



Um Jumma
Women's Charitable
Society



Women in Darfur Celebrating Peace on International Women's Day

Hakamat Festival

March 8, 2007

North Darfur, SUDAN

On 8 March 2007, UNDP Sudan, in partnership with DAI and Um Jumma Women's Charitable Society, celebrated the International Women's Day, together with the women and men from different ethnic tribes of Darfur. It was the first time in Darfur history that the tribes from Masaleet, Dinka, Arab, Falata, Dinariah, Fur, Tama, Hausa, Zagawa, Kenin, Umregbath, and Hakamat women and men gathered together to celebrate the International Women's Day in El Fasher, North Darfur. The event attracted more than 400 people from North Darfur.



The Hakamat women have been around for centuries and are predominantly from Darfur and Kordofan. The Hakamat are known for their "press poetry" which is both positive and negative. They are feared by men because the Hakamat have the power to excommunicate members of the village with their songs of ridicule keeping the members of villages in line.

They are highly respected community leaders and composed of elder women from communities and villages. *Hakamat* literally means "Judging". The Hakamat come from generations of Hakamat

women who pass their legacy onto their daughters insuring the Hakamat heritage remains in the family. The Hakamat women must have a special talent for song and poetry writing. Their excellent communication skills commands respect from their community. One Hakamat says: "as soon as they hear our drums and our chants, people forget the pain and hardship and they come together in what we call *Nefir*: collective community service."





The Hakamat women are very good in mobilizing the villagers in their communities. They serve the community by mobilizing the people to do all kinds of collective work.

They sing to encourage people during the harvest or while building a house. They offer strength and courage in difficult situations and are an inspiration behind collective community work. The Hakamat also have songs of humiliation for those who may be lazy in their community and for those who are not participating in the collective work for which they sing about.

The Hakamat women also recite poems and songs encouraging violence and war. Through poetry, these women have traditionally inspired men to fight against their enemies and resolve tribal differences with armed force and bloodshed. Today, the Hakamat work to promote peace. Due to the continuing armed conflict that has resulted in the



breakdown of communities structures, the population of Hakamat women has been declining – many are internally displaced persons or are living in IDP camps or IDP gatherings losing their tribal cultural roots. Traditionally these women are agitators of war, but now they are also advocates for peace and empowerment of women in Darfur and Kordofan.



This Hakamat Festival on the International Women's Day provided women with an opportunity to share their sufferings from the conflicts and to collectively promote peace and empowerment of women in Darfur through their poetries, songs, and dances reflective of their tribal cultures and traditions in Darfur. The event was an affirmation to the courage, fortitude and strength of the Darfurian women who endured the war.



The Wali of North Darfur Osman Mohammed Yusuf Keber, the British Ambassador to Sudan Ian Cliff, British Ambassador to the United Nations John Sawers, Keith Mines Liaison Officer for the American Embassy in North Darfur, UNDP Khartoum Anna Lappay, UN agencies, AU, INGOs, and local organizations attended the event. The festival took place at the Peace Tent of the AMIS Forward Mission Headquarters in El Fasher.

- UNDP SGBV Programme, El Fasher, North Darfur -