

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

# VOICES

of Darfur

SEPTEMBER 2012

## Darfur's Pottery

An Interview  
with Professor  
Mohammed Rashid

### Education Challenges in Rural Darfur

*Renewed momentum  
for school development*

### Improving Darfur's Maternal Healthcare

*Modern skills for a new  
wave of professionals*

### Darfur's Displaced Look to New Vocations

*Embracing new jobs,  
looking to the future*



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS  
MISSION IN DARFUR  
(UNAMID)



*The ceramic pottery of Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Rashid, a professor at El Fasher University, North Darfur. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.*

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

I'm pleased to introduce the September issue of *Voices of Darfur*, which continues in the new 32-page format, giving the magazine the ability to tell the story of UNAMID and the people of Darfur with more in-depth coverage. The current issue, like the July and August issues, 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, first an exclusive with Police Commissioner James Oppong-Boanuh, conducted by Emadeldin Rijal at UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. Mr. Oppong-Buanuh talked with *Voices* about a wide range of topics, including the challenges he has faced leading the Police component of the world's largest peacekeeping mission. Ala Mayyahi conducted the second interview, our cover feature, with Professor Mohamed Rashid. In the interview, Dr. Rashid talks about the tools and techniques of making handcrafted ceramics, and about his love for a craft that may soon become a lost art.

In the viewpoint published in this issue, Leonie M. Barnes, the Programme Manager for UNAMID's Ordnance Disposal Office, offers her thoughts on the emergence in Darfur of cigarette lighters that look like hand grenades. In "Sending Mixed Messages to Darfur's Children," Ms. Barnes argues that the cigarette lighters available in Darfur's shops run counter to good messaging, and may cause dangerous confusion in the minds of children, who may expect to collect such lighters from the field without recognising the deadly consequences.

In "Education Challenges in Rural Darfur," Emadeldin Rijal offers an in-depth look at the realities of Darfur's evolving education infrastructure. While examples of Darfur's students successfully moving from secondary schools to the university system may be plentiful these days, those opportunities are hard won in rural areas, which continue to struggle with teacher shortages and basic services.

In "Improving Darfur's Maternal Healthcare," Sharon Lukunka writes about childbirth in Darfur. In rural areas and in camps for internally displaced people, many babies are delivered at home with the assistance of birth attendants who rely on traditional practices. That situation is changing, thanks to hospital education programmes and midwife centres, which are equipping a new generation of professional midwives with modern methods for dealing with birth complications.

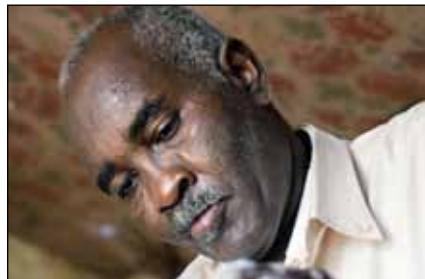
Finally, in "Darfur's Displaced Look to New Vocations," Abdullahi Shuaibu and Sharon Lukunka write about how the Darfuris living in the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people, like other displaced Darfuris no longer able to practice their former vocations or return to their homes, are seizing new vocational opportunities to make a nominal living as best they can.

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).

**Kirk L. Kroeker**

Head of Publications

## ON THE COVER



*In his studio, Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Rashid, a professor at the University of El Fasher in North Darfur, works on one of his pieces of pottery. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*



*A girl from Kuma Garadayat in North Darfur at the 1 August inauguration of several development projects implemented by UNAMID. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

# VOICES of Darfur

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# NEWS DEPARTMENT

## Delegation to Mitigate Friction in North Darfur

BY GUIOMAR PAU SOLE



On 21 August 2012, the local commissioner in Mellit, North Darfur, Mohamed Osman Ibrahim (right), welcomes Head of Office for North Darfur, Hassan Gibril (left). Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

A UNAMID team visited Mellit, North Darfur, on 21 August to meet with community leaders and mitigate friction between the Ziyadiah and Berti tribes, the two main tribes in the area. Disagreements between the tribes emerged on 15 August and resulted in clashes in which shops were looted and destroyed and six people were

reportedly killed and 12 injured.

Leading the team, UNAMID Head of Office for North Darfur, Hassan Gibril, offered UNAMID's assistance in mediation and intertribal reconciliation activities. Mr. Gibril noted that Mellit is known for the peaceful co-existence between tribes, and said he hoped that reputation

will continue well into the future. He also noted with appreciation that local initiatives by civil society leaders, native administration and the citizens in the area are underway to bring peace and security to the area.

During a meeting with Mr. Gibril and the UNAMID delegation, the chief umda (local leader) of the Abassi camp for internally displaced persons, Adam Abdurahim Kharif, said that the residents fear attacks similar to those that happened in the Kassab camp, and asked for more protection to prevent them. "We have learned from what happened to our brothers; we won't wait until it happens to us," he added, thanking the Mission's Team Site staff for their support and for increasing the number of peacekeepers in the camp.

Mr. Kharif went on to express his hope for the full implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which he said will bring security to the region and allow the displaced people to return to their places of origin.

The local commissioner of Mellit, Mohamed Osman Ibrahim, speaking about the violence and loss of life, said that what happened was a series of isolated incidents that have been resolved through goodwill. "The security situation is under total control; it's back to normal," he added.

The deputy leader of the Ziyadiah tribe, Rabih Mohammed Rabih, explained that members of the community moved quickly to contain the situation and now are working together to find a peaceful remedy. He added that both tribes live in a single location where they share land and other resources. He expressed hope for additional support to the community so its people will be able to make a living and not resort to violence or criminality. ■

## UNAMID Peacekeeper Killed in Line of Duty in South Darfur

BY CHRIS CYCMANICK

A UNAMID peacekeeper was killed on 12 August, and another was injured, while performing their duty of protecting civilians in Nyala, South Darfur.

The peacekeeper, from Bangladesh's Formed Police Unit, lost his life at approximately 3:15 a.m., when a gang surrounded and fired at the staff in the Mission's community policing centre inside the Otash camp for internally displaced persons. The armed men fled after the police unit

returned fire.

Acting Joint Special Representative (JSR) Aïchatou Mindaoudou condemned the attack which she said is a war crime under international law.

"The attack on our peacekeepers is cowardly and deplorable, and our thoughts go to the families and friends of the fallen and the injured," said the Acting JSR, who called on the Government of Sudan to continue to make serious efforts to apprehend the culprits and bring them to justice. ■



On 29 May 2011 in El Fasher, North Darfur, Brigade General Qazi Abidus Samad, from Bangladesh, places a wreath in remembrance of the fallen during the ceremony for the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## UNAMID Concerned over Violence in North Darfur

BY CHRIS CYCMANICK AND GUIOMAR PAU SOLÉ



On 9 August 2012 UNAMID personnel unload medical supplies for the residents of Kassab camp for displaced persons, in Kutum, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

On 6 August 2012, UNAMID leadership expressed concern over the spread of violence and attacks against civilian population in the town of Kutum, North Darfur. The series of incidents began on 1 August when the Alwaha district Commissioner and his driver were shot dead and their vehicle was carjacked by three unknown armed men.

Later in the day, the official's vehicle was recovered by Sudanese security agents 2 kilometres from the Kassab

camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Subsequently, on the same day, armed men surrounded Kassab, looted the market, burned down the Sudanese Police post in the camp, reportedly killed four people (three civilians and one police officer) and injured six others.

Similar events leading to the deterioration in the security and humanitarian situation occurred the following days in and around Kutum and the Kassab and Fataborno IDP camps, including fighting between the armed elements and Government forces, as well as looting and displacement of civilians.

UNAMID has taken measures, including establishing a 24/7 presence in affected IDP camps, to protect civilians and

reinforce the strength of its forces. On 6 August, a Mission assessment team visited Kutum and Kassab to meet with local authorities and community representatives, and to evaluate the conditions on the ground and the needs of the population.

Mission leadership directly engaged Government officials on their responsibility to provide protection and defuse tension, and initiated a mediation track between the feuding parties as provided for in UN Security Council Resolution 2063 (2012). In addition, the Mission leadership requested that the Government investigate the reported attacks on and abuses of the civilians and the destruction and looting of equipment belonging to humanitarian agencies. ■

### Gereida, South Darfur



On 25 July 2012, a girl farms the land during the rainy season. Women, children and elderly people living in camps typically farm the nearby lands and let the men, who are less likely to be attacked, work the areas farther away. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## El Fasher, North Darfur



On 12 August 2012, two men set up trays with food at Al Tijane School to celebrate Iftar, the evening meal when Muslims break their fast during Ramadan. UNAMID sponsored the event, which was attended by nearly 500 people. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## UNAMID Assists Young People in Ardamata and Kass

BY MUNTASIR SHARAFADIN AND AMANI AHMED

On 31 July 2012, UNAMID's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) section launched several Community-based Labour-Intensive Projects (CLIPs) in Ardamata, West Darfur. The projects are designed to give young people in the area job skills as they work on construction projects, such as building a roof to provide shelter for visitors to Ardamata Prison.

