

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2009

CHAD

THREE WOMEN AND ONE DREAM: EDUCATION IN DJABAL

"I want peace so that I can continue school and become a doctor in my country," says 13-year-old Manayar who has been living in Djabal refugee camp, in eastern Chad, over the past four years.

A typical day in Manayar's life starts at 4 a.m. at the Coranic School. At home, she makes a fire to prepare tea and *la boule* (a traditional Chadian and Sudanese dish made of cooked bread with sauce). While the food is prepared, Manayar wakes her two younger brothers and gets them ready for school. Quickly she drinks a glass of tea and runs to the camp school, which starts at 7 a.m.

All pupils clean their school courtyard and sing the Sudanese anthem before classes begin. The curriculum is Sudanese and includes mathematics, environmental education, geography and Arabic. Everybody returns home for breakfast – *la boule* – between 9 and 10 a.m. At noon, the first part of Manayar's day is over and the second one starts. After a short nap (no lunch) she fetches water for her mother before settling down on her school homework. The second and last meal of the day – *la boule* – is at 6 p.m., followed by another hour at the Coranic School. The long day under the burning Chadian sun comes to an end at 10 p.m.

Working on the family plot and the search for firewood replace lessons at school during summer holidays.

"I cannot imagine life without school," says Manayar, vividly shaking her head, "it opens my eyes and mind. The school is my path to the future." Her mother Fatimé and her grandmother Mariam join us as we talk. Manayar's grandmother – who can neither read nor write – works as a midwife in the camp with UNICEF's Italian NGO partner Cooperazione Internazionale, or COOPI, and Manayar's mother supports her with registering newborns.

It is an amazing family clan, now sitting under a tree: the grandmother, a qualified midwife, ensures safe deliveries; the mother, part of the new Sudanese generation that went to school, completes the process of birth-giving with a birth certificate; and, finally, the daughter who hopes to pursue her education to realize the dream of one day becoming a doctor.

Thanks to UNICEF and its partners, over 75,000 school-aged children in 12 Sudanese refugee camps, 15,000 internally displaced children and 10,000 children in surrounding host communities attended school during the first half of 2008. UNICEF's support ranged from improving classrooms and distributing learning materials and textbooks to training community teachers and parent-teacher associations. Yet, challenges remain.

School materials and classrooms are insufficient, although almost all primary school-aged refugee children go to school. UNICEF's education projects for refugees are seriously underfunded. In 2007, 66 per cent of funds needed for education projects were covered, whereas so far in 2008 this figure is only at 56 per cent.

No education after primary school exists in refugee camps due to lack of teachers and shortage of funding for secondary education. Manayar plans to return to Sudan to continue her education in Khartoum after her eighth-grade exam in Djabal.

Diplomas issued in refugee camps in Chad are not recognized by the Government of Sudan. UNICEF and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) are persistently advocating recognition since 2007, yet there has been no significant progress because of ongoing tensions between Chad and the Sudan.

Manayar has four more years until her eighth grade, and UNICEF is committed to give her and her peers an opportunity to fulfil their dreams.