

SUDAN, IS IT TIME TO GO BACK?

WORKSHOP SUMMARY PAPER



anaSudan

26 September 2020

INTRODUCTION

Sudan, is it time to go back?

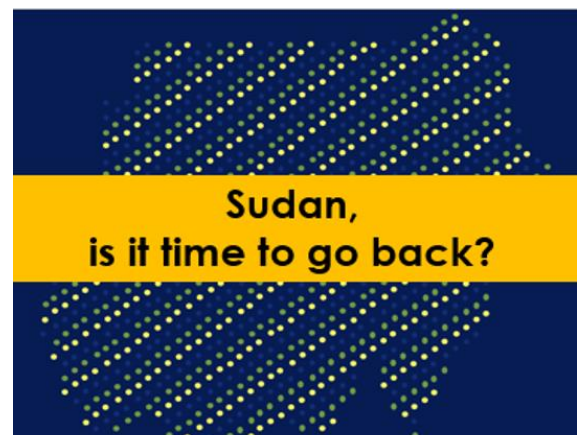
anaSudan held a workshop on Saturday 26 September 2020, the purpose of which to identify and make proposals based on the requirements of:

1. Expatriates and Sudanese communities abroad;
2. Business communities and institutions in Sudan.

The intended outputs from this workshop are as follows:

1. White paper: providing a summary of key findings along with proposals;
2. Global Talent Survey: capture a large population sample, Sudanese and foreign;
3. Circulation: outputs will be circulated digitally;
4. Availability to local public and private sector institutions: the output documents will be available to the public (global audience) and local public and private sector institutions in Sudan.

“Sudan’s professional arsenal and rural development are golden keys to the propulsion of our economic growth” - anaSudan



The introductory note addressed 4 key areas of focus:

WHAT is the challenge?

- ❖ Sudan has been stripped of its 'Intelligentsia'; teachers, academics, writers, artists (the liberal thinkers), along with its elite professional and expert capacity. The portion of 'Intelligentsia' left in Sudan have been wholly swamped and overwhelmed with daily life struggles, hampering their career progress and development, whilst discouraging their aspirations;
- ❖ There were 2.9m Sudanese people living outside Sudan, confirmed figure by UNESCO (2011)¹. Currently the figure is estimated to be 5m. Listening to young people in Sudan now, sadly this figure will keep climbing;
- ❖ There is a vacuum in leadership, academia, research and development/innovation, social development, which are the essentials of social and economic progress for any sovereign nation;
- ❖ The lack of trust between individuals and local public and private institutions is a direct by-product of the vacuum in leadership, academia, research and development/innovation and social development. The absolute degradation of our services and poor-quality standards is the core cause of this mistrust.

WHY is repatriation a priority?

IT IS CRUCIAL FOR THE REBUILDING PHASE AND SHOULD FORM PART OF OUR NATION'S POLITICAL STRATEGY

- ❖ Drawing professional expertise, cutting edge technologies, state of the art workflow methods, technical know-how and a highly proficient multi-lingual resource capability;

¹ Government estimates in 2011 put the total number of emigrants between 880,000 and 1,338,000, half of whom were in Saudi Arabia. Recent World Bank estimates put the total number of Sudanese emigrants at 1.5 million, while SSWA gives a higher figure of 4 to 5 million.

- ❖ Drawing a diverse global workforce with ties to host/home nations, can potentially influence Sudan's international political strategy, whilst offering the opportunity to leverage these relationships to further the country's international relations objectives;
- ❖ Leveraging extensive global business networks built by Sudanese experts sitting within a huge number of the world's top organisations, who have fostered relationship with wide global networks over decades;
- ❖ Aligning with international service delivery standards as a result of integrating expatriate resources into Sudan's business sectors, which could have a huge impact on the quality of local standards of service and production;
- ❖ Some Sudanese abroad have a need to be home and participating in rebuilding a new Sudan. Any Sudanese wishing to repatriate to Sudan has the right to do so and opportunities should be made readily available and easily accessible for them to participate in the rebuilding efforts;
- ❖ Achieving a more integrated and robust social fabric resulting from more integrated communities, whilst creating right environments to achieve social cohesion;
- ❖ The economy: the more successful entrepreneurs, the more people who can produce and pay into the economy the more success the country can be at revitalising the economy. It is critical that we re-build a stable and reliable nation for ourselves that accommodates us all with our differences; It is simply no longer acceptable for multiple generations to be displaced whether within the country or abroad;
- ❖ And finally, is it simply a question of duty? This is of course a private question that each individual has the right to determine for themselves.

