



SPECIAL REPORT

THE REPUBLIC OF SUDAN

AGRICULTURE • MINERALS • FINANCE • MANUFACTURING



A DYNAMIC PRIVATE SECTOR OPEN TO THE WORLD

PUBLISHED IN COOPERATION WITH THE US-SUDAN BUSINESS COUNCIL

FIRST



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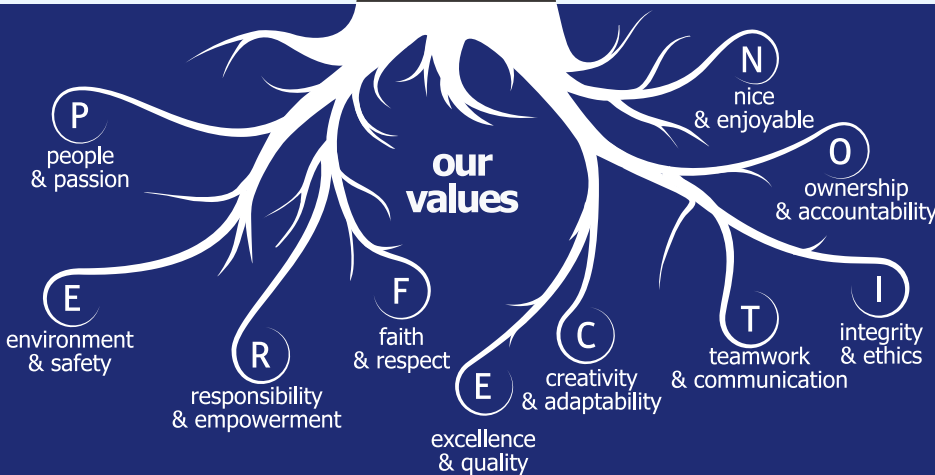
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Foreword by
Rupert Goodman DL
Chairman and Founder
FIRST

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Special Report on Sudan. We are especially grateful to the participating members of Sudan's private sector for all their help and guidance in the preparation of this report. We are also very grateful to the Ambassador H.E. Irfan Siddiq and his staff at the British Embassy in Khartoum for their support and assistance. Our Report Editor, Johanna Zuleta, should also be congratulated on bringing this publication to fruition.

Sudan is a country with a rich history, geography and culture. Located in North East Africa, it occupies a land area of 718,772 square miles, making it the third largest country in Africa by land mass. Sudan's history stretches back to the Pharaonic period.

Sudan occupies a geostrategic position at the intersection of the Middle East, Sub-Saharan, North and East Africa. The country lies between latitudes 8 and 23° north. The landscape is predominately flat plains with a number of significant mountain ranges – including Deriba Caldera in the Marrah Mountains. With an altitude of around 10,000ft, it is the highest point in Sudan.

The Blue and White Nile rivers flow within the country to meet in Khartoum becoming the River Nile which then traverses northwards to the Mediterranean Sea. The country is also blessed with important mineral resources, including chromite, cobalt, copper, gold, lead, mica, nickel, silver, tin, uranium, zinc and both oil and gas.

Sudan's economy has benefitted from the removal of sanctions and ongoing economic

reforms and offers interesting investment and trade opportunities for the discerning investor.

Agricultural production remains the principal source of income and employment in Sudan and constitutes one third of the economy. The main agricultural products include cotton, groundnuts, sorghum, millet, wheat, Gum Arabic, hibiscus, fruit, sesame seeds and animal feed.

Sudan is ranked as the third largest gold producer in Africa. Artisanal gold mining operations contribute around 85 per cent of production with the balance from large and small-scale mining and tailings processing operations.

There are also significant investment opportunities in livestock production – accounting for 26 per cent of the total export value. Sudan has the capacity to further develop beef production given its extensive water resources and fertile soils.

Sudan's private business sector is the key driver in economic development and we are grateful to the senior business leaders from Sudan who have shared their insights, experience and ideas in this special publication.

We at FIRST are delighted to have produced this special publication to promote Sudan's private sector and hope that it contributes to Sudan's continuing economic development and the promotion of important international relationships, especially in the area of trade and investment.

This report is the first in a series designed to provide new perspectives on this fascinating and distinctive country. **F**

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أراك

Araak Group spans over 8 strategic sectors and employs over 3,000 people



Bottling



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Milling



Construction & Real Estate Development



Banking & Insurance



Recycling



Retail Food Distribution



Retail Food



BOTTLING

From its birth in the 1980's our bottling division has grown to become the largest manufacturer of soft drinks in Sudan and a pioneer in the field, growing from producing a single product to a range of over 20.



MILLING

Wheata is one of the largest flour mills in the region. With a current capacity of 1750 tonnes per day, it is an important national pillar in ensuring food security and plays a vital public health role through fortifying flour with iron and folic acid.



CONSTRUCTION

Araak Development and Construction is developing 200,000 square meters of prime residential land into the largest residential compound in Khartoum with over 500 villas and 400 apartments. Araak City is changing the way Sudanese people live.



RECYCLING

As part of our Corporate Social Responsibility programme, Takreer, a PET recycling plant, was launched to reduce the companies' carbon footprint and the environmental impact of PET use in Sudan.



ENGINEERING

Araak Engineering supplies the wider consumer market with high quality air conditioning and refrigeration units. The company also acts as a supportive backbone to the group's other companies in bottling and construction.

We at Araak Group believe there is no limit to the opportunities available to a company of our stature to grow and further develop. We are always encouraging dialogue between other reputable companies and ourselves to study ways on how we can develop stronger ties to expand our portfolio of operations by investing in new ideas or improving old ones. We believe this is vital to stay competitive and further strengthen our position at the pinnacle of Sudan's private sector and achieve our goal of sustaining a profitable operation.

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Message from
H.E. Irfan Siddiq OBE,
British Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan

Sudan is one of the few largely untapped big markets in Africa. The United Kingdom and Sudan have historically enjoyed strong business and wider links. Many of these relationships have proved remarkably resilient and enduring, despite the challenges of international sanctions and other factors in recent decades. We are keen to see the United Kingdom and Sudan forge stronger business links as part of a growing broader engagement, spanning (among other themes) development, human rights and regional issues. We look forward to continuing to work to support this aim. **F**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irfan Siddiq'.

H.E. IRFAN SIDDIQ OBE

Paving the way

INTERVIEW WITH IHAB IBRAHIM OSMAN

CHAIRMAN, US-SUDAN BUSINESS COUNCIL



IHAB IBRAHIM OSMAN is General Manager of NADEC New Businesses, one of the largest vertically integrated dairy companies in the world. He is also the Chairman of the US-Sudan Business Council. Previously, he was CEO of Sudatel Telecom and has worked for Kuwait Finance House (Bahrain) and Verizon Communications in the US. He serves on a number of corporate and non-profit boards, including the UN Global Compact Business for Peace Steering Committee and the Khartoum Breast Cancer Centre Hospital, he also founded the Impact Hub Khartoum. Osman holds a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University, an MBA from Oxford University and a BSc in Electrical Engineering from the New York Institute of Technology.

Please give us an overview of the origins of the US-Sudan Business Council (USSBC), and the objectives of the organisation. In terms of objectives, what are your aims for developing business relationships and for the development of Sudan?

A strong private sector is the surest path to stability and inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic development. It is with this belief that the US-Sudan Business Council (USSBC) was founded in September 2014 in Washington DC by a group of like-minded independent Sudanese private sector companies.

USSBC was actually the product of a concern that the then impasse between the US and Sudanese governments would continue. We therefore proposed creating an independent forum compliment the political dialogue in an independent manner across a broader and deeper stakeholder base in the private sector and civil society in both countries.

When we reached out to the American Embassy to hear their thoughts on the matter, it was a pleasant surprise to find they were not only open to the idea, but in fact extremely encouraging of it. We reached out to nine of the leading private sector enterprises in Sudan, many of whom are featured in these pages, and were delighted to see them embrace the idea with vigour. With the guidance of the US Embassy, the USSBC was incorporated in the US, with a formal mandate of facilitating and enabling a strong business, cultural and educational dialogue between Sudan and the United States.

Does the USSBC work exclusively on the Sudan-US relationship, or with companies and institutions from other countries? How can your role also serve / benefit the relationship with Europe for example?

Over time, as the USSBC established a successful track record, we started being the go-to private sector institution in Sudan not just for the US Embassy, but also the Embassy of the United Kingdom, the European Union, and many other diplomatic missions. This is because the Council provides valuable, actionable business insights and grassroots intelligence, while facilitating meaningful partnerships between foreign investors, business and Sudanese entities across the spectrum of Sudanese society and economy. Today, the USSBC is the

leading Sudanese private sector business council for outreach to all Western countries.

Does the USSBC have other objectives outside the business sphere, such as in the education and cultural exchange arenas?

When we started the USSBC, the country was still subject to the US trade embargo, meaning we were limited in the activities we could undertake in the business sphere. Thus, we realised that we had to start first by building meaningful civil society relations. Accordingly, we reached out to think tanks, universities and other civil society institutions in the West, encouraging them to reappraise Sudan and facilitating access for them to their equivalents in Sudan. This allowed for a new, non-governmental perspective on Sudan to be voiced in the West, which we found was highly effective. We continue to be supportive of not for profit activities, including by providing complimentary membership for those non-profits we believe to portray the strengths of Sudanese culture and civil society.

Please give an overview of the benefits that the USSBC offers, particularly to foreign companies and organisations seeking out opportunities in Sudan?

USSBC membership offers new market entrants a trusted local partner for advice, alongside a range of high-level services to strengthen working relationships in Sudan. The USSBC facilitates and enables exclusive access to meetings and events, executive business intelligence and opportunities to leverage the influence and advocacy of the council's founding members.

The USSBC works across three streams to encourage responsible, reliable engagement within Sudan's business environment. Firstly, we provide a platform for a rich dialogue between all representatives of Sudanese civil society to encourage credible partnerships with global firms. Secondly, we incentivise: the strength of our network between Sudan, the UK, US and other Western countries encourages firms to explore new commercial and cultural opportunities and gives our members the tools to make partnerships successful. Thirdly, we initiate: we believe that a strong private sector not only creates stability but instigates greater transparency and accountability, helping our members create long lasting, reliable and prosperous partnerships.

What type of companies belong to the USSBC and what is the criteria for joining?

The USSBC's nine founding members were selected for their track records for successful operations, their high corporate governance standards, their strong contributions to the communities they operate in, and their desire to see Sudan more integrated and connected to the international community. We follow these principles when considering any applications for membership.

We were insistent, from day one, that the USSBC be established and operated to the highest global standards of a business council. To this end, we are fully compliant with all US laws and regulations applicable to such bodies, including those covering transparency, accountability, lobbying activities, due diligence and governance. We believe membership of USSBC must bring with it a positive reputational impact for each of its members.

What recent successes has the USSBC had?

The USSBC has been widely acknowledged as playing a pivotal role in the lifting of the US trade embargo, and prior to that, to the implementation of a general licence from OFAC in relation to ICT for Sudan. Over the years we have successfully hosted business and banking conferences in Washington DC, New York, London, and Khartoum in collaboration with highly respected partners including from global law and consulting firms, valued think tanks and the US Chamber of Commerce.

Not least, we have created a well-respected face for the Sudanese private sector in international capitals from Washington, DC to London, which has had a substantial contribution to changing the narrative on Sudan.

The United States has recently fully lifted sanctions against Sudan. What impact has this had on the business links between the two countries and how do you see these links evolving over the short to medium term? Are there any legacy issues as a result of the sanctions which are proving especially challenging to overcome?

We have already seen US companies re-entering Sudan in a variety of sectors from agricultural equipment to restaurant chains. This is a strong indication of the appetite from the US for business opportunities in the country.

The lifting of the trade embargo has also brought revitalised interest from European, Asian and regional companies and institutions, again in a range of sectors including healthcare, infrastructure, oil and gas and agriculture.

There remain however, legacy issues particularly in relation to the banking sector. Global banks continue to take a very conservative position on Sudan. In this respect, Sudan is unfortunately a typical example of the global


'overcompliance' issue. We have been working with the US, UK and European governments to try to overcome this, and we are confident that as investor interest in the country increases, so too will we see an increase in the global banks' appetite for Sudan exposure.

Sudan offers, potentially, many opportunities. Which sectors of the Sudanese economy are particularly ripe for invigorating and where do you see the short and medium-term opportunities for building mutually beneficial building relationships?

We are particularly focused on promoting and re-invigorating the following sectors in the Sudanese economy: agriculture, education, healthcare, banking, mining and ICT. We believe these have the strongest potential in the short to medium term, particularly agriculture and mining, not least because the government is strongly encouraging of any ventures which could lead to increased national exports. Our founding member base has much experience in each of these sectors and so we are well positioned to be guides and partners to any incoming companies.

How do you envisage the USSBC's role once the relationship with US companies is normalised?

With sanctions no longer a barrier to full bilateral trade relations between the US, UK and Sudan, USSBC membership offers new market entrants a range of services to strengthen their decision-making process vis-à-vis Sudan investments.

Sudan is the next frontier, but all great opportunities come with many challenges. The USSBC is focused on helping those with positive interest in Sudan to navigate these challenges and unlock the great potential Sudan offers. 

Parties interested in doing business in Sudan can contact us via our website, www.ussbc.org, or directly by email to tsaed@ussbc.org

We have created a well-respected face for the Sudanese private sector in international capitals from Washington DC to London, which has had a substantial contribution to changing the narrative on Sudan

The bridge to Tuti, an island in the heart of Khartoum, where the White Nile and the Blue Nile merge.





