

# VOICES

of Darfur  
August 2015

## Painting for Peace

### An Interview with Amir El Tayeb

**The Art of Baby Naming  
in Darfur**

*Traditional naming  
ceremonies*

**UNAMID DDR Wins  
Pan-African Award**

*An interview with Aderemi  
Adekoya*

**The Leather Industry  
in Darfur**

*Thriving business even in  
conflict*



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS  
MISSION IN DARFUR  
(UNAMID)





An evocative artwork painted by Darfuri artist Amir El Tayeb who says that as his style evolved over the years he has become more experimental in the use of colour and technique. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.



## IN THIS ISSUE

### INTERVIEW



#### 8 | Interview with Aderemi Adekoya:

BY PAUL OMALLA

Aderemi Adekoya, Chief, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Section, UNAMID, speaks about winning the prestigious Pan-African Award, the sustainability of the Community-based, Labour-intensive Projects and the challenges faced by the Mission's DDR programme.

### COMMUNITY



#### 14 | The Art of Baby Naming in Darfur

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

A Darfuri tradition, simaya, or the naming ceremony of a new baby, continues to be an integral part of people's lives. However, many fear that the economic instability caused by the ongoing conflict may lead to such conventions becoming obsolete.



#### 20 | Darfur's Thriving Leather Industry

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

The ongoing conflict in Darfur has resulted in an unstable economy and an infrastructure that is in disrepair. In the midst of this, skilled Darfuris continue to create intricate leather handcrafts that represent a cultural inheritance handed down through generations.

### CULTURE



#### 26 | Painting for Peace: An Interview with Amir El Tayeb

BY EMADELDIN RIJAL

Noted Darfuri painter, Mr. Amir El Tayeb, talks about the different techniques he uses to represent his creative vision and the challenges faced by artists across this conflict-torn region.

### NEWS DEPARTMENT

3 | UNAMID expresses deep concern over clashes between the Reizegat and Habaniya tribes in South Darfur

3 | UNAMID peacekeepers repel attacks on patrol team in North Darfur

4 | UNAMID celebrates Nelson Mandela Day

5 | UNAMID Civil Affairs Supports Peaceful Coexistence between Farmers and Herders in North Darfur

5 | UNAMID rehabilitates Government of Sudan Police Station in Kabkabiya, North Darfur

6 | UNAMID and Qatar sign MoU for payment of stipends to Cease Fire Commission Representatives

...and more

# EDITOR'S NOTE

**VOICES**  
of Darfur

Editor-in-Chief  
Carlos Araujo

Associate Editors  
Ala Mayyahi  
Priyanka Chowdhury

Staff Writers  
Emadeldin Rijal  
Mohamad Mahady

Graphics & Design  
Mutaz Ahmed

Photographers  
Hamid Abdulsalam  
Mohamad Mahady

Contributors  
Paul Omalla

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

 [facebook.com/UNAMID](https://facebook.com/UNAMID)  
[facebook.com/UNAMID.arabic](https://facebook.com/UNAMID.arabic)  
 [twitter.com/unamidnews](https://twitter.com/unamidnews)  
 [gplus.to/UNAMID](https://gplus.to/UNAMID)  
 [flickr.com/unamid-photo](https://flickr.com/unamid-photo)

I'm pleased to introduce the August 2015 issue of Voices of Darfur. This is a special issue for us as it includes the last interview conducted by our colleague, Emadeldin Rijal, who passed away suddenly on 3 April 2015. Mr. Rijal is missed every day not only because of his incredible work ethic but also because his quiet sense of humor and gentle ways made him a joyous spirit to be around, both in the workplace and beyond.

The August edition, like other issues of Voices, 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.

This issue includes two interviews, the first of which is with Mr. Aderemi Adekoya, Chief, UNAMID DDR, who speaks to Mr. Paul Omalla about winning the prestigious Pan-African Award, the sustainability of the Community-based, Labour-intensive Projects (CLIPs) and the challenges faced by the Mission's DDR programme.

In "The Art of Baby Naming in Darfur," Mr. Mohamad Mahady describes how

a Darfuri tradition, *simaya*, or the naming ceremony of a new baby, continues to be an integral part of people's lives, though many fear that the economic instability caused by the ongoing conflict may lead to such conventions becoming obsolete.

In his second contribution to this issue, "The Leather Industry in Darfur," Mr. Mahady presents a photo essay designed to highlight how, in the midst of the unstable economic conditions and infrastructural disrepair caused by the ongoing conflict, the Darfuri leather industry continues to thrive.

Finally, in our cover feature, "Painting for Peace," Mr. Emadeldin Rijal presents an interview with noted Darfuri painter, Amir El Tayeb, where he talks about the different techniques he uses to represent his creative vision and the challenges faced by artists across this conflict-torn region. 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](mailto:unamid-publicinformation@un.org).

**Carlos Araujo**

Director

Communications & Public Information Section

## ON THE COVER



*Darfuri painter Amir El Tayeb has made his mark on the art scene across Sudan with his unique use of colours, detailed patterns and traditional symbolism. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*



*Newly displaced children are pictured outside UNAMID's base in Mellit, North Darfur, following attacks on their original villages last year. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*



**PUBLICATIONS UNIT**  
Communications and Public Information  
Section (CPIS) - UNAMID  
Email: [unamid-publicinformation@un.org](mailto:unamid-publicinformation@un.org)  
Website: <http://unamid.unmissions.org>

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

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

## Unamid Expresses Deep Concern Over Clashes between the Reizegat and Habaniya Tribes in South Darfur

**T**he African Union–United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) expresses serious concern over reports of escalating tensions and clashes between the Reizegat and the Habaniya tribes on 14 July in the Al Sunta locality, 150 kilometers south-east of Nyala, South Darfur, which has, according to various sources,

claimed dozens of lives and caused injuries on both sides. The fighting was allegedly triggered by a cattle rustling incident for which both tribes have mobilized their fighters.

UNAMID strongly urges the leaders and members of both tribes to exercise maximum restraint, engage in meaningful dialogue to re-

solve their disputes and refrain from all acts that would lead to further intensification of violence, loss of life and potential displacement of innocent persons.

The Mission is closely monitoring the situation for a detailed update, including the actual cause of the clash and number of casualties. Mean-

while, it continues to do its utmost, within its capability and mandate to protect affected civilians, facilitate and support all efforts by the Government of Sudan, native administration, leaders of the two tribes and other key stakeholders to de-escalate the tensions and achieve reconciliation between Reizegat and Habaniya. ■

## Unamid Peacekeepers Repel Attacks on Patrol Team in North Darfur

**O**n 15 July, unidentified armed men aboard a gun-mounted vehicle opened fire on a UNAMID patrol team between Bowa and Turmes villages, 18 kilometers north-

west of the Mission's team site in Kutum, North Darfur. The patrol team comprised of 39 peacekeepers, which was on its way back to the team site after escorting a World Food

Programme (WFP) convoy, returned fire till the perpetrators dispersed and ran away.

