



SUCCESS STORY

Building Vocational Skills in Darfur

Displaced women learn skills that help them generate income



Photo: Baketa Organization

In Darfur, women who have been displaced from their homes are especially vulnerable to attacks when they leave the camps to collect firewood or work in the fields. In South Darfur, USAID is working to reduce women's exposure to risk by supporting classes that will give them the skills to earn income as seamstresses and allow families to purchase firewood in local markets.

On February 14, 2006, the first sewing class graduated from a women's skill-building center in Kalma camp for displaced Sudanese, near Nyala in South Darfur. Initially planned to accommodate 60 students over three months, the class was expanded to absorb the 85 eager students who showed up on the first day. All 85 graduated, and a fourth month was added to teach the students how to maintain and fix sewing machines.

A USAID grant helped a local group, the Baketa Organization for Women and Children, establish the skill-building center, purchase more than 20 sewing machines, and fund an instructor for the courses.

The graduating class continues to work with Baketa to develop small business plans that will put their new skills to use in tailoring, mending, and sewing household items. A second sewing class with 60 more students has already begun.

Sewing courses in Kalma camp teach displaced women how to earn income as seamstresses.

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USAID has funded a grant for a similar project in Dereig, another South Darfur camp for displaced Sudanese. The grant supported a two-month vocational sewing course for 75 women and provided sewing machines, training materials, stipends for the training, and a modest sum to rehabilitate the training center.

Young men displaced by the Darfur conflict also lack opportunities to generate income and provide for their families. A separate USAID grant provided 30 young men in Krinding camp in West Darfur with two months of vocational training to teach them to produce traditional leather shoes to sell in local markets. The grant provided trainers' stipends, materials, and enough funds to rehabilitate a training center with local materials.