SUDAN'S



PIONEERS

The Republic of Sudan: Country profile

Facts and Figures

Geography

- Area total: 1,861,484 sq km
- Coastline: 853 km
- Boundaries /border countries (7): Central African Republic 174 km, Chad 1,403 km, Egypt 1,276 km, Eritrea 682 km, Ethiopia 744 km, Libya 382 km, South Sudan 2,158 km

The Nile is Sudan's primary water source; its major tributaries, the White Nile and the Blue Nile, meet at Khartoum to form the River Nile which flows northward through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea

The Nation

- Population: Approximately 40 million
- Major Languages: Arabic (official), English (official), Nubian, Ta Bedawie, Fur
- Religion: Sunni Muslim, small Christian minority
- Etymology: the name Sudan derives from the Arabic "*bilad-as-sudan*" meaning "Land of the Black [peoples]"
- Administrative divisions:
- 18 states (wilayat, singular - wilayah); Blue Nile, Central Darfur, East Darfur, Gedaref, Gezira, Kassala, Khartoum, North Darfur, North Kordofan, Northern, Red Sea, River Nile, Sennar, South Darfur, South Kordofan, West Darfur, West Kordofan, White Nile
- Independence: 1 January 1956 from from Anglo-Egyptian co-rule

Economic Overview

- The world's largest exporter of gum arabic, Sudan produces 75-80 per cent of the world's total output.
- Agriculture: cotton, groundnuts (peanuts), hibiscus, sorghum, millet, wheat, gum arabic, sugarcane, grapefruit, mangoes, bananas, sweet potatoes, sesame seeds; animal feed, sheep and other livestock
- Industries: oil, cotton ginning, textiles, food production, edible oils, soap distilling, petroleum refining, pharmaceuticals, armaments, automobile/light truck assembly, milling
- Exports: gold; oil and petroleum products; cotton, sesame, livestock, peanuts, gum arabic, hibiscus

Source: *The CIA World Factbook*

The raising of the Sudanese flag at the Independence Ceremony in 1956



The Khalifa's House: The original cupula of the Mahdi's tomb with the new tomb in the background



Satellite image of Khatoum and the meeting of the two Niles



Source: NASA

Sudan's agro-tech pioneers

By AHMED ABDELLATIF

GROUP PRESIDENT, CTC GROUP



AHMED ABDELLATIF has been the Group President of CTC for ten years. Over his career with CTC he has led the transformation of CTC from a family business with less than 50 employees into one of the leading multi sector corporates in East Africa, employing over 1,500 professionals. Ahmed Abdellatif sits on the board of a number of companies and is actively engaged in various civil society organisations. He is the founding President of the Sudanese Young Businessmen Association and a founding member and Vice Chairman of the US Sudan Business Council (USSBC).

The Group adopts modern Warehousing Management Systems (WMS) to manage one of the largest retail operations in Sudan

CTC Group leads the transfer and implementation of world-class agro technologies into the Sudanese agricultural sector. Under our tagline Moving Forward, the Group's vision has always been to develop an enterprise that would fulfil a larger societal purpose, bringing economic prosperity beyond the marketplace and into the homes of people in Sudan.

Over our 60-year history, CTC Group has built a diversified business portfolio and is now also Sudan's market leader in the manufacturing and distribution of consumer electronics and home appliances, IT infrastructure and software solutions, and also has interests in construction and property development, commercial vehicles, earthmoving and construction machinery and agricultural commodity exports. CTC continues to foster partnerships across the globe with enterprises that share our commitment to transforming people's lives, exclusively representing over 60 world leading global brands in Sudan.

An equal opportunity employer, CTC Group emphasises the development of Sudanese human resources, running apprenticeship and graduate programs to give vocational training and university graduates the opportunity to build successful careers. Now one of the leading conglomerates in Sudan, we have over 1,500 full time employees, of whom 1,000 work in agriculture.

Pioneering the transfer of agrotechnology

Agriculture is the most important sector in Sudan,



contributing one third of GDP (31.3 per cent), generating over US\$30bn and employing over 80 per cent of the workforce. CTC Group is the leading independent private sector company in the Sudanese agricultural inputs and agro technology sector with three specialised companies delivering an integrated range of products and services across the agricultural cycle:

- CTC Agrochemicals is the leading player in the field of agricultural inputs, providing technology packages such as agrochemicals, fertilisers, hybrid and improved seeds and pesticides application equipment. CTC Agrochemicals promotes the responsible use of its products.

- CTC Engineering has partnered with the world's largest manufacturers of agricultural equipment, providing tractors, harvesters and tools customised for Sudan. CTC Engineering is also a market leader in irrigation and water management systems, pumps, pivot irrigation systems, land preparation, harvesting technologies, post-harvest and storage technologies and cold storage systems, with a nationwide service and parts network and comprehensive client support services.

- CTC Farms has established the first modern nurseries in Sudan for the production of seedlings and their distribution to greenhouses and fields to ensure quality of production.

Technology Transfer Centres

CTC Group has used its 60-years' experience to improve agricultural practices in Sudan, introducing the first private technology transfer centres (TTCs) to keep farmers' abreast of the latest developments.

Our TTCs facilitate the transfer of agricultural technology to farmers by increasing capacity, conducting field demonstrations (pilot farms) and educational seminars, improving input supply, machinery/implements and spare parts and providing expert advice.

These world-class centres are equipped with agronomists, service teams, workshops and warehouses with the equipment to address customer needs throughout the year. The network has grown to include Sudan's major agricultural areas, with branches in Khartoum, Gadarif, Medani, Kadugli, Sennar, Damer, Obaid, Eldabba, Dongola and Nyala.

Capacity building & in-field support

CTC Group has also invested in training centres equipped with the latest educational tools and technologies. The Group recently set up the CTC Academy, equipped with modern simulators for operator training and certification, as well as the CNH Training Centre in partnership with Case New Holland - the latter being the first regional hub in East Africa for all CNH customers.

The Group has also developed a Farmers to Farmers Program, a networking platform to share best practices and success stories between farmers who have adopted customised technology packages provided by CTC Group that helped boost productivity and yield.

Some of the success stories include the increase of Sorghum yield in the state of Gadarif where CTC Agrochemicals introduced a series of technology packages that improved yields from 300kg/ha to over 2ton/ha and helped increase the total planted area by 40 per cent.

Commodity exports

Sudan has many commodities in global demand, notably gum arabic, exporting almost 80 per cent of world supply. CTC Group is a leading gum arabic exporter, putting community protection and welfare at the core of its partnerships with global food ingredients companies. The Group is also setting up processing plants across Sudan to add value locally and boost farming communities' incomes.

Environmentally and socially responsible

CTC Group encourages the transfer of modern agricultural practices aligned with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), meeting strict international standards in providing the safest and best quality of inputs from reputable global suppliers. CTC Group is committed to meeting community interests as well as protecting the environment.

As a major exporter of gum arabic, the Group has worked closely with farming communities to develop sustainable infrastructure and facilities to improve living standards.

CTC Group believes in doing business "the right way," behaving ethically, contributing to sustainable development and improving the quality of life of its workforce and their families by designing its activities to be financially profitable, socially beneficial and ecologically sustainable. CTC Group is a signatory to the UN Global Compact, and all CTC Group employees are formally required to adhere to the



CTC Group Code of Business Ethics.

CTC is also a founding sponsor of Mashrouy, a Youth Entrepreneurship Programme, in partnership with the British Council and the British Embassy in Sudan.

In November 2015, CTC Group sponsored and hosted the first ever Sudanese private sector-funded US Congressional Delegation visit to Sudan in partnership with leading US think tank the Humpty Dumpty Institute. The delegation visited Sudan at the start of the process to normalise relations between Sudan and the United States that led to the lifting of US sanctions in October 2017.

Sudan has 40 million hectares of unused arable land. At CTC Group, we believe that agriculture will remain key for Sudan and presents attractive investment opportunities in agri-services and logistics, livestock, agri-manufacturing and other areas. We remain committed to investment in, and the development of, this sector and to keeping the Sudanese agricultural sector Moving Forward.

Since our establishment in 1956, CTC Group remains committed to investment in, and the development of, Sudanese agriculture

Top:
Al Damer TTC: the latest in an ever expanding network of Technology Transfer Centres across Sudan's main agricultural areas

Below:
Visiting US Congressional delegates inside CTC Nursery in Khartoum North



Reflecting the pace of change

INTERVIEW WITH YOUSIF EL TINAY

CEO, UNITED CAPITAL BANK



YOUSIF EL TINAY started his banking career in 1996 with Banque Paribas in Qatar, rising to the position of Deputy General Manager. In 2007 he returned to Sudan to help establish United Capital Bank, the first specialised corporate finance bank in Sudan. He has been CEO of UCB since 2016. He holds a BA in Economics and Business Administration from the University of Qatar and is an alumnus of Harvard Business School having graduated from the General Management Programme in 2009.

The US lifted sanctions in October 2017; what has been the impact of the 20-year embargo on the financial sector?

Obviously, lifting the sanctions is a major event, a turning point. But let's look at the bigger picture: in 1997, the United States imposed sanctions on Sudan, listing it as a sponsor of terrorism. The last two decades have also seen violence in some regions and of course since 2011, the southern part of the country seceded and formed South Sudan, taking with it most of Sudan's oil reserves. Estimates put the total loss due to the sanctions at around US\$500 billion, with an indirect loss of some US\$4 billion annually. The sanctions banned just about every kind of commercial and financial dealings with Sudan, and as a result, the banking sector was isolated from the global financial system. The sanctions have resulted in heavy losses to foreign investors in Sudan, as well as adding further restrictions on exporters. There has been a loss of trust between international financial institutions.

How optimistic are you about the future?

Lifting the sanctions should mean our country's return to the world financial system, allowing us to facilitate banking operations and procedures for exports and imports, and we should now be able to resume contact with international financial and investment institutions. In turn, it should contribute to improving the exchange rate of the Sudanese currency, boosting the private sector by allowing greater access to financial sources to obtain funds...

But...

Exactly. The problem is that 20 years is a long time to have been out of the game, and there are many people in the international financial sector that have never dealt with Sudan, who weren't around in the pre-sanctions period. And what's worse, they are unsure about the situation here: the sanctions have been lifted but the country remains on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. There has been progress in some areas of the economy, with foreign players coming in, but the international financial community is being very cautious.

What we might call the 'BNP Paribas Scare' factor?

Yes: in 2015, BNP Paribas was fined US\$8.8 billion for circumventing the US sanctions, and obviously that sent a powerful message out to the international financial community. The problem we face now is that international financial organisations are not motivated to reach out after years of either doing just fine without Sudan or being punished for doing so. Banks are afraid to deal with Sudan and have not been educated out of their fear or complacency.

Do you feel the United States has done enough to let the world know that the sanctions have been lifted and that Sudan is open for business?

Washington's view is that it has no responsibility to tell the world that Sudan is once again open for business. It's our job to get out there and tell the world and to then provide the documentation. Right now, only a handful of people know the sanctions have been lifted.

Until a high-ranking US official (e.g. the US president) or CNN goes on the record and says loud and clear that the US is happy to start dealing with Sudan again, we in the Sudanese financial sector are going to have to go around knocking on a lot of doors, explaining the new reality. We have been talking to all the big international banks, inviting them to return to Sudan. We need one big player to come in and then the others will hopefully follow suit. At this point, we're not even talking about investing in Sudan, simply for the international banks to act as correspondence banks, to help with transferring money. The



United Capital Bank's headquarters in Khartoum

problem is that there isn't much money to be made by doing that. I think it will be a slow process, because for the moment, banks are going to be paying a lot of attention to compliance laws.

Tell us a little about UCB and its efforts to encourage the international banking community to do business with Sudan

The bank was set up in 2005 by a group of investors from Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt, and we've been on the Sudanese stock exchange since 2007, and then late last year, coinciding with the lifting of sanctions, a group of leading Sudanese investors staged a 40 per cent buyout of the bank's shares, so we're now 60 per cent Sudanese and 40 per cent foreign owned. Our strategy is now to establish ourselves as a credible entity in the eyes of the international financial community, so our focus is on getting a rating by institutions such as Moody's and Fitch. Then, if a big overseas bank wants to start dealing with Sudan, they can come and look at our bank and see the report. It's essential for Sudan's banks to be clearly seen to meet international criteria, which we do. Within that context, UCB is positioning itself as a local bank with considerable international experience. We've already played a key role in financing through our branches in Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman, providing Islamic financial solutions to strategic projects in the fields of infrastructure, corporate finance and small and medium sized enterprises in industry, agriculture, mining, trade and services.

In a little over a decade, UCB has acquired a leading position in financing these key areas of the economy, as well as financing exports such as sesame seeds, gum Arabic, livestock, gold and cotton, while also funding imports of wheat, sugar, production inputs, medicine and capital equipment.

Like all banks in Sudan, we're Shariah compliant, and we offer a complete range of financial services to corporate


entities and large projects in both the private and public sectors. These include innovative and customised finance products and services to meet our client's needs and assist them in achieving their operational, development and growth targets.

UCB's corporate banking services include trade finance services, arranging and managing syndicated facilities, current accounts and investment accounts.

What is your assessment of Sudan's banking sector almost one year after the US lifted economic sanctions?

Although we have been cut off from the international financial system, the banking sector has moved forward. About a decade ago, the authorities embarked on a series of reforms to strengthen the financial system and improve the performance of the banking sector. Supervisory and legal and regulatory frameworks were improved, particularly in the areas of corporate governance, risk management, and provisioning.

