



# PREFACE:

## RECONNECTING UNIVERSITIES WITH THE DISCOURSE OF SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN SUDAN

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Over the years, the Sudanese Diaspora across the world has given rise to a large body of literature that has mobilized the interest of scholars on a wide range of issues relating to the Diaspora both within the Sudanese community and internationally. In this context, the role of the Sudanese Diaspora in technology transfer and achieving sustainable development (SD) in Sudan has been discussed and documented in the **first International Diaspora conference** in 2009.

This book includes the best papers presented during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sudanese International Conference of World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD), hosted by SPRU – Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom in the period 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The different chapters selected have tremendous scope in both focus and source, covering a broad geographical spectrum from across the world focusing on how we can manage knowledge effectively to achieve a sustainable inclusive growth in Sudan.

The main objective of the Diaspora conference is to provide a forum for researchers, professionals and scholars of diverse interests and backgrounds to engage in discussions on innovative approaches to the challenges facing the future of Sudan and the Sudanese Diaspora across the world. The conference brought together intellectual and practice-based contributors who have examined the concepts of science and technology as an innovative approach to achieve a sustainable inclusive growth in Sudan. Participants also explored the full range of Sudanese Diaspora across the world in charting the way forward.

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A critical focus of the conference has been placed on reconnecting Sudanese academic and research institutions with the discourse of sustainable inclusive growth. As knowledge production sites, the University's engagement in national economic growth and the broader development agenda is nothing new. Ever since the beginning of modern science, knowledge has been sought from the University and today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth – or poverty – of nations depends on the quality of its higher education. According to UNESCO, universities are not just for teaching purposes, but also contribute through research in science and technology and in the social and human sciences, to the advance of knowledge, to the creation of new knowledge, to cultural development and fulfilment, to the solving of the problems with which the society is faced, to SD.

There are clearly opportunities for academic and research institutions and societies in Sudan to contribute more effectively towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SD. At all levels and on all scales of endeavour, the role of universities and research institutions is crucial to resolve the economic, social and environmental problems that make current development paths unsustainable. Sudanese universities and research institutions can make a leading contribution to tackling major problems such as: fighting disease; overpopulation and urbanisation; the digital/information divide and the impacts of information technology systems on world financial markets; coping with climate change; confronting the water crisis; defending the soil; preserving forests, fisheries and biodiversity; trade in biotechnological products and building a new ethic of global stewardship.

However Sudanese universities are not considered as integral elements of national research system and the policies which guide collaboration between universities and research institutions are lacking. The reasons for such not very strong linkages include: missing national research policy; differing research objectives; differing research activities; missing information on ongoing and proposed research; differing organisational structure, especially with regard to planning, coordinating, and monitoring and evaluation; differing qualifications of staff members (degree-level or specialisation); differing reward systems; their belonging to different ministries with different budgets, rules, regulations, and demands; traditional linkages with different institutions (with different objectives); missing formal linkages; missing incentives for staff members to link (assumption that costs are higher than benefits) as well as competition for available research resources between the institutions.

Governments everywhere expect the universities and research institutions to fulfil their role as major agents in the realisation of the MDGs and achieving SD. Therefore Sudanese universities and research institutions are under increasing governmental pressure to make direct, visible, and relevant contributions to SD strategies.

Whilst there has been a tremendous growth in size, the expansion of higher education in Sudan has caused average quality of education to decline as resources are stretched increasingly thin. Essentially, the expansion has been less differentiated and, therefore, ill-planned to confront emergent development needs. Rather, what is evident is a stupendous replication of traditional disciplinary-based techniques of knowledge production. These have,

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nevertheless, increased the richness of knowledge about the universe we live in but without apparently translating or transforming the catchment societal environments in terms of measurable productive capacities. There are also grave concerns that higher education in Sudan is becoming increasingly obsolete which, in part, is why development programmes are stultified even from the outset. Therefore, Sudanese universities must confront the 'new realities' evident in the environments in which they operate.

The different chapters of the book aim to discuss a range of questions relating to strengthening the linkages between universities and research institutions as well as reconnecting these institutions to the SD discourse by exploring the role of universities and research institutions in achieving the MDGs and SD in Sudan. In doing so, a number of issues relating to the role and relevance of universities and research institutions to the contemporary discourse of Sudan's development will be examined such as:

- *What is the role of Sudan's university sector and research institutions in supporting and enhancing the process of economic and social development in the country?*
- *What are the major obstacles that universities and research institutions face in Sudan?*
- *Are there governmental components to these? If so what?*
- *Are there societal components to these? If so what?*
- *How can these obstacles best be overcome?*

It is hoped that the different chapters in the book will help develop a framework for the analysis of the role of Sudanese academic and research institutions in achieving MDGs and help policy-makers to construct an "ideal role" for universities and research institutions in Sudan and outlines how performance can be evaluated in pursuit of the goals of sustainable inclusive growth.

Finally, we would like to congratulate the authors for their valuable contribution and we are grateful to our track chairs and many reviewers for graciously offering their invaluable comments that have enriched the quality of the papers in this book and also for making available to us their valuable time and efforts. Our most sincere thanks go to all of the keynote speakers and presenters who shared with us their expertise and knowledge.

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