

SRF

SAHEL REGIONAL FUND

Governance Framework Review

2026

Sahel Regional Fund

This document presents proposals for revising the SRF governance framework across three key areas:

01 Board Member Selection

Harmonised process for national and international NGOs

02 Eligibility Criteria

Common framework with type-specific thresholds for NNGOs & INGOs

03 Observer Roles

New two-tier architecture: permanent & guest observers

Board Member Selection Process – NNGOs

BEFORE

Existing Framework

The framework distinguished two separate regimes:

- NNGOs were required to justify their election or nomination by national forums (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad) or regional networks (RBM, WANEP, etc.), including a description of representation legitimacy in the application form.
- NNGOs were considered minimum requirements, based on influence capacity and contribution to SRF's strategic ambition. Selection relied on a brief written expression of interest and an oral presentation before the host, a donor representative, the Board Chair, and an observer.

AFTER

Revised Proposal

A unified approach: all Board NGO members – national or international – now meet the same minimum requirements. Selected via a brief written expression of interest, with an optional interview.

Eligibility criteria ensure members can:

- Participate in defining and approving the fund's strategy and call-for-proposals orientations
- Endorse allocation decisions across SRF funding windows
- Review project selection processes and provide appropriate oversight
- Contribute to advocacy, external relations and resource mobilisation

Eligibility Criteria – Previous Framework

The previous framework established distinct criteria by organisation type.

NNGO Criteria (Previous)

1. Election or nomination by a national forum (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad) or regional network
2. Working for an NNGO registered as a member of the forum/network in one of the 4 target countries
3. Holding a national director role or equivalent senior position
4. Representing the interests of NNGOs involved in the humanitarian response within their forum/network

INGO Criteria (Previous)

1. Ability to influence and create synergies between project areas (Liptako-Gourma, Lake Chad Basin, Eastern Chad, SW Niger) and regional level
2. Operational presence in key project hotspots or via RMM mechanisms
3. Coverage of at least 3 countries in project areas
4. Representation in Dakar or commitment to attend quarterly meetings
5. CHS certification or commitment to apply CHS standards
6. Signatory or commitment to sign the Climate & Environment Charter
7. Active participation in regional IASC, national HCT and inter-agency coordination

Revised Eligibility Criteria - Harmonised Framework

A common baseline of criteria for all Board NGO members, with type-specific thresholds for certain quantitative requirements.

Strategic Influence

Capacity to exercise strategic influence and contribute to regional and global discussions supporting the SRF's ambition, drawing on deep knowledge of the Sahel region context.

Representation in Dakar & Seniority

INGO: Regional Director (or equivalent) or Deputy Regional Director based in Dakar.
NNGO: National Director (or equivalent) with commitment to attend quarterly Board meetings in Dakar in person.

Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)

Certification or commitment to comply with Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), ensuring quality and accountability across all operational activities.

Technical Capacity & Projects

INGO: at least 5 humanitarian projects with local partners over the past 2 years.
NNGO: at least 3 national humanitarian projects over the past 2 years.

Revised Eligibility Criteria — Presence & Coordination

Operational Presence

Presence in key hotspot areas of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger or Chad, with a demonstrated capacity to respond to humanitarian and protection needs.

INGO: at least 3 countries

NNGO: at least 3 provinces or equivalent administrative entities in one of the target countries

Humanitarian Coordination

Active participation in national humanitarian coordination bodies (HCT, inter-agency mechanisms) and in the regional IASC group.

IASC inter-agency mechanisms include:

- The cluster system — sectoral humanitarian coordination at country level
- Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT)
- Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups (ICCG)
- NGO forums

Why Harmonise?

These harmonised criteria replace the two distinct previous regimes. They provide a level playing field while preserving thresholds adapted to the operational reality of each organisation type - ensuring both NNGOs and INGOs meet the genuine capacity standards needed to contribute meaningfully to the Board.

Rationale for Revising the Criteria

Board discussions identified four key needs to strengthen transparency and quality in the representative designation process.

01 Clarify the Representation Role

Clearly distinguish situations where an NNGO acts on behalf of a forum from those where it more broadly represents the national and local humanitarian NGO community.

02 Define the Role of Forums

Clarify the forums' role in the nomination process to ensure a consistent approach and avoid ad-hoc decisions. A forum may recommend one or more candidacies.

03 Ensure Two-Way Representation

Ensure representatives can effectively carry the forum's voice in both directions: towards the Board and back towards the forums themselves.

04 Structure the Application Process

Limit the number of candidacies and prioritise recommendation letters from forums rather than direct nominations, allowing the Board committee to fully assess scope and representativeness.

