

# Call for project proposals 2025 Central Sahel & Lake Chad Basin Multi-country consortia Submission guide

DRC West and Central Africa Regional office - SRF Fund Management Unit

## 1. The Sahel Regional Fund (SRF).

The Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) is a **regional humanitarian fund managed by NGOs and hosted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**. It supports organisations with an operational presence in the central Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin and eastern Chad, with a particular focus on conflict-affected rural areas, under-funded and hard-to-reach regions, and areas facing significant population displacement. Currently funded by UKAid, the SRF aims to evolve into a multi-donor pooled fund, strengthening its impact and capacity for action.

**In line with the commitments made at the Grand Bargain and the World Humanitarian Summit**, the Sahel Regional Fund aims to provide **high-quality humanitarian funding**, combining high operational standards to ensure an effective response to the needs of populations, funding methods adapted to the needs of NGOs and the realities on the ground in conflict zones, and an inclusive partnership approach with NGOs.

SRF places at the heart of its work **the objective of meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations**, whatever their status and wherever they may be, by taking a **nexus approach** combining both **emergency response and the promotion of resilience** to ensure continuity of support in the face of humanitarian crises. The SRF is also committed to **reaching beneficiaries in the hardest-to-reach** areas, where humanitarian aid is often limited, to ensure that coverage is as inclusive and effective as possible.

**The SRF promotes an integrated multi-sectoral response**, combining several sectors including food security, health, nutrition, protection and WASH, depending on the priority needs in the context of intervention, in order to ensure a global and coordinated impact, adapted to local realities. This approach is based on a dual requirement: firstly, **a territorial approach**, based on a holistic understanding of local dynamics - tensions, socio-economic challenges, access to essential services and interactions between populations - to guarantee coherent and contextualized action; secondly, **a people-centered approach**, which goes beyond sectoral axes to meet the overall needs of the populations affected and which involves the beneficiaries at all stages of the project to ensure appropriate and sustainable responses.

**The cross-border** nature of the SRF makes it possible to respond to regional dynamics that go beyond national borders, by strengthening cooperation between players.

This approach is supported by **predictable and flexible funding**, enabling organisations to better adapt to changing crises and to respond to humanitarian challenges in a more responsive and sustainable way.

With a strong commitment to **localisation**, the SRF enables local NGOs to participate in the governance of the fund and to access funding and capacity building, in order to promote strong and sustainable local leadership. It also adopts **an inclusive and accountable approach, in line with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and the principles of accountability to the affected populations**, ensuring the involvement of communities and the inclusion of vulnerable populations.

For further information about the Sahel Regional Fund, please visit the website: [Introduction to the Sahel Regional Fund](#).

## 2. Context, objectives and conditions of the call for proposals

The central Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin continue to face a complex humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by the spread of armed conflict, inter-community tensions and massive population displacements. Persistent insecurity is hampering humanitarian access and limiting assistance to vulnerable populations. These challenges are compounded by structural issues such as chronic food insecurity, high rates of malnutrition and limited access to basic services. In addition, episodes of drought, combined with the intensification of certain human activities, accentuate desertification, reduce agricultural yields and increase pressure on natural resources, thus contributing to local tensions and forced displacements.

Since 2022, the SRF has supported three major projects aimed at improving the living conditions of people affected by these crises. As a result of these interventions, around 775,000 people facing protection violations and/or acute humanitarian needs have benefited from a multi-sector assistance package. Of these, almost 153,000 people have also been supported in resilience and food security initiatives, while 127,000 individuals have received emergency cash support, contributing to a tangible improvement in their living conditions.

### 2.1 Purpose of the call

Faced with the challenges posed by the context of international humanitarian funding, this call aims to enable NGOs to propose interventions that combine critical responses to immediate needs and actions to strengthen the resilience of populations, in line with the Nexus approach and the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) of the countries concerned.