CLIPs are designed to support the efforts of the Sudanese Government to address the needs of at-risk youth and other vulnerable groups in violence-affected communities. The beneficiaries of the projects in Dar-

fur, mainly people age 18-35, of whom 25 per cent are women, will learn several livelihood and life skills to improve their employability and social integration, while at the same time helping to rebuild their fragile communities.

Earlier in the week, on 29 July 2012, UNAMID's DDR section launched an agricultural project in the Kass locality in South Darfur. The project is scheduled to be implemented during the next four months in coordination with the Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and in cooperation with the local nongovernmental organisation Mubadiroon.



On 29 July 2012, UNAMID's DDR section launched an agricultural project in the Kass locality of South Darfur. The agricultural project is expected to benefit 500 families and 50 young people living in four area villages. Photo by Amani Ahmed, UNAMID.

The agricultural project is expected to benefit 500 families and 50 young people living in four villages in the Kass locality. The communities will receive seeds, digging tools and training. Several other CLIPs are being implemented in Darfur. These CLIPs, much like the construction and agricultural projects, are designed to facilitate on-the-job-training for young people. ■

## El Fasher, North Darfur



**On 19 August 2012, Muslims attend morning prayer. One of the main bridges to El Fasher broke down due to heavy rains. Many people living outside the city couldn't attend the religious celebration at the main mosque. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.**

## UNAMID Acting Chief Inaugurates Development Projects in North Darfur

BY EMAEDELIN RIJAL

On 1 August 2012, hundreds of men, women and school children took part in the launch of six quick-impact projects (QIPs) implemented by UNAMID's peacekeepers in Kuma Garadayat village, located some 85 kilometres northwest of El Fasher, North Darfur. The facilities are designed to improve the health services, sanitation and education in the area.

The projects include four classrooms for the boys, four classrooms for the girls, two ablutions, a women's development centre and a medical clinic.

"Our gratitude goes to UNAMID's Senegalese soldiers who have spent months to construct these buildings

which we hope will significantly improve the quality of life at Kuma Garadayat," said Acting Joint Special Representative Aïchatou Mindaoudou. "In a larger sense, UNAMID's projects represent our commitment to peace in Darfur and what peace could bring to your communities."

Mohammed Abbaker, a community representative, said the day is an important one for Kuma Garadayat. "Our hope has become a reality," he said, explaining that the first phase of the projects has addressed the bigger part of the community's concerns, especially in connection to education and women's development.

During the inauguration, the UNAMID Acting JSR announced that the Mission



**On 1 August 2012, children from Kuma Garadayat welcome UNAMID Acting Joint Special Representative Aïchatou Mindaoudou, on her arrival to the village. The Acting JSR officially presented to the population in Kuma Garadayat several quick-impact projects, which included new classrooms for girls and boys. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.**

will support the training from the rural area of Kuma of 10 traditional midwives Garadayat. ■

## Security Paramount to IDP Returns in North Darfur

BY SHARON LUKUNKA



On 9 August 2012, women from the Kassab camp for displaced persons in Kutum, North Darfur, wait to be assisted by a doctor at a temporary medical clinic set up to assist those injured during the violent clashes in the area. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

Security concerns were among several issues discussed on 12 August during a meeting between UNAMID Force Commander Patrick Nyamvumba and leaders from the Kassab camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kutum, North Darfur.

Lt. Gen. Nyamvumba met with community leaders from

the camp to express his condolences for the lives lost in the violent clashes that began on 1 August and to assure the IDP representatives of the Mission's commitment to work with everyone to ensure full protection of civilians in the camp. "As commander of the forces, I have requested that permanent forces are stationed in Kassab

camp," he said. "They have instructions to protect and defend the civilians on the ground."

The Force Commander urged the community leaders to share information with the Mission. "The best way to avoid this kind of violence is to deter it," he noted. "But without information, there is little we can do."

Speaking on behalf of IDP leaders, Yousif Musa Ali said protection is the camp's main concern. "That is why we agreed to meet and work together with UNAMID," he said. "Without protection on the ground, it is very difficult to tell our people to go back."

Lt. Gen. Nyamvumba also met Kutum Rural Hospital's medical manager, Dr. Noureddine Abdul Shafi, and the Locality's Deputy Commissioner, Mustafa Bakhit Abdalla, to present them with medical supplies for the hospital and for temporary clinics set up to treat the camp residents injured during the clashes.

Following the incidents on 1 August, Kassab camp residents initially sought refuge among the host population in Kutum town, and were forced to live in open areas without basic services. In collaboration with the World Health Organization, the North Darfur Ministry of Health and the Kutum Rural Hospital, a UNAMID medical team established a temporary clinic at the secondary school in Kutum to provide assistance.

Patients at the clinic were treated for various diseases, including respiratory infection, stomach pain, chronic sickness, trauma and malaria, as well as injuries suffered during the incidents in and around the camp. The temporary medical clinic operated for several days.

The Mission is continuing to work not only with humanitarian agencies to find ways to provide relief to the affected population, but also with the Kassab camp community to secure the area. ■

## El Fasher, North Darfur



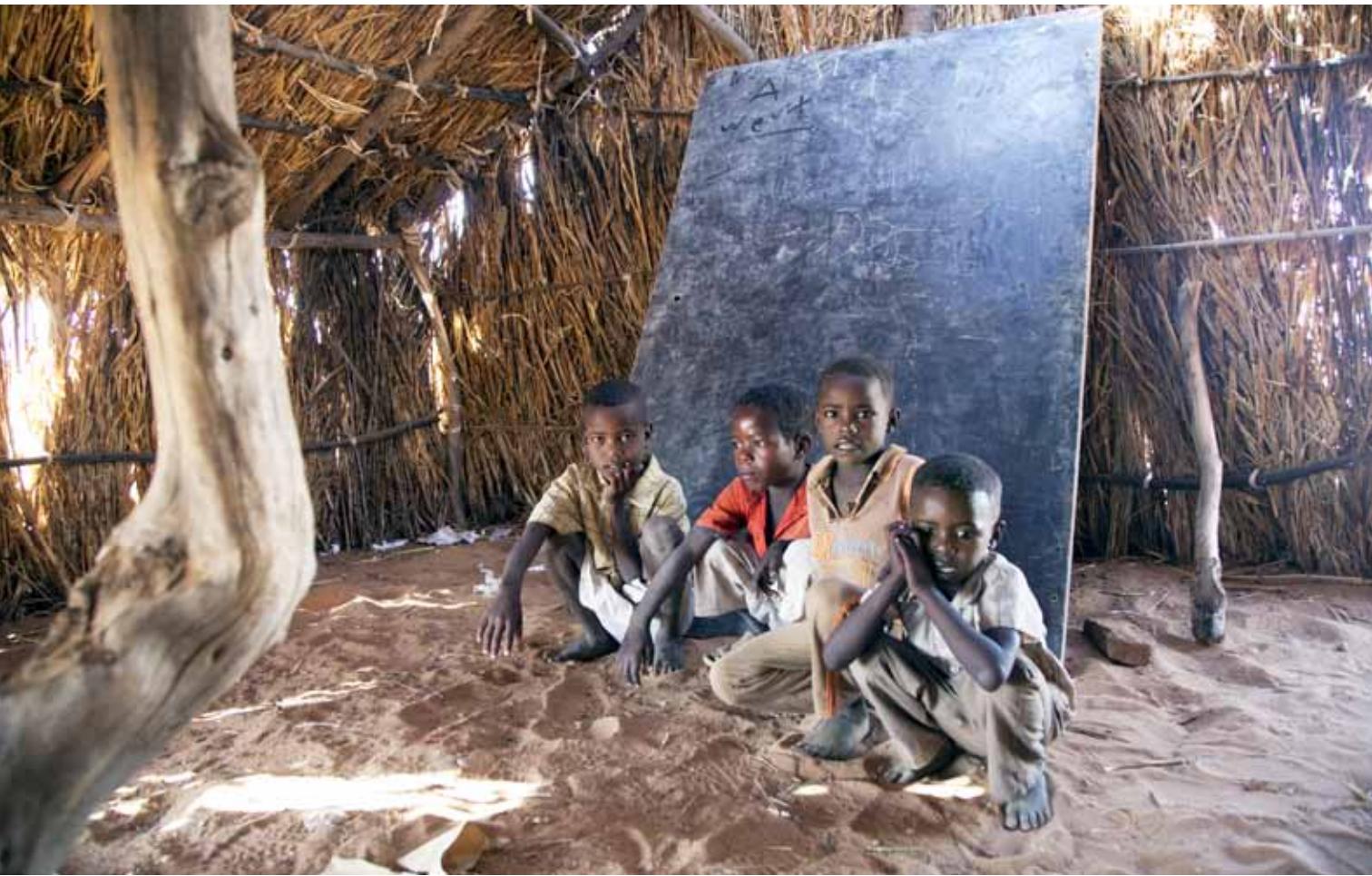
On 15 August 2012, Nurlehoda Mohammed works on the construction of a community centre as part of a Community-based Labour-Intensive Project sponsored by UNAMID. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

# EDUCATION

## Education Challenges in Rural Darfur

Despite many improvements to the education infrastructure in Darfur during the past 20 years, communities across the region, especially in rural areas, face major challenges.

