



# Diaspora engagement mapping SUDAN

## Facts & figures

Terminology: Sudan refers to its diaspora as 'Sudanese working abroad' (Arabic: السودانيون العاملون بالخارج *as-sudāniyyūn al-‘āmilūn bi-l-khārij*) or 'expatriates' (Arabic: المغتربون *al-mughtaribūn*). The term diaspora is also used informally.

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.91%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **1,000**

### Voting from abroad<sup>3</sup>:

At embassies/consulates



### Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

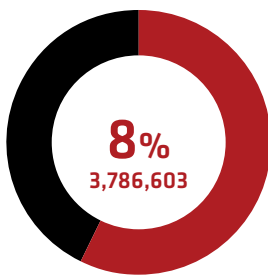
### Emigration



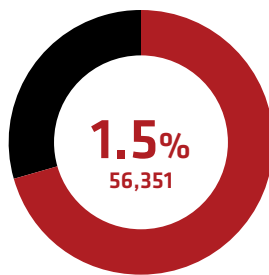
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 57.3%  
♀ 42.7%



♂ 70.6%  
♀ 29.4%

### Top countries of destination



Chad	1,071,034
Saudi Arabia	895,646
South Sudan	608,817
Egypt	500,000
Uganda	141,990

## Sudan does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

Although the Cabinet Office is due to start developing one in the course of 2020.<sup>4</sup>

1 [http://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/South\\_Sudan\\_Act\\_2011.pdf](http://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/South_Sudan_Act_2011.pdf) No restrictions on dual citizenship are laid down in Sudanese law. However, Article 10 of the Sudanese Nationality Act Amendment of 2011 states that Sudanese nationality shall automatically be revoked if a person acquires the nationality of South Sudan.

2 National Elections Act, 2012 Act. No. 39 April 2012. See also: <https://dr.211check.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/The-NEA-2012-Amendment-Act-2023-Signed-copy.pdf> The right to vote for those living abroad extends to presidential elections and referendums.

3 Ibid.

4 Personal communication, SSWA, June 2020

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1997 ● **Sudan Labour Code** requires all Sudanese who wish to work abroad to register with and gain permission from the Ministry of Labour and Manpower.<sup>5</sup>
- 1998 ● **Organisation of the Affairs of Sudanese Working Abroad Act** regulates emigration of Sudanese. Article 4 of the Act created the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA), a department of the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, as the lead agency for diaspora engagement in Sudan (see below).<sup>6</sup>
- 2003 ● **Passports and Immigration Act** sets out entry and exit requirements from Sudan for Sudanese and foreigners. This also required all Sudanese seeking to leave the country to obtain an exit visa and leave through an approved port of entry.<sup>7</sup> Exit visa charges were paid to the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad, although these were abolished in May 2020.<sup>8</sup>
- 2015 ● **The Five-Year Programme for Economic Reform 2015-2019** includes references to increasing remittances flows and savings flows from Sudanese working abroad into the national banking system by stabilising and unifying the exchange rate.<sup>9</sup>
- 2007  
▼  
2031 ● **Twenty-Five year National Strategy 2007-2031** places diaspora as an important factor in developing the external labour market. They see a role in connecting people working outside the country in locating solutions to address the problems and concerns within the country. The strategy also has a view to harnessing diaspora skills to work towards sustainable development, potential investment and to train Sudanese in specialised skills.<sup>10</sup>
- 2021  
▼  
2023 ● **Sudan Poverty Reduction Paper** recognises diaspora or Sudanese Migrants Abroad as important contributors during humanitarian crisis and as part of a social safety net.

### » Trends

From the 2000s onwards, Sudan has worked to engage its diaspora both to maintain and increase diaspora financial flows into the country, and to stem brain-drain. Sudanese diaspora professionals and investors are active in the country.<sup>11</sup> Sudan has also sought to work with its diaspora to undertake lobbying and advocacy in countries of residence for sanctions on the country to be overturned, in particular the restrictions on importation of medicines and medical equipment that remain largely in place.