Security instruments are also traded on the Khartoum Stock Exchange, and around 40 brokerage firms operate in the market. Secondary market activity is limited to over-the-counter trades, and is largely dominated by government securities. Access to securities markets is open to local and foreign investors, including banks, corporate entities, financial institutions and individuals.

Now that sanctions have been lifted, Sudan is poised to offer unique investment opportunities and a welcoming business climate, particularly for the natural resources/mining industry, the agricultural industry, the livestock industry, as well as several others. As one of Africa's largest countries, Sudan is a major emerging investment opportunity, offering access to one of the few untouched markets in the world. I am optimistic about the future and in line with the overall development in the local market and banking services in the region; we believe our next challenge will be "going digital" by or before 2022. 

Sudan is a major emerging investment opportunity, offering access to one of the few untouched markets in the world

Bottom Left: UCB has a leading position in gold pre-export finance

Bottom Right: The Gezira Scheme is Sudan's most fertile agricultural area. One of the largest irrigation projects in the world, it produces a large variety of crops, including cotton



Investing in the future

By **HASSAN ABDELHALIM**

GENERAL MANAGER AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, ARAAK



HASSAN ABDELHALIM is a holder of CFA level one with an undergraduate degree in economics & finance from the University of Manchester. He has worked in the fields of finance, marketing, sales and is a founding partner of a multi-outlet QSR business. Initially starting his career as a financial analyst at Kenana Engineering & Technical Services, Hassan's career progressed to include several posts including Senior Financial Analyst, Project Manager, Business Development Manager and now his current role as GM of an Araak company. Based in Khartoum, Hassan is Vice-Chair Business Development and a founding member of the US-Sudan Business Council.

Araak's bottling division is Sudan's largest soft drinks manufacturer

Please give a brief overview of the history of Araak.

The company was founded by my grandfather, who is group chairman, shortly after Sudanese independence in the mid-1960s and he initially traded and exported agricultural commodities and food staples. Over the last half century, the Araak group has developed into one of Sudan's leading conglomerates, which now has eight divisions: bottling, engineering, milling, construction and real estate, banking and insurance, recycling, retail food distribution and retail food.

What was the turning point for the group and the factors that have driven growth?

After the Vietnam War, international cotton prices dropped and our chairman decided to take the business in a different direction. With Sudan opening up and the economy booming we opened Sudan's second 5-star hotel. In the mid 1980s political instability led to a sharp fall in tourism and business travel and the local hospitality industry started to shrink. We managed to keep ahead of the game by setting up a bottling factory, later winning the Pepsi franchise. In fact we are now the soft drink's second oldest franchisee in the region and the largest soft drinks producer in Sudan, with more than 40 products, so this really was the turning point for Araak. We have three bottling plants and

10 production lines and directly distribute to some 35,000 clients from seven nationwide distribution centres. We were the first company to introduce PET bottles and canned products to the Sudanese market. I should add that our Pepsi is probably the cheapest in the world, making it widely available to all Sudanese consumers, although we expect to see continued growth in the coming years in per capita consumption: unlike the rest of the world, where carbonated soft drinks consumption per capita is shrinking, in Sudan it is increasing.

What sectors of your business do you expect Araak to focus on over the next few years?

We intend to consolidate on food, expanding to flour-based products, moving our flour business into more value-added items like pasta and biscuits, as well as exploring the dairy and tea markets.

In 2001, we set up Wheata, which produces high-quality flour, bran and semolina, as well as yeast. Since then it has undergone two large production capacity expansions and created the only seaside grain terminal in Sudan. It's the second largest mill in the country, able to mill 2,750 tons a day. At the same time, we intend to develop our seaside terminal by installing a grain ship loader, which will allow other Sudanese exporters to

get their products to market much more efficiently. Property and real estate also has huge potential in Sudan, as seen by our Araak City development in Khartoum.

What advice can Araak offer foreign investors in Sudan?

Foreign investors treat Sudan like any other Middle Eastern or African country, yet it is a unique mix of both. Our advice is to study the market and avoid presumptions. Partnerships can be very useful, and companies coming into Sudan should seek the right partner for them, not necessarily the leader in the market.



The partial lifting of sanctions has been a game changer for doing business in Sudan. What is your prognosis for the further opening up of the business environment in Sudan to foreign capital and business expertise?

We think things are moving very quickly since sanctions were lifted in October 2017, but it's also true that the real tipping point will come when Sudan is removed from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. Business relationships have opened up but not banking ones, and that remains the most difficult obstacle, but we are optimistic that on that front things will change soon.

Which project in cooperation with a foreign partner best illustrates your approach to doing business in Sudan?

Pepsi was the game changer for us. Now we're working closely with KFC and Pizza Hut and we're very excited to be bringing them to Sudan. We aim to open around 20 stores over three years in the Khartoum area, after which we'll expand to the rest of the country. We plan to open the first Pizza Hut and KFC in December of this year.


Are there any new areas where the group is actively seeking to pursue opportunities in cooperation with foreign partners?

Sudan is now contending to be Africa's second-largest gold exporter, after South Africa, which is an incredible achievement, given that we only have small-scale artisanal operations here, and it certainly indicates the potential of the sector if an industrial approach to mining is adopted.

How important is CSR to Araak?

CSR is at the heart of everything we do: for example, recycling is an integral part of our overall vision. In 2014 we set up a PET recycling plant, with all profits going back in to the business. We use a lot of PET plastic so we feel we have a responsibility to recycle and to reduce our carbon footprint. Most of this is from landfills, and we also buy bottles collected by unemployed young people, providing them with an alternative income. We train students of all levels all year round. Our goal is simply to help create a good business environment where entrepreneurs can flourish. We also feel it is important for young women to study, particularly those from rural areas, which is why we funded the construction of a new dormitory, named after our founder and chairman, which opened last year providing accommodation to 2,000 female students.

Is there a final message you'd like to pass on to potential investors in Sudan?

As a key company in the Sudanese economy, we want to show the world that despite the difficulties of the last two decades, Sudan has developed a strong, dynamic, modern economy and the country is open for business: in short, we're a modern and forward thinking nation. We want to change the narrative about Sudan and create a win-win for everyone. As part of our commitment to raising awareness about the opportunities in Sudan, we decided to cofound the US-Sudan Business Council. The idea was to improve relations with US and to point out to Washington that the sanctions were hitting ordinary Sudanese people and businesses. Now that the sanctions have been lifted, we believe that Sudan's moment has come. 

Despite the difficulties of the last two decades, Sudan has developed a strong, dynamic, modern economy and the country is open for business

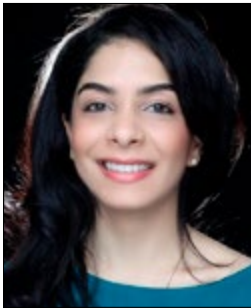


Wheata has a milling capacity of 2,750 tonnes per day

Empowering women

By **TARNEEM SAEED**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ALSOUG.COM AND HEAD OF STRATEGY, SAEED INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL GROUP



TARNEEM SAEED

was educated in Sudan, Canada and the United Kingdom and holds a LLB from the London School of Economics. After working for Allen & Overy, she chose to return to Sudan as head of strategy for the Saeed Group. In 2016, she co-founded *alsoug.com*, of which she is now the CEO. *alsoug.com* is Sudan's largest online classifieds portal. Tarneem is an executive director of the US-Sudan Business Council and sits on the board of the Khartoum Breast Care Centre. She is also a member of the board of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington, DC.

Believe it or not, I am far from being the only woman running a successful operation in Sudan. This is in fact one of the charms of Sudan: its paradoxical nature. No stereotypes apply here. Women have played a strong role in Sudanese society for millennia. In fact, there is a strong tradition of powerful queens, known as *Kandakas*, dating back more than a millennium. Ours is a culture where the Afro-Arab norm of patriarchy is tempered by a strong tradition of powerful matriarchs. My own great-grandmother was a successful businesswoman at the turn of the 19th Century, a rare occurrence at the time in many parts of the world.

Today, I play a key strategic role at board level in our family business, Saeed Industrial & Commercial Group, where I (and the rest of the board) are supported by multiple senior female managers. This is also the case in many of the businesses owned by our private-sector colleagues. My consumer internet start-up, *alsoug.com*, is also driven by strong female leaders. In the non-business world, I sit on the board of the Khartoum Breast Care Centre, Sudan's leading breast care hospital, which is run by an exceptional Sudanese woman, Dr Hania Fadl. No doubt women do face challenges to succeed in Sudan, including in relation to aspects of law and society that need to change to be in tune with the times. However, from my own experience, I can say that it is possible for women in Sudan to realise their potential and achieve their own success.

By way of background, my brother, Tamir and I spent our early years in Sudan and completed our higher education in the West. We then built lives for ourselves in Britain, he as a banker, and I as a lawyer. And thus, it could have remained. We could have wished Sudan well, bestowing on it not more than a few fleeting holidays and a hands-off approach to through charitable donations, but otherwise wholly embracing our new lives abroad.

A few years ago, however, a series of events disrupted our contented lives in London, and next thing I knew, I was on a plane back to Sudan. Before I could catch my breath, I found myself working on the production of a

coffee table book on Sudanese art with our family friend, Lina Haggag; helping to pull together a US-focused private sector outreach body (now the US-Sudan Business Council), and not least, getting to grips with the tremendous legacy my forefathers had left us in the shape of Saeed Industrial & Commercial Group, which fell to my father's generation and ours to carry into a new era.

Some two years into my return to Sudan, after travel for Saeed Group had taken me to many neighbouring African countries, I began to question why the consumer internet revolution had skipped Sudan. We had good mobile internet penetration rates, a



Right: Amanitore was a Nubian Kandaka or Queen regnant of the ancient Kingdom of Kush at Meroë, about 200 miles north-east of Khartoum

recently literate population, and a relatively high GDP. What was going on? Researching deeper into the subject, I realised that the reason tech start-ups had not, until that time, had much success in Sudan, was that there were in fact substantial hurdles in place, which continue to this day. These include no unified e-payment system, patchy internet service, a regulatory environment more geared to conservative business models, and not least the lingering after effects of the US trade embargo which was lifted in 2017 after 20 years. Brainstorming with Tamir, we decided that in order to do something about it, we had to start with something comprehensive, and self-sufficient, that didn't require any external infrastructure or support. Thus it was that we launched *alsoug.com*, which is now Sudan's largest online classifieds platform.

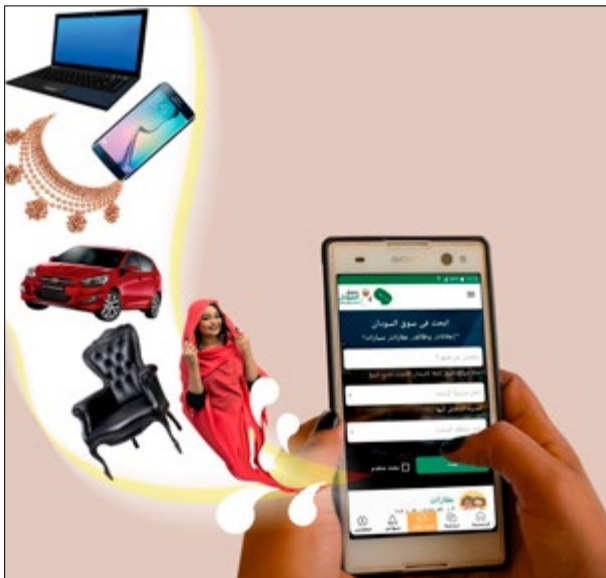
Alsoug.com is subtly transforming Sudan in many ways. For example, we found that key consumer sectors, like real estate, cars and electronics, are predominantly dominated by 'middle-men', many of whom operate

in close-knit and ambiguous circles. By enabling direct-dealing between sellers and buyers, *alsoug.com* immediately removed consumers' desperate reliance on the middle-men, making transactions much easier, and more efficient and beneficial to both the buyer and the seller. Moreover, *alsoug.com* increases the number of transactions carried out, by connecting sellers faster to more buyers – one regular user says he sells more real estate through *alsoug.com* in a month than he did in a year pre-*alsoug*. In addition, as the *alsoug.com* database has grown, it has become a pricing reference point, increasing transparency in the country and enabling consumers to understand better the value of what they are buying and selling. Especially in an inflationary environment where prices can change quite significantly even by the week, we offer consumers an extremely valuable (yet free) service.

Whilst I noted above the strong matriarchal tradition in Sudan, it is nonetheless conservative. There are domains in the public space such as stalls in markets and auction spaces which are traditionally more male-dominated. Female entrepreneurs try to overcome this restriction by operating their businesses from their homes, through WhatsApp or Facebook groups to advertise their goods and services - but the reach of these groups is of course limited. *Alsoug.com* has a special section for Sudanese women, with sub-categories tailored specifically to reflect their needs. This has hugely magnified the access of these female entrepreneurs to new customers. In addition, by moving traditionally male-dominated public spaces online, *alsoug.com* is also enabling women to take charge of key life-purchases, such as cars and real estate, without having to be reliant on a man. It was that a woman, no matter how powerful, wealthy or independent, needed a man to attend a car auction for her or even sometimes to contact a middle-man on her behalf. With the advent of *alsoug.com*, she can now search, choose, negotiate and buy, all by herself, using just the power of her mobile phone and *alsoug.com*.

