

Portraits of Women Peacemakers in Darfur Sudan



STICHTING VROUWENORGANISATIE NEDERLAND-DARFUR
Women Alliance for Peace in Darfur





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Content

Mother Darfur should flourish

*The problem among us is not a futile story
We fight with each other but life does not last forever
Let us build Darfur, the region we love.*

*O young people!
Beat racism and unite your world with truth and sincerity
Let us build and reconstruct Darfur, soon and with pure hearts
Let us allow mother Darfur to flourish.*

*O Ma-aza! o Mardiya!
Let us cultivate the valley's saplings with axes and spades
Let us allow mother Darfur to flourish.*

*O our people of the native administration!
Unite Darfur's tribes with no racism
Let us allow mother Darfur to flourish.*

Zahra Zareba

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Introduction



Map of the 5 states of Darfur

For decades we have been told that maintaining peace without the use of weapons is an illusion and that keeping the peace depends on the possession of weapons and on the armed supremacy of one of the parties. Proving this theory has resulted in young people needlessly spilling their blood and has led to many innocent people losing their lives as collateral damage. However, it has now become increasingly obvious that there are other very effective ways of settling disputes, if well applied. At national level for example, settlements are made through arbitration in the International Peace Courts rather than on the battle field, and within nations, peace treaties have been promoted and protected by Peace Missions from abroad. However, strengthening peace initiatives that combat inequality in civil rights and promoting the peaceful settling of disputes between different factions within society, remains a challenge.

With the above in mind, in the year 2000 the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 began to strongly promote the right of women to voice their opinions and to be considered equal partners in peace building processes. It should be noted that it is often women who are most active in this area of development and this publication shows how peace building works in practice.

Darfur is a living example of a place where peace has been difficult to achieve, as there are many different tribes, numerous refugees and regular clashes of interest between villagers and nomads, not to mention the tense relationship with the central government. Women in Darfur have been witness to violent conflicts for more than ten years, forced to live in a continual state of mourning for their dead, for the bloodshed, the fear and the enmity that has hindered social and economic development. They finally made the decision to choose another path, the path of “mediation”. As you will read, their practice turned out to involve much more than mediation alone. It sought to inspire positive values and a belief in the future, giving hope through income generating activities, seeking common interests, building awareness and addressing responsible leaders directly.

The international foundation VOND (Women’s Organisation for Darfur) has the honour of cooperating with WAP Darfur (the Women’s Alliance for Peace in Darfur) on the publication of their stories, stories that shine a light on a truly hopeful path towards peace. We are deeply grateful for these examples of peace building, each of them a pearl in the history of nonviolent conflict resolution.

Joke Oranje, Mekka Abdelgabar,
Annette Bool

A story about mobilizing personal relationships for peace



Mahjouba Hassan Musa

MASSAI ORGANIZATION FOR HUMAN SERVICE
DAEIN, EASTERN DARFUR

During the war between two tribes, Al-Rizaiqat and Al-Maalia in East Darfur, men from both sides refused to make contact during a ceasefire. They just waited for a peace agreement to happen spontaneously.

In the same period, women from both tribes started to work together. Mahjouba Hassan, the manager of The Massai Organization for Human Service, began working closely with the National Organization for Women Parliamentarians. In Daein, they succeeded in bringing together women from both tribes, who agreed to build peace by working together. They also agreed not to support any armed attack from either side.

Mahjouba: *“Women are not involved in clashes and fighting, even though it is they who are mostly affected by wars. It will be easier to convince them to work for peace”*. The team of the Massai Organization for Human Services agreed to persuade their members to talk to each other about how to put a stop to aggressive attitudes and inflammatory war songs and instead, to start talking about the advantages of peace. Mahjouba and her colleagues went to visit a woman leader (Hakkamah), famous for her song: *“I want the head of this man in my hands”*. It was an attempt to put a stop to dangerous and emotionally agitating songs of this kind. The action led finally to the avoidance of war songs and this change was followed and broadcast as a story by Radio Darfur.

Mahjouba also approached a female representative from Al-Rizaiqat tribe to introduce the idea of women’s participation in solving tribal conflicts through reconciliation. She knew that this person was married to the head of the Native Administration of the other tribe, the Maalia. She invited her to attend the reconciliation meetings of the Massai organisation. The lady enjoyed it, learned about reconciliation techniques and recognized that the contribution of the Massai organisation was significant. She agreed to become part of the project, aimed at the signing of a peace treaty between the tribes. From there, a mediation process was started, engaging women from the conflicting tribes and other communities around them. In this way, using personal relationships and mutual learning, it was demonstrated how women can play an essential role in peace building.

A story about seeking justice instead of revenge

The organization El-Bir Wa El-Tawasul works in the field of humanitarian and social activities in the town of Geneina. Their mission is mending the social fabric of the community and peace-building through participation in social activities such as music events and the opening of schools and health centres. The foundation has organized workshops on hepatitis and AIDS because people were fearful of being infected by illness coming from the IDP camps in neighbouring Chad and they initiated a vaccination programme, targeting 1,000 women and children from the IDP camps, as well as nomads.

The team of El-Bir Wa El-Tawasul also undertook an engineering survey for the installation of a complete water treatment plant in the village of Mulli, part of the Geneina locality; the water plant was financed by a fund from China. There are multiple tribes living in the village of Mulli, most of them from the Masaliet tribe and some from Arab tribes, so a meeting was held with the sheikhs and citizens of the village for the purpose of organizing the sharing out of the water supply. They also informed the inhabitants of Mulli that, provided the tribes could cooperate, the organization El-Bir Wa El-Tawasul intended to execute two other fundamentally important projects; an elementary school and a police station for emer-

gencies. Everyone involved agreed to these terms and made a promise to live in peace and harmony. Then the team organized joint committees from the parties to monitor the implementation of these projects.