Following a coup d'état and a popular uprising against the military regime in 2019, Sudanese diaspora groups and networks were involved in advising the popular uprising and the newly formed Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) alliance in relation to advocacy, governance, and media outreach.<sup>12 13</sup>

5 Full text in English (unofficial translation) available at: <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/2152/Labour%20Code%201997.pdf>

6 Personal communication, SSWA, May 2010 (I am awaiting a copy of the original text); See also Venturini, A. and Fargues, P (2015), *Migration from North Africa and the Middle East: Skilled Migrants, Development and Globalisation*, London: Bloomsbury

7 <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/0ddd19/pdf/> .

8 Personal communication, SSWA May 2010

9 Full English text available at: <https://www.cabri-sbo.org/en/documents/the-five-year-programme-for-economic-reform-2015-2019>

10 <https://andp.unescwa.org/plans/1249#:~:text=The%20Twenty%2DFive%2DYear%20National%20Strategy%20aims%20to%20continue%20building.codes%20and%20settled%20cultural%20traditions>

11 For example, see: <https://www.anasudan.net/> ; <https://sudannextgen.com> ;

12 For example, see: <https://www.amelproject.org/> ; <https://twitter.com/ahmedadam4sudan> ; <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/dreamville-artist-bas-sudan-activism> ; <https://blog.alusb.com/sudan-bukra-an-innovative-solution-to-freedom-of-speech-in-sudan/> ; [https://twitter.com/sudan\\_bukra](https://twitter.com/sudan_bukra) ;

13 This new political landscape promises to create an environment that is more enabling for diaspora engagement. Indeed, the civilian government includes several diasporans, including Prime Minister Hamdok. himself. See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/abdalla-hamdok-sudan-prime-minister-190821104935717.html>

The Government of Sudan has since invited the Sudanese diaspora to participate in building a new Sudan. It was due to start developing a formal diaspora policy in 2020 and also to consult with its diaspora around the world to develop new schemes and incentives to encourage diaspora resource flows, skills transfer, and productive return.

The onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 has lent this outreach an added urgency, and Sudanese health professionals based in Canada, the UK, and the US as well as Gulf states have been active in mobilising medical and other supplies.<sup>14</sup> In April 2020, Prime Minister Hamdok launched the 'Stand for Sudan' campaign, calling on Sudanese nationals around the world to contribute financially to support the country's economy during a time of crisis.<sup>15</sup>

The Sudanese government, the UN, the EU, and international partners and donors to Sudan met in Berlin at the Sudan Partners' Forum in June 2020 to discuss a \$1.8 billion assistance package to Sudan, as well as political support for the transition government. The Sudanese diaspora was identified as a partner in Sudan's development by the Forum.<sup>16</sup>



## Achievements

Sudan has sought to engage its diaspora to increase diaspora financial flows (remittances and investments), skills transfer, and productive return since the late 1990s, partly in response to international sanctions on the country. To achieve this, it established the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA) to serve as a point of contact with the diaspora, whose website contains links to investment and other opportunities aimed at the diaspora.

The requirement to purchase an exit visa – and pay outstanding taxes – in order to leave the country had long been a complaint of Sudanese emigrants and was increasingly out of step with policy in other African states. In May 2020, the government abolished the exit visa system entirely to facilitate greater diaspora circular migration.<sup>17</sup>

Sudan has also negotiated bilateral health worker agreements with Ireland and Saudi Arabia with the aim of managing migratory flows and addressing brain-drain by providing training placements for Sudanese residents, and short locum modalities for Sudanese specialists in addition to institutional links in both countries.

Sudan has established a National Fund, administered by SSWA, to support repatriation of returnees and their families and children and to help them to reintegrate into society.<sup>18</sup> Sudan has also worked with IOM and the EU as part of the Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration of Returnees to improve protections for returning migrants and diaspora returnees from states in the MENA region, most recently in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>19,20</sup>

14 Personal communication, Sudanese Doctor's Union

15 <https://500wordsmag.com/sudan-news/sudan-launches-stand-for-sudan-campaign/#:~:text=On%20%20April%202020%2C%20Prime,to%20support%20the%20country%27s%20economy>

16 [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20200625\\_joint\\_communique\\_-\\_sudan\\_partnership\\_conference\\_0.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20200625_joint_communique_-_sudan_partnership_conference_0.pdf)

