

## Editorial

# Lessons to the World: Sudanese Youth and the Wellbeing of Children

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The Current Issue of the Sudanese Journal of Paediatrics (SJP) reflects on the engraved old heritage of the Sudanese to help the needy by highlighting the story of the Hawadith Street Initiative (HSI) [1]. Named after the street on which it was founded, which translates indirectly to “Accidents Lane”, HSI was established in 2012 to meet Sudan’s child health insurance gap by crowdfunding medical care online (using the social medium website, Facebook) to help the needy hospital patients covering their treatment costs in Khartoum and other cities of Sudan. The activities of this group of youths, most of them fresh university graduates in their twenties of age, started with recreational programs for cancer patients, and public campaigns for donation of blood. Currently HSI includes more than 2000 volunteers in Khartoum and 17 other cities. The icon of HSI is Um Gisma. Her nickname came after her eldest daughter Gisma. She was referred from South Kordofan (about 690 km Southwest) to Gaafar Ibauf Children’s Hospital (GICH, located in Hawadith Street) to treat her daughter, Gisma, who was suffering from renal failure in 2009. To meet the living costs for five children who accompanied her to Khartoum, she

started making and selling tea and coffee near GICH. Based on a known heritage of Sudanese doctors [2] a young Consultant Pediatric Nephrologist at GICH (Dr Safaa Abdelhameed Madani), helped Um Gisma to rent a house and enabled the rest of the kids to continue their basic education. Following the help she found from HSI, Um Gisma then became a vital motherly member, providing her clients’ seats as benches for HSI members to sit on and meet to manage their issues. She also performed what looked like ‘secretarial and treasurer’ work for the HSI, receiving visitors in their absence, and collecting donations. The health of her daughter Gisma improved, and she managed to complete her secondary school study, and joined Ahfad University for Women, on a scholarship, to study psychology. The HSI group chose Um Gisma as the best representative for the opening of their most spectacular achievement, namely the establishment of an intensive care unit at a children hospital in Omdurman city costing 435,880 US dollars. The HIS constitutes a unique organization, worldwide, in a new wave of Internet-based initiatives.

Hawadith Street Initiative (HSI) is not the only youth organization in Sudan who volunteered for the

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wellbeing of children and society at large. An initiative called Nafeer (after the traditional Sudanese Arabic word for community assistance after a disaster) played a significant role in assessing needs and distributing relief items to families affected by flooding in Khartoum State in 2013, capturing the attention of The New York Times [3]. Using the social media, Facebook and Twitter, they managed to mobilize hundreds of Sudanese from within the country and others living abroad. They also established a mobile clinic with a volunteer doctor.

A third voluntary organization is Sadagaat [4], a charity group focused on raising funds and distributing them to the needful Sudanese families and individuals. Sadaqat Charity Organization of Sudan driven by the enthusiasm displayed by its manager, Nazim Sirag and all the team behind the scenes, sponsored a major educational event during the period January 27-31, 2015 in Khartoum. This included the Paediatric Epilepsy Training Course Level 1 (PET1), organized by the British Paediatric Association (BPNA), and the International Child Neurology Association (ICNA) educational conference [5]. Sadagaat was described by Prof. Jo Wilmshurst, Secretary of ICNA, as an “amazing NGO – headed by Nazim who was a fount of information and deeply committed to promoting better health care for Sudan”[6].

Hatim Foundation is a non-profit UK Partner of Sadagaat that is working to establish a Child Development Centre in Sudan [7]. It has been established by Sudanese-born Dr. Nazim Haidar Abdel Aati, Developmental Paediatrician, London NHS Trust, and Dr Reem Mirghani. Through this foundation, Drs. Nazim and Reem are using their knowledge and experience in paediatrics and child Health, together with their professional and social networks to make this mission a reality. It’s noteworthy that a team of British speech, language and occupational therapists, led by Dr. Nazim Haidar, shared with a symposium during the Khartoum ICNA

Educational Conference (January 27-31, 2015) in continuity with their ongoing program for training Sudanese speech and language therapists [5].

The fifth youth organization is called Thilal Alrahma (which translates from Arabic to “Shadows of Mercy”). It was founded in 2004 and concentrates its activities in schools by distributing and maintaining textbooks. Individuals belonging to the organization also personally maintain the buildings of these schools. In 2015, they were selected as the best youth non-governmental organization (NGO) by a popular regional television program in a competition involving similar organizations in Arab Countries [8].

Another remarkable story is that of Dr Mazin, a young medical college graduate and son of a Consultant Neonatologist and Sudan Association of Paediatricians’ member (Dr. Mohamed Khalil). Dr Mazin founded SudaMed Company to develop the first unified patient record system in Sudan [9]. This pioneering project, which is Cloud-based and accessible throughout the country, not only reduces the costs for patients and hospitals alike, but also saves lives. Creating what became a profitable international business, which is valued at \$138.7 million, he promised 70% of the profits to charities. SudaMed set up 10 free health clinics and 8 free primary and secondary schools in Khartoum.

Dr Mazin Mohamed Khalil, who received several international awards, was selected through a competitive process to address the 2015 One Young World Summit (OYWS) which took place in Bangkok [10]. Delegate Speakers of the OYWS are an inspirational group who present their impactful work during this annual international gathering and share their experiences with the Summit and the watching world.

Lastly, Historical Perspectives highlights the story of building Gaafar Ibnauf Children’s Hospital (GICH), the icon of Hawadith Street [11]. In what sounds

like a fairy tale, Prof. Gaafar Ibnauf managed with tremendous efforts, spanning 27 years and generous national and international contributions, to transform it from a 30 – bed paediatric emergency unit to a 6 stories magnificent building.

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