

AfDB approves Desert-to-Power technical support programme

The African Development Bank (AfDB) recently approved a Desert-to-Power (D2P) technical support programme that aims to advance the rollout of solar generation in G5 Sahel countries. The Desert to Power initiative intends to turn the Sahel region into a renewable powerhouse, harnessing its solar potential to create the world's largest solar zone.



Image source: Gallo/Getty

Aimed to increase solar generation capacity by 10GW through on and off-grid projects, Desert to Power is expected to transform the livelihood of some 250 million people across the 11-state Sahel region. These activities are expected to address various challenges hampering the development of the energy sector in the G5 Sahel countries, including the lack of sufficient installed generation capacity, high reliance on imported fossil fuels and the inability of national grids to absorb larger amounts of variable renewable energy.

Technical assistance programme

The technical assistance, in the form of a \$5m grant from the Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA), has three main components:

- (i) technical studies for the integration of variable renewable energy (primarily solar) in national grids;
- (ii) feasibility studies for solar hybridisation of existing isolated grids; and
- (iii) capacity building to support Chad to integrate the first solar power project (Djermaya Solar PV IPP) in its national grid.

“This technical assistance programme responds directly to needs identified in the National Desert to Power Roadmaps of the G5 Sahel countries. It specifically addresses key bottlenecks for the large-scale deployment of solar projects, and will help prepare bankable projects for subsequent investments,” said Dr Daniel Schroth, acting director for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency at the African Development Bank.

The approval follows the fourth Africa Energy Market Place (AEMP) event held by the AfDB. The 8-10 December 2020 event focused on the G5 Sahel countries and successfully mobilised a broad coalition of technical and financial partners to support the initiative. The G5 countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger.

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