BY EMAELDIN RIJAL



On 21 November 2010, in North Darfur, children smile in their classroom at the school in Arabashir village near El Fasher. While many classrooms in Darfur are made with mud bricks and grass, classrooms made with branches and grass, such as the one shown here, are common in many rural villages. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**M**any of Darfur's rural localities lack primary and secondary schools, forcing villagers to send their sons and daughters to other localities to attend classes. Students living in the village of Kuma Garadayat, for example, must walk two hours, each way, to attend secondary school. Like many villages in Darfur, Kuma Garadayat had, until recently, only one basic school,

which was itself lacking services such as toilets and water.

The situation in Kuma Garadayat is not unique. Localities across Darfur are addressing similar challenges. The primary and secondary schools that serve Darfur's students are facing not only increased enrolments and shortage of teachers and workers, but also problems with basic infrastructure, including du-

rable buildings, chairs and supplies. Underequipped schools and overcrowded classrooms, especially in rural areas in Darfur, are but one problem among a range of problems that educators face in the region.

Following Sudan's regime change in 1989, Darfur's education system expanded significantly as resources were pumped into general education, paving

## With the growing concern about a need to continue the development momentum that has been happening in Darfur during the past two decades, the communities themselves have been making an effort to contribute to the infrastructure.

the way to establish a formal higher education system in the region. In 1990, a presidential decree established El Fasher University in North Darfur. And in 1994, another presidential decree established the University of Nyala in South Darfur and the University of Zalingei in West Darfur, now Central Darfur.

Subsequently, there has been a gradual increase in the number of primary and secondary schools. For example, the number of preschools in North Darfur in 2008 was 459. In 2012, the number has risen to 643. The primary schools in Darfur numbered 949 in 2008. Now there are 1,138. Similarly, the number of secondary schools has increased from 105 to 145 in the same period.

The rise in the number of schools in North Darfur and in other states in the region, and the emergence of a fully funded university system, is helping to ease the economic burden on families who cannot afford to send their children to study at universities outside Darfur.

Nooredin Omer, age 15 and a student in the village of Laskana, some 60 kilometres west of El Fasher, says his hope is to attend El Fasher University. Nooredin will be taking his secondary school's final exams this year, and will be ready to advance to university studies. He says he has no interest in going far from home for his studies. Instead, he intends to stay close to home and his family.

Such examples of Darfur's students successfully moving from secondary schools to the university system are common these days, but those op-

portunities are still hard won in rural areas. Mr. Siddig Ali Gamar, a teacher at Kuma Garadayat's school in North Darfur, says that the ability for his students to learn is severely diminished by the school's makeshift buildings.

The school in Kuma Garadayat used to consist of old, unfenced buildings made of mud and grass. These buildings, says Mr. Gamar, did not provide adequate protection against heavy rains and storms. "We have suffered a lot from the poor infrastructure," he says.

Mr. Gamar's students are not shy when it comes to voicing their opinions about the school's past conditions. "This caused us boredom," says Mohammed Ahmed, a 14-year-old student in Mr. Gamar's class.

Such school buildings, which must be renovated each year to keep them functional, typically serve several hundred students annually. In the case of Kuma Garadayat, the school serves more than 700. "The pupils were just seated on the floor," says Mr. Gamar.

In addition to the problems with the buildings, schools in rural areas also face problems with basic services, such as water. Compounding these problems is the shortage of teachers. Schools in remote locations frequently must rely on volunteers to teach.

With the growing concern about a need to continue the development momentum that has been happening in Darfur during the past two decades, the communities themselves have been making an effort to contribute to the infrastructure. In Kuma Garadayat, the locals constructed two new classrooms from brick. These classrooms are much more durable than the mud and grass buildings that had housed the school in the past.

"It is for the sake of our children that we have a moral obligation to make the learning environment com-

*On 1 August 2012, in Kuma Garadayat, teacher Roda Abbaker Izzeldin guides her young students to the inauguration ceremony of six UNAMID-sponsored development projects in the locality. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*





In August 2012, boys in Kuma Garadayat, North Darfur, sit inside their new school building, which was constructed as part of six quick-impact projects undertaken in the area. The projects, which also include a clinic and a women's centre, were implemented by UNAMID peacekeepers from Senegal and inaugurated by Acting Joint Special Representative Aïchatou Mindaoudou. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**“We at the Ministry of Education, alongside UNAMID and other international organisations, have real partnerships and large roles to play for the sake of education.”**

—Al-Tigani Sineen

fortable,” says Mr. Mohammed Abbaker, a member of the community in Kuma Garadayat and one of the people who helped to fund and build the new structures.

In Kuma Garadayat, UNAMID assisted these efforts through quick-impact projects (QIPs) designed to strengthen Darfur’s education infrastructure. Recently, the pupils of Kuma Garadayat’s mixed school celebrated the launch of eight new permanent QIPs-funded classrooms, each made of durable brick, and two new ablutions.

“The construction of these facilities

is a dream and will definitely provide an environment that will be conducive to learning,” says Mr. Gamar. “It is a revival in education.”

The launch of these new facilities is expected to reduce the burden facing the community, and especially the parents, all of whom must pay teachers’ wages, provide school supplies and fund the school’s physical maintenance.

Despite such positive examples of infrastructure improvement, development of education infrastructure across the conflict-torn region has been moving slowly, largely due to a lack of fund-

ing. Available funds have been diverted mostly to programs directly related to the peace process.

Al-Hadi Jumma, age 50, recalls the time when there was almost no chance for students in rural areas to move on to higher education because there was no formal primary or secondary school system in remote locations. Only in recent decades, primary schools have begun to emerge in these areas in Darfur. Traditionally, the only widespread form of education in rural areas were the Khalawis, the schools that teach the Koran.

“Every year, I used to go many miles to attend classes in the town of El Geneina, far away from where I was living,” says Mr. Jumma, who notes that his father usually took him on the back of a camel to get to classes at a remote secondary school.

Mr. Al-Tigani Sineen, Minister of Education in North Darfur, says the

Ministry is working on a project that will provide “electronic classrooms” designed to address the issue of book shortages. According to the Minister, more than 2,000 teachers have been recruited to bridge the gap in teacher shortages. He points out that, while some funding is available, the financial requirements of the past were far less than they are currently, due to the increase in the number of schools.

Despite all the issues facing education in Darfur, he says, progress is being made and infrastructure development is moving forward. Even as many projects are proceeding, children in rural areas likely will face challenges for many years to come.

For example, in Kuma Garadayat, while several new buildings have been constructed, preschool children have no building of their own. They sit under a tree to receive their early education. This is Kuma Garadayat’s kindergarten. Ms. Roda Abbaker Izzeldin, the kindergarten’s teacher, says environmental conditions, such as rain or harsh weather, far too easily deter children from attending classes at the tree.

The challenges associated with rural education are not unique to Darfur. Such challenges are common to many rural areas in developing countries. However, the conflict in Darfur between the government and armed movements has cast a shadow over education. “Lack of stability and acts of violence taking place from time to time have not only led to the deterioration of education in Darfur, but also have resulted in the suspension of schools,” says Ms. Hawa Al Sadig, a teacher at the Um Hijleg school in North Darfur.

“I was delayed a year because of the fighting,” says Ibrahim Ali, a student who says that his school in Ellait, North Darfur, was closed in 2004 as a result of the conflict in the area. Ibrahim points out that such situations remain a stumbling block to education, and cause many students to leave school.

Ismaeil Adam, age 17, says he took the secondary school’s final exams but was unable to pass as a result of his education being interrupted several times due to school closures. However, with



On 5 December 2010 in El Fasher, North Darfur, children in the Ahigro school. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## Examples of Darfur’s students successfully moving from secondary schools to the university system are common these days, but those opportunities are still hard won in rural areas.

support of his parents and relatives, Ismaeil has enrolled in a private school in El Fasher. And he has rekindled his ambitions for entering the university system. “I want to study medicine,” he says.

Examples of Darfuri students attending universities relatively close to their homes have only been possible during the past 20 years, thanks to the Government of Sudan’s education policies and its partnerships with various agencies and actors who have been helping to channel resources to strengthen the education system here.

“We at the Ministry of Education, alongside UNAMID and other international organisations, have real partnerships and large roles to play for the sake of education,” says Minister Sineen, who explains that the Ministry of Education began a coordinated effort in early 2012 to address all aspects of the educational system in Darfur.

The Ministry is reviewing what has

been achieved since the beginning of the year and determining the best way forward to address the needs and realities of the current situation, particularly in rural areas. “We are doing our best to overcome the obstacles and challenges that the education process poses here,” he says.

As part of this coordinated effort, the Ministry of Education has established committees in all parts of Darfur to work directly with communities and determine local needs. He expressed hope that such collaborative efforts will result in positive and measurable changes.

