

Business & Economy

SUDAN ECONOMIC POTENTIAL & DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

Sudan is an Afro-Arab country of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. It enjoys a remarkable strategic location in the center of the African continent that marks a melding point between Arabs and sub-Saharan peoples. The country shares extensive borders with nine countries of Northern, Central, Eastern and Western Africa. Such juxtaposition engenders a mix of trade, culture, social, ethnic and other human ties built through history.

Current estimates put the population in excess of 30 million with estimated annual growth rate of 2.6% and a population density of 10.2 per km², though this figure masks wide variation with respect to effective population density on arable land which exceeds 50 persons per km². About 67% of the population live in rural areas while 33% live in urban areas. The demographic characteristics of the country indicate a young population structure with the number of population under 15 years accounts for about 45% of total population, according to the last Census of 1993. Total estimated labor force accounts for 9 million with increasing female participation in economic activities. Unemployed people represent about 15% of the total labor force. Employment structure since 1996 is dominated by agriculture followed by services, industry, transport and construction with 55%, 10%, 5%, 6% and 3% respectively. Broad agriculture and rural sector espouse about 77% of the labor force.

Agriculture remains the leading sector in the economy with an estimated contribution of 45% of GDP, and 85% of export earnings before the year 2000. The main export commodities are livestock (having potential animal wealth of about 128 million heads of sheep, goats, cattle and camels), sesame, groundnuts, cotton, vegetables, fruits, sugar and gum Arabic. Oil exports started in August and refined oil products and natural gas in July 2000.

In addition to its natural, agricultural and animal resources, Sudan abounds with potential mineral wealth of which petroleum, now exploited, is the most important with commercially proven and prospects for additional reserves. Gold mining and exports are on a rising trend while numerous minerals such as iron ore, copper, mica, zinc, chromate and manganese together with non-ferrous resources such as plaster, lime and black sand are also available in appreciable quantities and potentially tradable. This could pose a real base for industrial development.

The industrial sector still depends on agricultural raw materials inputs such as vegetable oil, sugar cane, cotton, hides, skins etc.. With more development of these natural resources agro-industrial potential investment opportunities will thrive and en-

courage manufacturing of agricultural-related means of production required for improving productivities of both plant and animal sectors.

ISSUES OF GOVERNANCE:

The Sudan Government is committed to adhere to the basic human rights enshrined in the divine laws and international covenants, ensuring the supremacy of society and its legitimate right to developing own indigenous democracy and peaceful exchange of power among the various partisan movement within the Federal System and united Sudan. Enforcing peace, restoring security and the rule of law, building confidence among all people and ensuring fair distribution of wealth and power are the main policy agenda of the Government. However, the rehabilitation of society's political, social and economic infrastructure are basic issues necessary to achieve peace, decent livelihood, fairness and justice together with fostering democracy among all citizens having different social, ethnic, religious and cultural background without discrimination.

ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT & PLANNING

Before 1990, economic management experienced serious difficulties in discharging the requisite task incumbent upon it. The weaknesses were both human and institutional. Sporadic attempts were made in the past to improve macroeconomic analysis, planning, programming and management capabilities; but these efforts were not sufficient to help decision makers to pursue prudent policy options.

1. The 3 years Economic Salvation Programme (ESP) of 1990/1992 had laid the ground for the espousal of a long-term Comprehensive National Strategy (CNS) covering the period 1992 – 2002. It is an indicative planning framework that merges all economic, social and political fabrics, espouses environmental considerations and recognizes the country's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. It calls for full collaboration between the Government at the the central and state levels, individual citizens and the society at large in fostering development and addressing the legitimate concerns of the people. This strategy has been implemented through three medium-term programmes. The formulation of such programmes takes on board the lessons learned and the experience gained in the preceding programme and accommodates the developments that are taking place at the national, regional and international levels.

