African Water Facility
Facilité africaine de l'eau
Mobilising Resources for Water in Africa
Mobiliser des ressources pour l'eau en Afrique

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP
GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT

Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2026 EDITION

Building Africa's strategic pipeline of investment-ready water and sanitation projects

Project preparation • Investment mobilisation • Sanitation transformation • Partnerships



INSIDE THIS EDITION

2026 Call for Proposals • Strategy 2026–2030 • Orange–Senqu • Congo sanitation reform • AUSII investment pipeline • Philanthropy and donor engagement • Germany and Kigali engagements • Mali field update

An initiative of the African Ministers' Council on Water, administered by the African Development Bank

OPENING MESSAGE

Preparing projects that can attract investment and deliver impact

Message from the Director of Water Development and Sanitation



Africa's water and sanitation challenge is also a project preparation challenge. Governments and institutions have identified urgent priorities, yet many projects cannot attract financing because essential studies, designs, safeguards or financial structures remain incomplete.

The African Water Facility helps close this gap. Through targeted grants and technical support, it enables countries and regional institutions to turn priority concepts into credible investment opportunities. Its 2026–2030 Strategy strengthens the connection between project preparation, investment mobilisation and sustainable implementation.

The 2026 Call for Proposals has now moved from launch to review, an important step in building a stronger pipeline of climate-resilient investments with clear development value and realistic pathways to financing.

This edition brings together our strategic direction, portfolio results, regional planning in the Orange–Senqu Basin, sanitation reform in the Republic of Congo, implementation support in Mali and engagement with governments, donors and financing partners.

Our engagements in Kigali, Stockholm and Berlin underline the need to match sound preparation with stronger institutions, partnerships and sustained financial support.

We call on existing and prospective donors, African governments, development finance institutions, philanthropies and private-sector partners to mobilise additional resources for AWF's 2026–2030 programme. Contributions to preparation, technical partnerships and downstream financing can help turn Africa's water security priorities into investments that improve lives. We invite you to work with us to prepare, finance and deliver the water and sanitation infrastructure Africa needs.

Mtchera Chirwa

Director, Water Development and Sanitation
African Development Bank

In this edition

PAGE	SECTION	FEATURE
03	Lead story	2026 Call for Proposals moves into review
04	Strategy & results	2026–2030 direction and impact at a glance
05	Regional spotlight	Orange–Senqu: from preparation to finance
06	Sanitation spotlight	Republic of Congo: reform to investment pipeline
07	AUSII and partnerships	Building the foundations for city-wide sanitation investment
07	International engagements	Donors & Observers, Brazzaville and Madrid
08	International engagements	Germany strategic partnership
08	International engagements	Kigali: putting investment readiness into practice
09	Looking ahead	Cairo Water Week and UN Water Conference
10	From the field	Mali implementation support
10	Investment opportunities	Preparation-to-finance pathway
11	Knowledge insight	What makes a project investment-ready?
12	Opportunities & dates	Key milestones and engagements
12	About AWF	Stay connected and closing note

LEAD STORY

2026 Call for Proposals moves into review

From open call to strategic pipeline



AWF launched its 2026 Call for Proposals on 15 July 2026, inviting eligible African institutions to submit high-impact water and sanitation initiatives with clear potential to attract downstream investment and deliver sustainable development results.

The submission window closed on 25 September 2026. Under the Call, AWF grant financing does not exceed EUR 1 million per selected project. The ceiling applies to the AWF contribution and does not limit the total value of the proposed investment, allowing larger projects to be considered where applicants demonstrate credible co-financing arrangements, investor interest or a realistic pathway towards financing.

The Call addresses a recurring sector challenge: many projects respond to urgent and well-recognised needs but cannot advance because essential feasibility work, detailed designs, safeguards, financial structuring, transaction support or institutional arrangements remain incomplete.

The Call attracted 648 proposals, comprising 456 sovereign and 192 non-sovereign submissions, demonstrating strong demand for water and sanitation project preparation support. The review is underway and will continue through the end of the year, with submissions assessed against the Call's eligibility and selection criteria.

> The Call is designed to strengthen AWF's strategic pipeline and help promising projects close the preparation gaps that prevent them from reaching technical and financial maturity.

Review underway Eligibility and selection assessment in progress.	**Through end-2026** Review of proposals continues through the end of the year.	**Next step** Selected proponents move into preparation design, grant processing and implementation planning.