UNAMID has constructed dozens of new permanent classrooms in schools across Darfur, has renovated many others and has provided benches for those schools so students will not have to sit on the floor. These projects represent UNAMID’s commitment to work with communities in Darfur and ensure that they are safe and habitable. ■

# INTERVIEW

## Commissioner James Oppong-Boanuh on UNAMID's Policing Strategy

On 29 August 2012, Commissioner James Oppong-Boanuh talked with *Voices of Darfur* about the work he is doing and the challenges he has faced in leading the Police component of the world's largest peacekeeping mission.

BY EMAELDIN RIJAL



UNAMID Police Commissioner James Oppong-Boanuh. Photo by Kirk L. Kroeker, UNAMID.

Assuming the position of Police Commissioner on 19 August 2010, Mr. James Oppong-Boanuh came to UNAMID with knowledge of the Darfur operation from its formative stages. From November 2004 to March 2005, Mr. Oppong-Boanuh served as Deputy Police Commissioner of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), where he also served as Acting Police Commissioner for three months.

Currently, under Mr. Oppong-Boanuh's leadership, UNAMID's Police component is focused on several objectives, including streamlining UNAMID Police operations as the Mission begins to reduce the number of police personnel while still providing robust protec-

tion to Darfuris and helping to improve the capabilities of Darfur's local police. As part of a concerted effort to achieve these objectives, the Commissioner has been focusing on several new projects and strategies.

On 29 August 2012, at UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur, Commissioner Oppong-Boanuh talked with *Voices of Darfur* about the work he is doing and the challenges he has faced in leading the Police component of the world's largest peacekeeping mission.

**Voices of Darfur:** Please tell us the background story on how you came to Darfur and what your initial thoughts were when you received the appointment.

**Oppong-Boanuh:** In coming to Darfur, I was no stranger to the area. Prior to UNAMID, I was the AMIS Deputy Police Commissioner. Actually, I was the leader of the Police Advanced Team that set up that mission. I acted as Commissioner for a few months until the Commissioner was appointed. Apart from that, peacekeeping has been an interesting area for me and has been part of my career. When I was appointed, there were a lot of things that we were doing in AMIS which I thought were beneficial to the people of Darfur. Having an opportunity to continue doing those activities was for me very exciting.

**VOD:** On 19 August 2010, when you formally assumed the role of UNAMID's Police Commissioner, what was the situation like in comparison to how it is now?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** When I arrived in 2010, the deployment for UNAMID Police was in a low state. Now we are in a very high state of deployment. Conditions on the ground for the officers were harsh and stringent back then. And now we have the supercamps where officers can live in accommodations with proper roofs and proper floors. And in terms of hostilities, our counterpart stakeholders were not as open as they are now. It is far better now than in August 2010 when I arrived.

**VOD:** How would you describe your current policing strategy? Would you characterize it as a modification or extension of former Police Commissioner Michael Fryer's, or have you embarked on a distinctly different strategic path?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** The strategy

for Michael Fryer cannot be the same strategy for James Oppong-Boanuh because we are leading the police component in different phases. When you set up a mission and you need to stabilize the mission, you open up your sectors, your team sites and patrol sites, and then you stabilize the situation to maintain what you have established. Michael did a lot—and let me take this opportunity to acknowledge his work. He achieved a lot. He was always going out on patrols. He led the police convoys with the support of our military personnel. All those vehicles that we see here now were brought by UNAMID Police with the support of the military counterparts.

During that period, it was good to go out in the field each day to ensure that you open up the sectors and the team sites and the patrol sites. When you've done that, you need to make sure that for those team sites, sectors and patrol sites you can run them effectively. That is how I see my role. When I came here, I set up a few things to ensure that the structures that we put in place will be maintained. So that is the difference between the two of us. In effect, I have built on his foundation to ensure that our structures will enable us to give our best in terms of services to our clients. Our structures will be well maintained and capable of running effectively.

**VOD:** Can you tell us about your strategy for leading a multinational police force with a common purpose? How many different nationalities have you led so far in UNAMID and how do you ensure that the police under your leadership are conforming to a single approach to policing?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** What guides my strategy is teamwork. We have 32 different nationalities, and all these officers come with their own concepts and their own ideas about policing. Therefore, if you take a subject like community policing, every country has its own version

of community policing, even though the principles might be the same. To ensure that such strategies are successful, you need to ensure all officers are on the same page. You also have to ensure that in an international environment, the core values of the United Nations and the African Union are upheld in the officers' daily dealings with colleagues, counterparts and stakeholders. Apart from that, officers must comply with international policing practices that are recognized and accepted.

**VOD:** Does that mean you organize training sessions to acquaint your officers with these internationally accepted policing practices?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** When they ar-

est initiatives related to women?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** When I arrived, one of the very first things that I set myself to do was to ensure that we have a women's police network. I shared the idea with my colleagues and my officers and I am happy to say that by December 2010 we had established the UNAMID Police Women's Network, which is a network of all the police women in UNAMID. I must say that this has been effective in organizing women and bringing them up in the activities in their work with UNAMID. For instance, now they are no longer reluctant to apply for positions when they become vacant, unlike previously. I must also say that this network has been recognized as a best practice by other missions.

Apart from the women's network, we have established sexual and gender-based violence training for all new arrivals in the mission. Originally, it used to be only for women, but now we have done it for all officers. It is not limited only to females. I have mainstreamed gender and women's issues in all of our activities.

Furthermore, I have tried to build the capacity of internally displaced persons and our colleagues in the Sudanese police through education on sexual and gender-based violence cases in terms of how they must be reported and investigated. In an environment like this, it is very difficult for women to report cases involving sexual and gender-based violence. With this education, the situation has improved a lot.

We had tried several methods to get the people of Darfur, particularly women, to report cases involving sexual and gender-based violence. It has not been easy, but there has been some improvement as a result of these education programs.

Also, we hold sessions for Sudanese police women on leadership and communication skills. In the very first ver-

**“Our quick-impact projects have focused on establishing, constructing and rehabilitating police stations, and ensuring that when displaced people return from their camps, they have protection structures in place so they can live normal lives.”**

rive, we have what is called an induction training. After that, we rely on in-service training at different levels: at the team sites and patrol sites. We organize separate courses for them. Even though we are operating across Darfur, different situations and different places in Darfur demand that we police a little bit differently. We adapt to the situations in the different localities. For example, if you go to Nyala, the environment is a bit different from the environment we have in El Fasher. And it is the same situation when you go to El Geneina. You have to apply different strategies to the principles. Otherwise you will not succeed.

**VOD:** Women are playing an active role in UNAMID's police and figure prominently in your capacity-building strategies. Can you tell us about your lat-

sion I attended, there were a few police officers around who were females and they were seated far away from the centre of activity. I did not understand, so I asked my colleagues and they said the women must be in a separate place. But I am happy to say that now I can see them seated with their colleagues. And for me that is a very important point.

I have already mentioned that we set up the UNAMID Police Women's Network. One of our initial tasks was to have a similar organization, a similar network set up in the Sudanese police, and I am happy to say that in 2011 we had the executives of the Government of Sudan Police Network formed in Darfur. The actual network is going to be set up in September 2012. But what we did in 2011 was to establish the executives and make sure that the network would formally launch in 2012.

**VOD:** UNAMID Police have been conducting training and skill-building activities for Darfuri women in camps for displaced people. What is the overall goal of these activities?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** What these activities do is to actually economically empower the women at least to be able to take care of their daily needs. When there is a conflict like this, people have to leave their livelihood or sources of their livelihood, and if you have people who are in camps and they have nothing to do, you give them brick-making skills or mat-weaving skills so they can sell their products and then they can use the money that they get to buy school textbooks and uniforms for their children.

**VOD:** Have these activities had a measurable impact?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** I would say that these activities have enhanced the livelihood and lifestyle of these displaced persons and, in particular, the women who have gone through these programmes. However, we should be doing more of these activities because the more we do it, the more you get encouraged by the people taking this kind of training.

**VOD:** As an aspect of protecting

civilians and facilitating humanitarian assistance, the Mission has embraced the "early recovery and development" concept. How are UNAMID's police officers in the field supporting this concept on a practical level?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** Before answering this question, let me just mention that you have to look at what we mean by protection of civilians in the context of early recovery and development. Concerning protection of civilians, we do physical escorts, which is part of our tasks under UNAMID's mandate. Our Formed Police Units escort women into the markets and to the farms to cut grass and fetch water and things like that. We also escort UNAMID staff and others who are going on duty.

But apart from that, there is another

**"I expect that the Sudanese police will continue to embrace the principles of modern and internationally accepted policing standards, which will ensure that whatever structures we put in place will continue on well into the future."**

aspect to this, which is the protection of the rights of the people. We do this in coordination with our Sudanese police counterparts by focusing on policing according to internationally accepted principles. If people's rights are protected, that means the aspect of protection of civilians has also been taken care of. So our capacity-building initiatives and our joint-training initiatives with the Sudanese police are all geared toward the protection of civilians.

Now about early recovery and development: when you have a situation where there is conflict, where structures are destroyed and people need to go back to where they came from or need to settle in areas other than where they are from, what you can do to help them is to ensure that you have infrastructure on the ground. It's not only about water, food, clothing, and so forth, but also about security. What is the level of polic-

ing? Are they going to be able to report issues and have the police or any other system respond when they have difficulties or when there is violence?