WHO constitutes global talent?

- ❖ Experts/professionals who will contribute positively to the social and economic development of a new Sudan, Sudanese and/or foreign nationals. It is high time that Sudan opens its doors to anyone who has something positive to offer, whilst ensuring a win-win situation;
- ❖ The availability of foreign workers will keep increasing due to the economic impact of Covid-19, which puts Sudan in favour of absorbing a diverse pool of expertise;
- ❖ Having said the above, professional Sudanese expats are an easy win; we have the passion, the willingness and the sense of duty.

HOW can Sudan attract global talent?

- ❖ Implementation of a government, private sector and/or individual led global recruiting and investment strategy;
- ❖ There is a pressing need for the synchronisation of a robust and pragmatic strategic effort aimed at driving global professional talent and investments to Sudan.

Launching INVEST SUDAN: a global recruiting and investment campaign



Aims of the campaign:

- ❖ 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;
- ❖ Remain inclusive to anyone who would like to utilise the campaign, including government and/or the private sector in Sudan.

BREAKOUT SESSION

Unpacking the question “how to create a scalable global recruiting strategy?”

01: Attracting Global Talent

OUTCOME: identify key elements that make relocating to Sudan appealing or unappealing. The analysis should be based on the requirements of expatriates and other Sudanese communities abroad i.e. what would encourage/discourage a return and establishing/re-establishing a base in Sudan.

- ❖ Services: What are the services considered crucial for the decision to relocate?
- ❖ Cultural barriers: Are there cultural nuances to be addressed and aligned to achieve better integration into communities?
- ❖ Remuneration and benefits: How can pay packages and benefits be aligned?
- ❖ Government incentives: What initiatives can the government implement?
- ❖ Long-term investments: What are the risks? How can risk mitigations and opportunities be promoted?
- ❖ Private business: What is the key information and engagement required?

02: Talent Outreach

OUTCOME: identify key elements that promote organisations from Sudan, making them appealing or unappealing to global talent. The analysis should be based on the requirements of public and private sectors in Sudan.

- ❖ Communication - one channel does not fit all: What do organisations based in Sudan need to do to promote themselves to a global audience?
- ❖ Candidate experience: What are the minimum expected requirements?
- ❖ Virtual career fairs: How can they be made effective?
- ❖ Dedicated talent agents: How can organisations in Sudan implement a robust system of talent acquisition? How can they guarantee 'what you see is what you get' for both the individual and organisation?

03: Global Talent Survey

OUTCOME: identify key elements to include in a global talent survey, aimed at understanding in greater detail what makes relocating to Sudan appealing or unappealing to expatriates and Sudanese communities based abroad, and the aspirations and challenges of public and private organisations based in Sudan.

- ❖ What are the top 5 survey questions?

Group findings

There was an overall interest from the group participants to go back to Sudan and serve the country, despite different sentiments from group members of different ages. Repatriating to Sudan was put in the context of what is really possible, what falls within the duty of being a Sudanese national in terms of our pursuit of freedom, peace, justice for everyone living in Sudan.

01: Attracting Global Talent

SERVICES

- ❖ Services do not need to be benchmarked to international standards, however there are basic public services such as water, electricity, education and healthcare that are important criteria in the decision to repatriate/return to Sudan, as these are systemic issues and will likely not improve in the short to medium term, without significant support and investment;
- ❖ Telecom services including reliable internet is considered a basic necessity;
- ❖ Infrastructure services e.g. waste management, roadside assistance;
- ❖ Work life balance including entertainment and internal tourism;
- ❖ Availability of basic consumer products;
- ❖ An effective banking system and banking services e.g. mobile apps, transfer and receive money to and from abroad;
- ❖ Security services in conflict zones;