The global media has not been too kind to Sudan in the past few decades. It is true that this is still a country with much room to progress, including in the areas of country-wide development and political inclusion. However, having lived here for four years now, I can say without hesitation that - notwithstanding the isolation that 20 years of US sanctions have imposed on the country – Sudan is a hidden jewel in Africa's crown, one that we, the companies and individuals featured in this edition, are determined to uncover.

Alsoug.com is enabling women to take charge of key life-purchases, such as cars and real estate, without having to be reliant on a man

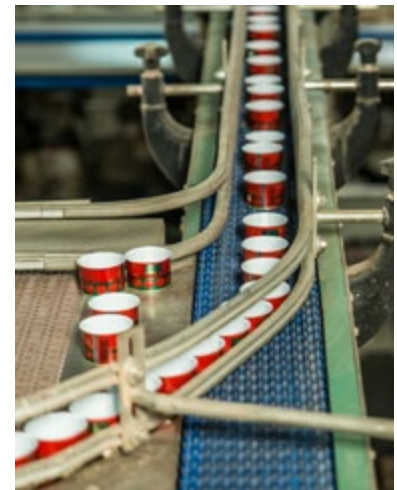
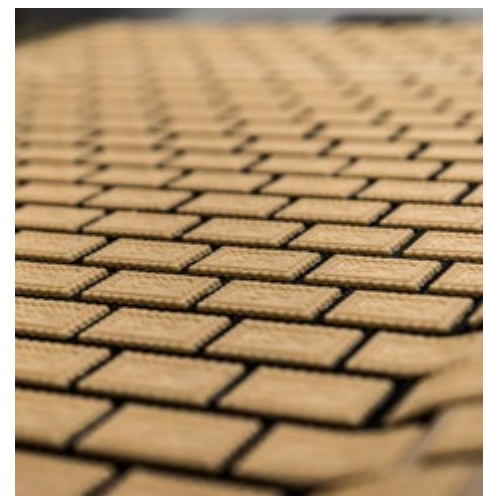


Top left: *Alsoug.com* provides a platform for the commercial empowerment of women

Bottom left: Dr Hania Fadl, founder of the Khartoum Breast Care Centre



INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL GROUP



ENRICHING EVERY DAY

Saeed businesses have always operated with our founders' strong ethical values firmly in mind. We pride ourselves on business decisions that are responsible. To us, responsible means business that is profitable, sustainable, and environmentally and socially ethical. Accordingly, we invest for the long term. When we go into a new sector or a new region, we expect to be there for decades, not months or years.

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A committed relationship

By **DR ZUHEIR SAEED**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SAEED GROUP



DR ZUHEIR SAEED holds a doctorate in food technology from the National College of Food Technology at Reading University. With a strong technical background and almost 35 years of business experience he has consolidated the Saeed Group and implemented a strategy of fortifying historic core competencies, strategic horizontal expansion, and diversification into new sectors. He is an active Rotarian (being a past President and Rotary Foundation Chairman for Sudan) and is currently President of the Sudan Archaeological Society.

Saeed Industrial & Commercial Group, or Saeed Group was established in Khartoum, Sudan as a trading house in the 1940s. In the 1970s, after three decades of successful trade operations, and as Sudan began to open economically to the world, we decided to add agro-industry to our portfolio. In doing so, we hoped to support the vision of Sudan as the breadbasket of the region. Thus, we built Saeed Food Factory, one of the first private agro-processing complexes in East Africa.

Saeed Food Factory was, and remains to this day, a standard of high-quality manufacturing excellence for East and Central Africa. Its management included one of Sudan's first food technologists and the director of the Food Research Centre. Its products, which range from tomato paste to jam, are household names across the country – synonymous in fact with the very spirit of being Sudanese. To this day, Saeed Food Factory products dominate their respective markets in Sudan both in terms of market share and penetration.

With the advent of Saeed Food Factory, the family established a reputation for responsible and sustainable manufacturing. Building on this, in the early 1980s, we expanded first into biscuits and then into snacks, under the Baraka brand. In building Baraka, we applied the same principles that had guided Saeed Food Factory, namely an insistence on nutritious and affordable food products. Today, Baraka Biscuits equal breakfast for many families in Sudan, a tremendous responsibility that we will strive to maintain for generations to come.

In the 1990s, to serve our Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) producing factories, we first established

a corrugated cardboard factory, Middle East Packaging (MEP), and then a plastics manufacturing plant, Mabco. Both new ventures were built using the same robust manufacturing principles that had ensured the success of Saeed Food Factory and Baraka, making the two new factories highly successful businesses in their own right. Today, MEP has a solid reputation for high quality, reliable carton supply. Using advanced machinery and world-class technology, MEP serves a wide range of sectors, including the FMCG industry, the motor oil industry, fruits and vegetables export sector, and local food restaurant chains, just to name a few. Our highly-technical approach to MEP, combined with our strong understanding of market demands and trends, means that we provide our customers with a dynamic comprehensive service which includes designing, manufacturing and delivering products to meet our customers' precise demands.

In 2012, Saeed Group decided to build further on our FMCG strength by expanding into pharmaceuticals with the acquisition of MEDICA Import & Distribution Company, a Sudan-based company which had held a well-respected presence in the pharmaceutical distribution sector for over fifty years. Today, MEDICA holds the exclusive distributorship for a broad range of respected pharmaceutical companies, including Reckitt Benckiser (Dettol), Novo Nordisk (Insulin), Pfizer and Beiersdorf AG (Nivea). The result of this strong portfolio, combined with our comprehensive country-wide distribution network, means the group has been able to consolidate MEDICA's position as one of the leading companies in its field.

For decades our FMCG food brands and plastic products have had a presence in markets in neighbouring countries. Recently we have embarked on formalising this presence through agency agreements and new industrial ventures in East and Central Africa. We are keen to find ways to make the high-quality, affordable products we manufacture more readily available to the wider African market.

Five years ago, we decided the time had come to revisit the original dream of our forbears, to harness Sudan's tremendous natural resources in an ethical and sustainable manner, so as to contribute to the development of the nation. Thus, we decided to expand our strategic investments in the agriculture sector and additionally, in the mining sector. This expansion reflects ►



Baraka products, integral to everyday Sudanese life

Its products, which range from tomato paste to jam, are household names across the country – synonymous in fact with the very spirit of being Sudanese

► our belief that the future of Sudan is in the responsible and sustainable use of its rich natural resources.

The Saeed Agricultural Project is a multi-faceted scheme that seeks to develop Sudan’s agrarian resources for both domestic and overseas consumption, tapping into the high-demand markets of the Arabian Gulf. It features a state-of-the-art cattle-fattening facility, high-tech fish farming and modern agricultural techniques such as cold-house and pivots. Our respect for the fragile ecosystem of the Nile Valley is an integral part of our production methods which are engineered to ensure the least possible impact on the environment.

In the 1970s, my uncle, a hydro-geologist, began to study the mineral resources of Sudan. Through the oil boom of the 1990s, he impressed upon me his idea that the Group was neglecting the true treasure of our country, its incredible mining potential. His words struck a chord within me and mining in Sudan became, not only a potential business for me, but a new passion altogether. When we founded Saeed Mining Company, we did so with a particular social mandate, to assist some of the most neglected of the Sudanese people. This resulted in our decision to take a concession not in the more well-known northern parts of the country, but rather in one of the most under-developed areas of the country, Blue Nile State. Our aim was never a get-rich quick scheme; on the contrary we were determined to create not just a world-class mine, but one which reaps dividends not today, but tomorrow, and not just for our children and grandchildren, but for the children and grandchildren of those whose ancestors had inhabited that land for centuries.

My great-grandparents came to this country more than a century ago, and to this day we are struck by the generous and welcoming nature of the people of Sudan. We have sought over the decades to emulate these principles, and to make them intrinsic to our own way of life. From the early days of the 1940s, our holistic approach to corporate social responsibility

has always been and continues to be a fundamental part of our businesses, including financial contributions and stakeholder engagement with local communities. We strongly believe that this ethos has and will continue to contribute to our success and longevity in Sudan.

Annual contributions from each Saeed Group Company support community-based initiatives including food distribution, scholarships and grants, educational infrastructure, medical treatment

and health clinics, and apprenticeship programmes across all areas of our operations.

Furthermore, we were amongst the first in East Africa with awareness of the environmental impact of manufacturing. We consistently take action to minimise and/or mitigate any negative environmental impact from our businesses.

Saeed Group companies are well-known for their equal opportunities’ human resource hire practices. In fact, for decades more than 50 per cent of the workforce in all of our businesses are women. In all our businesses, where possible, we draw our employees from the surrounding communities. We are one of the few conglomerates in Sudan to have virtually no foreign staff.

Over the years, our deep roots into Sudanese society have encouraged us to do our part to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of our nation. As president of the Sudan Archaeological Society, I along with my fellow Society members, have striven to protect and, promote and restore Sudan’s unique archaeological treasures.

We believe that we have a responsibility to this boundless country that has given us so much, and we are optimistic that our next eighty years in Sudan will be at least as fruitful for us as the last eighty years have been. **F**

Tomatoes on trial at the Saeed Agricultural Project



Raw materials preparing for processing at the Middle East Packaging’s corrugated cardboard factory



Alsadig Alkhatim, one of the company’s many long-time employees, who oversees the state of the art canning line



A catalyst for transformation

By **AMMAR HAMADIEN**

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EXECUTIVE



AMMAR HAMADIEN leads GSMA engagement with mobile operators, policy-makers and technology providers across the MENA region to further the digital and financial inclusion in the region. He has over 20 years' experience in ICT. He started his career in technical roles for HP and Cisco. More recently, he was CEO of Chinguitel in Mauritania and has worked for Zain Group in Bahrain, Kuwait and Sudan. Hamadien holds an MBA from Imperial College London Business School and a BSc in Management Information Systems from California State University.

Sudan was one of the first countries in the region to introduce telecommunications services at the end of the 19th century. In the 1990s, the sector saw a major shift driven by the privatisation of the state-owned incumbent and the creation of a ministry in charge of sector policies and legislation, and a regulator. This opened the door for foreign investments. Zain, MTN and Etisalat have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure throughout the country. The sector has been one of the fastest growing in the country for many years thanks to the more than US\$7 billion in investments from licensed operators in the past 15 years.

Today, there are three mobile telecommunications service providers – Zain Sudan, MTN Sudan, Sudatel – and Canar which provides solutions primarily to the enterprise sector. The sector connects 72 per cent of the population but less than 50 per cent are connected through mobile broadband. The market remains predominately pre-paid, more than 95 per cent of subscribers opt for Pay-as-You-Go offers.

It is evident that investment in ICT has played a major role in shifting societies out of poverty, positively impacted GDP per capita and enhanced employment rates. Sudan is no different, technology will play a critical role in the economic development of the country. However, much remains to be done to reap the many benefits technology can provide.

The digitalisation of various elements in the agricultural value chains is a critical requirement for this important sector in Sudan. Mobile-based solutions for agricultural processes can improve the procurement of crops from smallholder farmers, provide technical advice via mobile phones to farmers in remote farms to improve agricultural practices and help them improve their efficiency and return on investments.

ICT can help improve the literacy rate in Sudan, now around 70 per cent. With 40 per cent of the country's population under the age of 15 and 20 per cent between 15-25, learning solutions linked to ICT can play a critical role in building a knowledge society that can uplift the country in the years to come.

Having the ability to make transactions, payments, savings, credit and insurance among others is a catalyst for enhancing prosperity in Sudan. Today, Sudan remains at the bottom of the list when it comes to financial inclusion a large proportion of the population having no access to any financial instruments. The economy remains largely a

cash-based society. In spite of the slow adoption of mobile-based payment solutions into the financial system; the local regulators and financial institutions are pushing forward to encourage and increase the rate of financial inclusion. With the recent announcements of several government agencies, and the push towards e-government services, a stronger push for a cashless society must be made both by the public and private sectors. Enabling legislation must be put in place to open the space for entrepreneurs and innovators to offer Financial Technology (FinTech) solutions to government agencies, enterprises and, most importantly, the general public. Increasing the rate of financial inclusion allows citizens to establish sustainable micro-businesses and improves their overall financial health. The ability to transact with a push of a button will impact all the sectors mentioned above.

For the past ten years I have been involved in various initiatives in the Middle East and Africa to provide the unbanked with tools to embrace the idea of on-demand finance through the use of mobile technologies and cloud computing. My goal is to help foster a business and regulatory environment for the growth and expansion of FinTech companies. This requires a progressive mindset across the public and private sectors. Therefore, a major focus of my work is placed on RegTech.

Sudan's financial sector is beginning to feel some relief following the lifting of the economic sanctions that negatively impacted progress in the financial and technology sectors. It is very important that we build our future plans on solid ground to enable the right combination of regulation and technology in the financial sector in Sudan. The plan is for the country to implement RegTech solutions that enable the banking sector to digitise all aspects of data analytics, compliance and significantly reduce operational risks. This is critically important in a market that will see a rapid increase in the number of FinTech companies that will provide various services and solutions to the public.

While there is a wide array of applications within the FinTech industry, the goal is to enable the introduction of business models that provide the vast numbers of unbanked Sudanese with the means to transform their economic and social status through the use of tools and means to start micro-businesses, obtain Sharia-compliant micro loans and crowd-fund small projects. This is of course a major opportunity for the financial sector as a whole and to banks in particular.