> **A strong preparation grant should not end with a study. It should move a priority investment measurably closer to financing, procurement and implementation.**

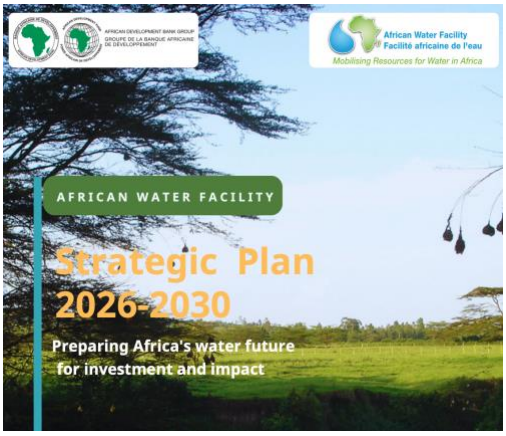
STRATEGY IN FOCUS

A sharper direction for 2026–2030

Preparing better projects, securing finance and strengthening AWF as a continental facility

AWF enters the 2026–2030 period with a clear mission: to serve as Africa's continental lead facility for catalytic project preparation, secure downstream investment and facilitate greater private-sector participation in beneficial uses of water.

The Strategy links preparation, finance mobilisation and institutional performance. In practical terms, AWF will prioritise projects and partnerships that demonstrate strong country ownership, credible preparation needs, clear development value and realistic prospects for downstream finance.



SP1 | 70%
Project preparation to catalyse investment for water security and safe sanitation. Improve project quality, last-mile readiness, governance, capacity and climate resilience.

SP2 | 20%
Secure water and sanitation finance and investment. Accelerate investment promotion, innovative finance, partnership development and private-sector participation.

OP | 10%
Build AWF into a high-performance facility. Strengthen visibility, operational efficiency, financial sustainability, monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Impact at a glance

152 projects approved since inception	**54** African countries reached	**EUR 220m** committed in grants	**EUR 1.9bn+** downstream financing mobilised	**EUR 2.2bn** priority investments identified or facilitated
EUR 1 → EUR 29 approximate leverage	**51.1m** people reached with improved water access	**18.7m** people reached with improved sanitation	**474,804** households supported through water management	**1.4m ha** equipped for irrigation

Strategy delivery scenarios presented to donors: EUR 75m → 30 bankable projects and ~EUR 800m downstream finance; EUR 90m → 36 projects and ~EUR 960m; EUR 120m → 48 projects and ~EUR 1.28bn.

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Turning shared priorities into investable projects

The Orange–Senqu Basin illustrates how regional planning can organise a pipeline for climate-resilient investment



For families, farmers and businesses across Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa, water security depends on turning shared regional priorities into technically credible and financially attractive investments.

A EUR 1.5 million climate-resilient planning programme, implemented by the Orange–Senqu River Commission with support from AWF and NEPAD-IPPF, helped develop a 30-year Climate-Resilient Investment Plan for the basin. The programme assessed investments against climate scenarios and strengthened basin-wide planning and integrated water-resource-management frameworks.

The resulting plan identifies 36 priority investments across nine thematic clusters, including water storage, inter-basin transfers, irrigation, wastewater reuse and catchment management. It provides a structured pipeline through which countries and partners can sequence priorities, engage potential financiers and move individual projects towards implementation.

Two priority investments identified in the plan secured financing in 2025: the Polihali Dam under Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, at approximately EUR 1.65 billion, and the Neckartal Dam Hydropower project in Namibia, at approximately EUR 289 million. Together, these represent approximately EUR 1.93 billion in downstream financing.

4 countries one shared basin	**36** priority investments	**EUR 1.5m** planning programme	**EUR 1.93bn** downstream financing for two projects

> **The lesson is not that planning automatically delivers finance. It is that a credible regional investment framework gives countries and financiers a common basis for sequencing, preparation and investment decisions.**

SANITATION SPOTLIGHT

Republic of Congo: from institutional reform to an investment pipeline

AWF technical assistance is helping strengthen policy, capacity and preparation for city-wide inclusive sanitation

In January 2025, the Republic of Congo created a ministry dedicated to urban sanitation for the first time. The new institution inherited a sector facing significant service gaps, limited specialist capacity and a need for stronger policy, coordination and investment planning.

At the Ministry's request, AWF deployed a sanitation Technical Assistant from 1 April to 30 September 2026. The assignment combines project preparation, capacity building, sector coordination, governance reform and support for city-wide inclusive sanitation.



A key milestone came on 18 June 2026, when the Government approved the revised National Sanitation Policy. The Ministry's sanitation performance dashboard was subsequently approved on 21 August 2026.

