Helping to provide clean water for thousands in the desert of Darfur, Sudan

For more than ten years, the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has maintained a large-scale peacekeeping operation following years of civil war. The mission is unprecedented in its ever-evolving nature, due to challenges posed by the harsh desert conditions of West Sudan.

The lack of water is one of the biggest threats to peace in Darfur, posing risks of disease and heightened conflict for the vast numbers of internally displaced persons in the area – 2.6 million people, according to a 2017 report of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

UN Volunteer Abubakarr Bangura, from Sierra Leone, serves as a Water and Sanitation Technician and is stationed with UNAMID in El Fasher, North Darfur.
My service allows me to directly address water and sanitation challenges affecting Darfur, including the effects of climate change and desertification. --Abubakarr Bangura, UN Volunteer Water and Sanitation Technician in Darfur, Sudan

Abubakarr’s degree in Development and Economics, and his current pursuit of a Master’s Degree in Environmental Management, made him the perfect candidate to support UNAMID in facing the environmental challenges in the area.

Ensuring access to water for the millions of IDPs in camps across Darfur is a monumental operation. Abubakarr helps providing 280,000 litres of drinking water to IDP communities each week, including organising the transport and logistics for water supply to prisons and schools.

"I was especially interested to serve and contribute in Darfur, where millions of internally displaced persons are living in a desert environment," he explains.

Abubakarr’s also works to empower local communities. To this end, he provides environmental training to youth and women from local camps, equipping them with techniques for small-scale residential composting and waste management. He also carries out community outreach projects that provide tree planting and environmental training to residents.

My service allowed me to meet local youth volunteers and see how enthusiastic and concerned they are about environmental issues in their community. I learned that issues related to natural resources are one of the biggest factor in local conflicts. --Abubakarr Bangura

The UNAMID facility in El Fasher houses thousands of UN staff and peacekeeping forces. Another of Abubakar’s key responsibilities is to reduce is the impact on a such fragile environment.

UNAMID operates the only modern waste water treatment facility in the country that treats 478,000 litres of waste water each week. The treatment is carried out using clean bacterial agents, in an environmentally-sustainable manner.

"Any toxic waste generated by UNAMID could negatively affect the surrounding communities, so we make sure to treat our wasted water in the right way. Someday, we will hand over these premises to Sudanese officials, so we want to leave them a clean and
Through my volunteer service I have gained invaluable experience in addressing environmental issues, especially in the context of an arid desert hosting refugee camps. I have also had a unique cultural experience, which has allowed me to know the real value of voluntary service. I hope I have contributed to make a difference in the lives of the people in Darfur. --Abubakarr Bangura

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