Those are the areas in which we are involved. Our quick-impact projects have focused on establishing, constructing and rehabilitating police stations, and ensuring that when displaced people return from their camps, they have protection structures in place so they can live normal lives.

I mentioned the patrols that our officers conduct. We give protection to the people, and when people see our patrols, they know UNAMID has a presence. That is a form of confidence-building. In a conflict situation, the victims are mostly women and children. Children go to school and the women have to find ways to address their livelihood challenges. That is why we have involved ourselves in mat-weaving and brick-making training and escorting women who go to fetch firewood, grass and water, so that they don't get attacked.

In addition, we have introduced community policing in the camps. We have done this in collaboration with our Sudanese counterparts. In every activity we are doing, we want to ensure that Sudanese police take ownership so that, when we leave, the structures that we put in place will remain, especially the community-policing structures and internationally accepted principles of policing.

**VOD:** Given the recent requirement to reduce the size of UNAMID's police force over 18 months, what is your strategy for maintaining the same level of police security with fewer police officers in the field?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** In terms of what we refer to as the review of uniformed personnel, I think the background idea is to do more with less. So what you do is examine your system to find overlaps, wastes, or drains, and sharpen your strategies and make sure that you have the minimum operating personnel. But it is also important to look at your strategies,



On 5 August 2012, in North Darfur, First Lieutenant Sigit Jatmiko, of Indonesia's Formed Police Unit, interacts with children in the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons during a morning patrol. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

how you conduct your patrols, how you enhance the work while using fewer resources. That is exactly what we are doing now.

In connection with this, there are some strategies we are putting in place to make sure we are able to do more work. What we are doing is realigning field deployments with the military to ensure that if there is a place where the Formed Police Units can protect our staff members, we let the military leave that duty to the FPUs. In those areas where we cannot have FPUs, the military will continue to operate. We should not have overlaps. We have limited it now to be more effective for our people to respond whenever there is any incident.

We have looked at all structures. Some departments have been merged. It does not mean that we are going to stop what we have been doing. We are going to do the same the thing or even more. But we have reduced the number of departments, which means that we

are going to have fewer people to manage those departments. What we are doing now is have a lot more team sites and patrol sites, and we are reducing the number of administrative officers used to manage the headquarters locations. Now all of them are in the team sites.

In addition, we are managing the patrol sites from the team sites, so we have only one set of administrators taking care of the patrol sites. This frees up personnel. This strategy will enhance and streamline our reporting channels and it will rationalize the personnel deployment.

**VOD:** UNAMID's Police component has partnered with Sudanese police in numerous ways, in capacity building, community policing, and even on construction projects. Could you provide a few highlights of these partnerships?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** Quite honestly this is an area that I am very proud of. In capacity building, community policing, construction projects and other areas,

we have collaborated well with our Sudanese counterparts. I am proud of what we have done in these areas. In the area of capacity building, we have been able to provide training not only for the Sudanese police but also for internally displaced people to ensure that at least they will be able to assist the Sudanese police in terms of the community policing that is being done in the camps.

On quick-impact projects, we have been able to construct, renovate and rehabilitate police stations across sectors. We have had a little bit of difficulty in securing donor funding for police-related projects, which would have gone a long way toward winning the hearts and minds of all our partners. If we are able to get funding, we will be able to extend our activities in these areas.

In terms of construction and provision of facilities, we have had four police training centres built in El Fasher, Nyala, El Geneina and Zalingei. And we have been able to get the cooperation of Su-



On 12 February 2012, Ann-Marie Orler, Director of Police in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and James Oppong-Boanuh, UNAMID's Police Commissioner, talk with teachers at the Primary School in Turba, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**“There are improved relations with the Sudanese police officers at all levels. We are able to follow up on the cases that are reported to them, and I believe that there has been an improvement in handling the cases.”**

danese police when it comes to critical investigations.

**VOD:** What would you identify as the current biggest challenge in your work and the work of the UNAMID police officers in the field?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** The major problem that we have is how to get officers to come into the mission—which we call personnel generation, which means getting the people from their countries, getting them into the system and then getting them here. One of the major challenges that we have had is the visa issue. Unfortunately, the Government of Sudan has been insisting on granting visas only to Arabic-speaking officers,

and we have only a few countries providing officers who speak Arabic. On the brighter side, now we are getting officers, from North African countries, who speak Arabic.

Another challenge is the unpredictability of the security situation in Darfur. Situations can change at any time. Security depends on a lot of social factors. Recently there were a few skirmishes in the area of Kutum. Some of these things you cannot actually take into account in advance of them happening. And when these things happen in an environment like this, the officers could be targeted. Demonstrations, for example, can give way to violence at any moment.

Another challenge is the denial of access to some areas. Sometimes you may need to go to a certain area and to talk to internally displaced people, and then you are told there is an operation in the area and you cannot proceed.

Another challenge is getting the confidence of our stakeholders. We are working with institutions and with the Sudanese police. What we refer to as colocation is a system where we may have Sudanese police and UNAMID police officers operating from the same base; whatever they do, we offer advice and assist in any way we can. This has not been possible here because of several factors, one of which is confidence. Recently, however, we made a breakthrough and we now have colocation centres established in a few camps. This will be a system where our officers work closely with the Sudanese police.

The last challenge that I want to mention is the fact that Darfur is a very large area. To be fair to my colleagues in the Sudanese police, it is too large even

for them. Most of the areas are not policed, and they are not covered by either Sudanese police or the movements.

**VOD:** How are you measuring the success of your work in UNAMID's police component? For example, is the number of attacks on civilians fewer this year than last? And how about the number of Sudanese police who have been trained and the level of their newly acquired skills?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** One of the areas that we measure as a success is the number of trainings that we have conducted for our various stakeholders, including the Sudanese police. By building the capacity of these officers, what we are doing is equipping them with skills to be able to protect citizens more effectively. That way the citizens have more confidence in the police.

So the success of my work can be measured by the training the police component has provided for various partners. We have contributed immensely to the protection of civilians in Darfur, increased the number of confidence-building patrols in the community and into the camps and assisted in handling cases and dealing with the people.

There are improved relations with the Sudanese police officers at all levels. We are able to follow up on the cases that are reported to them, and I believe that there has been an improvement in handling the cases. With UNAMID coming into the system and trying to assist, conditions have improved. The officers of the Sudanese police are more equipped than before in dealing with new situations.

The number of attacks will not necessarily depend on Sudanese or UNAMID patrols. In a conflict area, violence can be triggered by anything. What we do is patrol and let people know that there is a system in place, and that if something happens they should report to the Sudanese police who will take up the issue. Then we follow up and make sure that the cases that are reported are investigated. I believe that the people of Darfur now have more confidence in their police than they used to have before.

**VOD:** One of your police officers

lost his life earlier this month. When you are faced with such tragedies in which officers pay the ultimate price while working for peace, what is your reaction?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** It is always with a heavy heart that one receives such news. Just this morning, I was informed of the death of one police advisor in Khar-

to address issues such as stress management and bereavement. We have a peer counselling system where officers are able to talk to their colleagues who have had difficulties. We continue our work and make sure that the vulnerable people of Darfur get what they should in terms of protection.

**VOD:** What do you still hope for the police to accomplish here in Darfur under your leadership and what is your vision for the future of policing in Darfur?

**Oppong-Boanuh:** In terms of the Sudanese police, I believe our relationship now is very good, but I believe that we should do other things to improve our cooperation so that we can assist each other more effectively. As for UNAMID Police, we will continue to embark on strategies that will bring us closer to the Sudanese police and to all our other stakeholders.

I expect that the Sudanese police will continue to embrace the principles of modern and internationally accepted policing standards, which will ensure that whatever structures we put in place will continue on well into the future. Whatever we do here is with the ultimate goal of helping the Sudanese police become the owners of these new programmes and strategies.

*On 29 May 2011, UNAMID police officers march during UNAMID's commemoration of United Nations Peacekeepers' Day. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*





On 19 September 2012, during a training session for midwives, Ms. Hawa Mohamed and Ms. Hanan Ibrahim show the class the pressure that pregnancy has on the bone structure of the pelvis. Ms. Mohamed and Ms. Hanan work in El Fasher, North Darfur, as instructors at the Midwife Centre, which trains women in modern childbirth methods. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.

## Improving Darfur's Maternal Healthcare

While the midwife situation in Darfur might be improving on the whole, in rural areas and in camps for internally displaced people, many babies are still delivered at home with the assistance of attendants who rely on traditional practices.

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

**F**arha Sabil, age 35, is among several young women attending the midwives course at El Fasher Women's Hospital in North Darfur. She came from Hashaba village, located some 70 kilometres northwest of El Fasher, to learn how to provide better care for women giving birth in her home village.

Previously, Ms. Sabil, like many birth attendants in Darfur, had relied on traditional techniques passed down through

generations of women living in the region. While those techniques have served her well, has run into complications that were beyond her capabilities, forcing her to travel by donkey to the nearest village to seek more qualified assistance.