No damage was recorded to UNAMID personnel or property and the incident has been

reported to the local authorities.

UNAMID remains committed to providing assistance to humanitarian actors throughout Darfur, in accordance with its mandate. ■

## Unamid Hosts Ramadan Cup Football Tournament in El Fasher, North Darfur



*Young football players from Althoura, El Fasher, North Darfur, celebrate the final results of the Ramadan Cup football tournament organized by UNAMID on 14 July 2015, as part of the "Darfur, talk peace now," campaign. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

**O**n 14 July 2015, UNAMID, in collaboration with the Althoura South Youth Association, organized the Ramadan Cup football tournament for peace in the Al Wihda football arena, El Fasher, North Darfur.

The tournament was part of the "Darfur, talk peace now," campaign and also included an Iftar gathering hosted by the Mission for the participating players as well as the local community of Althoura and surrounding areas.

During the month-long tournament, Imams and opinion leaders of Darfur highlighted the importance of Ramadan and the role of Darfuri youth in the ongoing peace process across the region. Additionally, they encouraged young people to work toward enhancing peaceful coexistence through dialogue.

Speaking on behalf of the Althoura South Youth Association, Bushara Abdelrehman, a member of the organization, expressed his appreciation for UNAMID's support in organizing the tournament, adding that such sport events bring diverse people together in the spirit of peaceful participation thereby contributing to efforts for achieving peace and stability in Darfur.

On his part, Amar Ali, captain of the winning team,

Alburuj Stars, thanked the Mission for its continued encouragement and support for sporting activities across Darfur and called upon the gathered youth to work at peace building at all levels.

UNAMID hosted similar tournaments and Iftar gatherings in the Abu Shouk and Al Salam camps for the internally displaced near El Fasher, where youth groups, members of the local communities and religious leaders gathered together. At the end of each match, the winning teams received trophies and medals as well as prizes for the best players and goalkeepers. UNAMID has trained 150 Imams and religious leaders across Darfur to encourage a dialogue for establishing sustainable peace in this conflict-ridden region. ■



## UNAMID Celebrates Nelson Mandela Day



*UNAMID staff and leadership participated in a 67-minute cleaning campaign at the Taiba Secondary School for Girls in Abu Shouk camp for the internally displaced, El Fasher, North Darfur. The event was organized to commemorate Nelson Mandela Day, which is annually celebrated on 18 July. The United Nations joins hands with the Mandela Foundation to urge people across the world to devote at least 67 minutes of their time to community service on this day. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

On 13 July 2015, more than one thousand community Leaders as well representatives from UNAMID and the Ministry of Education,

North Darfur, gathered at the Al Taiba Secondary School for Girls in the Abu Shouk camp for the displaced near El Fasher, North Darfur, to celebrate the Nelson Mandela Day.

This year's theme, "Take action, Inspire change", highlights the importance of working together to build a peaceful, sustainable and equitable world. The occasion, annually observed on 18 July, is designed to commemorate the 67 years Nelson Mandela dedicated to public service and making a difference to the world.

To mark the day, UNAMID peacekeepers conducted a tree planting ceremony and 67 minutes of community service by cleaning the school premises.

Additionally, UNAMID's Deputy Joint Special Rep-

resentative (DJSR), Abdul Kamara, read out the United Nations Secretary General's message on the day. On behalf of the Ministry of Education, North Darfur, Abdelrahman Yahya expressed his appreciation for UNAMID's support to education in Darfur. Other speakers in the occasion included the headmaster of Al Taiba Secondary School, who thanked the Mission for its assistance. This year, the United Nations is bestowing the first ever Nelson Mandela prize, established by the General Assembly.

This honorary award will be presented every years to two individuals—a man and a woman—who through their dedication, hard work and compassion have built on Mr. Mandela's legacy. ■

## UNAMID Supports the Rehabilitation of Lumbati Basic School, North Darfur

On 8 July 2015, UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Child Protection Sections, in collaboration with local nongovernmental organization Friends of Peace and Development Organization (FPDO), Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC), as well as the Ministry of Education, North Darfur, officially launched the construction of three classrooms, one office and toilet facilities at the Lumbati Basic School in Kafoud, 65 kilometers north-east of El Fasher, North Darfur.

This rehabilitation project is part of the Community-based, Labour-intensive Projects (CLIPs) programme led by UNAMID DDR; it is aimed at providing skills

training on manufacturing environmentally-friendly bricks to 40 at-risk youth from the local community as well as promoting peaceful coexistence and reducing violence through the provision of basic services.

Additionally, the project will incorporate sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns on peace building, tolerance and coexistence. This rehabilitation effort was originally proposed by the Sudanese Liberation Army-Free Will (SLA-FW), a signatory of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) as well as an Action Plan submitted to the United Nations (UN) committed to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers. SLA-FW has registered 217 children with the SDDRC for reintegration and submitted



*UNAMID's DDR and Child Protection Sections, in collaboration with a local NGO, the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission as well as the Ministry of Education, North Darfur, launched rehabilitation efforts at the Lumbati Basic School, Kafoud, North Darfur. This project was originally proposed by the Sudanese Liberation Army-Free Will, a signatory of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

progress reports to the UN on the full implementation of its Action Plan, underscoring its dedication to promoting social cohesion in Darfur and benefiting children.

Speaking at the event, UNAMID DDR representative, Mahmoud Elnayer, said that the project will provide a unique platform for Darfuri youth to acquire income-generating skills.

Alma Tafani, the Child Protection representative, in her remarks, welcomed SLA/Free Will resolve to promote the protection of children, stating that the project is very significant for the development and education of children in the Lumbati area and surrounding villages. Ms. Tafani also encouraged the local community to continue their commitment to the protection and development of their children. On his part, Dr. Kamal Hassan Abdallah, representative, Ministry of Education, North

Darfur, commended UNAMID's efforts in the construction of schools across the region. Dr. Abdallah said he believed such projects help improve the educational environment and act as catalysts for increased student enrolment in schools.

Community leaders present on the occasion requested UNAMID's assistance in providing vocational training to the youth in the area.

Additionally, former SLA-FW commander, Alsadig Amin, expressed his appre-

ciation for UNAMID's support to furthering school education in Kafoud and reiterated the movement's commitment to protecting children. He also commended the SDDRC and FPDO for providing skills training to 40 youth engaged in the ongoing construction activity and urged parties to the ongoing conflict in Darfur to abide by applicable international child protection obligations.

The event was combined with the ongoing campaign, "No Child Soldiers – Protect

Darfur." In this regard, the Mission's Child Protection and Communications and Public Information Sections distributed advocacy vests, UNAMID mandate flyers, water rollers, footballs, volleyballs, stationery, T-shirts and scarves to more than 700 students and members of the community.

