

## Ismail Haroon Adam Degais 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 Ismail Haroon Adam Degais. I was born in Nertiti and am now living in Zalingei, Central Darfur state. I am member of our community council, our youth club, a member of a public health professional society and I work with World Relief as area coordinator in north Jabal Mara, Rokero. I am 27 years old.

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

Before attending this course, I dealt with different communities, but I did not have enough skills and confidence at that time because of the sensitivity of their situation. This course provided guidance on how to engage the community. The most useful thing I learned was about establishing relationships with conflict parties. In Jabal Mara till now, conflict and violence are happening day after day. On the other hand, I have to say that through awareness sessions I did on community peace building in conflict areas, I found that responses from youths and women already exist.

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

The course covered a lot of useful things. The most important for me were the key principles of UCP.

### **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?**

Definitely: I discussed with my friends in our youth club and community society on the course content. At my workplace we have a peacebuilding and protection project ongoing. During training sessions, I used UCP guidance for the community especially on capacity development, building relationships and civil immunity in war. I have also shared the UCP manual with my friends at work and in my society and told them about the second course. Most of them applied and were selected for the second course in Darfur. I continue providing them help and information.

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

In August 2020, a clash happened between one civilian and a group of the army that had signed the peace agreement with government at Rokero market. The situation got heated and some armed elements started shooting randomly. I was drinking coffee nearby and after the incident, some of the people from the market joined the same coffee shop. I invited them to have coffee with me. We started talking about peacebuilding and the incident that just happened and we talked about the victim and the ability of the new government to manage the security situation. During the discussion, I told them about NP and their work in South Sudan in addition to the

course I attended. Most of them were engaging in the discussion. We agreed that it is easy to change a behavior. Their commander told us to visit them one day in their camp.

### **What opportunities for UCP do you see in your community?**

As I am following events in Darfur and in Jabal Mara regularly I observe attacks happening day by day on a very small scale. If UCP team or trained youth could be deployed, such incidents could be contained before they happen. Early warning and response (EWER) and rumor control are needed on the ground. I hope NP can train more and more youth in Darfur. My community became tired going from one war to another. If we found a way to solve these issues, this would be invaluable for Nertiti. Especially because women are still being killed so often, UCP is necessary. Women are the most vulnerable group in Darfur and they need special protection which UCP can provide.

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

I don't think that there is a clear war between two parties in Darfur. What is happening now is that some groups are holding guns and if they have a personal problem, they use their guns against others and target ethnic groups. To silence guns, we need to establish peace between communities and create relationship between them. Here, we can use UCP principles and methods.