



# THE SAHEL REGIONAL FUND

Annual Report Year 1 (April 2023 – March 2024) Summary

## Over 29 million people in the Sahel region face severe food insecurity, driven by conflict, climate change, and economic shocks.

Countries in the Sahel are grappling with a complex array of development challenges. Escalating insecurity, political instability, military takeovers, and the effects of climate change are compounded by economic shocks, making the delivery of humanitarian assistance increasingly difficult.

Rising armed conflict and violence continue to destroy communities, undermine social cohesion, and intensify negative coping mechanisms. This has resulted in unprecedented levels of forced displacement, largely driven by non-state armed groups. Millions of people have been displaced for extended periods, some multiple times as a result of forced displacement.

The region is now home to over 5 million displaced individuals, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, deepening the humanitarian crisis.

Acute malnutrition, particularly among children under five, is reaching alarming levels, with global acute malnutrition rates surpassing emergency thresholds in several areas.

The Sahel's vulnerability to climate change further compounds these challenges. Frequent droughts, desertification, and seasonal flooding severely impact agricultural productivity and water access, displacing even more people and damaging vital infrastructure. As a result, many households have lost their livelihoods, becoming increasingly dependent on humanitarian aid to survive.

**The Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) is tackling these mounting challenges head-on, targeting the most vulnerable and conflict-affected areas across the region.**

In response to the escalating humanitarian crisis in the Sahel, the SRF is delivering life-saving interventions to the region's most vulnerable areas. Targeting conflict-affected, hard-to-reach, and under-resourced zones, including the **Liptako Gourma, Lake Chad Basin, Maradi region in Southwest Niger, and East of Chad**, the SRF provides essential support to displaced populations impacted by violence, climate shocks, and chronic instability. Beyond immediate relief, the SRF prioritises sustainable, long-term solutions by fostering local capacity and resilience. With a unique approach centred on flexible, predictable funding for NGOs, the SRF enables integrated, multi-sector, and cross-border responses.

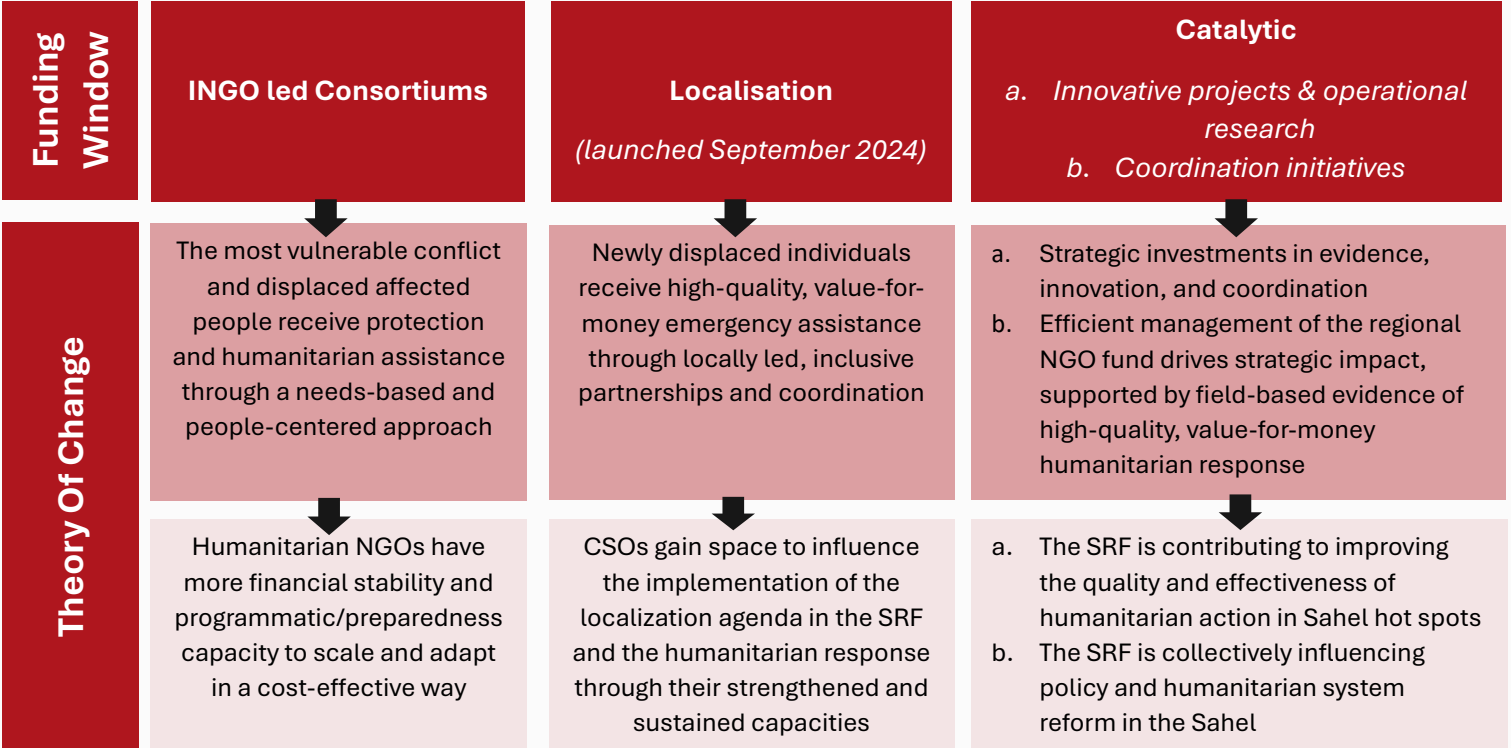
In its first year of operations, the SRF allocated a total of £33.19 million, and **reached 551,404 direct beneficiaries—65.24% of its 2025 target of 845,233.**

