

UNAMID's publication for the people of Darfur

VOICES

of Darfur

MARCH 2011

INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY EDITION

**REGIONAL WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE
CAUCUS LAUNCHED**

**DARFUR COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**RAISING AWARENESS TO INCREASE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN**



AFRICAN UNION - UNITED NATIONS
MISSION IN DARFUR
(UNAMID)

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Darfuri women celebrate a volleyball victory

Front Cover Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran



UNAMID International Women's Day Poster

Back Cover Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran



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FEBRUARY

03

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), together with UNAMID, completes the installation of a high capacity water pump near the Mission's team site in Shangil Tobaya, North Darfur. It will serve the thousands of displaced persons (IDPs) who have settled outside the team site following fighting in the area in December 2010.

Representatives of the Government of the Sudan, the African Union, the United Nations and UNAMID meet in Addis Ababa for the tenth Tripartite Coordination Mechanism meeting. This session focuses on the Darfur political process (DPP), security and freedom of movement, early recovery development, water, and granting of a license for UNAMID Radio to operate.



FEBRUARY

07

United States Special Envoy to the Sudan, Scott Gration, concludes a two-day tour of North and West Darfur. He meets with local officials and with the UNAMID's leadership to discuss latest developments on the situation in Darfur, including the DPP. He is later accompanied by the Mission's Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Patrick Nyamvumba, to Tukumara, where they speak with civilians. The group also travels to Kutum and El Geneina, and the villages of Gosmino, Tanduso and Foro Baranga.

FEBRUARY

08

UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR), Ibrahim Gambari, receives a high-level delegation led by Presidential Adviser and head of the Government of the Sudan's dossier on Darfur, Dr. Ghazi Salaheddin, at the Mission's headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The delegation is briefed on UNAMID's activities, achievements and challenges. They discuss ways to increase cooperation between the Mission and the Government.

FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE

FEBRUARY

10

Nigerian peacekeepers at the UNAMID team site in Graid, South Darfur, provide medical assistance to more than 30 patients as part of their community outreach program.



FEBRUARY

16

JSR Gambari briefs the press on the latest developments in Darfur, particularly regarding security, the DPP, and the outcome of the tenth Tripartite Coordination Mechanism.



FEBRUARY

18

JSR Gambari chairs the Mission's third retreat of Special Envoys to the Sudan, in Nyala, South Darfur. More than 20 Special Envoys from UN Member States as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and head of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), Mr. Haile Menkerios, were present. The retreat provides a forum for focussed discussions on the latest developments in the region and on ways to increase and improve international support for peace efforts and the Darfur political process.



FEBRUARY

21

Over 500 graduates from the University of El Fasher in North Darfur sign a pledge to encourage and support the peaceful coexistence of Darfuris and to use their skills and knowledge to serve and improve their communities.



UNAMID receives a delegation of 12 Ambassadors to the Sudan from various contributing countries at its headquarters in El Fasher, North Darfur. The delegation, led by Qatari Ambassador Ali Bin Hassan Al Hammadi, meets with the UNAMID leadership, UN Country Team representatives, local state officials, and with peacekeepers and IDP leaders in Tawilla, North Darfur.



More than 64 female parliamentarians from the Legislative Councils of the three states and from the Sudan National Assembly participate in the launch of the Darfur Regional Women's Legislature Caucus. The event is opened by UNAMID JSR Gambari under the theme "Women Legislators, Engendering Policies and Laws".



Darfur communities celebrate International Women's Day

BY GUIOMAR PAU AND EMADELDIN RIJAL



The women of Zalingei

The eighth of March 2011, the one hundredth anniversary of International Women's Day, was a landmark day in Kabkabiya, North Darfur. It celebrated the special date for the very first time when residents of the town and neighbouring villages joined millions of people around the world to recognize the achievements of women.

In the locality, situated approximately 135 km west of El Fasher, North Darfur, more than 3,000 cheerful women, men and children from various groups, came together for activities that included dance, art and musical performances. Ten women were presented with awards by UNAMID in recognition of their professional contributions to their respective communities.

Several other towns in Darfur's three states also observed the day under the auspices of local authorities, UN agencies and UNAMID. This year the common theme was "Equal Access to Education, Training, Science and Technology: Pathway to decent work for women."

