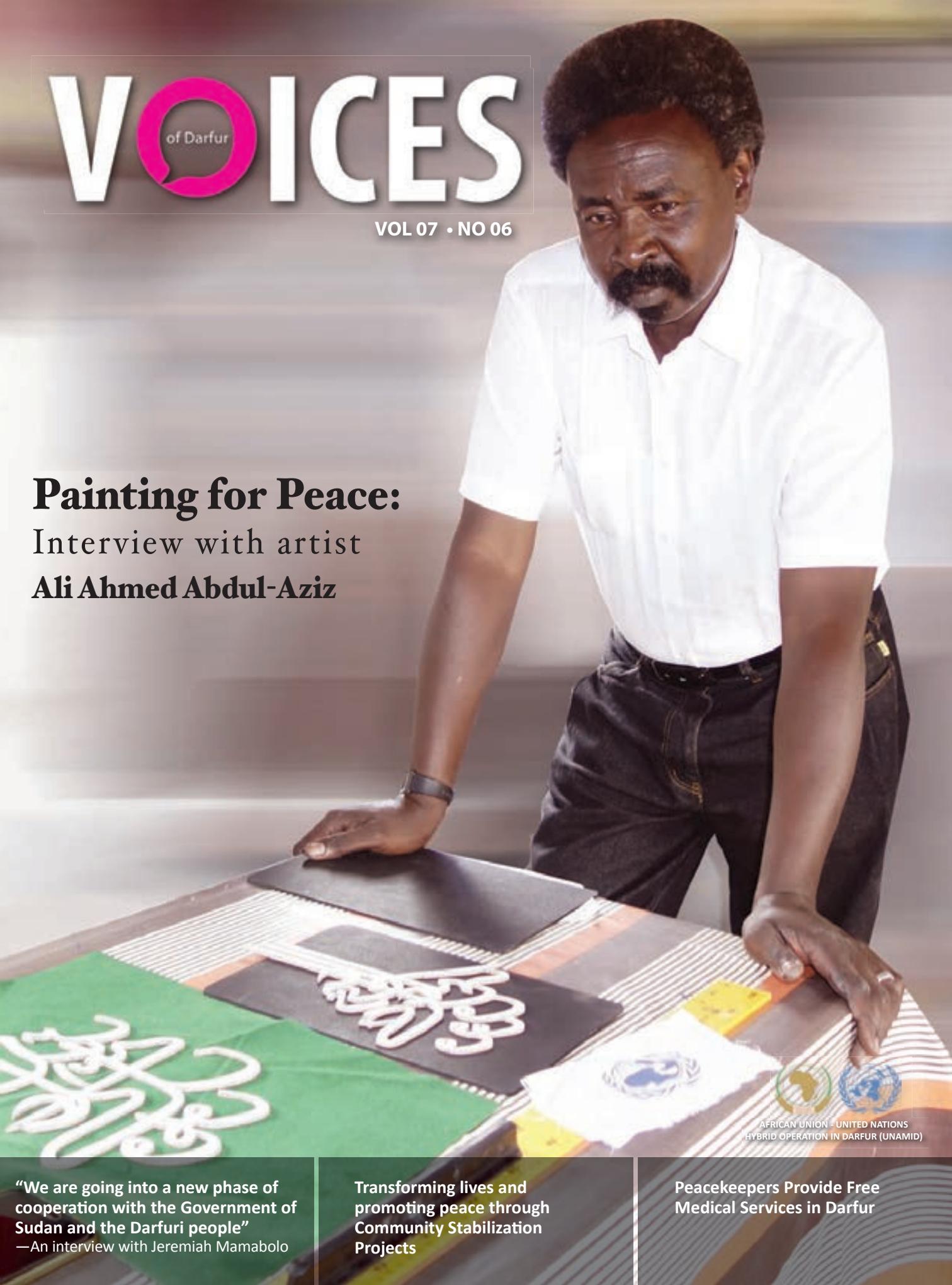


VOICES

of Darfur

VOL 07 • NO 06

Painting for Peace: Interview with artist Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz



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

"We are going into a new phase of cooperation with the Government of Sudan and the Darfuri people"
—An interview with Jeremiah Mamabolo

Transforming lives and promoting peace through Community Stabilization Projects

Peacekeepers Provide Free Medical Services in Darfur

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NOTE

We are quite pleased to introduce the September 2017 issue of *Voices of Darfur*, which contains news, features and interviews not only about unique aspects of life in Darfur but also about UNAMID's ongoing efforts to facilitate lasting peace in the region.

In an interview with *Voices of Darfur*, the Joint Special Representative, Mr. Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo entitled, "We are going into a new phase of cooperation and collaboration with the Government of Sudan and the Darfuri people", sheds light on UNAMID's ongoing reconfiguration and why the collaborative AU-UN Mission holds a significant place in the political landscape of Africa.

The feature article entitled: "Transforming lives and promoting peace through community stabilization projects", shines the spotlight on Suhair Ali Abdallah, a mother of two children, who has benefited from a livelihood training programme supported by UNAMID's Community Stabilization Section (CSS) and implemented by the Sudan Red Crescent Society.

The feature also focusses on UNAMID violence reduction programmes across Darfur, which have evolved into the more broad-based and clustered Community Stabilization Projects (CSPs) with far-reaching positive impact on targeted communities.

In another feature entitled, 'Peacekeepers

Provide Free Medical Services in Darfur', we highlight the many roles in which UNAMID's peacekeepers serve across Darfur, uniquely building trust in communities, and often providing free medical services to those in need while performing their core functions such as assisting in addressing sexual and gender-based violence and promoting the rule of law.

The collation of photographs focusing on UNAMID Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) gives a pictorial glance of these projects as a viable mechanism not only used to address major conflict drivers such as competition over scarce water resources through the drilling of boreholes supporting peace and conflict mediation, empowering women, youth, civil society and disadvantaged groups throughout Darfur.

Finally, in our cover feature, 'Painting for Peace', *Voices of Darfur* presents an interview with Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz, a Zalingei-based artist, who speaks about his art, the role it plays in the ongoing peace process as well as the impact of the conflict on the artistic imagination of Darfuri youth.

As *Voices of Darfur* continues to evolve as a news magazine, we welcome your feedback. To send comments by email, please put "Letters to the Editor/Voices of Darfur" in the subject line and send the email to:

unamid-publicinformation@un.org.

Carlos Araujo
Chief
Communications & Public Information Section

ON THE COVER



Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz, a Zalingei-based artist at his office in the Popular Police Primary School in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.



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

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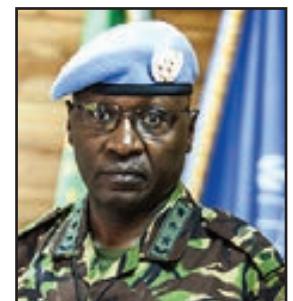
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UNAMID Head conducts first official visit to South Darfur



UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, visited South Darfur, where he met with government officials, IDP leaders, UN agency representatives and locally-based UNAMID staff. Topics of discussion included security, joint coordination and cooperation, and the on-going Mission reconfiguration. Photo by Mubarak Bako, UNAMID.

UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR), Jeremiah Mamabolo, recently concluded his first official visit to South Darfur which took place on 7-8 September.

During his two-day visit, JSR Mamabolo met with Sabeel Ahmad Sabeel, Deputy Wali, South Darfur, for a briefing on the security situation in the area. Mr. Sabeel informed the JSR that the security situation in South Darfur is relatively stable currently and that the state government is actively engaged in community stabilization activities.

The Deputy Wali also gave an overview of the ongoing arms collection from civilians and requested UNAMID's assistance in this endeavor. Additionally, he requested the Mis-

sion as well as the UN Country Team to continue humanitarian support to vulnerable populations across Darfur, especially with regard to provision of water and healthcare services.

On his part, JSR Mamabolo assured the Deputy Wali of UNAMID's continued support for the South Darfur State Government.

Additionally, Mr. Mamabolo interacted with the internally displaced persons' (IDP) leaders at Kalma camp for the displaced; IDP leaders expressed concern on the reduction of UNAMID's military, police and civilian personnel due to the ongoing reconfiguration and its impact on the displaced Darfuri population.

Isa Mohammed, an IDP leader, spoke at length on grave security is-

sues faced by the displaced community and stressed that the core causes of the ongoing conflict in Darfur still exist.

In turn, JSR Mamabolo informed the gathering that UNAMID's ongoing reconfiguration is a way to make the Mission more agile and responsive to the needs of the people it serves in terms of current on-ground realities. He explained that the Mission's strategic priorities remain the same and it will continue to protect civilians, facilitate access and security for humanitarian actors and work towards ameliorating the root causes of communal conflict.

The JSR also held several internal meetings and toured the Mission's healthcare facilities at its South Darfur office.

■

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations visits Sudan



The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited Golo, a town in the vicinity of Jebel Marra, Central Darfur On 22 July 2017. During the visit, Mr. Lacroix met with local authorities and community representatives. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

EL FASHER - The UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, has concluded a five-day visit to Sudan, during which time he met with Government officials, local authorities, community representatives and UNAMID peacekeepers.

High on the agenda was the recent UN Security Council Resolution 2363 and the current reconfiguration of UNAMID.

The Security Council decided recently that the Mission should adopt a two-pronged focus going forward.

This involves a peacekeeping focus centered on Jebel Marra, Central Darfur, and areas in the vicinity, and a more peacebuilding approach in other parts of Darfur, with an emphasis on enhancing the rule of law.

The Sudan visit – which took in

Khartoum, El Fasher, along with Zalingei and Golo in Central Darfur -- was part of a larger mission also involving Abyei and South Sudan.

In Khartoum, Mr. Lacroix met with Ibrahim Ghandour, the Foreign Minister, where they discussed government support for UNAMID operations. In further meetings, Mr. Lacroix spoke with other Government officials and also briefed African Ambassadors based in the Sudanese capital about implementation modalities related to the UNAMID reconfiguration.

While in Darfur, Mr. Lacroix met with local authorities and community representatives, along with UNAMID leadership and military, police and civilian peacekeepers.

In El Fasher, Mr. Lacroix met the Wali (Governor) of North Darfur,

Abdul-Wahid Ibrahim, during which they discussed reconfiguration of the Mission and ongoing cooperation.

Said Mr. Lacroix: "We discussed plans in order to continue the support to the population, particularly the IDP community, and the plan to build capacity in the areas of rule of law to help further improve the security situation."

Mr. Ibrahim addressed the situation in North Darfur state, and coordination between local authorities and UNAMID.

Mr. Lacroix took up his post on 1 April of this year, replacing Hervé Ladsous. Mr. Lacroix brings to the position over 25 years of political and diplomatic experience, mostly handling multilateral organizations, United Nations activities and programmes.

Humanitarian situation key focus of inter-agency assessment mission to Rockero, Central Darfur



An inter-agency humanitarian assessment mission concluded a visit to Rockero in North Jebel Marra locality, Central Darfur on 9 July 2017. A Jointly led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), the mission included representatives of UNAMID, the UN Country Team, the Government of Sudan and non-government organizations. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.

ZALINGEI - Evaluating the humanitarian situation was a key focus of a recent inter-Agency Humanitarian Assessment mission to Rockero, North Jebel Marra locality, Central Darfur.

The five - day mission – which also considered community needs and concerns -- included representatives from UNAMID, the UN Country Team, Government of Sudan and non-government organizations. It was jointly led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC).

It is estimated that more than 43,000 households of internally displaced persons and returnees are living in the locality.

The mission team carried out a humanitarian needs assessment in eight villages including Kaya, Aro, Burgo, Wara, Abonga, Niscam and Sala, along with Rockero town.

Community leaders described the humanitarian situation as very difficult and identified priorities humanitarian needs such as water, sanitation and hygiene, health, food security and nutrition, and education.

The team also held meetings with government officials and lo-

cal community leaders including the Locality Commissioner, HAC, Police Commissioner, the area Sudan Armed Force Commander and the Native Administration, along with local community and religious leaders, youth and students.

Fisal Hassan, the locality, Humanitarian Aid Commissioner, identified a need for humanitarian agencies to open offices in Rockero locality in order to support the local community.

Adam Al Noor, the Commissioner of North Jebel Marra locality, identified a need for capacity-building training workshops for the local community. ▀

UNAMID boosts water supply at growing El Fasher Airport, North Darfur



UNAMID's Water and Environmental Protection Unit finished drilling a borehole at El Fasher Airport terminal, North Darfur. The project, which will assist with the provision of water, is part of the Mission's support to local communities throughout Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.

EL FASHER – The completion of a UNAMID-supported borehole at El Fasher Airport, North Darfur, will help to meet the water and sanitation needs associated with a growing number of passengers.

UNAMID's Water and Environmental Protection Unit finished work on the borehole on 5 July 2017.

According to airport authorities, traffic at the airport has increased over the last couple of years, with growing numbers of people using the terminal building. As a result, the need for enhanced sanitation and hygiene facilities has similarly increased. For the past sever-

al years, the airport's water needs were met by regular UNAMID-supported water deliveries by truck.

El Rasheed Abdulrahman, Director of Engineering Department at El Fasher Airport, said the new borehole will supply water to the passenger terminal and to the firefighting team, among other uses. He commended UNAMID for their assistance and partnership with airport authorities.

Olatunji Ayeni, Chief of UNAMID's Water and Environmental Protection Unit, said that the airport project is part of the Mission's community support programme, which helps communities throughout Darfur.

Another example of UNAMID community support were relief efforts in Sortony, North Darfur. The Mission conducted a hydrological survey and drilled five boreholes in order to provide water to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the area.

Mr. Ayeni said that the Mission also provides support to the United Nations Country Team in accordance with its mandate to help communities, particularly IDPs. UNAMID also works with community-based organizations to conduct greening campaigns such as through the planting trees, including economically viable species. ▀

3,000 young Darfuris join hands with UNAMID on International Youth Day



UNAMID, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the National Federation of Sudanese Youth, celebrated International Youth Day in El Fasher, North Darfur, under the theme "Youth Building Peace." More than 3,000 people attended the event, which included a marathon and bicycle race, an exhibition, cultural performances and a concert featuring renowned Sudanese musician Hani Abdeen. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit (COU) organized a day-long commemoration of International Youth Day on 12 August 2017, under the global theme, 'Youth Building Peace.' More than 3,000 young people from El Fasher and nearby localities in North Darfur took part in a marathon, a bicycle race, an exhibition and a carnival, which were followed by drama performances and traditional dances. The programme ended with a concert featuring renowned Sudanese musician Hani Abdeen, accompanied by local talent, Hassan Aish.