Since its inception, more than 100 projects have been successfully implemented through the Mission's CLIPs programme, in collaboration with local partners, across Darfur. ■

## UNAMID Civil Affairs Supports Peaceful Coexistence between Farmers and Herders in North Darfur



*Umda Omar Ali, Chair, the Good Will Committee, and leader of Arab herders, addresses a peace forum attended by more than 500 displaced farmers and herders in Shagra village, North Darfur. The Committee, supported by UNAMID Civil Affairs, facilitated a 10-day campaign to negotiate peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in nine cluster villages in rural El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

On 4 July 2015, UNAMID's Civil Affairs Section, in collaboration with local peace building mechanism Good Will Committee composed of influential displaced farmer leaders and Arab herders, organized a peace forum in Shagra village, near El Fasher, North Darfur, as part of its efforts to restore peace, stability and development in rural areas, particularly during the rainy season when conflicts increase between farmers and herders.

The event, attended by more than 500 displaced farmers and Arab herders, as well

as representatives from the state government, UNAMID officials, native administration leaders and members of the Good Will Committee, was aimed at building trust between farmers and pastoralists; promoting peaceful coexistence; and encouraging the voluntary return of the internally displaced farmers to their original villages for farming. Additionally, participants also discussed the protection of farms against forcible grazing as well as security of farmers. Community leaders who attended the forum committed

themselves to maintaining peaceful interaction for both farmers and nomadic herders and have put in place an early warning mechanism to contain any sudden tensions between the parties. Mr. Suleiman Adam, an Umda (community leader) from Shagra affirmed the participants' full compliance with the outcomes of the forum. "Peaceful coexistence remains is our highest objectives and we will expend all our efforts to maintain this regardless of our tribal affiliations," he said.

Similarly, the representa-

tives of farmers who were forced to flee their original villages due to the ongoing conflict across Darfur expressed their willingness to return to their homes and resume their normal life.

"We look forward to returning to our villages as soon as possible; however we need peace and security," said Mr. Ahmed Bashir, an internally displaced persons (IDPs) representative.

"Coexistence is a very crucial element to bring about sustainable peace and stability in Darfur," averred Mr. Rommel Dela Rosa, Civil Affairs Officer, UNAMID. The Mission's Civil Affairs Section is mandated to support the ongoing peace process across this troubled region and mitigate inter-communal conflicts.

Therefore, the Section provides its support to mechanisms like the Good Will Committee, which is designed to facilitate peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders living in the rural areas around El Fasher, North Darfur. ■



## UNAMID Rehabilitates Government of Sudan Police Station in Kabkabiya, North Darfur



UNAMID's Sector North Police Commander, Brigadier-General Mohammad Baki, and the Director of Kabkabiya Police Station, Colonel Taj Eltayeb, discuss issues at the handover of a rehabilitated boundary wall, toilet facilities and a verandah for the Kabkabiya Police Station, North Darfur. The rehabilitation activity was part of the Mission's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme. Photo by Salah Mohammed, UNAMID.

On 25 June 2015, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) handed over a rehabilitated boundary wall, toilet facilities and a veranda to the Kabkabiya Police Station authorities in the presence of the

Acting Commissioner, Kabkabiya locality, community leaders and UNAMID staff. The rehabilitation was part of the

Mission's Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) programme.

Addressing the handover ceremony, UNAMID's Sector North Police Commander, Brigadier-General Mohammad Baki, stated that the Mission's contribution to such activities underscores its commitment to work together for sustainable peace in Darfur with the Government of Sudan (GoS) Police, local authorities and community leaders.

In his remarks on the occasion, The Acting Commissioner, Kabkabiya locality, Ismail Hussein, expressed his appreciation for UNAMID's support and said he believed that this project will enhance the capacity of the local police.

On his part, the Director of Kabkabiya Police Station, Colonel Taj Eltayeb, thanked the Mission for its continuous support and asked for the implementation of more supplementary projects aimed at improving water facilities and also requested training programmes for local police. ■

## UNAMID Supports Universal Periodic Review Mechanism Workshop in Khartoum

On 17 June 2015, the Sudan National Commission for Human Rights, in collaboration with UNAMID's Human Rights Section (HRS) organized a training workshop on engaging stakeholders in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism in Khartoum.

A total of 26 participants comprised of 9 females from the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), the Advisory Council for Human Rights (ACHR) and civil society organizations took part in the day-long event.

This workshop was a continuation of previous similar forums which took place in November 2014 and January 2015. The November workshop was based on a general framework of international human rights mechanisms while the January workshop focused on the UPR specifically.

Following requests from the participants, the NHCR and UNAMID have agreed to provide technical support to the ACHR and civil society organizations in the drafting of reports for the upcoming

UPR for Sudan in May 2016. A 100-day programme has been launched to support the drafting of stakeholder reports by September 2015. Additionally, during this period three workshops and meetings on thematic issues will be arranged to facilitate timely report submission from the involved parties.

The workshop included a review of specific thematic issues discussed in earlier workshops before participants arrived at proposals for the upcoming two months. Mr. Joseph

Suleiman, Ag head of NCHR, expressed his thanks to the Mission for its contributions.

On his part, Mr. Ahmed Hassan, Head, UNAMID's Khartoum Liaison Office, congratulated participants for their active involvement in the forum and emphasized the need for developing authentic reports for the next UPR cycle, while assuring everyone present of the Mission's support.

The next workshop on the same is scheduled for 17-18 August 2015. ■



## UNAMID and Qatar sign MoU for Payment of stipends to Cease Fire Commission Representatives

On 14 June 2015, UNAMID and the State of Qatar signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the release of \$ 378,000, through the Qatar Development Fund, to facilitate the payment of stipends to the representatives of the Justice and Equality Movement-Sudan, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and the Government of Sudan (GoS) who are part of the Ceasefire Commission (CFC).

This financial contribution comes as a show of support from the Qatari govern-

ment for the implementation phase of the final security arrangements delineated by the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), which was signed between the GoS and LJM on 14 July 2011; JEM-Sudan became a signatory on 6 April 2013.

UNAMID is tasked with administering the funds to the CFC representatives. The MoU was signed by UNAMID's Director of Mission Support, Rakesh Malik, and Sheikh Khalifa Jassim Al-Kuwari, on behalf of the Qatar Development Fund. ■



UNAMID DMS, Rakesh Malik, and Sheikh Khalifa Jassim Al-Kuwari, on behalf of the State of Qatar, sign an MoU releasing \$ 378,000 for payment of stipends to representatives of JEM-Sudan, LJM and the Government of Sudan who are part of the Cease Fire Commission. Photo by Ramzi M. Abdelrahman, UNAMID.

## UNAMID Peacekeepers Recover Ambushed World Food Programme Personnel, Vehicle

On 5 June 2015, UNAMID peacekeepers from South Africa rescued the driver of a World Food Programme (WFP) truck which was ambushed by unknown armed men aboard a gun-mounted vehicle 55 kilometers south-west of the Mission's Team Site in Kutum, North Darfur, a day earlier.

The truck was part of a UNAMID and WFP convoy which was travelling in two groups. One of the groups pursued the assailants immediately but was unable to apprehend them, at the time. However, the dedicated and professional intervention of the Mission's leadership and troops on the ground ensured

that both the driver and the vehicle were recovered the following day, though some of the truck's contents were looted. UNAMID and the Government of Sudan continue to investigate the incident.