The technical assistance has also supported preparation of a new sanitation law, strengthened coordination with development partners, introduced practical training on AWF proposal preparation and helped translate the City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation approach into an emerging investment pipeline.

The technical assistance is also helping the Ministry explore sanitation financing mechanisms, including a proposed Sanitation Program Facility, greater use of private-sector and climate-finance instruments, and the concept of a national sanitation fund.

Brazzaville & Kintélé master plan
EUR 1,261,045 total project cost
EUR 999,855 proposed AWF grant (79%)
Appraisal report finalised; project awaiting Bank approval.

Sanitation & urban resilience
USD 590,000 preparation project
USD 500,000 proposed UMDF grant
Investment feasibility studies awaiting Bank approval.

Nature-based solutions
USD 400,000 technical-assistance proposal to integrate nature-based solutions into the sanitation and urban-resilience preparation work.
Funding source: AfDB (PICU)

AUSII AND PARTNERSHIPS

Building the foundations for city-wide sanitation investment

AWF's flagship urban sanitation initiative is turning diagnostics, institutional strengthening and project preparation into a stronger platform for investment



Christine Razanamahandry-Allanaissem in Kigali discusses how stronger sanitation systems, prepared projects and financing partnerships can help African cities scale services through AUSII.

Through the Africa Urban Sanitation Investment Initiative (AUSII), one of AWF's flagship initiatives, the Facility is moving urban sanitation beyond isolated infrastructure projects towards city-wide systems that combine service delivery, institutions, markets, regulation and financing.

Across a first cohort of 12 countries, AUSII is using diagnostics to identify service gaps and investment constraints, then helping countries move towards programmatic investment plans, stronger project preparation and financing partnerships.

COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT | KENYA, SENEGAL & CHAD

Kenya, Senegal and Chad are moving beyond single sanitation projects towards programmatic approaches under AUSII. Programmatic approach plans, now committed by the three countries, are being used to identify priority constraints, sequence reforms and project preparation, and define investment packages that can attract downstream financing.

The approach reflects a wider shift under AWF's 2026–2030 Strategy: from fragmented interventions to coherent portfolios that link enabling reforms, infrastructure and financing.

AUSII | FLAGSHIP AT A GLANCE

12 countries First diagnostic cohort
6 priority countries Kenya • Senegal • Nigeria • Chad • Madagascar • Namibia
EUR 50–60m Indicative priority investment package per country
10-year ambition USD 320m capitalisation • 50 CWIS projects • 15m people • ~USD 7bn investment mobilised
Pathway Diagnostics → programmatic plans → project preparation → financing

From strategy to partnerships

AWF is taking its 2026–2030 agenda to donors, governments and sector partners

DONORS & OBSERVERS | 10 JUNE

AWF convened its first 2026 Donors & Observers meeting virtually on 10 June, bringing together 33 participants from existing and potential donors, development partners and sector organisations. The meeting presented the 2026–2030 Strategy, AUSII, AWF's financing needs and its advocacy agenda. Participants discussed potential support ranging from core funding and reprogramming of existing resources to downstream and blended finance.

BRAZZAVILLE | AfDB ANNUAL MEETINGS | 25–29 MAY 2026

The side event on financing water sector investments in Africa followed the adoption of the Africa Water Vision and Policy 2063 by Heads of State and Government at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 14–15 February 2026.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss how to translate the commitments of the Africa Water Vision and Policy 2063 into practical implementation.

MADRID | SPAIN OUTREACH | MAY 2026

AWF held a bilateral engagement with Spain's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business (MINECO) in Madrid in May 2026 as part of its resource-mobilisation outreach. The discussion presented AWF's new Strategy, current investment opportunities and the role of project preparation in creating a stronger pipeline for downstream finance. Spain indicated interest in continuing the dialogue on possible support to AWF and selected investment opportunities.

Why these engagements matter: AWF's project-preparation mandate depends on strong relationships with the institutions that can fund preparation, co-finance investment-ready projects and help countries move from priority needs to implementation.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

Germany advances strategic partnership with AWF

Berlin engagement puts core funding, political support and private-sector collaboration at the centre of AWF's 2026–2030 agenda



H.E. Prof. Dr Hani Sewilam, Chair of the AWF Governing Council, with H.E. Reem Alabali-Radovan, Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development.



AWF and German Water Partnership representatives during the Berlin mission.

BERLIN | 1–3 SEPTEMBER
AWF AND GERMAN GOVERNMENT ADVANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S WATER SECURITY

A high-level mission co-led by H.E. Prof. Dr Hani Sewilam, Chair of the AWF Governing Council, and Mtchera Chirwa, Director of the Water Development and Sanitation Department at the African Development Bank, focused on strengthening political and financial support for AWF and deepening links with German partners.