Ms. Hassanat El Nour, who is the Head of Reproductive Health at the North Darfur State Ministry of Health in El Fasher, says she has been working in the Ministry for more than nine years,

trying to implement programmes specifically designed to expand the skillsets of women like Ms. Sabil. Ms. El Nour explains that, as a result of such programmes, the number of trained midwives and maternal healthcare services has doubled in Darfur's villages in the past few years alone.

In 2003, there were about 150 traditional midwives in various villages and communities in North Darfur. Ms. El

Nour says this number has increased dramatically due to training programmes carried out by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations and UNAMID. But she also says there is still a long way to go.

“There is still a gap, especially in areas where there is no security and where the community does not allow women to stay away from their homes for too long,” she says.

Ms. El Nour notes that professional midwife programmes in Darfur are seeing an increase in the numbers of enrolling students. For example, in the past few years, hundreds of women from El Fasher and the surrounding areas have sought midwife training at El Fasher Women’s Hospital. Upon completing the one-year course, the women return to their villages not only to practice their new, modern skills but also to educate other women about current childbirth techniques.

“The last survey conducted in 2012 showed that maternal healthcare has improved in Darfur because many women are now seeking better healthcare and family planning services,” says Ms. El Nour. “More women are being trained as professional midwives, and traditional birth attendants are turning into professional midwives.”

While the midwife situation in Darfur might be improving on the whole, in rural areas and in camps for internally displaced people, many babies are still delivered at home with the assistance of traditional attendants. These attendants do not have any formal training and their equipment typically consists of a simple rope for mothers to hold while giving birth. And many such attendants, especially the older ones, are illiterate.

“To address the issue of illiteracy, the Ministry of Health has collaborated with the Ministry of Education to give birth attendants and midwives basic knowledge, such writing names and preparing reports,” says Ms. El Nour.

As a result of the programme at El

Fasher Women’s Hospital, and other similar programmes across Darfur, current figures are showing evidence that many women in Darfur are relying less on traditional practices and are deciding instead to use professionally trained midwives. However, Ms. Fatima Make, the head of midwives at El Fasher Women’s Hospital, explains that in the camps for internally displaced people, women are still being assisted mainly by traditional midwives. In particular, she says older women insist on using traditional methods and often wait too long to seek medical help when complications arise.

More than 60 years ago, the Ministry

of Health established the North Darfur Midwife Centre, which brings about 100 women from different parts of the state to attend its training course annually. Women have the option of attending the complete one-year midwife school, or may take a three-months course conducted by sponsoring nongovernmental organizations.

Ms. Hawa Adam, the head of the North Darfur Midwife Centre in El Fasher, has been teaching at the Centre for 29 years. She says that many more women from rural areas are enrolling in the school to learn about current delivery practices. During a training session,

*A nurse washes her hands at the Women’s Hospital in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*





On 3 November 2011, in Dar El Salaam, North Darfur, UNAMID organized a forum to discuss UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Participants discussed the progress made in Darfur on women's issues, including participation in the peace process, training for midwives and socioeconomic empowerment. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**“More women are being trained as professional midwives, and traditional birth attendants are turning into professional midwives.”**

—Hassanat El Nour

more than 50 young women will listen to Ms. Adam discuss aspects of modern childbirth, such as the need for a sanitary environment. The students, dressed in clean white attire, learn in detail every step of the birth process against a backdrop of education about concepts related to pre- and postnatal healthcare.

The Centre, which receives funding from the Ministry of Health, the international community and nongovernmental organizations, offers room and board to its students. Each year, groups of women between the age of 20 and 35 not only receive training in basic hygiene, infant care, immunization and nutrition, but also learn how to present these concepts to the members of their communities.

“At the end of the course, the women are provided with a medical kit to use in their respective homes so they can begin practicing and pass on the skills to other women when they return to their villages,” says Ms. Adam.

Ms. Bahria Mohammad, a 25-year-old woman from the North Darfur village of Misteria, and Ms. Sulmia Abdulrahman, age 20, from Ostei, also in North Darfur,

are students in the current class. Both say they want to become professional midwives to help reduce the number of infant deaths and to educate other women, especially the older women who insist on using traditional methods. Ms. Mohammad is the first from her village to be trained professionally.

“The closest hospital to Misteria is in Kutum, and when there are complications during a birth, traditional midwives travel by donkey or sometimes borrow a vehicle to go to Kutum Hospital, which is a trip that takes up to six hours,” explains Ms. Mohammad. “When help arrives too late, either the mother or the baby may be dead.”

Ms. Mohammad has a small clinic in Misteria that she says she will use to help women when she completes her training. Villagers in Ostei face a similar situation. The only available healthcare centre is located far from where Ms. Abdulrahman hopes to work as a midwife. She recently completed her basic education and decided to train in the one-year course to be a professional midwife.

“Many women in my area still use

traditional birth attendants due to lack of healthcare facilities, most times resulting in deaths and other complications,” says Ms. Abdulrahman.

In 2010, *Voices of Darfur* spoke to several midwives in Darfur. At that time, the midwives said they were concerned about traditional birth attendants and their lack of knowledge of modern methods. That situation appears to be changing. El Fasher Women’s Hospital’s Ms. Make says there has been a noticeable improvement during the past two years. “With the support of humanitarian workers, we are informing women, particularly those living in displaced camps, to avoid using traditional attendants and instead seek professional midwives,” she says.

As more women begin to take professional midwife training courses in Darfur, and as information campaigns raise awareness in camps for displaced people, reliance on traditional birth methods appears to be diminishing. Despite evidence of what could be a promising trend, there is the matter of infrastructure. Clinics in rural areas are typically in a state of disrepair and do not have much equipment or medical supplies.

With the assistance of the United Nations agencies and nongovernmental organizations, many of these centres have been rehabilitated and are receiving support in the form of supplies and training. UNAMID, for its part, has been working through quick-impact projects to fund the construction and rehabilitation of medical clinics across Darfur and to provide training so traditional birth attendants can become professional midwives. In addition, UN agencies and NGOs have been sponsoring women from different areas in Darfur to be trained as professional midwives.

Ms. El Nour says that with such initiatives, maternal healthcare has significantly improved in recent years, and there is now greater collaboration between the Ministry of Health, other government institutions, UN agencies and NGOs. Her advice to newly trained midwives is that they must follow this spirit of collaboration and work together with traditional attendants so they can share knowledge and improve healthcare across the region. ■

## Sending Mixed Messages to Darfur's Children

Local shops are selling cigarette lighters that look remarkably like real hand grenades and are sending an unfortunately dangerous message to the children of Darfur.

BY LEONIE M. BARNES

Recently, members from the Ordnance Disposal Office, a substantive component of UNAMID that deals with explosive remnants of war (ERW), discovered that shops in Darfur are selling cigarette lighters that look like hand grenades. Apparently these lighters are selling well. Unfortunately, in addition to selling cigarette lighters, these shops are selling complacency because when dangerous items are transformed into playthings, some of the dangers such items pose in real life get lost.

In Darfur, since the time the United Nations and other organisations began collecting information, the number of deaths and injuries from accidents involving ERW have reached 200. Children, especially young boys, suffer the most. ERW, such as hand grenades, mortars and fuses, contain explosives

that can fragment with a large lethality radius. At least two incidents in the past 12 months are specifically linked to hand grenades. In the past six months alone, 14 children have been killed or injured by ERW. Last December, a 2-year-old girl was killed and three boys were injured when they played with a hand grenade.

The cigarette lighters available in local shops associate something lethal (a hand grenade) with something relatively nonlethal (a lighter). The concern, of course, is that the children who see these lighters used by adults will be attracted to real hand grenades and will put themselves in danger by wanting to play with them. Moreover, the children who see these lighters used by adults might end up

questioning what their parents have said or what UNAMID's risk-education professionals have talked about in the many awareness programmes they have conducted across Darfur. After all, children may not listen to what we say, but they are certainly paying attention to what we do.

The Ordnance Disposal Office works as part of UNAMID to reduce deaths and injuries from ERW throughout Darfur. In the risk-education pro-

around those areas. Like children anywhere, and despite what they may have heard in risk-education programmes or from their parents or elders, the children of Darfur may succumb to their curiosity about the bright and shiny objects, often to tragic consequences.

The reason the issue of these cigarette lighters is of such concern is that they introduce an element of play into what is a recognisable, dangerous item

that will be among these scattered remnants of conflict: the hand grenade. The element of play associated with these lighters may cause dangerous confusion in the minds of children, who may expect to collect such lighters from the field without recognising the deadly consequences of real hand grenades.

The Ordnance Disposal Office works closely with its national

counterpart, the Sudan National Mine Action Centre, and has raised the issue with the Action Centre's Risk Education branch, which is now addressing the issue with the Government of Sudan, with the ultimate goal of banning the importation of these items. In the meantime, the Ordnance Disposal Office will continue to raise awareness about the dangers of ERW and will continue to urge everybody, Darfuris and UNAMID staff alike, to refrain from purchasing these lighters and sending the wrong message to children.