Meanwhile, on a rather windy day, over 300 women, along with children and youth, gathered in a festive atmosphere to witness the inauguration of a new

women's centre in Abuzar camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El-Geneina, West Darfur. The theme for the Day's observance was an unequivocal reflection of the aims and objectives of the centre.

It was established as part of UNAMID's quick impact project initiative with the West Darfur State Community Development Association (CDA) as an implementing partner and will serve as a social and community services facility monitoring the perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence and supporting the victims. This centre will also provide English classes and skills training, as well as sensitization programmes in other areas.

"We are happy today," Khadiga Omer said simply. This 55-year old woman from the camp had been dancing in



left. Observing International Women's Day - Solidarity march in El Fasher

PHOTO: OLIVIER CHASSOT

top. School children in a colourful display at the celebration in Kabkabiya

PHOTO: REUBEN INAJU

excitement during the early moments of the inauguration ceremony.

Noting the struggles of internally displaced women in her opening remarks, CDA General-Secretary, Ms. Saffa El-Agib Adams stressed that, "It is absolutely necessary to take care of girls' education to ensure that they will be able to make valuable contributions to the development of Darfur."

In El Fasher, the Day began with a march in the city. Hundreds of citizens, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), and representatives from the state government, civil society, medical institutions, traditional and religious leaders, Sudanese police and military personnel, together with staff members from UNAMID and UN agencies walked purposefully through the streets as a demonstration of their solidarity and

commitment to ensuring equal rights and access for women.

The march ended at Al Nagaah Stadium, where children sang and acted in dramatic sketches portraying equal access for women and men to different jobs. One of the ceremony's highlights was a series of interviews by secondary school girls who spoke with female Darfuri role models -- an academic from El Fasher University, an IDP leader from Al-Salam camp, a Sudanese Government official and a local businesswoman.

Joining in the celebration were UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR) Ibrahim Gambari, State Minister of Finance, Abdo Doud Suliman, and the Wali's Advisor on women and children's issues, Halima Tabin Boosh, in addition to other Sudanese Government and UNAMID officials.

During the proceedings, the JSR conveyed the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's message for the day.

"On this centenary, we celebrate the significant progress that has been achieved through determined advocacy, practical action and enlightened policy making. Yet, in too many countries and societies, women remain second-class citizens."

"Only through women's full and equal participation in all areas of public and private life can we hope to achieve the sustainable, peaceful and just society promised in the United Nations Charter."

The Secretary-General's statement further highlighted the importance of increasing women's access to education, health, areas of decision-making and technology.

