



BUILD BACK BETTER INITIATIVE · SUDAN & EAST AFRICA

Evidence for Resilience – Policy. Communities. Change.

3Bi | BUILD BACK BETTER INITIATIVE

CAIRO WATER WEEK · AFRICAN WATER FACILITY · SUDAN

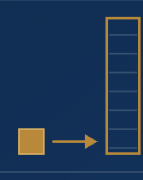
Africa's Water Facility Makes Its Funding Pitch in Cairo. Sudan Is Absent From Its List. Prepare One for Abu Dhabi.

AWF launches its 2026–2030 Strategy on 27 October. A EUR 1m preparation grant can open the way to far larger water investment.

3Bi Research Team

26 October 2026

POLICY BRIEF



The African Water Facility Makes Its Funding Pitch in Cairo This Week. Sudan Is Absent From Its Project List. Prepare One for Abu Dhabi.

3Bi Research Team | Policy Brief | 26 October 2026

Research Team

WWW.3BISUDAN.ORG



Contents

The Ask	1
Why Now	1
The Evidence	2
Addressing the Counter-Case	3
What 3Bi Recommends, Specifically	3
Sourcing & Contact	4



The African Water Facility launches its 2026–2030 Strategy at Cairo Water Week on 27 October and asks donors to fund its pipeline. Sudan has no project of its own on the list. It should prepare one before the UN Water Conference in December.

The African Water Facility launches its 2026–2030 Strategy at Cairo Water Week on 27 October 2026 and is seeking donor support for its project pipeline. No Sudan-only project appears on its published list. (Illustration: 3Bi)

3Bi Research Team | Policy Brief | 26 October 2026

The Ask

Before the UN Water Conference opens in Abu Dhabi on 8 December 2026, Sudan's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, which leads on water, should tell the African Water Facility (AWF) that Sudan intends to apply for project-preparation support, and should name one urban water or sanitation investment it wants prepared first. This costs Sudan a letter and a concept note, not a loan. Without it, Sudan will stay outside the pipeline that AWF is asking donors to fund in Cairo this week, while its neighbours' projects move from studies towards financing.

AWF, the continent's fund for turning water and sanitation priorities into bankable projects, launches its 2026–2030 Strategy at Cairo Water Week on 27 October. It needs EUR 75–120 million in core funding over five years and US\$300 million for a new sanitation window, and it lists African governments and Arab states among the funders it is courting (Cairo Water Week, session page for the AWF Strategy launch, accessed 26 October 2026). We found no Sudan-only project in its published project list (AWF, Consolidated List of Projects, April 2025). This brief sets out why that gap is worth closing now, and how.

Why Now

Cairo Water Week opened on Sunday 25 October and runs until 29 October under the theme "Water as a Catalyst for Peace, Shared Prosperity, and a Sustainable Planet". Opening it, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said water security "has become a shared responsibility that demands genuine international cooperation, resource mobilization for financing, technology transfer, and capacity building" (Presidency of Egypt, opening speech, 25 October 2026). The organisers describe the week as a preparatory platform for the UN Water Conference (Cairo Water Week, first announcement, 21 July 2026).

On Tuesday 27 October, AWF holds a high-level "Advocacy and Call for Support" event for its new strategy, co-chaired by Egypt and Senegal. Egypt's water minister, Hani Sewilam, chairs the AWF Governing Council, and Senegal's water and sanitation minister, Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, is listed as



a speaker (AWF, September 2026 newsletter, 5 October 2026; Cairo Water Week session page, accessed 26 October 2026). AWF then meets its donors and observers in Abidjan on 3 November, ahead of its Governing Council, and is preparing for the UN Water Conference in December (AWF newsletter, 5 October 2026). That conference, co-hosted by the United Arab Emirates and Senegal, runs from 8 to 10 December at ADNEC in Abu Dhabi. Pre-registration for state delegations closes on 13 November (UN DESA, 2026 UN Water Conference pages, accessed 24 October 2026).

The sequence matters. Donors decide what to fund partly on what is already in the queue. A country that is not in the queue at Cairo, Abidjan or Abu Dhabi is not part of that conversation.

The Evidence

First, AWF pays for the step that most often blocks water finance: preparation. AWF is an initiative of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), administered by the African Development Bank (AfDB). It funds feasibility studies, designs, safeguards and financial structuring so that projects can attract lenders. Since its creation it has approved 152 projects in 54 countries, committed EUR 220 million in grants and helped mobilise more than EUR 1.9 billion in downstream finance, which it puts at roughly EUR 29 for every euro it spends (AWF newsletter, 5 October 2026). Its 2026 call for proposals offered grants of up to EUR 1 million per project. The call closed on 25 September with 648 proposals, 456 of them sovereign submissions, and the review runs to the end of 2026 (AWF, call for proposals page, 15 July 2026, updated after closing; AWF newsletter, 5 October 2026). The Orange–Senqu basin shows the model at work: a EUR 1.5 million planning programme produced an investment plan from which two projects worth about EUR 1.93 billion secured financing in 2025 (same newsletter).

Second, Sudan is missing from the list that AWF shows to investors. AWF's April 2025 consolidated list covers its ready-to-invest projects, its 24 active preparation projects, 16 projects lined up for approval in 2025, and a pipeline of 33 prioritised projects. We found no project for Sudan alone in any of those categories. Neighbours are there. South Sudan has a EUR 500,000 water and sanitation project in the 2025 approvals and a solid-waste project in the pipeline. Ethiopia has a EUR 80 million climate-resilient water and sanitation project under preparation. Egypt has a EUR 625 million renewable-powered desalination programme under preparation. Uganda and Kenya appear several times (AWF, Consolidated List of Projects, April 2025). One multinational pipeline item covers "selected Nile Basin countries" without naming them. The only Sudan-specific AWF project we found is a EUR 3.3 million grant approved in January 2012 to prepare investment plans for water and sanitation in 15 to 20 small towns in Darfur, aimed at leveraging about US\$100 million in later investment (AWF, project page, January 2012). We could not establish whether any of the 648 proposals in the 2026 call came from Sudan. AWF has not published the list.