### 2.2 Focus of expected projects.

Projects proposed for SRF funding must be fully in line with its strategic objectives and respond in an integrated and coherent way to the following priorities and principles:

1. **Respond to urgent humanitarian needs and contribute to the resilience of vulnerable populations.** The projects submitted must provide a flexible response to immediate humanitarian needs by providing emergency solutions to stabilise the living conditions of the populations affected. The aim is to ensure continuity of support in the face of crises, with interventions capable of adapting over time and in their modalities, thus facilitating a gradual transition towards more sustainable approaches to resilience.
2. **The structuring efforts in terms of resilience will be aimed primarily at strengthening economic resilience**, in line with the "graduation model", to encourage the autonomy of beneficiaries and reduce their dependence on humanitarian aid, as well **as agri-environmental resilience**, aimed at improving the sustainable management of natural resources and the

livelihoods of rural communities and reducing their vulnerability to climate shocks. These two complementary strands should ensure a tangible and measurable impact in the target areas.

3. **Multi-purpose and unconditional cash transfers are the modality encouraged** to cover most basic needs, subject to a feasibility assessment (at least a market analysis based on the MEB). Although restrictions exist in some countries, a broader reflection is nevertheless expected on the coverage of non-food needs in order to ensure more comprehensive support for beneficiaries.
4. **Projects must propose integrated multi-sectoral interventions**, including several complementary sectors, in line with locally identified priorities. This could include food security, health, nutrition, protection and/or WASH, **based on territorial and people-centered approaches**. This means that projects will have to be defined in clear geographical areas, considering all local dynamics, tensions and interactions between populations, and that interventions will have to respond to the overall needs of beneficiaries beyond the sectoral axes alone, while ensuring the active involvement of local populations in the design and implementation of projects.
5. **As far as possible and where relevant, present a cross-border dimension, by intervening in more than one country, considering** regional dynamics and the mobility of populations affected by crises. The projects concerned must encourage coordination between the countries concerned.
6. **Encourage strong and sustainable local leadership**. Local partners must be **fully involved in decision-making, contributing to the strategy, design and implementation of the intervention**. Partners selected to submit a full proposal will be required to provide a capacity building plan for the local partner(s). This plan, which may be based on existing arrangements that need to be adapted or consolidated, should cover structural, administrative and financial aspects, involving all the relevant international players and partners. It will aim to support the structuring as well as the increase in technical and operational skills of the local partner(s), beyond the duration of the project. The progress of these partners will be monitored throughout the implementation phase, to ensure a lasting impact.
7. **Demonstrate a strong commitment to accountability**, ensuring transparency, community participation and access to feedback and complaints mechanisms. Projects must be aligned with the principles of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) commitments.
8. **The impact of projects must be tangible and rigorously measured**, and the lessons learnt must be documented and shared in order to encourage learning and capitalisation. Therefore, **all projects financed by the SRF must include an explicit 'learning' dimension**, making it possible both to strengthen the capacities of the players involved and to optimise future interventions. Consequently, each project must produce relevant learning resources and tools, in line with the themes addressed, which will contribute to structured capitalisation and useful feedback for future actions. These productions must be in line with the SRF's strategy and, where appropriate, with the areas of intervention of the expected projects. Further information on this point will be provided by the SRF team at a later stage.

## 2.3 Cross-cutting elements that should also be highlighted in the proposals submitted

**Humanitarian coordination, complementarity and operational synergies:** Projects must be part of an effective humanitarian coordination system, aligned with existing mechanisms (clusters, coordination platforms, national and regional strategies). An approach favouring operational complementarity is required to avoid duplication and ensure optimum impact. Stakeholders must also seek inter-sectoral and inter-institutional synergies, enabling an integrated and strengthened response to the needs of populations.

**Agility and capacity to adapt:** Interventions must be flexible and responsive, able to adapt to contextual changes and emerging crises. Ongoing analysis of local risks and dynamics is essential to anticipate challenges and adjust actions accordingly.

**Conflict-sensitive approaches:** Projects must adopt a conflict-sensitive approach, rigorously applying the "Do No Harm" principle. The aim is to reduce local tensions, avoid any unintended negative impact and strengthen social cohesion. Regular and shared analyses of the context should guide the planning and implementation of interventions, thus guaranteeing an appropriate and effective humanitarian response.