The World Food Programme expressed its gratitude to UNAMID's Acting Joint Special Representative,

Abiodun Bashua, and commended the Mission's South African troops who executed the successful search-and-rescue operation on the ground.

Facilitating the United Nations Country Team in the provision of humanitarian assistance to people in need is a core aspect of UNAMID's mandated priorities in Darfur. ■

## Government of Sudan Recovers UNAMID-Owned Vehicles Hijacked from a Local Contractor

On 2 June 2015 a group of unidentified armed men attacked an unescorted goods convoy of a local contractor transporting UNAMID Contingent-Owned Equipment (COE) in Doma area, South Darfur, while en-route from Nyala to Port Sudan.

As a result, vehicles belonging to a UNAMID Contingent were taken by the criminals. The vehicles were later recovered, thanks to the efforts of the South Darfur security authorities who pursued the carjackers and recovered the vehicles.

UNAMID would like to clarify that the local contractor acted against repeated instructions from the Mission not to move the COE without UNAMID armed escort. Furthermore, the contractor had misinformed the Mission that its convoy will be escorted by an appropriate force from Sudanese Customs Police.

Despite the contractor's assurances of sufficient locally-sourced protection, UNAMID had repeatedly and unequivocally issued instructions to the contractor not to move the cargo with-

out UNAMID peacekeeping force armed escort. Regrettably, the contractor contravened the instructions and mobilised the COE convoy from his warehouse in Nyala without prior notice to the Mission; and indeed without any form of escort as previously indicated by him.

While UNAMID is grateful to the Government of Sudan (GoS) forces who pursued and apprehended the perpetrators as well as recovered the hijacked vehicles; it regrets the unilateral actions by the contractor which constitute a breach

of his contractual agreement with the Mission and thus created the opportunity for misreporting and misrepresentation of the facts of the incident, as well as creating a situation that led to the unnecessary exposure of many parties to avoidable danger.

The Mission has consistently acted within its mandate and within the perimeters of its Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed with the GoS. The Mission shall continue to discharge its mandated activities despite the daunting challenges. ■

# INTERVIEW



**“Active participation from beneficiaries lies at the heart of the CLIPs programme and is responsible for any awards we have won”:**

## **Interview with Aderemi Adekoya**

Aderemi Adekoya, Chief, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Section, UNAMID, speaks about winning the prestigious Pan-African Award, the sustainability of the Community-based, Labour-intensive Projects and the challenges faced by the Mission's DDR programme.

BY PAUL OMALLA





*Aderemi Adekoya, Chief, UNAMID DDR, is pictured in his office at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. UNAMID's DDR section recently won the Pan-African Award for Entrepreneurship in Education for its Community-based, Labour-intensive Projects programme. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

**O**n 28 April 2015, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was declared the Country Winner for Sudan of the 2014 Saville Foundation Pan-African Awards for Entrepreneurship in Education. The award was given to UNAMID's Community-based, Labour-Intensive Projects (CLIPs) programme, led by the Mission's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) Section.

UNAMID DDR's CLIPs programme seeks to bolster peace building initiatives in Darfur, in collaboration with the Government of Sudan, through community

stabilization, reduction of armed violence, banditry and crimes committed by "at risk" youth through promoting the adoption of peaceful livelihoods and socially responsible behaviour. Direct beneficiaries of the CLIPs programme are trained to develop alternative livelihoods through labour-intensive public works projects, income-generating activities and vocational skills training.

Since its inception, UNAMID DDR has successfully implemented 58 projects through local implementing partners across Darfur. These projects have directly benefited more than 9,000 "at-

risk" youth in 70 communities. Moreover, some 130,000 community members have benefited from construction of community infrastructure such as schools, youth and multipurpose centres' in addition to livelihood, agricultural and sanitation projects. The programme is implemented through UNAMID DDR section.

Voices of Darfur spoke with Aderemi Adekoya, Chief, UNAMID DDR, about the award, the sustainability of the CLIPs programme and the challenges faced by DDR in the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement in this conflict-torn region.

**Voices of Darfur: Can you tell us a bit about the Pan-African Award?**

**Aderemi Adekoya:** The Pan-African Awards for Entrepreneurship in Education was established to reward organizations in Africa that are taking an innovative, entrepreneurial and sustainable approach to education. UNAMID DDR was awarded the Pan African for Sudan specifically for its CLIPs programme which addresses, as its primary beneficiaries, the needs of at-risk youth across Darfur. Young people are always neglected in a post-conflict situation. The award was given to us through an initiative called "Teach a man to fish," in partnership with Disabled Foundation. It comes with a certificate and a small cash incentive of \$ 1,000, which we intend to roll back into the local communities we serve.

**VOD: What exactly do you mean when you use the term "at-risk" youth?**



*On 25 March 2014, a group of women are pictured while attending a training on baking at the technical school in Mellit, North Darfur. 150 youth at risk of joining violent armed groups attend this 3-month training sponsored by the UNAMID DDR section as part of its CLIPs programme. Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran, UNAMID.*

**Mr. Adekoya:** In any post-conflict environment, there is always a peace agreement in existence. However, in our experience, young people in such societies often have problems that are not covered or addressed by an official agreement. This is what we mean by the term “at-risk” youth. We, therefore, took it upon ourselves to develop a programme that works directly with young people in Darfur, providing them with vocational training to increase their skill-set and their chances of making a decent livelihood. Such skill-building initiatives ensure that when avenues arise for them to be employed, they are already in possession of the requisite skills, thereby enabling them to sustain themselves as well as their families.

**VOD: Is this the first award received by the DDR section?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** Not really; we have received numerous awards and commen-

dations, though this is the most recent. In 2014, we received the UN 21 award, given to us by the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban ki-Moon, also for the CLIPs programme. I am extremely proud of this.

**VOD: UNAMID has passionately supported the implementation of the CLIPs programme. Can you tell us why?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** In any community across the globe, the youth are the future of tomorrow. If young people do not receive adequate nurturing and support, especially in a post-conflict situation, then it ceases to be an individual’s problem and becomes a cause of concern for a society’s future. As I said earlier in this interview, it is imperative that we provide the requisite assistance to the youth of Darfur to ensure that they are skilled and motivated enough to want to make a difference for their families, their communities and their homeland. This is ex-

actly what the CLIPs programme seeks to achieve. Many of the CLIPs actually engage beneficiaries in constructing and developing community infrastructure such as hospitals, schools for girls which their sisters can attend, and even community centres where they can all gather and deliberate on issues related to the peace process and capacity building for women, for example.

**VOD: Tell us a bit about where these projects are located.**

**Mr. Adekoya:** Our projects are Darfur-wide. We have covered a wide range of locations and we intend to still continue doing the same. The only area that has been restricted for us is East Darfur and we have not been able to go beyond the capital, El Daein. However, I’m optimistic that we will soon be able to cover more areas in East Darfur.

