SRF Strategic Framework

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1. Background

The Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) hosted by Danish Refugee Council is a new regional humanitarian fund governed by leading NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) with an operational presence in Liptako Gourma (LG), Lake Chad Basin (LCB) and in Maradi region in Southwest Niger. The fund will target locations in under-resourced hard-to-reach conflict affected rural areas and locations that face challenges to cope with the influx of conflict and displaced people in these locations. Such locations will be considered as the humanitarian hot spots in the Sahel region to be targeted by the Fund. The Fund is supported by UK (United Kingdom) aid and will operate until 31 March 2026. The fund could later evolve as a multi-donor pool fund.

The goal of this new regional mechanism led by NGOs is to support the implementation of more efficient response models and form evidence on high quality Value for Money (VfM) and principled humanitarian action. SRF's unique added value is to invest in the following drivers which are key to improve the response to this regional crisis:

➢ Predictable, flexible and long-term funding to support an estimated three multi-country consortia operating in humanitarian hotspots to scale and adapt programming in an effective and timely manner to respond to acute needs and to emerging crises. Where relevant and added value is demonstrated, the Fund will finance multi-country consortia implementing integrated multi-sectoral and cross border strategies to support the development of a regional humanitarian response to this regional crisis.
➢ Strategic and inclusive engagement with local stakeholders, first responders and endogenous systems.
➢ Investment in operational research and capacity in NGO (Non-Governmental Organisations) coordination forum at national and regional level to support a more principled and effective response, improve its quality and support the humanitarian reform agenda.

The SRF Strategic Framework endorsed by the board in September 2022 will form the framework for the SRF common engagement and strategic vision. SRF partners will be expected to develop their own operational strategy based on their situational analysis. The implementation of more efficient response models has the objective to lead to a change in humanitarian programmatic approach to respond to the increasing scale, scope and complexity of acute humanitarian need in Sahel humanitarian hot spots.

This regional approach intends to influence a humanitarian response which is currently too defined by national borders, short-term, insufficiently inclusive and impacted by lack of consideration of humanitarian principles, with questionable value for money. For this reason, the SRF will promote innovation, learning, adaptation, anticipation and evidence-based policy dialogue to go beyond the business as usual and improve the quality of the humanitarian response in the Sahel region

2. Vision, mission and ambitions

The **SRF Charter** defines the SRF vision and mission and contains the principles, standards and commitments the SRF partners commit to upholding to and abiding by.

The **SRF vision** is to pursue a safer and more dignified future for all conflict and displacement affected populations in the hotspots of most humanitarian need in the Sahel. As a regional humanitarian fund governed by leading NGOs, it will closely coordinate and constructively challenge the broader response to see how we can collectively do better, so that more vulnerable people in Sahel hard-to-reach hotspots have as many of their basic needs met more comprehensively through a higher quality, Value for Money (VFM) and principled humanitarian response.

The **SRF mission** is to complement and reinforce protection and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, by providing funding for immediate relief of affected populations, strengthening local capacities, supporting skilled aid organisations and paving the way for lasting solutions. It is designed to support and reinforce principled humanitarian response and is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

The **SRF strategic ambition** is to demonstrate that a high quality VfM humanitarian response and principled humanitarian response will contribute to meet more comprehensively the basic needs of the most vulnerable population in the targeted humanitarian hot spots. The SRF will require adequate balance of efforts in ensuring a coverage in both under-resourced hard-to-reach conflict affected areas and urban/peri-urban area which face less access constraints but face challenges to cope with the influx of conflict and displacement people. This will underpin a joint regional NGO advocacy agenda to influence practices, policy and humanitarian reform.

The strategic ambition of the SRF aligns with the strategic objective of the Grand Bargain 2.0. The original objective of the Grand Bargain was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system. The new objective now includes an explicit focus on measuring improved efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system against "better humanitarian outcomes for affected populations". There are two new enabling priorities, often summarised as "quality funding" and "localisation". These also integrate other crucial elements such as efficiency and effectiveness, visibility, risk sharing, transparency and accountability – including to affected people.