Growth through diversification

By **ANTHONY A. HAGGAR**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HAGGAR GROUP



ANTHONY A. HAGGAR holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Georgetown University (Washington) and diplomas from INSEAD (Fontainebleau). He has played an important role in transitioning the family business to its present hybrid form, blending the people and social focus of a family businesses with the best practice and discipline of a successful multinational. Under his leadership the group has rebalanced its portfolio, divesting out of tobacco and pursuing a more regional footprint. The group is present in seven African countries and continuously looking to grow, particularly in agriculture, energy and ICT.

Haggar’s roots run deep in Sudan. Established in what is now South Sudan at the turn of the 20th century, today Haggar operates in eight sectors across six countries in Africa and continues to look for opportunities to invest and develop the private sector across Africa.

The company’s founder, Mikhail Haggar, set the company up in 1904, in Juba, South Sudan, and within two decades, the family had established tea and coffee plantations, as well as diversifying into tobacco cultivation and cigarette manufacturing, along with gold mining. By the 1960s, the family-run business had moved into plastics and Styrofoam production. As Sudan’s economy developed in the 1970s, Haggar created an advertising agency as well. Haggar continued to develop its tobacco business in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, when George A. Haggar and Anthony A. Haggar joined the firm. This led to a period of acquisitions and green field operations and the expansion of the company into new fields.

Today, thanks to an ambitious and diverse team and a caring, professional and high-performance culture, Haggar has expanded its operations from Sudan to South Sudan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. The group focuses on building long term positions across Agriculture (Value Add), energy and ICT, the sectors we believe will provide the architecture and foundations for



SUDASAT – connecting you where others can’t

sustainable development across the continent. Our focus will continue to be on opportunities that enable multiple stakeholders in an equitable manner, not only satisfying our shareholders but also supporting the achievement of SDGs within the countries we invest in and across the continent at large. based on transparency and mutual trust, with the goal of making our success equitable across the communities, environment, partners and employees we work with.

Haggar operates in six key areas:

Agriculture: GLB Invest is developing one of the largest centre-pivot irrigated alfalfa farms in Sudan across 87,200 hectares of land in the Wad Hamid area under a 99-year renewable lease from the Sudanese government, strategically located seven kilometres from the Nile River, 130km from Khartoum and 700 km from Port Sudan – the gateway to the target markets of KSA, the UAE and China.

Energy: Dynamic International Oil Well Services is Sudan’s leading national oilfield services company, supplying solutions and integrated project management that optimise drilling and production performance for customers working in the oil and gas industry. Founded in 2006, Dynamic offers multiple services and solutions by specifically catering to the needs of the ever-demanding oil and gas exploration and production industry.

Renewable energy is increasingly becoming a recognised solution for Africa’s energy needs. Decentralised energy solutions are identified as one of the most important ways to achieve the UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). Recognising its potential for impact, renewable energy is becoming an integral component of Haggar’s energy strategy.

ICT: SUDASAT is the largest provider of VSAT services in Sudan, providing voice and data connectivity to institutions, companies and individuals. SUDASAT has 8 transponders on ARABSAT, Badr 6 providing C-band coverage across Sudan and a customer base that spans multinationals, telecom operators, government organisations and development agencies. Next year Sudasat will be launching dedicated Ka coverage across Sudan to help meet the ever-growing data needs of its customers.

Dolphin was established in 2013 in Dubai as an African communications carrier and specialises in wholesale capacity and internet bandwidth for carriers, ISPs and enterprise customers. Dolphin aims to be a driving force for the business community of West Africa functioning as a catalyst in extending global reach, high quality connectivity and reliable levels of connectivity. With its investment in the ACE Submarine cable, Dolphin offers full right of landing in Dakar, Accra and Lagos covering 80 per cent of West Africa's population.

Industry: Established in the 1920s, Pasgianos Food and Beverages introduced the first bottled soft drinks to the Sudanese market. In 1961, the Company production plant was registered as a production facility with the ministry of industry. In 1999, the company was acquired by Haggar Group. Since its acquisition, the Company has invested in capacity and continues to provide unique national flavours to the carbonated soft drink market.

Coldair Engineering Company has been operating since 1960. Coldair leads in refrigeration and its products have become a symbol of trust in the hearts and minds of Sudanese consumers, continuing to broaden its product range to better serve the household needs of every Sudanese family.

Financial Services: Juba Insurance Company Ltd. was established in July 1984. Haggar bought a controlling stake in the company in 2010.

Haggar has a small stake in Ivory Bank, founded in South Sudan where it is working to build its competencies and capabilities to secure a leading role in the sector.

Real Estate: SEDCO (Sanctuary Estate Development Company) is a real estate company founded in 2014,

owning and managing residential buildings with furnished flats to rent, that range from studios to larger apartments.

CSI: Commitment to sustainable development is an integral part of Haggar Group's investment philosophy: we believe businesses have responsibilities to society that extend beyond their obligations to stockholders and making a profit.

To this end, 2.5 per cent of each operating company's net profit is spent on CSI initiatives and 16 per cent of Haggar dividends are allocated to the Haggar Foundation, which focuses on clean water and education initiatives.

The Group strives to fully integrate social, environmental and governance issues into its strategic plans and core business activities. The adopted CSI values and standards across all business processes and practices aim to mitigate any negative environmental impact while enhancing social impact.

Looking to the future: Beyond its strategic focus, Haggar continues to develop its legacy industry investments in Sudan while building a trading platform to support and develop Africa facing trade opportunities.

Our senior management continues to seek out new projects, in defined areas and several potentially interesting opportunities are under review.

Africa is a continent where growth, new technologies and business models are merging to transform the business environment.

The private sector is a key catalyst in this and in Sudan this is no different.

At Haggar, we are focused on contributing to Sudan's growth and development in the hope of more equitable and sustainable benefit across a wider stakeholder base.

Our approach continues to be based on partnering with other like-minded patient sources of capital for continued growth

Left: DIOWS - supporting the development of Oil & Gas in Sudan

Right: PFB - Sudan's national soft drink



70 years of partnership

By **ROBIN DAVIES**

COUNTRY DIRECTOR, SUDAN, BRITISH COUNCIL



ROBIN DAVIES has degrees in Modern Languages, European Literature and International Relations, and he has spent most of his working life in the Security sector. Joining the British Council in 2009, and before taking up the post as Country Director Sudan in 2016, he enjoyed appointments in Brussels, Bangladesh and Pakistan. He says, "Working in the Cultural Relations sector in Sudan is a very rich experience. It is a privilege and hugely motivating working with the Sudanese and International British Council staff here."

We established our first office in Sudan in January 1948. Since then, apart from a seven-year absence from 1950 until 1957, we have maintained a continuous presence in Khartoum. As the UK's international cultural relations organisation, we steadily expanded our presence further across Sudan, primarily focusing on English language teaching but also running cultural centres and libraries. By the mid 1960s we had established six offices across Sudan. In 1989 we reduced our footprint to our current premises in down town Khartoum, from where we continue to expand our impact, cost effectively, across the whole country.

Over the last 70 years, through our work in arts and culture, education, English language, sport, entrepreneurship, civil society and youth development we have been making a positive contribution to the people, institutions, and governments of Sudan. We have changed lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust, and in turn these relationships have enriched British culture, and our knowledge about this extraordinary country.

In 2018, we celebrate 70 years of the British Council's work in Sudan in education, professional training programmes, and in developing cultural links between our countries. We have refurbished our Khartoum office, which now offers a welcoming space for all our customers and visitors, nine large, modern classrooms for our students, and a comfortable working environment for over 120 teachers and staff.

The British Council is expanding its work in education,

including in schools, universities, the professional skills sector and higher education, beyond the capital to reach fragile states in Sudan, injecting 21st century skills into the classrooms, training teachers, updating curricula on a national scale, and supporting Government to transform education systems. Partnering with local business, including CTC, in a national innovation and enterprise competition, we train young entrepreneurs in social enterprise and business development skills. We offer the young people of Sudan the required English language skills to improve their employability. We work closely with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education at federal and state levels, providing the expertise and networks to improve the quality of teaching and learning across Sudan.

Partnering with the Ministry of Higher Education, the British Council has conceived and introduced a new programme to improve university students' level of English language – much needed as schools often fail to deliver to the required level for academic purposes. The four year course will soon be piloted in four Sudanese universities, and more than 300,000 university students will benefit.

Over the last two years the British Council has rewritten the English language curriculum in Sudan. We have recrafted the suite of students' English text books, the teachers' manuals and the trainers' guides. The interactive approach, the use of teaching aids and games, and the promotion of group learning and student involvement have all contributed to the added value that the British Council has brought to the partnership with the Ministry of Education. Funded by the World Bank, this programme will ensure that all teachers will have been trained in delivering the new curriculum.

Finally, we run several networking programmes for Sudan's artists and creatives; we are engaged in community and volunteering programmes and, funded by the British Council's global Cultural Protection Fund, we work closely with British and Sudanese partners to digitally preserve, and make accessible to the public, Sudan's cultural history, and to refurbish three museums in Sudan, including The Khalifa House in Khartoum.

The cultural relationship between the UK and Sudan has never been richer. It is a relationship which aspires to ever greater friendly knowledge exchange and understanding. **F**



The British Council team in Sudan

COFFTEA: A Sudanese success story

By **SIDDIG M. S. IDRIS**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, COFFTEA



SIDDIG M.S. IDRIS is a graduate in business, finance and economics of Leicester University. On joining Cofftea Trading in Sudan he led the sales and marketing team for seven years before becoming country manager of Cofftea Kenya. On returning to Sudan he oversaw the application of advances in the blending and packaging of COFFTEA's products. During his tenure Cofftea grew from 20 to 600 employees and has become one of the top white sugar importers in the world. He is also the Director of the Mohamed Salih Idris Foundation.

Visitors to Sudan will quickly learn of the importance of tea in daily life. If they have enjoyed a refreshing brew then it's very likely to have been blended by Cofftea, a company whose passion for quality has made it a household name for more than four decades.

The origins of Cofftea date back to the mid-1950s, when the current group Chairman, Mohamed Salih Idris, began trading, traveling throughout Sudan. In 1984, he set up Cofftea reflecting the company's core businesses of tea and coffee. Since then it has grown to become Sudan's largest blender, distributor and packer of the two beverages, supplying numerous sectors with a wide range of products. The company blends, packs and distributes some 30 million kilograms of tea per year and roasts, blends, packs and distributes around 20 million kilograms of coffee.

In 2003, the company set up the first specialised tea-packing factory in Khartoum, covering some 5,000 square meters, where it uses the finest Kenyan blends to produce its flagship Al Ghazaltain brand in loose and teabag formats. Its teabag range includes classic black tea, flavoured tea (cinnamon, cardamom, and mint), green tea and hibiscus.

Cofftea has now repatriated the core blending process from Kenya to Sudan to ensure quality control. It employs more than 600 people directly, as well as providing a livelihood for more than 60,000 tea and coffee growers, along with training and opportunities for development. The company prides itself on its committed and capable owner-managers.

In 2011, to meet growing demand for its premium products, two new factories were built in Sudan and Kenya with a combined capacity of 35 million kilograms of tea, along with fully automated and computer-controlled blenders and coffee roasters, able to produce three million kilogrammes a year. Rigorous quality assurance and control are applied at every stage in the process. The following year, a third factory was opened in Bahri, in northern Khartoum. The company now has 17 brands.

Cofftea's factories are ISO certified (ISO 22000 Food Safety Management System and ISO 9001 Quality management system) and are equipped with the latest machinery and equipment imported from Europe, Turkey, and India. These include testing laboratory equipment as well as fully automated blending and packing machines. Most importantly, Cofftea implements and adheres to the highest hygiene and working standards in its operations, not only to ensure the safety of its products, but also a safe, clean, and healthy working environment for its workforce.

Cofftea is committed to sourcing its raw materials on a large scale while promoting sustainability. Some 90 per cent of plantations where Cofftea sources its tea are ISO 22000:2005 certified (green leaf reception, processing, packing and dispatch of black CTC tea). Similarly, its fair trade tea is Rain Forest Alliance certified.

A commitment to the wider community

Aware of the leading role it plays in the country, Cofftea engages with the communities it works with through a range of initiatives that include providing school students throughout the country with bags, notebooks and winter clothes, as well as recognising the important role played by many people in the fields of education, sports and community service.

Cofftea co-sponsored Mashrouy for the last three years 2015, 2016 and 2017, which represents a set up in conjunction with the Sudanese Young Businessmen Association, the British Embassy and the British Council in Khartoum. The hit television programme has helped identify and support young Sudanese entrepreneurs and has attracted huge interest from Sudanese business people, some great ideas for new business ▶



Iftar conversation at sunset hosted by CoffTea during Ramadan

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- Since 1984



كوفتي
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Sudan, Khartoum

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► proposals, wonderful contestants and a huge following for the presentations and selection process. It has showcased Sudan's entrepreneurial culture, showing that it can flourish if the economic environment allows it to and creating prosperity for all.

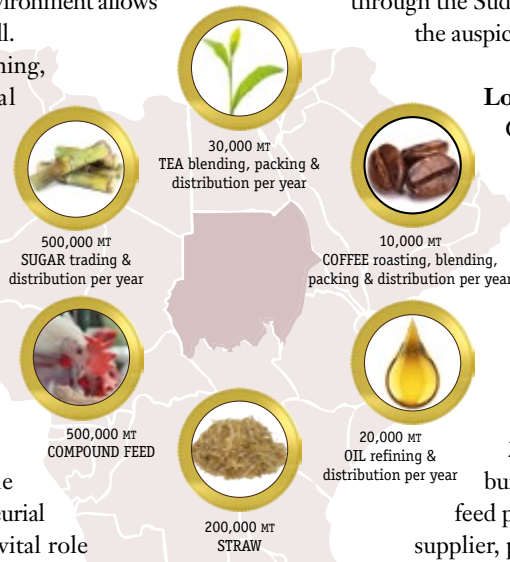
Cofftea also sponsors Chevening, the UK government's global scholarship programme that offers future leaders the unique opportunity to study in the UK. These scholarships are awarded to outstanding professionals to pursue a one-year master's degree in any subject at any UK university.

