

Near East Foundation
SCHOOLING FOR SUDAN ORPHAN REFUGEES
Khartoum, Sudan

In a desperately poor area on the outskirts of Khartoum inhabited by Sudanese forced to leave their homes in the south and west of the country, the "Al-Tagwa Centre" has been trudging on. In the single-story school with five small classrooms separated by reed mats, 250 students sit on the bare ground to learn, with no roof overhead to shield them from the sun's burning rays in the hot season and cold in winter, dusty winds, nor the noise outside.

From its beginnings six years ago, the Al-Tagwa school has been the brainchild of Mohamed El-Tayeb and a community effort working with the local Popular Committee. Mr. El-Tayeb now administers the school on land he donated. The school was built by volunteers using local materials for its mud-brick construction. There are no windows or doors, rather a small path through a half-shattered mud wall which the children use as an exit. The school yard is used as a short cut by distracting pedestrians.

The school was founded by and for local people. It is through their efforts and devotion that the project began, and through their persistence and courage overcoming all obstacles and facing all challenges, that the dream became a reality.

Because of such desperate needs, Near East Foundation (NEF) has bought books for students and teachers, hopes to construct a new tin roof to replace the current temporary reed mat roof previously donated by NEF, and install two water tanks for use by the local community--not just the school.

First NEF contributed large mats for the children to sit upon, rather than the hot ground. They provided funding for textbooks and supplies for students as well as teaching manuals and a geometry set as an educational tool. Other funds were used for drinking water--a stand and three small jug containers. Next came financial support for a much-needed roof and supporting walls.

All six classrooms are being roofed with iron pipes and wood sticks covered with reed matting; in turn overlaid with plastic sheeting as rain protection; and yet another layer of cloth sacks to ventilate the plastic from the sun. Further, classroom walls are being extended to the roof. And each classroom will have a door and window--providing now absent ventilation, and a blackboard as well.

What We Hope To Achieve

Further upgrading and improvement is required for the school in order to offer a better and sustainable access and stability of educational opportunity for its 250 students, and in order to be a magnet for students. This new initiative aims to repair damaged areas of the existing roof and, provided that funds are sufficient, to upgrade the entire roof, and add

windows and doors to newly constructed frames. It also aims to provide proper seating for students and a small room for teachers to prepare lessons and store materials. We also hope to be able to sponsor students most in need who can afford neither school fees nor school supplies. Also, basic clothing is needed for students. The project hopes to provide simple uniforms to reduce disparities between students.

Who Benefits

This initiative will directly benefit the Al-Tagwa school to offer a sustainable access and stability of educational opportunity for 250 students in this very deprived area as well as a better alternative than the far-distant, expensive, and overcrowded public school.

This upgrade will also directly benefit orphans in the area. Orphans now comprise 40 percent of those enrolled and the school is a magnet, attracting orphans off the streets and away from further hardship.

What We Plan To Do

- Provide basic clothing for students in the form of school uniform.
- Sponsor needy students by covering annual tuition fees and covering the cost of required books and school supplies.
- Repair and reinforce the existing roof -- which was damaged, after recently having been repaired, during February 2006 in the season's last sand storm. A concrete roof will be installed.
- Install windows and doors.
- Provide proper seating for students.
- Construct a teachers' room where teachers can prepare lessons, meet one another as well as meet with individual students, and store materials and supplies.

How Long Will It Take

Twelve months