**Involvement of local authorities and territorial anchoring:** Project promoters must ensure the effective involvement of local authorities and decentralised technical services, in order to guarantee local ownership of interventions. Projects must be aligned with the Communal Development Plans (CDP) and other existing and/or relevant strategic frameworks. Proposals should describe their strategy for inclusive engagement with local stakeholders, to ensure sustainability and community ownership of the actions implemented.

**A robust accountability framework** encompassing both accountability to the donor(s) and accountability to the affected populations in all activities implemented. To this end, SRF partners should:

- Respect the fundamental values of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.
- Comply with the fundamental humanitarian standard of quality and accountability (CHS).
- Respect the IASC's six fundamental principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Ensure that community feedback, complaints and response mechanisms are in place in all project areas, incorporating a basic 'Do Not Harm' approach and considering specific vulnerabilities. Consortia should describe how they will ensure that these mechanisms are safe, accessible, child-sensitive, gender-sensitive and inclusive in their design.
- Ensure strong community involvement in the project and dissemination of project information.
- Ensure that all grant recipient organisations have a robust internal complaints mechanism in place, in accordance with internal regulations that meet the highest standards.
- Signing the SRF charter as a moral commitment to greater accountability to populations affected by conflict and to local stakeholders.

## 2.4 Targeting and access.

**This call covers the countries of the central Sahel (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso) as well as the Lake Chad Basin, limited to Chad (Lake Province / Province du Lac only) and Niger. Please note:** Cameroon and Nigeria are not included in the geographical scope of the SRF, and Eastern Chad is not covered by this call.

All areas defined as priorities in the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) are eligible, with priority given to areas that are difficult to access or landlocked, and as far as possible should have a cross-border dimension. Partners submitting a project must **assess their access capacity (gaining and/or maintaining access) and the operational feasibility** of their intervention, **including in the event of altered UNHAS**

### flight coverage.

The targeting of beneficiaries, whether individual or collective, must be based **on overall vulnerability and the criticality of humanitarian needs.**

However, **particular attention** should be paid to **the populations displaced and/or affected by the conflict**, given their increased vulnerability.

## **2.5. Entities and projects covered by this call.**

This call is addressed **to consortia led by international NGOs or members of the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.** As part of the DDA procedure, the SRF will give priority to examining the documents of the lead applicant, while analysing those of the partners in order to ensure the coherence of the consortium and the capacity of the lead to manage the grant effectively. The composition of the consortia must be based on the complementarity of expertise, the search for operational efficiency and structural simplicity, with a view to making good use of resources. **All members of the consortium must be registered in accordance with current legislation**, in compliance with their legal obligations and not be subject to any convictions.

**In line with the SRF's commitment to localisation**, SRF-funded consortia must include at least one local structure, fully involved in the design and implementation of the project. These local partners must be legally **registered**, and **the aim is for them to directly manage at least 25% of the allocated funds**, this proportion remaining an ambition rather than a strict requirement

**Each NGO may join only one consortium**, regardless of its status (local or international NGO), and may participate in only one project submitted for SRF funding under this call. It is recommended that this **exclusivity** be formalised in a Pre-Teaming Agreement.

Finally, only **NGOs that are already established and operational in the target areas are eligible.**

**Please note: If an existing project has recently been prematurely interrupted due to a suspension of funding**, the partner may consider submitting to the SRF the resumption and finalisation of certain activities of this project, **provided that these are fully aligned with the priorities and modalities of this call.** The aim is to have a faster and more cost-effective impact than in the case of an entirely new project, thanks to the remobilisation of the project's staff and operational resources and the preparatory activities that have already taken place.

**In this very specific case,** the NGOs concerned must first rigorously check their **eligibility** by completing the self-eligibility questionnaire. It is important at this stage not to attempt to artificially adapt a project that has been interrupted if it does not fit in with the SRF's objectives and criteria, as this would be a waste of time for all parties and would not prevent the proposal from being rejected at the analysis stage. If the eligibility conditions are met, the organisations can then **submit their project in accordance with the standard terms and conditions of the call**, mentioning explicitly in the title that it concerns a resumption of activities. They must also attach to their submission **an additional appendix** containing an explanatory note specifying the status of the interrupted project, its state of progress, and the efficiency gains expected in the event of resumption.