17 Personal communication, Shabaka, July 2020

18 Ibid; see also: <https://grfdt.com/AbstractDetails.aspx?TabId=2189>

19 <https://www.iom.int/news/sudan-launches-joint-initiative-migrant-protection-and-reintegration-returnees>

20 <https://sudan.iom.int/news/sudan-prepares-receive-returning-nationals>

## Obstacles



- **Lack of trust:** Even after the 2019 revolution, there remains significant distrust between the diaspora and the Sudanese government, in particular distrust of Sudanese government representatives in countries of residence remains as embassy staff have largely remained the same. SSWA was also mistrusted for being the agency responsible for charging the Sudanese diaspora for exit visas and National Contribution payments.<sup>21</sup>
- **Lack of information:** The Sudanese diaspora faces a lack of readily available information on investments, volunteering, and skills transfers' opportunities. The SSWA website is only available in Arabic, which many in the diaspora outside the Gulf States do not read.
- **Lack of capacity for diaspora engagement:** The Sudanese government lacks resources and capacity to facilitate engagement with Sudan's diaspora as effectively as possible. There is also sometimes poor coordination between SSWA and diaspora initiatives.

## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



### Enhancing regional remittance flows 2021

#### REMITTANCES

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) entered into a two-year agreement in May 2021 to support the harmonization of remittance policies across the IGAD countries including Sudan. The government of Sudan will work with UNCDF and IGAD to map out all the relevant policies and regulations. These efforts are all ultimately aimed at keeping remittances flowing and shifting more of them from the informal unregulated networks and into safe, regulated, and transparent channels. This work is also supported by Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, as part of its broad strategy of engagement with African stakeholders including the African Institute of Remittances (AIR), the African Union, and the regional economic communities.

### SSWA Stand for Sudan Webinars

#### NETWORKING + PARTNERSHIPS

SSWA organises diaspora conferences in Sudan, attended by representatives of diaspora groups and professional networks, as well as officials from different ministries, to discuss ways of increasing diaspora participation in the country's development in different sectors. The conferences make recommendations to SSWA for programmes and initiatives to be developed and implemented.

In July 2020 SSWA started a series of online diaspora engagement and consultation events targeting the diaspora in the MENA region, Europe, and North America. These events took place as part of Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok's 'Stand for Sudan' national campaign, which calls on Sudanese diaspora around the world to contribute to support the country's development financially during the current COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication, Shabaka, July 2020

<sup>22</sup> <http://500wordsmag.com/sudan-news/sudan-launches-stand-for-sudan-campaign/>

## Sudanese Partnership for Knowledge Transfer by Expatriate Nationals (SPaKTEN) 2015-present

To address the problem of brain drain in the country, SSWA launched the SPaKTEN initiative to recruit Sudanese diaspora experts for short-term consultancy assignments in Sudan in different sectors, including specialists in medicine, education, agriculture and livestock management, engineering, environment, and energy, IT, finance, and other sectors of strategic importance to Sudan's development. The SPaKTEN network is comprised of 215 experts based in 34 different countries. Experts typically undertake assignments of 2-3 weeks and are paid travel, expenses, and a small stipend.

HUMAN CAPITAL

## Sudanese Diaspora Health Professionals' Networks 2020

Networks of Sudanese health professional based in Australia, Canada, [Ireland](#), New Zealand, the [UK](#), the [US](#), and Qatar, such as the Sudan Doctors' Union, have mobilised to support the country's health system during the Coronavirus pandemic. Working closely with the Sudan Ministry of Health (MoH), they are mobilising resources and transporting medical supplies and equipment to Sudan, translating and providing guidance on treating COVID-19 to medical staff in the country, and advising MoH officials on COVID-19 preparedness, both remotely and on the ground. In addition, they are conducting lobbying and advocacy of international partners for a lifting of economic sanctions on Sudan during the global public health crisis.