**The cigarette lighters available in local shops associate something lethal (a hand grenade) with something relatively nonlethal (a lighter). The concern, of course, is that the children who see these lighters used by adults will be attracted to real hand grenades and will put themselves in danger by wanting to play with them.**

grammes set up for peacekeepers and members of the Darfur community, including children, the Ordnance Disposal Office staff members seek to raise awareness of the risks of touching, playing with or moving unexploded ordnance items such as grenades, mortars, artillery shells and rockets. These objects are always dangerous because of the explosive content within them; they become even more dangerous once they have been used in battle but have failed to function as designed.

Unfortunately, many such items that do not function as designed are littered extensively across the area of conflict after the fighting is over. All too frequently, they are found by the children moving

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# COMMUNITY



## Darfur's Displaced Look to New Vocations

Residents of the Abu Shouk camp for displaced persons, like other displaced Darfuris no longer able to practice their former vocations or return to their homes, are seizing the opportunities available to them to make a nominal living as best they can.

BY ABDULLAH SHUAIBU AND SHARON LUKUNKA

The approximately 1.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in the Darfur's camps depend, at least in part, on humanitarian assistance for food, healthcare, water and education. But many of Darfur's IDPs are looking for opportunities that will allow them to be less dependent on food rations and

other basic services for their survival.

Two of the camps in North Darfur, Abu Shouk and Al Salaam, have expanded on the edge of El Fasher. Together, the camps are home to some 160,000 people who have been trying to move forward with their lives, despite not being able to return to their home villages.

In Abu Shouk, the residents have established a large market area that is home to much buying and selling of goods and services. Abu Shouk traders purchase items from El Fasher market, which is not far from the camp, and sell them at the Abu Shouk market. Food, clothing and household items are com-



**Far left:** In 2005, Mr. Mohammed Ishad arrived in Abu Shouk from Jebel Marra, where he was studying the Koran. Today, he owns and operates a market stall that offers shoes bought from El Fasher and Khartoum. Mr. Ishad is shown here, in October 2011, in front of his shop. Photo by Olivier Chassot, UNAMID.

**Left:** In August 2010, when this photo was taken, Mr. Musa Mohamed Abdelhamid, originally from Tawilla, North Darfur, ran a laundry business in the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people, where he had lived for 6 years. At that time, he said he didn't want to return home because of the security situation in Tawilla. Today, Mr. Abdelhamid still lives in the camp running his laundry business. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**Left:** On 21 February 2012, Ms. Kaltoum Issa, age 19, makes bricks for her new house in the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people. Ms. Issa, originally from Jebel Seet, North Darfur, lost her left hand when her village was attacked and her home was burned down 10 years ago. Her right hand was damaged too. When she came to Abu Shouk, the International Rescue Committee provided her with a prosthetic hand, which has since broken. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

**Abu Shouk, located about 5 kilometres northwest of El Fasher, North Darfur, was set up in 2004 to accommodate displaced populations from the surrounding areas. It is now home to more than 80,000 inhabitants.**

mon items purchased or traded. Buyers in the market can find much more than just consumables and household wares. Mobile phone stalls, selling SIM cards and airtime, are plentiful.

In 2005, Mr. Mohammed Ishad arrived in Abu Shouk from Jebel Marra, where he was studying the Koran. To-

day, he owns and operates a market stall that offers shoes bought from El Fasher and Khartoum. "We thank Allah for his mercies, although business is very slow due to the poor purchasing power of the people here," says Mr. Ishad. "But we are still surviving and making a little income to keep us going."

Abu Shouk, located about 5 kilometres northwest of El Fasher, North Darfur, was set up in 2004 to accommodate displaced people from the surrounding areas. It is now home to more than 80,000 inhabitants. Although the population in some other Darfur camps has continued to increase due to the security situation, Abu Shouk was officially closed to new arrivals in 2005 because the land could not physically accommodate more people.

Over the past several years, Abu Shouk has taken on the feel of a large village. "As no IDPs seem to know when they will return home, this temporary settlement is beginning to feel more like



*A member of the Women's Centre in the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people. In the Women's Centres in IDP camps across Darfur, women are able to study Arabic, math and other subjects. Women typically attend the classes with their children. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*

**“As no IDPs seem to know when they will return home, this temporary settlement is beginning to feel more like their permanent base.”**

—Zurab Elzarov

their permanent base,” says Mr. Zurab Elzarov, an officer in UNAMID’s Humanitarian Protection Strategy Coordination Division.

One activity that has become common in camps is brick-making, a business that does not require a large initial investment. Many of the women who cannot farm their land due to security issues associated with traveling outside the camps are resorting to brick-making to bring some money into their households. Other income-generating activities that are becoming common inside IDP camps include welding, electrical work, smelting and tailoring.

Mr. Adam Mohammad Adam, who

moved from the North Darfur town of Kutum about 11 years ago, is married with 15 children. To support his family, Mr. Adam runs a small stall where he prepares and sells a traditional Sudanese meal known as *ful*. In addition to selling *ful*, he employs two tailors to create and mend clothing. “I don’t always get much, but the little I make is enough for sustaining my family on a daily basis,” he says.

To improve the living standards in IDP camps, and facilitate the growth of small business initiatives such as those run by Mr. Adam and Mr. Ishad, UNAMID has been focusing on empowering underrepresented populations through

education programmes and infrastructure development. “The strategy is designed to promote development principles, an environment conducive to lasting peace and better living conditions for the communities,” says Mr. Elzarov.

While many IDPs have given up their traditional way of life in favour of seeking new vocations to match their current living situations, a few camp residents in Abu Shouk have continued doing what they did before they were displaced. Mr. Osman Mohammed Abdulatif, who arrived at Abu Shouk in 2004 from Kabkabiya, located about 70 kilometres west of El Fasher, is one such businessman.

Despite being in Abu Shouk, Mr. Abdulatif, a cattle trader, has continued buying and selling cows. Instead of taking his cattle to market in the major towns, he now sells his cows in Abu Shouk. Prior to the conflict, agriculture and livestock trade used to be the main livelihood options for rural Darfuris. Now that many of those Darfuris are living in

camps, economic activities have shifted to accommodate the new realities.

UNAMID and its partners in Darfur continue to work on development programmes designed to help improve the situation in IDP camps, enhance employment opportunities and build vocational skills for displaced people. Ms. Khadija Abakar Adam is among several Abu Shouk women who have taken classes offered at one of Darfur's many Women's Centres. "I joined the centre five years ago and have learned how to weave baskets, sew and make crafts," she says. "I have passed on my skills to other women outside the centre, and I have encouraged them to join."

Mrs. Nafisat Mohamed, an IDP advocate in Abu Shouk, says that the women and young people living in the camp now have knowledge of different trades, which they have put to good use in benefitting those who reside in the camp. "Although businesses are going on here in Abu Shouk, sometimes there is a threat to personal property and invest-

ments because of security issues," says Mrs. Mohamed. "There are some attacks by armed groups and other people."

Mrs. Mohamed says she hopes UNAMID, agencies and nongovernmental organisations will continue to support the entrepreneurs in the camps, especially the women, to enable them to develop their businesses. "Additional support will greatly help the people in the camp to grow and prosper and also engage in ventures that are far more productive than fighting among ourselves," she says.