## 2.6. Financial framework and duration of the proposed interventions.

The total **indicative** budget available for this call is **£ 12 500 000**.

Projects should last **between 12 and 24 months, with** a budget of **between £1,000,000 and £4,000,000 per project**.

In accordance with SRF rules, **no proposal will be accepted if the annual budget submitted exceeds 30% of the applicant organisation's last previous annual budget**

**The management costs borne by the SRF are set at 7%.** These costs must be shared between the consortium partners in proportion to the share of the budget implemented by each.

In accordance with the current [operations manual](https://www.sahelregionalfund.org/media/vs4f2zhm/srf-manuel-operations-fr_draft.pdf) (which will be revised in 2025) ([https://www.sahelregionalfund.org/media/vs4f2zhm/srf-manuel-operations-fr\\_draft.pdf](https://www.sahelregionalfund.org/media/vs4f2zhm/srf-manuel-operations-fr_draft.pdf)), when the concept note is submitted, the budget must be presented in summary form, detailing the amounts per intervention sector (health, nutrition, food security, resilience, protection, WASH, etc.), specifying any use of the cash method and the breakdown by consortium member, while ensuring consistency with the project's logical framework (see point 4.2). At the stage of the full proposal, the budget must be detailed on an annual basis. A procurement plan, a monitoring plan and a capacity building and institutional development plan must be annexed to the proposal. In all cases, it is recommended to refer to this Operations Manual, which details all the applicable rules and procedures.

## 3. Project selection criteria.

### 3.1. Main project selection criteria.

For this call, the SRF evaluates proposals considering recognised general project management criteria, as well as specific criteria tailored to the specific needs and objectives of this call. This approach aims to ensure that the selection of projects is aligned with best practice, while meeting the specific requirements of the context in which they are to be implemented. These include the following criteria:

1. Compliance with [the SRF strategy](#) and the SRF [Charter](#), the appeal guidelines and the humanitarian priorities of each of the countries covered.
2. The experience of the organisations, their specialisation in the theme(s) submitted, their operational capacity and their access to the areas of intervention.
3. Analysis of the context, needs and proposed theory of change (conflict-sensitive analysis, quality of the analysis of the needs and vulnerability of the populations in the area covered, intervention logic, etc.).
4. Community involvement and accountability.
5. Relevance, efficiency and effectiveness (analysis of resources, sectoral and operational technical content, match between activities and results, number of people supported for each type of support, relative to resources committed).
6. Sustainability (induced changes and perpetuation).
7. Compliance with expected cross-functional elements.
8. The level of involvement in global and sectoral coordination, at national, regional and local level.
9. Monitoring and evaluation (mechanisms, resources, tools, timetable).
10. Commitment to localisation efforts.



11. The budget (consistency and realism, reasonable operating costs, value for money).

**At operational level**, in addition to the criteria listed above, the assessment will focus on the relevance of targeting, ensuring that projects reach a significant number of beneficiaries while having a real impact on their empowerment. Interventions must demonstrate their capacity to reduce the vulnerability of populations in the long term, so that they do not require humanitarian assistance in the future. Particular attention will be paid to the coherence of actions, the sustainability of effects and value for money, both at project and sector level.

The assessment of projects will consider the risks associated with the decline in the overall level of humanitarian funding and the multiple impacts on the humanitarian ecosystem. **The SRF will seek to determine whether proposed projects remain realistic and viable despite these disruptions**

Given this highly uncertain context, **applicant NGOs will have to provide assurances** about their ability to implement their project regardless of uncertainties about external funding. The SRF will ask the NGO members of the consortia **to confirm the stability and sustainability of their country structures**, to ensure the continuity and proper implementation of the project.

