

Education of Girls in Sinkat Kinab is not an Illusion

CDF Confronts the Challenge and Builds a School for Girls

The Sinkat Kinab is a complex of scattered Forgan in Dablawait area. It is a tribe extended from Aburoof at the Southern part of Kassala town near Eritrea boarder, to Fidyayaib, Tagog and part of Allafa community beside many other small villages in the eastern part of the country. It has a population of about 35,000 persons. The tribe, as most of the Bija group, is very conservative especially in issues relating to women's involvement in the community. According to the traditional beliefs, education of girls is seen as a transgression and indulgence. The number of women educated in the community does not exceed 0.05% and only on low levels of Quranic reading.



Sinkat Kinab Community

As a rule of thumb, all the Bija tribes have internal branches and this is absolutely true for Sinkat Kinabs. There are five tribal branches inside this tribe, Mahragab, Rohaidoab, Kilay, Labitai, and Naseyai. Each branch lives on a small piece of land near each other, then the individual branch divides into sub-branches based on extended families which form a Fareeg and occupies part of the piece, and that is the secret of why all the Bija villages are seen as scattered villages.

Friday the 7th of December 2007 was a very special and memorable day in the history of the village and the area. In Kassala State the Wali with some Ministers, a number of top State officials, CDF staff, media, community leaders, and hundreds of people from the area gathered in Sinkat Kinabs village. The occasion was the official and public inauguration of Sinkat Kinab's first Girls School which was built and furnished by the CDF project.

The Sinkat Kinab community leader described the occasion as the unique event in the area. The closest girls' school was about 10 Km from the village and none of the community girls had ever attended a school before.

Some spectators were astounded when the Sinkat Kinabs' Nazir [tribal leader], Mr. Omer Tita, stated, "This is the first time for the Sinkat Kinabs to have a school for girls." The surprise increased when he added, "It is not ONLY the first school for girls in the village but – actually," he said, "it is the first time in history that a school has ever been built in Sinkat Kinab." The Girls school will be built in phases; phase 1 is completed, and consists of 2 classrooms, one office with shed, and pit latrines. The CDF was afraid at first that only a few girls of this conservative area would be allowed to enroll in the school. When the construction was completed, the figures exceeded the expectations as 150 girls applied, but only the 100 who met the enrollment criteria were selected. Phase 2 for the sub-project is the construction of a teacher dormitory. It represents part of the CDF's complete packaging provision and complementary activities. With no teachers in the past, the school now has a headmaster, 2 female basic school teachers, and one adult education teacher. Teachers currently live in a poor house, consisting of a small room with shed and fence built of straw. One of the teachers said smiling, "We agree to come and teach here despite the fact there is no dormitory for us mainly because we knew that the CDF is working here." In fact, now teachers are competing to be sent to where CDF is working. Consequently, this places huge responsibilities on the CDF to scale up and go ahead which in turn develops CDF's management strategy.



From left to right: Kassala rural commissioner, KAS LM, KAS State Wali, KAS State CBOs consortium leader, KAS rural officer, and State Minister of Social Affairs.



The future starts: Girls formed a class for the first time.

Coming back to the tribal forms of cooperation, nobody can deny or avoid talking about them when approaching Bija, as this is a base for their social structure, and one of the key factors that should be emphasized when targeting these communities. It is a matter that the Nazir mentioned proudly in the gathering, "The Sinkat Kinabs' is the root of all Bija in the country." This was later emphasized by the State Wali in his comprehensive speech, when he added that, "We all (Bija) come out of Sinkat Kinabs, they are our grandfathers' grandfathers." The Wali noted at the same time the clear impact of CDF, due to its unique interventions in the State especially for Kassala and Hamashkoreib localities. He went further saying that, "CDF expanded its services to 12 new communities, to become 52 participating communities under its umbrella." He added, "The CDF is going toward saturation, all

the rest of the other localities in the state will be participating next year." He pointed out why education is important, not only for children, but for adults as well, and therefore, it is an essential right for humans. The state Wali referred to what the Nazir stated in his letter that most of Sinkat Kinabs, especially women, have never attended schools at all, as a result they are almost all illiterate! The Wali assured everyone that one of the State's five year strategic goals is to provide education for all. He then pledged to "Provide as much help as possible to teachers in order enable them conduct their noble message especially in the rural areas." He added, "I am a son born in a village. What makes me so happy is seeing progress and prosperity occurring in each village".



A step forward:

The Wali, State Officials and female teachers at the time of inauguration.

In the last LIU staff visit to Sinkat Kinab, heaps of sand and gravel were seen placed in the area where the teacher dormitory was to be built. The PTA chairperson told the staff about the source, "This is from the Wali". According to the LIU engineer, the materials were estimated to be 13% of the total dormitory cost, and would provide a surplus for phase 2 of school construction! That is not the only assistance added the chairperson whispering, "The Wali will also provide food supplies for teachers that might last for them at least to the end of the school year!"

The event was attended by many officials such as Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Ali - the Minister of State Culture and Social Affairs, one representative from State Local governance and from the Ministry of Finance, Mr. M. Drouf - the head of legislative committee in the State legislative council, Nazir Ali Ibrahim Daglil - the Nazir of Bani Amir, Adam Hajaj Nazir of Sabalaleet tripe (Branch of Bani Amir), Omda Elhaj Mohamed DEEN - Omda of Sabdarat (Bani Amir branch), Mohamed Adam Hamid - Omda of Elmaria (BA branch), and Kassala Rural locality Moatamad (Commissioner) who approached the gathering saying that "During our training with CDF and from the Khartoum Consultative Workshop last November, I come to realize CDF's efforts in my locality and the whole country, the approaches they use [mentioning the CDD approach] will empower communities and the localities at the same time." He promised more collective work, collaboration and cooperation for the success of the CDF and locality interventions in Sinkat Kinab and other villages.

Overall, the event was seen as breaking through the female education wall of silence in the village, at the same time it brings to the forefront the challenges toward creating long-term sustainability and adequate scaling up.

It is worth mentioning that Mr. Omer Tita, the Nazir of Sinkat Kinabs, is an educated person. He teaches himself by himself, as he said. He has a diploma in social services and a diploma in Literacy from Egypt universities. He was the director of the literacy department in the State MOE before he retired in 1985 to become SOLO manger for KAS state.