In June 2015 in the town of El Geneina, a little girl called Imtithal, 8 years old, was killed. Imtithal's eldest sister left her with neighbours while she went shopping but when she returned the girl had disappeared. Shortly afterwards, the girl's body was discovered inside a luxury car belonging to one of the citizens of Geneina. The car was filled with toys. The owner claimed that he had gone to the market and when he returned to his car he found a dead tramp inside, a young girl who had suffocated because the car doors were closed. The man tried to get rid of the body but failed. Finally he brought the body to a private clinic and it is suggested that a considerable amount of money was paid to the acting physician, to produce a death certificate reporting suffocation as the cause of death.

When El-Bir Wa El-Tawasul heard about the incident, they mobilized the members of the Committee of the UNSCR 1325 and went to the family of the dead

child to offer their condolences, to make inquiries and to try to calm tempers. The team accompanied the girl's family to the clinic in order to identify their daughter's corpse. The nurses tried to prevent them from approaching the body but the team threatened to call the police if they persisted in refusing to allow the family access to the body. Finally the family succeeded in identifying the body of their missing daughter and requested the death certificate. However when they noticed blood on the child's clothing, they demanded a second autopsy to determine the real cause of death. Initially the staff at the clinic refused to cooperate but under pressure they finally agreed. The autopsy proved that the child died by strangulation. In addition it was discovered that she had a fracture in her neck and a break in the pelvis and hips; it turned out that she had been raped. The team of the organization held a meeting and issued a statement accusing the man in question of raping and murdering the child.

A group from the family and tribe of the deceased girl gathered in front of the clinic, vehemently protesting against the staff and the tribe of the criminal and refusing to leave unless the offender was put in jail. The team of the organization advised them to avoid violence and promised to bring the case to court. Then together with the family and the child protection police, the team followed the progress of the case until it went to court and the criminal was put in jail pending further investigation of the case.



Fatima Fadul Abdalla

FOUNDATION
AL-BIR WA EL-TAWASUL
GENEINA WEST DARFUR

A story about handling armed fighters



*Aziza
Mohmed Kinean*

DAR AL-SALAM ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT
NORTH DARFUR

The Dar Al-Salam Association for Women's Development is part of a network of 72 women's associations in different rural areas of Darfur. It organizes workshops for leaders of the civil administration and members of the People's Committees, workshops which improve communication and encourage the sharing of good practices in the various regions. It also protects the members against assault and robbery through their active mobile phone network.

In 2013, an influx of displaced people settled in Dar-Al-Salam County in North Darfur. There followed an increase in violent clashes in the neighbourhood and it soon became apparent that many of the displaced persons were in fact armed fighters. These displaced people claimed that they were the only reason that resources were being allocated to Dar-Al-Salam. The settled residents of Dar-Al-Salam feared that if they did not accept them, Dar-Al-Salam would no longer receive any aid. This position caused tension and conflict between the residents and the refugees.

The Dar Al Salam Association for Women's Development organized a training project targeting 200 women, 100 from each group (residents and refugees). They divided the trainees into groups to learn skills in the small scale manufacturing of various utensils and they also organized literacy classes and training on health and religion. Gradually, the trainers moved to a position where the workshops consisted of a mix of resi-

dents and displaced women in the same group. Good relations developed and women from different groups started to visit each other.

The instructors of the Dar Al-Salam association facilitated the discussion of problems raised by those within the different groups, enabling some women to speak about the shortage of water and the deterioration of wells. The Dar Al-Salam Association made contact with UNAMID (the UN/African peace keeping forces) to find a solution for this specific issue. The Dar Al-Salam Association formed a committee for social peace and mediation in 2015, composed of 50 women and 50 men. The mission of this committee was to solve problems arising from the group discussions, and to do what was necessary to prevent them from escalating.

The Association replicated the program in neighbouring villages. They started to ask for contributions from the participants and members (11 Sudanese pounds per person) for a special transport fund. The fund is used to pay for transportation and food for the organizers, when moving from one village to another, thus spreading the program over as large an area as possible.

A story about mutual trade for peace

The organization Al-Tasamuh for Women's Rights and Child welfare was established in 2012 to help with the empowerment of women in the rural areas of West Darfur. The organization formed peace committees with farmers, nomads and IDPs in the area.

The team of Tasamuh has extensive experience of dealing with violence against women due to the war around Zalengei. In 2009 Zamzam herself was abducted together with other men and women, by a group of rebels. On that occasion, the women were separated from the men and the rebels tried to rape them. Luckily the women were set free when the police arrived but they were warned by the rebels not to report the rape attempt. Later, letters were delivered to their homes threatening that they would be raped if they reported the attempted rape to the police. Because they were intimidated and frightened, no report was made. Confronted with this situation, the team understood that fear is the major reason why women refrain from reporting rape incidents. From that time on, the team started to provide legal assistance to women in rural areas, more especially to internal displaced persons.



Zamzam Ali Abdallah

AL-TASAMUH FOR WOMEN'S
RIGHTS AND CHILD WELFARE
ZALENGEI, WEST DARFUR

Bieja, in the heart of the state of Middle Darfur is a complex of three villages surrounded by four damars (Nomad dwellings) and it lives in a continual state of conflict with its neighbours. In an attempt to reconcile these conflicting parties, the team of Tasamuh approached the women from Bieja to try and understand their way of living. Bieja women trade yogurt and cheese with other villages and when the team asked them where they got their milk, they answered: "From the damars". The team then went to the nomad dwellings in the neighbourhood to inquire where the women bought their grain and the women answered: "From Bieja village".

However, milk and grain were not the only businesses connecting the women. For example, after the harvest, the animal fodder to feed their cattle was bought by the nomads from the farmers in Bieja. The team of Al-Tasamuh discovered that the conflicting parties had strong mutual interests, so they explained this situation to the women on both sides. The team advised the women to look after their own economic interests and then they convinced them to have a discussion with their husbands about the importance of peaceful co-existence based on that interdependence. The team of Al-Tasamuh also formed a committee to further encourage mutual trading and subsequently, peace building committees were established. Finally, in October 2015 the committees organized a workshop on the basis of peaceful coexistence and groups from both sides of the conflict attended.

