



PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme



Sounding Good: Musical Performances in Darfur Make the Difference

EL Fasher, Darfur, 6 July 2011 -

They've launched and produced newspapers, radios programmes in local unwritten languages, street theatre performances, and have entertained and informed thousands of children in IDP camps with their puppet shows. Now, on 7th July, 2011, Afia Sudan is returning to Darfur, this time in El Fasher, to organize extensive community outreach activities.



Thousands join in the revelry at the Afia-staged DDR/CSAC awareness concert in El Geneina on June 9th 2011 (photo credit: Afia)

The day will start with workshops at 2pm at the National Union Hall, followed by a big march through the town at 6pm and leading up to an evening concert at Al-Shaheed Al Ziber Stadium featuring Igd Elgalad Vocal Group and Shorhabel Ahmed. Such activities are part of a partnership with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (NSDDRC) and UNDP to increase and enhance the level of information and public awareness about the community security and small arms control (CSAC) and DDR programmes in the Darfur region.

As Sudan prepares for its historic separation and conflicts continue to fester in other parts of the country, this small national NGO is making a difference in Darfur. A dedicated group of activists, consultants and communication professionals, Afia Sudan has been promoting peace-building and democracy since 2006. As Executive Director Khalid Ibrahim Haj Elhassan explains, "Afia is a local organization and it is a partnership comprised of artists, actors, musicians, journalists, and dramatists trying to change the shape of these communities."

The activities carried out over the previous month in South and West Darfur have been met with wide acclaim, and have attracted tens of thousands of participants. UNDP's DDR Coordinator in Darfur, Stephen Moore, was witness to the excitement in El

Geneina. He recalls, “The huge crowd absolutely spilling over the field with people sitting on walls and in trees. The event finished with the band singing the DDR song, and one of the memorable moments of the night was as the crowd was dispersing, the people were singing this song. So it made a big impression on people: it was something that was not only remembered but it was something that was song about. It was a very memorable night.”



(Notable musicians donning DDR and CSAC shirts played to the rapt crowd in El Geneina (photo credit: Afia)

Thursday’s activities in El Fasher will include *hakamas*, training workshops for teachers, musical performances, acrobatics and speeches from NSDDRC and UNDP dignitaries. Elhassan anticipates a crowd of over 15,000 people and he notes that many of the activities will be targeting IDPs, especially through the use of children’s theater & humorous drama.

“We are trying to improve the level of education of the children,” Elhassan notes. “We will give them information on CSAC and DDR and they can use it for the future and use it for different issues like peace-building and education. A small workshop will also target the teachers to improve their skills.” The march will be led through the town accompanied by the police marching band and with the direct involvement of a number of local groups. It will culminate at Al-Shaheed Al Ziber Stadium where the concert will begin. For most, these crucial messages of peace and reconciliation never sounded so good.

For further information, contact:

Tajelsir Alzan, NSDDRC, phone: +249923426441, e-mail: tajmohammed72@yahoo.com

Ariel Rubin, UNDP, phone: +249 (0) 912142399, e-mail: ariel.rubin@undp.org

Kumar Tiku: Head, Communications Unit, UNDP Sudan: kumar.tiku@undp.org