3. Geographical focus
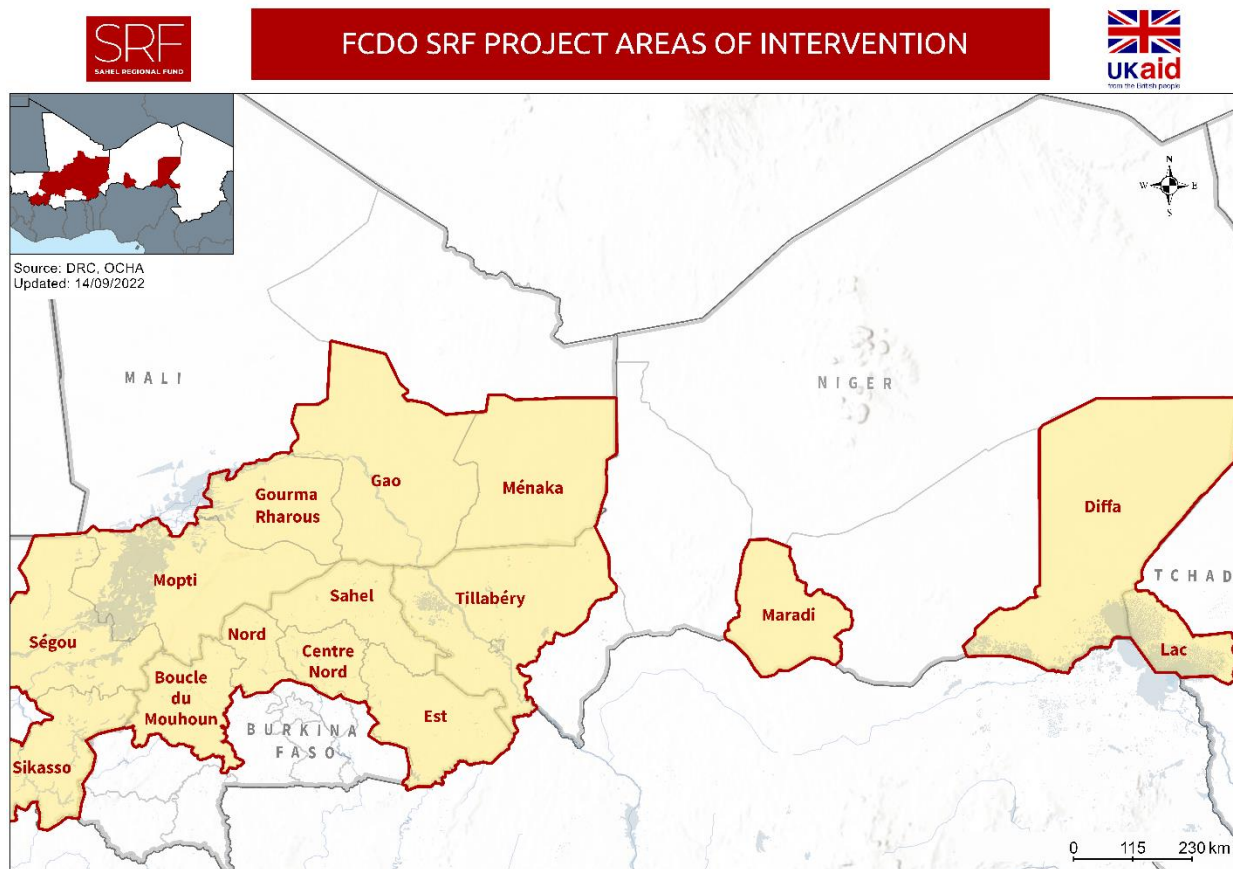
4. Cross cutting areas

4.1. Centrality of protection

Protection will sit at the centre of all initiatives supported by the Fund[1]. SRF partners will aim at keeping vulnerable people from harm, reduce the impact of threats people face, minimise their exposure to threats and increase their capacity to cope. All intervention funded by the SRF will be developed based on a protection risk analysis using the Protection Analytical Framework[2].The SRF aims to strengthen the protective environment and contribute to increase accountability of the duty bearers by ensuring data collected by SRF partners are integrated and shared with existing national monitoring systems (P21, GBVIMS, MRP on grave violations against children, etc.) to enhance the detection, monitoring and prevention of protection incidents as well as to provide an adapted response with specific services.