A story about containing jealousy



Sumia Mohamed Abdalla

GLOUB ALRAHMA FOR CHARITY
GINEANA, WEST DARFUR

Gloub AlRahma is an organization working to promote women's training and literacy in a remote neighbourhood of Dar-es-Salaam in the southern part of the Kaja valley, close to the town of El Geneina, in West Darfur. Gloub AlRahma is involved in implementing a women's training programme in partnership with an international organization, CIS. Funded by this organization, they promote income-generating activities such as sewing and handcrafts. Through the support of UNAMID (the peace keeping forces in the area) the organization built a women's centre for Food Security and Income Earning Capacity. The organization also implemented a training course for forty women, on legal awareness and on UNSC Resolution 1325, supported by the Dutch organization VOND (Vrouwenorganisatie Nederland Darfur). The aim of these workshops is to create a solid foundation that allows women leaders in Darfur to explore their potential, to exchange experiences and learn more about peace processes and peace building.

At the beginning of October 2015 an incident occurred in the village of Kendibe, Sirba locality in West Darfur, involving one of the inhabitants of the region, the Director of the Mixed School of Kendibe. Because of his role in the region he dealt with the organization of active people working in that area, and became very well known. The Mayor from the native administration in the region felt threatened by his popularity and wanted him out of the way. He

conspired with a criminal gang and paid them a considerable amount of money to have the Director shot dead.

Unfortunately, instead of hitting the intended victim, the bullet hit his wife in the leg as she was standing next to the Director. The incident occurred inside their home, around nine o'clock in the evening. When Gloub Alrahma heard the dreadful news they hurried to the house and condoled with the victim's family. They provided psychological support and transferred the victim to Khartoum (the capital) for treatment. Unfortunately the woman's leg had to be amputated because she was so seriously injured. The team also visited the couple in Khartoum during recovery. Both the person who committed the crime and the Mayor were committed to prison and remain there up to this moment.

A story about the influence of women centres

Al-Amal and its partner organization, the Association for Building Peace were given the opportunity by the Darfur Reconstruction Fund, to implement peace building programs, in cooperation with 10 other organisations. The fund provided small grants to build centres for women coming from two conflicting tribes in the Kaas and Shattaya localities of South Darfur. The purpose of the project was to mend the social fabric in this conflicted area by initiating small joint activities between the two tribes.

The violence and clashes between those tribes increased until it had become a kind of life style, resulting in sharp divisions between the inhabitants, each tribe living in its own separate area. The war influenced the people's perception of their neighbours and damaged the relationship between communities that had previously lived alongside each other in harmony. It was mainly women and children who were the victims of this situation, much affected by the armed clashes.

The first Centre was built in the village of Shawaya which is in the Shattaya County. Shawaya used to be a peaceful village. Salwa and her colleagues encouraged the women from the neighbouring village to participate in the income generating programs provided by Al-Amal. After a great deal of persuasion, the women agreed. The team created cooperatives and divided the women into groups, each group consisting of 10 to 20 participants from different tribes. They made the decision that the positions of president and vice-president would never be assigned to women of the same tribe. Women started to work together and some of them even dared to go to the markets of the opposing tribe to sell their products.

This initiative helped in the reconstruction of the social fabric among the women of enemy tribes. They started to recognize common economic interests and the advantages of trade exchange, which contributed to the peace building process. The good relationship between the women who participated in using the services of the Shattaya Centre for Women's Development became widely known. The officers of the civil administration in the region encouraged this kind of exchange. The team also mobilized support from the UNAMID mission to build a well, a school and a market. The school developed into a high school



Salwa Haroun Imam

AL-AMAL ORGANIZATION FOR
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SOUTHERN DARFUR-NYALA

for Girls, which is the only secondary school for girls in the region. Girls from both tribes attend the school.

Then, in 2014, Al-Amal Organization for Community Development started a programme for women in Kaas, including both refugees and women resident in the village. The centre became overloaded with more participants than expected, 250 instead of 200. In view of this situation, the team located a person who could speak a number of dialects, and they managed to divide the participants into groups based on their specific skills. In that way, the overload was accommodated. Later on, their work was brought to exhibitions, but transport was a problem as the participants had to share the few cars with many groups. The situation was not helped by the fact that people living in the nomad areas needed the cars to bring their children to their own tribal school. After meditation, a solution was found. The team talked to the parents and the teachers and persuaded them to admit nomad children to the nearest school, even if the school was not of their tribe.

A story about calming the tempers



Nawal Mohammed El-Dirdiri

AL-BADRAIN ORGANIZATION FOR CHARITY
AL-FASHIR, NORTH DARFUR

A serious conflict started between two tribes: the Awlad Amin living in a village called Shagat Jamous and another tribe living in a village called Al-Lieyiet.

A man from Al-Lieyiet married a woman from Awlad Amin in Shagat Jamous. The man bought a new electricity generator and was enjoying the benefit of it, especially having electric light in the evening. One day a woman walking near his house accidentally stepped on a wire and died. This incident caused an enormous conflict between the two tribes. The people of Awlad Amin asked for Diya (compensation) for the death of their daughter and the people of El-Lieyiet refused the request and explained that what had happened to the woman was an accident, there was no bad intention involved and the accident was just her fate.

The atmosphere became very tense and the two communities decided that the married couple should separate. However this did not solve the problem and after the separation, the anger between both parties only increased.

The team of Al Badrain formed a mediation committee composed of women. They set up mediation meetings between the women of both tribes to encourage them to convince their husbands and brothers to put an end to the conflict. The team succeeded and was able to reconcile the two tribes after agreement had been reached on the amount of the compensation to be paid. In the end husband and wife were able to come back together and the couple continued to live in peace.

A story about **peace building with the sheiks**

Al-Wathba Organization for Development and Peace works in partnership with another organization called Al-Hussaini. Both organizations invited women from several tribes in the area which is dominated by a group of rebels, to come together in one location, the Al-Ekhlās women's centre in the Al-Riyad neighbourhood in the city of Nyala. This centre seeks to provide humanitarian aid through the activities of the women. Every time the women meet there, they debate solutions for peaceful co-existence.