**VOD: Could you describe some of the CLIPs projects for our readers?**





*Young men pictured at a training on welding sponsored by UNAMID DDR through its CLIPs programme in Mellit, North Darfur. Since the inception of DDR CLIPs, more than 6,500 youth have directly benefited from these projects. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

**Mr. Adekoya:** Most of our projects basically focus on implementing vocational training programmes for young people. Other than this, we have also implemented on-the-job construction training to facilitate the creation of social infrastructure within local communities. Other CLIPs projects include livelihood and agriculture projects—these mainly benefit families who have land of their own and we provide support for them to improve and harvest their crop yield. In addition to this, we have executed environmental projects in West Darfur as well as projects that empower youth in terms of economic opportunities.

**VOD: How have beneficiaries responded to the training opportunities provided by these projects?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** It is the unanimously positive response from beneficiaries that propels us to continue supporting their communities. We have conducted

a series of impact assessments through UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section along with our own monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Moreover, UNAMID DDR staff has spoken directly to beneficiaries, especially women and youth, who have told us that our interventions have changed their lives. This is exactly what the CLIPs programme is designed for. Active participation from beneficiaries lies at the heart of the CLIPs programme and is responsible for any awards we have won.

**VOD: Could you give us an overview of what implementing such projects cost?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** Since its inception in 2011, we have spent more than six million dollars. This includes the cost of some 73 projects in total. We have 42 rehabilitation and construction projects, 23 vocational skills projects and 8 livelihoods, midwifery and solid waste

management projects. More than 6,500 youth have directly benefited from these projects. In certain projects, such as construction of schools and hospitals, which I mentioned earlier, the numbers of indirect beneficiaries multiply exponentially; it is a trickle-down effect. If I were to attempt a ballpark figure, we estimate some 250,000 members of local communities across Darfur continue to benefit from the CLIPs programme.

**VOD: Can you explain how the CLIPs programme fits into the overall second-generation DDR programme being implemented in Darfur?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** Second generation DDR is a process of intervention designed to complement traditional DDR programme. It is also used in areas where it has become difficult, if not impossible, to implement traditional DDR. In Darfur, years after the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement

(DPA), minimal progress was made by signatory parties to implement DDR. The continuing violence means that vulnerable youth will frequently be recruited by different armed factions. Moreover, armed banditry or other negative vices within the communities will increase. Thus the several delays and impediments to the implementation of a full-scale traditional DDR prompted us to come up with the idea of developing a programme to reach out to youth and communities scarred by the conflict. CLIPs, therefore, aim to provide an alternative means of livelihood and sustenance to Darfuri youth so as to prevent them from resorting to arms and violence. By engaging young people and mobilizing local communities to support these projects, the programme envisaged a situation where youth and the communities they inhabit become partners in rebuilding their fragile societies and denouncing violence. Looking back at our achievements so far and based on the projects we have implemented as well as success stories from the field, I can confidently say that CLIPs have fared very well and fit perfectly into the spectrum and scope of second generation DDR interventions.

**VOD: What follow-up mechanism have you put up in place to ensure these projects have continued impact on the ground?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** This is an extremely interesting and relevant question. In fact, this was one of the primary considerations we kept in mind when we were designing the CLIPs programme because once because once you intervene in a community, you have to ensure that the intervention continues beyond the initial stage. This is why we build in what we term sustainability measures into these projects. These measures include the local community—locality commissions and ministries that are relevant to specific projects.

For example, if we are supposed to build a school we do not merely engage the youth to build the structure, we ensure it is in line with the standards



established by the Ministry of Education. Once the infrastructure is built, the Ministry provides study materials, teachers and so forth. And the ministry of education once we have finished they will now provide the teachers, the books and so on.

We believe in the principle that

when you involve all elements in the actual creation of any project, they retain ownership of it and ensure it is never destroyed.

This is what we mean when we say sustainability. We are very certain that this approach will keep these projects moving ahead in the right direction.





*Pictured here is Aderemi Adekoya, Chief, UNAMID DDR. Mr. Adekoya says he believes that sustainability lies at the heart of the DDR section's award-winning CLIPs programme. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

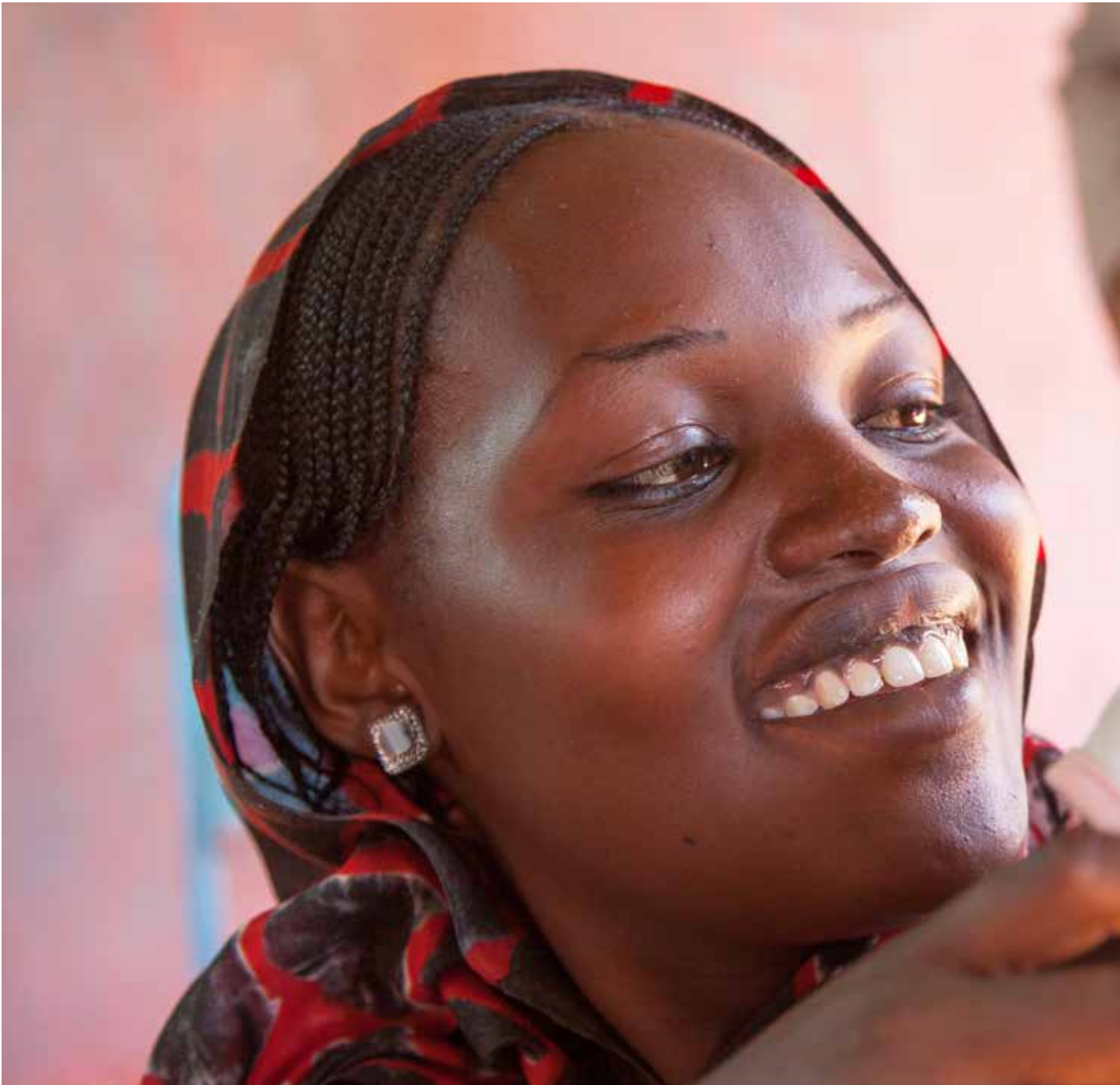
**VOD: How important is the role of the Government in ensuring such sustainability for your projects?**