Cultural barriers

- ❖ Expats do not want to be treated differently once in Sudan and be constantly reminded that they are not entirely Sudanese. At the same time, for those who have concerns of being 'singled out' expats can be reassured the longer they spend in Sudan the more integrated they quickly become. Expats have predominately become social chameleons and as such, are able to fit in easily and adapt to foreign situations;
- ❖ Expats are able to bring a new perspective such as new experiences, customs, foods, which would serve to add to the cultural density and flavour;
- ❖ Social culture:
 - Gender equality and the respect of privacy to both males and females is required. For example, it should be acceptable to society that a woman can go jogging without being harassed and bothered;
 - Time management and respecting people's time;
 - Dress codes and acceptability of individual choices;
 - Understanding and accepting differing opinions and individual points of view;
- ❖ Culture at work:
 - Respecting a strong work ethic, duty to the work and team, time management;
 - Flexible working hours e.g. the ability to work from home to be more productive;
 - Removing stipulations associated with e.g. team breakfasts, attending weddings, funeral etc. during work hours;
 - Considerations for work-life balance, safety at work etc. should be made;

Remuneration and benefits

- ❖ It was felt that the availability of a fair remuneration expectation could require economic restructuring. Expats accept it is not going to be realistic to expect the same packages received abroad. However there needs to be a solution to ensure fairness to the individuals making the move back to Sudan, especially if they have children studying abroad. Some remedies include:
- ❖ There may well be opportunities to convince individuals to take a minor reduction in income, however it will be unrealistic to expect to pay them a fraction of their salary and benefits;
- ❖ Draw back people on short-term basis; institutions in Sudan such as the banking community may offer internships to new undergraduate and/or postgraduate students who are based outside of Sudan. For example, for an Engineer interested in the water industry, it could be made exceptionally easy for them to conduct their research in Sudan. Such opportunities would benefit the country from the research conducted, whilst the student would be provided a unique opportunity to undertake research in a set of challenging conditions. This may also lead to the establishment of education programmes that secure a steady flow of youth educational tourism from different parts of the world;
- ❖ There needs to be a distinction made between expats who left the country in the past 4-5 years and those who have been out for decades. An expat who has been out of the country for 4-5 years, may be more amiable to returning to Sudan if provided suitable opportunities;
- ❖ Government services:
 - There needs to be consistency and fairness in the services provided to individuals in Sudan and returnees. The same level and quality of service should be provided across the board regardless of individual status;
 - The provision of e-government services could be offered at a premium, where required, e.g. passport and national ID cards renewals;
 - There needs to be a zero-tolerance culture for corruption. All services need to be clear of corruption and should be offered at a standard;

Government incentives

- ❖ An overall economic eco system is required, which offers concessions and tax exemptions e.g. import taxes, concessions to ease the purchase of property or land to enable resettlement and rebuilding of a new life in Sudan;
- ❖ Currently all services are focused in Khartoum, however expats would be interested in concessions and incentives that draw them to other parts of the country, states, towns or rural areas that may even be under-developed;
- ❖ Issues surrounding inclusion/exclusion of the diaspora into established local systems should be considered;
- ❖ It has been noted that expats are being offered the freedom of working in Sudan currently, with international organisations, whilst maintaining the same pay and benefit packages they receive abroad. The government could secure more of these initiatives;
- ❖ Consider expat compensation options;
- ❖ Establishing a system of allocation of expatriate experts into existing projects;
- ❖ Offer discount rates on acquisition of agricultural land/mining projects etc.;
- ❖ Despite expats being used to a certain level of remuneration and pension packages, a large proportion are still willing to remain flexible with the assumption there will be economic reform in the short to medium terms. If not, the deterioration of the value of the currency and exceptionally low wages will not provide the confidence needed to encourage repatriation;

Long-term investments

- ❖ Where salary deductions may not be favourable to expatriates, considerations should be made to encourage expats to return and start private businesses, and as such they may assign themselves suitable dividends;
- ❖ Implementation of government strategies to ensure a stable and healthy investment environment, whilst ensuring investments into the private or business sectors are secured;