Fatima's experience of peace building dates from 2004, when she was asked by the Mayor of the state of South Darfur for advice on the situation concerning the Bedouin in the Kaas region. She herself is from the Four tribe. In collaboration with an organization called International Renaissance, Fatima organized forms of communication between people from 17 different tribes, all of whom were displaced people living together in the IDP camp called Outash.

In order to avoid any potential conflicts, the team worked with the Sheikhs and the elders from each tribe in the camp, taking care to discuss and agree together different ways to preserve agricultural plots and water resources, and to distribute medication for the livestock. The outcome was a success and Outash is now considered the best example of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence in Darfur. Since then, Fatima is convinced that agriculture and grazing are interdependent activities and there should be no reason for enmity between the people who practise them.

With this message, she started to cooperate with an organization covering the area of Kaas, called Al-Ruhal for Rural Development. She persuaded women from her own tribe to join women from other tribes in the area and she set out

to contact various Sheikhs, Heads of the Customary Courts and Community Leaders from all tribes. Fatima discussed her experience with the different methods of maintaining agricultural plots and water sources and she strongly advised the tribal leaders to reject violence and start working together as the best way to maximise economic potential. After several years of work, all parties agreed to cooperate in maintaining peace in the Kaas county.

When the farmers in the locality of Blail mistakenly used the traditional animal pathways for agricultural purposes, the animals destroyed the crops and this provoked serious clashes. The women from Al-Wathba had to meet with the displaced people and the nomads more than 10 times before they could be convinced not to use weapons. The women made a plea for farmers to start using farmland only after receiving permission from the Sheikhs and urged the Sheikhs to clearly demarcate the routes for the nomad's animals. At one of the camps, a Sheikh refused to see the women as mediators but he was forced to change his mind when conflict erupted inside the camp. Afterwards, he expressed his gratitude for their peaceful and effective intervention.

Due to the significant progress which has been made regarding reconciliation issues in the region, Fatima Kanjom has now been nominated as a member of the Darfur Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which consists of 44 members, 6 of whom are women.



Fatima Kanjom

AL-WATHBA ORGANIZATION
FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
SOUTH DARFUR, NYALA

A story about resolving disputes



Mahasin Ali Abdelgadir

AL-RUHAL FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT
NYALA, SOUTH DARFUR

Al-Ruhal established centres for women, housing them in facilities made from local material. Al-Ruhal was the first organisation to bring women together from different tribes in the region. The first centre, which included a kindergarten, was funded by a Turkish organization and the UNAMID. After that, Al-Ruhal established another centre especially for a nomad group in Domaya, a locality extending to the suburb of Nyala. The centre serves 300 women from different tribes, who work together on crafts and other types of work that can provide them with an income. The team started establishing and encouraging reconciliation committees led by sheikhat (women rulers of tribes) from different tribes. Later on, the Domaya temporary buildings were replaced by brick buildings and now serve women from 28 villages around Nyala.

The centres were very active in the Abu-Ajura reconciliation and the strenuous efforts made by the meetings of Al-Ruhal for reconciliation and mediation which resulted in the successful reconciliation of a lady with her family. She returned to her husband and children after a dispute that lasted eight years, during which time she had been separated from her family. Based on that experience, the team Al-Ruhal took the initiative in an attempt at reconciliation between two tribes, the Al-Mahadi (nomads) and the Al-Four (settlers). The meetings included representatives of local groups and government representatives, and they resulted in a solution to

disputes, so that Al-Mahdi and Al-Four tribes are now living in peace. Al-Ruhal means “nomads”, for that reason the organization has been described by many as a foundation that can be trusted to intervene on behalf of nomads.

An American organization called DDR supported Ayah, which is a partner organisation of Al-Ruhal. They acknowledged that the Abu-Ajura reconciliation is an effective methodology for civil society organizations to use when reconciling disputing parties. At this moment, Al-Ruhal organization is regularly called on to join conciliation committees involved in solving disputes.

A story about **de-escalation** and songs of peace

The Kebkabiya foundation organized several workshops on the role of religion, on the role of women in peace building and on nurturing children. The foundation also organized different debates on subjects such as, social and peaceful co-existence, on changing aggressive attitudes and on blaming and denouncing conflicts.

Creating awareness is an essential tool in the prevention of armed clashes; the newest proposal from the Kebkabiya foundation is to choose 50 people from each tribe and focusing on them, organizing events which will build awareness. The Kebkabiya team has also organized a three-day theatre performance about the war. Belligerent tribes including the Zagawa, Tama, Four, Arab and Eringa were invited to take part in the theatre performance as part of this campaign.

At Jabal Amer last year a war broke out between two tribes involving the camel herders (Rizaigat) and Bani Hussein. The war, which continued for six months, caused massive destruction and resulted in fierce fighting. Camel herders burned down a village, men were found killed and thousands of women with their children were evacuated from their homes. 810 people died, among them 60 women killed for no reason. Other Arab tribes were called to support the parties. A group arrived at Faza'a to strengthen the Rizaigat. Due to the high number of people killed a famous sheikh called Musa Hilal proclaimed a reconciliation conference in the locality of Kebkabiya.

The governor refused to attend the conference in protest against the violence and outside interference. He also ordered the Mayor not to attend, however the Mayor refused to comply and a large number of people also attended, among them many camel herders. Strangely enough, the women who were so seriously affected by this long-term war were not invited to the conference. For that reason, Thuria called one of her relatives and demanded an opportunity to allow the voice of the women to be heard. She was invited to the conference and allowed to speak.



Thuria Ibrahim Salih

KEBKABIYA FOUNDATION FOR
WOMEN DEVELOPMENT
NORTH DARFUR-KABKABI

Thuria gave a speech that made a deep impression. She confronted the men with the fact that they start a war without giving any thought to the women who would ultimately pay the price, losing their husbands, sons and brothers. She was very moved and wept during the speech and the men reacted to her by weeping also. She said: *“You create the problems and leave us alone as widows and orphans and I am angry because you refuse to allow women to participate in this conference. Women can have a strong influence and are able to guide a reconciliation process when a conflict arises. Women should be aware that the men who did the killing are their husbands and sons. They should talk to their husbands and sons to hold them back from participating in war.”* Suddenly one man stood up and told Thuria that he would support her, and so he did. He supported an awareness workshop for the cultural leaders, the Hakkamat and Sheikhat, in order to transform their mind-set and to transform their war songs into songs of peace.

