

VOICES

of Darfur

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**Combating the
Covid-19 pandemic
through painting:**
An interview with fine
artist, Saida Mousa



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

UNAMID Human Rights Section:
Responding to COVID-19 through
a human rights lens

UNAMID winning the battle
against COVID-19, a step at a time!

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pandemic through painting: An
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Colleagues, I am pleased to introduce this edition of the Voices of Darfur magazine for September 2020. This publication is dedicated to the approach the Mission adopted to prevent and mitigate the sudden onset of COVID-19 pandemic in its Area of Responsibility in Darfur. This edition contains news, features, and interviews that highlight adjustments UNAMID components had to make to ensure continued delivery of Mission mandated activities and provide support to the Government of Sudan to combat the pandemic.

In an interview with Voices of Darfur, UNAMID's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Vincent Osabutey-Anikon, lays out the Mission's and relevant stakeholders systematic approach and handling of the onset of the contagious COVID-19 outbreak, observing that the pandemic called for a coordinated and impactful approach from the United Nations community in Darfur, in partnership with the Government of Sudan to quickly find innovative, yet impactful ways to control and mitigate the outbreak.

The feature article entitled: UNAMID Human Rights Section: Responding to COVID-19 Through a Human Rights Lens provides an insight to how UNAMID Human Rights Section responded to the sudden emergence of COVID-19 through the implementation of its COVID RIGHTS WATCH initiative in many parts of Darfur

as part of the Section's response to the pandemic. The initiative has contributed in monitoring the impact of responses to COVID-19 on human rights and exploring, through advocacy and sensitization, the integration of human rights into the spectrum of responses to the pandemic.

The second feature in this edition, entitled UNAMID Governance & Community Stabilization Section: Fighting COVID-19 and Promoting Peace in Darfur, outlines the successful conduct of the Section's innovative COVID-19 and peace messaging campaign it conducted in Central, North and West Darfur, including amongst the nomadic communities in conflict-affected Jebel Marra in Central Darfur.

The collection of photographs in the Photo Story, focuses on UNAMID in Action during the COVID-19 peak period where the various Mission components "Stayed and Delivered" on its mandated activities despite mobility and health related challenges faced at the time.

Finally, in our cover feature: Combating the Covid-19 pandemic through painting: An interview with fine artist, Saida Mousa.

As Voices of Darfur continues to evolve as a news magazine, feel free to send us your feedback. Send your comments by email with "Letters to the Editor / Voices of Darfur" in the subject line to unamid-publicinformation@un.org.

Musi Khumalo
Chief Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS)

ON THE COVER



"UNAMID peacekeepers provide protection for farmers during a farming patrol conducted recently in Azoom valley, near Zalingei town, Central Darfur. UNAMID routinely conducts farming, fire-wood collection and water-fetching patrols in its area of operation. Photo by Amin Ismail, UNAMID."



In an interview with Voices of Darfur Magazine, Fine artist, Sayida Mousa talks about her personal experiences during the emergence of the pandemic and reflects on the contribution of artists in spreading awareness on the disease among citizens. Photo by Hamid Abdulsalam, UNAMID.

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Lieutenant General Leonard Ngondi
(Kenya)
Force Commander



General Landing Kinteh
(Gambia)
Police Commissioner

UNAMID and UNCT sign Financial Agreement to support Government of Sudan in its fight against COVID-19



Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with other UN AFPs and UNAMID will support the planning and distribution of items and monitoring of the implementation in coordination with joint federal and states' ministries of health.

"Funds from this Financial Agreement will clearly target, amongst the general population, internally displaced people, returnees, the prison population and host communities in Darfur that are among the most vulnerable Darfuris to COVID-19 and its social and economic consequences. These are core vulnerable target groups for UNAMID. They desperately need our support and as the UN family in Sudan, specifically Darfur, we will continue to partner with the TGoS in its spirited fight against COVID-19," DJSR Gbeho added.

The above action is a continuation of efforts from UNAMID to fully support the TGoS in its quest to prevent, contain and ultimately win the fight against COVID-19. It is to be recalled that at the North and Central Darfur state level, the Mission has gifted the Ministries of Health with critical equipment such as generators, air conditioners, hard plastic water tanks, personal protective equipment (PPE) and various other related items to be used in the newly established isolation centers in the states. In addition, UNAMID has assisted the State High Level Coordinating Committee on COVID-19 with logistic support through helicopter flights to visit Tine and El Lait towns in North Darfur to assess the exposure to the risk to the COVID-19 in these areas, with a third trip planned to Al Zurug, North Darfur in the coming days.

Zalingei, 7 May 2020- "UNAMID, in consultation with Government and in partnership with the UN Agency, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) implementing the Joint State Liaison Functions (SLFs) in Darfur, have agreed to allocate almost two million US dollars to support the Transitional Government of Sudan's COVID-19 National Response Plans focusing on Darfur. Projects covered under this Financial Agreement will contribute to and support the Government's preparedness and response to the current COVID-19 pandemic in Sudan, with a focus on hotspots in Darfur," UNAMID's Deputy Joint Special Representative, Ms Anita Kiki Gbeho stated at the virtual signing ceremony of the Financial Agreement held on 4 May at the Mission's Headquarters in Zalingei, Central Darfur. Mr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Resident Representative for Sudan countersigned the Agreement on behalf of his organization from the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

Funding, under this Agreement,

will cater for projects aimed at containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, decreasing morbidity and mortality through the support to equip and or establishment of isolation centers; enhancing capacities of local health and community systems in adopting Infection Control and Prevention (IPC) measures through provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs); providing sanitizers and handwashing facilities; medical waste management and disposal equipment; supplies and consumables and also strengthen the capacities of Points of Entries (Poe) to detect and refer suspected cases through provision of thermal detectors and IPC equipment.

These planned projects were selected in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) based on the gaps and immediate needs of the National Country Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19. UNDP will cater for the procurement processes, whilst the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Population

UN State Liaison Functions sensitize prison officers and inmates on COVID-19 prevention measures in South Darfur



Zalingei-31 August; UNAMID's Rule of Law Team in the UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs) and the Prison Directorate and Ministry of Health in South Darfur State, held a one-day sensitization Workshop on prevention and mitigation measures against the spread of COVID-19 at the Nyala Central Prison female wing premises.

