

SUDAN

Sudan, situated in Northeast Africa is a country of immense diversity that is unique and complex in its climate, politics, environment, languages, cultures, religion and ethnicities.

Sudan is the third largest country on the African continent with a total area of 1,882,000 sq.km. The country has international borders with 7 states: Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad and Libya. The River Nile traverses the country from South to North while the Red Sea washes about 550 miles on eastern coast making Sudan a bridge between Africa and the Middle East.

The country faces a number of environmental challenges related to climate change including soil erosion, desertification and recurrent droughts. Agricultural expansion both public and private has proceeded without conservation measures. The consequences have manifested themselves in the form of deforestation, soil desiccation and the lowering of soil fertility and water tables in various parts of the country.

While the population of Sudan predominately descends from both indigenous African groups and Arabs, today most tribes in the country speak Arabic and the Arab culture predominates. Over 97% of the population of Sudan is Muslims with small Christian minority.

The Nile is very important in Sudan for watering crops and producing power. Most of the major towns and cities therefore lie along the river, including the capital, Khartoum.

The waters of the White Nile travel from Lake Victoria in Uganda, which is fed by other rivers further south. But the 'White Nile' itself starts at Lake No in South Sudan, from where the river makes its way northwards to Khartoum.

The Nile splits Khartoum into three cities- the old British-built center, the commercial area of Omduran on the west bank and the industrial Khartoum North on the north bank. Here, Suburbs spread out into the desert. There are also shanty towns and refugee camps on the outer edges.

Khartoum's name comes from the Arabic for 'elephant's trunk'; this is believed to stem from the narrow strip of land between the Blue and White Nile.