A story about forging a peace treaty



Zahara Zariaba

AL-ARJOUN FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT
KUMA, NORTH DARFUR

The area where the foundation Al-Arjoun is located, the Eastern part of North Darfur, is not characterized by violent conflict. However there is still tension between the tribes due to regular disagreements between nomads and farmers.

In this situation, Al-Arjoun approached representatives from four local areas, Al-Malha, Al-Kuma, Al-Sayah and Milliet, to decide on a brotherly agreement between the farmers and the nomads. In the words of Zahra: *“We initiated and signed a joint peace treaty. The treaty allows the Meidoob tribe to enter the areas of Al-Zayadia tribe. Up until this moment we remain connected and have good lines of communication. We’re expanding the circle of connection starting from the locality of Milliet to the locality of Kuma and then on to the locality of Al-Malha”*. Zahra’s dream is that women will stop talking about tribal differences and renounce tribal strife and agitation. They should refer to themselves in the first instance, as Darfurian women who strive for peace.

Unfortunately, on March 2015 a violent conflict started between two tribes (the Berti and the Zayadiya). However, while the Berti live in a town called Milliet and the Zayadia live in Kuma, many members of each tribe live in the county of the other tribe. For example, Zayadi live in 8 out of the 21 neighbourhoods of Milliet while many Berti tribes have been living in Kuma for centuries and in fact intermarriage is a common feature of their relationship. Despite the peace

agreement which was signed to end the violence, families from both cities were harassed or forced to leave their homes. Al-Arjoun participated, together with other women’s organisations in the Women’s Alliance for Peace in Darfur (WAP-Darfur), in a mediation effort to stop the killings. In the beginning, they were not allowed to enter the area, but then they succeeded in organising meetings between the women, and after that it was possible to approach the men and the sheiks as well.

A story about **convincing young rebels to renounce violence**

Al-Tigana established an office in Al-Fashir to support internally displaced women. The team organized fundraising to help support poor families by supplying them with a small amount of cash each month. However, part of the money was allocated to pay compensation in order to prevent violent conflicts between tribes. In many cases, if the expected compensation is not paid, a minor incident can escalate to violence and killings.

For mediation, Al-Tigana relies on an old system called Rakouba, which happens to be the name of a veranda built from local material, but is also the name of the process which is used to negotiate a reconciliation between the parties concerned and decide on compensation (Diya) to the victims. In that system, the fighting parties meet on the “rakouba” to determine whether the distress was caused by an intentional or non-intentional action, and if Diya is due. Then they will decide on compensation and the problem will be solved. In most cases people comply with the judgement and the decisions proposed by the mediators, the Rawakeeb.

Ibtisam used a model of reconciliation for her own tribe, the Tunjour (one of the bigger tribes of North Darfur), to enable them to live in peace with other tribes. She started by reminding the Tunjour of its lost identity: Tunjour was once a well-organized kingdom of communities spread around Darfur and Chad. A group of educated Tunjour men and women brought their people together from Al-Fashir, Kafoot and Saraf Omra localities. With the participants they discussed the fact that the Tunjour do not want to continue living in a state of armed conflict. They urged each family to take their sons back from the armed movements and it was decided that those who still insisted on joining armed groups, would no longer be considered part of the Tunjour community. Thereafter they divided Al-Fashir

into six areas and organized the youth to carry out a demographic survey. They listed the number of Tunjour families, discovered how many Tunjour women had married into other tribes and found out how many were displaced and from which villages. Meanwhile, the Tunjour women from civil society organizations raised awareness by meeting with their elders, the governors, the ministers and officers from the tribe, approaching them as normal citizens, as caring parents. At the end of the campaign they requested all the Tunjour families to sign a register showing whether or not their sons were ready to give up violence and join the move towards a new peaceful identity.

Based on that experience, Al-Tigana participated in the joint mediation effort between the Berti and the Zayadia tribes in North Darfur in April 2015. They had been engaged in armed conflict, wounding many and causing deaths. Together with other women’s organisations, they called meetings with women in the towns of Milliet and in Kuma to mourn for the deceased, to talk about the losses caused by the armed clashes and to analyse the root causes of the violence. The women approached the customary authorities and eventually a peace treaty was signed, to be monitored by women. The process was recognized by the peace forces (UNAMID) as an important example of “best practice”.



Ibtisam Al-Duma Shomain

AL-TIGANA ORGANIZATION
FOR WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT
AL-FASHIR, NORTH DARFUR

A story about intertribal marriage



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The foundation Al-Ruhama for Development and Humanitarian Aid built two women's centres, one in Al-Salam County and the other in Domaya. In the Al-Salam centre, internally displaced women gathered with other women resident in the area, to cooperate in benefiting from the aid available and to improve their chances of earning an income. The other centre, at Domaya, was built for both nomads and residents and the objective and purpose of both centres, is to bring the different groups together, as a way of encouraging reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

In March 2015, war broke out between the Al-Salamat and the Al-Falatah tribes. Apparently marriage between these tribes is quite common but the trouble centred round a Salamat lady called Hawaa and a man from the Falatah tribe. They were married and had nine children. One day Hawaa was overheard by her sister-in-law while talking on a cell-phone with someone from her family. The conversation referred to a Falatah man beating his wife viciously as a punishment and kicking her out of the house to go back to her family. The sister-in-law informed her brother of what she had heard. Rumours spread about this situation and in revenge, all the Salamat men who were married to wives from Al-Falatah started to send their wives back to their families, keeping the children away from their mothers. Then the Falatah men started to do the same thing, threatening to expel the Salamat wives.

When the team of Al-Ruhama heard of this matter, they hurried to intervene and find a way out of this dilemma to protect the families. First, the team brought the expelled Salamat women and their children to a safe place in the city of Nyala, to wait for the parties to reach an agreement. A campaign was started to unite and mediate between the conflicting parties. After many meetings the compassionate mediation team finally succeeded in stopping the massive expulsion of wives.