Workshop attendees comprised key justice actors in South Darfur from the Prisons, Prosecutions, Judiciary and Legal Aid Administration Directorates, including forty-five Prisons Officers and over a hundred male and female inmates. The sensitization session for the latter category was held separately inside the prisons, as part of the support offered to justice institutions to enhance safety in the delivery of justice services and increase compliance with the World Health Organization and the Sudan Ministry of Health guidelines on prevention of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Basic Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) and general home clean-

ing materials were also distributed to all Workshop participants as a way of raising awareness amongst personnel of these institutions and also enable the continuation of delivery of justice services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing participants, the Director of Prisons in South Darfur, Brigadier General Salah Eldin Ibrahim Abaker, lauded the partnership between UNAMID's Rule of Law Section and State Prisons and Justice institutions and acknowledged the Mission's continued support to the justice institutions that has facilitated massive improvement in the prison management, including the psycho-social support provided by Civil Society Organization (CSOs) to the inmates during these difficult times of dealing with the prevention and mitigation against COVID-19.

"Through the collective efforts of the inmates and officers and the drive to work together, we have managed to ensure a safe working space and healthy living conditions in the places of detention, which are currently

over crowded thereby making them susceptible to infectious diseases, hence our advocacy for the urgent need to procure cleaning materials and PPE. We acknowledge that the prisons operational and living environment has improved due to the support extended to us by UNAMID, including increased capacity to manage prisons in a professional manner", he explained.

In his remarks, the UN SLFs Rule of Law representative in South Darfur, Coster Kabulo Chiyota, strongly encouraged continued collaboration in justice support for increased capacity, health, peace and security in the State, as UNAMID prepares for its exit from Darfur at the end of December 2020.

Participants appealed to UNAMID and other relevant partners to organize similar sensitization workshops in other South Darfur locality prisons, judicial and prosecution offices, underlining need to construct a training center, college or school to accommodate the numerous training requirements in the State.

UNAMID and state health authorities launch community awareness campaign against COVID-19



UNAMID's Communications and Public Information (CPIS) and Governance and Community Stabilization Sections (GCSS), in partnership with the Darfur state authorities, this week launched a two-week Community Engagement Awareness Campaign (CEAC) in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps in north and central Darfur to raise awareness of the communities on the preparedness, prevention and combat against the newly-erupted corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in Darfur, Sudan. From 31 March to 1 April, the CEAC Team conducted four awareness-raising sessions with key community leaders in Al Salaam and Aboushouk IDPs camps in El Fasher, north Darfur and one session at Hasa Hissa IDPs camp in Zalingei, central Darfur, on 2 April. The community groups comprised Head Sheikhs (Traditional Leaders), Women and Youth representatives and an Imam (Religious leader). Participants were not only strongly urged but were financially supported to

ensure the information acquired cascades to the different levels in their respective communities. After the sessions, participants were given packages of soap to distribute to their communities for hand washing. Few participants were invited to ensure the Mission adheres to social distancing and minimal crowd COVID-19 health requirements. The program, part of the UNAMID Communications Strategy for Prevention and Combat on COVID-19, has been facilitated by the Mission in support of the state Health Ministries in north, central and west Darfur whilst south Darfur will be covered before the end of April 2020. The CEAC Team includes representatives from the Missions' Medical and CPIS Sections and is led by health officers from the state Ministries of Health and Social Development who are responsible for the delivery of background information on the disease, clinical symptoms, transmission and preventive measures. UNAMID medical representative then focus on presenting issues related

to the Mission's support to the Sudanese Government's fight against COVID-19, community perception on the Mission and the status of the COVID-19 in UNAMID ; the Mission's COVID-19 Contingency Plan that outlines preparedness to prevent and combat the disease and measures taken so far that include staff travel tracking, mandatory self-quarantine for 14 days etc. On the latter point, Mission staff who arrived recently from their travels have all been cleared of any corona virus infection, after completing their mandatory 14-day quarantine. Apart from facilitating the program, the Mission also sponsors a one-hour radio program on Radio Zalingei; printing of banners, posters and flyers on COVID-19, logistics and some operational tools to disseminate COVID-19 messages. The Mission, in continued collaborative efforts with the state health authorities, will soon initiate street publicity campaigns in all five Darfur states and Radio and Television drama on the disease on the same stations. ■

UNAMID concludes second COVID-19 prevention and peaceful co-existence awareness campaign in Central Darfur



Zalingei, 12 July 2020- UNAMID's Governance and Community Stabilization Section (GCSS), in collaboration with the Sudan Social Development Organization (SUDO), successfully concluded the implementation of a second COVID-19 prevention and peaceful co-existence awareness raising campaign which targeted six villages in the rural areas in Zalingei locality, central Darfur. The project, implemented from 24 June to 8 July, reached over 6,600 residents, including 1,045 members of the nomadic community residing in Damras and Farigs (Arab settlements) and up to 170 returnee households. The campaign sensitized the targeted communities about the risks associated with COVID-19 and how to prevent and mitigate the spread of the virus through house-to-house

awareness visits, dissemination of the Sudanese Ministry of Health's COVID-19 protocols, leaflets and posters, distribution of soap, distribution of face masks, hand sanitizers, gloves and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for medical personnel at four clinics situated in the project implementation areas. Furthermore, the campaign included the delivery of peace messaging on the need to jointly address the concerns and challenges of the nomadic and settled communities in order to promote peaceful co-existence, in line with the GCSS mandate. Additionally, the campaign also targeted women who are caretakers of families and are more receptive to information about preventing the spread of the virus. UNAMID's Chief of the Governance and Community Stabilization Sec-

tion (GCSS), Zurab Elzarov described the project as a successful model of linking the COVID-19 prevention activities with promoting peace and reconciliation in conflict affected areas. "Based on the successful implementation of the two COVID-19 prevention projects in Zalingei locality, GCSS is commencing three new projects- one in Saraf Umra locality, north Darfur, one in El Geneina locality, west Darfur and a third one in Jebel Marra locality, Central Darfur", added Mr. Elzarov. The awareness raising campaign on COVID-19 will also be combined with spreading the messages of peace, reconciliation and peaceful co-existence between different community groups, especially in El Geneina and Jebel Marra localities which have been and continue to be affected with intercommunal conflicts. ■

UNAMID conducts intensive street publicity awareness campaign on Covid-19 across Darfur



Zalingei, 22 June- More than one million residents from five Darfur states (north, south, east, central, west) are estimated to have directly benefitted from the recently concluded month-long Street Publicity Awareness Campaign (SPAC) on the fight against COVID-19 organized by UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section, in collaboration with the state health authorities in the western region of Sudan. The awareness campaign, led by local health experts from the State Ministries of Health and Social Development, comprised the use of megaphones mounted on

open vehicles and vans adorned with posters and banners with slogans on the measures to mitigate and fight against COVID-19, that has so far claimed more than four hundred lives by mid-June 2020. The campaign was conducted in towns, neighborhoods and outskirts, districts, markets and in 10 internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps across Darfur. Towns covered include El Fasher (North Darfur), Zalingei (Central Darfur), El Geneina (West Darfur), Nyala (South Darfur) and El Daein (East Darfur). The IDPs Camps covered comprise Aboushouk and Al Salaam (North Darfur), Hamidiya,