The company also supports the more than 8,000 tea ladies nationwide, who represent the best of Sudan's strong entrepreneurial spirit and have come to play a vital role in the country's economy and cultural life over the last three decades. Many of these women come from the lowest rungs of society – the immigrants and the displaced from regions in conflict. Cofftea has undertaken a range of initiatives to help formalise the situation of Sudan's tea ladies by providing kiosks and access to running water.

Further reflecting its commitment to Sudan's tea ladies, in late 2017, U.S. Embassy staff in Khartoum attended an Iftar, the evening meal with which Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast at sunset, with tea ladies hosted by Cofftea to share a meal and the Ramadan spirit in honour of some of Sudan's hardest working businesswomen.

Cofftea also co-sponsored the second International Peace Marathon in Khartoum in January this year organised by the Council for International People's

Friendship (CIPF) through the Sudanese-Kenyan Friendship Association and the Kenyan Embassy in collaboration with the National Olympic Committee, through the Sudanese Athletics Union, under the auspices of the Presidency.



Looking to the future

Cofftea has expanded its areas of activity in recent years, and also trades and distributes some 500,000 tons of sugar. It has a state-of-the-art refinery with a capacity of 70,000 tons per annum of cooking oil which will commission its production by mid of 2019. The company is also building a state of the art animal feed plant that will make it a major supplier, producing 500,000 tonnes of compound feed and 200,000 tonnes of straw each year. By the end of 2019, Cofftea's animal feed plant will be the largest in the country, with a capacity of one million tons a year.

Almost a year on from the lifting of US sanctions, there is clearly a mood of optimism within the Sudanese business community, with an awareness that a turning point has been reached. Growing numbers of countries are now looking closely at how to position themselves in Sudan, exploring opportunities and assessing potential partners in what is a huge domestic market, as well as a launch pad for investment and exports in the wider region.

Moreover, Cofftea is looking to expand its regional markets by targeting the East African markets as well as Gulf markets in the first place. With a vision to explore the opportunities in Europe through exports.

Sudan has an entrepreneurial culture that will flourish if the economic environment allows it to, creating prosperity for all

Left: The pick of the tea

Right: The CoffTea family in Khartoum



A quintessential ingredient

By **AZHARI ELTIGANI ELSHEIKH HAMOUDA**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MIGANA



AZHARI ELTIGANI ELSHEIKH HAMOUDA holds an MSc from the University of Khartoum and qualifications in environmental and developmental studies. He is also currently studying for an MBA with the University of Cumbria in partnership with the Robert Kennedy College in Zurich. He worked with US-Aid and later the Arab League in Tunis before returning to Sudan to establish a company specialised in exporting Hibiscus, sesame and other agricultural products. He subsequently established Migana Industries in 2005, when the opportunity arose with the liberalisation of the sector in Sudan. Today Migana is one of the world's most important suppliers of Gum Arabic to international companies.

Few people are probably aware that one of the most widely used products around the world today is a resin that is still extracted by hand from wild Acacia trees in Africa's Sahel region, the vast swathe of savannah stretching from Somalia on the Indian Ocean to Senegal on the Atlantic.

Used for more than 4,000 years, Gum Arabic is an ancient resource that is set to play an even bigger role across a growing range of industries.

Gum Arabic is made from the hardened sap from two species of the acacia tree; *Acacia senegal* and *Acacia seyal*. The resinous liquid seeps out after the bark is cut and thickens on contact with the air, forming a hard and glassy gum. This process is called "gummosis" and usually lasts from three to eight weeks.

Also known as acacia gum, *chaar gund* and *meska*, this miracle product is not only perfectly safe for human consumption, but ongoing research has established its many health and dietary benefits. Essentially, it is a stabilizer, a binder, an emulsifier or a viscosity-increasing agent, used not only in confectionery, soft drinks, wine, liquor, and dietary fibre, but also for non-food products such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, printing, ceramics, photosensitive chemicals, textiles, paper, ink, paints and adhesives.

A complex mixture of polysaccharides and glycoproteins comprised mostly of galactose, arabinose, rhamnose, and glucuronic acid, Gum Arabic has its own E number: E414. It also contains a small amount of protein: 18 different amino acids have been identified in *acacia senegal*.



Gum Arabic readily dissolves in water to form highly concentrated solutions of relatively low viscosity, which is a consequence of the gum's compact structure. Being both hydrophobic and hydrophilic, Acacia Gum is perfectly suited as a stabiliser of colours and flavours held in emulsion.

The Chinese and Japanese were already using acacia gum for painting in 4,000 BC, while it also played an important role in Ancient Egypt 1,500 years later, applied as a pigment binder for paints in hieroglyphs.

With the industrial revolution, acacia gum, by now known as Gum Arabic, was used for textiles, as well as lithography, and as an ingredient in early photography.

Sudan produces the finest gum arabic

A semi-arid zone species, the Acacia is drought resistant and able to regenerate naturally from seeds or from copies. The densest areas of acacia forest are in central Sudan, making the country the biggest producer and exporter of the best quality Gum Arabic, supplying up to 80 per cent of annual world requirements. While many processed food ingredients can provide flavour stability, Gum Arabic is a natural, sustainable, vegan clean label product that promises to provide a viable alternative to chemically produced ingredients.

As an entrepreneur, I have worked for more than 25 years in the Sudanese agricultural export sector and set up Migana Industries after the Sudanese government liberalised the Gum Arabic sector. Migana is involved at every stage of production, from harvesting to export, based at its factory in Khartoum, where some 5,000 metric tonnes are processed. Migana has warehouses in El Obeid and Al Nuhud (both production areas for Gum Arabic) where raw gum is received and then checked and graded. It is then transported to warehouses in Soba, Khartoum for analysis in the company's laboratories. From there it is loaded into containers for export.

Migana has a 50 hectare Acacia nursery and research centre in Al Nuhud (south of Khartoum). This project, launched eight months ago in collaboration with the University of Cumbria, is the only project of its kind in Sudan.

With a view to expanding our presence in the United Kingdom, we have a strategic agreement with Juniper Global Ltd, a UK based agri-trading company that was formed in 2010, and which functions as the sole marketing

and sales arm of Migana, Our presence in the United Kingdom for the past eight years facilitates and covers the issuing of contracts, banking and logistics. Our UK-based managing director, Rimon Yousif, has built Juniper into a leading supplier of natural agricultural products, specialising in the export of Gum Arabic and senna pods to international markets. Through his efforts Juniper enjoys partnerships and joint ventures at both ends of the supply chain – from direct reach to farmland and agricultural projects and operations in Sudan to global manufacturers on an international platform.

Juniper’s knowledgeable and professional management team help inspire, guide and problem-solve for our customers and abide by ISO standards while implementing an active Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme. In order to ensure CSR values are visible in our supply chain, we have opened dialogue with our suppliers to ensure CSR compliance and implementation, especially in the areas of labour standards, environment and anti-corruption. We work with innovative, competent and participatory partners, who contribute effectively to the strength of our supply chain.

We are now building solid relationships with local, regional and international businesses to create and stimulate opportunities for cooperation and investment that involve constructing a global integrated industrial structure for Gum Arabic processing to meet increasing international demand. Migana is now among the leading Sudanese companies in the sector and is the main approved supplier for most international importers.

A commitment to development

Gum Arabic also has the power to drive development in the 19 African producer nations, already providing a living to at least 10 million people. A promising commodity for producing countries, it has the potential to generate foreign exchange, promote sustainable agriculture and forestry, ensure food security and combat desertification and climate change.



In Sudan, Gum Arabic creates an important value chain that includes tree cultivation, harvesting, drying, cleaning, sorting, grading, transportation, storage, processing, marketing and industrial application.

Migana works with local suppliers to provide natural and safe products that are ethically sourced, as well as ensuring full traceability. In the United Kingdom, through Juniper Global Ltd, there is close liaison with customers to supply high quality products consistently and continual R&D to benefit our customers from ongoing improvements. We always operate as an ethical and responsible organisation and our relationship with our distributors is crucial and the aim is to establish long-term, strategic partnerships with both our suppliers and customers.

The transformation of Gum Arabic production into more income-generating activities can not only promote economic development through higher incomes, but also to secure rural livelihoods, empower vulnerable groups, including women, and promote synergies with natural resource management and climate change mitigation.

Migana promotes the protection of gum trees through longer concession rights, which in turn encourages concession holders to protect trees and plant new ones. The company works to prevent over-harvesting and improper wounding of gum trees by applying best practices. Proper tapping can have a positive effect on the long-term productivity of trees.

Demand for acacia gum is steadily increasing in Europe: in the past five years, demand has grown by an estimated 2.5 per cent annually. Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy already import considerable amounts of acacia gum, but do so from other European countries. France has established itself as an important intermediary and exports two-thirds of all processed Gum Arabic, although growing numbers of manufacturers in the United Kingdom are seeing the benefits of buying through local suppliers that purchase the finished product in powder form direct from Sudanese companies such as Migana Industries.

We are now building solid relationships with local, regional and international businesses to create and stimulate opportunities for cooperation and investment

Left: Among the multiple uses of the sap of the Acacia tree: stabiliser, binder, emulsifier

Right: Three generations of the Elsheikh Hamouda family are now involved in Migana





Saleh Abdelrahmen Yagoub Co. Ltd.

Salih Abdelrahman Yagoub Co. Ltd (SAY) is one of Sudan's largest and oldest conglomerates with over half a century of experience and interests in construction, trading, retail, manufacturing and the service sector.

Our group of companies include **Afritex** in the gum arabic sector, **Samil Industrial** in the nutritional products sector (especially those used to treat malnutrition), **Darfood** in the peanut sector (uniquely contributing to the development of Darfur) and **Al-Nakheel** (which own Sudan's first export graded facility for organic grass fed meat).

We already proudly work with international partners **Nutriset** and **Onyx Développement** and are dedicated to the development of Sudan



Members of SAY Group



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47 Bequwan St. House #1 Khartoum (3)
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Driving Darfur's development

By **HISHAM SALIH A. YAGOUB**

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, SALIH YAGOUB GROUP (SAY)



HISHAM S. A. YAGOUB

holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Evansville, Indiana. He joined Yagoub Group in 1992 and during a long career was responsible for modernising group companies and introducing international standards, especially for the Afritec, Samil, Darfood and Al Nakhel factories. He currently serves as the Deputy Chairman and the Managing Director of SAY Co, as well as Managing Director of two sister companies (Afritec Ingredients and Samil Industries) which are partnerships with international investors.

One of Sudan's largest conglomerates, the Salih Yagoub Group (SAY) was founded by leading businessman and philanthropist, and current Chairman, Salih Abdelrahman Yagoub. The group is family owned and led by the Chairman with the assistance of his younger sons Mohamed and Omer Salih A. Yagoub, myself, and a dedicated team of experts.

The core businesses of SAY comprises the following: our gum arabica division and the Afritec Ingredients Factory for gum arabica ingredients. This is a joint venture with Nexira International of France. Then, there is Darfood, in the peanut sector and finally our Al Nakheel meat factory which is Sudan's first export graded facility for the processing of organic grass fed meat. Finally there is Samil which is a joint venture set up in 2011 with French company Onyx Développement, part of the Nutriset Group, to develop malnutrition solutions for young children, among them, Plumpy'Nut and Plumpy'Sup, which are now being used in several developing countries, with special emphasis on the needs of Sudan and neighbouring African nations.

Samil

Plumpy'Nut is a Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) with similar nutritional value to F-100 milk for nutritional rehabilitation of children with severe acute malnutrition. Plumpy'Sup is a Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) developed for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition in children aged six months or more. It can also be used to prevent severe malnutrition, particularly with children that have recently completed therapeutic feeding programs. These two products are pastes that need neither preparation or dilution for consumption. Both are produced for the PlumpyField network of independent producers that manufacture ready-to-use nutritional solutions right in the countries where they are most needed. These products are used in the treatment and prevention of malnutrition, and comply with the highest international standards on quality. By sourcing locally, these members sustainably contribute to the

social and economic development on their countries and to the fight against malnutrition.

Thanks to the Yagoub family's experience in the agri-food sector, a state-of-the-art production unit in Khartoum was soon set up that is now able to meet most of the needs in Sudan and neighbouring countries for RUTF. Now, Samil's world-class quality and production standards is helping improve Sudanese peanut production and thus create better access to the export market for other producers.

Darfood: Driving development in Darfur

Leveraging our core competencies in the sector of malnutrition products and groundnuts processing, Darfood was established as a joint venture with Onyx Développement. The Darfood Company Limited is also supported by RVO, the Dutch cooperation agency, which has supplied 750,000 for the purchase of a peanut sorting line unit.

Since 2017, Darfood has been producing high-quality peanut products at a newly built mill in El Daen, in the east of Darfur province. The plant has been located in Sudan's main peanut growing area, which produces between 150,000 to 200,000 tons annually, and is providing a major boost to the local economy, creating around 200 jobs in the province. The plant has a daily production capacity of 150 tonnes.