Germany made an initial EUR 500,000 pledge in core funding to AWF. Discussions with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) highlighted alignment around water security, investment readiness and approaches for mobilising public and private participation in Africa's water sector.

Engagements with the German Water Partnership opened further dialogue with German private-sector expertise and technology providers. Follow-up includes finalising the BMZ funding agreement and involving BMZ and GWP in preparations for Cairo Water Week.

EUR 500,000

Initial German core-funding pledge to AWF

Why it matters: the Berlin mission links AWF's project-preparation mandate directly to political support, core resources and practical pathways for German financing, expertise and technology.

Kigali: putting investment readiness into practice

Africa Water & Sanitation Systems Leadership Symposium | 17–21 August 2026



Hellen Njiwa engages participants at the AWF marketplace table following her presentation on project preparation, investment readiness and financing opportunities in Kigali.

Mtchera Chirwa linked investment readiness to targeted institutional reform, better-quality plans and rigorous project preparation. Hellen Njiwa then brought that message into the marketplace, where participants gathered at the AWF table to discuss preparation support, financing opportunities and the 2026 Call for Proposals.



High-level discussions in Kigali brought government leaders and sector partners together around reforms, investment readiness and financing for water and sanitation.

Across high-level sessions, government leaders and sector partners examined how stronger institutions, better-quality investment plans and credible project preparation can unlock financing. Mtchera Chirwa stressed that reform must respond to each institution's constraints and that the quality of plans determines whether priorities can move towards investment.

LOOKING AHEAD

Cairo Water Week: taking the Strategy to African sovereigns

The next major engagement will focus on domestic resource mobilisation, partnerships and investment readiness



Cairo Water Week is scheduled for 25–29 October 2026. AWF plans to use the platform to deepen engagement with African governments, donors and partners around project preparation, domestic resource mobilisation and the implementation of the 2026–2030 Strategy.

On 27 October, AWF will convene a high-level Advocacy and Call for Support Event for its 2026–2030 Strategy, co-chaired by Egypt and Senegal. The hybrid session, scheduled for 11:30–13:00 in Room Picasso, will bring together African governments, development partners and financing institutions to strengthen support for the Strategy and accelerate investment in safe water and sanitation across Africa.

The event will provide a platform for partner interventions and dialogue around the financing and partnerships required to move African water and sanitation priorities from project preparation towards investment and implementation.

21 October 2026 | GWP Regional Forum Africa AWF has been invited to participate remotely in the 50th German Water Partnership Regional Forum Africa, with a strong focus on the Water Forward initiative.	**December 2026 | UN Water Conference, UAE** AWF and the Bank are preparing for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, building on the investment-readiness and financing agenda advanced through Dakar, Jeddah, Stockholm, Berlin and Cairo.

Engagement journey | May: Madrid & Brazzaville → June: Donors & Observers, Jeddah → August: Kigali, Stockholm → September: Berlin → October: Cairo → December: UN Water Conference

Additional international engagement highlights

STOCKHOLM | SIWI WORLD WATER WEEK **23–26 AUGUST** AWF deepened donor and philanthropy engagement around its project-preparation model, Strategy and AUSII. No funding commitments were made.	**JEDDAH | SAUDI WATER WEEK** **30 June 2026 | Ritz-Carlton Jeddah** AfDB and AWF discussed climate-resilient WASH investment, project preparation and co-financing with Arab States stakeholders.

FROM THE FIELD

Mali: accelerating implementation of climate-resilient water and sanitation investments

Supervision focuses on converting an agreed action plan into delivery before project closing



From 20 to 24 April 2026, AWF led a supervision mission for the Project to Support Climate- and COVID-19-Resilient Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation in the Kayes Region and Kati Circle (PAAEPAR-3C2K). The project forms part of the programme financed by the Kingdom of Denmark. The mission reviewed physical and financial progress, procurement, safeguards and the measures needed to accelerate implementation.

The mission resulted in a detailed action plan covering all remaining activities, revisions to procurement and budget arrangements, and measures to accelerate contracting. During a meeting with Prof. Tiemoko Traoré, the Minister responsible for water, a 72-hour timeframe was agreed for signing service-provider contracts.

A field visit to Dogodouman, in Kati Circle, enabled the mission to meet local authorities and future beneficiaries, and to visit sites intended to receive water and sanitation infrastructure. Environmental and social performance was also assessed during the mission. A total of 89 grievance committees have been established at commune and village levels, and no complaints have been registered since project activities began.