The event was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the National Federation of Sudanese Youth; it took place at El Zubair Stadium.

Guests of note included UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR), Bintou Keita; the Deputy Wali (Governor) of North Darfur, Mohammed Berima; Minister of Youth and Sport, Hikmah Ibrahim; and representatives from the UN Country Team, community leaders, youth groups as well as members of civil society.

Speaking at the occasion, DJSR Keita stated that as agents of change, young people need to be included in the peace and security agenda. "The UN Secretary General is committed to the empowerment and inclusion of young people around the world and in conflict prevention efforts," she added, while calling upon Sudanese youth to work towards building a durable peace in Darfur.

On his part, Deputy Wali Berima expressed the Government of Sudan's commitment to supporting Darfuri youth and requested UN partners to facilitate the construction of youth centres in North Darfur; Ms. Ibrahim urged non-signatory movements to join the ongoing peace process, during her speech.

This event was preceded by a workshop on peacebuilding and conflict resolution jointly organized by UNAMID, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the National Federation of Youth Unions, on 10 August in El Fasher, where some 80 young Darfuris signed a peace pledge.

Similar activities are taking place in the remaining four Darfur states. ▀

UNAMID joins call by Nelson Mandela Foundation to devote 67 minutes to helping others



A Drama group perform a show during the event to commemorate the Nelson Mandela International Day, organized by UNAMID's Community Outreach Unit at Zam Zam camp for internally displaced persons, near El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID

18 July is globally marked as Nelson Mandela International Day, in recognition of the former South African President's contribution to the culture of peace and freedom.

This year's Mandela Day theme, 'Action Against Poverty,' resulted in a unique event at the ZamZam camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), North Darfur, where community members attended a free medical camp run by UNAMID's military and police peacekeepers from Rwanda, Egypt, Indonesia and Nepal.

The event, organized by the Mission's Community Outreach Unit, included awareness-raising sessions on basic hygiene, such as washing hands before mealtimes, and drama performances; renowned Darfuri musician, Halima Sasa, performed traditional peace songs. Information and educational materials on the ongoing peace

process were also distributed among the audience.

Speaking to the diverse audience comprised of community leaders, students, women's groups and youth associations, Carlos Araujo, Chief Communications & Public Information Section, UNAMID, read out the UN Secretary-General's message on the occasion which highlighted how Mr. Mandela continues to inspire the world through his example of courage and compassion, and his commitment to social justice and a culture of freedom and peace.

On his part, Emad Badawi, representative, Ministry of Health, North Darfur, emphasized the importance a healthy environment and urged the IDP community to organize clean-up campaigns to prevent the spread of diseases. Mr. Badawi commended UNAMID for organizing the medical camp and

its efforts to ensure that the camp's residents become conversant with good hygiene practices.

Additionally, Abdalla Adam, Director of Student Activities in the camp, requested the Mission to help expand the ZamZam Secondary School for Boys in the interest of providing increased education services to the camp's youth.

"I think this event had a great impact on all of us," said Adam Ahmed, a resident of ZamZam camp. "Young students who attended the event responded really well to the drama performances; furthermore, UNAMID peacekeepers at the medical camp gave us hand sanitizers which are very useful, especially when there is lack of water in the camp," added Mr. Adam.

Similar activities commemorating Mandela Day were organized across all five Darfur states. ▀

UNAMID-built airport ring road at El Geneina airport transferred to West Darfur authorities



UNAMID officially handed over a newly-finished airport ring road in El Geneina to the State Government in West Darfur. The project, constructed by UNAMID peacekeepers as part of the Mission's support to local authorities, will facilitate movement at the airport and enhance security. Photo by Elsadig Daud, UNAMID.

EL GENEINA – A new UNAMID-built ring road that will facilitate movement and enhance security at El Geneina airport has been handed over to local authorities on 6 July 2017.

The 10 km road was constructed by UNAMID Pakistan peacekeepers inside the perimeter of El Shaheed Sebira airport.

The new road was officially transferred to the State Government of West Darfur at a cere-

mony in El Geneina earlier this month. Participants included El Hadi Adam, the Minister of Finance for West Darfur, along with senior officials from the Government of Sudan and UNAMID.

Oumar Kane, UNAMID's Head of Office for Sector West, said the project is a real addition to state infrastructure. The road will facilitate movement inside the airport and enhance security in the area.

Mr. Kane commended Pakistani peacekeepers for supporting infrastructural projects such as the airport road and the embankment at Kaja wadi. The embankment is helping to prevent soil erosion from damaging the main road to the airport.

Mr. Adam expressed appreciation for UNAMID's support, noting that the ring road is essential for internal movement at the airport. ■

Community stabilization and peaceful coexistence focus of UNAMID-backed El Daein workshop



More than 70 people took part in a UNAMID supported workshop on Cross Border Peace and Cooperation, which was organized in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and sponsored by the European Union on 12 July 2017. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.

EL DAEIN - Enhancing community stabilization and peaceful coexistence amongst pastoralist and sedentary communities in border areas was the aim of a UNAMID-supported workshop in El Daein, the capital of East Darfur.

More than 70 people took part in the five-day capacity-building workshop on Cross Border Peace and Cooperation, which was organized in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and sponsored by the European Union.

Participants were drawn from the Government of Sudan, the Native Administration, rural court judges, the police, Community Policing Vol-

unteers, women and youth groups, and community leaders.

The workshop used interactive and participatory modes of facilitation, drawing on practical examples, scenarios and work groups. Training focused on improved leadership, rule of law and security at the community level, along with proactive resolution of conflicts.

William Joof, UNAMID's Acting Head of Office in Sector East, said that the partnership between the Mission, IOM and the European Union is a positive approach towards supporting the capacity development needs of local communities.

The workshop was tailored to not only enhance the capacity of partic-

ipants, but also to provide networking opportunities, said Mr. Joof.

Ibrahim Musa, the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner for East Darfur, welcomed the workshop, which was timely given the large numbers of refugees currently present in the region.

Mr. Musa urged participants to make the most of the skills acquired during the training in their daily activities.

El Fadil Madibo, the Deputy Nazir of Rezigat, underscored the need for regular workshops to promote mutual understanding and to provide the Native Administration with skills that will guide them in addressing conflicts. ■

“We are going into a new phase of cooperation and collaboration with the Government of Sudan and the Darfuri people”

— An interview with Jeremiah Mamabolo

UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, talks about UNAMID’s ongoing reconfiguration and why the collaborative AU-UN Mission holds a significant place in the political landscape of Africa.

BY EMMANUEL EMASEALU

On 2 March 2016, Jeremiah Mamabolo was appointed as Deputy Joint Special Representative –Political for UNAMID. Subsequently, on 12 January 2017, the AU and the UN appointed him as Acting Joint Special Representative (AJSR). Today, Mr. Mamabolo is the substantive Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur.

