

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