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COP31's BRIDGE Helps Nine Countries Turn Climate Plans Into Bankable Projects. Sudan Asked for That in Antalya. It Should Apply Now.

3Bi Research Team | Policy Brief | 16 November 2026

2026-11-16 · Research Team

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COP31's new Climate Implementation Bridge helps governments turn climate plans into bankable projects, starting with electrification. Nine countries, including Ethiopia and Zambia, have joined. Sudan asked Antalya for exactly this kind of help and should send an expression of interest before 20 November.

On 13 November 2026, at COP31 in Antalya, Chile, Lebanon, Mexico and Zambia joined the COP31 Presidency's Climate Implementation Bridge, which helps countries turn climate plans into investment-ready projects; Sudan is not among its nine participants. (Illustration: 3Bi)

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The Ask

Before COP31 closes on 20 November, Sudan's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources (HCENR), its UNFCCC focal point, should send a joint expression of interest to the COP31 Presidency's Climate Implementation Bridge (BRIDGE), the new UNDP-backed initiative that helps governments turn climate plans into investment-ready projects, and propose solar electrification as Sudan's entry point. It costs one letter, it carries no membership fee or new institution, and it answers the request Sudan made in its own national statement to the COP31 Leaders' Summit five days ago. The window matters because BRIDGE is expanding now, and its steering arrangements pass to the COP32 Presidency in Addis Ababa next year.

Why Now

On 13 November, COP31's Finance and Trade day, the Presidency announced that Chile, Lebanon, Mexico and Zambia had joined BRIDGE. They follow the first cohort of Ethiopia, Fiji, Indonesia, Pakistan and Uzbekistan, announced during the UN General Assembly's High-Level Week in New York. The same day, Türkiye's Ministry of Treasury and Finance, its Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change and UNDP signed a memorandum of understanding, with Türkiye committing US$3 million in grants to make the platform operational (COP31 Presidency, press release, 14 November 2026; UzDaily, 14 November 2026). The first five countries are already running country-led diagnostics to identify priority sectors, investment needs and barriers (COP31 Presidency, 14 November 2026).

BRIDGE's concept note sets out its roadmap. After the first cohort, the next stage is "second cohort engagement", with lessons from the first group informing "further refinement and expansion ... towards and beyond COP31". A Global Steering Committee will bring together the COP30, COP31 and COP32 Presidencies, so the initiative continues under Ethiopia, which hosts COP32 in Addis Ababa in November 2027 (COP31 Presidency, BRIDGE concept note, 2026; CGTN

Africa, 16 November 2026). On 19 November, COP31's thematic day "İmece: Enhancing Implementation" is devoted to investment-ready projects and access to finance (COP31 Presidency, thematic days programme). That is the day for Sudan's delegation to say it is interested. After 20 November the ministers leave, and the next cohort risks taking shape without Sudan in the conversation.

The Evidence

First, Sudan has a price tag on its climate plan but no pipeline behind it, and BRIDGE exists to close that gap. Sudan's revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), submitted in September 2022, puts the support needed for mitigation and adaptation at US$8.24 billion over ten years, conditional on external help (UNDP Climate Promise, Sudan country page, accessed 16 November 2026). A price tag is not a pipeline. BRIDGE's concept note says that, under an OECD–UNDP assessment framework, 80 per cent of new developing-country NDCs show strong signals of ambition, but only 36 per cent show strong evidence of "actionable elements" such as investment plans, financing strategies or sectoral action plans. It names the gaps: weak prioritisation, fragmented institutions, high project-preparation costs and projects that lenders do not consider bankable. Its three components target exactly those: national planning capacity, project pipelines, and finance design and capital mobilisation (BRIDGE concept note). On 11 November, Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council President told COP31's leaders that Sudan has significant potential in renewable energy, "particularly solar power", as well as land management, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration and water management. He called on international partners to help Sudan "transform its potential, resources and plans into tangible investments, scalable projects, job opportunities and greater resilience", alongside capacity-building for national institutions (SUNA, 11 November 2026). That is close to a description of what BRIDGE says it does.

Second, BRIDGE starts with electrification, where Sudan's gap is large and its plan already points. The concept note says the initiative's "initial thematic focus" will be electrification, as "a practical entry point for testing the approach", while letting country priorities set the scope (BRIDGE concept note). About 66 per cent of Sudan's population had access to electricity in 2024, so roughly one person in three did not (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2024 data). Sudan's NDC pledges a conditional 38 per cent cut in energy-sector emissions by 2030 and proposes scaling up more efficient irrigation powered by renewable energy, with agriculture its main adaptation priority (UNDP Climate Promise, Sudan page). Solar mini-grids, solar-powered irrigation and solar for health and water services sit where those three lines meet. They are also the kind of small, repeatable projects that BRIDGE's second component proposes to bundle into "investment-ready portfolios" so that each one does not have to find a financier alone.