4.1.1. Social inclusion - gender, disability, mental health, marginalization

The SRF is committed to reach those most at risk and to leave no one behind. Displacement and conflict-affected people face distinct risks based on intersecting socio-demographic characteristics and identity factors.

When collecting and processing data, SRF stakeholders will, as per sector's standards, ensure the data is disaggregated by sex, age, disability (Washington Group indicators), status (displaced/ not displaced) and other relevant diversity factors to assess the distinct needs, vulnerabilities, opportunities and capacities of the diverse groups that make up an affected population, to design, monitor and adjust programmes, and assess impact on diverse groups. Disability is measured by default by including in all data sets the short Washington group set of indicators measuring difficulties. Other characteristics, which may affect access, will be defined during the response design, by both the affected communities and the humanitarian organisations (ex. Lifestyle as a pastoralist, community belonging, etc.).

The SRF is committed to contribute to reducing gender inequality and protect the people most at risk from conflict-related sexual violence and barriers to humanitarian assistance. The SRF will support responses in regions and communities where roles are clearly defined based on factors such as gender and age. The occurrence of the crisis may change the equilibrium of powers in a household and between groups. The SRF will encourage the roll out of gender-responsive actions grounded in a recognition and respect of the power-dynamics. The contextual risk analysis will be complemented by a more specific gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) analysis The SRF will prioritize intervention contributing to reduce the staggering levels of gender-based violence occurring in the locations affected by displacement and conflict and improving access to crucial reproductive health services.

Further, it will be key to incorporate climate change impacts and climate risks in the contextual risk analysis that will be undertaken to the different needs in relation to gender, disability, mental health, marginalized populations.

4.1.2. Do no harm' and conflict sensitivity

The SRF is committed to ensure that all SRF funded NGOs understand the context in which they operate; understand the interaction between the organisation's intervention and the context and act to limit or prevent unintended negative effects (including gender-based violence).

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[1] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-protection-priority-global-protection-cluster/iasc-policy-protection-humanitarian-action-2016#:~:text=This%20policy%20defines%20the%20centrality,expertise%20of%20all%20relevant%20actors.
[2] Protection Analytical Framework | Global Protection Cluster

The SRF will ensure that all projects will integrate conflict-sensitivity at all stages, but particularly at critical moments in project development and implementation. To that intent if and where assessed as providing added value, the SRF will consider the opportunity to provide common tools and/or provide trainings to ensure conflict sensitivity is really taken into consideration and ensure minimum standards are met. Having a deep understanding of the context based on a comprehensive conflict analysis is crucial to the humanitarian imperative of doing no harm when intervening in a geographical area. This is also a key element of the SRF strategic ambition to put affected populations at the centre of all SRF actions. Localized conflict analysis, and regular updates, will inform project design and project implementation in ways to avoid an intervention having a negative impact and examine avenues to strengthen social cohesion and local power structures but also with humanitarian principles. Conflict analyses should meet two main criteria:

> ➢ Be *'fit for purpose'* meaning that the outputs of conflict analysis processes are as directly and practically useful for programming and operations, and/or external stakeholder engagement, as possible;
> ➢ Be *'good enough'*, meaning that while conflict analyses may not be comprehensive, they should provide reliable insights on the most important conflict factors and stakeholders and generate actionable and practical recommendations for programming and advocacy.

The SRF will also ensure all projects will integrate an access strategy providing a mapping of the factors constraining[3] humanitarian access (legal, administrative and bureaucratic, safety and security, physical environment -including related to climate risks- and infrastructure, adequacy of internal and donor practices) and provides actionable measures to support operational and/or programming adaptation to move towards an access-enabling environment in operational contexts where humanitarian access is hindered.

