

In Kigali, a new generation of African doctors is taking shape at the University of Medical Sciences and Technology (UMST), where decades of Sudanese experience meet Rwanda's promise for the future.

Under the leadership of Dr. Mamoun Homeida, the Sudanese founder and chairman, UMST is more than a university—it is a bridge between nations, a catalyst for healthcare improvement, and a home for students displaced by conflict.



Prof. Mamoun Homeida, the founder and chairman of UMST

“Universities must maintain the highest academic standards. Education should be excellent, never compromised,” Dr. Homeida says. “Our strength lies in our 30-year heritage from Sudan. We came to Rwanda not to start from scratch, but to build on decades of proven excellence.”

Dr. Homeida's journey began decades ago in Sudan, where he earned his medical degree from the University of Khartoum in 1970 and later became a professor of internal medicine and gastroenterology. He also holds a Membership of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and briefly lectured at Bristol University in the U.K. before returning to Sudan. In 1996, he founded UMST in Khartoum, marking the country's first private university.

For Dr. Homeida, expanding UMST beyond Sudan was a natural progression. “Our vision was to spread our experience across the continent,” he explains. Rwanda became the first country outside Sudan to host a UMST campus, beginning a journey that combined education, healthcare service, and community engagement.

After acquiring land in Kigali and patiently navigating regulatory processes for nearly four years, the university officially opened its doors. In the meantime, the Frontier Medical Centre was established, becoming a well-known healthcare institution in the city.

“Our decision to come to Rwanda was never about Sudan's political turmoil,” Dr. Homeida says. “We began planning this four years before the war. The goal was always to expand African education, to bring excellence to other countries, and Rwanda was ideal for that mission.”



At the heart of UMST's philosophy is a curriculum that blends global medical standards with African realities. Dr. Homeida, who has worked across Africa since the 1990s, including as a consultant for the World Health Organization on diseases like river blindness, believes that education must reflect the needs of the continent. "We call it 'Go Africa,'" he says. "Sudan belongs to Africa. Our teaching integrates tropical medicine and regional health challenges, so our students are prepared not just globally, but locally as well."

Education in Africa, he notes, faces immense challenges. Many countries have too few universities for growing populations. Tanzania, for example, has roughly one university per six million people. "Quality higher education is the foundation of national development," he says. "As Mahathir Mohamad reflected about Malaysia, education transforms nations. Africa must uplift its universities if it hopes to progress economically and socially."

Rwanda, Dr. Homeida says, is uniquely welcoming to investors and educators. "The leadership here is practical and visionary. From the moment you arrive at the airport, you feel the openness and friendliness of the country. Regulations are supportive of genuine development, unlike places where bureaucracy slows progress."

Within two years of its establishment in Rwanda, UMST began actively contributing to the country's healthcare system. The university assisted the Ministry of Health in combating river blindness, drawing on decades of research and expertise. Scholarships for Rwandan students were introduced, and UMST's students participate in community service programs, visiting schools, prisons, and marketplaces to raise public health awareness.



UMST also partners with research institutions such as SIKIN, Rwanda's leading institute, and collaborates with the University of Rwanda, with staff serving as external examiners. These relationships, along with government support for scholarships and accreditation, allow the university to thrive and integrate meaningfully into Rwandan society.

"Education is about serving people," Dr. Homeida says. "Some of our consultants volunteer at Nyarugenge Hospital, and we've donated modern equipment like a \$40,000 ultrasound machine. We work together because, as the African proverb

says, 'If you want to go far, go together.'"

The university is also attentive to students' well-being, particularly those displaced by Sudan's conflict. Counseling services, a psychiatrist on staff, and a proactive Deanship of Student Affairs support students' accommodation, welfare, and mental health. The student union fosters community by organizing donations and supporting peers in need.

Mutassim Osama Mohammed Alhassan, a teaching assistant in pharmacy who arrived in Rwanda from Saudi Arabia three months ago, praises UMST's support.

"The university provides everything a student or teacher needs to succeed. English is our language of instruction, but Kinyarwanda lessons for first-year students help Sudanese students communicate and integrate into the local community."



Mutassim Osama Mohammed Alhassan, a teaching assistant in pharmacy

Medical student Alaa Ahmad Mustafa Nourgelir echoes this sentiment. Displaced from Sudan due to conflict, she describes Rwanda as "safe, welcoming, and empowering. Living and studying here has allowed me to become independent, to explore new cultures, and to make lifelong friends." She advises prospective students to respect local customs, learn the language, and embrace the independence that comes with studying abroad.

UMST's Kigali campus is fully operational and accredited by Rwanda's Higher Education Council. It offers state-of-the-art facilities and provides students practical experience through clinical rotations in six hospitals across Kigali and the country. With nearly 2,000 students from Rwanda, Sudan, Congo, and Tanzania, the university creates a "small Africa" that reflects both diversity and integration.

The university's vision extends beyond education. A 25–30 bed teaching hospital is under construction in Kanombe, equipped with modern facilities to train students and serve the community. "We are investing in human capital, producing doctors, engineers, and professionals who will build nations," Dr. Homeida says. "Development is the development of minds and skills."

UMST's Sudanese heritage, combined with its Rwandan presence, is a model of cross-border educational collaboration. Its faculties include medicine, dentistry,

medical laboratory science, pharmacy, and additional programs in healthcare administration and research. The university maintains international recognition while meeting local needs, contributing both to Rwanda's healthcare system and its economy. Families from around the world now send their children to study here, enhancing the country's reputation as a safe and progressive educational destination.

"Challenges remain, of course," Dr. Homeida admits. "Language learning and integration take time. But Rwanda has been exceptionally supportive, and we feel part of this society. UMST is here for the long term."

From Sudan to Rwanda, UMST demonstrates that education and innovation can cross borders, shape futures, and strengthen communities. With a mission grounded in excellence, social responsibility, and African identity, the university is not just training professionals—it is nurturing leaders who will transform the continent.



Mutassim Alhassan sums it up simply: "UMST gives students the tools to compete globally while remaining connected to Africa." Alaa Nourgelir agrees: "It's more than a university—it's a community, a home, and a Launchpad for our dreams."

For Dr. Homeida, that is exactly the point. "We came to Rwanda to sustain excellence, to promote African integration, and to support the development of education and healthcare. This is our vision for Africa's future, and we are committed to it fully."

Across Kigali, in lecture halls, labs, and community outreach programs, the next generation of African doctors is learning, serving, and innovating. And at the heart of it all is UMST, a Sudanese-born university now shaping Rwanda's and Africa's tomorrow.