

## CHILD SPONSORSHIP IN SUDAN—MEETING NEEDS OF NEEDIEST

The number of orphans and children from single mother-headed households in Sudan has risen dramatically over the past few years due to war, natural disasters, and other crises. Poverty and economic hardship also have added to children born out of wedlock who, according to Sudanese law, are considered orphans. Since November, Near East Foundation has been addressing this problem.

“Assisting the poor and needy is part of a long and sacred tradition in the Moslem World,” commented Roger Hardister, NEF Regional Director for the Middle East, North Africa and Horn of Africa. “NEF is pleased to be part of that tradition and to be able to work with local organizations to assure that contributions made reach those most in need. Important too, we’re working within the context of a development process, helping to reduce immediate needs and to create greater opportunities for future progress,” he emphasized.

There now are 54 such children from Khartoum’s poorest communities having their basic needs met—health care, nutrition, education, guidance—getting a shot at a brighter future. However, they represent only a quarter of those registered to receive assistance from NEF.

Sudanese nongovernmental organization, Om El Mominein Charity Organization, founded in 1984 to assist families and orphans with both long and short-term care, is the local partner. Om El Mominein selects participating children, distributes funds, follows up, and if all goes according to plan, will eventually take over the program.

To date, two payments have been made for the children’s care, totaling \$16,200 for two quarters, or \$50 per child per month, and are expected to continue on a regular basis. Human Concern International provides the funds for distribution to families, while NEF covers local administration and support for the program as well as assistance to Om El Mominein. NEF gives additional financial help for feast celebrations, clothing, and special education.

According to Mohamed Ali, NEF Sudan Office Administrator, child sponsorship is one of the most popular ways of helping poor people in Sudan, and without such help, many children would be unable to attend school and get absolutely critical basic education. “This alone can really help them move out of poverty.” Mohamed says. “Child sponsorship also helps us create more relevant and effective development interventions preventing the conditions that give rise to orphaned children and single parent homes,” he continued, adding, “And it’s a reminder that our programs must always reach out and touch the lives of individuals, empowering them to help themselves.”