Furthermore, the SRF risk management framework will ensure an effective and proactive risk management system is in place. It will clarify risk ownership, ensure mitigations measures and monitoring tools are in place and regularly updated. The SRF partners will actively coordinate with the humanitarian access working groups (at national and regional level) to share experience and explore further the range of challenges and solutions to full and unimpeded humanitarian access which is a fundamental prerequisite to effective humanitarian action.

4.1.3. Paving the way for sustainable and inclusive solutions

Although the SRF is focused on addressing immediate and basic needs of the most vulnerable conflict and displacement affected people, the timeframe of the action allows for program approaches to facilitate the transition from short-term humanitarian interventions to inclusive long-term solutions. It will enable displaced people and returnees to work and/or to protect/start rebuilding the assets that are essential to people's livelihoods, so they enhance their self-reliance and can provide for themselves and their families, increase their resilience and meet their needs for protection, food security, health, housing, and other essential services in a sustainable and dignified manner. The SRF partners will be expected to demonstrate how they will respond to the needs expressed by affected populations and their approach to address the multiple basic needs of the most vulnerable populations while integrating and promoting sustainable solutions in their response strategy particularly with a view to improving the protection and reintegration of refugee and internally displaced persons. The stakeholders' engagement strategy will reinforce our engagement with other development and peacebuilding actors to identify clear synergies and referral pathways in the project areas.

The SRF will promote local integration and have the capacity to support the voluntary and sustainable return of displaced people to their homes in the spirit of the Kampala Convention which was ratified by all concerned countries in the target areas. In consideration of existing challenges related to return in the

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[3] Access constraints include impediments to entry, restrictions of movement, interference with relief activities, violence against humanitarian personnel, denial of the affected population's needs, restriction of the population's access to aid, active hostilities, the presence of unexploded ordnances and mines, and constraints presented by the physical environment and infrastructure.

Sahel region, it will be key to ensure that returns are conducted in an informed manner and do not expose people to more risks. Often lack of economic power exposing them to more risks including around gender-based violence, which continues to be under-reported.

The SRF is also committed to address root causes to deal with situations of protracted displacement and polarization/conflict in the targeted communities as well as to address triple nexus challenges. Forced displacement has multiple, linked causes which are both structural (long-term) and proximate (more immediate events or shifts in perceptions). The causes and dynamics of forced displacement vary greatly from one context to another and will need to be analysed to inform SRF partners' response strategies. The timeframe of the action allows to incorporate some elements of programming aiming at addressing root causes either directly in the SRF intervention or through synergies with development activities such as:

➢ Strengthening community capacities & mechanisms for conflict prevention.
➢ Building strengthened resilience (ie capacity to absorb, adapt and transform) to environmental shocks and stresses, including through support for shared natural resource agreements, improved community regenerative practices.
➢ Supporting/promoting improved sustainable & equitable management of shared resources, supporting equitable & inclusive access to (self-) employment and to resources and services enabling economic activity, incl. land/property, financial services, financial and digital literacy to strengthen food production systems.

SRF partners will be encouraged to analyse displacement patterns, violation of rights and how livelihoods are affected taking into account the legal, political, environmental, socio-economic and cultural factors. Such analysis should inform protection and assistance strategies that, where possible, start working toward sustainable solutions for people affected by conflict and displacement from the early stages of their action.[4]

4.2. Increased participation and accountability to affected communities and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

SRF will ensure a strong Accountability Framework to Affected Populations (AAP) in all activities implemented with the goal to increase accountability toward affected population. The SRF is committed to upholding the principles, standards and values of accountability and transparency, as contained in the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. Process and mechanisms for the roll out of this AAP will be defined in the SRF MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) framework.

