

September 2021



Photo 1: Women's Football Match between Khartoum Community Team Vs. National Team, Khartoum, 8 July 2021

Routes-based migration response programme

Stronger community ties in Khartoum

Social cohesion and relationships between neighbors forms the social fabric of any community. However, accessing avenues to build social ties and to facilitate integration into a new community can remain difficult, with specific obstacles often faced by internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. As the urban city center of Khartoum hosts many members of these vulnerable communities, challenges associated with integration and social cohesion in mixed group neighborhoods are prominent, with needs to strengthen community ties and to create support systems within and among different groups present. Lacking social cohesion further contributes to refugees and migrants' continued lack of access to basic services, socioeconomic infrastructure, and opportunities for community engagement. To support vulnerable mixed population groups in addressing some of these challenges, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), has been running social cohesion initiatives in Khartoum. The string of social cohesion activities and events form one component of The Routes-Based Migration Response Programme (RBMP), a 3-year intervention that supports vulnerable mixed communities across Sudan through delivery of humanitarian response alongside efforts to facilitate avenues for integration. The provision of immediate aid, as well as encouraging integration for migrants, aims to foster growth of trust between communities, developing long lasting bonds, while also improving access to services and information on rights.

The social cohesion initiatives carried out in 2020 and 2021 were originally co-designed between DRC and members of the community based protection networks (CBPNs) established by DRC in Khartoum. Through joint collaboration, DRC and CBPNs identified community needs, and designed a series of activities that aim to break barriers, facilitate social exchange, and to build relationships. As part of the social cohesion initiative, activities included hosting a Success Gallery, conducting sporting events, and facilitating drama performances, among others.



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The Danish Refugee Council is a leading, international humanitarian displacement organisation, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons during displacement, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. We provide protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. We support displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies - and we work with communities, civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence. Founded in Denmark in 1956, 9,000 staff, 7,500 volunteers.

“I am very proud to be part of their [DRC’s] network as it makes me feel as if I was the reason that someone found help by DRC.”

Ahtenesh, Ethiopian women



Photo 2: International Refugee Day Campaign 2021, Eritrean Community Corner

On 15 July 2021, DRC hosted the Success Gallery event at the International University of Africa, with the main goal of bridging gaps between communities of younger generations. The event provided space for participants from different nationalities, including Eritrean, Ethiopian, West African, South Sudanese & Sudanese, to display and share important features of their heritage, including traditional clothing, food, and hand-made accessories. Ahtenesh, a 23-year-old woman who arrived in Sudan at the age of 7 from Ethiopia, is a CBPN member and one of the participants. When speaking to DRC staff at the event, she expressed her joy at representing and sharing her culture. At her wedding, Ahtenesh followed a Sudanese tradition called “Jirtik”, and experienced firsthand how cultural transfer and exchange can make people feel like one. She added, *“I am very proud to be part of their [DRC’s] network as it makes me feel as if I was the reason that someone found help by DRC.”*

On 26 July 2021, DRC held a women’s basketball match in a community arena in Al Diem area. One team was composed from Sudanese players and the other of different nationalities, including South Sudanese, Eritrean & Ethiopian. Team members were nominated to join by the CBPNs, and trainings were offered to participants to prepare for the game, allowing also for social interactions to support relationship building among the teams. Luis, a 24-year-old female player and South Sudanese refugee, stated how rare it is for women sporting events to be held in Khartoum, so she eagerly jumped at the chance to participate.



Photo 3: Women’s Basketball Match Banner, Khartoum, 26 July 2021

Luis, who previously attended another social cohesion event; a football match; organized by DRC under the same initiative said *“I met people at the previous event and I was glad that I got the chance to see them again, now we are friends”*.

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Photo 4: Peaceful Co-Existence Drama Show, Khartoum, 22 & 23 August 2021

The latest and last social cohesion event organized under the RBMP was a drama show titled “Peaceful Coexistence”. The concept was initially raised by CBPN members who wanted to tell their stories in order to unveil some of the hardships that IDPs, asylum seekers, migrants and refugees contend with, as well as some of the injustice and exploitation they face along the way. Nahid, a Sudanese national activist volunteering at a local association with the aim to educate women on their rights and how to improve their lives, showed great passion for the show and her participation in it. For her, raising awareness and educating local communities on their rights and rights of others has the capacity to significantly contribute to safer environments for vulnerable persons.

As for Gasim, a 24-year-old refugee from South Sudan who participated in the Drama Show, emphasized the importance of the message conveyed by the show that the show. When speaking to DRC, Gasim highlighted the correlation between difficult economic situations and discrimination. He has noticed that with the declining economic situation in Sudan, host community members are becoming increasingly hostile against refugees, claiming the draining of the country's resources and taking national jobs. Gasim hopes that by increasing host communities' understanding of refugee, asylum seeker and other migrant communities' experiences, they may be more willing to provide support and build relationships. He believes that the message of the Drama Show supports efforts to build foundations of this understanding, and finally noted that **“When you find a refugee in need you help them because they are already far from their families and they don't have anyone else.”**

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