Raising awareness to increase opportunities for women

BY MARGHERITA ZUIN

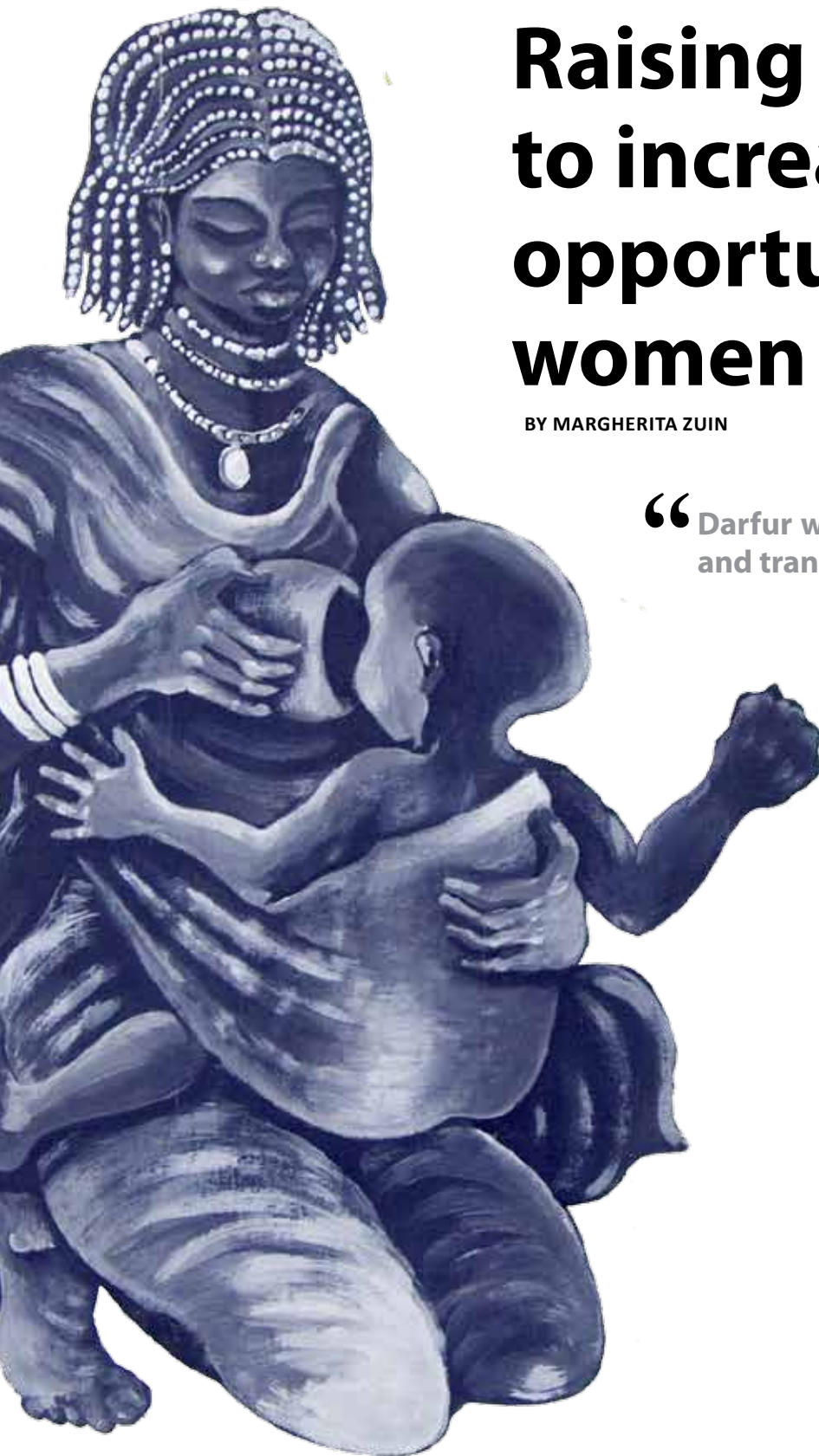
“Darfur women are making history and transforming society”

On 8 March, UNAMID celebrated International Women’s Day in Darfur, where the role of women in society and political life has grown dramatically in recent years, and where women may hold the key to peace.

International Women’s Day is observed each year throughout the world. The day represents an opportunity to testify to the commitment and contribution of women to promote equality, justice, peace and development. It is also an occasion to recognize and raise awareness of women’s rights—as well as a day when men often offer flowers to the women in their lives.

International Women’s Day originated in the early 1900s, inspired by the socialist movements in the United States and Europe, when women started to be vocal about their needs and rights by actively requesting change. In 1908, in the United States, 15,000 women marched through the cities advancing their demands for shorter working hours, better pay and the right to vote. The first National Women’s Day was celebrated in the United States on 28 February 1909.

This was the first of many observances around the world of a day to celebrate the progress





of women, to advocate for further change, and to promote women's rights and their active participation in governance and decision-making.

In 1910, the Socialist Second International meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark unanimously approved the idea of an International Women's Day. On 19 March, 1911, observances were held for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, with more than a million women demanding women's rights to work, vote, be educated, hold public office and end discrimination.

As part of a movement originating at the beginning of the first World War, International Women's Day was celebrated in Russia in February, 1913. As a response to the deaths of over 2 million Russian soldiers in the war, Russian women went on strike "for bread and peace", which led to the abdication of the Czar and the installation of a transitional government that granted women the right to vote.

Since its creation, the United Nations has been honouring this day through conferences, events and activities. During "International Women's Year" in 1975, the UN General Assembly declared 8 March as the Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. The day is now an official holiday in many countries.

International Women's Day marks the growth of opportunity for women in Darfur.

Around the world in recent years, positive changes have occurred for women in terms of rights, protection and empowerment, through changes in legislation, increased participation of women in political life, increased awareness of women's needs and a growing use of a gender perspective in all processes to ensure that the needs of all -- women, men, boys and girls -- are taken into account.

In Darfur, women are increasingly recognized as fundamental and major actors in the society. Change and development can be seen in different

areas, from governance to the rule of law, from participation of women in the political sphere to early recovery from humanitarian crises.

The Government of the Sudan in each of the three Darfur states has set up important mechanisms to increase equality and address women's needs. The most notable are the appointment of a Wali's Advisor of Women and Children, the creation of family and child protection units, as well as committees to combat gender-based violence.