Khamsadagaig, Al Salaam, Hasa Hissa and Tayba (Central Darfur), Dereig and Al Salaam (South Darfur) and Naeem (East Darfur). Anecdotal feedback received indicate that the SPAC message reached over one million residents in the targeted areas with the following breakdown: 300,000 in South Darfur, 100,000 in North Darfur, 220,000 in Central Darfur and 350,000 in East Darfur. Overall Darfur population is estimated at 9 million. Mr. Mohammed Yahia, the Deputy Director General of West Darfur Ministry of Health and Social Development, extended his apprecia-



tion to UNAMID for supporting the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGoS) in the ongoing efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The campaign has really brought home the devastating effect of COVID-19. Through this street publicity, the message has reached people in the districts, IDPs camps, markets and farmers in the areas on the outskirts of El Geneina town, to places where we could not reach with our means," Mr. Yahia revealed. Mr. Adam Arbab Sheikh, a student at the El Imam El Kassim School in El Geneina, west Darfur, who resides in one of the IDPs Camps in the town, stressed the importance of disseminating more information on the negative impact the novel corona virus has on people's lives, especially the vulnerable people living in the IDPs camps. He commended UNAMID and the state Ministry of Health for allocating two days for the Campaign

at the school, calling on the urgent need to provide masks to the residents, as these items are not readily available in the local shops. A member of the health ministry in El Daein, east Darfur, who preferred anonymity, stated that through this Street Publicity Awareness Campaign, the presentations given and the COVID-19 song from Omar Ishas and Shmuz, we gained further information to protect ourselves and help other people to deal with this disease". UNAMID continues to work closely with the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGOS) in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic through various types of support including, amongst others, provision of PPE (personal protection equipment), generators, freezers, air conditioners, transportation of blood samples from Darfur to the Sudanese capital Khartoum, reconnaissance flights to the country's Darfur borders with neighboring countries to assess level of preparedness to combat COVID-19.

Ms. Hawa Ismael, a vegetable trader in Nyala, in south Darfur said the Street Publicity Campaign enhanced their knowledge on

UNAMID distributes hygiene materials to IDPs in Central Darfur to help them combat the spread of COVID-19



Zalingei, 12 May 2020- As part of UNAMID response and mitigation measures against the spread of the novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) in Darfur, UNAMID’s Human Rights Section (HRS) distributed hygiene materials, comprising water jerrycans, soap, sanitizers and dignity kits to representatives of the Taiba and Al Salam IDP camps in Zalingei, central Darfur.

Speaking at the distribution ceremony held at the main gate to the Mission’s Headquarters, the Chief of the Human Rights Section, Mr. Marcel Akpovo urged the IDP representatives to comply with social distancing and crowd limitation guidelines when distributing the gifted materials in the Camps, highlighting the importance of adhering to the directives of the Fed-

eral and State Ministries of Health on preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19.

“The fight against this pandemic will not be won if we do not abandon some of our entrenched social practices that might contribute to the spread of the virus, such as handshakes and social gatherings. Remember also to wash your hands with this soap and water frequently and to stay at home as guided by your local health authorities, to avoid getting infected,” Mr. Akpovo stated adding that in the distribution of dignity kits, priority should be given to vulnerable women in the two IDPs Camps. A dignity kit comprises sanitary pads, soap and body lotion.

In his comments at the handover ceremony, the Sheikh of the IDPs

Mr. Alhadi Adam, expressed his most sincere appreciation to UNAMID Human Rights Section for its kind gesture to the residents of the two IDPs Camps who will fully utilize them to improve their hand hygiene and help lessen their exposure to the corona virus.

UNAMID continues to work closely with the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGOS) in its fight against the COVID-19 pandemic through various types of support including, amongst others, provision of PPE (personal protection equipment), generators, freezers, air conditioners, transportation of blood samples from Darfur to the Sudanese capital Khartoum, reconnaissance flights to the country’s Darfur borders with neighboring countries to assess level of preparedness to combat COVID-19.

UNAMID: First phase readiness to combat and prevent spread of COVID-19



Zalingei, 21 March 2020 — To ensure that the risk to its personnel and to the host country is minimized as well as ensuring that staff members strictly follow critical precautionary measures to avoid or minimise the chance of contracting the COVID19, the African Union – United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), in line with UN Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DH-MOSH), has adopted and is implementing a number of measures in its area of operations.

These measures, part of the Mission’s Contingency Plan for COVID-19, include the tracking of its staff travelling to and from affected regions around the world and putting in place measures to accommodate their safe return to

the UNAMID community; implementing self-quarantine of staff members who may have travelled from affected countries; training of Mission staff, isolation areas within the camps, including uniformed personnel, in personal and environmental hygiene and ensuring effective use of personal protective equipment (PPE) especially among health care workers in UNAMID.

“UNAMID does not underestimate the critical need for prevention and management of COVID-19 in its mandated area of operation. This calls for a coordinated and impactful approach from the UN community in Darfur in close consultation with the Government of Sudan authorities who have shown a high level of cooperation with the Mission on this rather important matter. UNAMID

looks forward to this continued cooperation with all stakeholders involved in the fight against this pandemic and stands ready to support the host community, within available resources. Together, we will win this fight,” Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, UNAMID Joint Special Representative/ Joint Chief Mediator stated.

The Mission’s COVID-19 Crisis Management Team is fully engaged with the Government of Sudan on the matter and continues to take all necessary precautions in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and decisions of Sudanese federal and state health authorities aimed at combatting and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the Mission’s area or operation in Darfur.

UNAMID Pakistani contingent conducts awareness raising workshop on COVID-19 in north Darfur



18 March; In the backdrop of the outbreak of the Novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNAMID's Pakistani peacekeepers conducted a series of workshops on COVID-19 at the Mission's Team Site in Kabkabiya, North Darfur. The workshops were aimed at raising awareness among UNAMID staff and the Kabkabiya local community on the importance of taking precautionary measures, such as the use of face masks, frequent hand washing, use of personal protective equipment and maintenance of good personal hygiene to control the spread of the virus, if and when it occurs in the area.

