

# Towards a people-centered industrial policy

*The Institute for Industrial Policy Studies, at the Industrial Research and Consultation Center (IRCC), organized a brainstorming event, in the form of a roundtable, titled "For Strategic Action to Develop Industry In Sudan In Accordance With The Sustainable Development Goals." The event took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 2-3, 2021.*

*As per the event's title and in accordance with the efforts made among a number of partners (the Federal Ministry of Industry, the Khartoum State Ministry of Industry, the UNIDO Sudan Office, and the IRCC) to achieve sustainable industrial development, and out of the belief in the necessity of having strategic and policy action with specific parameters, goals and objectives. The Round Table sought to "[W]ork toward developing a consensus framework that helps direct industrial policy recommendations, according to a flexible industrial strategic direction, in order to enhance the role of the industrial sector and increase its contribution to economic development in Sudan."*

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Any serious efforts towards establishing an industrial policy for Sudan requires beginning by defining the framework of this policy and its general determinants. To achieve this, the Institute of Industrial Policy Studies, at the Center for Industrial Research and Consultation, organized in February 2021 a brainstorming event, in a round-table program entitled "For Strategic Action to Develop Industry In Sudan In Accordance With The Sustainable Development Goals."". Through this platform, the Institute sought "to work towards developing a consensus framework that helps direct industrial policy recommendations, according to a flexible industrial strategic direction, in order to enhance the role of the industrial sector and increase its contribution to economic development in Sudan." as mentioned in his report published on the center's website, alongside the papers presented in the program. The papers presented within the program listed a number of principles that can be adopted as basic determinants and frameworks for the process of setting industrial policy. These principles are 1) the comprehensiveness and sustainability of industrial policy so that its benefits include various segments of society and do not negatively affect the well-being of future generations and the future of the country. 2) Using the scientific method and tools in comparison, decision-making, and policy development, and 3) Emphasizing the role of the state in directing industrial development through industrial policy tools. We emphasize the substance and importance of these three determinants, and we also add to them a fourth aspect that we consider necessary for the completion of this framework, that is the prioritization of people's lives and the well-being of current as well as future generations as a basic determinant in the comparison between policies. We believe that it is necessary to establish this point, especially in light of the current structure of the Sudanese economy. Livestock and extractive industries constitute the bulk of the Sudanese economy, and all of them - to varying degrees - are sectors with environmental, social and economic implications that must be paid attention to. The high economic returns of these industries pose a threat to the interests of the communities and individuals who are affected by them, as they may increase the

resistance of decision makers to adequately weigh in the interests of societies if they conflict with trends that achieve high profits within the industry in question. The possibility of this risk increases as the country's economic conditions deteriorate and the need to quickly maximize revenues increases. This has happened before in Sudan's recent and distant history. A people-centered approach must be agreed upon when working and thinking about industrial policy to achieve real progress.

There is no single formula for what it means to adopt the principle of the priority of human life. This formula is determined by the material circumstances surrounding the economic issue, like other general principles such as justice, freedom, and peace. In the following paragraphs, we mention two examples of the implications of the principle of "priority of human life" in setting industrial policies, and we hope that they will contribute to initiating broader discussions about the general principles of building a new Sudan and the practical methods which can be put in place to implement them in the reality of people in need.

## Resources do not come from nowhere

The process of industrial transformation is based on diverting part of the country's resources towards industrialization and establishing necessary supporting infrastructure for manufacturing operations. These transferred resources often consist of a mixture of previously unused resources in addition to resources that are transferred from other economic activities towards manufacturing activities. Sudan has a long history of internal conflicts and human disasters resulting from ill-conceived transfers of resources from one economic activity to another. There are many examples of this, including disputes over lands converted from pastoral to agricultural use or vice versa, and displacement from lands converted from residential use to mining activities, dam construction, or others. An abundance of examples of failures in transferring resources is available within a wide spectrum -in geography and type- of the total Sudanese crises, and they are united by one strategic and principled error, that is the error of handling development projects as projects that exist in a vacuum without regard to the "indigenous people" and their influential ways of life that are affected by the development process. We can also describe this as handling development projects as green field projects, which are projects that lack constraints imposed by prior work. For example, establishing a factory on vacant land – a simplified example- is a greenfield project, unlike adding a brownfield project such as building and new mechanisms to an existing factory, which means the project was preceded by work on the same area. These technical descriptions commonly used in project management and construction projects provide good frameworks for understanding two contrasting approaches to development in Sudan. We see that the trend towards looking at the development process as a whole and the industrial development process in particular as a green field project is a feature that has dominated planning in Sudan for decades, and perhaps since the establishment of the state, with rare exceptions. This approach deals with available resources - land, water, labor, finance - without regard to their previous uses for the particular project. The colonial aspects of this approach are clear in the manners by which it devalues the lives and well-being of indigenous people. On the other hand, we find that understanding, researching, and designing industrial policies and development projects as "brown field" projects places the current uses of resources at the center of the discussion. This approach helps planners better see the parties affected by their policies. Whether they are communities that currently use the land for various purposes, or an agricultural sector that currently utilizes labor which will shift towards industry, or unskilled labor that is currently doing work that will be mechanized through industrial development

