

WORKSHOP SUMMARY PAPER

Setting up a base in Sudan: Opportunities, Risks and Mitigations



INTRODUCTION

Our Digital Clinic

anaSudan held a workshop on Saturday 24 October 2020. Which is a continuation of the theme **"SUDAN, IS IT TIME TO GO BACK?"**

During our 'Digital Clinic' participants had the opportunity of exploring a range of themes in smaller breakout clinics;

- ❖ Engaged with and learnt from expats who have returned to Sudan and established their lives, set up their business;
- ❖ Gained business start-up tips, advice and insight;
- ❖ Networked with professionals in Sudan and abroad.

The workshop was hosted in alignment with anaSudan's **INVEST SUDAN** initiative, a global talent sourcing and investment campaign.

The campaign aims to:

- ❖ Promote recruiting and investment opportunities in Sudan
- ❖ Normalise the concept of setting up a base in Sudan and individual aspirations of being home, through open forums and discussions
- ❖ Discuss with openness and transparency all risks and mitigations associated with relocating to, living and working in Sudan

- ❖ Remain inclusive to all professionals and experts with a positive interest in the rebuilding phase of Sudan, whether Sudanese or otherwise

Objective of Breakout Clinics

The key goal of the break out clinics was providing smaller groups of participants the opportunity to engage in the clinic's topic and gain new knowledge and insights, ask questions and share existing experiences.

The clinics provided the right environment for participants to network with like-minded professionals.

"Promoting and attracting global talent acquisition and investment opportunities to Sudan" - anaSudan



BREAKOUT CLINICS: KEY MESSAGES

01: The Legalities Around Setting Up and Structuring Your Business

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Legal Counsel



Ideation Stage

- ❖ Business idea protection:
 - Limit disclosure as appropriate
 - Sign Non-disclosure Agreements (NDA) and Non-compete Agreements (NCA), as required
 - Register any patents and industrial designs
- ❖ Trade Agency and similar arrangements:
 - Secure any rights needed for your business operation (agency, distribution, licensing, IP use etc.)
 - Undertake product registration and certification
- ❖ Educate yourself, examples:
 - Setup options in order to select most appropriate for your business
 - Regulators/Regulatory requirements such as employee engagement, tax, zakat, social security, customs, free zones, trade unions etc.
 - Potential professional partner firms e.g. legal, accountancy, HR
 - Visa and work permits for expats

- ❖ Secure key resources contractually
 - Ensure any agreements are bound by appropriate contractual agreements

Setup

- ❖ Choose appropriate setup option for your business
- ❖ Ensure capital is aligned with business plan
- ❖ Register IP Assets
- ❖ Finalise all requirements mandated by:
 - Commercial Registrar
 - Regulators / Regulatory requirements (employee engagement, tax, zakat, social security, customs, free zones, trade unions)

Operations

- ❖ Maintain statutory duties such as financial books, records, annual submissions etc.
- ❖ Ensure compliance with employment, visa and other regulatory requirements e.g. engineering and legal sectors
- ❖ Take informed decisions and refer to experts e.g. when hiring employees, terminating contracts, contractual arrangements etc.
- ❖ Adopt standard contracts
 - Adopt policies that ensure accountability starting with the basics and update as your business grows, especially in areas related to finance and accounting, procurement, employment and safety
 - Adopt a clear matrix of responsibility
 - Use Board as means for good governance and engagement option

02: Project Management

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Healthcare Management Consulting Principal
Digital Health and Innovation Director



Defining project management

- ❖ There is always a starting and end point; a product or service
- ❖ Follow structured principles of project management; project initiation, planning, development, execution, monitoring and closing

Challenges and risks

- ❖ Successfully merging different people with varying skills and disciplines into collaborative teams
- ❖ Ensuring you remain relevant and aligned with overall corporate strategy; being strategy focused and being able to monitor your performance and that of the project, whilst ensuring quality assurance

Risk mitigation

- ❖ Sourcing external expertise such as advisory committee roles, external advisors and partnerships are beneficial in resolving day to day challenges
- ❖ Take into account client's and stakeholders' needs and requirements
- ❖ Being flexible, thinking outside the box, being adaptive when facing fast changing and challenging environments such as in Sudan, one that is 'full of surprises'
- ❖ Time management and the importance of appropriate and detailed planning, whilst tracking performance regularly against key milestones and making adjustments to mitigate any delays