Information regarding COVID-19 outbreak, mode of transmission, signs & symptoms and precautionary measures to be taken were highlighted in these workshops. The Pakistani doctors educated the participants about handshake avoidance, distancing of at least one meter or so from others, avoidance of crowded places and maintaining good personal hygiene. Two Pakistani health specialists, namely Lt Colonel Noshad and Major Dr. Amna Malik, the Team Site COVID-19 Coordinator Major Dr. Jibran and the Duty Medical Officer, Captain Dr. Kamran conducted the workshops. Pamphlets and posters on COVID-19 and precautionary mea-

asures to be taken to control its spread were also distributed to participants. The participants appreciated the efforts of Pakistani Doctors to valuable knowledge the received during the workshop and expressed their readiness to share the information gained during these workshops with the staff and local community. At the end of workshops, participants were also screened for COVID-19 with infrared thermometer and were found to be negative. Similar workshops will be conducted as part of the community outreach activities to raise awareness amongst local community as well as UNAMID Staff.

UNAMID Pakistani peacekeepers initiate production of Personal Protective Equipment to fight COVID-19



Zalingei, 7 May 2020- Pre-empting the worldwide shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed for the protection of health personnel against the COVID-19 pandemic, UNAMID peacekeepers manning the Level Two Field Hospital in the Mission's Team Site in Kabkabiya, north Darfur, recently took the initiative to produce self-engineered indigenous Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as flexible face protection shields, full body non-permeable water proof coveralls and gowns with and without hoods, including face masks. These PPE items are specially designed and prepared from re-

usable and disposable materials available in their Team Site. Through this innovative project, the Pakistani Contingent intend to minimize hazardous effects of COVID-19 to its medical personnel through maximum utilization of readily available resources in an effort to extend the life span of the of PPEs issued through UNAMID and the Pakistan Army. "These efforts from the Pakistani medical personnel will go a long way in reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure to healthcare professionals thereby providing uninterrupted medical services in the Mission area", the Commanding Officer of the Pakistani

Contingent in Darfur, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Noshad Ali, affirmed. In addition to the production of PPEs, UNAMID Pakistani medical personnel have previously conducted a series of workshops on COVID-19 at the Mission's Team Site in Kabkabiya, north Darfur. These workshops were aimed at raising awareness among UNAMID staff and the Kabkabiya local community on the importance of taking precautionary measures, such as the use of face masks, frequent hand washing, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and maintenance of good personal hygiene to control the spread of the Corona virus.

UNAMID supports newly established COVID-19 Isolation Centre in Central Darfur



Zalingei, 5 April: As part of UNAMID's efforts to support the Sudanese health authorities in preventing and combating COVID-19, the Mission handed over Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Ministry of Health and Social Development's newly COVID-19 Isolation Centre established in Zalingei, central Darfur. The handover ceremony was attended by UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative (DJSR), Ms Anita Kiki Gbeho, the Governor of Central Darfur, other Government of Sudan officials and UNAMID staff.

The medical consumables delivered by UNAMID Medical Section to the Ministry of Health and Social Development, Central Darfur to enable the new Isolation Centre to operate, includes Personnel Protection Equipment such as goggles, caps, face shields, N95 masks, disposable aprons and gowns.

At the handover ceremony, DJSR Kiki Gbeho, stated that the gifting of the PPE is just a small part of the Mission's contribution to the setup of the Isolation Centre. "We have heard the calls by the international community and Government of Sudan to join the efforts together to combat COVID-19. It is important to highlight the criticality of implementing the guidance of the World Health Organization and Sudan Ministry of Health, which call for preparedness at all times and sending messages to the population for washing hands, social distancing and to understand how serious this pandemic", Ms. Gbeho added.

In his remarks, the Governor of Central Darfur, Major General, Suliman Al Amin Mussaed, expressed his appreciation to UNAMID for this gesture towards equipping this new Isolation Centre in Zalingei. "The handover of PPE from

UNAMID, clearly indicate that the Mission is just as concerned about this pandemic as the Government. We all share a common goal in this fight against COVID-19", added Mussad.

The Director General of the Ministry of Health, central Darfur, Mr. Mudathir Adam, also commended UNAMID's continued support to local health authorities in Darfur. "Now we are ready to receive any case of COVID-19 at the new Isolation Centre", said Mr. Adam.

UNAMID Medical Officer, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Alhassan, noted that the Mission, after realizing the gap the local authorities were facing in facilitating the launch of the new Isolation Centre, the Mission proactively decided to make arrangements to provide the critically required PPE for medical staff, who actively receive and manage patients infected by COVID-19. ■

UNAMID supports the Federal Ministry of Health in combating the COVID-19 Global Pandemic



Khartoum, 22 April 2020 – As part of UNAMID's continuous support to the Government of Sudan in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, UNAMID's Joint Special Representative /Joint Chief Mediator (JSR/JCM) Jeremiah Mamabolo, gifted five serviceable 4x4 vehicles, four high-capacity power generators and a refrigerator container unit to the Federal Minister of Health, Dr. Akram Ali Eltom.

The virtual gifting ceremony and press conference – the second of its kind in Sudan – which took place in Khartoum today reflects Mission's resolve to continue its operational support to the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGoS) in its fight against the New-Coronavirus pandemic as the country, and the rest of the world, are also battling this global menace. During the virtual handover ceremony, Mr. Mamabolo Commended the arduous efforts exerted by the Federal Ministry of health, the World Health Organisation and the International community in fighting the Pandemic. He also praised the Sudanese doctors, nurses and other health workers for their bravery and sacrifice to save lives.

"Today, as part of our joint partnership with the Government, UNAMID is pleased to handover this gift to the Federal Ministry of Health (MOH), to enhance the Government of Sudan's preparedness in tackling the potential impact of COVID-19 on the population." Mr. Mamabolo stated.

"Against this backdrop, I would like to re-echo the Secretary General's appeal for cessation of hostilities and allow for collaborative effort as the world gears itself to fight this COVID-19 menace, and reiterate my call on all parties to the Sudan conflict to see reason to join the peace process in Juba for a comprehensive agreement that would foster genuine and speedy nation building," he added. JSR Mamabolo further extended his appreciation to the Government of Sudan for its continued efforts to respond to the needs of its citizens. He also commended the WHO and other UN Country Team members for their unfettered support to the national authorities in fulfilling its responsibilities towards the people of Sudan. On his part, the Federal Minister of

Health commended UNAMID's support to his Ministry and the TGoS in their war against the spread COVID-19 and their effort to protect everyone in Sudan from the ravages of the pandemic.

"Today's contribution from UNAMID is another landmark in the Mission's endeavor to support us in protecting our population during these critical times where we are working in tandem with the international community to combat COVID-19," Dr. Akram Ali Eltom stated.

