



Zakaria Mohammed Omer, Zalingei (Central Darfur)

As part of the UNs' support to the African Union's Initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, UNAMID has partnered with Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) to provide capacity building on unarmed protection methodologies to African youth and peace leaders in Darfur through an online training course. From June to July, over 40 Darfuris from all 5 Darfur states were trained. Below, you find one out of eight interviews of course graduates who give their insights on how the eight-week course has changed their perspective on how to deal with conflict and how to change behaviours of those around them to prevent or mitigate violence.

My name is Zakaria Mohammed Omer. I am originally from Nertiti, Jabel Marra in Central Darfur. I joined UNAMID in Zalingei in February 2009 and have been working with UNAMID since then.

How has this course added to or changed what you knew or believed about protecting civilians or securing communities?

Frankly speaking, the UCP course was one of the most useful courses for me. It added a lot of information that was absent in my mind especially about civilian protection and it added new skills that will help me to deal efficiently with people in conflict areas and solving everyday problems in a more professional way.

Of the things you learned or experienced in the UCP course, what has been the most important for you?

The course is useful in general, but for me two points were most important, namely learning about the early warning early response system (EWER) as well as methods to control rumors. Working

on these two issues will protect people from violence and reduce losses in case violence happens.

Were you able to use the information and methods from the UCP course in your life, whether in your family, your community, or your work? Can you give one example?

I live in a society that is socially torn by war, so I use the information that I studied from UCP course, especially the EWER system and rumors control, to reduce conflict.

What initiatives in civilian protection have you participated in since you took the course, if any?

I have not yet participated in any initiative - but I have the intention of launching an initiative in my home locality of Nertiti which consists of forming a committee of Nertiti youth to discuss with them about peaceful elements to solve problems in Nertiti locality.

What opportunities for UCP do you see in your community?

The opportunities are great be-

cause the community has been suffering a lot from the war and now they are looking for any way to end the war and bring peace.

How do you see that UCP can contribute to silencing the guns in Darfur?

The long period of the conflict in Darfur changed the behavior of the community, especially the youth. So, if UCP wants to contribute to silencing guns in Darfur, they must first start training youth groups to change their behavior and built good relationships among the youth themselves.

Many people, including civilians, have and use weapons in Darfur. Do you see that UCP can effectively protect people in this context? How?

The spread of the weapons in the hands of civilians is one of the major challenges to peace in Darfur and represents a challenge to the UCP approach. I believe that the government must collect weapons from civilians first in order to allow any UCP organization to carry out their task successfully.