**Mr. Adekoya:** The role of the Government in the CLIPs programme is vital. I would like to go on record to say that the Walis (Governors) in all five states where we have

implemented CLIPs projects have been very supportive. They have often personally attended the handover ceremonies and expressed their appreciation for the Mission's engagement with the local populace.

I was present during a recent women's dialogue for peace and they

were very thankful for the CLIPs interventions in their areas. This is exactly what makes the entire Mission, the DDR Section and me, personally, committed to the improvement of livelihoods and the social environment in Darfur through implementing more such projects.



## The Art of Baby Naming in Darfur

A Darfuri tradition, *simaya*, or the naming ceremony of a new baby, continues to be an integral part of people's lives. However, many fear that the economic instability caused by the ongoing conflict may lead to such conventions becoming obsolete.

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY





*Firouz El Fadel, a 22-year-old mother of two, is pictured with her baby. In Darfur, children are welcomed by parents and the news of a birth is rapidly disseminated among relatives, friends and neighbors. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

**T**he birth of a child is one of the most joyous occasions for a family across the world and in every culture, a new addition to the family heralds celebrations as well as the customary act of naming. Different communities follow different social, religious and cultural conventions when it comes to naming a newborn.

In Darfur, children are welcomed by parents and the news of a birth is rapidly disseminated among relatives, friends and neighbors. These good tidings culminate in the naming ceremony which is traditionally held on the seventh day after the child is born. A number of rituals are performed in the days leading up to the ceremony. These

are specifically focused on the mother and are aimed at hastening post-delivery healing. In rural areas, these rituals are presided over by traditional birth attendants or midwives.

Great attention is given to the type and preparation of food during this time; a new mother is made to drink warm, strengthening liquids such as soups and broths made of millet flour. Only warm water is to be used for bathing and any strenuous activity such as, for example, walking long distances, is forbidden.


In addition to health safeguards, local customs also provide for a measure of religious protection—certain verses of the Koran, known as hijab, are specifically written for newborns and new mothers. These are transcribed on paper and tied around the wrists or necks of both the baby and its mother.

Meanwhile, the entire family prepares for the big event on the seventh day where the baby shall officially be named. The venue is prepared, accommodation for guests decided and the food, especially different kinds of meat, prepared. Depending on the economic status of the host family, sheep, goats, oxen, and even camels are slaughtered for the feast along with other items contributed by family members.

On the day of the ceremony, all invitees head to the earmarked venue for the simaya or the naming ceremony which begins with the mother and child being led out of their chamber to see daylight for the first time. Usually conducted by older women relatives, the child is made to face east, the holy direction, to receive blessings. Religious heads are also called upon to invoke blessings on the entire family; following this the elaborate naming ceremony ensues.







Midwives from El Fasher Women's Hospital, North Darfur, deliver twin babies. The naming of twins follows a special convention in Darfur. Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran, UNAMID.

“Those of us who live in camps suffer every day as we lack basic necessities such as shelter, food, water and healthcare. In a situation like this, an increasing number are giving up on conventions and traditions which require a certain measure of economic stability to uphold. When we worry about feeding our babies and raising them in a healthy manner, ceremonies such as the simaya seem to diminish in importance.”

—Abulaziz Saadalnour

Although it is a father's right to name a child, a newborn can also be named after significant political, social, artistic or heroic personages. Similarly, if a birth coincides with the rainy season, then a child is usually called Matar (rain); a baby born at the beginning of the month is often named Hillal (crescent). Similarly, if a baby is born at a time of great success, then it is named Nasr (victor)

In Darfur, names usually correspond with some religious significance. Names such as Mohammed, Ibrahim, Dawood, Ishag and Ishmael refer to the prophets. Abubaker, Omar, Othman and Ali refer to the caliphs.

Traditionally, babies born on particular days of the week are given specific names, unless the same name has already been given to an older child. Babies born on Fridays are called Adam, in the case of a boy, or Hawa, for a girl. Children born on Saturdays are named Abdullah, Abdulrahman and Maryam depending on their gender. Ibrahim, Suleiman, Dawood and Halima are the chosen names for babies born on Sundays. As a rule, Monday-borns have to be named Mohamed, Ahmed or Fatima. This is because both the Prophet Mohamed and his daughter Fatima were

born on a Monday. In case, there is already a child named Mohamed in the same family, the newborn can be called Mahmoud which is a variation of the same name. Those born on Tuesdays are usually called Ismail, Ishag, Yagoob and Khadija while Haroun, Mussa, Yahia and Aisha are dedicated for babies born on Wednesday and Idris and Kaltoum for those whose birthdays fall on Thursday.

In the case of twins, names like Hassan and Hussein, Elsadig and Elsidig are proposed for baby boys, while, Kaltam and Kaltoum, Maryam and Maryouma are used for girls. In cases where twins consist of a boy and a girl, appropriate names include Hassan/Hussein and Hussna, Elsadig/ Elsidig and Sadiga or Sideega.

The detailed and intricate customs associated with naming a child ensures that a majority of Darfuris have similar names; certain first names can be repeated in the family name, especially grandfathers' names where repetition clearly occurs. An example of this is a name like Mohammed Adam Mohammed or Ali Ahmed Ali; in most cases people name sons after their grandfathers, despite the repetition, as a way of honouring elders.



*Midwives pose with newly born babies they have helped deliver in El Fasher Women's Hospital, North Darfur. In Darfur, names given to babies usually correspond with some religious significance. Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran, UNAMID.*

Due to globalization and the growing availability as well as access to information resources, many Darfuris have started using modern names. Darfuri youth have newer names as opposed to their fathers or grandfathers whose names evidence the conventional nomenclature. But though contemporary Darfuri society shows Western influences, and many babies are named without keeping traditional concepts in mind, the naming ceremony remains an integral aspect of the cultural heritage in these parts.

Perhaps the most affected, in terms of retaining their cultural heritage, is the internally displaced population in Darfur.