"UNAMID has worked in partnership with us at the federal level and at the state levels to support the Darfuri population over the years and during these difficult times. For that we are grateful," he added.

"We hope that today's contribution will be the start of the support we are getting from the AU-UN and other partners and that this support continues as our government continues to scale up its fight against COVID-19 and other epidemics such as Malaria in order to provide the healthcare standards our citizens deserve," Dr. Eltom concluded. ■



UNAMID Human Rights Section: Responding to COVID-19 through a human rights lens

On 11 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) a pandemic. In response to the declaration, the Government of Sudan (GoS) on 16 March, declared COVID-19 a public health emergency and immediately imposed severe restrictions which raised uneasiness from some quarters due to pandemic related sensitivities that touch on basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly of vulnerable people who feature at the lower end of the protection architecture. More importantly, the concerns pointed to the need for enhanced protection modalities that include the mainstreaming of rights-based approaches into mitigation measures as a strategic response to curb xenophobia, stigmatization, and discrimination.

As the pandemic struck at the very heart of the right to health, the Human Rights Section revisited Sudan's obligation under international human right law requiring the state to take positive measures to ensure the 'right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health'. The Section however recognized the reality that despite the political goodwill of the Government of Su-

dan, it lacks the capacity and the financial and logistical resources necessary to take adequate measures for the 'prevention, treatment and control' of the pandemic. Although the Human Rights Section's Business Continuity Plan had scaled back its mainstreaming and capacity building activities in line with the Mission's advisory adopting social distancing to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Section found re-

newed strength in UNSC Resolution 2525 extending UNAMID's mandate to 31 December and specifically enjoining the mission to support Sudan in its efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 within the limits of its capacities and existing resources. The Human Rights Section translated this call into a package of outreach campaigns targeting local communities and IDP camps and bearing messages on COVID prevention as well as providing hygiene and sanitation materials.

Between May and August, the Human Rights Section (HRS), in collaboration with other UNAMID components, and the UN State Liaison Functions (SLFs), undertook visits to IDP camps, IDP gathering sites and communities in Nertiti, Golo, Sortony and Zalingei and organized awareness campaigns in locations in West, South and East Darfur. During the visits, the Section passed down messages sensitizing communities and distributed hygiene materials as part of UNAMID's support to communities in preventing the spread of COVID-19. While distributing water jerrycans, bars of soap and dignity kits to representatives of IDPs in the IDP gathering site in Sortony in early July, HRS used the occasion to disseminate messages to IDP leaders targeting the ills of discrimination, xenophobia, and stigmatization. Human Rights Officers used concrete examples of stigmatization, including the unfortunate happening in El Daien, East Darfur, where the victim's family was isolated by the rest of the community following the death of their son who presented symptoms of COVID-19.

Reminding beneficiary communities of conduct that contributes to the spread of the pandemic was an effective approach adopted by the Human Rights Section in changing



attitudes during the awareness sessions. For instance, during the handover of COVID-19 hygiene materials to local communities in Golo, central Darfur, Human Rights Officers, drew the attention of the beneficiaries to social behaviors that must be avoided during the pandemic, observing that “people continue to congregate in large assemblies during celebrations, in markets, in mosques and other high traffic places in your camps and communities without practicing social distancing protocols,” and warned: “if these social behaviors continue, the probability of all of you contracting the disease, is very high.” Appreciating UNAMID for the donation on behalf of beneficiary communities, representatives of IDP camps made commitments to help their communities to change attitudes and observe prescribed protocols. Having diagnosed the areas of potential danger, the Human Rights Section strategically located water

“In response to the sudden emergence of COVID-19 in UNAMID’s Area of Responsibility, the Human Rights Section, while aligning its operations with UNAMID’s Business Continuity Plan, initiated ‘COVID RIGHTS WATCH’ campaign as part of its response to the pandemic. The initiative has contributed in monitoring the impact of responses to COVID-19 on human rights and exploring, through advocacy and sensitization, the integration of human rights into the spectrum of responses to the pandemic. As a tool for robust monitoring of the health situation in vulnerable areas in Darfur and other parts of Sudan, COVID Rights Watch provided essential entry points for early warning and informed on mitigation measures,”. Marcel Clement Akpovo, UNAMID Chief of Human Rights Section affirmed.

stations for handwashing in high traffic sections of IDP camps and gatherings such as mosques, markets, nutrition centers and clinics to ensure handwashing became a regular practice. This approach also ensured that the mitigating measure reached out to a large segment of the population without discrimination. The Human Rights Section

ensured sustainability of handwashing by providing resources for the maintenance of the hand hygiene stations for three months and carrying out regular monitoring of their effective use. The Human Rights Section also ensured that the distribution of COVID-19 gifting exercise was sensitive to the needs of specific vulner-



able groups. Positive discrimination was observed while distributing COVID-19 materials to IDP communities in Nertiti, Sortony, Zalingei and other localities across Darfur, ensuring that sanitary kits essential for the intimate needs of women, girls and survivors of sexual violence were included in the gifting process. While supporting efforts aimed at mitigating the spread of the pandemic, the Human Rights Section did not lose sight of the rise in the incidence of gender-based violence affecting mainly women and girls. Adopting a holistic approach, human rights personnel in State Liaison Functions attached to UNFP in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Development conducted a 10-days mobile awareness exercise between 2-12 June on gender based violence and COVID-19 at three localities in West Darfur: Kulbus, Jebal Moon and Forobarang. The exercises, targeting people in high traffic areas like markets, water points and public celebrations,

were facilitated by trained staff from the Ministry of Health who delivered specific messages through a mobile van. A similar exercise was carried out in IDP camps and villages surrounding El Geneina through the agency of Y-peer group, a local civil society organization, that developed radio messages, songs and drama skits for broadcast over Darfur FM 90.3 in El Geneina and other local radio stations. Anecdotal feedback the Human Rights Section has received so far, indicate that the awareness campaigns and material distribution exercises brought home the devastating effects of COVID-19 to a significant segment of the IDP population in Central, West and North Darfur. Beneficiaries of these COVID RIGHTS WATCH campaigns and donations appreciated UNAMID support to vulnerable people who could potentially lose out on prevention programmes. The awareness and material distribution exercises were also the occasion for the Section to

obtain information on the general response to the pandemic and what may be done to improve the response in IDP communities. “Feedback received recently from our beneficiary communities is really encouraging. They informed us that although they had heard a lot about COVID-19, they had no specific knowledge about how to prevent it and that messages disseminated during the HRS outreach campaigns on social distancing, wearing of face masks, regular handwashing and avoiding crowded places, has certainly helped their communities to deal with the disease,” UNAMID Chief of Human Rights, Marcel Akpovo, noted. Darfur has had fewer confirmed cases of COVID-19 than other regions in Sudan, a significant pointer that the Mission’s Human Rights Section’s education and prevention material distribution efforts to communities most at risk, may have achieved desired results in curbing the spread of COVID-19. ■



UNAMID winning the battle against COVID-19, a step at a time!