Third, the gap is in sanitation, and in the data on it. In 2024, 65.7% of Sudanese used at least



basic sanitation, 81.1% in towns and cities, while 16.4% still practised open defecation and 64.9% had at least basic drinking water (WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme estimates, via World Bank World Development Indicators, accessed 26 October 2026). No national estimate is published for “safely managed” sanitation, the indicator used for the Sustainable Development Goal. Such estimates depend on data about how waste is emptied, treated or disposed of once it leaves a toilet, which many countries lack (same source). That is exactly the gap AWF’s sanitation window is built to fill. The Africa Urban Sanitation Investment Initiative (AUSII) starts with country diagnostics, then moves to programmatic plans, project preparation and finance. Its first diagnostic cohort covers 12 countries, with six priority countries (Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, Chad, Madagascar and Namibia) and an indicative package of EUR 50–60 million each. Over ten years it aims for 50 city-wide sanitation projects reaching 15 million people (AWF newsletter, 5 October 2026). Chad, Sudan’s western neighbour, is already in that group.

Addressing the Counter-Case

The strongest objection is that a grant of up to EUR 1 million is too small to matter, and that Sudan’s scarce staff time is better spent on the large climate funds. This is a fair concern, and 3Bi is not suggesting AWF replace them. Our point is that preparation money is what makes large money possible. Most funders, the climate funds included, ask for feasibility studies, safeguards and cost estimates before they will commit. AWF’s own record, from the Orange–Senqu basin to city sanitation in Zambia, where completed designs and tender documents attracted US\$65 million in downstream commitments, is that a small, well-used preparation grant can unlock far larger investment (AWF newsletter, 5 October 2026). Sudan’s 2012 grant was designed on the same logic.

A second objection is that Sudan cannot currently prepare or carry a project to completion. The concern is legitimate, and we do not claim that a Sudanese proposal would be selected. But AWF does not only fund national ministries. Its eligible recipients include sub-national entities, utilities, basin organisations and non-sovereign bodies whose work aligns with national development (AWF, eligibility guidance on its project pages, accessed 26 October 2026). Sudan’s 2012 grant was executed by the Public Water Corporation through a project unit with branches in the state water corporations (AWF, Sudan appraisal report). The institutional route exists. What is missing is a request.

What 3Bi Recommends, Specifically

First, this week, Sudan’s Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, directly or through its representatives at Cairo Water Week, should tell the AWF team that Sudan intends to submit a request at the next opportunity, and ask whether any Sudanese proposal is among the 648 now under review.



Second, before the AWF Donors and Observers meeting in Abidjan on 3 November, the ministry should ask AWF in writing how a country joins the next AUSII diagnostic cohort, and propose one Sudanese city for a sanitation diagnostic.

Third, by the end of November, the ministry and the relevant state water corporation should draft a two-page concept note for one preparation project within the EUR 1 million ceiling, using AWF's own concept-note template, so that it is ready when the next call opens.

Fourth, Sudan should work with the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme and its partners to produce a first estimate of safely managed sanitation. A diagnostic and a baseline make any future request stronger.

Fifth, Sudan's delegation should pre-register for the UN Water Conference by 13 November and carry the concept note to Abu Dhabi on 8–10 December as a concrete, financeable commitment.

Sixth, 3Bi will track AWF's Cairo event, the outcome of its 2026 call and the conference commitments, and will publish a follow-up by the end of December 2026.

Sourcing & Contact

Primary sources: Cairo Water Week, session page "Launch of the AWF Strategy for 2026–2030 as a key enabler to deliver on access to safe water and sanitation in Africa" (Day 3, 27 October 2026; accessed 26 October 2026); Cairo Water Week, first announcement of the 9th edition (LinkedIn), 21 July 2026; Presidency of Egypt, President El-Sisi's speech at the opening of the 9th Cairo Water Week, 25 October 2026; African Water Facility, newsletter "Communities, partnerships and investment-ready projects" (September 2026 edition), 5 October 2026; African Water Facility, "AWF Launches 2026 Call for Proposals", 15 July 2026, with closing notice; African Water Facility, Consolidated List of Projects, April 2025; African Water Facility, Darfur water project page (January 2012) and Sudan project appraisal report; WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme estimates for Sudan (2024), via World Bank World Development Indicators (accessed 26 October 2026); UN DESA, 2026 UN Water Conference and participation pages (accessed 24 October 2026). 3Bi could not access the full AWF 2026–2030 Strategy document and relies on AWF's own summaries of it. AWF has not published the list of proposals received under its 2026 call. The session page gives US\$300 million for capitalising AUSII; AWF's newsletter gives a ten-year ambition of US\$320 million. We use the session figure for the Cairo ask. For methodology questions or to propose a correction, contact 3Bi's Research Team via 3bisudan.org.

This piece was produced through 3Bi's automated daily publications workflow, which monitors regional and international climate and energy reporting.

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



Suggested citation: 3Bi Research Team, "Policy Brief," 26 October 2026, Build Back Better Initiative (3Bi), 3bisudan.org
Publisher: Build Back Better Initiative (3Bi)