Khadija Essa, 35, lives in the Abu Shouk camp for the internally displaced near El Fasher, North Darfur. Ms. Essa, who is originally from Jebel

Sei, located approximately 115 kilometers north-west of El Fasher, fled her village when the conflict broke out in 2003. Born on a Tuesday, Ms. Essa's name reflects the customs of her community.

In the ensuing decade, Ms. Essa claims to have noticed a marked difference in lifestyle as compared with the one she used to lead in her original village. According to her, this difference is particularly prominent when it comes to cultural life and community events such as weddings, funerals and baby naming ceremonies.

"The simaya was a much-anticipated event in our original villages. From the minute a child was born, family and friends would throw themselves into the preparations for the event on the seventh day so that everything went off without a hitch," she recalls.

"Neighboring villages would come together to mark the occasion; women would congregate to prepare food as well as conduct the ceremony where mother and child would be sitting out side, facing east where the holy places—Mecca and Medina—are located for blessings. They would also contribute materials and money for the mother," she adds.

Life in the camps for the displaced is a stark contrast to the peaceful and harmonious existence in the villages of Darfur before the conflict.

"It was very easy to celebrate the birth of a child in our villages because we had everything we needed; in the camps, we lack even the basic resources required to live a decent life on a day-to-day basis. Social events have, therefore, become very difficult to conduct," reveals Ms. Essa.





*The detailed and intricate customs associated with naming a child ensures that a majority of Darfuris have similar names; certain first names can be repeated in the family name, especially grandfathers' names where repetition clearly occurs. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

“It was very easy to celebrate the birth of a child in our villages because we had everything we needed; in the camps, we lack even the basic resources required to live a decent life on a day-to-day basis. Social events have, therefore, become very difficult to conduct.”

—Khadija Essa

Similarly, Abulaziz Saadalnour, a community leader at the Kalma camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), South Darfur, many Darfuri traditions, including the simaya, are in danger of getting lost on account of

the ongoing conflict and its decimating effect on people's livelihoods. “Those of us who live in camps suffer every day as we lack basic necessities such as shelter, food, water and healthcare. In a situation like this, an increasing num-

ber are giving up on conventions and traditions which require a certain measure of economic stability to uphold.

When we worry about feeding our babies and raising them in a healthy manner, ceremonies such as the simaya seem to diminish in importance, he reveals.

The conflict-ravaged territory of Darfur, plagued as it is by a deteriorating economic situation and limited income-generating opportunities, has, thus, seen a reduction in traditional ceremonies as the costs and logistics related to them prove prohibitive. A week-long celebration to name a baby is now often constrained to a single day.

However, despite the tremendous toll taken by the ongoing conflict, Darfuris across the region struggle to remain true to their traditions and values.

## Darfur's Thriving Leather Industry

The ongoing conflict in Darfur has resulted in an unstable economy and an infrastructure that is in disrepair. In the midst of this, skilled Darfuris continue to create intricate leather handcrafts that represent a cultural inheritance handed down through generations.

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

Leather goods are among one of the oldest known handcrafts in Darfur. Darfuri craftsmen use leather to create decorative items as well as shoes, known as markoob, which are typical of the region, among other things.

Despite the ongoing conflict here, tanneries with improved machinery and modern techniques of leather processing, have continued to thrive, especially in Nyala, South Darfur

Shoemaking is perhaps the most common activity which uses leather as its primary raw material. In fact, trade in Darfuri-made shoes is not merely limited to the five states of the region, but also extends to neighbouring countries such as Chad.

Shoes have a special significance in Darfuri culture as they are often used by people as gift items for friends, relatives and loved ones during cultural occasions or days of religious import.

In addition to this, leather embellishments for livestock, such as camels and horses, are other

common items which use leather as a basic element. Traditionally, adorning animals with scarves and saddles made of leather during public events is a manner of welcoming important visitors and community members during a large social event.

Moreover, handcrafts made of leather are particularly significant in the cultural landscape of this region because they are used by almost all ethnic groups living in Darfur, irrespective of their tribal affiliations. Leather-made items, thus, form a social interface for all Darfuris.

On account of the immense demand for leather goods, there is healthy competition between manufacturers which has ensured that the leather industry here has developed at par with international standards while retaining its unique artistic flavor.

This photo essay highlights different aspects of the Darfuri leather industry and is a tribute to the skilled craftsmen who fashion intricate items evocative of the rich cultural heritage of this region.



1

*Pictured here are traditional Darfuri shoes made of of leather in different colors and sizes. Shoemaking is perhaps the most common activity which uses leather as its primary raw material.*

2

*Pictured here are leather containers used for carrying special collectibles on camels during long journeys. Leather goods are among one of the oldest known handcrafts in Darfur.*

3

*Handcrafts made of leather are particularly significant in the cultural landscape of Darfur. Pictured here is a pillow made of leather and filled with wool; this is usually used by nomadic tribes on their saddles during long journeys.*





1



2



3



4

*A shoemaker is pictured while working in his shop in Nyala, South Darfur. Despite the ongoing conflict here, tanneries with improved machinery and modern techniques of leather processing, have continued to thrive, especially in Nyala.*

5

*Here are some leather embellishments used for livestock, such as camels and horses. Traditionally, adorning animals with scarves and saddles made of leather during public events is a manner of welcoming important visitors and community members during a large social event.*





6 *An embellished bag made of leather, which is one of the primary raw materials used by many Darfuri craftsmen.*

7 *A man sells shoes at his shop in the local market in Nyala, South Darfur. Trade in Darfuri-made shoes is not merely limited to the five states of the region, but also extends to neighboring countries such as Chad.*









9 A shoemaker in Nyala, South Darfur, is pictured in his workshop during a preliminary stage of creating pair of traditional Darfuri shoes with leather.

8 Decorative items made of leather used for adorning livestock such as camels and horses during festivals in Darfur. Traditionally, adorning animals with scarves and saddles made of leather during public events is a manner of welcoming important visitors and community members during a large social event.

10

11



11

## Painting for Peace: An Interview with Amir El Tayeb

Noted Darfuri painter, Mr. Amir El Tayeb, talks about the different techniques he uses to represent his creative vision and the challenges faced by artists across this conflict-torn region.

BY EMADELDIN RIJAL



*Darfuri artist Amir El Tayeb is pictured here working on a painting. Mr. El Tayeb reveals he uses symbols as messages that convey the harsh realities and burning issues faced by the people of Darfur in his artworks. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

As a Darfuri painter, Mr. Amir El Tayeb has made his mark on the art scene across Sudan with his unique use of colours, detailed patterns and traditional symbolism which, he says, combine to express his firm belief in the importance of the cultural heritage of Darfur and as well as the unique role played by fine arts in the life of a nation.

Born in 1963, Mr. El Tayeb grew up in El Fasher, North Darfur, as the son of parents who supported his interest

in and appreciation for art. He went on to acquire a formal education in painting from the Fine Arts College at Sudan University of Science and Technology.

In an interview with Voices of Darfur, Mr. El Tayeb talked about the artistic process, the different tools and techniques he uses to imbue his work with the depth of insight demanded by his personal creative vision and the challenges faced by artists across the region.