SAY was already involved in the groundnut sector in Darfur, procuring, distributing, and trading, which gave it a thorough knowledge of the Darfuri peanut market and a good working relationship with local producers. Darfood will not only guarantee the right quality for its partners and Samil, but also reduce transportation costs, as well as keeping processing value within the region. SAY has also been active in Darfur for many years, producing gum arabica. Some of the producers who now supply SAY with gum arabica are also peanut growers that have been working with the company over the years. ▶



SAY is helping meet the challenge of reconstruction and local development in a region with a history of conflict

► Cooperation agreements have already been signed with local agricultural cooperatives, ensuring the producers to obtain part of their income. Training and assistance will also be provided to producers to strengthen their involvement.

Peanuts are bought from farmers’ cooperatives, shelled and sorted and then processed at the Darfood Edible Oils Mill to make Plumpy’Nut.

Oil produced at the plant is sold to Sudanese food producers or on the international markets. The waste products left after raw materials processing are used to make peanut cake, which is sold as animal feed, while shells are compressed and sold as bio-mass energy or used as fuel to power the plant, in line with the company’s environment policy.

Attracting investment to Darfur

By locating in Darfur, SAY is helping meet the challenge of reconstruction and local development in a region with a history of conflict, but that is now set to take advantage of its huge agricultural potential. This industrial initiative includes the whole sector, from supporting the growers, who have started to be trained by Darfood and with whom cooperation agreements have been set up, to the conversion of this agricultural raw material in all its forms. The implementation of this processing unit will support local development and enhance the value of this agricultural network, while constantly striving for quality. Throughout the process, from harvesting to transformation, special care will be taken to respect high-quality production standards.

The Darfood project came about through SAY’s on-the-ground daily experience of the social and economic cost to the region of not having exploited its

huge potential to produce high quality peanuts for the international market, as well as the possibility of developing a local confectionary industry, and also to produce RUTF due to unreliable supplies of high graded premium.

Furthermore, SAY recognised that Sudan was not playing a significant role in the international markets for HPS (Hand Picked Selected Peanuts) nor in the local market for this product, despite being one of the main peanuts producers in the world.

This was because Darfur’s peanuts processing sector was poorly developed and under-resourced, which affected all stakeholders in the value chain.

Until now, local producers were obliged to send their peanuts to Khartoum for processing, thus, the Darfood project supports the growth of businesses in the food production chain, both upstream and downstream.

SAY highlights the socio-economic advantages of the Darfood project in directly improving the lives of thousands of local farmers and households in Darfur, as well as its wider impact on the development of the region. The sorting facility will contribute directly and indirectly to the creation of jobs for young Darfuris, particularly women, while stimulating the production of quality groundnuts and introducing modern tools and methods to the farming there.

At the same time, local producers will benefit from professional assistance and training programs being facilitated by the project’s professional specialists to rural communities, as well as securing new markets for their produce.

SAY hopes the creation of the first modern agro-food processing facility will send out a signal and encourage other private investors to set up large scale projects in the region. E

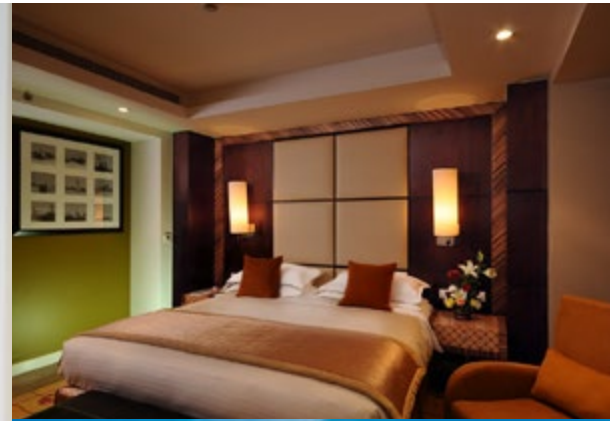
Left:

An ultra-modern facility

Right:

Combatting malnutrition





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Milestone with Al Salam Rotana

By ADNAN DAYOUB

GENERAL MANAGER, AL SALAM ROTANA KHARTOUM



ADNAN DAYOUB holds a Masters Degree in French, English and Arabic simultaneous translation from the University of Damascus and hospitality management from the GLION Institute in Switzerland. He began his career working with Intercontinental Hotels from 1997 to 2003 and Millennium Hotels & Resorts from 2003 to 2010 before joining Rotana Hotels. Under his guidance the Rotana Khartoum won Hotel of the Year in 2015 amongst Rotana Hotels and Sudan's Leading Hotel accolade for 2016 and 2017 from the World Travel Awards.

Having been in the hotel industry for 28 years, I have experienced diverse situations in handling various hotels but the most memorable and challenging one is my journey with the Al Salam Rotana Hotel Khartoum.

Al Salam Rotana Khartoum was opened in 2007 and is located just a few minutes from Khartoum International Airport along a stretch of Africa Road, a short drive from downtown Khartoum and within walking distance of Afra Mall, Khartoum's largest shopping mall. The hotel is perfectly situated for both business and leisure.

The hotel epitomises the exceptional hospitality of Sudan, and breath-taking luxury featuring 233 rooms and suites elegantly designed with the comfort of the guests in mind. The hotel is supported by an excellent array of services and fitted with the latest in sophisticated equipment.

Al Salam Rotana has a variety of facilities making it the perfect place both for business and leisure. The hotel offers two distinctive food and beverage venues including the Al Nuba Restaurant and the City Café. In addition to a gifts shop and business center, the hotel offers a selection of meeting spaces, boardrooms and a ballroom, all with pre-function areas, suitable for all

kinds of occasions and meetings. It also has a Bodylines Fitness & Wellness Club which offers a fully equipped gym, outdoor swimming pool, steam and sauna rooms, in addition to a variety of massages to choose from.

During my time as General Manager at the Al Salam Rotana Khartoum, I have managed to maintain the highest standards and continue develop the property and the skills of all its staff. We continue seeking and hiring the very best local talent and to fostering and training them and their skills. As a result of this time and investment we have gained a very positive reputation in the local market which led us to be the number one hotel in Khartoum and the preferred hotel of our valued guests, partners and media partners.

We pride ourselves in providing a family atmosphere for our staff ensuring that the time they spend with Rotana will be valuable to their careers and personal development. We particularly welcome their suggestion in providing a better experience for our guests. Different programs and activities are executed to develop leadership and teamwork and increases cooperation between staff regardless of their position.

I have always believed that our success comes from the very personalised services we render to our valued guests. It is the attention to detail and the smile on




Perfect for both
business and leisure

our faces that makes the difference during our daily operations and interaction with our external and internal guests.

Our commitment to developing tourism in Sudan has led us to adapting our services and products to attract more travellers. We are participating willingly in some of the active programs of the Ministry of Tourism which allows us gain exposure for our hotel. It also highlights the good relationship we have with the officials responsible for the development of tourism.

On the other hand we have been recognised as the Sudan's Leading Hotel (2016 and 2017) for two consecutive years and Sudan's Leading Hotel Suite (2014 & 2015) also for 2 consecutive years by the World Travel Awards. Al Salam Rotana is

continuously monitoring, responding and attentive to all guest feedback and in particular we have created positive engagement with our social media accounts.

We have chosen to fully embrace delivering our Rotana brand promise which is "Treasured Time", and this Treasured Time extends to our guest guests, owners, partners and colleagues. Part of this mean always keeping my door open to our exceptional team, putting a smile on my face while ensuring the daily operations are smoothly. The key points for success and adaptation in the hospitality industry are communication, productivity and outstanding problem solving skills. In addition to being able to work in a multi-cultural environment which will guarantee reaching the ultimate goal of success. 

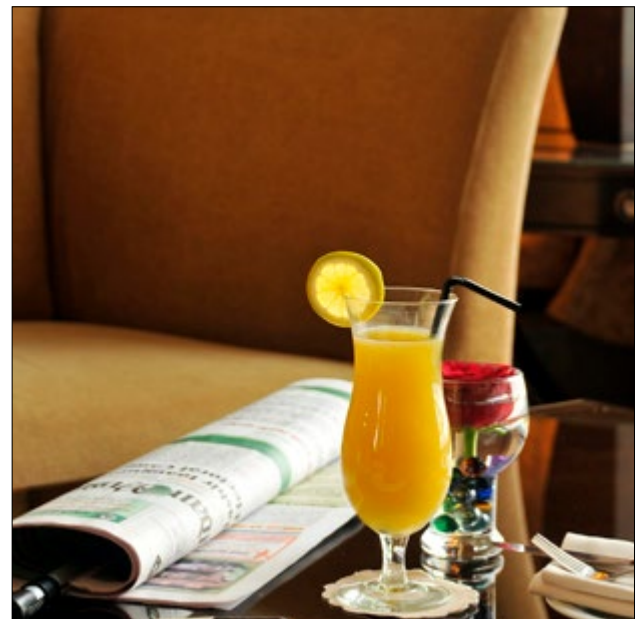
The reason behind our success is simple, we personally take care of our valued guests and colleagues



Top: Ultimate wellness at the Al Salam Rotana state of the art spa

Bottom Left: When it comes to conferences and banqueting, nothing else can come close to our ballrooms and meeting rooms

Bottom Right: Several times winner of Best Hotel in Sudan, perfect for business and leisure



Khartoum's luxury address

By BERNARD MERCIER

GENERAL MANAGER, CORINTHIA HOTEL KHARTOUM



BERNARD MERCIER is a graduate of the Hotel School of Lausanne, Switzerland, and began his career with Intercontinental Hotels in South America before moving to Sheraton in that region and Australia. He subsequently worked with a variety of major hotel groups including Tivoli in Brazil, LTI in Germany and Hilton in the Philippines rising to the rank of area manager. After a successful career with Kempinski he joined Corinthia Hotels in 2016 to manage and develop its landmark property in Khartoum.

Located in the heart of Khartoum, the Burj Al-Fateh, better known outside Sudan as the Corinthia Hotel Khartoum, has established itself as the capital's most luxurious hotel, an architectural masterpiece of steel and glass that adds new elegance to the city.

A reflection of the growing success of Sudan's economy, the hotel sits amid beautifully tended gardens, sparkling miniature lakes and fountains, providing travellers with an oasis of calm in what can be a tiring and hectic city. The hotel's eye-catching architecture, paired with its one-of-a-kind accommodation and unmatched service and attention to detail have earned it a reputation with guests from the region and around the world, whether on business, enjoying a weekend getaway, or as the starting point for a longer trip to discover the many wonders of Sudan.

Overlooking Tuti island, where the Blue and White Nile converge, this elegant, blue and white five-star architectural gem brings to mind a twin sail. The hotel's rooms and suites, each offer unparalleled panoramic views of Khartoum as well as the River Nile, while cutting-edge automation systems and business facilities provide the perfect business environment, meeting the highest standards.

Part of the Corinthia Group's collection of five-star luxury hotels founded by the Pisani family of Malta in 1962, since when it has expanded its presence to leading destinations such as London, Prague, Lisbon and St. Petersburg, the Hotel Khartoum has changed

the skyline of the Sudanese capital. Opened in 2008 and the tallest hotel in the city, the Corinthia Hotel Khartoum has established itself not just as one of the city's most iconic buildings, but a benchmark for excellence. The complex spreads over 45,000 square meters, incorporating the latest in leisure and business technology, luxury accommodations and unrivalled services and facilities, redefining the luxury hotel category from the ground up to its 18th floor.

A ten minute drive from the capital's airport, the hotel is within walking distance of the National Museum of Sudan and barely a mile from many of Khartoum's landmark buildings and historic sites.

Luxurious rooms

The Corinthia Hotel Khartoum has 230 modern, luxurious and spacious air-conditioned rooms. Luxurious Deluxe City and Nile View rooms offer beautiful views and exceptional comfort and peace to every guest. Our Deluxe Nile View offers breath-taking vistas of the magnificent Blue Nile, while a Deluxe City View gives a stunning view of Khartoum's cosmopolitan heart. Available as both Queen and Twin, each room comes complete with all the luxuries you'd expect from a grand, five-star hotel. These include a two-seater sofa bed, Wi-Fi access, TV with a large selection of English and Arabic channels, a spacious working area and a mini bar with tea and coffee making facilities.

Similarly, the handsome, spacious Executive Club rooms offer beautiful views and provide a comfortable retreat at the end of a busy day in the Sudanese capital. In addition, Executive Room guests are offered complimentary transport from the airport to the hotel on arrival and are granted access to the Executive Club Lounge where they can enjoy breakfast while watching the sun rise over the Nile or sample evening refreshments as it sets, bathing the view in red and gold.

As well as providing greater space, the Ministerial Suites offer a range of luxury amenities such as a king-size bed, marble bathrooms and jacuzzi, an expansive living area, dining table and working desk and a two-seater sofa. Ministerial Suite guests are offered complimentary airport



An executive room of the Corinthia Hotel in Khartoum

pickup to the hotel on arrival and also enjoy access to the Executive Lounge with complimentary breakfast and refreshments, along with many other benefits.

The Presidential Suite is the largest hotel accommodation in Sudan and offers the ultimate experience in luxury. The Presidential Suite features two separate bedrooms, one with a luxurious king-size bed and marble bathroom with large jacuzzi and massage shower and another with twin beds. Guests can relax and watch a film on a 55" flat screen TV, get some work done or enjoy freshly-brewed tea while taking in the spectacular views. Equally, they can host up to eight guests for lunch and dinner or hold meetings in the en-suite office, equipped with the latest technology and internet connection. No detail has been overlooked in creating our signature statement of modern luxury and comfort.

