication materials have been distributed to IDPs and Sudanese police officers.

Through its ERW risk education activities, the Mission raises awareness among the local population on the threats of UXOs and promotes safe behaviour in relation to ERW. In this regard, ODO has provided ERW training to 100 teachers across Darfur and has visited schools to sensitize children on the dangers of ERW through community theatre and other art forms. A total of 1 million civilians, with about 60 per cent children, have received risk education through direct presentations. With the collaboration of UNICEF and the Sudan Ministry of Education, ERW risk education has been included in the Darfur school syllabus.

Apart from trying to prevent injuries to the Darfur population, UNAMID provides psycho-social support services to ERW victims in the region. UNAMID, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health through local hospitals and health

centres, plays a major role in the rehabilitation of people left with a disability as a result of ERW. This includes helping them to know about their rights. UNAMID supports the training of trainers and awareness sessions that focus on United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Through its Quick Impact Projects, UNAMID has facilitated the training of over 100 disabled people with different categories of disabilities including the deaf and dumb, and ERW incident victims, including women, to acquire different skills.

The income generation project supports victims of ERW accidents and persons with disabilities to improve their economic livelihood and wellbeing. The focus of the programme is on making equipment such as wheelchairs, elbow sticks, arm and hand sticks, along with providing skills in tailoring, carpentry, sawmilling, sewing, metalwork and welding, food processing and handicrafts. Project participants have produced more than 40 wheelchairs and 100 arm sticks and elbow sticks which have benefited more than 100 people.

Prosthetics and Orthotics services are provided for people with disabili-

ties in collaboration with the Nya-South Darfur branch of the National Authority of Prosthetics and Orthotics. Similarly, physiotherapy services are provided in conjunction with the Ministry of Health through hospitals. ODO has provided four physiotherapy exercise sets donated by UNMAS through centres in Khartoum, Nyala, Kassala and El Geneina.

UNAMID has modified a number of weapons and ammunition storage facilities in line with the mandate of protecting innocent civilians through better control of small arms and light weapons across Darfur. The support provided by ODO is designed to enhance the long-term and sustainable capacity of partners including the Sudan police, Sudan DDR Commission and the National Mine Action Centre (NMAC) of Sudan.

The ODO, like other sections of UNAMID and related humanitarian organizations, faces a number challenges in carrying out its operations in Darfur. Jeffrey McMurdo, ODO Program Manager, says, “One of our main challenges is getting access to areas where ERW is believed to be a risk.”

The Government’s support to ODO in securing this access for survey and clearance

“The work of the ODO is to save lives – both of the civilian population and of humanitarian actors who are responding to their needs”
— Jeffrey McMurdo.

is essential, says Mr. McMurdo.

Suleiman Nyamwaya, ODO Chief of Operations, adds: “The Office can only deploy teams to areas the Government allows access. This is always done with armed escorts due to the prevailing security situation.”

In spite of extensive efforts by the Mission and its implementing partners, ERW incidents continue in all parts of Darfur. “Unfortunately, we have not seen any significant reduction in the number of incidents” says Mr. Nyamwaya. “This is not because we aren’t doing enough, but because the conflict is still ongoing between concerned parties. Another challenge is the risk of recontamination of previously assessed and cleared ar-

4 A rocket propelled grenade (RPG) found in Central Jebel Marra, was located with assistance of local community upon receiving explosive remnants of war (ERW) risk education training. Photo by Mohamed Mubarak Albadwi, Friend of Peace and Development Organization (FPDO).

5 UNAMID’s Ordnance Disposal Office, in collaboration with JASMAR, a local, non-governmental organization, conducted a risk education activity on explosive remnants of war (ERW) in Yassin, East Darfur. Photo by Mohamed Zakaria, JASMAR.

eas due to continued armed hostilities,” says Mr. Nyamwaya.

In order to put an end to ERW incidents and reduce the impact on the civilian population of Darfur, a comprehensive peace agreement by the parties to the conflict is essential. However, it is a tragic reality that even after peace has been declared, communities where ERW abound are still living with the risks of injury and death.

“For the people, peace only comes once the last ERW is removed,” says Mr. McMurdo. “That, constantly, is our goal – the complete security of all communities. Darfur was once free of ERW and it will be again.” ■

UNAMID facilitates the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Darfur

In line with its core mandate, UNAMID provides support to humanitarian operations in Darfur and facilitates the timely delivery of assistance to conflict affected populations. Through the provision of UNAMID armed escorts, humanitarian actors are able to deliver assistance to areas at risk and in some areas of ongoing conflict.