Since the April supervision mission, the project team has continued implementing the accelerated workplan, with procurement for all activities now completed. Follow-up is focused on completing the remaining works and services before the project closes on 31 December 2026.

EUR 4.907m project cost at appraisal	**31 Dec 2026** current closing date	**11.2%** reported disbursement rate at mission reporting	**20–24 Apr** 2026 supervision mission

The management lesson is simple: where implementation time is short, supervision must translate quickly into specific actions, deadlines, accountability and follow-up.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND KNOWLEDGE

From preparation to financing

AWF's value lies in making the pathway from priority need to investment visible

The investment pipeline is not a single list of projects. It is a progression in which technical preparation, investor engagement, financing decisions and implementation reinforce one another. The examples below show this pathway across AWF's portfolio.

1	2	3	4
PROJECT PREPARATION Feasibility • design • safeguards • institutional readiness	INVESTOR ENGAGEMENT Financing strategy • market sounding • co-financing dialogue	FINANCING SECURED Lenders/investors commit capital and conditions are agreed	IMPLEMENTATION Procurement • construction • service delivery • results

OPPORTUNITY AREA	PREPARATION / PIPELINE	FINANCING / STATUS	WHY IT MATTERS
Urban sanitation | Zambia	Integrated and sustainable urban sanitation across 12 urban settlements; feasibility work, detailed designs, tender documents and environmental/social instruments completed.	USD 65 million downstream financing commitments	Shows how AWF-funded preparation can move city-wide sanitation investments from studies and design towards financing and implementation.
Regional water security	Orange–Senqu 30-year investment plan; 36 priority investments across nine clusters.	Polihali and Neckartal: ~EUR 1.93bn downstream financing.	Shows how regional planning can organise priorities and help projects move towards finance.
Productive water use, São Tomé and Príncipe	NEW-ERA preparation phase covering master plans, feasibility studies, detailed designs and safeguards for multipurpose water infrastructure supporting irrigation, water supply and hydropower.	UA 2m preparation package, including UA 500,000 from AWF. Downstream financing mobilisation is being prepared.	Shows how integrated water-resource preparation can support agricultural productivity, energy production and climate resilience while creating a pathway towards larger infrastructure investment.

What makes a project investment-ready?

Five disciplines that help move projects from recognised need to financing decisions

1. Start with ownership



A project needs a clearly defined problem, an accountable institution and alignment with national or regional priorities. Preparation is strongest when the eventual implementing institution is engaged from the beginning.

2. Build credible evidence

Feasibility work, demand analysis, engineering, safeguards, climate-risk assessment and cost estimates should reduce uncertainty and support real decisions, not simply produce reports.

3. Make the financing pathway visible

Preparation should identify who might finance the project, what conditions they will require, and which risks must be reduced before a financing decision can be made.

4. Treat institutions as part of the investment

Infrastructure cannot perform without clear mandates, capable institutions, sustainable operating models, regulation and accountability.

5. Design for delivery and inclusion

Climate resilience, environmental and social safeguards, gender, affordability and long-term service delivery should be integrated into project design rather than added at the end.

Good project preparation is not an administrative step before financing. It is the process that turns uncertainty into evidence, priorities into decisions and development needs into investable propositions.

DATES AND ABOUT THE FACILITY

Keep the next milestones on the radar

Calls, partner engagements and upcoming AWF moments

DATE	MILESTONE	WHY IT MATTERS
October–December 2026	2026 Call for Proposals	Eligibility and selection review underway through year-end.
21 October 2026	GWP Regional Forum Africa	Remote participation by AWF; Water Forward and Africa engagement.
25–29 October 2026	Cairo Water Week	AWF participation and partnership engagement.
27 October 2026	AWF high-level event at Cairo Water Week	Domestic resource mobilisation and support for Africa's water priorities.
Following review	2026 Call for Proposals	Selected proponents move into preparation design, grant processing and implementation planning.
3 November 2026	2nd 2026 Donor & Observers meeting	In-person/hybrid meeting in Abidjan ahead of the Governing Council meeting.
December 2026	UN Water Conference, United Arab Emirates	Major global water-financing and partnership engagement.

Stay connected

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About the African Water Facility

The African Water Facility is an initiative of the African Ministers' Council on Water, administered by the African Development Bank. It provides grants and technical assistance to help African countries and regional institutions prepare investment-ready water and sanitation projects, mobilise financing and strengthen sector governance.





Thank you for reading this edition of our 2026 newsletter. Stay connected for further project updates, opportunities and partnership news.

Preparing projects. Mobilising investment. Delivering impact.