Observer Role - Before & After

BEFORE

Existing Definition

The observer monitored the transparency and compliance of Board procedures against SRF charter standards, without voting rights. Appointed on the direct recommendation of the Fund Director, based on criteria including:

- Ability to advise and promote coordination with existing and future humanitarian funds
- Participation in the regional IASC in Dakar or strong knowledge of humanitarian needs and nexus challenges
- Representation in Dakar (Senegal)
- Advocacy role related to humanitarian action and humanitarian access

AFTER

New Architecture

The revision introduces a distinction between two types of observers:

Permanent Observer (Donor)

A donor holding a permanent seat on the Board, reinforcing transparency, enriching debate quality, supporting strategic coherence and improving accountability between the SRF and its financial partners, while preserving the Board's decision-making independence.

Guest Observers

Organisations or external actors invited to participate occasionally or regularly in Board meetings, in a purely informative and advisory role, without interfering with formal decisions.

Selection now by recommendation of the Fund Director or the Board, broadening the designation base.

Permanent Observer - Roles & Responsibilities

The permanent observer is a non-voting donor whose contribution spans several strategic and operational Board dimensions.

Participation & Expression

Attends Board meetings as a non-voting member with the right to speak and contribute, without taking part in formal decisions.

Strategic Insights

Brings donor perspectives aligned with global priorities, accountability requirements and humanitarian funding trends.

Strategic Coherence

Facilitates alignment between SRF orientations and donor policies, in keeping with Grand Bargain and Humanitarian Reset commitments.

Mutual Accountability

Supports a shared understanding of commitments, requirements and expectations between the SRF and its financial partners.

Risk Analysis

Provides complementary insight on major risks and mitigation measures, supporting a balanced and transparent approach to risk management across the humanitarian chain.

Mobilisation & Mandate

Supports resource mobilisation and advocacy initiatives. Can make technical experts available for the evaluation committee. Minimum one-year mandate, renewable.

Guest Observers - Roles & Responsibilities

A guest observer is an organisation or external actor invited to participate occasionally or regularly in Board meetings to strengthen transparency and understanding, without interfering with formal decisions.

Participation by Invitation

Participates in Board meetings on invitation, based on needs identified by the Board or FMU — whether for a specific session, a thematic cycle, or a given period.

Access Without Decision-Making Role

Gains direct access to strategic discussions, governance processes and operational exchanges to better understand the SRF's functioning, priorities and mechanisms. Does not participate in formal decision-making.

Advisory Contribution

May contribute to specific discussions at the request of the Board or FMU when expertise is deemed useful, while respecting deliberation spaces reserved for Board members and the permanent observer.

Confidentiality & SRF Familiarisation

Respects confidentiality of shared information, documents and deliberations. A donor may be invited for familiarisation purposes — to understand the Board's functioning in view of a potential future financial contribution.

Rationale - New Observer Profile

Strengthening Openness & Attractiveness

By allowing observers to attend Board meetings, the SRF creates a privileged space to better understand its functioning, governance mechanisms and value model.

Observer participation — without a decision-making role — provides direct access to strategic discussions, allocation methods and the fund's approach to risk management, building confidence in the SRF's capacity to deliver targeted, effective and accountable humanitarian responses.

A Vehicle for Progressive Engagement

The observer status is also a vehicle for progressive engagement. By becoming familiar with SRF priorities, its territorialised approach and results, observers are well-positioned to consider future financial support.

This new structure contributes to strengthening SRF's legitimacy, consolidating strategic alliances and creating conditions for sustainable funding growth — while preserving governance independence and credibility.

4

Target Countries

Burkina Faso · Mali · Niger · Chad

2

Observer Types

Permanent & Guest

1 yr

Minimum Mandate

Permanent observer

4.4.4

Board Seats

INGOs · NNGOs · Donors

Summary — Governance Framework Revision

The three proposed reform areas aim to strengthen the coherence, transparency and effectiveness of the SRF Board.

AXIS 1

Harmonised Selection

A unified process for NNGOs and INGOs, based on a written expression of interest and an optional interview — replacing the two distinct previous regimes.

AXIS 2

Revised Criteria

A common baseline of harmonised eligibility criteria, with type-specific thresholds for geographic coverage and number of projects (INGO vs NNGO).

AXIS 3

Redefined Observers

A two-tier architecture: a permanent observer (donor) with a structured role and clear responsibilities, and guest observers in an advisory and learning role, fostering progressive engagement of new financial partners.

These reforms reflect a commitment to enhanced transparency, constructive dialogue, and alignment with the Grand Bargain and Humanitarian Reset principles.



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