In addition, the governments of the three states, civil society organizations, women's groups, and youth have engaged with UNAMID to organize mechanisms, bodies and activities that will work to ensure the empowerment of women as well as the promotion and protection of their rights. For example, building on the provision of the Sudanese Interim Constitution which guarantees a quota of 25 per cent of women in the Sudanese National Assembly and in the state legislative councils, UNAMID launched, on 21 February 2011, the Regional Women's Caucus. This body, comprising all women legislators, will be primarily responsible for gender advocacy at state and national legislative levels to address gender gaps in state laws and policies, and to lobby for reforms in policy enforcement and in governance structures.

Committees for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 exist in each state, composed of Government representatives, civil society representatives, internally displaced persons, academics and activists. Capacity-building activities and training have been carried out with a wide range of actors, including prison staff, judges, members of family and child protection units and committees to combat gender-based violence to strengthen their capacity through regular meetings. Consultations have also been held in many localities throughout Darfur by UNAMID substantive sections as well as in Doha to respond to women's needs. Dialogues and discussions have been held in IDP camps to gather their views and

discuss their participation in community decision processes. Women from various sectors of civil society have also been broadly consulted to identify and prioritize their needs in the peace process.

Four women's centres have been rehabilitated and seven built throughout the Darfur region. These centres, run by local organizations and women's groups, organize activities aimed at empowering women at different levels, from literacy classes to training activities, from income generation activities to peacebuilding discussions. Dialogues are also being carried out with imams (male religious leaders) and akamats (female traditional leaders).

The new role of akamats represents the importance and contribution of women in Darfuri society particularly in bringing peace -- as some akamats in the past tended to support and encourage men and youth to take part in war. They are now using their traditional songs and encouragement to foster peace.

Darfuri women are making history and transforming society. The recognition of their contribution and their rights is therefore a fundamental step for the achievement of peace and the development of Darfur. The 2011 International Women's Day provided a chance for them to have their voices heard again and to advocate for their rights and needs. The experience of Darfur demonstrates that women can make a difference.

MARGHERITA ZUIN IS A GENDER AFFAIRS OFFICER IN UNAMID

ARTWORK BY DARFURI ARTIST, HASSAN AHMED



Devoted to assisting those in need

The story of Sister Margrite Shinkel

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

Sister Margrite Shinkel has been a nurse in Darfur for the past nine years, helping to rehabilitate hospitals and working with women and children. She is not only well known in her native Switzerland, but also among the villages and nomadic settlements in North Darfur. To many, she has become an iconic symbol of hope as she continues to devote much of her time assisting the community. She is known as Sister Margrite.

When asked why she left her home in Switzerland to come to the Sudan, Sister Margrite says simply, "I like helping people, particularly women and children. They need the most assistance."

She arrived in the Sudan almost 40 years ago in the early seventies and spent the first years of her seemingly never ending sojourn in Omdurman, near Khartoum. Later on, she worked as a matron for the Sudanese Ministry of Health in Dongola, and with nomadic groups in Atbara in North Sudan. Time progressed and in 2001, her close colleague and family friend, Dr. Ahmed Shadul Farrah, who



left. Sister Margrite with one of her patients at Kutum Rural Hospital

top. Mother and child at Kutum Rural Hospital

PHOTOS: SHARON LUKUNKA

had been appointed the first Minister of Health of North Darfur, introduced her to the local authorities and communities with which she was not yet familiar. When the war broke out in 2003, Dr. Farrah left the Sudan, but Sister Margrite remained behind to continue her work as a nurse.

She has always felt secure and protected by the community and recalls an incident during the war when she left her home in Darfur to purchase some bread. There was an armoured vehicle blocking the road. Some would characterize it as a risk, but Sister Margrite asked the soldier to move his vehicle and, surprisingly, he did. On her way back, she gave him a loaf to express her gratitude. "Here is some bread for you because you moved for me."

The therapeutic feeding centre in El Fasher for malnourished children is one of the many symbols of Sister Margrite's presence in Darfur. She helped to build it. "The centre was of much assistance, especially during the conflict as malnutrition was a common problem at the time," Sister Margrite noted. She also supports the

school of midwives in El Fasher where she has built a maternity unit, conducts medical training activities and provides financial assistance for women to attend the school.

