

S·V·P News 4

Sudan Volunteer Programme

Registered Charity No 1062155

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From November 1998 SVP began sending longer term volunteers with commitments of three months or more. By March 2000 over fifty volunteers had been sent on these terms. In addition, SVP's fourth **summer programme** began from mid June 2000 with twenty four SVP volunteers arriving in Khartoum. Momen Osman Salih, Saif Haj El Safi and Saad Yousif undertook the arduous task organising their placement at work, their accommodation in Khartoum, meeting the planes, getting everybody to the hostel, answering all sorts of questions and seeing that the schools and colleges were ready to receive them. It was a demanding and time consuming job for these and the other members of **SVP Sudan**. Our thanks go to all who helped and gave so much time and hospitality to our volunteers.

As in former years SVP continues to learn from its experience in many ways which will be relevant to future plans. We rely on the great demand and welcome for our volunteers at all levels of education, and our many friends in Sudan eager to help our expansion and improvement in service and expertise.

*Alison Holman,
Rachel Bingham &
Anna Roberts
with friends at
Omdurman Ahlia
University*



A note from the chairman of Sudan Volunteer Programme

This is the fourth issue of SVP News. It contains stories received from our volunteers in this year's programmes. We hope that these will encourage others to join us in our really urgently needed work of teaching English. SVP now has volunteers throughout the Sudan academic year from July to April.

SVP thanks all the volunteers of the 1999-2000 season: Barry Marston, Zarina Davis, Peter Hotton, Stephen Harrison, Sarah Nesling, Ali Pickard, Sonia Farrey, Nick Tomkins, Darren Clark, Anna Roberts, Peter Dawson, Ian Winterton, John King, Gemma Cannings, Ken Darmanin, Alice Doyle, Michael Metcalf, Jason Trickett, Tim Grimble, Gavin Dunn, Jaime Tweedie, Kate Prottey.

In the Summer 2000 Programme: Nasrin Akhter, Clare Bagley, Rachel Bingham, Kate Brown, Dinny Burge, Emily Chamblin, Alison Holman, Anjudel Johnson, Anna Roberts, Eleanor Williams, Adam Connors, James Edleston, Barney Hinnigan, Graham Hogg, John McAfee, Mark Miller, Joe Moorhouse, Madoc Thriepland, Stephen Nash, Gareth Price, Matthew Scott, Haroon Shirwani, David Westwood, Nick Whatley, Colin Wong.

In the Autumn 2000 programme: Patricia Somerset, Catherine Palmer, Fatimah Kelleher, Mike Dubinin, Simon Watkinson, Lucy Cridland, Jo O'Brien, Esther Shaw, Amira Hamza Malik.

SVP could not exist without members and supporters. Please continue your help and keep in touch: if not one already - please become a member. There is more about SVP on the back page.

Ahmed Bedri

Dinny Burge, a medical student at Bristol University taught at Academia Medical School. She writes:

When I was told that I would be living with a Sudanese family during my stay in Khartoum, I was excited to be given a unique opportunity to experience Sudanese culture at first hand.

My delightful family consisted of around thirty members of all ages. Even by the end of my two-month stay I had not quite worked out how everyone was related to each other, as the size of the families means that nieces can be older than their aunts, and at least four generations merged into one another. The house was large enough to accommodate all these people, with most sleeping out under the stars in the courtyard at the back of the house, or on the roof. As the khawajiyya (foreigner), I slept in the air-conditioned (sometimes) guest room, which I shared with two or three others.

During the frequent power cuts, we all moved into the relative cool of the outside and would wake covered in a layer of fine dust.