Third, Sudan's neighbours and peers are already inside, and entry is deliberately light. Ethiopia, the next COP host, was in the first cohort. Zambia, another African least developed

country (LDC), and Lebanon, an Arab Group member, joined on 13 November (COP31 Presidency, 14 November 2026). BRIDGE "is not structured around a formal membership or supporter model". Countries "engage on the basis of expressed government interest", may enter at whatever stage fits their existing capacity, and are not required "to repeat existing analysis or create new institutional structures". Interested governments are invited to write to a dedicated contact channel, cop31bridge@iklim.gov.tr (BRIDGE concept note; COP31 Presidency, invitation letter). Support runs through UNDP's "Climate Promise: Forward", and UNDP's Climate Promise already lists Sudan among the countries it supports (UNDP Climate Promise, Sudan page). Arabic-language energy coverage has singled BRIDGE out as possibly one of the most important initiatives to come out of COP31 (attaqa.net, 15 November 2026).

Addressing the Counter-Case

The strongest objection is that BRIDGE is not money. That is correct, and the concept note says so plainly: it is "not a new implementing agency, climate fund, financing institution, or coordination platform", and "the BRIDGE itself is not a financing mechanism". Türkiye's US$3 million supports the platform as a whole, not any country (COP31 Presidency, 14 November 2026; UzDaily, 14 November 2026). 3Bi is not claiming that joining BRIDGE will fund a single Sudanese project. Our point is narrower. Sudan's problem in front of climate funds and development banks is less a shortage of ideas than a shortage of prepared, costed, comparable projects. BRIDGE offers, at no fee, a diagnostic, a pipeline plan, investor market-sounding and early engagement with development banks and climate funds. Those are the steps a country with a US$8.24 billion plan and very little public budget would otherwise have to pay consultants to do.

A second objection is capacity: Sudan's ministries are stretched, and BRIDGE asks for a whole-of-government process anchored in the finance and environment ministries. That is a fair concern. But the concept note lets countries enter at the point that matches their capacity, uses existing analyses wherever possible, and leaves governments to choose their partners. Sudan already has work to build on: its NDC, its membership of the NDC Partnership since 2019 and UNDP Climate Promise support (NDC Partnership, Sudan country page, accessed 21 October 2026; UNDP Climate Promise). BRIDGE's entry stage explicitly accepts referrals from the NDC Partnership and multilateral development banks. Starting with a single sector, solar electrification, keeps the ask manageable.

A third objection is duplication with programmes Sudan already uses. The concept note answers this itself: BRIDGE is meant to connect existing support rather than replace it, and it says it will not act as "a gatekeeper for partner engagement".

What 3Bi Recommends, Specifically

First, by 19 November, COP31's implementation day, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and HCENR should send a joint expression of interest to the BRIDGE contact channel. The letter should name solar electrification, including solar-powered irrigation and solar for health and water services, as Sudan's proposed entry point and ask to join the second cohort. Sudan's delegation should hand the same message to the Presidency's BRIDGE team in Antalya.

Second, within four weeks of COP31, the two institutions should name a focal person in each and a counterpart in the Ministry of Energy and Oil, as the concept note expects participating governments to designate "national focal institutions".

Third, before any diagnostic begins, HCENR should assemble what already exists: the 2022 NDC and its US$8.24 billion cost estimate, NDC Partnership support requests and earlier solar and irrigation studies. BRIDGE can then start from Sudan's own analysis rather than repeat it.

Fourth, Sudan's delegation should ask Ethiopia and Zambia how their BRIDGE engagement works in practice, in Antalya or soon after. Ethiopia's role as COP32 host and steering-committee member makes it the natural first contact.

Fifth, 3Bi will check after COP31 which countries BRIDGE lists in its second cohort, and report whether Sudan is among them.

Sourcing & Contact

Primary sources: COP31 Presidency, "COP31 mobilises finance to turn climate commitments into action" (press release, Antalya, 14 November 2026); COP31 Presidency, "Climate Implementation Bridge" concept note and invitation letter from COP31 President Murat Kurum (cop31.tr, accessed 16 November 2026); COP31 Presidency, Climate Implementation Bridge (BRIDGE) Action Agenda page (accessed 16 November 2026); COP31 Presidency, thematic days programme (accessed 16 November 2026); UzDaily, "Uzbekistan Among First Countries to Join COP31's BRIDGE Climate Investment Platform as Türkiye Commits US$3 Million" (14 November 2026); attaqa.net, report on COP31 and investment (15 November 2026); CGTN Africa, report on the African ministers' meeting at COP31 (16 November 2026; COP32 date only); SUNA, report of Sudan's national statement to the COP31 Leaders' Summit (11 November 2026); UNDP Climate Promise, Sudan country page (accessed 16 November 2026); World Bank, World Development Indicators, access to electricity, Sudan (2024 data; verified 5 November 2026); NDC Partnership, Sudan country page (accessed 21 October 2026). One trade outlet also listed Barbados among the new BRIDGE countries; the COP31 Presidency's own release names four (Chile, Lebanon, Mexico and Zambia), and we follow the Presidency. 3Bi has not seen any Sudanese government statement on BRIDGE and is not claiming that Sudan has or has not been approached. 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," 16 November 2026, Build Back Better Initiative (3Bi), 3bisudan.org
Publisher: Build Back Better Initiative (3Bi)