She assists women in the El Fasher prison. "They need a lot of help to get on with their lives." She sounds hopeful.

Nowadays, this unyielding humanitarian spends a lot of time in Kutum at the hospital there. She is able to continue her sterling contributions to the people of Darfur through the goodwill of her friends and family from her small farming rural village in Switzerland. The Government of Switzerland has also been very supportive.

Last February, the Swiss Ambassador to the Sudan, Andrej Motyl, visited Sister Margrite in Kutum to take a first-hand look at her work with a view to providing further assistance. "We must find more ways to support the people of Darfur to achieve peace and Sister Margrite has shown us another way," the Ambassador stated.

One of her colleagues in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Muneer, says only the community can give the most accurate portrayal of Sister Margrite. Everyone is familiar with her, even the small child in the market area. She is known to be patient and kind – the best example of a humanitarian worker in Darfur. She has assimilated herself, becoming very familiar with both cultural and social aspects of Darfur, including the Nubian society. Dr Muneer described her as "someone who is always working on a project or finding ways to assist the people".

Sister Margrite Shinkel insists that her work will never be complete. As long as she receives financial assistance, she, in turn, will continue to help as many people as possible in Darfur.

Darfur's first female Omda

Her story in the Making

BY LUCY MATHIESON & HALIMA MOHAMAD



Fatma Mohammed El Fadul

Over the years, International Women's Day has inspired women to take to the streets, spark revolutions, hold meetings at cozy luncheons and concerts, rub shoulders with presidents, prime ministers and mayors, demonstrate at the doors of newspapers and welfare institutions, occupy empty houses to gain shelter for homeless women and usher in reform legislation. The day has roots in the Western world and the socialist movements when women demanded that they be given the right to vote, hold public office, and no longer endure job discrimination. However, the event has grown in importance to women across the world as they continue the struggle for equality

It is in this context, that we take the opportunity to look inward at one of Darfur's women, one amongst her sisters, be they parliamentarians, mothers, daughters, aunts and grandmothers, employees, employers or entrepreneurs.

The theme for International Women's Day 2011 was "Equal access to education, training and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women." For Fatma Mohammed El Fadul, Darfur's first female Omda (mayor) and a Darfuri legislator in the National Council in Khartoum, education afforded her the opportunity to step into what has been and often still is seen as a male domain. And, in doing so, she has cast a light for other women in Darfur who may wish to follow in her path.

Born in Nyala, South Darfur, Ms. El Fadul studied for a bachelor's degree in rural development at Ahfad University for Women. She undertook a master's degree in sustainable rural development from Ahfad University and a higher diploma in education from Khartoum University. Currently preparing for her doctoral degree in sustainable peace at Sudan University, Ms. El Fadul declares that, "education is the right of every girl, and no woman should be denied her human rights."

However, predictably, Ms. El Fadul's pathway has not been without obstacles. Her family had served with the native administration (administrative process established to organize the affairs of tribal groups according to their norms and traditions and to frame their relationships with other groups in both war and peace). Thus, she perhaps had the benefit of her family's connections. Nevertheless, the fact she is a woman has presented challenges to her progress.

It was in her first role as a teacher, dealing with 17 high school classes and a student body with rural backgrounds, that her attention became focussed on those in most need of education - women and girls. Inspired by what she encountered while teaching, Ms El Fadul was driven towards furthering her own education. During this time she participated in a workshop to stimulate ideas for contributing to the education of women, including recommendations for the reform of law and policy. Ms. El Fadul advocated that women should get a percentage of seats across all levels of governance, including the native administration. Her proposal received broad consensus and led to recognition by the Wali of South Darfur, who appointed her as an Omda in the Nyala locality of the Magdomya Administration, a first for Darfur.

Reflecting on this moment, Ms. El Fadul notes that her "education and her commitment and level of contribution to women's rights in the public arena" had served her well in gaining such recognition. However, on her appointment, she found that despite her qualifications, experience and merit, her status as a woman appeared

still to be a strong factor for resistance among some of her colleagues. On her initial acceptance of her role as Omda, Ms. El Fadul found that the male leaders (Sheikh) did not fully accept her and who wondered whether it was due to a lack of men that a woman had been appointed in what had been traditionally been a male domain.

Not one to be deterred, Ms. El Fadul called for a meeting with the Sheikhs. Despite the fact that not all of them came to the meeting, she forged ahead, telling those who were there what her role demanded, how important it was and her qualifications to fulfill it. Most of those present welcomed her initiative and began to accept the idea that there was now a woman Omda.