- ❖ Understanding the legal environment within which your project is being delivered and regularly assess and mitigate any impact
- ❖ Forecast and mitigate potential risks and regularly review and update project risk register
- ❖ Applying simplicity; the easiest way to manage a project and resolve challenges is in how it can be broken into small, simple and more manageable elements in order to flush out any dead ends and define clear outcomes to meet the client's expectations
- ❖ It is important to utilise teamwork tools and applying the ideas of ideation and design thinking, whilst being able to collaborate in a team environment along with the competency environment surrounding team selection

03: Practical Experience

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Partner and Managing Director
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Opportunities

- ❖ The decision to return to Sudan is personal and can simply be based on the need to find a 'permanent home'
- ❖ Whilst many Sudanese expatriates were in fact forced to leave Sudan, the revolution has opened an opportunity for everyone to return home
- ❖ Sudan is going through a huge wave of change, which to bring to fruition and sustain in the longer-term, requires strong and consistent lobbying from those inside Sudan and those currently outside. Combining local knowledge and expertise with global exposure, experience and robust networks is likely to render positive results
 - Whether from a social responsibility and/or business aspiration point of view, there is a critical need to fill existing knowledge and development gaps in various business sectors, meaning there are huge opportunities to absorb large volumes of people with a range of skill sets

- ❖ Sudan is a nation spanning large swathes of land, with a comparatively small population. The societal make up is diverse in thinking, corporate and professional cultures, social cultures and behaviours, all of which requires a systematic and consistent rebuilding process over a lengthy period of time
- ❖ Capacity building:
 - Young people inside Sudan have huge capacities and potential especially in innovation, despite the minimal resources available to them, along with the willingness and aspirations to participate and achieve success
 - Utilising local/young/up and coming talent and building a robust capacity base within Sudan through knowledge transfer, makes for a golden opportunity for local professional capacity building that can provide local talent the best possible chance at succeeding

Risks

- ❖ Substantial electricity cuts are ongoing and despite installing a generator, fuel shortages may mean a generator cannot be powered. This has a perpetual impact for instance poor internet services
- ❖ Basic services such as health care and education are not available or at poor standards by comparison
- ❖ Issues of stability and safety are of concern

Risk mitigation

- ❖ The best time to come to Sudan is when an individual can maintain resilience at the face of extreme adversity and is able to bear the difficulties that they will likely experience. Factors that may aid the decision to return include health condition, professional knowledge, family and financial status, backup plans etc. These vary from person to person
- ❖ If you choose to move to Sudan from, set yourself up gradually. This means, start small by perhaps setting up a small business in Sudan, which will provide one with the experience and exposure to doing business in Sudan, ways of life and cultures
- ❖ In order to remain positive and survive, hold on to your passion, take it day by day and focus on your final goal. There are ample opportunities to succeed in Sudan and ultimately it is a permanent home and there is the sense that " I don't have to leave"
- ❖ Due to the daily challenges faced e.g. home maintenance, health and living costs and resources, goals may be difficult to achieve but there is always a way around this. Always ask yourself the question "what do I need to do to overcome this hurdle?"
- ❖ Always have a plan and set a timeline with key milestones, treat your repatriate as a project with a 5-year plan. This is the only way you will impact change.

- ❖ Use technology and scientific advancements currently in existence globally to assist you in progressing your goals faster
- ❖ If you have children, the biggest challenge will be preparing a life for them that is aligned with what the family may have been accustomed to abroad;
 - To overcome this hurdle, stop comparing life outside Sudan with the one you will lead inside Sudan
 - kerb your expectations
- ❖ To overcome basic daily life challenges such as electricity shortages, consider installing a small solar system, which depends on affordability from one person to the next
- ❖ Returning to Sudan is not an easy decision to make, so it's a good idea to consider your options carefully

SUMMARY

“Sudan, a land of opportunities”

Whereas currently around the world opportunities may be fast becoming scarce, the contrary can be said about Sudan where ample opportunities currently exist in each and every sector and industry. These opportunities should present huge incentives to repatriate to Sudan and participate in the development phase.

There has to be acknowledgement and realisation that whereas the country's leadership builds from the top; creating our national strategic vision and road map, at the bottom is where the real building, innovation and creativity happens; one cannot operate successfully without the other. As such, the time is really now for each person to take individual leadership and start taking personal action. There needs to be a change in mindset and absolute focus on entrepreneurship project delivery in aid of a collective transition from a purely consuming society to a producing one.

Repatriation is a critical step in the future of development of a new Sudan. There needs to be a consistent effort in bringing together local talent, global experts and public and private sectors based in Sudan. We need to work together in a structured and systematic manner in order to be able to collectively benefit and reach our goal for a new Sudan to prosper.

There is a vast pool of talented young people in Sudan, some of whom have recently repatriated and it is important to reach out to these young people and utilise their abilities whilst helping them sharpen their skills and guide them to succeed.

