

**Developing Darfurian Unity**  
**The Ammerdown Centre, Bath, UK, 23-27 June, 2008**

At the request of a small group of Darfurians, Concordis International facilitated this four-day meeting, which brought together 22 senior Darfurians from a variety of ethnic, social and political backgrounds. Participants attended in their personal capacities, with assistance from Sudanese and international experts. The consultation was designed to build consensus, cooperation and trust amongst the group by working together in depth on key issues associated with the conflict, with the larger aim of contributing to the building of unity across Darfurian society and not only among the armed opposition movements. Participants worked together on key issues, including security, identity, livelihoods and land. Concordis facilitated a programme of plenary sessions, but participants also initiated their own series of constructive meetings on the margins of the event.

The participants acknowledged insecurity to be the most significant problem in Darfur; security cannot be achieved without **negotiation** between the Darfurian movements and the Sudanese Government, preceded by **discussion** between the diverse Darfurian groups involved in the conflict so that they could enter negotiations united. It was noted that shortcomings in the implementation of the DPA ceasefire agreements have resulted in there being little or no confidence that further written agreements will be honoured. Therefore it will not be possible to establish a future ceasefire without adequate **guarantees**. They agreed that **UNAMID** must have a credible force on the ground if it is to play a significant role in ensuring security, and particularly if it is to act as a guarantor to any potential security agreement. Furthermore, it was also highlighted that the needs and grievances of **groups associated with 'janjaweed' need to be addressed** if the conflicts in Darfur are to be resolved.

**The participants addressed the issue of identity. While they saw the need for Darfurians to define a common identity and agree upon collective aspirations, they felt that the ethnic diversity of Darfur should also be recognised and reinforced.** It was also highlighted that it is inaccurate to associate all Darfurian Arab groups with the 'janjaweed'.

**Underdevelopment in Darfur was seen as a consequence of marginalisation.** Participants agreed that this can only ultimately be addressed by an increase in the region's share of political power and resources in Sudan. They agreed that long-term development projects will be essential for post-conflict recovery in Darfur and felt that development should focus on investment in **training, education and counselling** for the Darfurian population, particularly the youth.

On the issue of land, it was felt that the **hakura system should be reinstated** and should serve, as it did in the past, as a basis for **multi-ethnic land use** and not for the creation of ethnically exclusive blocs. The **forcible land occupations** of recent years were seen as a major problem and needed to be addressed. There was a general consensus that a **conference on land** should be held in Darfur to resolve land disputes and clarify the land system.

By the end of the consultation, the participants articulated a common vision: that all Darfurians' efforts be combined and directed towards a united, secure, stable, advanced and developed Darfur within a united Sudan. Ten men and women, based in North, South and West Darfur, Khartoum and abroad, were nominated by the group to form a coordinating committee to engage the full range of Darfurian tribes, political parties, civil society groups and armed movements in order to develop a united Darfurian front. The participants recognised that they had not been granted a mandate to speak on behalf of all Darfurians; instead, they determined to use their positions to build agreement and develop a case for unity, cooperation and coexistence in a way which would provide hope to demoralised populations and inject some momentum and credibility into the currently moribund peace process.