Another challenge and perhaps an even greater obstacle has been the difficulty in raising funds for her portfolio. "The native administration depends almost entirely on self-funded projects. Raising funds for women-based projects, incentives, empowerment and inclusion can be difficult in a male dominated sphere," she said. However, without prioritization of budgetary allocations for the inclusion and empowerment of women, any talk about "equal access appears to be rhetoric," she added.

In this regard, Ms. El Fadul is prioritizing sustainable development within Darfur. "The authorities in Darfur must build development schemes to enable their girls to attend school. Because families utilize girls for labour, development will create new opportunities for adult employment, freeing up those girls to attend school." Moreover, she stresses, "women's rights must be prioritized. Girls must not be removed from school for marriage under any circumstances." And, finally, citing the support she received from within her own family, Ms. El Fadul suggests that "mothers should be encouraged through policies, schemes and education to support their daughters." After all, as in her own case, equality and equal access begins in the home.

THE AUTHORS ARE GENDER AFFAIRS OFFICERS WITH UNAMID

Darfur Regional Women's Legislative Caucus launched

BY MARGHERITA ZUIN



UNAMID JSR Gambari addresses the women legislators during the launch

PHOTO: DAVID MANYUA

The UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit in February launched a Regional Women's Caucus, bringing together in El Fasher 64 women legislators from across the three states of Darfur to address gender inequality and discrimination in laws and policies.

This initiative seemed to promise a new start for Darfur's women legislators, whose excitement, attention and participation in the discussions were evident at the 21 February event. The UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit maintains that the creation of the caucus represents a unique opportunity to support and promote gender equality in Darfur. This newly created body intends to address gender inequality and discrimination in law with the belief that only by changing policies and laws at the core will the women of Darfur have a sustainable and effective chance at equality.

Through the existing quota system in the Interim National Constitution (2005) and Electoral Law (2008), women are guaranteed 25 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly and in the State Legislative Councils throughout Darfur. However, while ensuring that the presence of women at the legislative level is fundamental, it has not been sufficient to ensure an effective inclusion of a gender perspective in the work of the legislative bodies.

As aptly stated by Ms. Umbashair Mehmoud Sheriff a Darfuri elected to the National Assembly in Khartoum, "The caucus will help in developing women's capacity to claim their rights. Furthermore, the present quota does not reflect the real presence of women in the community. Therefore, building women's capacity will be the guarantee to ensuring proper and fair participation of women at all levels of society."

The creation of the Darfur Regional Women's Legislative Caucus builds on this understanding. The caucus will advocate for a legislative response to address gender gaps in state laws and policies. Its work will strengthen the capacity of women legislators to effectively engage and participate in decision-making processes and will also bring a gender perspective to the work of the legislative branch ensuring that the needs and priorities of women are discussed at the parliamentary level. The caucus will also formulate strategies and monitoring mechanisms to verify the role of women in the implementation of Sudanese and international law, and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

During the launch, women legislators attended training sessions which provided them with basic knowledge on how to include a gender perspective into the work of the National Assembly and the

Legislative Councils of the three Darfur States. The UNAMID Gender Advisory Unit plans other capacity building initiatives in the near future.

At the launch, UNAMID Joint Special Representative (JSR), Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, stressed the Mission's readiness to support the newly created body and its objectives, saying, "I congratulate the women, elected or not, who heeded the call for placing more women in leadership positions." He also expressed UNAMID's commitment to assist the Government of the Sudan to make plans and take actions to encourage and ensure equal and effective participation of men and women in decision-making processes, to ensure equal sharing of the benefits deriving from peace and development efforts, and to protect women, men, boys and girls according to the risks and threats they are experiencing in Darfur.

The Wali of North Darfur, Mr. Mohamed Othman Yusuf Kibir, lauded the initiative and the partnership between the Government of Sudan and UNAMID in creating the Darfur Regional Women's Legislative Caucus. The Wali, recognizing that women and children have been the most affected by the conflict, urged the women legislators to take advantage of the opportunities laid out by the new body and come up with recommendations for a lasting peace in Darfur.

The Wali's advisor for women and children and speakers of legislative councils from the three Darfur States, as well as the Commissioner of El Fasher, UNAMID officials and representatives of the civil society attended the launch.