“In early March 2020, the rapidly expanding COVID-19 pandemic called for a coordinated and impactful approach from the United Nations community in Darfur, in partnership with the Government of Sudan to quickly find innovative, yet impactful ways to control and mitigate the outbreak,” Dr. Vincent Osabutey-Anikon, UNAMID Chief Medical Officer.

UNAMID Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Vincent speaks to Voices of Darfur on how the Mission’s and relevant stakeholders systematic approach and handling of the onset of the contagious COVID-19 outbreak, including finding means to support to host community within the available resources, has had a significant impact in combating COVID-19 pandemic in the Mission.

Voices of Darfur (VoD): How did UNAMID Medical Section react to the onset of this pandemic, especially on the aspect of the level of the Mission’s preparedness to respond to such a pandemic?

Dr. Vincent (DV): Let me start by giving some important background to the COVID-19 situation globally and then focus on the Mission’s Area of

Operation in Darfur, Sudan. As you might be aware, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as pandemic on 11 March 2020 with the uncertainty surrounding the outbreak of this disease across the globe. Thousands of people are dying every day because of this pandemic. The United Nations has been taking robust steps to ensure preparedness

in all duty stations and to enhance their response capabilities. These measures include providing all entities and duty stations with a comprehensive set of preparedness actions to implement, sensitizing staff on preventive measures, activating business continuity plans and strengthening the preparedness of United Nations health facilities in all duty stations. Accordingly, the African Union - United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) developed and implemented several procedures and guidelines for the prevention and control of COVID-19 pandemic in its duty stations.

By mid-March 2020, the rapidly expanding COVID-19 pandemic was recorded in Sudan and later in Dar-

fur where UNAMID is deployed. This called for a coordinated and impactful approach from the UN community in Darfur and Government of Sudan to control the outbreak. Continued cooperation with all stakeholders involved in the fight against this pandemic and unrelenting support to the host community, within available resources, has had significant impact in combating COVID-19 pandemic in the Mission. To this end, UNAMID has continued to cooperate with all stakeholders involved in the fight against the pandemic and to support the host community.

VoD: What specific measures did UNAMID take then to respond to this emerging challenge of COVID-19?

DV: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020, UNAMID quickly enacted COVID-19 Contingency Plan in line with Division of Health-Care Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH) guidelines from New York (NY) and also established close coordination and collaboration with relevant stakeholders and partners (e.g. WHO country office, UNCT and Government of Sudan.)

This plan guides the Mission’s response to the pandemic. It outlines the mitigation measures immediately employed to prevent an initial incident of infections in UNAMID locations, treatment measures in the event of any confirmed cases, and actions aimed at stopping the further spread of infections in the UNAMID locations and to the general population.

Additionally, a COVID-19 Outbreak Coordinator was designated by UNAMID in addition to the immediate establishment of a Crisis Management Working Group (CMWG) led by the Mission Chief of Staff, with the standing Crisis Management Team chaired by the Head of Mission, on hand to make immediate policy decisions on managing the pandemic. The COVID-19 Coordinator took the

lead in working with all management teams and existing crisis management and preparedness mechanisms to ensure that all plans were prepared, and that preparedness is monitored and tested.

VoD: What risk mitigation measures were put in place within the Mission area to fight the pandemic?

DV: A raft of measures were instituted and implemented to ensure that UNAMID personnel are well informed about the ongoing pandemic. The Mission put up a robust awareness creation campaign in the form of regular health advisory broadcasts, infographic pop ups on UNAMID computers on COVID-19 in line with WHO updates to create awareness about the pandemic among all mission staff. The Mission positioned appropriate signages and posters, hand hygiene stations, temperature checks at entrance gates as well as other practical measures such as hand hygiene practices, respiratory etiquettes, physical distancing measures and regular environmental cleaning and disinfection to create a safe working and living environment for all personnel.

All staff members were encouraged to practice social/physical distancing and hand hygiene and avoid gatherings. Meetings for more than 10 people were not allowed and sitting arrangements at meetings had to ensure at least two-meter distance between participants. To ensure regular use of face mask, the Mission supplied all its personnel two pairs of reusable face mask accordingly.

Isolation rooms were prepared and personal protection equipment (PPE) availed for use by medical staff made available to all the health facilities in the different Mission locations. Training was also conducted for medical staff including those who are part of national contingents to reinforce infection prevention and control measures against the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, end-to end care chain SOP (Standard Operating Procedures)



for management of COVID-19 in the Mission was developed by the Medical Section. This SOP was practicalized through a Tabletop Exercise successfully conducted on 31 May 2020 to test the resilience of preparedness of all medical facilities in the Mission. Staff members were urged to seek medical attention promptly if they feel unwell with any of the known symptoms of COVID-19. They were encouraged to call Medical Section focal points by phone and indicate their symptoms and travel history, to minimize the risk of the pandemic to health care providers in the Mission. As a precautionary measure, every international staff member who returned to the Mission area on 16 March, 20 to date had to undergo self-quarantine for 14 days. One of the ways in which the United Nations is seeking to combat the spread of the virus is to reduce its personnel footprint where appropriate and feasible not only out of concern for the health of its staff but, importantly, also to avoid the risk of spreading infection in local commu-

nities and overburdening health facilities in the event of an outbreak at different duty stations. A voluntary departure program from the Mission area was rolled out for international personnel with an existing medical condition, especially a condition that has compromised a person's immune system or impacts normal lung and respiratory function. The Mission also instituted flexible working arrangements, limited staff presence in offices and encourage non-essential staff to work from home. Managers were asked to explore various modes of working to ensure business continuity by interacting via IT platforms and tools such as MS Teams and Skype for Business. UNAMID Leadership imposed restrictions on staff movement in line with the Government of Sudan directives. Critical national staff were also brought in groups into UNAMID suppers to undergo 14- self-quarantine regime after which they resumed work for life support duties to maintain business continuity. **VoD:** Given the raft of measures in-

troduced by the Mission to prevent and mitigate the pandemic, how did the Mission fare in terms of the infection rate of its staff? **VD:** Despite all the effort and measures put in place, UNAMID recorded its first COVID-19 cases among one of its Formed Police Units (FPUs) on 29 May. Until the end of September, UNAMID as a Mission has conducted 63 RT-PCR Covid-19 tests, recorded 19 COVID-19 confirmed cases, with one fatality, and currently has no active case of COVID-19. The Rwandan Government unilaterally conducted PCR tests on 1,100 of its contingent members and on other personnel; and out of the 21 PCR positive cases reported and the contacts thereof none is symptomatic as of today. UNAMID has also established a COVID-19 Testing Centre in its Logistics Base in El Fasher, north Darfur and is about to commence PCR testing of COVID-19 for any suspected case in the Mission. **VoD:** The Mission's operational area of Darfur as with other parts of Sudan, has a challenge in handling the

onset of the pandemic. How did the Mission extend support to the host community to alleviate the impact of this pandemic?

