



## Editorial

# Sudan Medical Specialization Board Amidst Challenges

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Established in 1995, the Sudan Medical Specialization Board (SMSB) has long served as the cornerstone for postgraduate professional medical education in Sudan. However, the 2023 conflict presented unprecedented challenges to SMSB's operations, disrupting training, examinations, and administrative functions. This editorial highlights the Board's historical evolution, the strategies adopted to maintain operations during the conflict, and its forward-looking vision for recovery and resilience in post-conflict Sudan.

## 1. Historical Context

The SMSB was created to address the nation's growing need for specialized medical professionals. Complementing the Postgraduate Medical Studies Board at the University of Khartoum, established in 1978, the SMSB expanded on early postgraduate programs that began in 1953 with a diploma in Obstetrics and Gynecology. Over time, the Board introduced clinical degrees, addressing gaps in earlier master's programs. Today, SMSB offers clinical MDs, Masters, and post-MD Fellowships, integrating robust training and research components [1].

## 2. Impact of the 2023 Sudan Conflict

The conflict in Sudan, which erupted on April 15, 2023, has had grave consequences for all aspects of life, and SMSB was no exception. Key challenges included the displacement of trainees, faculty, and administrative staff and interruptions in training and examinations.

## 3. Strategies Adopted to Maintain Operations During the Conflict

### 3.1. Emergency relocation

In response, the SMSB relocated its headquarters to Wad Madani, the capital of Gezira State. However, continued violence necessitated further relocation to the Northern State, where support from local authorities and institutions enabled the establishment of a functional office. This rapid adaptability ensured that SMSB could continue its core functions.

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### 3.2. Graduation examinations

Conducting the final examinations presented logistic and financial challenges, particularly for candidates and staff displaced abroad. Nevertheless, the SMSB maintained its commitment to high standards, ensuring examinations adhered to traditional formats and involved external examiners. By January 2025, over 1600 residents had successfully graduated – a significant achievement under such circumstances.

### 3.3. Sustaining training during the conflict

To address disruptions in training, SMSB implemented innovative solutions:

- (i) Localized Training Placements: Trainees were instructed to join the nearest safely qualified health facility that met SMSB training criteria.
- (ii) International Collaboration: Efforts were made to place trainees in recognized postgraduate training sites abroad, though responses were limited.
- (iii) Validation Standards: Training quality was ensured through logbooks, workplace-based assessments, and specialty council reviews.
- (iv) Coordination for Trainee Support: SMSB center presidents in all states collaborated with local authorities to facilitate accommodation, transportation, and basic living facilities for trainees, enabling access to safe and

qualified training facilities. Special focus was given to trainees in procedural specialties, who were encouraged to return to secure areas within Sudan.

- (v) Entry Examinations and Slot Management: Entry examinations for various specialties were continued as planned. Specialty councils were directed to update data regarding vacant training slots to ensure effective management of training placements.

- (vi) Conflict-focused Research Initiatives: The thesis projects were essentially directed at addressing critical health challenges arising from the war, emphasizing innovative solutions, contributing to world experience, and advancing global medical science.

## 4. Conclusion

SMSB's resilience during the 2023 Sudan conflict is a testament to the dedication of its leadership, staff, and trainees. While challenges persist, the achievements made under these conditions provide a strong foundation for recovery and growth. Through strategic planning and sustained efforts, SMSB promises to continue its vital mission of nurturing skilled healthcare professionals for Sudan.

## References

- [1] Sudan Medical Specialization Board. (n.d.). *Homepage*. <https://www.smsb.gov.sd>