In this interview with *Voices of Darfur*, JSR Mamabolo speaks in detail of the impact of the ongoing reconfiguration of the Mission on the people of Darfur and tells us why, in his opinion, Darfuris across the region and the Government of Sudan should work collaboratively with the international community to effect a positive social change.

VoD: How challenging or demanding is your current position as the Head of UNAMID?

JSR: It is a huge responsibility. I am honoured to be appointed to manage this portfolio. It is particularly challenging because the Mission is undergoing a reconfigura-

tion and we have been mandated to reduce our troops and police as well as incorporate the concept of stabilization into the peacekeeping that we have been doing so far.

In a sense, this development is a reflection of the good work UNAMID has done in Darfur over the years. To talk of downsizing at this point in time, therefore, should be seen as an indication that UNAMID has reached a certain level which requires a change in its modus operandi in correlation to the situation on the ground.

We must anticipate and contain the implications of the reconfiguration by ensuring that it does not lead to a relapse into conflict across Darfur. This is why we have been asked by the Security Council to continue making assessments and reporting back as we reconfigure the Mission.

VoD: You believe, therefore, that the reconfiguration of the Mission has become necessary?

JSR: Darfur is not what it was

more than a decade ago, although clashes are ongoing in the Jebel Marra area and a cessation of hostilities has not been signed by all parties to the conflict. It is a reality that there is relative peace and stability now in most parts of Darfur. Negotiations through the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) have equally contributed to the current situation.

Thus, a stocktaking by UNAMID becomes necessary.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done. You still have IDPs, for example. We have to ensure that even those still outside the ongoing peace dialogue are brought in so that everybody is engaged. That way, all stakeholders can hold each other accountable and, therefore, be assured of a sustainable, long-lasting peace without any fear of a relapse.

VoD: What are the implications of the reconfiguration of the Mission for Darfuris?

JSR: For the people of Darfur,





On 11 April 2017, UNAMID organized a guard of honour for its recently appointed Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Kingsley Mamabolo, upon his return to the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur, to assume his new role. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

there has been a lot of anxiety on the ground. UNAMID has played a large role in allaying their concerns, both physically and psychologically. UNAMID has given the assurance of the existence of an international force, even though there is now a new situation that questions the very existence of this international force. One of the implications of the reconfiguration of the Mission for Darfuris, therefore, is that Darfuris may now begin to see the need to canvass for help from the international community, but in a different form. Such help could focus on development as well as taking a critical look at the root causes of the conflict with a view to offering a form of intervention that would provide a permanent solution.

Another implication of the reconfiguration of UNAMID is that it may raise an awareness on the need to

create an environment whereby the people of Darfur, in particular, and Sudan, in general, can come together and resolve their differences.

Over the years, UNAMID and the international community have been working to create such an environment in which the people of Darfur can work towards peace together by addressing the root causes of the problems and by ensuring that the international community can assist Sudan in fortifying areas such as the justice system, rule of law institutions and human rights.

A significant impact of the reconfiguration on the people of Darfur is that as long as you talk about peace-keeping, the general impression created is that there is a major conflict in the region, which by itself could deter those who want to invest in Sudan or support growth and development in the Darfur region.

Once the world knows that UNAMID is being reconfigured and Darfur is now focusing on stabilization and development, I hope investors will come in to support capacities that would enable this country and the Darfur region to prosper and never go back to the situation it was in some thirteen years ago.

VoD: Displaced leaders spoke passionately that their situation has not changed when you visited Kalma IDP camp in South Darfur recently. This creates the impression that the root causes of the conflict may not have been sufficiently addressed. What triggered the conflict and what is the Mission doing to address the complaints of the IDPs?

JSR: The root cause of the war can be traced to matters of land, water and the rights of farmers and nomads. It is, essentially, a conflict of interests. The nomads usually

follow a migratory route with their animals. Sometimes, farmers encroach on parts of such migratory routes, mutually accepted as 'no man's land,' which, as such, should remain unoccupied. So, land is usually a source of the conflict. Another cause of friction is that when nomads move their animals through this migratory route and there is no water, they are, sometimes, compelled to divert routes and move through the farms to try and find water for their livestock. It can be imagined how long these migratory routes could be. So, there is nothing wrong if the international community ensures that water is provided in large quantity in those areas, at least, water from boreholes. In this way, nomads would have adequate water for their animals and not have to leave the path that has been designated for their movement.

The issue of the IDPs is complicated and revolves, essentially, around the issue of land. IDPs in Kalma complained that their land has been occupied by other people. How do they get back their land? How do they tell those who are now occupying the land to move away? How do you ensure that IDPs who want to, can go back to their places of origin? But again, there are IDPs who are quite comfortable where they are today and may not wish to return to their places of origin.

But how do you then incorporate them into the cities where they are so that, indeed, they can make a livelihood there? What this entails is that we all need to be working in collaboration. We need to bring in the government. They must identify their programmes and involve us because it is first and foremost the responsibility of the government to ensure the security of its own people as well as provide services for the people. We need to work within the framework of the DDPD and



On 17 July 2017, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, visited Abu Shouk camp for the displaced to brief community leaders on the anticipated closure of the Mission's team site in the area and subsequent hand-over of the facility. JSR Mamabolo asserted that UNAMID will continue to provide necessary support to the population of Abu Shouk. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID.

JSR/JCM: The local and international staff of the Mission are a part of the reconfiguration in the sense that there will be a drawdown. We will be reducing, in a year's time, some 44% of the troops and 30% of the police. Of course, there will be a corresponding figure in relation to civilian staff because you cannot reduce the troops and do nothing about the civilian staff strength. We were sent here to execute the UNAMID mandate successfully and we are fulfilling that mission. That is why at some stage, because you are succeeding in executing that mission, you may have to think of leaving. But you have got to make sure that as you leave, you leave a job well done.

There may be deficits of trust as expressed by the residents of Kalma camp. It is to be expected. But we all must work together to raise questions on the future of Darfur in relation to humanitarian relief, ceasefire commissioning, constitutional matters and so forth, to ensure a durable peace for the people living here.

VoD: Does the reconfiguration of UNAMID have consequences for the local and international staff of the Mission?

VoD: How far has the Mission



On 10 September 2017, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, visited Tine area, North Darfur, where he met with local authorities and community representatives. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

moved forward with the reconfiguration programme?

JSR: In line with the mandate, the Mission is reducing the number of military, police and civilian personnel, and has earmarked 11 team sites across Darfur to be closed in six months. We are doing very well in terms of the timelines. We have already closed four team sites to date: Malha, Mellit and Um Kadada, North Darfur, and Muhajeria, East Darfur. Seven team sites are yet to be closed. These are Abu Shouk, Tine, Habila, Forobaranga, Tulus, Eid Al Fursan and Zam. We shall be handing over two more sites in a matter of days. We think that we would be able to hand over the remaining team sites within the timelines given.

We will be assessing the progress made in the first phase of the reconfiguration in January 2018.

The Security Council will look at what has been the impact in order to determine whether we are moving forward.