DV: In early April, cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) infection were confirmed in all Darfur states where UNAMID's heaviest footprint is concentrated. Given the highly contagious nature of the virus, the priority of UNAMID, along with the efforts of the UN Country Team and Government of Sudan authorities was to contain further transmission into other areas and across communities including among UNAMID personnel.

UNAMID leadership immediately prioritized COVID-19 response to GoS (Government of Sudan), through exceptional approval by the UNAMID's Director of Mission Support (DMS), after endorsement by the Mission Chief of Staff. In this regard, UNAMID gifted various Government entities PPEs, different medical items, refrigerated container, vehicles, generators, special flights to visit localities in response to COVID-19 by Darfur state officials as well as transporting samples to Khartoum for PCR testing for Covid-19.

The Mission also collaborated with the some Darfur states to produce information, education and communication materials, including (i) a one-hour radio programme on COVID-19 involving medical experts from UNAMID, WHO, and local authorities in central Darfur and (ii) translation into Arabic and circulation across Darfur population of several COVID-19 information materials.

Apart from health preventive protocols such as practice of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and social distancing at the community level, the main important containment strategy recommended by WHO to prevent human-human transmission of the disease and stop the spread of the pandemic, is to conduct rapid testing, isolate and treat cases and do effective contact tracing to quaran-

"The United Nations has been taking robust steps to ensure preparedness in all duty stations and to enhance their response capabilities. These measures include providing all entities and duty stations with a comprehensive set of preparedness actions to implement, sensitizing staff on preventive measures, activating business continuity plans and strengthening the preparedness of United Nations health facilities in all duty stations."

tine contacts. The Mission has also acquired two RT-PCR machines for testing for COVID-19 for North and Central Darfur states. Internal administrative processes are currently underway to facilitate the handover of these PCR-testing machines to the two Darfur states, purposely selected due to concentration of Mission staff and operations in the area.

Last but not least, UNAMID and the UNCT agreed to use approximately \$1.8 million from SLF (UN State Liaison Functions) funds to support the implementation of national response plans on COVID-19 focusing on hotspots in Darfur. Specific objectives are: a) contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality through establishment of equipped isolation centers; b) enhance capacities of local health and community systems in adopting Infection Control and Prevention (IPC) measures through provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), sanitizers and handwashing facilities, medical waste management/disposal equipment; and supplies and consumables; and c) strengthen the capacities of Points of Entries to detect and refer suspected cases through provision of thermal detectors and IPC equipment.

VoD: Almost seven months after the outbreak of the pandemic was first announced, globally, some efforts are being exerted to prepare the Mission premises for the safe return of staff to work. How prepared is the Mission

for this return of its staff? **DV:** In view of the unpredictable timeframe of this pandemic, UNAMID will continue to operate in a COVID-19 environment for a while and is fully prepared for any eventuality. UNAMID's Occupational Safety and Health Committee (OSHC), under the direction of the DMS, has developed comprehensive guidance on a return to workplace safety measures. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is aimed at enabling UNAMID personnel to return to work safely, while keeping the risk of contagion as low as possible and emphasizing UNAMID's duty of care for its personnel and the host communities. This SOP covers all the operational areas of UNAMID in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and sets out practical measures to enhance and enforce the implementation of best practices in managing risk of exposure. Therefore, staff return to work will be conducted in a calculated manner to ensure the health, safety and security of staff are not compromised and that return procedures are in compliance with the above SOP and guidance from Mission Leadership. UNAMID Medical Section, in collaboration with the Mission's leadership, will continue to implement pragmatic measures in order to ensure that the pandemic is brought under control in its areas of operation and in Sudan in general through its continued support to the Sudanese government. ■

UNAMID Peacekeepers Helping Host Community During COVID-19 Pandemic





In the context of combating the COVID-19 pandemic in towns, villages and Camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur, various UNAMID components joined forces to do everything in their power to support the peo-

ple of Darfur whom they have come to serve. Given the limited availability of health facilities in Darfur, UNAMID peacekeepers set out to mobilize resources to procure critical personal protective equipment, face masks, soap, hand sanitiz-

ers, water containers including conducting awareness campaigns on causes, symptoms of COVID-19 as well as preventive and mitigation measures against the pandemic.

During their various interaction with the com-

munity, UNAMID Peacekeepers strongly encouraged the local populace to adhere to Government of Sudan and Darfur State Ministries of Health laid out lockdown rules, limited mobility to limit the spread of the epidemic. M





Combating the Covid-19 pandemic through painting: An interview with fine artist, Saida Mousa

Affectionately known simply as Sayida, this amazing female fine artist was born in El Fasher city, north Darfur where she obtained her primary education certificate and later went to Kosti city, White Nile State for her high school education. Sayida then studied at the College of Fine and Applied Arts, Department of Painting and Drawing in Khartoum where she specialized in mural art.

BY SALAH MOHAMMED

Voices of Darfur speaks to Sayida Mousa, on the impact of COVID-19 in Darfur. Ms. Mousa opens up about her personal experiences during the emergence of the pandemic and reflects on the contribution of artists in spreading awareness on the disease among citizens to follow the guidelines and preventive measures issued by the Sudanese Ministry of Health and World Health Organization. She also talks about her cooperation with UNAMID Communications and Public Information Section

in raising awareness on COVID-19 in Darfur, especially in IDPs camps.

VoD: How did you get involved with drawing and painting?

Sayida: I started my artistic career from an early age. I remember quite vividly that as a child, I would pick up a pen and draw anything that caught my attention. My early artistic career was heavily influenced by my artistic family where my father is an artist and painter and my mother is an artist in her own right as she continues to date to produce bags and

leather products. She decorates our house with drawings and beautiful products. I am truly inspired by her as a practicing fine artist, as she continues to influence my artistic career. **VoD:** What topics do you focus on in your drawing and painting?

