



# NEF

## NEAR EAST FOUNDATION in DAR ES-SALAAM AR-RABWA, SUDAN

Khartoum is a city of seven million people, of whom three to four million lack both running water and electricity. This is the capital of Sudan. Civil war has wracked the south and east of the country for decades and continues today in Darfur to the west. People from Sudan's many different ethnic and tribal groups have fled violence, chaos and famine and flocked to the capital. They have added more than two million people to the population in just the last few years.

Khartoum today has an air of decay without much bygone grandeur. People seem to be camping out and waiting for something unknown. Infrastructure is poor, roads at times impassable and electricity unreliable. Yet, as one drives out of the city, the construction gets even shabbier and life seems even less certain. Then, the city stops.

### THE COMMUNITY

Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa, 35 kilometers from Khartoum, appears first as an orange blur on the horizon. The road, unpaved since leaving Khartoum's outskirts, travels across hard, barren land. There are no trees, no bushes, just an occasional cactus-like plant breaking the flat, dry landscape. When the settlement gets closer, its structures blend seamlessly into the earth. All but a school and a health clinic are made from its mud, and the nearby excavations that supplied the mud now threaten wandering animals and children, as well breeding mosquitoes in the rainy season.



The 35,000 residents of Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa began moving to the area and building the settlement about twenty years ago. They are internal refugees mostly from Darfur and South Kordofan in the west and Equatoria in the south who had migrated over several years to Khartoum as their home areas suffered conflict and economic collapse. The government of Khartoum State, attempting to relieve the city of this flow of refugees, cajoled and compelled them to settle in an area whose arid, infertile conditions had left it sparsely populated. Unlike most resettled people, the residents of Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa often received title to their new land. They had to build their homes on their own.

The thatch-roofed, dirt-floor houses of Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa are grouped rather haphazardly into seven blocks, spread over an area of four square kilometers. Their modest size attests to the difficulty of



construction and the need often to rebuild when rain washes them away. A typical family of six shares at most two small rooms and digs its own simple pit latrine.

No food grows at Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa. Men travel hours into the city to seek day jobs and provisions, but 60% remain unemployed. Women tend homes and children, and cook with wood or gas; the only lighting comes from fuel generators. Water is delivered on a donkey cart from the only one of four water stations that is operating today. The government does not provide services: no schools, health care, garbage collection, electricity or sanitation. Illiteracy is high among men and nearly universal among women.

The Near East Foundation (“NEF”) has worked at Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa since 2001. As with all its projects, it began by organizing residents into committees, so that they might solve their problems themselves and so that these solutions would last. Each block elects a Popular Council which appoints a water committee. An education committee runs schools, along with newly-created parent councils. A health committee helps run NEF’s health clinic, and a credit committee manages micro-finance provided by NEF.



## THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

The health of Dar Es-Salaam ar-Rabwa residents is precarious. Malaria, yellow fever, and other endemic diseases, as well as parasitic infections, are widespread, as are sexually-transmitted diseases. Malnutrition is a constant problem particularly among infants, young children, and pregnant women. Infant and maternal mortality rates are high, even for a country like Sudan where, in 2005, 62 of every 1,000 children and one woman of every 170 died during childbirth (while one woman of 13,400 died in the United States during childbirth). Residents, coming primarily from rural and nomadic backgrounds, are not accustomed to organized medical care. Until NEF intervened, the nearest medical facility was 25 kilometers away.



Having determined with community leaders that health care was the community’s highest priority, NEF in 2001 obtained rights to a one-acre site in the center of Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa. By 2003, NEF was operating an eight-room, single-story Community Health Center on this site. A two-room maternity ward opened alongside the original building within the last year.

The Center provides reproductive health services, along with basic medical care and basic laboratory services. It handles all but complicated or urgent cases which it refers to the nearest hospital in Khartoum.



Its original eight rooms include a doctor's office, two maternal and child health outreach rooms, outpatient and temporary in-patient rooms, a laboratory, a pharmacy and an administrative office.

The Center's 23-member staff consists of one doctor, one medical assistant, one nurse, a health visitor who visits homes to promote health center services and participation, four community health outreach specialists, a pharmacist assistant, lab technician, a nutritionist, a vaccine administrator, a maternity room supervisor, three midwives, two orderlies and five support personnel. NEF administers the Center from its Khartoum office, while the attending doctor and local financial manager oversee daily operations, along with the community health committee.