HEALTH

## Diaspora Development and Humanitarian Expertise 2015-present

Diaspora professional networks and research groups are active in organising events and conferences, especially in relation to knowledge transfer and development. The Sudan Research Group (SRG) and [Sudan Knowledge \(SK\)](#) bring together Sudanese diaspora and other experts from across the world to discuss issues relating to sustainable development, science and technology management in Sudan. Similarly, Sudan Development and Humanitarian Professionals is a networking and knowledge exchange platform to share opportunities, knowledge, experiences, and skills focussed on the aid sector. [Shabaka](#) undertakes research on diaspora development and humanitarian response, and advises the Sudanese and other governments in Africa and Europe.

NETWORKING & KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

## [The Nubian Initiative 2018](#)

The Nubian Initiative (TNI) is a US-based Nubian diaspora initiative that runs trans-boundary projects on Nubian cultural preservation and sustainable socioeconomic development efforts. It produces online multimedia archives to represent the endangered Nubian history, archaeology and culture, and engages local communities, particularly youth, in viable socio-economic projects, specifically focused on Green Economy and Sustainability. TNI also supports local and international entrepreneurial efforts towards sustainable tourism in Nubia.

CULTURE + TOURISM

## [The Sudan Crisis Coordination Unit \(SCCU\) 2023](#)

Shabaka launched the SCCU coordinates resources and efforts among diverse stakeholders addressing the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. The unit offers information, guidance, and support to diaspora organisations, humanitarian aid agencies, local civil society groups, government agencies, and first responders. Emphasising effective partnerships and capacity building for localised aid delivery, the SCCU's overarching goal is to ensure a more effective and efficient crisis response, maximising the impact of available resources.

HUMANITARIAN AID



INVESTMENT

Rhino Investment 2022 - ongoing

Launched by the Sudan-based innovation hub, 249Startups, Rhino Investment is a funding mechanism aiming to create an inclusive Sudanese entrepreneurial ecosystem, cultivating sustainable startups and SMEs as well as encouraging youth empowerment and job creation. Through its impact funding instrument, Rhino Investment brings together the networks of investors in Sudan and across the Sudanese diaspora to actively co-invest and facilitate the scaling of local Sudanese startups.

## Annex: List of actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### **African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) 2008**

AU-CIDO is responsible for implementing the AU's engagement with non-state actors through the involvement of the diaspora and civil society. Sudan nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country at AU Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) Continental Meetings.

#### **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 1996**

IGAD works to promote regional cooperation and integration to add value to Member States' efforts in achieving peace, security and prosperity. Its Regional Strategy 2016-2020 acknowledges the participation of the diaspora in fostering development in the region.<sup>23</sup>

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

#### **Ministry of Cabinet Affairs 2019**

The Ministry of Cabinet Affairs is the lead ministry for diaspora engagement in Sudan.

- At sub-ministerial level

#### **Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA) 1998**

SSWA sits within the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and is responsible for diaspora affairs, policy development, and coordination of diaspora services. SSWA provides a one-stop service centre for the diaspora in Sudan, and e-services for the diaspora abroad in relation to registrations and ID cards, payment of the National Contribution and zakat, and information on investment and skills transfer opportunities, as well as cultural and heritage activities.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Sudan Centre for Migration, Development, and Population Studies 2019**

SSWA established the Sudan Centre for Migration, Development, and Population Studies in 2019 to conduct research and monitor population movements to and from Sudan, exploring their economic, social, psychological, health and security implications.

<sup>23</sup> IGAD Regional Strategy Volume 1: The Framework, available at: <https://igad.int/documents/8-igad-rs-framework-final-v11/file> IGAD members also endorsed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region in February 2020, and are working towards its full adoption, see: <https://igad.int/divisions/health-and-social-development/2016-05-24-03-16-37/2373-protocol-on-free-movement-of-persons-endorse-at-ministerial-meeting>.

<sup>24</sup> SSWA publishes an e-magazine in Arabic, *Afāq al-Hijrah* ('Migration Horizons') on migration and diaspora related issues in Sudan, see: <https://www.flipsnack.com/sswa2017/16.html>

## Diaspora organisations in Europe

Read more about diaspora organisations in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)"



**Ana Sudan** 2020 Germany UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Ana Sudan ('I am Sudan') is a network of diaspora professionals with members from multiple locations around the globe (Sudan, USA, Canada, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand) that works to mobilise human and financial resources for development projects in Sudan. They support education and mentoring initiatives in Sudan, as well as tree planting and rural development projects, and local infrastructure projects.