The new caucus agreed on an initial draft action plan, which the women legislators will develop in the coming weeks, and endorse as a first step before starting their activities.

"Today you are making history," UNAMID GAU Chief Yegerawork Angagaw, told the participants. "We are working together. We are committed to making Darfur and the Sudan a place where women are empowering themselves to move towards a stable Darfur that is inclusive, developing, educating its youth and, in the process, eradicating poverty."

MARGHERITA ZUIN IS A GENDER AFFAIRS OFFICER IN UNAMID



Snapshots - two Darfur female legislators

BY SHARON LUKUNKA

More than 64 parliamentarians from the Legislative Councils of the three Darfur States and the Sudan National Assembly participated in the launch of the Darfur Regional Women's Legislative Caucus in El Fasher, North Darfur last February. The caucus, organized by the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), is considered an essential step to support the promotion of gender equality in the region and advocate for a legislative response to addressing gender gaps in state laws and policies. It also aims at working in the interest of Darfuri women to ensure that the Government remains committed to the terms of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and subsequent agreements in addressing issues related to gender equality in the region.

Batool Ali Dukin and Suad Abdallah Hammad were among the women legislators who attended the launch.

Batool Ali Dukin
Member of North Darfur State
Legislative Council

Ms. Batool Ali Dukin, a former headmistress at Al Manaa higher secondary school for girls in El Fasher and the current Secretary-General of the women's association in North Darfur, is one of the state's 12 female legislators.

She first became a member of the women's union in 1992 and, while in University, she was involved in student politics. These experiences paved the way for her present service in the political arena.

Since her election as a member of the Legislative Council's agriculture committee, Ms. Dukin has been working with her colleagues to ensure that women and children's concerns are taken account of during the Council's deliberations. "We



left. Batool Ali Dukin

top. Suad Abdallah Hammad

PHOTOS: SHARON LUKUNKA

anticipate and solve problems, design and implement policies," she said. Her committee works with a number of local authorities, including the Wali's Advisor on women and children, and the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education and Health. She has assisted in preparing proposals for Darfuri women's development, to boost their economic power by providing work opportunities and training. As she stated, "We are working for one goal, to advance women in the state. Women are strong enough to change the community, to change the situation and live better lives."

Although not married, Ms. Dukin is bedrock in her family. She assists her nephews and nieces ensuring that they attend school and complete their assignments. She also finds time to meet regularly with her extended family.

Suad Abdallah Hammad Member of the North Darfur Legislative Council

A veterinarian by profession, Suad Abdallah Hammad has been serving in the North Darfur legislature for the past nine months. Before that, Suad was the Director-General of animal resources in El Fasher. Her main interests are addressing women's concerns and promoting human rights.

"As a member of the legislative council, I urge all women to be more motivated and to achieve their goals through education and hard work. Nothing is impossible. But, you must be willing to try everything," she stated.

Suad is a strong advocate for her community and hers became one of the louder voices in the Legislature to

demand women's rights. "We need to reduce the vulnerability of women, equip them with necessary skills and resources to undertake their own projects and activities," she stressed.

As a student, she was involved in the University students union and also joined different civil society organizations in El Fasher. With her experience in public affairs, she decided to be more useful and push for services for the community.

"The people elected me to serve the society," she explained. "I hope I can give them back what they expect from me, especially to build the capacity of women. Through me, my daughters and other Darfuri women must be able to acquire more skills and serve Darfur."

Women Pioneers in West Darfur

BY RODA SUBE AND XIANGRONG HUANG



Kaltoom - Shoemaker

Kaltoom Abaker Yagoub Mohammed is from Umdowaina, El Geneina. This 42-year-old woman is a mother of four daughters and has only benefitted from basic education. However, Kaltoom studied the Quran and is now teaching its principles to women in her community. She is a shoemaker by trade. "Making markoob (local Darfuri shoes) both for men and women is what I do to make a living," she said.

Kaltoom lost her father when she was nine years old. She had already started learning to make shoes to help pay her school fees. Unfortunately, her family took her out of school so she could marry a man who was also a shoemaker. A few years later, her husband left her because he could not provide food and school fees for their children. She remarried but when she became pregnant, her second husband also left her. Since then, she has

been supporting her family through her trade. From the earnings of her business, she acquired two pieces of land, on one of which she now lives.