or otherwise. Brownfield project management tools help us build a clear map of those affected by industrial policy by looking at the current story behind each resource we plan to use. These tools then help us see people and their reality and give them the appropriate weight within the planning process.

## The worker's hand is capable of disrupting work

It is an undisputed fact that labor is essential to the process of industrial transformation. Many also agree on the importance of training the Sudanese workforce to enable adequate contribution to a highly efficient production process with high-quality products. We see that there is another aspect to be considered regarding the impact of the workforce on the industrial development of the country. In its publication on the occasion of May 1, 2021, Labor Day, the Sudan Workers Bulletin mentioned 24 institutions in which protest activities were carried out by workers in the period from May 2020 to May 2021. These activities varied between protests, strikes, and others. The bulletin stated that what it collected did not exceed 15% of the labor incidents that took place during that period. It is not surprising that labor protests increase in periods when economic deterioration combines with spaces - even if only partial - for union activity and mass action. This is something that is logically expected and repeated in our history, which is full of economically failed transitional governments. On the other hand, we know that conditions of economic deterioration under dictatorships or security repression, whatever its form, which often lead to a decline in labor activities, do not mean that workers suddenly became satisfied with the economic situation. In fact, security repression pushes everyone – workers included - to create new channels to express their discontent or dissatisfaction. Workforce dissatisfaction turns into subtle forms of work disruption and reduced efficiency and quality. These acts are not necessarily, nor are most likely, intentional and planned acts of sabotage. They are just natural results of logical indignation at poverty and economic decline. The workers who receives a return for their work that is not sufficient for them; are tired workers, they works less efficiently, slower, with less attention to details, and even their ability to understand the requirements of the work and its steps will decline. The workers are also able to achieve impressive production efficiency rates on the “Bonus Day,” and this includes the most honest, professional, and keen-on-the-work. This includes the workplaces that monitor their workers the most, whether they monitor them through systems or directly through cameras. This includes everyone, including me, you, her, them, and all the masses of wage-earners. We as humans perform better when we are happier and more satisfied, -surprise!-. We conclude here, then, that achieving a minimum level of satisfaction for the workforce, in addition to being a direct reflection of the principle of the centrality of people and their humanity; It is also a principle that has a direct positive impact on production. We must therefore work to put achieving this minimum level of workforce satisfaction at the forefront of the planning process. We must also design indicators and determinants to study it and accompany it in planning in a serious manner. We must also ensure representation of the workforce and/or its interests at the planning and decision-making table.

Planners will face different questions - beyond the two examples presented above - throughout the process of setting industrial policies for Sudan, and if people's lives and well-being are not part of the answer, we believe that it will be an incomplete or perhaps destructive answer. We have lessons in our recent and ancient history regarding resource wars and poor or lack of planning. We present these general guidelines to the ongoing discussions, believing in the importance of studying them and the possibility of applying them to the reality of the technical tools, indicators and determinants used in planning.

We also believe that this application must be preceded by faith and a conscious commitment to the principle of the priority of people's lives; a people-centered approach, so that planners and all participants in the planning process, through fair representation of stakeholders, can accompany it through all questions of strategic planning in general and industrial policy development in particular.

#### *Round table documents*

Industrial Research and Consultation Center (IRCC) – Round table report April 2021 (Arabic) :  
<https://ircc.gov.sd/archives/852>

SUDAN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE – Towards Pro poor Inclusive & Sustainable Industrial Development – UNIDO: <https://ircc.gov.sd/archives/852>

Decision-making tools: an introduction to methodology and institutionalism – Gussai Sheikheldin (Arabic): <https://ircc.gov.sd/archives/852>

How to Develop a Sustainable Industrial Policy in Sudan – Dr. Atif Elgozali:  
<https://ircc.gov.sd/archives/852v>