**Voices of Darfur: Tell us a bit**

**about when your love for art first started to flower. When did you decide to be a painter?**

**El Tayeb:** My father was a mechanical engineer; he would often be re-assigned to different places across Sudan and we would accompany him. Traveling in this fashion gave me the chance to witness a variety of cultures. As a child, the more sights you see, the more mental reserves you start to build up. My mother was an artist in her own right



and made traditional handicrafts such as food covers and baskets with beadwork; additionally, she also fashioned decorative pieces, tailored clothing and did beautiful embroidery. I would often sit next to her and watch while she created these unique pieces.

Later, while attending school, I began contributing my own paintings and drawings regularly to the literary magazine. My teachers and my parents both encouraged me to pursue my passion for art and, once, I got more involved in it, I realized that painting includes knowledge of many disciplines, be it, physics, medicine, engineering, philosophy, and so forth. I also learned that a number of great scholars in the world were also painters. This motivated me to hone my own skills—I painted the Crying Child, a world work, 20 times before I was satisfied with my reproduction—and even went on to study art.

**VoD: Where did you study painting? How did the formal training in art enhance your natural instincts as a painter?**

**El Tayeb:** I studied colouring and painting at the Fine Arts College, Sudan University of Science and Technology, and graduated in 1991. The formal training I received in the College was immensely helpful in opening up my mind to new forms and techniques that I could use to express myself better through my artworks. While studying, I also got the opportunity to attend art exhibitions and buy books related to my subject. I believe exhibitions are a very important aspect of an artist's training as these are a platform where diverse socially relevant issues, incidents and events, such as poverty, starvation, and so forth, are addressed and depicted in front of a diverse audience.

**VoD: Tell us a bit about how your personal artistic style developed.**

**El Tayeb:** When I first graduated from the School of Fine Arts, I completed a new painting almost every day. I also used to darker colours than I do now. As my style evolved, and with age



*Noted Darfuri painter, Amir El Tayeb, is pictured here with one of his most recent works. Mr. El Tayeb says he believes one of the main challenges for young artists is the lack of training institutes across Sudan. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

and life experience, I started becoming more experimental in the use of colour and technique in my work. Along with this, I also started taking more time to produce a single piece of art.

**VoD: What significance does colour have in your paintings?**

**El Tayeb:** Different hues signify different things for an artist and enable him or her to communicate in unique ways to audiences. In most of my work, I use shades of white to symbolize comfort and happiness. Yellow, a colour mentioned in the Holy Quran, signifies

warmth; purple means love while red connotes danger. These are the primary colours I work with while painting. Others are used as background tints.

**VoD: What are the tools and techniques you generally use?**

**El Tayeb:** I use a variety of techniques to layer my work with depth. In terms of the medium used, I usually alternate between water colours and crayons. I also work with local powdered colours and with hues extracted from certain plants. I often experiment with textured paper to add an interesting dimension to an artwork.

**VoD: You use symbolic shapes in your paintings. Are these related to your Darfuri heritage?**

**El Tayeb:** Yes, the symbolism in my pieces is part of my Darfuri background; I use symbols as messages that convey the harsh realities and burning issues faced by the people of Darfur. Across the world, artists can use their craft to raise awareness among people about real concerns regarding the society they inhabit.

**VoD: Tell us a bit about the exhibitions you have participated in. What was your first exhibition ever?**

**El Tayeb:** I believe exhibitions are a very critical forum for any artist, and therefore, have been actively involved in displaying my artworks to a wide audience. My first exhibition was in the College of Fine Arts on the occasion of Teachers Day in 1987 and my contributions were widely appreciated by my lecturers, a fact that greatly encouraged me to pursue art as a career.

Since then, I have participated in a number of exhibitions in Darfur; in 1988 I exhibited my works for a week at the El Fasher Cultural Centre in North Darfur. The theme of the exhibition was, "Fine Arts: Suffering of Darfur," and most of my works on display at this forum represented the suffering and day-to-day insecurity faced by the people across this conflict-ravaged nation, including their struggle for water, the most precious resource in a desert. I have also been a part of exhibitions held at the cultural centres in Khartoum, including the International Khartoum Expo.



*An intricate painting by renowned Darfuri artist, Amir El Tayeb, who says with age and life experience, he has started becoming more experimental in the use of colour and technique in his work. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.*

In addition to this, I have been part of awareness committees such as the campaign against female genital mutilation organized by UNICEF.

**VoD: Other than painting, what are your other interests?**

**El Tayeb:** I enjoy all forms of artistic expression, whether it is graphic design, silkscreen printing or creating general products, designing T-shirts and so forth. Having the skill to paint and draw has enabled me to work across mediums, whether it is designing a business card or creating key chains.

**VoD: What is the role of fine art in a society like Darfur?**

**El Tayeb:** The fine arts have a vital role to play in involving different segments of a society in issues and events that have a direct impact on them. Life derives from art and vice versa. Darfur is no exception to this dictum. For example, I am currently working on a painting that deals with the ongoing peace process in Darfur, which is relevant to everyone living there.

**VoD: How has the ongoing conflict in Darfur affected the fine arts in the region?**

**El Tayeb:** Conflict, whether in Darfur or anywhere in the world, always has a long-lasting effect on any form of art as it affects the psychological stability of an artist as well as a direct influ-

ence on his or her creative freedom. If an artist is surrounded by insecurity or doesn't feel safe, the power to create art naturally suffers.

**VoD: What, according to you, are some of the challenges faced by artists in Darfur today?**

**El Tayeb:** In my opinion, one of the main challenges that the younger generation of Darfuri artists is the lack of training institutes for teachers who are able to guide aspiring artists in fields such as painting, theatre, music and so forth. Indeed, this creates difficult circumstances for youth across Sudan. Another significant issue faced by many artists is that while Darfuri people have good taste, many cannot afford to buy artworks. Given the lack of a thriving customer base, many fine artists in the region have to resort to other occupations in order to supplement their income.

**VoD: Finally, do you have any message for the people of Darfur?**

**El Tayeb:** I believe that peace is a natural prerequisite for any culture to flourish and develop. I would like to urge every Darfuri to remain committed to the cause of sustainable peace and learn to live together in harmony. Only then, can they ensure future generations prosper and forge ahead to achieve great things.





A piece of embroidery created by noted Darfuri painter, Amir El Tayeb, who says he enjoys dabbling in all forms of artistic expression, whether it is graphic design, silkscreen printing or creating general products, designing T-shirts and so forth. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.





UNAMID Communications and Public Information Section  
Email: [unamid-publicinformation@un.org](mailto:unamid-publicinformation@un.org)  
Website: <http://unamid.unmissions.org>

 [facebook.com/UNAMID](https://facebook.com/UNAMID)  
[facebook.com/UNAMID.arabic](https://facebook.com/UNAMID.arabic)

 [twitter.com/unamidnews](https://twitter.com/unamidnews)

 [gplus.to/UNAMID](https://gplus.to/UNAMID)

 [flickr.com/unamid-photo](https://flickr.com/unamid-photo)