



BUILD BACK BETTER INITIATIVE · SUDAN & EAST AFRICA

Evidence for Resilience – Policy. Communities. Change.

3BI · CLIMATE & ENERGY ANALYSIS

The UN's New Grid "Accelerator" Is a Matchmaker, Not a Lifeline

Sudan's power grid is collapsing. The world's new fix for slow grids is an introduction to investors — not a check.

3BI RESEARCH TEAM

The UN's New Grid "Accelerator" Is a Matchmaker, Not a Lifeline — and Sudan Needs Cash, Not Introductions

Sudan's grid is collapsing. The world's new fix is an introduction, not a check.

Research Team

WWW.3BISUDAN.ORG



Contents

The Hook	1
The Argument	1
Why It Matters to the Reader	2
Close	2



The UN's new Global Grids Accelerator will broker deals to speed up electricity-grid investment worldwide, but it brings no new money and builds on a program Sudan isn't part of. Sudan's grid needs bridge financing now, not another multi-year pipeline.

The Hook

On September 23, 2026, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stood at the UN Climate Summit in New York and launched the Global Grids Accelerator, calling electricity grids "the arteries of the energy transition" (Guterres, UN Climate Summit, September 23, 2026). The pitch was simple: renewable power is being built faster than the wires needed to carry it, so the UN will broker deals between governments, development banks, and investors to speed up grid construction. It is the kind of announcement that reliably draws applause during UN General Assembly week and just as reliably fades from view within days. For Sudan, where the electricity grid is not merely lagging behind renewables but actively disintegrating, the launch is worth a harder look — because what the Accelerator does not do may matter more than what it does.

The Argument

First, the Accelerator is a broker, not a bank. According to Climate Home News' reporting on the launch (Climate Home News, September 23, 2026), the initiative "functions as a broker, not a financing institution" — it convenes UN agencies, multilateral development banks, investors, and utilities around grid priorities that governments themselves identify, and it announced no new funding. That distinction matters enormously for a country like Sudan, where the barrier to rebuilding the grid is not a shortage of technical plans but a shortage of money and the basic peace conditions investors require before they commit any. A matchmaking platform helps a government that already has bankable projects and investors it can be introduced to. It does very little for a government that cannot get an insurer or a lender into the room in the first place.

Second, the scale of the problem the Accelerator is responding to is real and growing — and Sudan sits outside the framework built to fix it. The International Energy Agency estimates roughly 2,500 gigawatts of renewable energy projects worldwide, nearly double the United States' total generation capacity, are stuck in grid connection queues (IEA data, cited in Climate Home News, September 23, 2026). The Accelerator's African component explicitly builds on Mission 300, the World Bank and African Development Bank's drive to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030. As of the World Bank's own Mission 300 materials, 36 African countries have launched National Energy Compacts under that initiative — and Sudan does not appear among the countries the World Bank names as having done so (World Bank, Mission 300 FAQ, accessed September 25, 2026). Sudan's absence is not surprising given the war, but it is consequential: a



country that is not inside Mission 300's compact process is also not positioned to benefit directly from an accelerator explicitly built to extend that process's reach.

The scale of what a broker-only model can achieve is visible even in far more stable settings. Climate Home News reports that between 2021 and 2025, 50 to 60 percent of renewable energy projects in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia were cancelled or stalled specifically because grid capacity could not absorb them (Climate Home News, September 23, 2026, citing IEA analysis) — and those are functioning economies with governments able to sign long-term power agreements and welcome foreign investors on ordinary terms. UNDP Administrator Alexander De Croo, addressing the launch, said grid projects need to be made "investable," acknowledging they require heavy upfront capital in exchange for a "stable return over the long-term" (De Croo, UN Climate Summit, September 23, 2026). That is a reasonable pitch to a bank weighing a project in Hanoi or Jakarta. It is a much harder pitch to make about a grid operating inside an active civil war.

Third, Sudan's grid does not have five to fifteen years to wait for a pipeline to mature. Sudan's electricity system is currently short roughly 3,300 megawatts of generation, driven by war-linked fuel shortages that have forced the near-total shutdown of thermal power plants dependent on imported fuel (Sudan energy reporting, September 2026). Hydropower from the Merowe and Roseiries dams has become the dominant remaining source, but it fluctuates with the season and cannot cover the gap. Sudanese officials have announced a committee to pursue "an accelerated shift toward solar and other renewable energy sources" — a sound instinct, and one that puts Sudan's own stated intent in the same direction as the Accelerator's mission. But intent is not the constraint. Climate Home News itself notes a structural mismatch in the Accelerator's own design: grid infrastructure typically takes five to fifteen years to build, a timeline that does not match the urgency of either the renewable boom the Accelerator is chasing or, far more acutely, a grid that is failing today.

Why It Matters to the Reader

For Sudanese policymakers and the humanitarian and development actors working alongside them, the lesson is not that global grid initiatives are worthless — Mission 300 has real money and real results behind it, having already reached tens of millions of newly connected Africans. The lesson is that a broker-only mechanism cannot substitute for what Sudan actually needs first: a bridge financing instrument, explicitly designed for conflict-affected utilities, that does not require the years-long project pipeline a stable government can offer. For donors and multilateral banks reading the Global Grids Accelerator's launch as a signal of where climate-energy money is heading, Sudan is a live test of whether "convening" initiatives can flex enough to reach the hardest cases, or whether they will keep serving the countries that were already investable to begin with.



Close

The Accelerator's own framing was that grids are the arteries of the energy transition. Sudan's arteries are not slow — they are cut. An accelerator that speeds up an already-flowing pipeline cannot restart one that has stopped, and the next donor conversation about Sudan's grid should start from that distinction, not from the assumption that inclusion in a global initiative is the same thing as receiving help from it.

This piece was produced through 3Bi's automated daily publications workflow monitoring regional and international climate reporting.

This publication is produced with support from 3Bi's institutional donors; see the full funder list at 3bisudan.org.