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Front cover. Block 1000.0049 from Naga (photograph courtesy Karla Kroper).

Above. Pottery jar with decoration of sorghum heads from BMC 60, Berber (photograph courtesy Mahmoud Suliman Bashir).

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We are all for Nyala (KAMAN), South Darfur. A note concerning a local initiative to preserve cultural heritage

Ashraf Abdalla



Figure 1. KAMAN logo – We are all for Nyala.

As a result of the recent conflict Nyala, the capital of South Darfur State, has been transformed from a beautiful city full of art, culture, creativity, and peaceful coexistence between its cultural components into a city of death. KAMAN means ‘We are all for Nyala’ (Figure 1). It is a grassroots, non-profit, non-religious, non-ethnic and non-political group,¹ based in Nyala working across the fields of culture, tangible and intangible heritage, enlightenment, development, and peace. It aims to foster and preserve collective societal awareness in all its ethnic components. By promoting human values, cultural awareness, and well-being KAMAN seeks to enrich the culture of Nyala’s diverse community to create a sustainable future and healthy environment (Figures 2 and 3). For this to happen, human energy and knowledge must be harnessed and directed for the benefit of city residents and the surrounding community.

KAMAN joins forces with and has productive collaborations and cooperation with local and state authorities, organisations from civil society as well as other groups and individuals. The group is financed by the contributions of its members (an estimated 50 men and women) and by donations and grants from the various authorities.² The team is comprised of volunteers, individuals with an interest in cultural, social, and humanitarian issues including activists involved in both public and private activities, along with many community leaders. The executive office comprises a group of young people involved in cultural affairs, community development, using transformation as a starting place for growth, enlightenment, and acculturation. Our partners serve as the group’s cornerstone because they share our belief in the significance of transforming society in accordance with cultural initiatives designed to advance society and human development.

What we do

The group aims to enlist the power of civil society and works towards using it for the advancement of knowledge with the aim of advancing civil principles in both spirit and substance. It collaborates with the pertinent authorities to repair public cultural facilities, restoring public access to libraries, and to venues for cultural, recreational, and historical events. It collects and documents the intangible and human cultural heritage of South Darfur State, and of its custodians, to promote and nurture a culture of belonging. It also works with others to rehabilitate heritage museums and community activities related to the group’s programs. Particularly with environmental cultural challenges, KAMAN attempts to engage with and consult the community and interested parties to stimulate creativity. Young people are encouraged to pursue scientific and practical studies focused on environmental improvement. By promoting scientific and practical learning among the youth, projects focused on environmental improvement are helped to realise their objectives.

Highlights

In 2021, KAMAN organised a celebration of World Poetry Day at the Tactic Tourist Resort. A library was also inaugurated in collaboration with the project ‘Make a difference with a book’, with a variety

¹ The Board of Directors consists of a team of administrators, specialists, and consultants. The Chairperson is Abdalla Idress and the Chairman of the Board of Directors is Ashraf Abdalla.

² Of course, this income is insufficient to cover the costs of most of the group’s activities.



Figures 2 and 3. Working with others in civil society to rehabilitate heritage museums and promote community activities.



Figure 4. Promoting the publication of Dr Abbas Al-Tijani's book in Southern Darfur Radio and Television, 2021.



Figure 5. Donations of books and equipment in the 'Make a difference with a book' project.



Figure 6. Sudanese Millet Festival in Nyala, Southern Darfur Community Museum 2023.

of books being donated by individuals and organisations. The publication of *Safar Ruuh* [A Spiritual Journey] by Dr Abbas Al-Tijani, a researcher in peace and human rights studies, was launched at Southern Darfur Radio and Television (Figures 4 and 5).

In 2022, in the Darfur Community Museum, a group of plastic artists established a workshop for modern plastic art (three-dimensional visual arts) under the direction of the plastic artist Ahmed Romba, former head of the Sudanese Plastic Association. Further, in cooperation with the South Darfur Community Museum, KAMAN assisted in planning the second iteration of the Sudanese Millet Festival in Nyala held in 2023. Millet is part of many different food stuffs in Darfur and as such has cultural, social, and economic import. The festival highlights local millet production.

KAMAN collaborates and coordinates workshops and events with numerous relevant parties including the British Council in Khartoum, the Living Cultural Heritage Protection Project, the LKikiri Association, the Darfur Museum, the Sudanese Women's Museum in Darfur, and the South Darfur Community Museum. Recent participation in programs of note include various workshops including one concerned with the effects of climate change on cultural assets (Southern Darfur Community Museum, 2022), and others on cultural heritage protection (Cairo, June 2023), cultural policy making (Cairo, July 2023) and intangible cultural heritage training focused on managing communication and coordination of community heritage activities (Cairo, June 2023).