The second phase will take us to June 2018. In the second phase, we will be dealing with pulling troops

of UNSC Resolution 2363, we are expected to develop a Jebel Marra Task Force that will consist of some four battalions to carry out peacekeeping and assist humanitarian personnel to dispense humanitarian relief all over Jebel Marra.

I must say that I am very happy with the progress that we have achieved so far in terms of the first phase of the reconfiguration. We are determined to stay on track and complete the first phase within the timelines provided.

VoD: Could you tell us a bit about the implications of the Mission's reconfiguration on the African Union and the United Nations?

JSR: This is the only UN Mission where you have the AU collaborating with the UN. We have got to make the collaboration a success because it would be setting standards, the way forward, for such other areas of cooperation and partnership. In fact, only a few days ago, members of the delegations of the Security Council of the AU and the UN Security Council met to discuss this very important collaboration.

This alliance must be nurtured as it is being watched jealously by everybody concerned to see what the progress is and what the gaps are. That is why on both sides, AU and UN, we will be reporting every two months to the Secretary-General on the progress or lack of it in terms of UNSC Resolution 2363. There is great interest in seeing this succeed and I am very honoured to be working with the committed men and women of this Mission and to be at the forefront of this.

Such partnerships encapsulate huge implications for the future, in the search for peace and security across Africa. There is the need to pursue the concept that Africans must be at the forefront in the resolution of their own problems under African leadership.

VoD: What is your advice to the people of Darfur in view of the reconfiguration of the Mission?

JSR: I think we will do well to take advantage of the space that has been created by the involvement of UNAMID and the international community to accept that there has been a lot of progress. We must also accept the fact that there are still quite a lot of things to be done to complete the mission of ensuring that there is lasting peace in Darfur and Sudan, which can only be achieved by the active agency of the Sudanese themselves. No single party can profess that they are going to bring peace. Darfuris themselves have to work together to find a lasting, peaceful solution to providing good leadership to their people and including all parties on the outside to come to the negotiating table. The international community can provide oversight on such negotiations. This would be a step in the right direction because everyone would be held accountable by the agreement they all reach.

If the Government of Sudan and the people of Darfur say they are interested in peace, then they must come together and, with the assistance and the focus of the international community, draw up the parameters for peace.

Darfur has been at the centre of international focus for a very long time. I think that Darfuris themselves would do well to participate actively in the restoration of peace to their own people.

VoD: How is the two pronged approach of peacekeeping and stabilization in Darfur going to be actualized?

JSR: The concept for the peacekeeping arm is that we would have a contingent of about four battalions headquartered in Zalingei, Central Darfur, and focusing on a large area which would include Jebel Marra. We will have to work



On 21 June 2017, UNAMID Joint Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, visited Golo, a town in the vicinity of Jebel Marra, Central Darfur, where he met with local authorities and community representatives. Photo by Mohamed Almahady.

“Darfuris themselves have to work together to find a lasting, peaceful solution to providing good leadership to their people”

with UN Headquarters in New York to determine which contingents will be represented in the Jebel Marra Task Force (JMTF). We had hoped that by now we would have permission from the Government of Sudan to open a temporary operating base in Golo. Our idea was that while the headquarters of the JMTF would be in Zalingei, Golo would be the temporary operating base.

This would help because of its proximity - it is really at the mouth of Jebel Marra and would have helped bring much more focus and attention to Jebel Marra. We have not completed those negotiations as yet because we don't have Golo yet. But we are still engaging with the government in this regard.

VoD: There would be pertinent security concerns with the reduction of personnel. How does the Mission hope to attend to these security issues?

JSR: Clearly, when you reduce such big numbers, there will be gaps. We have to find ways to close these gaps. How do we protect the assets of the UN, wherever they may be? How do we give protection to IDPs? We will work with the government to plan. Is there any need, for example, of capacity? At UNAMID, we have come to accept that we may not be able to protect all the convoys that are moving in Darfur because we may not have the capacity to do so, which means that we will have to enlist the support of the government to provide security.

A whole lot will be done to close the gaps in terms of this programme of capacity. That is in the second level of the mandate which states that we must work with the Walis (Governors) in the Darfur states, with the Government of Sudan and the community to see how we can help build capacity in areas where there is none.



Transforming lives and promoting peace through Community Stabilization Projects

BY MATILDA MOYO AND SALAH MOHAMMED

TWO YEARS AGO, the future looked bleak for Suhair Ali Abdallah and her two children. The mother's fortunes were set to change, however, when she heard during a ladies' gathering in 2015 about a livelihood training programme in El Geneina. West Darfur. The programme was supported by UNAMID's Community Stabilization Section (CSS) and implemented by the Sudan Red Crescent Society.

Suhair was trained in two subjects: food processing and perfume making. Now she runs a bustling confectionery business in Al Madaris, El Geneina. Through her successful business, Suhair was able to renovate her home, converting it from thatch to brick and mortar. She is also able to send her eldest child to kindergarten

and has helped her younger brother to open a shop in the neighbourhood.

"My life has changed and I am grateful to UNAMID because without their support I would not be where I am today," says Suhair.

Previously, life was a struggle for the divorced mother who was working as a household help and would also sometimes make bricks to supplement her meager income. "Now I make much more, although the business is seasonal," she says.

The traffic of customers to her home is testament to the popularity of her products and the success of her business. The peak time for her enterprise is during the wedding and Eid (religious holiday) seasons, when clients place orders

in advance due to high demand.

Suhair works with a team of three other women, who are also doing well. Two members of the group specialize in food processing, while the other two focus on perfume making, which has steady demand. This helps to protect the women from the seasonality of the confectionery business and to operate profitably throughout the year. The four women are from different communities, covering Arab, Masalit, Zagawa and Bargo. This is reflective of the peaceful coexistence and social cohesion that UNAMID promotes through its programmes in Darfur.

Islika Sisay, a UNAMID CSS officer, says livelihood training activities -- such as the one in which Suhair participated -- are part of a broader set

of Community Stabilization Projects (CSP). These projects -- designed by UNAMID in partnership with the Government of Sudan and local non-governmental organization (NGO) partners -- involve community-based stabilization and peace-building projects. They cover diverse topics such as livelihood and infrastructural development, and target at-risk youth and other vulnerable groups through the provision of on-the-job-training in construction, other vocational skills training and the establishment of income generating activities. The projects are spread across different localities in West Darfur, to reach as many communities as possible with the available resources.

"The goal of CSP in targeted communities is to create an enabling environment for peaceful co-existence and social cohesion, including through support to activities that provide social services, infrastructural development and alternative

Suhair Ali with a team of four other women, two members of the group specialize in food processing, while the other two focus on perfume making. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

livelihoods for vulnerable groups and communities," says Mr. Sisay.

The projects -- based on priorities agreed on in consultation with government, NGO partners and the community -- include construction of much needed community infrastructure such as police stations, courts, schools, hospital wards and multipurpose community centres.

Issa Adam Braka, Commissioner at the Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SDDRC), says the consultative process can be credited for the high success rate as it results to relevant projects with community ownership.

"The projects have been very successful because they are identified by communities, who are also involved in selecting the beneficiaries," says Mr. Braka.

