



NO TIME FOR SELF INDULGENCE **SUDAN'S DISABLED THINK FIRST ABOUT OTHERS**

Disabled People International and El Nahda represent the hopes and aspirations of young disabled people determined to lead the way towards a better life for their peers and their entire community. These heroic people should be admired and rewarded for their courage in the face of enormous challenges--they are a role model for others to follow.

All contributions are appreciated and NEF (Near East Foundation) and these two local Sudanese associations would especially appreciate contributions and inquiries from disabled persons abroad, disability groups, and/or disability and medical service providers with a long term interest in cooperation and support for these efforts. Possibilities exist for limited correspondence and exchange of information between groups.



NEF (Near East Foundation) has worked for more than 10 years in partnership with Disabled People International (DPI), a community-based organization located on the outskirts of Khartoum in the poverty-stricken settlements of Salama and Soba-Aradi. DPI was founded in 1995 by residents to provide the physically disabled with opportunities to share their talent and skills for the betterment of their entire community. In 2005 a group of teachers from DPI, themselves disabled, founded El Nahda (Society for Well-being of the Physically Disabled) as a "sister organization" focused on the special needs of the disabled and their families.

"I'm amazed at the progress these people have made and how much they have been able to do with so little. We would like to be able to do so much more to give them a hand. I live not far from here and am able to visit often," comments Moussa Gismalla of NEF's Sudan staff who knows the situation close up. "These people founded the school to serve the community. All staff and teachers are disabled...disabled people serving the community, rather than being served," he added clearly touched.

A case in point, one of the school teachers, Al Amin Abdallah Hamdi, 33, a member of Al Nahda, lost his arm to the shoulder at the age of five when he fell from a bicycle and was treated by traditional healers. His arm had to be amputated. Many women have club feet, broken limbs, back problems. Others have polio and other debilitating and crippling diseases.

Over 300 disabled people, including children, reside in the area. DPI and Al Nahda conducted a study of disabled in the community and issued identification cards certifying disability to help qualify disabled for the few services available from other providers. House visits are made to certify disability and income levels of applicants are periodically reviewed. Now this task has been undertaken by Al Nahda.

After years of relying on DPI and Al Nahda as a partner for helping others, NEF and its supporters are turning their attention to assisting these associations to upgrade and expand their own projects and activities as well as place increasing emphasis on the needs and priorities of the displaced.





SPIRITED PEOPLE ON A SPECIAL MISSION

DPI and Al-Nahda are both very special because of the people who founded and continue to serve them. Education and other services they provide are the result of their determination, creativity, and commitment to helping others rather than to a desire to focus only on themselves.

Reflecting on DPI's beginnings, Alfonse Muni, now 38, founder and director, observed: "We wanted to help others. We as disabled people had suffered much and we couldn't simply stand by and let others suffer. Our struggle was one with our community...we were from the same background and lived under the same conditions and constraints. In fact, we were lucky, most of us are educated and have managed to make something of our lives. We thought we could help others do the same. That was our dream."

Members of DPI and El Nahda, like so many in poor and war torn countries like Sudan, are the unintended casualties of long years of civil conflict, disease, an accident-prone environment, ill-advised treatment, or the lack of access to basic services leading to poor hygiene and health. Their lives are a reflection of the hardships imposed by personal circumstances and life under harsh conditions in the ever growing shantytowns and settlements of Greater Khartoum.

Their communities of Salama (population \$10,600) and Soba-Aradi (20,000) were founded by individuals and families fleeing conflicts in the West and the South of the country 20 years ago. Consequently, they are mixed in religious affiliation, tribal affiliation, and area of origin. Most live in makeshift housing, either mud-brick or stick frames with waste plastic sheeting as a cover.

Far from Khartoum center, buses are available, but very crowded, without any special facilities for the disabled, and cost more than most people with disabilities can afford. There are no books for the blind and few opportunities to learn brail; no hearing aids or assistance for the deaf...not even any real medical evaluation for these cases.

At present, the Government of Sudan is working to formalize these communities to deal with overcrowded conditions, lack of services...among the few available is a government school for boys and one for girls (segregated by sex), but costs are prohibitive for most children. There are considerable conflicts between the government and residents, many of whom risk being expelled from the area to reduce population pressure and relocated to areas far from potential employment and social networks that have been developed. These conflicts are likely to continue unsettled for the foreseeable future with residents left largely to care for themselves.

DISABLED PEOPLE INTERNATIONAL (DPI)

DPI sponsors the community school pictured here with an enrollment of 600+. Student backgrounds reflect the ethnic and religious diversity of Salama and Soba-Aradi, with a virtually equal distribution of girls and boys in preschool and grades one through eight. DPI students are required to pay a basic fee of US\$ 25 per year. In fact, only about a quarter have the money and most of those that do pay can average only \$6-7. More than half of this money is used to maintain school facilities and the rest to compensate basically volunteer teachers, who themselves are generally disabled.