In 2000, Kaltoom won a cash prize of 1,500 Sudanese Pounds at a handicraft exhibition in Khartoum. Last November, the Sudanese Red Cross Red Crescent invited her to train other women in the art of shoemaking. Kaltoom's initiatives have also been recognized by the Government both at the state and national levels as she is frequently invited to participate in exhibitions.

Markoob making is a traditionally male profession and most people in West Darfur would not believe that these shoes are also being crafted by women. Presently, Kaltoom is lobbying Government authorities to support other women shoemakers.



Munira - from Teacher to Brick maker

Munira Mohammed Bahr Eldin was born in El Geneina in 1936, a direct descendant of the Sultan of Masalit Bahr Eldin, leader of the Massalit group. The Sultan, who was Munira's grandfather, sent her along with two relatives to study in El Fasher. Later, in 1952, Munira enrolled in the Institute of Education in Deleng, South Kordofan, where she was the first person from Dar Masalit to be accepted. In 1956, she began working as an educator, including as headmistress of a prominent girls school, which produced many distinguished women. The current Minister of Health in West Darfur is an alumnus.

After working in the teaching profession for more than 40 years, Munira retired in 1993 and became self-employed. Her father, Mohammed Bahr Eldin, was an administrative officer in the Government, while simultaneously working as a builder and brick maker. Munira inherited his skill.

She is happy with her new career largely because she feels that she is supporting the local economy and is using her teaching skills to impart her trade to young people in the community. "They have the spirit of self reliance to overcome poverty, even though brick making is such hard work," she said.

Munira is the mother of three children - two sons and one daughter. One of her sons is a medical doctor, while the other is an engineer and her daughter, a veterinarian. But Munira continues to enjoy making bricks. She has also established an association in 2003 called Mohammed Bahr Eldin Charity Association for Orphans. It comprises a kindergarten class, teaches women how to use fuel-efficient stoves and provides assistance to the needy.

THE AUTHORS WORK IN UNAMID'S GENDER ADVISORY UNIT IN WEST DARFUR

THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 8 March 2011

One hundred years ago, when the world first commemorated International Women's Day, gender equality and women's empowerment were largely radical ideas. On this centenary, we celebrate the significant progress that has been achieved through determined advocacy, practical action and enlightened policy making. Yet, in too many countries and societies, women remain second-class citizens.

Although the gender gap in education is closing, there are wide differences within and across countries, and far too many girls are still denied schooling, leave prematurely or complete school with few skills and fewer opportunities. Women and girls also continue to endure unacceptable discrimination and violence, often at the hand of intimate partners or relatives. In the home and at school, in the workplace and in the community, being female too often means being vulnerable. And in many conflict zones, sexual violence is deliberately and systematically used to intimidate women and whole communities.

My UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign, along with its Network of Men

Leaders, is working to end impunity and change mindsets. There is also growing international resolve to punish and prevent sexual aggression in conflict, and to do more to implement the Security Council's landmark resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which highlights the importance of involving women in all aspects of building and keeping peace.

Another area where we urgently need to see significant progress is on women's and children's health. The September 2010 Summit on the Millennium Development Goals recognized the central importance of this issue, and Member States and the philanthropic community have pledged strong support for my global strategy to save lives and improve the health of women and children over the next four years.

In the realm of decision-making, more women, in more countries, are taking their rightful seat in parliament. Yet fewer than 10 per cent of countries have female heads of state or government. Even where women are prominent in politics, they are often severely under-represented in other areas of decision-making, including at the

highest levels of business and industry. A recent UN initiative – the Women's Empowerment Principles, now embraced by more than 130 major corporations – aims to redress this imbalance.

This year's observance of International Women's Day focuses on equal access to education, training and science and technology. Cell phones and the Internet, for example, can enable women to improve the health and well-being of their families, take advantage of income-earning opportunities, and protect themselves from exploitation and vulnerability. Access to such tools, backed up by education and training, can help women to break the cycle of poverty, combat injustice and exercise their rights.

The launch this year of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – UN Women – demonstrates our intent to deepen our pursuit of this agenda. Only through women's full and equal participation in all areas of public and private life can we hope to achieve the sustainable, peaceful and just society promised in the United Nations Charter.



أنا أذهب إلى المدرسة من أجل غد أفضل

I go to school for a better tomorrow

اليوم العالمي للمرأة ، دارفور، 8 مارس 2011



الاتحاد الإفريقي
AFRICAN UNION



الأمم المتحدة
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