This is supported by Mr. Sisay, who says sometimes the communities are the ones to initiate projects and then request assistance. An example includes the Babanousa Wadi (river) embankment in El Geneina, which resulted in homes along the river being protected from the adverse effects of soil erosion during the rainy season.

In addition to improving the lives of individuals involved, such projects offer a myriad of benefits to the community including improved community security; community empowerment through strengthened institutions of governance at community level; the enhancement of local and national authority ability to manage environmental and natural resources; enhancement of livelihood and food security; and better access to improved water. Other positives include availability of primary health care services; quality and child friendly basic education; opportunities for voluntary return of internally displaced persons; and the overall recovery and development of Darfur.

"The community value these projects because of the benefits and sta-

bility they bring," says Mr. Braka. "They have helped to boost security because they occupy youth who are out of school and who would otherwise be targeted by armed forces and criminals." Mr. Braka points to the immense economic, social and security benefits of the projects, noting that in addition to sources of livelihood, they provide relevant services to the community.

Mr. Sisay says that after receiving vocational training, participants are supported with equipment and organized into groups so they can benefit from group dynamics, motivate each other and hold each other accountable.

"The groups are more likely to benefit from micro-credit than individuals, as the group dynamic serves as collateral," says Mr. Sisay, adding that grouping participants together helps to ensure the sustainability of projects. Following their participation in various projects, some of those interviewed by Voices of Darfur said they foresaw a bright future by continuing to grow their businesses while at the same time contributing meaningfully to society.

"I intend to continue with this business, as I am living comfortably now," says Suhair, who would like to see more vocational training opportunities so more of her peers can benefit from both the economic empowerment and unity that result from such programmes.

Ahmed Haroon Mousa, 21, and his group of nine peers were trained as apprentices in welding and supported with equipment including a generator to start operations. Currently, the group works at the company where they did their apprenticeship but plan to branch out and start their own company. "This programme has helped us a lot and we are planning to expand and establish our own workshop," he says.

Halima Mohamed, a 30 year old mother of eight, was trained to make handicrafts and is grateful that she



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can look after her family as she is the sole bread winner following the discharge of her husband from work due to an injury.

"Life is better now that I have these skills and can fend for my family. Before the training, I used to sell peanut butter at the market, but now I can sell my products both at home and at the market," she says.

Awatif Abdalla, 37, a married mother of five, makes perfume and is grateful that she doesn't have to ask anyone for money but earns enough to provide a decent life for her family.

UNAMID has been carrying out violence reduction programs across Darfur since 2012. The programme moved progressively from the initial concept of community-based labour intensive projects (CLIPs), evolving into the more broad-based and clustered community stabilization proj-

ects (CSPs) with their far-reaching impact on targeted communities. To date, around 120 projects have been implemented, covering over 40 communities across Darfur. These projects have impacted about 10,786 direct beneficiaries, of whom 4,311 are women. Thousands of people have benefited indirectly across the five Darfur states.

CSPs provide at-risk and vulnerable youth with employable skills, while supporting government efforts to deliver much-needed infrastructure in the selected communities, as well as focusing on areas of IDP return and livelihood development projects. Such projects provide a range of technical, vocational and livelihood skills to empower participants to have a significant role in the rebuilding of their fragile communities. The projects also strengthen community co-

hesion and promote peaceful co-existence. Efforts in areas such as Shattai in South Darfur, El Daein in East Darfur and Zalingei in Central Darfur have proved remarkably impactful and will be built upon in the design of subsequent CSP projects.

As part of the CLIPs and CSP projects, the Mission has been able to support the rehabilitation of community infrastructure such as community policing units, rural courts and prison wards. This strengthens rule of law and governance at the community level. Also through CLIPs and CSPs, UNAMID has constructed youth and women's training and development centres in an effort to strengthen community cohesion by promoting interaction and peaceful coexistence of different groups in targeted communities. Moreover, a number of the projects were designed to provide

short-term income for participants while at the same time providing training to enhance their income-generating capability and support the development of employable skills.

UNAMID continues to engage a range of local partners on the design and implementation of programs, including local communities, government entities, implementing partners, the Sudan DDR Commission, the Ceasefire Commission, UNDP and WFP. The aim is to stabilize communities which are under threat of the recruitment of their members into armed violence, criminal gangs, banditry or other anti-social behaviors and to support the reduction of weapons proliferation. The CLIPs and CSPs have truly transformed the lives of people in Darfur communities in accordance with UNAMID's endeavours to create an enabling living environment for vulnerable groups in the region. ▀

Suhair with her brother Mohamed Abdallah in the shop she helped him to open. Photo by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.

UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Section concluded a vocational training project in Mukjar, Central Darfur on 13 October 2015. The training, implemented by the Sudanese Red Crescent, was part of the Mission's Community-based Labour-intensive Projects (CLIPS) programme. Photo by Mohammed Idriss, UNAMID.

UNAMID, in collaboration with the Government of Sudan and the UN Country Team, supported the launch of a disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration project in Zalingei, Central Darfur on 30 August 2016. Some 812 ex-combatants, drawn from the signatory movements to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, were targeted in the exercise, which also included registration and marking of civilians' arms. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.

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 on 8 July 2015. This project was originally proposed by the Sudanese Liberation Army-Free Will, a signatory of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Photo by Hamid, Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

UNAMID's Community Stabilization Section (CSS) funded vocational training for young women in Tandelti, West Darfur on 13 November 2016, through which some 45 participants learned tailoring, embroidery and perfume-making, among other handicrafts. Equipping young Darfuris with income-generating skills is part of the Mission's efforts toward building sustainable cities and communities with reduced inequalities as per the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Photo by Islila Sisay, UNAMID.



Peacekeepers Provide Free Medical Services in Darfur

UNAMID's peacekeepers serve in many roles across Darfur, uniquely building trust in communities, and often provide free medical services to those in need while performing their core functions such as assisting in addressing sexual and gender-based violence and promoting the rule of law.

BY MOHAMAD ALMAHADY

Since its establishment in 2007 in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1769, UNAMID continues with its mandated responsibilities focused on the protection of civilians; facilitation of delivery of humanitarian assistance and ensure safety of humanitarian actors; mediation between the government of Sudan and non-signatory armed movement on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in

Darfur (DDPD) and support to the mediation of inter-communal conflict in the Darfur region.

As UN peacekeeping operations have evolved to encompass a broader humanitarian approach, the Mission's police and military contingents have initiated self-funded humanitarian support services that steadfastly contribute to peace, security, stability and development for the host community.

UNAMID's Bangladesh peacekeepers conducted recently a medical clinic at Ardamata camp for the displaced, in El Geneina, West Darfur, in partnership with Sudanese military health authorities. More than 400 people were reached including with free medical services, clothing and school materials. Photo by Muntasir Sharafadin. UNAMID.

The peacekeepers, who daily interact with local communities at the grass-roots level during their patrols or outreach activities, are moved by the dearth of basic, essential social services in the Mission's area of responsibility.