Collaborating in the Development of a New Sudan: a Simplistic Interpretation



Legalities

Ideation stage

- ❖ Understand the landscape well enough and know exactly what you're trying to achieve. Clarify is key at this stage
- ❖ Know your regulatory road map
- ❖ Know your stakeholders, regulators and the duties that may be imposed on your business
- ❖ Protect your idea contractually
- ❖ Register all your assets and rights
- ❖ Acquaint yourself with local costs

Set up

- ❖ Based on your research during the ideation stage, choose your set up option and ensure your capital requirements are lined up
- ❖ Register any intellectual property rights
- ❖ Register your business name
- ❖ Ensure you follow all regulatory requirements and registrations with the appropriate regulatory bodies
- ❖ Be prepared that there is a lack of digital resources to aid business set up, meaning longer set up periods and the requirement for additional resources

Operations

- ❖ Be aware of what the law expects of you as a business, ensuring the implementation of the appropriate governance structure and policies that apply to your business. It's always good to start with accountability and defining an authority matrix, which ultimately helps you achieve your goals
- ❖ Adopt standard contracts where possible
- ❖ Make sure you source valid information
- ❖ Whereas it's quick to register a company, the name might take longer. Past experience has demonstrated a lot of desired names were already registered, ultimately leading to registering a name that may not be of preference
- ❖ Systems are currently being updated to introduce governance and transparency
- ❖ Engage a good lawyer to help you navigate local processes and procedures
- ❖ Pay attention to the detail and ask the right questions
- ❖ Engage in ideas and set up a company that has longevity whilst remaining committed to making your business a success

Project delivery

- ❖ Be flexible, open minded and apply out of the box problem solving techniques; there are many challenges in Sudan due to the fast pace of change
- ❖ Time management is key; it is important to manage your time efficiently and effectively
- ❖ Be confident in asking for help; if you find yourself stuck in one area, be humble and seek guidance
- ❖ Apply the principles of project management and be consistent, there is no reason this will not work in Sudan

Practicalities

- ❖ Our children need to grow up within their extended families in Sudan to understand their role as part of their immediate and extended families and society as a whole
- ❖ Treat repatriating to Sudan as a project and be innovative and think out of the box in pursuing your move
- ❖ Moving to Sudan requires precise planning as there can be a lack of individual and financial security
- ❖ Living in Sudan is highly challenging and the realities around daily life might seem shocking at the start;
 - There are always ways around mitigating these issues to establish a stable base, and when you find the right way that works for you and your situation, your experience may not be as bad as you may have initially feared
 - There's a solution to every problem and there's no place that's perfect; there are daily life challenges when living abroad, and it is about problem solving on a daily basis
 - Ensure you have a support network to guide you through your journey
- ❖ Understand local cultures and behaviours and adapt to them
- ❖ Have options for health care and in particular emergency healthcare
- ❖ Treat your participation in the development process in Sudan as a long-term project and it is important to remain flexible and adaptive
- ❖ Be innovative; despite an idea already existing in Sudan, make your idea stand out
- ❖ Remain determined in the face of cynicism when it comes to the application of a new idea or concept. Have the conviction in your abilities and belief in your idea and pursue that. And whilst it is important to listen to people and learn from their experiences, have the confidence and determination that you're following the right path and give it your absolute best shot

- ❖ Don't get distracted; once you start something ensure you remain focused on your goals and milestones. Do not deviate from your plan despite external pressures and distractions
 - Define your key outputs, know what you're capable of doing and what you are able to achieve in the long run within the constraints present. Sometimes you need to make adjustments, but ensure you are not distracted from your end goal
- ❖ Be persistent no matter the challenges and obstacles you face
- ❖ Sudan will test your perseverance, professionalism and innovation. It takes a lot to be successful in Sudan, but it is possible
 - Reflections: in 1971 Sudanese expatriates who migrated to the UAE recall experiencing regular electricity cuts, whilst water tankers delivered water their homes. They imported meat, vegetables and even clothes from Sudan

Watch our live discussion videos:

- ❖ Workshop Intro: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXTdL3HsbUc&t=4s>
- ❖ Breakout Clinics Sneak Peak: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn4abUSUIz8>
- ❖ Workshop Summary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKSGAaDcxeg&t=21s>

The Local Expertise

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Our participants

Whilst there are too many names to list, we would like to extend a warm and special thank you to all our participants, who have shared their knowledge, expertise and personal experiences with us. Their insights have contributed vastly to generating a richer discussion, which provided it for the right conditions to draw out the core foundations of the topics discussed and as summarised in this paper.

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