In this regard, and jointly with OCHA, the Mission's PoC/HL Section has been holding monthly Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord) forums in Sectors to strengthen the logistical and security arrangements for the support that UNAMID provides to humanitarian partners.

The Mission also continues to enhance, through improved coordination and information gathering processes, the provision of protection through presence and patrolling in civilian areas, particularly in and around IDP camps, markets and villages, thereby ensuring area-security for the conduct of protection and humanitarian activities.

During the period July-December 2016, PoC/HL Section processed 343 Military and Civil Defence Assets requests received from humanitarian partners, amounting to 837 escort days provided.





Artist Sayida Musa Adam at her studio in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

Darfur's Shapes: An Interview with Artist Sayida Musa Adam

In an interview with Voices of Darfur, artist Sayida Musa Adam talks about her art, the creative scene in Darfur and role of local artists in spreading the culture of peace across the region.

BY ALA MAYYAH

Born in 1979 in El Fasher, North Darfur, renowned artist Sayida Adam passionately depicts Darfur's culture through her brightly-colored, vibrant paintings. She decorates her canvases with symbolic shapes that reflect deep-rooted customs, known by most local communities, to emphasize the role of tradition in uniting the people of Darfur. Often, in her artwork, figures of Darfuri women stand tall beside men, reminding the viewer of the importance of gender balance in building a healthy society, where compassion and equality prevail.

Ms. Adam holds a Bachelor's degree in painting, with a focus

on color, from the College of Fine and Applied Arts, Sudan University. Currently, she is enrolled in a Master's degree on the evolution of contemporary wall art in Sudan, at the Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Speaking to Voices of Darfur, Ms. Adam talks about her ambition in art, her hopes and how art can contribute to advancing peace in times of conflict.

Voices of Darfur: You have been painting and designing Sudanese dresses for many years. Tell us about your recent projects?

Ms. Adam: Last year I conducted some workshops for orphaned children on drawing and coloring, in coordination with local charitable enti-

ties in El Fasher. Additionally, just last month I held an exhibition of my watercolor pieces at the French Cultural Center in Khartoum; in fact, I sold all my paintings to the invited diplomats. I also created a wall sculpture piece upon request by the Ali Dinar Museum. The piece depicts the martyrdom Commander Ramadan Baraa' in the famous battle called 'Sieley,' which took place in 1916 during the reign of Sultan Ali Dinar, between the British-Egyptian forces and the Sultanate of Darfur. This piece is part of a series of sculptures that I will produce for the museum embodying social, religious, cultural and political aspects of Sultan Ali Dinar's reign.

Furthermore, during the last two

years, I participated in joint exhibitions organized by UNAMID in its headquarters in El Fasher, along with other local artists.

VoD: Has there been a change in your style of drawing and design compared to your early pieces?

Ms. Adam: Yes, of course. My first drawings were childish; after I studied drawing and coloring formally, my art has become more mature, its elements are better composed.

During the last four years, I changed my artistic style dramatically in terms of coloring technique and chosen subjects; this could be obviously seen in my latest exhibition in Khartoum. This change in style is part of my intellectual and cultural development; I now comprehend the society I live in better and am a more effective individual within my community.

VoD: Do you receive support from any entity to continue to produce your art?

Ms. Adam: The support I receive, be it from a cultural center or individuals, is more of moral than financial. This gives me a big boost to continue creating my art. There is also the support I get from those who attend my exhibitions and buy my paintings. This is huge encouragement.

VoD: Have you reached the level you aspired to achieve when you started your career?

Ms. Adam: Currently, I am proud of the quality of my work and the success I have achieved till now. This success itself has become the motivation for me to continue.

VoD: What do you want to achieve in the near future?

Ms. Adam: I want to be an ambassador of peace for the whole world, and not merely for the people of Darfur or Sudan, by delivering messages encouraging peaceful coexistence between people of different races, religions and nationalities through my art. I also want to utilize the money I get from selling my paintings to help children affected by conflict, whether in Darfur or other areas that suffer from such troubles. During free workshops for Darfuri children, I teach them paint-



On 6 March 2017, artist Sayida Musa Adam paints in her studio in El Fasher, North Darfur. Ms. Adam's art depicts Darfuri women and men together, reminding the viewer of the importance of gender balance in building a healthy society. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

ing and music because such activities enhance peaceful coexistence and strengthen social ties among people from different origins.

