

Dear Supporter,

Welcome to our latest Sahel Reporter. Firstly, let me pass on the good news that the European Commission has approved a grant of £1.05 million to SOS Sahel – representing 89% of the costs of our new three-year 'Food Security & Livelihoods' programme in the Red Sea Hills of Sudan. This will help us to meet the needs of 25,000 Beja communities who were left unsupported after the forced withdrawal of agencies such as Oxfam GB last year. We now seek the remaining 11% in matched funds; see our appeal overleaf.

Sudan faces a challenging time. In January, its people will vote on whether to separate South Sudan from North Sudan. The outcome of this referendum could drastically change the lives of the communities we work with, potentially escalating conflict as boundaries are redrawn and sparse environmental assets divided. As a contingency measure we are postponing our planned demarcation of livestock routes in Kordofan, since land is becoming a burning issue, and will temporarily relocate staff based in the hotspot areas.

Let me reassure you that your donations to SOS Sahel's peace-building work in Sudan are needed now more than ever, and are making a vital difference. Mohammed's story overleaf is just one example of how investing in dialogue with marginalised groups can reap peaceful dividends. Furthermore, our work has strong support from local government and both settled and nomadic communities. Thank you for enabling SOS Sahel to respond quickly and effectively to the challenges facing my country.

Kind regards,



Salih Majid Eldouma
Director of SOS Sahel Sudan



Salih Majid Eldouma

Greater choice for Beja women in the Red Sea Hills

In Dawaaliadit, an isolated village in the Red Sea Hills, Beja women are successfully managing their own commodity shop, thanks to the provision of concrete and items such as sugar, soap and dates from SOS Sahel. The shop acts like a hub for villages far and wide and is helping these traditional women to manage their own affairs, improve their livelihoods and inspire other villages to run similar enterprises.

Aisha Ashbadeen Alhassab, wife of the Sheik, says:

"Those who have cash have been able to buy commodities, and those without cash have borrowed from the shop to pay back later. It has made a big change; everything is now accessible and people now have everything they need in their daily diet."

"With the free time we have, we are supporting our husbands in clearing the fields of grasses and stones. There is a common agreement between men and women here: women work daily in the shop and those working get a third of the profit, the second third is added to the shop's capital, the final third is split among us women."

SOS Sahel has also provided four central villages with grain mills in an effort to reduce the women's burden. Traditionally women must manually grind sorghum up to three times a day to feed their families – spending hours breaking the grain between two stones, soaking it in water, and then grinding it into fine flour. Though there is still status to this method, the grain mills are giving women choices and many are discovering there are equal benefits to be gained from producing more food in less time.



Dawaaliadit Women's Commodity Shop



Aisha Ashbadeen Alhassab, who co-manages the Commodity Shop

Sudan Appeal 2010 – can you help?

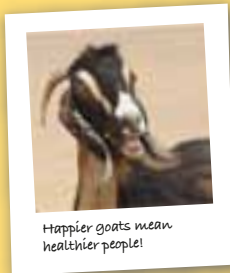
Will you spare a donation to support our Sudan Fund this year? We are currently raising money to help close the 'food gap' suffered by Beja families in Red Sea State, Eastern Sudan.

You can help these communities to rebuild their lives by supporting their diversification into cultivation, fishing, goat-herding and small-scale enterprises for women. In Red Sea State, malnutrition is greatest among rural women and children – nearly 30% of children under five are malnourished and infant mortality is the highest in Sudan at 116 deaths per 1,000 live births (Ministry of Health/WFP, 2004). Simple measures such as improving goat health through vaccination and fodder provision can give Beja families essential nutrients through increased yields of goat milk.

£25

could provide dry fodder for a family's goat herd for an entire dry season.

Please send any contributions you can offer to Lucy Polson at the Oxford office.

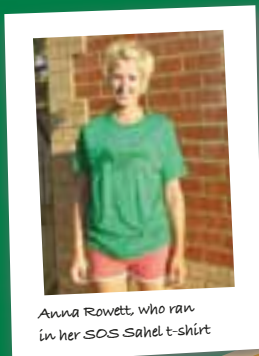


Happier goats mean healthier people!

Other ways to give Runners raise a grand!

Between May and September, SOS Sahel supporter Eleanor Williams and our graduate intern Anna Rowett ran a combined 45 miles in aid of our work in Africa. Their runs in Bristol and Plymouth have raised a joint total of £1,042 – that's more than £23 per mile! Our sincere thanks go to both Eleanor and Anna.

If you feel inspired to raise money for SOS Sahel, whatever your challenge of choice, please find us at: www.uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving.



Anna Rowett, who ran in her SOS Sahel t-shirt



Foundations for peace in a conflict hotspot

At Abu Safifa nomadic encampment along a key livestock route in South Kordofan, our project team has witnessed a significant turnaround in the roles of the women and youth in their communities. Having trained these two 'invisible' yet influential groups in conflict mediation techniques, SOS Sahel has been able to include them in community decision making that is ordinarily restricted to male elders. The women in particular have shifted their traditional positions and are now vocal advocates for peace instead of encouraging their men to fight in defence of their honour. Mohammed Elobeid, the head of the Youth Committee (below), told me how his group has put their mediation training into practice by helping the traditional leaders to resolve local conflicts and avoid recourse to guns or formal courts of arbitration:

"We are the youth. Together with the traditional leaders, we sit separately with each conflicting group and we learn about their problems from both sides. When we understand the impact on both sides, we bring them together in a suitable and neutral place. We ask them to suggest their own solutions and we help them to negotiate with each other. Sometimes, we have even contributed to the solution ourselves by donating some money if financial compensation is required."

As the Sheik of Abu Safifa explains below, the elders of the village feel the burden on them to resolve conflicts has now reduced as a result of SOS Sahel's intervention. In his experience, most of the disagreements start between the youths so it makes sense that they are now involved in building peace:

"Youths like Mohammed have gained something after training with SOS Sahel. I was not around during the last conflict, but he managed to resolve the problem himself using the mediation skills that the elders traditionally use".



Mohammed Elobeid, head of Abu Safifa Youth Committee



A pastoralist boy and his herd travel a livestock route between villages and farmland

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