**Al-Sudaniya Mentoring (ASM)** 2013 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

ASM is an initiative that was established to empower, engage, and inspire young Sudanese women to develop their personal and professional skills to become pioneering leaders of the future. Mentees on the programme apply the skills and knowledge they have gained to implement projects in areas such as women's rights, education, and technology to give back to their community.

**Church Association for Sudan and South Sudan (CASS)** 2018<sup>25</sup> UK

- ☑ **Development activities**

CASS supports the ministry of the churches in Sudan and South Sudan, provides grants and training to pastors, and undertakes community development and educational activities in local communities in both countries.

**Darfur Union in the United Kingdom (DUUK)** UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

DUUK is a civil society organisation that acts as advocate for the people of Darfur in Sudan, and mobilises public awareness of the Darfur issue. It collaborates with NGOs and sister Sudanese organisations to build a platform for a peaceful Sudan.

**Shabaka** 2014 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Shabaka – the name of a Nubian pharaoh as well as the Arabic for 'network' – is a Sudanese diaspora social enterprise based in the UK that provides research and consultancy services to corporate, NGO, community, and government sectors in Africa and Europe. These include research and training on diasporas, migration and development, and protection and humanitarian action worldwide, with a focus on Sudan, the Horn of Africa, and the MENA region.

<sup>25</sup> CASS was founded over 60 years ago but was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in the UK

### **St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church** 1991 [UK](#)

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church serves the large Sudanese Coptic community in Brighton and Hove, the largest such community in Europe.<sup>26</sup> The church provides educational services and poverty relief for community members, and mobilise resources for local community development projects in Sudan.

### **Sudanese Community and Information Centre (SCIC)** 1989 [UK](#)

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

SCIC is a registered charity based in London. It works to empower the Sudanese community in the UK and in Sudan through providing assistance to migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and weekend community schools and after school clubs for diaspora youth. In Sudan, SCIC collaborates with INGOs working in Sudan in the provision of relief to displaced communities, education, health, empowerment of women and rural development.

### **Sudanese Doctors' Union (SDU)** 1976 [Ireland](#) [UK](#)

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

SDU-IE and SDU-UK are networks of Sudanese health professionals working in Ireland and the UK. They provide knowledge and skills transfer via regular volunteering and training projects in Sudan and mobilise resources and medical equipment to support the health system in Sudan, which has been crippled by years of sanctions.

### **Sudan Uprising** 2019 [Germany](#)

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Sudan Uprising was founded during the 2019 revolution to provide community advocacy and media outreach in Sudan, Germany, and the UK. It also mobilises resources for community projects in Sudan.

### **Sudan Women's Association (SWA)** 1996 [UK](#)

- ☑ **Integration activities**

SWA offers services and holds activities for Sudanese women and children, such as English as a Second Language (ESOL) and IT classes, social and cultural events to recognise and celebrate Sudanese culture, and employability training.

<sup>26</sup> Brighton and Hove Council (2018), *International Migrant in Brighton & Hove - 8Part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment programme* available at: <https://phantom.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=123725>

## Sudanese Diaspora Network (SDN) 2019 Global

SDN is a global youth-led network, serving as a global hub to unify, mobilise, and empower youth towards a better and more sustainable Sudan. It provides a platform for diaspora organisations to build alliances, share resources, and collectively mobilise to achieve common goals, including rebuilding Sudan through development and relief projects.

## Women's Education Partnership 2000 UK

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Women's Education Partnership runs women's literacy classes and provides university scholarships in Sudan and South Sudan, and educational scholarships for orphans whose families are affected by HIV/AIDS. Its Eye Care Outreach provides vital medical services to people in the Nuba region, including support to people living with HIV/AIDS. It also provides solar lighting panels for literacy classes, community centres and clinics.

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Edited by: **EUDiF**  
October 2020  
Updated August 2025



Implemented by



Funded by  
the European Union