The Center now provides care to more than one thousand patients each month, with demand growing steadily as the Center's health awareness effort expands. To supplement its budget and establish the value of its services for patients, the Center charges nominal fees; for example, use of the Center's new birthing facilities costs just \$5, yet only more affluent residents can afford this. The doctor may waive fees for destitute patients, but the current budget permits only \$500/month for such waivers. In addition, the Center provides certain services free of charge at all times: post-natal care, health awareness outreach, family planning, counseling, child nutrition, and vaccinations.

Annual operation of the Center costs approximately \$80,000. Fee income totals approximately \$12,000/year, and NEF must supplement this amount from its general funds or restricted grants. NEF is working with the committee to establish a non-governmental organization under Sudanese law to assume autonomous administration of the Center. To provide financial sustainability, NEF proposes to construct shops near to the Center that it can rent to merchants selling food and clothing. Construction will cost \$4,500 per shop which will bring rental income of \$1,200 each year.



## THE SCHOOLS

The Khartoum State government operates two small schools at Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa, but enrollment procedures permit few residents to attend. Children can enroll only at age 7 and must present birth certificates and other documents that most refugees lack. The community relies on a handful of schools that its residents started and run themselves. NEF supports three of these schools: Tagwa, Tawheed and al-Awatif.







1) Tagwa educates 235 boys and girls ages 7 to 14 and employs nine teachers. Founded in 2000 by a local couple who continue to run the school, it is certified and regularly inspected by government officials. However, it operates on tuition of only \$12/year that it collects from some students and the assistance that NEF and other donors give it. Teachers receive only occasional and modest compensation and effectively volunteer their services.

The school consists of seven classrooms around an inner courtyard, along with an office. Construction is of mud, with thatch roofs. The thirty-odd students who crowd each small classroom sit on plastic chairs or the dirt floor and do not have desks. A wall painted black serves as the blackboard; few students have notebooks or any other reading or writing materials. There are no latrines or recreation facilities.

NEF has provided funds for constructing secure roofs over the classrooms and contributed chairs, tables and some teaching materials. NEF has encouraged the founders and parents to establish a parent council to help run the school and, now that this has occurred, seeks guidance from the council. It has identified the need for two more classrooms, a teachers room and girls' and boys' latrines at the school. The new rooms will cost at total of \$8,000 and the latrines \$2,500 each. Desks and benches for all students will cost \$10,000 and books and other materials \$5,000. Playground equipment is available for \$6,000 and uniforms for the entire school for \$5,000.



2) Tawheed is a preschool with 30 students that began as part of Tagwa and recently became independent. It consists of a single class area, with only one wall and a thatch roof that NEF provided. Again, children sit on chairs that they often bring from home or on the ground, and their teacher writes on a part of the wall painted black. The founder, a community leader, seeks to construct two classrooms which will cost \$5,000 and a latrine for the students at a cost of \$2,500. Desks and chairs will require \$2,500, and books and other materials for the teacher and students \$800.



3) Al-Awatif provides literacy classes to adult women. It consists of a shelter alongside its founder's house, for which NEF provided a thatch roof. A dozen women regularly attend, often with their young children. The school needs to complete walls and reinforce the roof so that rain will not destroy them. It also seeks books and other materials for the teachers and students. The total cost of these improvements is \$3,000.



## WATER SUPPLY

Water is Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa's greatest need today. With an adequate supply, residents might even be able to farm in the area, but this would require extension of a canal from the Nile, ten kilometers away. At present, drinking, cooking and bathing are the priorities. The principal means of supply is delivery by donkey cart in metal or plastic containers to homes where water is stored, often in unsanitary conditions.



The community has four public water stations, consisting of deep wells and pumps that bring water to elevated storage tanks from which suppliers take it for delivery. Water committees appoint caretakers to run the stations and charge fees for their use. These officials are of varied competence and honesty, and maintenance of the stations has suffered. Currently, only one station functions, and it is inadequate for the community's needs. A Sudanese religious organization operates another station, along with two hand pumps, but public access is limited.

NEF has worked with residents of Dar es-Salaam ar-Rabwa for several years to improve the community's water system. This is a matter of repairing and maintaining existing stations, adding backup hand pumps and constructing one or more new stations. Residents need training in management of the system and in appropriate and safe use of water. The ultimate goal is to construct a distribution system to bring water to each home.



Based on these efforts, NEF has developed a plan to improve and expand services:

- addition of a hand pump in one block will cost \$2,500;
- connection of the Community Health Center to a water station will cost \$5,000;
- renovation and maintenance of the one functioning water station will cost \$5,000;
- repair and restoration of three water stations will cost \$5,000, \$8,000 and \$10,000 respectively;
- completion of a new water station will cost \$36,000; and
- construction of a household distribution system for two blocks will cost \$43,000.