By empowering local stakeholders and prioritising data-driven interventions, the SRF ensures aid is effective and aligned with evolving needs. Key interventions have included **enhancing food security, nutrition, health, protection, and access to essential services (integrated approach with decentralised services) to address deep-rooted socio-economic vulnerabilities.**

This impactful year also featured support for ICVA's project aimed at boosting the efficiency and equity of humanitarian responses. Coordinated through ICVA's expanded presence in Dakar, this initiative bolstered **NGO collaboration, coordination, and advocacy**, promoting principled aid delivery for the region's most vulnerable. Through these efforts, the SRF is making significant progress toward a safer, more resilient Sahel.

**Driving Change: The Three Pillars of SRF Funding**

*The SRF's vision is driven by three connected funding windows, each aimed at accelerating local aid and enhancing humanitarian impact through quality funding. These windows are designed to drive the SRF's theory of change – with each window aligning with the SRF's mission to build resilient, locally-driven, and highly effective humanitarian response in hard-to-reach Sahel hot spots:*



# IMPACT

## APRIL 2023 TO MAY 2024

FUNDING	The SRF received 65.9 million GBP from FCDO			
INVESTMENTS	33.19 million GBP allocated (50%)			
	10.04 million GBP total funding spent until March 2024 (15%)			
	PHASE 1	Fund Management Unit (FMU)	INGO led Consortiums	Catalytic
		0.97 million GBP spent	8.99 million GBP spent	0.08 million GBP spent
		16% of overall allocation	33% of overall allocation	25% of overall allocation
PHASE 2 <small>Estimated values</small>	Fund Management Unit (FMU)	INGO led Consortiums	Catalytic	Localisation
	4.6 million GBP	34 million GBP	2.2 million GBP	14.6 million
ACHIEVEMENTS	Transparent and efficient project selection; robust monitoring & evaluation capacity and framework	Effective engagement with local authorities & Increased access	Acceleration of locally driven response efforts	Strengthened regional advocacy
ENABLED IMPACT	<p>As a result, between April 2023 and March 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The SRF directly reached 551,404 beneficiaries through three projects in four countries</b>, with 87.7% of beneficiaries reporting safe, accessible, and inclusive aid. Of those served, 55.41% were women and girls. comprised.</li> <li><b>SRF funding has enabled impactful advocacy and strengthened regional coordination through ICVA, achieving high satisfaction among NGOs and forums in the WCA region:</b> 68% found the support relevant for coordination and advocacy, 100% of local NGOs valued the mini-grants for localisation, and 55% reported increased capacity to influence policy dialogue.</li> <li><b>National and local organisations actively shaped SRF governance through Board representation and project leadership, with £1.7 million directed to 10 NNGOs to drive localised response efforts across the Sahel.</b></li> </ul>			

# MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

## EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

*"The SRF is the first major donor in Djenné district, stepping in when we were overwhelmed with new arrivals of IDPs from 10 villages." — Abdoulaye Cissé, 1st Deputy of Djenné district, Mali.*

Strong coordination with local authorities has driven effective and targeted resource allocation, ensuring meaningful impact on the ground. Consistent communication with regional and local government authorities, and partners (including OCHA) has unified efforts, promoted shared goals, and fostered local ownership of both short and medium-term objectives. Key officials, such as M. Hamadou Brah Traoré, Sio Mayor in Mopti, Mali, have commended SRF's collaborative approach: *"Our town hall has been continuously involved, from awareness-raising to proximity monitoring and support in beneficiary targeting"*. This approach has fostered transparency and buy-in from regional and local authorities, who have actively participated in monitoring, communication, and community outreach.

## ACCELERATION OF LOCALLY DRIVEN RESPONSE EFFORTS

A key focus of the SRF's first year has been the steady advancement of its localisation approach, integrating national and local organisations into both governance and project implementation roles. National organisations now hold seats on the SRF Board of Directors, contributing essential insights that shape the SRF's localisation agenda. This commitment extends to project implementation, where each SRF-funded consortium includes at least two NGOs. In 2023, ten NGOs across Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad received funding to implement activities, with full participation in project management and decision-making. Additionally, the SRF Board approved a proportional redistribution of overheads, empowering NGOs to strengthen their organisational capacities.

**In its first year, 19.4% of the SRF's expenditure was allocated to NGOs,** ensuring locally-driven interventions reached vulnerable populations. Looking ahead, the SRF is poised to accelerate the localisation agenda with a dedicated **localisation funding window** for NGOs, beginning with pilot projects in Chad and Burkina Faso and expanding across the Sahel region.

## INCREASED ACCESS

A significant achievement in SRF's first year has been **delivering aid to 95% of targeted hard-to-reach locations across its four countries of operation, despite numerous access challenges**. Security threats—ranging from armed conflict and violence to the presence of IEDs—alongside logistical, geographical, and bureaucratic barriers, have made reaching these remote, often isolated areas highly complex. To overcome these obstacles, SRF partners have employed integrated access strategies that combine programmatic and operational approaches to maintain a principled and effective humanitarian presence. Key examples include successfully reaching Ouallam and Diffa in Niger and Ouahigouya in Burkina Faso, where access has been especially challenging.

The SRF's IRC-funded project illustrate these adaptive efforts. IRC and its partners have applied transparent, risk-managed strategies, resulting in **92% of beneficiaries in Niger and 83% in Chad reporting safe, accessible, accountable, and participatory aid delivery—surpassing targets**. Effective approaches included leveraging the local knowledge and community-based organisations. Additionally, combining essential services in a single intervention—such as integrated health, nutrition, and WASH support—ensured that communities in hard-to-reach locations received comprehensive aid without requiring multiple interventions, thereby reducing exposure to risk.

## STRENGTHENED REGIONAL ADVOCACY

With SRF funding, **ICVA is amplifying the voices of those often unheard, driving powerful advocacy, regional coordination, and knowledge-sharing efforts across national, regional, and global forums**. Through co-chairing influential groups such as the regional advocacy and communication working group and the Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee alongside OCHA, ICVA has strengthened regional NGO coordination, ensuring local perspectives are represented in decision-making spaces. The launch of a regional NGO advocacy group and task force underscores ICVA's commitment to empowering NGOs, **with 68% of respondents affirming ICVA's relevance in coordination, capacity-building, and advocacy, and 77% reporting improved collaboration through ICVA's support**. Additionally, **55% of NGO staff reported increased capacity to influence policy at all levels** thanks to ICVA's efforts.