A story about returning refugees

The foundation Riaheen Elsalam was established in 2005 to provide educational opportunities, health care for mothers and children and to enable women to make a livelihood. It benefited mainly from international organizations helping Darfur. Recently, the name and logo of the organization changed from “Riaheen Elsalam Organisation” into “Relief and Mediation Force”, but the acronym is still REMCO.

REMCO became known because of a project called “synergy”, a saving scheme providing funds to encourage reconciliation and cohesion in the community. Groups of beneficiaries were formed to give training in saving money for emergencies. The project was extended to eight areas, where more than 200 saving groups were formed, most of them composed of more than one dif-

ferent tribe. Saving boxes were provided, each box containing starting capital and each having three locks. The beneficiaries open these boxes at the beginning of the rainy season and then each participant will have a reasonable amount of money, (even after discounting what the savers put in), to be used for agricultural projects. This valuable project proved that people who save money together can live in harmony and benefit from an increase in mutual collaboration and interdependence.

After the outbreak of the war between the Fallata and the Salamat tribes in the area of El-Nadief, REMCO participated in the mediation intervention made by VOND and the Women’s Alliance for Peace in Darfur. In the meetings held with the women and local leaders, it was confirmed that in the past the land had been inhabited by other tribes like Bargo Alsaliahab, who were now refugees. This tribe had gardens and farms in the region and were known as messengers of peace and not inclined to make problems. For this reason, it was proposed that they return to the area.



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The REMCO team collected more information, contacted the Bargo Saliahab and held meetings with them in Daien of East Darfur, in Assalam IDP camp and in the camp of Gereida. Then they contacted the Mayors and thereafter convinced the Bargo Saliahab to return to their villages. The team went to the Nazir (head of the native administration) of the Habbaniya tribe, who assured them that the existence of Bargo Saliahab in the region had been important to local development because of their involvement in agriculture in the El-Nadief area, and he saw their return as a positive move for the region economically. The team contacted the local government and the Executive Director of the area and they too confirmed the need for the return of the Bargo Saliahab. Consequently, there are now 186 families from Bargo Saliahab who are ready to return to their area in the locality of El-Nadief and are only waiting for a signal from the government and from REMCO to return home. The team is now working hard on renting vehicles, arranging shelter and gathering materials and food while the homes of the Bargo Saliahab are being rebuilt.

Two examples of joint mediation by VOND's representatives and the Women's Alliance for Peace (WAP) in Darfur

The ongoing war in Darfur

In 2003 war erupted in Darfur, the Western region of Sudan, when the people protested against the marginalization of the area. Since Sudan gained its independent status in 1965, the region had been seriously neglected in terms of power sharing, economic development and the provision of services. Initially there were only two rebel groups but gradually they divided into more than 20 warring factions, the divisions fuelled by tribal conflict which dragged the region down into a state of chaos. Tribal fighting became usual in Darfur gradually intensifying, leading to thousands of deaths and injuries and forcing many more thousands to flee their homes. Tribal clashes are usually triggered by land disputes, pasture rights, cattle thefts and fighting over water resources as land ownership in Darfur is divided on a tribal basis, most of the tribes owning an area called a Hakura. Some tribes, more especially nomads, do not possess a Hakura of their own and live on the land of other tribes which results in tribal fighting. The Darfur local governments appointed mediators (Ajaweed) to help in keeping the peace and to mediate between fighting tribes. Those appointed are impartial individuals trusted by the community, like ex-police officers and retired judges. Private mediators are chosen mainly from the native administrators.

The first example of mediation by WAP Darfur: North Darfur

In North Darfur, the Barti and the Zayadia started attacking each other in March 2015 while during the same period, the LEAP learning event was organized in Al-Fashir, the capital of North Darfur. The fights were ongoing at the time of the LEAP meeting, causing death, injury and the displacement of many people. A cease fire was called, followed by a fragile, temporary agreement to stop the aggression. The LEAP participants decided to intervene. They planned to offer three mediation workshops with women; one in the city of Milliet, exclusively for the Barti tribe, another in Kuma, exclusively for the Zayadiya tribe, and a third meeting in Al-Fashir, for the two tribes and impartial participants from other tribes. The proposed title for the workshops was "Mending the social fabric and the calming of tempers". It did not seem to be appropriate to talk about reconciliation, because it was a little too soon after the mediators had managed to cobble together the fragile cease-fire between the two tribes. The situation in the area was tense and people were still cautious about travelling in the area for fear of the activities of armed bandits. However, despite the anticipated danger WAP Darfur went ahead with the implementation.

The first workshop was in Milliet organized on the 19th of April for a group of 52 participants; there were a number of men included but the majority were women. The workshop started with a long prayer, condolences and the presentation of speeches on the role of women in building peace; advocacy and the promotion of the principles of peace; the role of customs and traditions in conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence in Darfur; the role of religion in making peace. The participants were given the chance to discuss and argue and during the event the sadness, the sorrow and the grievances of the women became very obvious. The participants claimed the existence of hidden agendas behind the war, a war by proxy. The women mediators had information which led them to believe that the intention of the two parties was to escalate the war after the elections. During the workshops they made a strong plea to

the combatants and the war lords to stop the escalation. Many useful recommendations came out of this workshop. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the workshop and the solidarity of this group of women leaders from civil society. They concluded saying that they were eager to have the war parties sign a strong and lasting peace agreement.

The second day another group of women representing WAP-Darfur drove to Al-Kuma County to perform the same task. In Kuma they asked the host, herself a member of WAP-Darfur, to invite a majority of women rather than men from the different institutions. However, the entire government body insisted on attending the meeting, so in the end there were more men than women. They spoke at length claiming that the Zayadiya are a peaceful tribe, forced to enter this war through contin-





ued provocation. The claim of a hidden agenda behind the war was confirmed by this group too, and the claim was made that some people trade in war in terms of weapons, ammunition and political gains. It became clear that land ownership was one of the most important factors in creating animosity. The citizenship rights of nomads (including rights on land) were guaranteed by the law but not enforced due to the lack of demarcation of boundaries. “We only demand the administrative recognition of our property rights” they argued.

