

Chad solar energy research and development

The solar photovoltaic plant at Djermaya, 30km north of N'Djamena, the capital, "will be the first utility-scale renewable energy project and will be the first privately owned, financed and managed power plant in Chad. It will generate significant savings for the country," Pacquement explains. Once the solar plant is operational, the cost of the electricity generated by the solar plant will be less than half the present cost of power in Chad.

The Djermaya solar project draws on risk capital and expertise from InfraCo Africa, Aldwych Africa Developments Limited, JCM Power and Smart Energies. InfraCo Africa, a privately managed company backed by public funds from the UK, Switzerland and the Netherlands that's part of the Private Infrastructure Development Group, will invest up to US\$3 million into Djermaya Solar and, through its developer Aldwych Africa, provide the resource and expertise needed to develop this pioneering project.

Public finances are constrained all over the world, but it's particularly true in Chad. The most effective use of funding from public donors is then to attract additional public or private finance through multilateral development banks. This blending of grants from donors and multilateral development bank financing has helped to leverage investment around the world, including in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the EU-AITF operates.

Created in 2007, the EU-AITF is a EUR 813 million fund founded by the European Commission and several EU Member States. The European Investment Bank manages the fund and hosts its secretariat.

"The EU-AITF is a great example of cooperation," Riedel says, "because it partners with different donors and with multiple financing institutions. There really is a spirit of mutual exchange between the different stakeholders."

Collaboration is an opportunity to achieve more than each partner might accomplish on its own. Blending facilities and trust funds are increasingly used by the European Commission and the EIB as tools to channel finance and partner with local governments and donors to deliver aid to the world's poorest and most vulnerable. Donor contributions can be the key to making a project viable, and to ensure it is sustainable or that its impact is maximised.

At Djermaya, the contribution of EUR 6.35 million from the EU-AITF, in the form of a 0% interest loan, will finance the building of the transmission line, substation and other electrical work required for system integration and to connect the solar project to the grid.

More than half of the volume of all EU-AITF grants has already leveraged concrete investments in projects worth EUR 7.8 billion. That's 18.5 times the volume of the grant support.

These projects make a real difference to people's lives. They provide them with access to sustainable energy services, with high-speed internet, or improve the connection to the transport routes that enable them to do business.

This pioneering project will help liberalise the energy sector, spurring independent power producers. It will mobilise private investment and promote renewable energy in Chad. It's also a model that can be replicated in other African countries.

"The EU-AITF has already supported many innovative projects like the Djermaya Solar," says Riedel. "It's a great example of successful collaboration." In its 10 years of operation, the EU-AITF has backed over 100 grant operations with donor funds, in support of more than 80 projects implemented by 7 different project financiers. That's one sure sign of a successful business model. But the lights coming on in Chad are the brightest signal.

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