# BENEFICIARY SATISFACTION

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

The SRF has demonstrated a firm commitment to AAP, ensuring all funded activities uphold the highest standards of transparency and responsiveness as outlined in the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. Through strong AAP frameworks, SRF partners implement various feedback mechanisms, such as hotlines, complaint management committees, local focal points, and direct engagement during community surveys. In areas where physical access is limited, local community informants play a critical role in relaying feedback and complaints, ensuring that project teams remain connected to community needs and concerns. Achievements in AAP include Mercy Corps' SRF-funded *Rallier project*, where suggestion boxes and informative posters were installed at intervention sites to guide community members on how to submit feedback via a dedicated hotline. Complaints were resolved within one month, exemplifying swift response times. CRS's *Dewral project* received 1,482 pieces of feedback, with around 90% being positive assessments and information requests.

The *IRC project* addressed 79 pieces of feedback within 2-4 weeks, which primarily focused on information requests, and suggestions for wider beneficiary inclusion. These collective efforts underscore the SRF's commitment to accountability and continuous improvement in humanitarian response.

## A PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH

The SRF's people-centred approach places affected individuals at the core of assistance efforts, fostering collaboration across sectors for a coordinated response tailored to community needs. Through multi-sectoral needs assessments and transparent prioritisation criteria, 90% of the most vulnerable populations were effectively reached, with beneficiary satisfaction notably high. In Burkina Faso, **98.8% of respondents confirmed their preferences were considered for kit contents, while in Mali, satisfaction with meal sufficiency rose to 93.2% post-intervention.**



**Feedback and inclusivity are key to SRF operations, as highlighted by community voices: “We feel important to the project,” shared women from the Senossa/Ouo Ali host community, while girls from the Albarka Koira/Ouallam host community said, “We’re happy - everyone has participated on an equal basis.” These testimonials underscore the SRF’s commitment to listening and responding to community needs.**

# LOOKING AHEAD

## Empowering Local Leadership, Expanding Our Reach

Building on the successes of our first year, the SRF aims to deepen its impact and continue to accelerate change in the Sahel. In September 2024, we launched our dedicated **Localisation Funding Window**, providing national partners with multi-year, quality funding that empowers them to lead responses in their communities. This pilot in Chad and Burkina Faso targets areas with the highest need, particularly those that are severely under-resourced and hard-to-reach. With localisation at the core of our strategy, we aim to expand this initiative across other Sahel countries, supporting local leadership where it's needed most.

Another key focus for the coming year is our goal to transition fully to a **Pooled Fund** modality. Regular discussions with donors are already underway, and with FCDO's support, we're positioning the SRF as a strong and flexible funding mechanism, capable of mobilising additional resources for the region's critical needs.

Through these ambitious steps, we're not only strengthening our capacity but also reinforcing our commitment to **creating resilient, locally driven humanitarian solutions across the Sahel**. Join us as we empower communities and scale up our efforts for lasting change.



## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE:

### A Note from the SRF Director, Séverine Moisy



Séverine & SRF MEAL team visit the SRF funded IRC project in Chad

**“I would like to express my deep gratitude to FCDO/UKaid, the SRF Board of Directors, all our partners and staff for their dedication and hard work. Together, we can build a more resilient and hopeful future for the people of the Sahel.”**



Séverine Moisy  
Fund Director

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This report reflecting on 2023-2024 showcases the achievements and impact of our interventions in the Sahel region. It underscores the resilience of the communities we serve and highlights the importance of coordinated humanitarian efforts. Thanks to the generous support of the FCDO, and the unwavering dedication of our international and national partners, we have been able to provide essential assistance to those most in need.

The data and testimonials within this report reflect the spirit of collaboration that fuels our work. We have witnessed the positive impact of our programmes on vulnerable populations, from delivering crucial health services and improving food security to protecting displaced children and implementing small-scale climate change mitigation efforts. These initiatives are vital for fostering stability and hope in the region.

Yet, there is much more to be done. The humanitarian needs in the Sahel remain vast, and we must continue to adapt and strengthen our response. This report is not just a record of our achievements but a call to action. We must keep advocating for sustainable support and innovative solutions to meet the ever-evolving challenges ahead.