VoD: Some people believe that suffering fuels creativity. Do you agree?

Ms. Adam: Certainly suffering stimulates creativity. Some believe that financial comfort is necessary for every artist to be able to continue his or her work. But I see that lots of good artists came from difficult circumstances; this applies to artists in Darfur and in other regions of the world. Also, lack of basic materials required to create any art often pushes the artist to be creative in finding alternative means. For example, I learned how to make my own watercolors by using the bark

of trees and different flowers, such as hibiscus, to create natural dyes, since I could not find readymade watercolors easily in the local markets. I also make my own canvases by treating local fabrics with certain materials to render them similar to ready-made canvasses. Such techniques, by themselves, are a kind of creativity that enables me to continue with my art, whether paintings or sculptures or designing fabrics.

VoD: Do you think there are more young artists in Darfur today in comparison with the number of artists at the beginning of the conflict here?

Ms. Adam: Yes, the number of artists has increased in the recent years. Darfuri people, by nature, love the arts, and lots of children and



Sayida Musa Adam, a renowned Darfuri artist is pictured at her studio in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

young people have learned painting through art workshops, which can be a good starting point for them to become professional artists. I have noticed that there is a high turnout for such art workshops in Darfur. Therefore, there is a natural increase in the number of painters, despite lack of supporting institutions or specialized art colleges in Darfur.

VoD: How can these young artists improve their craft in light of the current economic conditions and lack of adequate support?

Ms. Adam: It depends on how persistent each person is, how much they apply themselves to developing their skills, and the availability of required materials for them. We in Darfur are going through changes and difficult economic situation, so artists, like other members in the community, have to adapt to reality and work in a positive way to make a different for the better, rather than using the circumstances as an excuse to stop working or even trying.

VoD: Figures of men and women are often presented together in many of your paintings to express the importance of both genders' contribution to advancing life. Do you think that Darfuri women have fair chances in key aspects such as working in highly ranked jobs and participating in the ongoing peace process?

Ms. Adam: Men and women are

“Darfuri artists are highly welcomed in Khartoum because they have a very good reputation within the artistic circles across the country.”

important pillars in Darfur's society. When they are successful, their communities succeed as well. Previously, women in villages used to only work in the field, planting and harvesting, and then spend the rest of the year in their houses without any ambition. But now women in both the countryside and cities are educated. People here, in general, have become more aware on women's rights and the importance of their role in society. That came through awareness-raising workshops on the subject by UN agencies in the country, in addition to the support of the community. All this helped create many opportunities for women to participate in activities in support of peace and community development as well as enabled some of them get hired in important positions.

VoD: Can Darfuri artists easily hold exhibitions for their art in the capital, Khartoum, to reach a wider audience?

Ms. Adam: Darfuri artists are highly welcomed in Khartoum because they have a very good reputation within the artistic circles across the country. This has been the case for a long time, not just recently. The circumstances of some of the artists might hinder them from traveling and holding exhibitions in Khartoum. However, it is not impossible to hold such exhibitions, especially if artists work in coordination with some interested parties such as local and international cultural and art centers.

VoD: There are some anti-war paintings done by great artists such as Pablo Picasso's famous piece, Guernica, where he depicted the suffering his people went through during World War II, so that future generations remember the tragedies of war and discard it. Do you think similar paintings can be done in large sizes by some Darfuri artists and displayed in public places to encourage Darfuris to renounce conflict and resolve their disputes peacefully?

Ms. Adam: Yes, definitely. For me, as a painter, I started with smaller paintings and showed them via exhibitions across the state, but they didn't succeed in getting attention. Then I started doing large wall pieces to address a wider audience at various educational and cultural levels. I displayed in these pieces the tragedies of the conflict and the affected people in Darfur.

I noticed that such artwork drew people's attention significantly. This means that my paintings succeeded in conveying the message to renounce violence and move forward towards peace as an alternative to the conflict. In future, I aspire to produce big sculptures and display them in public areas showing the effects of the conflict in Darfur.

VoD: What is the message that you would like to share with the people of Darfur?

Ms. Adam: My message is for all the people of Sudan—there is a Sudanese song that says people in my country make beauty; I call on all my people to embrace tolerance, virtue and beauty.



A painting created by the artist Sayida Musa Adam, whose art encapsulates powerful roles for Darfuri women. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.



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