2. With the CNS due for completion by the end of year 2002, the Government has initiated a medium-term Programme of Action (MPA) covering the period 2001 – 2010 as part of its commitment to adhere to the third UN Conference on LDCs framework for development which feed into the long range strategy (2003 – 2027) presently under preparation. The MPA accommodates the Second Presidential Term Programme (SPTP) which covers the period 2001 – 2006. Its main objectives are: to sustain the achievements of high rates of growth of the economy and create the conditions for the removal of impediments to growth of particularly the non-oil sectors and ensure that the benefits of growth are fairly distributed among the different States, sectors

and population strata with accentuation on least developed and war-affected areas and poverty specific issues.

3. It is expected that real growth rates of the economy will range between 6 – 7 % in the coming years and that inflation will be maintained at a ceiling of about 6 % before the end of the decade. Among the specific priorities envisaged are: the alleviation of some key bottlenecks protracting the economic transformation such as irrigation infrastructure, transportation network, electricity generation and transmission and basic social services deliveries of health, education and potable water supply and sanitation especially to the most needy. The Programme also is purported to continue sharpening structural reforms including public and private institutions, legal and regulatory frameworks and financial, monetary and trade reforms. Furthermore, the programme is poised to prepare the necessary conditions for the economy to meet the challenges of on-going rapid transformation to globalization, the information revolution and accumulating and rapid change in science and technology.

METHODS & MECHANISMS OF ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

Economic management of a liberalized economy requires human talents, motivated civil service and expedient mechanisms and modalities necessary to spawn the requisite strategies, policies, tools, instruments and procedures. The relationship between Government institutions at both central and State levels from one side and the private sector, civic community from the other side is developing into crisscross patterns. These developments are supposed to inspire constructive dialogue and exchange of views among all protagonists and people at large in the fields of policy formulation, programming and planning for socio-economic transformation and poverty reduction strategy formulation and implementation.

In order to overcome the then existing drawbacks in management and to cope with the changing economic environment at national and international tempos, institutional strengthening and manpower development programmes were designed and implemented at a wider spectrum of economic management field. A well-integrated system was established for policy analysis and macroeconomic modelling and planning. New institutional set-ups, computerization of information systems, computer networking establishments, upgrading of workforce and managerial structures have all led to effective implementation of economic reform programmes and expedited the decision making process. Such an environment is capable of spawning innovative and intellectual policies and the relevant technologies necessary for the creation of a national competitive position.

The Ministry of Finance leads the process of micro- and macro-economic modelling and other modern scientific tools, methods, instruments and procedures for economic management within joint mechanisms involving public and private sector agencies concerned. Such methods of economic management have helped redressing issues arising from country, regional and international developments. Human and managerial capacities of the Ministry in this respect have notably improved to the extent that a number of

the IMF reports contain high praise to the Ministry.

It is worth mentioning that Sudan continued experience in macro-economic modeling and analysis have led to enhancing both human and institutional capacity building, improved debt management and facilitated the transmission of information required for policy makers to pursue prudent self-reliance policy options congruent with sustainable economic development; and that do not contradict with international interdependence but transcends fair and just foreign relations. Furthermore, Such policy orientation denotes own ability to cluster country specific advantages and allows the government to take independent policy decisions.

Government Ministries and agencies including the Ministry of Finance prepare their respective annual work plans in order to implement national policies and execute the general budget in light of approved economic and social objectives and priorities in the different fields. This includes institutional strengthening and human and managerial capacity building for effective implementation of identified activities. The work plans also stipulates performance criteria for measuring economic and social performance and requires the production of periodic reviews, evaluation and monitoring reports depicting management and performance constraints encountered with proposed remedial actions to be taken.

In this regard, a new institutional structure for the Ministry of Finance has been adopted in 2001 as a step towards implementing the program of the SPT. The

restructuring adds three new administrative sectors: the Resources Sector; the Social Sector and, the Rural and South Sector. That is in addition to the Fiscal and Budget Sector, the Directorate General of Macroeconomic Policies and Programs, the Directorate General of Financial and Administrative Affairs, the Directorate General of National Accounts and Internal Audit.