The Desert to Power project is a flagship initiative led by the African Development Bank to harness the vast solar power potential across the Sahel region. It connects 250 million people with electricity and solar resources. The project will transform the Sahel into the world’s largest solar production zone.
IMPACT IN THE G5 SAHEL COUNTRIES

+ 3 GW of new on-grid solar power production to be developed

$1.8 billion of savings attributed to the deployment of the solar projects

6.3 million households will have access to decentralized energy solutions

30 million equivalent to people in G5 Sahel countries
GAINING GROUND

Consistent with the African Development Bank’s High 5 priority of lighting up and powering Africa, Desert to Power aims to generate 10 gigawatts of solar energy by 2030 and to supply 250 million people in some of the poorest countries with green energy. At least 90 million people will be connected to electricity for the first time, enabling them to get out of poverty.

The initial focus for the Initiative is the group of G5 Sahel countries. This is where there will be the greatest impact. The G5 Sahel leaders present at the September 2019 Summit endorsed the African Development Bank’s goal and the overarching implementation plan. With their support, the Desert to Power implementation taskforce was established to act as the one-stop coordinating unit for Desert to Power operations.

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ROADMAPS

The joint taskforce, hosted by the African Development Bank, has been working with countries and international development partners and to identify viable projects, mobilize finance and develop national and regional roadmaps to make the Initiative a huge success.

Several plans have already been approved, including the Djermaya 32-megawatt solar photovoltaic (PV) project in Chad, which will be the first independent power producer project in the country. The African Development Bank is on track to meet the commitment that it made at the G5 Sahel Summit to mobilize $20 million for project preparation purposes. The Bank also held a successful Africa energy marketplace, focusing on solar power in the G5 Sahel countries. The event mobilized a broad coalition of technical and financial partners, who supported the roadmaps.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Thanks to the strong engagement of the G5 Sahel countries and strong partner support, the African Development Bank has made considerable progress over the past year – and this despite the Covid-19 pandemic having necessitated a reprioritization of operations supported by the Bank. Technical challenges have hampered the progress of some independent power producer projects. These challenges include credit and currency risks, and constraints related to tax and regulatory regimes. The African Development Bank is counting on sustained political goodwill and strong commitments from its partners to expedite the development of these important projects. The Bank is intent on accelerating the region’s access to sustainable, quality and affordable energy.
In October 2021, the African Development Bank received a $150 million investment in its Desert to Power G5 Financing Facility from the Green Climate Fund.

Mobilizing Resources and Working with Partners

The objective of the umbrella Desert to Power G5 Financing Facility is to assist the G5 Sahel countries – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger – to adopt a low-emission power generation path by making use of the region’s abundant solar potential. The Facility will mobilize $966 million over a seven-year implementation period.

Other funding has included:

- A $2.78 million grant from the African Development Bank Group’s Transition Facility Fund, approved in May 2020, to provide technical assistance and project preparation in Chad, Mali and Niger.

- More than $6 million from the African Development Fund (approved in the first quarter of 2021) for project preparation across the G5 Sahel countries.
The Sahel is one of the regions of the world which receives the highest amount of sunlight. Achieving universal access requires a connection to electricity for +30 million people in the G5 Sahel countries.