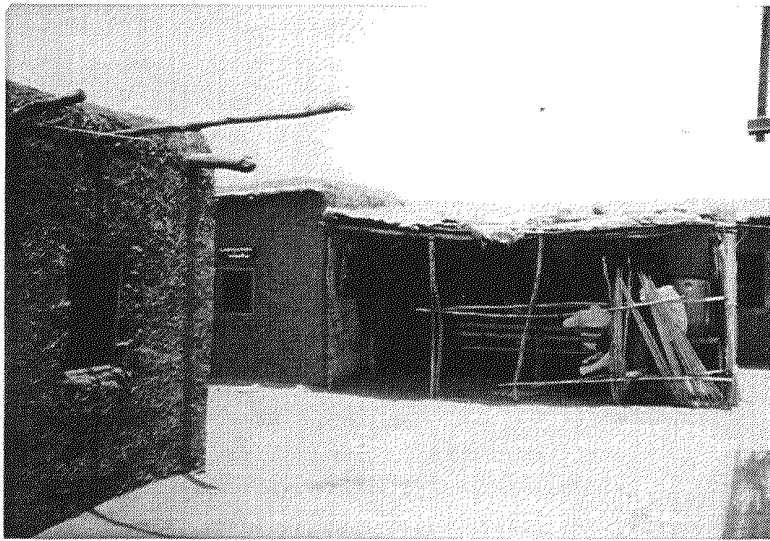
Although the family never stopped worrying about me, they got used to the idea that I could travel around Khartoum alone and would not get lost (much). I think the girls, who had never spoken to a westerner before, were more affected by the culture shock of my arrival than I was. In a

traditional family like this, the women do not leave the house unless they have a good reason, especially in the evening. At first it was difficult to balance my activities in Khartoum, and in particular the numerous invitations from my students, with family life, but with both sides willing to adjust I soon settled in.

The girls were constantly bemused by many aspects of their new sister/daughter. Why did I have no nice clothes? Sudanese women take exquisite care of their appearance when outside the home and my baggy T-shirts and long skirts, mostly from Oxfam, could not compete with their finery. Why did I cut my beautiful yellow hair? Why was I so thin? Why didn't I live at home with my parents and grandparents? Why did men cook? Why wasn't I married? So many questions which I couldn't begin to answer without first embarking on a description of British life and culture. However long I spent explaining, I felt that my audience would never really understand what I was saying unless they came to Britain themselves, just as I could not visualise or understand Sudanese life and culture until

immersed in it. I desperately wanted to bring some of my new sisters home with me, just so they could have a glimpse of a country so different.

Food was prepared for the family by Haboba (grandmother) or another of the older women. Before moving in with the family I had tried one or two dishes from the stalls on the street, and had not been impressed. However, the cooking in my new home was superb. Vegetables stuffed with rice and meat, chicken with peanut sauce, root vegetable and beef stews, salad with peppery rocket, goats cheese and juicy olives, fresh mango and guava juice. Being unhealthily thin by Sudanese standards, I was expected to eat twice as much as everyone else. Not wanting to offend, I did my best but Haboba was always disappointed by my efforts. Although my visit was as much of an education for my



outside the clinic at Soba Aradi

host family as for me, I could not dispel all the misconceptions about British life which they and my students had. No, there are people without enough food. No, it is sometimes sunny in England. No, not all students have a car.

As part of the family, I was exposed to situations which I would otherwise not have been able to experience. One evening I accompanied

the women to a neighbour's house, where the 21-year-old daughter was preparing for her wedding in two weeks. A professional singer and dancer had been asked to the house, along with forty or so friends and family (all female), to teach the bride-to-be to dance. It was a wonderful party atmosphere, with lots of singing, clapping and dancing - I was dragged reluctantly onto the dance floor and made to imitate the rest, causing much hilarity.

A few weeks later I was fortunate enough to be invited by another family to the wedding ceremony itself. A Sudanese wedding lasts for several days with various ceremonies. There was the traditional dancing of the bride for an all-female audience and her husband. At least 150 women had gathered on the roof of the house, and after a few lighting problems due to power cuts, the bride and groom arrived. She was wearing the most beautiful tob (traditional Sudanese dress), and got onto the stage and began to dance. After a while she shed her tob. Underneath she was wearing just a short skirt