Sayida: I absolutely love painting women and issues that surround them because, as a gender sensitive woman, I feel I can offer women a platform to send their messages of the oppression they encounter in their lives and I also educate them

on achievements made in correcting these oppressive policies. Women remain inspirational to poets, fine artists, and writers in general. My mother is my main inspiration in my work. In any home, it is the mother's hand that builds and sensitizes her children as they grow. Therefore, women constitute almost 100% of my work. My paintings basically reflect the auspicious role of women, their suffering, their beauty, and spirit. I have dealt with many inherited harmful practices and social customs through fine art works, including marriage, false beliefs, reducing stigma on women who have children outside wedlock. I have also designed artefacts required for the bridal dance and procession of the groom, which is one of the inherited social, wedding customs in Darfur.

VoD: How do you view women's participation in the field of fine art?

Sayida: Sudanese women have participated in arts since ancient times. The ancient Nubian woman used to

decorate the walls of her home in an attractive, colorful manner and was an active participant in most social aspects related to her community. The woman decorated the food for her husband in a beautiful and artistic way - a type of culinary art form which has become a global art. The woman also draws henna on the hands and feet and decorates her house by placing paintings in different places in addition to handicrafts and embroidery work. These are considered as a type of art in Darfur. We consider a woman as a basic pillar in the field of fine art. Women, since colonialism, have studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Departments of Coloring, Sculpture, Printing in Khartoum and participate in all fields of art.

VoD: Tell us about your cooperation with UNAMID, especially in raising awareness on Covid-19?

Sayida: My relationship with UNAMID's Communications and Public Information Section (CPIS) dates to mid-2013 when the Section ran a painting competition and I won first prize. That was an amazing feeling for me as I felt that my artistic talent had finally been recognized by people from outside Darfur, even outside Sudan. My working relationship with CPIS's Community Outreach Unit has grown stronger over the years. CPIS has also given me a platform not only to display my paintings but to train young fine artists during the various painting competitions that run parallel to the Mission's photo exhibitions and cultural events.

CPIS has had a significant role in raising awareness on COVID-19 in the Mission's area of responsibility, in close collaboration with the State Ministries of Health and WHO (World Health Organization). CPIS included the aspect of drawing clearly visible murals in Camps of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in most of the Darfur states. This community awareness campaign from CPIS is a very good initiative meant to sensitize the citizenry through murals and to draw their attention to COVID-19. These mural images, with messaging in the

local languages, remain in the IDPs Camps to this day as a constant reminder of the dangers of COVID-19.

VoD: What is your view on the precautionary measures taken by UNAMID to prevent COVID-19 from spreading among its employees and local communities?

Sayida: I believe UNAMID put its best foot forward to prevent and mitigate the spread of the pandemic amongst its staff and Darfurians. As a Darfurian, I noticed that when the COVID-19 was first reported in the news, UNAMID strictly enforced social distancing, distributed face masks and hand sanitizers, ensured self-quarantine or isolation of any staff suspected of having contracted the disease. In addition, UNAMID distributed leaflets to its employees, restricted access to its Mission premises and conducted daily temperature checks for everyone entering its premises, Mission-wide. As Darfurians, we were all motivated by the action taken by the peacekeepers to fight this pandemic.

Although its mandate is peacekeeping, UNAMID also strongly supported the federal and Darfur state level governments and IDPs in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic through handover of PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), medical equipment, face masks, hand sanitizers, generators and other useful items.

VoD: How has COVID-19 affected you as a Darfurian artist?

Sayida: COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on the world. Darfur has not been spared either. The pandemic has negatively impacted all aspects of life, especially economic, cultural, and social. Our core activities as artists have been paralyzed completely. For almost 6 months - from March to early August - all artists were deprived of their livelihood. All cultural events in theater, cinema, painting and photo exhibitions and others were suspended. The social impact was felt through the need to practice social distancing that the citizenry had to adhere to. We could not shake hands with each other or gather as friends or family. Initially, this devel-



opment was viewed as culturally unacceptable but as the pandemic got worse, people opted to follow the instructions to save lives.

The economic impact was obvious on artists, as the cultural and social seasons such as festivals and wedding occasions - a regular source of income for artists - when designs, paintings and murals making requests in homes or event venues are usually made. To survive during this period, most artists were forced to dip into their meagre savings to meet the demands of daily life, including medical treatment. It was tough. However, COVID-19 cases have started to recede, and we hope that artists will return to practice their activities with their full material and physical force.

VoD: What do Darfur artists do to raise the awareness of people on COVID-19?

Sayida: I believe that every person in Darfur whether he is a farmer, worker, fine artist, or teacher has creative energy and this applies to all parts of Sudan. Fine artists play a significant role in raising social awareness within the families and residential neighborhoods through seminars, meetings, environmental sanitation campaigns, and sensitize citizens on the magnitude of COVID-19. Painting has a prominent awareness

raising role through use of descriptive murals and posters that always remind people of the pandemic. In my city of El Fasher, we started educating the community during the early stages of COVID-19 through the use of murals in various places in El Fasher city, IDPs camps, residential neighborhoods, the city market, and government institutions. These murals sensitize people on the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the advantages of strict adherence to quarantine and other life-saving precautionary measures, including wearing of face masks and hand washing to limit the spread of the pandemic.

VoD: Tell us about your most prominent technical contributions inside and outside the Sudan?

Sayida: I have participated in many exhibitions and workshops inside and outside the Sudan. I have participated in documentation workshops for the construction of Toti bridge in the Sudan's capital city, Khartoum. These works are found in the Toti Museum in Khartoum. I have also engaged in some art gatherings in Ethiopia and Eritrea, with some of my paintings exhibited in a museum in Spain, although I am yet to receive a written confirmation from the museum that the latter exhibition is true. In Sudan, I have individually or collec-

tively participated in many activities, as well as in events and exhibitions organized by UNAMID - more than ten CPIS exhibitions so far. I have also joined my colleagues in their exhibitions organized in South Sudan. Many people in our city of El Fasher have seen my work exhibited at the Cultural Complex Center, Museum and Ministry of Culture and Information. In fact, some of the women in Darfur wear clothes with my designs, which is a kind of modern art in the Sudan.

VoD: What is your message to your colleagues (artists) and the host community on COVID-19?

Sayida: To my fellow Darfurians and Sudanese as a whole, my message is simple. We should all remain committed to the instructions issued by the Federal and Darfur State Ministries of Health and World Health Organization on how to prevent and mitigate COVID-19.

To all fine artists, remember that we have a huge responsibility as artists to use our tools effectively to sensitize the citizens about the dangers of contracting COVID-19, especially for us since our health facilities are not adequate to handle high numbers of patients at the same time. Our core message in life is to be concerned with the sensitization of citizens about looming or existing dangers such as COVID-19.





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