Dining in the hotel

Dining options include the Mugran Restaurant located on the 16th Floor, with spectacular views of the White and Blue Nile. Light and airy – and blessed with panoramic views – it serves breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner, with a daily changing buffet menu with specialties from around the world.

Situated on the 18th floor, the Rickshaw is the city's best restaurant. It offers an evening menu that takes in the best of Asian cuisine, with influences from China, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Le Grill Restaurant offers wide range of mouth-watering snacks and meals in a cosy atmosphere, whilst watching daily sports events on the big screens. Light meals can be enjoyed at the outdoor area African Garden in a lush, green and exotic surrounding.

The Nile River café and Café Khartoum are the perfect setting for a relaxed meeting or other events, featuring freshly made snacks, salads and light meals, along with local drinks and juices.

The hotel provides additional services such as 24 hour room service, laundry and dry cleaning as well a business centre.

Meetings, events and weddings

The Corinthia Hotel Khartoum offers 10 meeting rooms ranging in size from the 36 m² Boardroom to the 900 square metre LebDAH Ballroom, supported by a business centre providing ideal venues for a variety of events from an exclusive board meeting to larger corporate gatherings, product presentations, fairs or unforgettable wedding and parties.

With a setting that can only be described as magical, the Corinthia Hotel Khartoum has set new standards for elegant weddings and honeymoons. Whether you dream of an intimate gathering of family and friends or long for a lavish, traditional Sudanese reception, the dedicated wedding planners will be delighted to help


organise every aspect of the big day. From flowers and decorations to the perfect menu, no detail is overlooked in the quest to create a truly fairy-tale wedding.

The total capacity of our indoor function areas is 1,000 people. Special outdoor events can be accommodated in our lobby terrace overlooking the garden and Nile. We offer ample free, secure self- and valet parking. The Corinthia promise is a unique, refreshing approach to organising the frequent meetings, incentives and conferences that keep all modern businesses thriving. In a nutshell, it's about bringing warm welcomes, inspired cuisine and world-class service to each of your events.

Spa and sports

A haven of wellness and a place to relax, the Sabratha Spa and Fitness centre features a large and fully equipped state of the art gym, an indoor swimming pool, saunas, jacuzzi, steam rooms, massages, hairdressers, squash and tennis courts, and a traditional Turkish bath (Hammam). Separate sauna and steam rooms are available for ladies and gentlemen. The spa director and his team extend an array of services through a wide selection of tailor made programs. The Spa has earned a unique reputation in the city and is sought by the most discerning clients looking for the ultimate in relaxation and well-being. This is a place where cultures are respected and catered for by dedicated staff. All beauty and health facilities are separate for ladies and gentlemen and with dedicated times at the indoor pool and jacuzzi for ladies.

The hotel sits within a secure complex that include a range of shops and services such as Egyptair, Qatar Airways, Dal Rent a Car and serviced offices.

Despite the hotel's size, visitors often comment on how they are made to feel part of a large family by the friendly and attentive staff. The Corinthia Hotel Khartoum is the place to be when visiting Khartoum, Sudan. 

The Corinthia Hotel Khartoum has established itself as the capital's most luxurious hotel, a masterpiece of steel and glass that adds new elegance to the city

The Mugran Restaurant with views of Sunut Forest, and the White and Blue Nile



Investigating ancient Sudan

INTERVIEW WITH NEAL SPENCER

KEEPER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT EGYPT AND SUDAN, THE BRITISH MUSEUM



NEAL SPENCER holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge on pharaonic temple construction, and has worked at the British Museum since 2000. Having worked at many sites in Egypt since 1997, and in Sudan since 2004 (on the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Campaign), he instigated a new research project at the site of Amara West in 2008. He also set up the Museum's International Training Programme, which has created a global network of museum curators and heritage professionals, including Sudanese specialists.

Revealing a faience vessel in a burial chamber of tomb G244 at Amara West

Could you give an overview of the relationship between the British Museum and Sudan?

Important antiquities from Sudan have been in the collection, and on display, since 1835. Two monumental pink granite lions were brought back for Lord Prudhoe from Gebel Barkal, one of the main temple sites near the fourth cataract on the Nile in Northern Sudan. These statues originally came from Soleb, a temple built in the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III around 1370BCE.

Today, our collection spans the whole of Sudanese history, amounting to around 10,000 objects from deep prehistory to the present day. The collection mostly comes from Northern Sudan, in an area that is often referred to as Nubia, along the banks of the Nile river. The other regions have either not received much archaeological attention, or have environmental conditions not conducive to preservation: less arid, more moisture and rain. This collection includes human skeletons from Jebel Sahaba, the earliest organised cemetery in the world, with evidence for inter-human violence. Alongside some of the earliest pottery in Africa, pharaonic antiquities, objects from the Monumental remains of the ancient city of Kerma kingdoms and 20th century postage stamps.

When did formal archaeological excavation begin in the region?

In Northern Sudan, scientific excavations began in the early part of the 20th Century. The British Museum began its own excavations in the early 1990s, seeking to

provide context and understanding for our collection. We currently run three projects: excavating the pharaonic town of Amara West, the great urban centre of Kawa, and a joint Sudanese-British Museum mission at Dangeil, a Meroitic temple, urban and cemetery site. So we are excavating across three different millennia of Sudanese history. With modern, scientific, archaeology we can analyse plant remains, animal bones, geo-chemical residues and pigment remains to understand what life was like in these cities. The study of skeletal remains informs us about ancient disease, demographics and migration. Archaeology is no longer about finding objects, it's about reconstructing past lives.

And how did you choose your excavation location?

I chose Amara West in 2008 because I was very interested in the ancient relationship between Egypt and Nubia. One of the best-preserved ancient towns anywhere in the Nile Valley, 700km north of Khartoum on the west bank of the Nile, it is a place where you can walk down ancient streets, into houses, through doorways and up staircases. We are interested in the cultural entanglement of Egypt and Nubia: the sharing of ideas, technologies and beliefs, moving away from a simple model of conqueror and conquered. While recognising the conflicts, exploitation and violence also occurred. The town was built around 1300BC and founded in the reign of Seti I, father of Rameses the Great. It built as a new centre to control Kush, the ancient Egyptian word for southern Nubia. One of the major Egyptian interests in this region was the abundant natural resources – particularly gold. The hills in Northern Sudan have large gold deposits: gold was a very important part of the elite world of temples and royal patronage back in Egypt.

Can you explain the historical context of the various cultures of Ancient Nubia?

Nubia and Northern Sudan is an area with a lot of cultural variety. In the early 20th Century, the different styles of archaeological assemblages – the different types of pottery and objects – were grouped into cultures. For example, in the third and second millennium BCE, we have the A- and C-groups. None of these cultures left behind writing – they weren't societies that had scripts – so we don't know their ancient names. But you also have other groups, related particularly to the



Photo: British Museum Amara West Research Project

deserts and nomadism. The boundaries between these groups were not fixed and they may not have been states the way we think of them today. Later, we see the rise of the great kingdom centred around the city of Kerma, which reached its golden age around 1700-1500 BCE, when military raids were made into Egypt. The Kerma kingdom was finally defeated by the Egyptian armies around 1450BCE and that ushered in pharaonic rule over that part of Northern Sudan. A series of Egyptian towns and temples were built at this time. Egyptian rule over Nubia ended in 1070BCE, which was followed by the rise of the next great Nubian power, which was based at Napata. Another powerful kingdom, its kings would rule over Egypt and northern Sudan, and fight wars against Assyria in the Levant. That was followed by the Meroitic Kingdom, based at Meroe, famous for the pyramids, and thereafter Christian kingdoms and eventually political Islam.

The British Museum is also assisting in the development of Sudan's domestic archaeological capability. What are the current highlights of your projects?

We have just finished a project to build the first bioarchaeology laboratory in Sudan, which will be opening in February 2019, in collaboration with the National Corporation of Antiquities & Museums (Sudan). Bio-archaeology is the study of human, animal and plant remains to reconstruct everything from diet, to health, to demographics as well as genetic profiles and migration. In Sudan, there is a very good range of preserved ancient cemeteries and when you excavate these you find the human remains of people, mainly skeletons but sometimes mummified. Traditionally, these remains have been exported for study, to places like the British Museum. Over the last ten years, we have trained the first bioarchaeologist in Sudan and now built this facility, enabling our Sudanese colleagues to store and study excavated human remains.

Are you not also working on a project regarding the science of colour?

One of the things we found at Amara West was finds related to the making and preparing of pigments. When you visit the archaeological site today it is very brown – mud brick and sand – but many of the walls and objects must have originally have been painted. We also found raw lumps of pigment: Charcoal, Egyptian blue, red ochre, yellow ochre, gypsum, bitumen, etc. We also found broken pieces of pottery that had been used as mixing palettes by the artists and grinding stones for grinding pigment. With one of my colleagues we ran a project to analyse how the pigments were made, what binders were being used and then how it was being applied in different places. For instance, we found that bitumen, a resinous substance from the Dead Sea, was

being used as a black colour for objects in the tombs, so it may have had ritual associations. That's just one example of the scientific streams of work we are undertaking.


How do archaeologists engage with local people?

We have been focusing very much, with our Sudanese colleagues, on working with the local community. Thus we have been producing books, in Arabic, for distribution to the local schools and villages and we run sessions in the schools. For example, one book is aimed at capturing knowledge about the region's traditional farming techniques that are dying out in the age of mechanised agriculture. We also produced podcasts – 70 per cent of the people in the villages near the site have phones with internet so these allow a wider audience to learn about the ancient sites and archaeological heritage. These have been produced in English, Arabic and Nubian. Nubian is the local language, which is not written anymore, so digital technology provides a great way of engaging local communities through this endangered language.

We are constantly interested in questions of cultural exchange and the movement of ideas, people, goods and religion. With the British Museum having a collection of nearly 8 million objects we can ask a lot of questions about the connections between cultures.

It seems that many museums and collections still overlook the importance of the ancient Nubian cultures – do you find that this is the case?

Museums have to reflect the contents of their collections and what the most important and famous objects are. In our case, we renamed our department from Egyptian Antiquities to the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan in 2001 to reflect the importance of the Sudanese collection we have here.

I think our gallery on Nubia was the first dedicated Nubian gallery anywhere in the world. 

The study of skeletal remains informs us about ancient disease, demographics and migration. Archaeology is no longer about finding objects, it's about reconstructing past lives

Monumental remains of the ancient city of Kerma



Photo: Derek Welsby

At the tipping point

By JOHANNA ZULETA

REPORT EDITOR AND SPECIAL ADVISOR, FIRST



JOHANNA ZULETA is a Special Advisor to FIRST. She is a connector acting between the corporate world, international politics and the arts. Founder of La Zuleta, a creative solutions agency. She has lived in Colombia, the USA, Greece and France, and has been based in London since 2002. Johanna has developed projects in collaboration with some of the UK's leading cultural institutions, such as the Tate, Barbican, Southbank Centre and the British Council.

Left:
Report Editor, Johanna Zuleta and visionary modernist Ibrahim El-Salahi, at the opening of his exhibition *"By his will we teach birds how to fly"* in London

Right:
The Sudan National Museum, established in 1971 in Khartoum

Let me take you through the highlights of being a newcomer in Sudan. I reached Khartoum on my birthday and this arrival became a present in itself. The journey that then unfolded has enriched my life and I have experienced many firsts in Sudan. This was my first time in Africa and the first time I lectured as a guest at a University. My lecture took place at al-Ahfad University, which was the first female university in the country and was initially established in 1907 as a school by the founder Babiker Badri.

The crafts in Sudan are exquisite and I relished my time at the Omdurman Market. It was also the first time I attended a film festival hosted in the middle of a bridge, the first time I crossed the desert, the first time I rode a camel (nothing quite prepares you for the vertigo!) and I learnt how to watch for the signs of a sand storm. By the time I was back in London, I had undoubtedly fallen in love with Sudan, and began planning my return trip.

I was born in Colombia in the 1980s and I came to see that Sudan and Colombia have many significant parallels. Sudan needs strong advocates to carry the torch and to push forward significant shifts in how Sudan is perceived globally so that a wider story can be told. When I took part in the Sudanese coffee ceremonies I always asked for the extra spice which is a local secret. The coffee was then served to me in clay pots and it came with a delicious kick of cardamom. This enchanting coffee should be appreciated



internationally as Sudan pushes forwards. The British habit of teatime is still strong in Sudan and if you try the Hibiscus tea from Cofftea you will want it for life. I can't wait for them to distribute it in London.

The Sudanese hospitality is as much a pleasure for the visitor as it is a code of honour for the host. Also a national sense of discretion is evident in this report. The biggest contributors to society in these pages wanted to either tone down their good deeds or not to mention them at all. They did not want to promote their own generosity but instead to focus on the positive changes taking place in Sudan.

The Pyramids in Meroe are older than the Egyptian Pyramids and there is a deep past to explore in Sudan. Contemporary culture is thriving and one of the distinguished contemporary figures perhaps its most celebrated citizen worldwide is the artist Ibrahim El-Salahi (1930). He has major exhibitions under his belt at the Tate Modern, Ashmolean Museum and Moma among others. And in literature, you ought to read the multi award winning author Leila Aboulela.

Now is a very exciting moment in Sudanese history. It is the beginning of a new phase where the country will be stabilising commercial relationships with the global markets. The one thing I can vouch for, after what I've seen and from the selective industry leaders I have met, who have built great generation-to-generation family businesses, is that they have very deep roots and set very solid grounds for the future. **F**



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