



SUCCESS STORY

Practical Lessons Enhance Peace-Building Skills in Darfur



Students and faculty members from universities in Darfur explored ways to resolve conflicts at the Peace and Development Centers' conference.

The USAID-funded Darfur Community Strengthening Program supports action planning and networking in Darfur, with a focus on education and youth development.

July 2009 – More than 100 students and faculty members from the Peace and Development Centers (PDCs) at Nyala, El Fasher, and Zalingei Universities met in July for the first regional PDC conference to promote peace in Darfur. The conference was planned and initiated by staff from the centers following a networking event held in May.

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) sponsored the two-day event as part of its Darfur Community Strengthening Program, and the conference provided participants with practical exercises in peace building as well as the opportunity to network and learn from like-minded peers in the Darfur region.

Each center conducted interactive workshops and lectures on peace-related topics such as mediation and negotiation, environmental degradation, and *Al Judia*, a traditional mechanism often employed to resolve disputes and conflicts.

The session on mediation and negotiation was particularly successful, as the Nyala University faculty transformed the auditorium into a mock negotiation session. The participants assumed the roles of observers, mediators, and parties that had a stake in the simulated conflict.

The conference provided a unique opportunity for PDC staff and the university students to share lessons learned and explore ways to overcome challenges. Inspired by their interactions at the conference and motivated to continue the discussion, students from Nyala University initiated an e-mail network that will allow participants to communicate via computers at newly equipped libraries at each PDC.

AED has supported the university-based PDCs in Darfur through the Darfur Community Strengthening Program since March 2008. AED's activities have focused on building capacity as well as providing material support, such as generators, photocopiers, library resources, training materials, and books.

Through these efforts, the program is building community relationships and encouraging dialogue to facilitate local-level peace building and enable Darfuris to actively participate in the decision-making processes affecting peace and stability in their communities.