Recently, UNAMID's peacekeepers from Bangladesh deployed in El Geneina, West Darfur, initiated the provision of free medical services to about 350 people from Kurti village and surrounding areas in West Darfur. This endeavor falls within the umbrella of the Mission's efforts aimed at assisting community members who cannot afford medical treatment, have limited access to health services and suffer from a shortage of medicines for diseases such as malaria, skin conditions and diarrhea.

During the campaign, recipients of this free medical service were overjoyed at receiving such support from UNAMID. "We have to walk for many miles, even for days sometimes, to get to El Geneina town for medical treatment. Some of our friends use donkey carts to travel. It is not easy. Therefore, this free medical service, which has come to us, in our village is most welcome," said Fatouma Mohamed, a returnee from Al Riyadh IDP camp, El Geneina.

The Mission's Bangladeshi peacekeepers have previously conducted similar free medical campaigns at Krinding 2 and Ardamata Camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in West Darfur, where more than 500 residents benefited from the service. In the course of the same campaign, peacekeepers also distributed wheelchairs and sewing machines to lessen the burden of



movement for physically challenged people and provide start-up facilities for income generating projects.

Lt. Col. Mizannur Rahman, Contingent Commander, explains that this initiative is meant to complement the efforts of UNAMID and the Government of Sudan in the protection of vulnerable people who may not have access to basic health services. "We are always pleased with the high turnout of patients when we hold free medical campaigns. The success of the campaign is attributed to concerted efforts made by all parties involved to ensure the local population benefits from these services", Lt. Col Rahman added.

Such free medical campaigns are not confined to IDP camps only but are extended to other quasi-governmental institutions such as the state federal prisons where UNAMID has provided healthcare services. Recently, more than 100 male and female patients, including inmates and prison officers in El Geneina, benefited from the exercise. They received antibiotics, anti-malarial medicines and vitamins as part of the continuing efforts by the UNAMID Rule of Law- Prisons Advisory Unit (RoL-PAU) to ensure an adequate, healthy and comfortable environment for inmates. This initiative was based on a comprehen-

hensive Memorandum of Understanding between the Mission and the State Prisons Administration.

Captain Khamis Mogadam, Head, West Darfur Prisons, commended UNAMID for this collaboration. "Free medical campaigns in prisons help to support efforts by local health institutions, thereby alleviating the suffering of inmates," Captain Mogadam stated.

Similar free medical support efforts have also been carried out by UNAMID peacekeepers in other parts of Darfur in a bid to ease the burdens of vulnerable populations who are unable to pay for their living, education and

food, let alone medical expenses, which have skyrocketed due to fluctuations in foreign currency.

In Nyala, South Darfur, the Mission's Nigerian peacekeepers have provided similar free medical services to more than 200 inmates and staff of the local state prison as part of a vital rehabilitation process for prison inmates during their confinement. This project, too, falls within the framework of the support provided by UNAMID RoL-PAU to the state prison and is aimed at promoting health services for inmates as well as engendering the close working relations and collaboration between PAU and the state prisons.

1 *El Geneina 23 August 2017: About 350 people from Kurti village, roughly 24 kilometres from El Geneina town in West Darfur, benefited from a free medical clinic and the distribution of clothes and toys for children by UNAMID through the Bangladesh Contingent. Photos by Matilda Moyo, UNAMID.*

2 *UNAMID's Pakistani peacekeepers, in collaboration with the Mission's hospital in Nyala, South Darfur, organized on 11 December 2016, a free health services camp for the displaced residing at the Khor Omer camp, East Darfur. The camp's residents were treated for a variety of diseases ranging from malaria, skin ailments and flu to suspected heart conditions. A similar camp was also organized for the inmates of El Daein Prison. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.*

3 *As part of activities to observe the Pakistan Independence Day Celebrations, UNAMID Pakistani Contingent held on 14 August 2017 a free Medical Camp for more than 2000 Internally Displaced Persons comprising of Men, women, the elderly and the children in El Daein. East Darfur. Photo by Abdulrasheed Yakubu, UNAMID.*



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UNAMID peacekeepers from Pakistan have also provided free medical campaign for the IDPs in Neem and Khor Omer camps in El Daein, East Darfur, where thousands of IDPs were treated for various ailments. The Mission's hospital in El Daein, run by the Pakistani contingent, also continues to provide medical services to the local community on a daily basis.

In North Darfur, Mongolian peacekeepers in Kabkabiya, continue to provide efficient health services to the host community residing in the area. UNAMID's hospital in this semi-isolated area has effectively contributed to development and stability by providing effective

healthcare services. Common diseases like malaria, cough, diarrhea, eye infections, respiratory problems and minor operations are treated in the hospital, in addition to free tests and medicines; more complex cases are referred to El Fasher hospitals for appropriate attention.

UNAMID's medical campaigns not only play a vital role in improving the health of the Darfuri community but also build tangible confidence amongst the host community towards UN peacekeepers.

From June to August 2017, the Mission's healthcare clinics and hospitals have helped more than 5,000 patients, in addition to the periodic medical campaigns or-

ganized during main UN observances such as the Nelson Mandela International Day, organized by the Mission's Communication and Public Information Section (CPIS) in Zam Zam IDP camp, North Darfur, where Egyptian, Rwandese and Indonesian peacekeepers provided free medical services to the local community whilst emphasizing the importance of hygiene and sanitation as a precautionary measure for acute watery diarrhea.

"Health awareness sessions run by UNAMID peacekeepers will most certainly improve our approach to the critical issue of hygiene in the camp. We hope the peacekeepers

will come back again with more medicine and information for our people, as this has increased their knowledge on prevention of some of these contagious diseases," said Ali Ishag, a community leader at ZamZam camp.

These views were echoed by Mr. Mohammed Ahmed, another community leader from ZamZam camp who participated in the free medical campaign. "Our local healthcare institutions are trying their best to provide medical care but are constrained. Free medical services from UNAMID constitute an invaluable opportunity for people to obtain effective medical attention," Mr. Ahmed said.

Similar free medical and aware-

ness campaigns have been conducted by UNAMID peacekeepers for teachers and students in the schools across Darfur to ensure that necessary measures and preventive action in the event of communicable diseases such as eye infections, acute watery diarrhea and respiratory infections, are undertaken.

As insecurity, instability and criminality continues in Darfur, medical interventions by UNAMID peacekeepers help reduce the effects of conflict and confrontation on individuals. In doing so, they are working to provide a greater sense of security and ultimately a brighter future to the longsuffering people of Darfur.

4 *UNAMID's nurse from Mongolia examining a patient from local community at UNAMID's hospital where they receive medical assistance. UNAMID peacekeepers run two hospitals and provide various medical assistance to the civilians living in the area and surrounding villages. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

5 *18 July is celebrated globally as Nelson Mandela International Day. In his message, United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, said that Mandela continues to inspire the world through his example of courage and compassion. UNAMID marked the day with a free medical clinic at Zam Zam camp for internally displaced persons in North Darfur. Photo by Mohamad Almahady, UNAMID.*

UNAMID Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) are small-scale, rapidly-implementable projects, of benefit to the population in Darfur. These projects are identified in consultation with the community including IDPs, local partners such as the local authorities, GoS line Ministries and Agencies, native administration, civil society and other stakeholders including UNCT and I/NGOs.