Both tribes agreed to comply with the recommendations of the WAP-Darfur mediators to honour the women’s cry for peace and to form peace agreements. However the third intended workshop in Al-Fashir which was to include the participation of the two groups and some impartial participants from the town, could not take place. Unfortunately, the Barti head of the native administration found the time

inappropriate for a joint meeting. He promised to work towards reaching a peace agreement with the Zayadiya and to fully comply with such an agreement when implemented. WAP-Darfur had no choice but to halt the workshop of Al-Fashir. Three months later the leaders of the Barti and the Zayadiya tribes signed an agreement on the cessation of hostilities in July 2015.

The second example of mediation by WAP-Darfur: South Darfur

The Salamat and the Fallata tribes fought each other twice, in March 2015 and August 2015. The Salamat is a small tribe scattered within the states of Darfur but they do not possess a Hakura and they live in the Habbaniya land, bordering the Fallata.

This time, the women from WAP-Darfur had their learning event in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. Conscious of the fighting going on around them, the participants worked out a plan of ac-

tion formulating a Women’s Manifesto for Peace and Reconciliation in Darfur, which was presented to the regional government. Following the manifesto, they decided to engage again in a concerted mediation effort. WAP-Darfur asked for a meeting with the chief mediator to learn more about the case and organized workshops based on that knowledge. The women mediators organized five workshops, three of them with the members of the Consultative Councils (Shura councils) of the Salamat, the Fallata and the Habbaniya tribes. The program was composed of four speeches: an introduction by LEAP’s coordinator on the UNSC1325 and the previous mediation in North Darfur between the Barti and the Zayadiya tribes which ended in peace; a second speech by the chair of WAP-Darfur on the role of women in making peace, with a plea for the decision makers to take the lead in ending the war immediately; a third speech about the advantages of peaceful co-existence; and finally a powerful speech by the local religious leader. He reminded the participants about the consequences of war, the legitimate ways in Islam of responding to assault, and the rules on self-defence in the case of a person or a group who are attacked. When the floor was given over to the tribal elite, their leaders had to answer questions on why and what were the reasons for fighting and what they believed to be the solutions. WAP-Darfur was then alerted to the fact that the Consultative Councils were not fully representative of the decision makers of the tribes in that area. The women were

advised to meet those leaders of the native administration who make decisions about war; i.e., the Omad (native mayors), the Agieds (commanders), the Amirs and the Hakkamat (war praise singers).

Meanwhile, both tribes started to prepare themselves for a new escalation of the war; witnesses reported that crowds from both tribes had marched towards the battlefield to support their fellow tribesmen, pointing to the inability of the state’s security forces to extend its control over the tribal clashes. Realising the situation, the women mediators from WAP Darfur approached the radio-broadcasting channels to send a strong plea to both sides to stop the escalation, requesting them to wait for the women’s mediation. Through this action, the state government was alerted and immediately sent military reinforcements to contain the situation and to prevent further clashes, whereupon the crowds scattered. The women’s initiative created disquiet among the stakeholders. It seems that the men felt both surprised and insulted that women could take such an initiative and be effective in stopping the violence. With the same goal in mind, the various male leaders then started making moves towards each other and some of the Habbaniya elite from the local government hurried to mediate. The result was a ceasefire agreement along with a promise to hold a peace conference in Buram (the Habbaniya County) in order to reach a final, lasting peace between the two tribes.



The women went on to organize workshops with the leaders of the native administration. WAP Darfur first met the Salamat and then the Fallata leaders, and asked for a convincing religious leader to join the meeting. The intervention had to be restricted in order not to jeopardize the deal made by the Habbaniya public authorities to hold a peace conference, so when the participants arrived in Nyala for the workshop, they found the men dominated the mission. In the workshops, the war lords were invited to present their view on the situation. The men welcomed the women's initiative to bring peace, and they considered it a new experience to have women refuting the stereotypical negative role of women (referring to the role of the female

Hakkamat mainly as war agitators). One of the outcomes of the workshops was a better understanding of the intentions of the Fallata towards the Habbaniya. The latter were assuming that if the Fallata were to win the war they would lay claim to a certain area occupied by the Salamat, because they had been using its water resources for centuries. Being assured that this was not the case, the misunderstanding was cleared up and, the Habbaniya leaders were left relieved and satisfied. Both parties promised to comply with the women's plan on peace.

The subsequent peace conference planned by the Habbaniya was held on the 23rd of September in Buram. The Habbaniya commissioners, together with the Fallata and in coordination with the traditional administration and the executive authorities were able to bring the tribal conflict to an end based on the terms of the Habbaniya and the Fallata. The Salamat did not agree with some of terms of reconciliation, but they agreed reluctantly to sign in order to stop the war and to normalize peaceful co-existence.



Methodological reflection and learning by women leaders on peace building

The stories you have read come directly from the practice of mediation, however an attentive observer can see that there are some implicit assumptions common to all of them. Moreover, there is a common methodological structure grounded in the tradition of tribes in Sudan and in a strong belief that women play a key role in sustainable peace building. VOND invites the reader to reflect on these features with us, for the benefit of other groups and other situations in the world.

Assumptions of peaceful conflict resolution

A theme common to many of the stories is the fact that people from different traditions and positions depend on each other economically. Agriculturalists and herders can be more successful if they live in peace with each other and profit from their complementary skills and roles. The same applies to the situation between refugees in camps and local residents.

Another common feature is that personal relationships built on trust can prove infectious. Once you build a network of people who trust each other, a conflict can be resolved on the basis of practical and flexible solutions and settlements. In the tribal groups, trust between members of the same tribe has been built up over the ages. But with migration, new media and social

change, there are other meaningful relationships that can influence peaceful decision making, such as family, friends, religious rituals, business contacts and political structures. We are no longer bound by a single identity, but learning to profit from multiple identities is a process that takes time and needs attention. Women in Darfur often call this, "the weaving and restoring of social tissue".