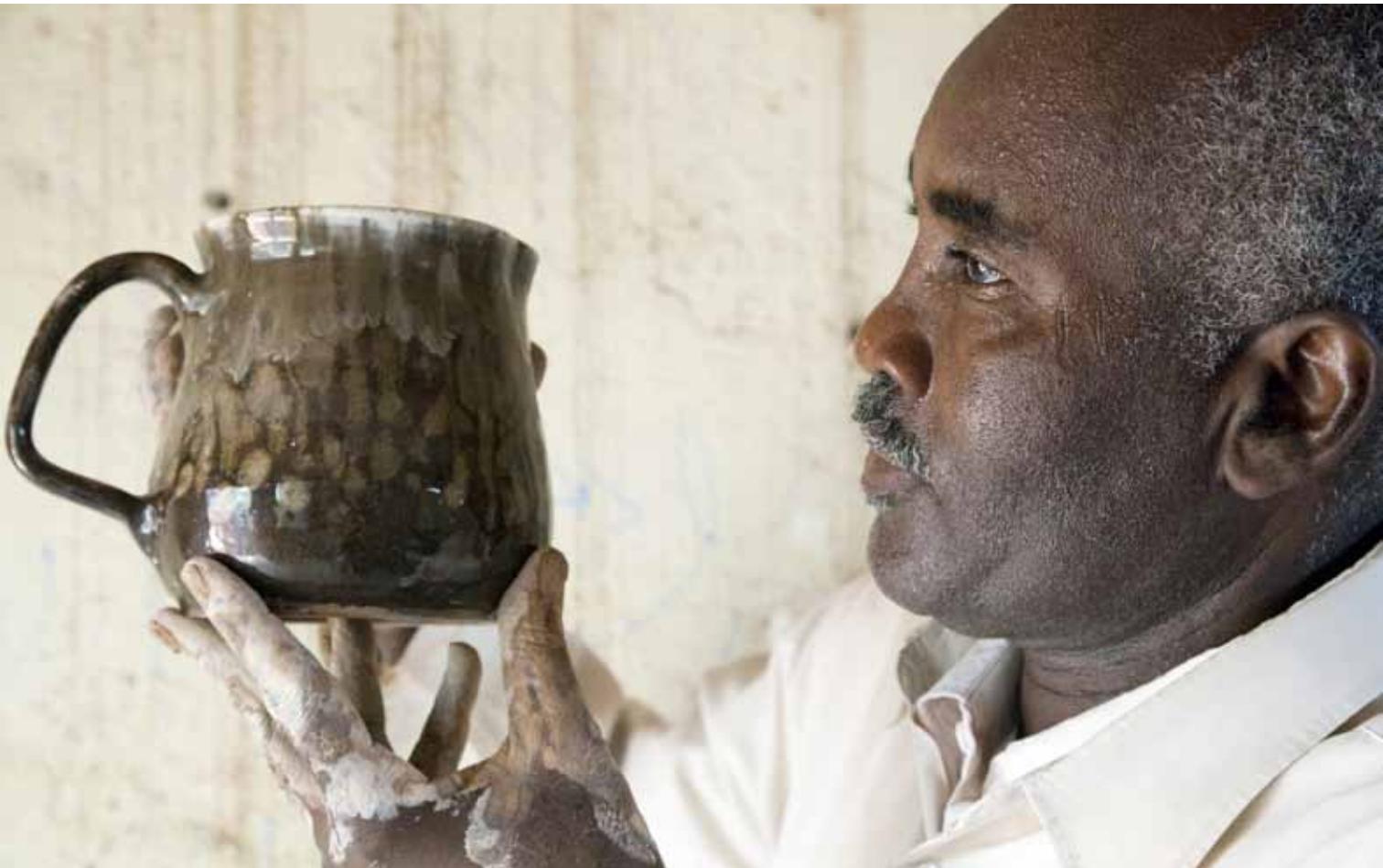
The displaced women in IDP camps are often the sole providers for their households, as many were separated from their husbands and extended families during their journey to the camps. "Countless displaced women became the only source of income for their families when their husbands were forced to go to another area or were killed during the conflict," say Mrs. Mohamed. "In the absence of their husbands, many displaced women are caring for the wellbeing of their children and older parents alone."

In addition to having facilities that focus on vocational training for women, Abu Shouk has become well equipped to educate its many children. The camp now is home to 17 basic schools, nine for girls and eight for boys. Altogether, the camp has roughly 400 teachers educating more than 1,500 students, who, in the years ahead, will enter the university system or proceed directly to vocations of their own.

In the past, Darfur's economy largely consisted of agriculture, livestock and local resources. Training and development programmes for IDPs, facilitated by UNAMID and its international and national partners, are expected to provide a way forward for IDPs who cannot yet return to their homes and engage in Darfur's most common vocations. Abu Shouk's residents, like other displaced Darfuris no longer able to practice their former vocations or return to their homes, are seizing the opportunities available to them to make a nominal living as best they can. ■

*Under the tutelage of Fakih Ahmed Ibrahim, a child studies the Koran in the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons. In Darfur, it is common for children to take classes at religious schools and to memorize Koranic verses. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.*





Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Rashid examines a piece of his pottery in El Fasher, North Darfur. Photo by Albert González Farran, UNAMID.

## Darfur's Pottery: An Interview with Professor Mohamed Rashid

In an interview with *Voices of Darfur*, Mohamed Rashid talks about the tools and techniques of making handcrafted ceramics, and about his love for a craft that may soon become a lost art.

BY ALA MAYYAH

**B**orn in North Darfur in 1957, Dr. Mohamed Rashid has been living most of his life in El Fasher, the town where he grew up, and now teaches graduate students at the local university. While Dr. Rashid has explored all types of artistic media over the years, including painting and fabric design, he favours working with clay.

His love of pottery and his experience with the art dates to his university days in Khartoum. In 1985, Dr. Rashid was granted a scholarship to the University of Sudan, where he obtained a degree in fine arts with a concentration in ceramics. He continued on to receive a Ph.D. in education.

Dr. Rashid has displayed his art in

several exhibitions across Sudan, including in El Fasher, Khartoum, Nyala and Um Kadada. He says that nature landscape has been his main source for inspiration, and making pottery with colourful glazes has been his passion since he first began to work in the medium.

In an interview with *Voices of Darfur*, Dr. Rashid talked about the tools and

techniques of making handcrafted ceramics, and about his love for a craft that may soon become a lost art.

**Voices of Darfur:** You've experimented with more than one art, but you clearly favour ceramics. What drives you most to this medium?

**Rashid:** Working with clay and shaping it while it's still tender. The glazes fascinate me when they come out of the oven shiny. That moment gives me joy. But I feel sad when some of them get cracked. Making ceramic is a long and tiring process. Some pieces take 15 days to be completed. When a piece gets broken, that means all the effort made for it is wasted. But the beautiful pieces pay for the tiresome moments, and this motivates me to continue to make more.

**VOD:** Can you give us a general idea of the process involved in making a piece of ceramic pottery?

**Rashid:** In general, there are several

basic steps to making any ceramic piece: preparing the clay, shaping the clay either by using a wheel or casts, drying the piece in a shady place, softening it from outside, baking it in the oven, then adding colours and baking it again as a final step.

**VOD:** Can you find the required tools and pigments easily in Darfur?

**Rashid:** For the clay, yes. We get the clay from the valleys and lowlands. It is called locally *al hafir*, which exists in El Fasher and in Golo, west of El Fasher. This kind of clay is a reddish colour and is good for vertical cylindrical pieces to be shaped by the wheel.

There is another kind of clay that is white. This kind is found in the mountain areas such as Kutum and Kabkabia. It's more solid, sticky, and easy to mix with water. It's used mostly for shaping pieces by casts.

For colours, we get the glazes, which

contain chemicals, from Egypt. They can't be found locally due to lack of demand in the market. As for cold colours, which don't contain chemicals, they are available in the local markets.

As for the ovens, the brick type is found and made locally, but the electrical ones that provide high temperatures, between 1,100 and 1,150 degrees Celsius, can't be found easily in Darfur. I usually take my pieces to Khartoum to bake them in such ovens in cooperation with some artists there.

**VOD:** You mentioned preparing the clay. How is that done?

**Rashid:** It has to be compiled first in large barrels to mix it well with water, and it stays in the barrels for one week. After that, we refine it in special containers and leave it until most of the water evaporates. But the clay should stay moist a bit. Then we keep it in plastic bags until it gets more solid. Only then

*The ceramic pottery of Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Rashid, a professor at El Fasher University, North Darfur. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.*



**“Darfur is a place where people’s art never dies. And due to the nature and lifestyle here, Darfuris are skilled in artful, handmade crafts that are decorated with beautiful detail.”**

the clay is ready for shaping. This clay is best for the wheel, but if we want to shape it in casts, then the clay should be more liquid.

**VOD:** After all this effort, do your pieces sell well at exhibitions?

**Rashid:** My prices are affordable for anyone, and I sell through exhibitions and in shops as well. They sell best for certain occasions and holidays.

**VOD:** And what are the pieces that are the most popular among your clients?

**Rashid:** The pottery for maintaining food. Also teacups, vases and boxes. People buy them as gifts or for their own use.

*Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Rashid at work in his studio, shaping clay into what will eventually become one of his ceramic pieces to be shown and possibly sold at an art exhibition. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.*



plants, which is a common practice locally. Pottery is one of the most popular art crafts in Darfur, but unfortunately there are fewer practitioners in recent years.

**VOD:** Is that because of the global influx of plastic commodities that have been replacing ceramics as an inexpensive alternative?

**Rashid:** Yes, and also due to the conflict in our region. People have been unable to continue making ceramics. Thousands of Darfuris have left their home areas and are living in camps, away from sources for pottery material. Also, this situation has created new requirements for fetching water and wood, which has taken people away from crafting ceramics.

**VOD:** Some pottery stays in good shape for thousands of years. Some pieces are kept in museums as highly valuable evidence of ancient civilizations. What make them so strong throughout the years?

**Rashid:** Actually, when pottery is buried underground, it can stay for long years there, provided that it's been baked to at least 600 degrees. And because ceramic is made of clay, which is taken from earth, it doesn't get rotten. All other kind of materials, even metal, would be rotten inside the ground, but not clay.

**VOD:** Thinking about the longevity of pottery, what would you like to achieve in your art? What sort of lasting impact would you like to make?

**Rashid:** I would like to establish an institution for teaching the craft of pottery. It's a good income-generating craft for women and for young people too. In the end, I hope this craft will become more popular and will replace the plastic pieces that are filling the markets.

**VOD:** If you ever have the chance to talk to foreign artists, what would you tell them about Darfur?

**Rashid:** I would tell them that Darfur is a place where people’s art never dies. And due to the nature and lifestyle here, Darfuris are skilled in artful, handmade crafts that are decorated with beautiful detail. We still have the original crafts of baskets, leather and carpets. If artists have the chance to visit Darfur from abroad, they would see that Darfuris are still producing art despite all hardships. ■



*In his studio, Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Rashid works on one of his pieces of pottery. Photo by Sojoud Elgarrai, UNAMID.*



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