- ❖ Young entrepreneurs could be offered funding and mentorship opportunities to encourage them to start small businesses, through the development of an entrepreneurship ecosystem and funding opportunities from private sector and international development partners;

Private business

- ❖ Easy access to and availability of research, feasibility studies, statistics etc. to increase the likelihood of investments;
- ❖ Access to local successful business owners through workshops and talks addressing the challenges experienced and providing tips on how to mitigate risks etc. This provides an environment where expats can see what local business owners have done, the obstacles faced and gain insights and reassurances that building a successful business in Sudan is achievable;

02: Talent Outreach

Communication: one channel does not fit all

- ❖ Utilise modern recruiting tools to reach a wide professional audience e.g. LinkedIn;
- ❖ Capture a wider pool of talent through networking opportunities;
- ❖ Consideration to be made for freelancing and long-distance expert engagement;
- ❖ Promote governance and transparency and ensure issues of nepotism and unequal opportunities is captured and addressed;
- ❖ Ensure recruitment process does not serve individual interests but rather those of the overall priorities of the Sudan and the Sudanese people as a whole;

Candidate experience

- ❖ It has been noted that a well-structured interview and recruitment process has been observed already at some of the large organisations in Sudan;
- ❖ Ensure gender equality during the interview and selection process;
- ❖ Create step employment solutions to encourage repatriation;
- ❖ Make available clear job descriptions and person specifications;
- ❖ Where appropriate, conditions are tailored to the individual's needs;
- ❖ Ensure a fair recruitment process against local competition;
- ❖ Considerations for a long-term career pathway and the possibility of growth with continual career progression;

03: Global Talent Survey

Examples included:

- ❖ Would you be willing to relocate to the countryside?
- ❖ Do you want to participate by being based in Sudan or remotely?
- ❖ Do you want to move to Sudan temporarily e.g. during sabbatical leave or whilst on holiday?

Summary

A healthy portion of expats who participated in this workshop expressed preference to working in the public sector. They expressed that whereas they would be open to undertaking long-term investments, they believed some legal reform would be required to secure long-term protection of assets.

In terms of public sector processes, it was felt they are unnecessarily bureaucratic and lengthy, which can become a deterrent. However, there was a consensus that the implementation of a 'one stop shop' on the ground in Sudan could improve user experience and build trust back into public services.

The provision of an accessible platform for the diaspora is felt would be encouraging, where local opportunities are catalogued so that expats can make plans and considerations accordingly e.g. a job or business opportunity portal that makes information easily accessible to expatriates.

Considerations should be made on the manner in which the diaspora can support the establishment of an operating system of governance in Sudan. In addition to understanding the role of the diaspora in participating in re-establishing a robust governance process. The diaspora's role is not about critiquing the system but rather actively engaging through established tools to aid the rebuilding efforts.

Whether individuals, public or private sector institutions, the immediate focus should be on the creation of a strategic global campaign that promotes talent sourcing and investment opportunities in Sudan, whilst providing a range of platforms to discuss and address risks and mitigations.

Sudan is not going to build itself; Sudan requires Sudanese cadres to participate in the rebuilding efforts. We are the ones with the vested interest and passion to safeguard success.

And like any machine, a country, its economy and society require positive stimulation and development of its people and processes, to ensure continual and consistent development.

Sudanese expatriates have amassed a huge wealth of expertise making them true champions of change and key contributors in the rebuilding of a new Sudan, the revitalisation of our economy and rebuilding of our social fabric.

And finally, there needs to be an awareness and assumptions have to be made by those repatriating to Sudan now, that the country is experiencing extreme and abnormal conditions and as such no expat should expect to go back to Sudan and 'plug and play'.

Having said that, it should also be noted that this situation is not unique to Sudan and other nations have had similar experiences and have succeeded in their rebuilding efforts. We should look for the lessons learnt from these nations by researching and understanding the processes they utilised to develop and implement their reconstruction programmes.

Rebuilding Sudan is a global concern and must be considered in the context of 'the wider picture', it is not one person's effort but rather a global diaspora effort to bring Sudan back on its feet.

Watch our live discussion videos:

Introductory note: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ct4QCN-rOSs&t=7s>

Group presentations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUqsquthafg>

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