UNAMID sees QIPs as a viable mechanism used to address major conflict driver such as competition over scarce water resource through the drilling and construction of water boreholes across Darfur; support to peace and conflict mediation, empowerment of women, youth, civil society and disadvantaged groups including protection of women from the exposure to SGBV; strengthening the rule of law, local governance and native administration; improve the learning environment of boys

and girls school children at basic and high school level; enhance agricultural production and food security; and, protection of civilians.

Over 21 million (US) dollars has been released to various Implementing Partners (IPs) including Mission's Military Contingents (also acting as IPs) for the completion of 879 total approved QIPs across the 5 Sectors of Darfur for a 9-year period.





Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz, a Zalingei-based artist at his office in the Popular Police Primary School in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.

Painting for Peace: Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz

Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz, a Zalingei-based artist speaks to Voices of Darfur about his art, the role it plays in the ongoing peace process as well as the impact of the conflict on the artistic imagination of Darfuri youth.

BY KONE MOUROULAYE

Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz was born in 1962 in Nyala, South Darfur. He completed his primary education in Kass and went on to study at the Teachers' Training Institute

in El Fasher, North Darfur. Subsequently, he joined the Khartoum Technical Institute and, following his graduation, worked for the Female Teacher's Training Institutes

in Nyala, Omdurman and Madani. Currently, Mr Abdul-Aziz lives in Zalingei, Central Darfur where he is the Headmaster of the Popular Police Primary School.

VoD: When did you start your artistic career and what made you focus on fine art? Was it by chance?

Ali: It was not by chance at all; rather it was the education I received from great teachers. The arts were an integral part of our early school curriculum, and this constituted the starting point for me in the field of fine arts. Now art is a source of livelihood for me and my family.

VoD: The region of Darfur enjoys a rich historical and cultural heri-

tage. Have you managed, through your artistic work, to reflect that aspect? What subjects draw your attention, amidst this plethora of historical heritage?

Ali: Darfur has beautiful variations of climate and natural scenery. This beauty inspires us and our children.

The striking environment of Darfur and the kind hearts of the people constitute the driving force for my work. Yet, the ordeal undergone by the region has affected the fine arts.

Even in the classrooms, pupils tend to draw pictures of weapons or a vehicle mounted with a machine gun. However, In spite of the ongoing conflict, Darfur was and still remains a land of genuine beauty and grace.

VoD: What does the fine arts in particular mean to you? Does it mean discerning the beauty of the universe and then depicting it in different forms?

Ali: It means life as a whole. Our everyday activities, be it sleeping, eating, moving, singing, are depicted in the fine arts. It is also used to express the feeling of society, its sorrow and joys. Daily life is translated into the fine arts.

VoD: How does the fine artist view the subjects of war and peace?

Ali: War has taken a lot from us, a lot. I have repeatedly mentioned that. Our students, if given a sketch-based task, draw nothing but weapons and the calamities that have happened in Darfur during the conflict. We pray to Allah to grant us peace across our homeland. Peace brings happiness to everybody and makes people live their life in a peaceful manner.

VoD: What is the role of the artist in promoting stability, peaceful co-existence, and the disseminating of the culture of peace?

Ali: It is a great role which starts with educating children in schools on how to treat others and how to interact among themselves, despite different backgrounds and tribal affiliations. We foster in their minds the notion that we are all one body descended from the same father and mother. These are the pivotal points from which peace can start.

VoD: As an artist did you have a significant role in establishing the pillars of peace? When was that?

Ali: Since the arrival of the UN and other humanitarian organizations in Darfur, I have been engaged in a number of activities related to peace. This includes painting of logos and mottos on T-shirts and banners (fabric or metallic), all advocating peace.



Art work created by the artist, Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.

VoD: What is the status granted to women and children in your art?

Ali: Women and children are instrumental in my art. The woman is the mother, the kind caretaker and the guarantor of the survival of human kind. Likewise, children are the cornerstone in building future generations.

VoD: Do you believe that the fine arts have a pervasive role in society that could encourage people to desist from harmful practices?

Ali: Of course, the fine arts are a double-edged weapon. Art can create negative or positive effects, depending on our intentions.

VoD: How does the local community, especially in Darfur, view the fine artist?

Ali: It is not a negative view. On many occasions, people do react to and enjoy a painting, and this is something positive.

VoD: What is the status of fine art across Darfur in general and in Central Darfur in particular?

Ali: In Darfur, in general, fine art has a broad perspective due to the fact that it is key in establishing peace and reconciliation. In Central Darfur, fine art plays a significant role in conveying messages to the population whether through text or through drawings.

VoD: In your artistic work do you

have special preferences? In other words, do you emphasize certain genres rather than others?

Ali: Yes! I often incline towards writing Arabic and English calligraphy and painting. I do not prefer drawing so much.

VoD: What is your most famous creation? When did you complete it?

Ali: I have created a very large body of work and would prefer my audience to rate them, rather than myself.

VoD: What is your dream as a fine artist who lives in Darfur?

Ali: My dream is the prevalence of peace in every home, in every corner, under every tree in Darfur. I dream of peace for anyone who wants to sleep by every road and anywhere in the wilderness.

VoD: Do you believe that the fine arts can play a significant role in the convergence of views in the community, especially with regard to parties to the conflict?

Ali: Yes! Fine art has a considerable role to play in this respect. People may vary in their languages and culture, but paintings, for example, use a universal language to communicate peace messages. Paintings are understood by nearly every human being.

VoD: As a fine artist, what message would like to convey

to the community in Darfur?

Ali: Weapons have no place in society. Let us rest.

VoD: Do you have future projects?

Ali: I plan to establish a gallery or exhibition space in order to help educate children on the fundamental principles of fine arts.

VoD: Have you participated in any regional or local exhibitions?

Ali: Yes! Regionally, I participated in the native administration exhibition in Khartoum in 1985-86.

VoD: Can you mention some of your achievements and challenges you faced in your artistic career?

Ali: I have been regularly participating and representing Central Darfur in the national school tournament. We decorate walls with paintings and drawings and we do many other activities.

VoD: How do you manage to reconcile your work as a school teacher with your activities as an artist?

Ali: Artistic work needs a peace of mind. I enjoy my job as a teacher. Teaching itself is an artistic activity. We convey our experiences to the pupils.

VoD: How do you feel about the Darfuri community, in the present and in the future?

Ali: In the present, things are still not good, but if we educate people on good manners, morals, peace, the Darfuri community will eventually be a very prestigious and outstanding community in the globe.

VoD: Do you receive any financial or any other support for your artistic activities?

Ali: I have received no support from any entity whatsoever.

VoD: In your view what does the fine arts in Darfur need in order to grow, develop and compete internationally?

Ali: The fine arts in Darfur need financial incentives and basic infrastructure such as exhibition grounds, artistic forums where people deliberate on art-related issues and artists can connect and interact with each other.

These are the prerequisites for Darfuri artists to establish themselves at the international level. ▀



Art work created by the artist, Ali Ahmed Abdul-Aziz. Ali speaks to Voices of Darfur about his art, the role it plays in the ongoing peace process as well as the impact of the conflict on the artistic imagination of Darfuri youth. Photo by Kone Mouroulaye, UNAMID.



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