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SUCCESS STORY

Supporting Youth Theater To Spread Messages of Peace



USAID/OTI/SUDAN

USAID/OTI works with youth in IDP camps in Sudan's volatile Darfur region to promote peace and human rights in response to the violence they experience daily.

The overarching goal of the USAID/OTI Sudan program is to strengthen Sudanese confidence and capacity to address the causes and consequences of the political marginalization, violence, and instability that has consumed the country for nearly 50 years.

Working within the context of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the OTI Sudan program focuses on promoting the emergence of responsive and effective civil authorities, establishing peaceful dialogue within and among communities, fostering the emergence of an active civil society, increasing the availability of independent information, and protecting vulnerable populations from grave human rights violations and related abuses.

December 2006 – The virtual absence of independent media outlets and the lack of social spaces where violence against women can be discussed hinder important efforts to raise awareness about the needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Darfur's camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Building upon the privileged position that young people in the IDP camps enjoy to address sensitive subjects with community leaders and other camp residents, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is supporting youth activities in several South Darfur IDP camps to raise awareness about these issues.

Through its in-kind grant mechanism, OTI is leveraging USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance funding to support the creation of youth theater groups at a youth center in the Kalma IDP camp in South Darfur. More than 1,900 members who come from eight of the camp's sectors and represent all of the camp's ethnic groups participate in the center's programs.

The OTI grant is providing the groups with two types of training – the first from a professional theater troupe that will give guidance on the dissemination of messages through drama, and the second from professional paralegals who will provide instruction on the preparation of human rights messages. The theater troupe will stage 12 plays and puppet shows over a 3-month period, and the performances will increase awareness about the needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The shows will also address the traumatic effects of the violence on young people and other members of the IDP community. The training will enable youth to design messages that address violence against women and the larger human rights context in Darfur. Moreover, by engaging the camp's youth in productive activities, the project will help dissuade them from behaving in ways that foster insecurity and jeopardize the provision of humanitarian assistance.