In another program, DPI focuses attention on “dropouts,” early leavers from either the DPI or other schools, often in the communities they left behind. Over 200 such children are now in the DPI program and receive basic education and follow-up. They attend afternoon classes from 2 to 4 p.m., offering basic education and vocational skills training. Periodic home visits support attendance and encourage students to rejoin the regular DPI school program. *Many children can be seen hanging around outside the walls of the DPI school, hoping to find a place either in the morning or afternoon school programs.*

DPI manages to get some basic school supplies from organizations such as UNICEF, ADD, the British Council, and EAT (Education Action International). Occasionally Sudan Education and Development, a local nongovernmental organization, helps with supplements for volunteer staff and teachers and the association receives teacher training as well as small projects funding for special activities.

NEF has provided training, a library, school books, food supplements, credit capital, blankets, and holiday distributions over the years. Much of this has been in cooperation with Canada’s Human Concern International (HCI). NEF also has introduced the groups to other donors with whom it regularly cooperates. However, all of this assistance is on a small scale, time bound and basically the groups fend for themselves.

DPI has a very active Parent Teacher Association founded to work with the school, comprised of all parents and with a board of 15 members. The PTA lobbies for assistance from local government and national nongovernmental organizations, assists with problem-solving when issues arise within the school or between the school and community as well as helps raise limited funds from former community member who have moved on to more prosperous employment.

Teachers and staff in the DPI school and other programs are volunteers, including the principal. Occasionally, a donor will offer a small, short-term “bonus,” usually in the range of \$50-60 per month per teacher, but generally covering only two or three months per year. Often this assist is simply not available...a big problem in retaining teachers.





AL NAHDA (Society for Well-being of the Physically Disabled)

Al Nahda surveys and registers the disabled, provides informal counseling and referral, and advocates for their rights within their community and with larger organizations and the government. The Society wants to further develop

- its ability to maintain updated records and surveys
- formalize counseling and referrals
- have emergency assistance funds to help certified clients
- provide funds for emergency medicines and medical supplies
- provide wheelchairs and prosthetics (free or with subsidies) to those who cannot afford them otherwise
- have access to credit facilities and skills training for the disabled to earn a better livelihood
- assist with transportation costs
- subsidize education and training for the disabled as well as sponsor adult education and a preschool for neighborhood residents.

Al Nahda has 300 members, each pays \$1 per month for membership. This money is used to maintain a small one-room office where the disabled can meet and where NEF recently helped cover an area in back for outdoor meetings. Plastic chairs will be added to complete this facility that will be used for adult literacy and health/disability education. Al Nahda hopes to establish a pre-school and an adult literacy class, independent of DPI, for residents who need to remain close to home since DPI lacks sufficient space for either of these services.

In short--"I have never let my disability get in the way of doing my best," says Um Hani Mouloud Ayist, age 32, originally from the Blue Nile area of southern Sudan but now resettled in Soba-Aradi. "I don't think others should either. Others helped me to overcome my disability. I want my friends and colleagues to have as well the help they need. It's our community and our responsibility. We are doing our best to live a full and happy life and to contribute to the community; I hope others can help us as we try to help others," concluded the founder of El Nahda, disabled for life by paraplegia, a fever she contracted at the age of three.

MICRO-CREDIT

Further, both societies are eager to offer credit for income-generating activities for low-income residents, and for the disabled and their families. DPI already has such a program funded by NEF and Al Nahda wants to start a new fund for its members. DPI focuses on parents of school children who need income assistance, whereas Al Nahda will focus on those with disabilities or parents of disabled children.

Types of projects which NEF loans funded in the past were making and selling charcoal, food processing and packaging, tie-dying and marketing materials, poultry and eggs, donkey carts for water carriers, kiosks for selling packaged goods and sweets, retail and trading, wood carving, carpentry, electrical repairs, etc.

TOTAL COST - US\$60,000

WHAT PEOPLE NEED

- \$100 - contributes to an emergency assistance fund for disabled in the area to provide emergency medical care, supplementary feeding, transportation, and medicines for the disabled
- \$50 - provides literacy and/or skills training for the disabled
- \$50 - provides staff development and board member training
- \$100 - contributes to the purchase of wheel chairs and appliances for the disabled
- \$100 - assists the visually disabled with learning to read brail and with learning materials and books
- \$20 - assists with the referral of disabled persons for external services
- \$55 - sponsors one child in pre-school
- \$120 - gathers and distributes local news for/by the disabled for local community – one year
- \$100 - contributes to a revolving credit fund to support increased livelihood projects for disabled youth and adults.

Give now at www.nefdev.org

Contributions to this program prior to June 30, 2007, will be matched one-to-one by the Cleveland H. Dodge Foundation.



NEAR EAST FOUNDATION
90 Broad Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10004, USA
Phone: +1 (212) 425-2205
Fax: +1 (212) 425-2350