### 3.2. Avoidance of conflicts of interest

The SRF, as a regional fund for humanitarian NGOs governed by NGOs, has put in place measures to reduce the risk of conflict of interest, while ensuring that all NGOs (except DRC), including board members, have an equal opportunity to access SRF funding [3-srf-rôle-de-la-gouvernance-structure-et-fonctionnement.docx \(live.com\)](#).

## 4. Submission instructions

### 4.1. Submission procedures.

**Interested international non-governmental organisations are invited to express their interest by submitting, in the first instance, a Concept Note together with annexes**, in the format available for downloading from the SRF website: <https://www.sahelregionalfund.org/fr/appels/appel-a-projet-2025-sahel-central-bassin-du-lac-tchad/>.

The Concept Note must be sent in accordance with the timetable specified below to the following address: [tender@sahelregionalfund.org](mailto:tender@sahelregionalfund.org)

After evaluation by the review committee and validation of the results by the SRF Board, only the selected entities will be invited to submit a full proposal. The required forms will then be made available on the SRF website, and the organisations concerned will be informed in due course.

**Please note Participation in this call for projects does not guarantee a final selection for a partnership with the SRF, or for funding.**

#### 4.2. Documents required for submission of the concept note.

For this call, the documents required for submission are as follows:

- **Concept note form (Appendix A).**
- **Documents confirming prior dialogue** with local authorities, technical services and communities.
- **Budget items (Appendix B).**
- **Logical framework (Appendix C).**
- **Preliminary elements of the theory of change.**
- **For takeover projects (in addition to the above)**
  - **Self-eligibility questionnaire.**
  - **Additional appendix including an explanatory note specifying the status of the interrupted project, its state of progress and the efficiency gains expected in the event of resumption.**
- **Official letter of support from the NGO's regional office or head office. (See details below).**

**The SRF is seeking letters of support from the regional offices or headquarters** of the lead NGOs and members of consortia applying for funding, to confirm their commitment and their ability to implement the proposed projects. This unusual approach for the SRF is intended to strengthen mutual trust, clarify commitments, and ensure the viability of interventions in a context of great uncertainty. Accordingly, the letters should:

1. To attest to the feasibility of the project despite possible access constraints, particularly linked to the possible alteration of UNHAS humanitarian support services.
2. Guarantee the maintenance of operational capacities and support arrangements until the end of SRF funding, by ensuring the continuity of the human, logistical, administrative and financial resources needed to implement the project.

#### 4.3 Questions and answers

You can submit your questions on any aspect to [information@sahelregionalfund.org](mailto:information@sahelregionalfund.org) within the deadline specified below. We will collect your questions by e-mail. We will then post all questions and answers on our website ([www.sahelregionalfund.org](http://www.sahelregionalfund.org)).

#### 4.4 Timetable (dates are estimated)

Activities	Estimated dates
Publication of the call	7 April 2025
Deadline for submitting questions	14 April
Answers to questions	21 April 2025
<b>Deadline for submission of concept</b>	Midnight on 4 May 2025.
<b>Concept notes selection</b>	Approximately from 6 to 26 May 2025
Information and invitation to eligible entities to submit a full proposal	Approximately around 26 May 2025.
<b>Deadline for submission of full proposals</b>	22 June 2025 at midnight.



Activities	Estimated dates
<b>Selection/analysis of complete projects</b>	Approximately from 24 June to 6 July 2025
Sharing of the selection report with the Board and feedback from the shortlisted organisations subject to the DDAs	Approximately 1st half of July 2025
DDA process and capacity assessment	July 2025
Publication of results and contracts	July August 2025

#### 4.4 Contact

If you have any questions about this call for projects, please write to the address [information@sahelregionalfund.org](mailto:information@sahelregionalfund.org)

If you have a complaint about a procedure, a suspicion of misconduct or a potential conflict of interest relating to the operation of the SRF and its integrity, you can submit a complaint to the following address: [grievance@sahelregionalfund.org](mailto:grievance@sahelregionalfund.org). The FMU is not involved in the complaints appeal committee, which is made up of members of the FCDO and the person responsible for the DRC Code of Conduct, for reasons of conflict of interest and neutrality.

#### Sahel Regional Fund

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