A third common feature is the absence or failure of judicial instruments in remote areas. People there tend to take justice into their own hands and revert to the use of violence to sort out problems. The women have to maintain good relationships with the authorities to restore compliance with the rule of law bit by bit, case by case.

And finally, we can observe that many internal conflicts have chronic root causes such as poverty, lack of education, land issues and migration. These are problems that apparently the central government is not engaged in addressing. People feel neglected or, when they try to take initiatives for themselves, not trusted, hindered and even attacked.

Why has a gendered methodology an added value?

It is clear in the stories that the development of participatory alternatives to armed conflict is not compatible

with strict patriarchal structures. Male leaders tend to feel responsible for the defence of their territory and authority. They depend on the honour of the leaders as a guarantee for peace. Female leaders are nowadays more strongly focused on multiple relations providing a healthy environment for trade and education. Their approach is more inclusive and future oriented. There is a paradigm shift in the way conflicts are interpreted and handled by women leaders and this new approach is gradually getting broader support in the communities.

Some key features of a gender-responsive approach.

Instead of jumping straight into problem solving, attention is given to personal feelings and values related to the conflict and the losses in terms of human lives, dignity and integrity. Instead of acting directly out of anger or despair, time-out is created to express and share anger and despair, using religious rituals, gatherings, personal meetings and group events.

Long before conflicts erupt in violence, productive relationships are built between people from different tribes and positions. When violent revenge is imminent, these people are called on to be present and show their commitment to seeking less harmful solutions. Of course, concerted efforts are needed to find acceptable solutions that can do justice to the wrongdoings that call for revenge – the victims should not be abandoned.

Tradition is respected and traditional rules and chiefs are not confronted. Instead, an effort is made to convince them to take fundamental values into account and to look for the renewal of tradition in the context of social changes, considering the devastating consequences of armed clashes for women and young people.

Women peace builders are optimistic and practical. They effectively help the migrants, the villagers and the Nomads to make a living. They believe that mutual cooperation and good human relationships will bring prosperity in the end. They understand that external help can be mobilized.

These features can be extended if other aspects of the methodology are further analysed:

- How do women leaders relate to the instruments of Justice and Peace as administered by the formal authorities?
- Are 1325 committees mobilized?
- What about educating for peace and focusing the spotlight of publicity on conflict resolution?
- Are women leaders ready to facilitate discussion on the root causes of conflict, overcoming the taboo imposed by the central government against discussing those issues on the ground?
- What strategies can they use to defend themselves against accusations of slander and other accusations?
- What is their strategy to address the issue of mass rape in the area?
- What support can they expect from the UN Security Council - and vice versa?

Training in Leadership for Peacebuilding (LEAP)

A special training programme for women leaders was introduced to the region in 2013. The initiative was taken by VOND, a Dutch group of concerned people in solidarity with the women in Darfur. VOND was inspired by the national action plan on the resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, promoting participation of women in peace negotiations, and women leadership in peace building. Together with 16 leaders from women's organisations in Darfur, a programme of six participatory learning events in different parts of Darfur was designed and funded through the Dutch National Action Plan 1325. It started in 2015 under the name "Leadership in Peace Building" (LEAP). At the start of it, the 16 organizations formed the Women's Alliance for Peace in Darfur (WAP-Darfur).

The women leaders of WAP-Darfur aim at being recognized as mediators. As they are close to daily life in the communities through humanitarian services and women's centres, they started to develop their own style and methodo-

logy of mediation. How can they apply this experience on a regional level, taking joint initiatives as WAP Darfur? The two examples in this brochure show some key features that are complementary to the features mentioned above:

- to take an impartial position in the conflict, listening to the view of women and choosing sides with the victims from both sides;
- to start with meeting one of the former mediators to learn about the cause of the conflict and the extent to which they have reconciled the situation;
- to open mediation meetings with a religious note including condolences for the deceased and reminding the audience of those verses in the Quran which prohibit the killing of people;
- to plead with the fighting groups for an immediate halt to the atrocities, based on arguments close to daily life;
- to avoid talking about who is to blame for the violence, because it usually leads to irrelevant arguments, each party claiming that they did not start the fighting and are only acting to defend themselves, their property or their honour;





- to work in the open and involve the media as much as possible in order to gain publicity and recognition for positive developments.

Lessons learnt from the examples of joint mediation

The methodological principles for gendered mediation proved to be very powerful in the way VOND and WAP-Darfur worked together for reconciliation. Both examples show what works and what doesn't work, and that is material for further learning. We mention a few examples:

The presence of women from the belligerent communities and the dialogue with them about their concerns had a strong influence on the final decision by both parties to halt the violence and work towards reconciliation. This was seen as strength in the first case, and it proved to be a missing link in the second case.

In both cases the inclusion of former mediators as sources of information helped in an understanding of the situation and in finding out who are the decision makers to be approached. But in the second case, the information proved

to be incomplete, the group was misguided about the real decision makers.

In both cases the inclusion of religious leaders and making time for religious ceremony proved to be effective, providing a strong moral ground for reconciliation.

The intervention of women was accepted as something new, which helped to encourage a more open mind set. Their impartiality was an added value, but in the second case the acceptance was ambiguous, probably influenced by the fact that the local women didn't participate sufficiently in the meetings.

The involvement of media was effective in the second case – it created some pressure for quick results. However this pressure also hindered the mediation, as the Salamat tribe was not satisfied with the final settlement.

Being involved in a continuing joint learning process is a positive challenge for VOND and WAP-Darfur. After all, peace cannot be achieved without listening to each other and learning more about the background against which the conflicts take place.

Great Darfur

*Darfur is great and strong sheltering many people
All Darfur races were once united and equal
But then it changed because the people lost their way
We used to cultivate our crops together and together we milked our cattle
We nurtured our cattle together
Goodness prevailed in our urban and rural areas
When we were in the open, the cooking fire sparked among us
Zahra sang and Hawaya ululated
My son was your son
We lived together in hunger and shared our food.*

Sumia Mohamed Abdalla

Colofon

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Women Alliance for Peace in Darfur