In accordance with the CHS/AAP, communities will participate in the different phases of the project cycle, (project design, mobilisation, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and annual review processes) in ways that allow for equitable participation of all. The SRF will require to work with, through and represent the diversity of communities in order to respond to their needs more effectively and strengthen accountability. Accordingly, activities will be adapted to ensure safe and dignified access for all. It is worth noting in consideration of the Sahel context that AAP is implemented across the programming cycle, but there exists precedence of humanitarian principles over the preferences of affected populations in cases where they are incompatible (for instance in an instance where a community would ask that a specific ethnic group is not assisted, SRF partners would be expected to object that request)

Taking into account crisis-affected communities, the SRF will emphasize the need of giving communities influence or ownership over decision making and incorporating diverse voices and vulnerable groups

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[4] DRC- NRC publication : Analyse de cadrage sur les barrières et les opportunités relatives à un centre de coordination et d'information sur les solutions durables au déplacement en Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale (January 2022)

(considering age, gender, status, disability and marginalized groups) by requiring the widespread deployment of Focus Group Discussions and surveys prior to starting activities and during the project's implementation. These feedbacks from affected communities are crucial to ensuring their voices are heard and that interventions are appropriate, and consequently to encourage their constant participation and feedback, to inform programme activities and policy messages.

To give account to/from communities and allow for opinions, recommendations and complaints to emerge and transparently and effectively share information with communities, the SRF will ensure with funded consortia that they will be implementing F-CRMs (Feedback and Complaints Response Mechanism) through two-way communication channels feedback mechanisms with communication channels based on community preferences. For instance, the communities will be able to see the results and recommendations that are driven by the survey they engage in. Falling directly in line with CHS standards n°4, 5 and 7, these community-based feedback and complaints response mechanisms are designed to be safe, accessible, confidential (in their handling of sensitive data and complaints), transparent (in their functioning and processes). In turn, hearing from communities and beneficiaries will allow the consortia to adapt their activities and programming, depending on the feedback received, as well as to being able to be held to account by affected communities in an environment marked by real power imbalances.

Inclusive communication, participation and feedback/complaints mechanisms should be put in place and recognised by all relevant staff, across all SRF funded intervention and crises, and across the entire programming cycle[5]. Crucially, given the sensitive nature of some potential complaints, the SRF will also put an emphasis on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment by ensuring that SRF funded partners have adequate policy and procedures in place against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment. Furthermore, the SRF will ensure SRF funded partners abide to these standards and actively promote them.

In line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's "Five Commitments on Accountability to Affected People/ Populations", the SRF will require from its partners to establish a common feedback and complaints system incorporating common participatory needs assessment, feedback frameworks, communication strategy and monitoring and evaluation processes.

Furthermore, beyond common feedback and complaints mechanisms which will need to be in place for all SRF partners, the SRF and its partners will encourage, promote and take part in system-level accountability (across humanitarian organisation and other relevant key stakeholders) through common feedback and complaints systems where deemed appropriate.

The Fund Management Unit will gather empirical evidence on the assumed association between increased accountability and a more effective and qualitative response to strengthen further the Accountability Framework to Affected Populations in Sahel humanitarian hot spots. Moving forward and considering that the AAP is at the core of the SRF strategy, it could be considered in the future by the SRF Board (if SRF successfully raised additional funding from other donors) to create financial incentives (result-based funding approach) for SRF partners to take accountability to affected population and data quality more seriously by linking funding decisions to beneficiary satisfaction and by offering more flexible funding arrangements in the case of high level of satisfaction shared by the conflict and displacement affected population.

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[5] Process and tools meeting expected standards for an increased accountability will be developed in the SRF MEAL Framework

Minimum requirements:
1. Two-way communication
2. Affected populations receive information about aid and know their rights and entitlements.
3. Accessible, safe and responsive feedback mechanisms
4. Meaningful participation
5. Inclusion of the most vulnerable and traditionally marginalized
6. Agencies grant accountability to affected populations voluntarily.

This happens:
7. Throughout the entire programme cycle
8. At the agency level, at the HCT/cluster level and at a system-wide level

4.3. Climate, environment and energy

The increasingly negative consequences of environmental degradation and climate-related challenges in the Sahel region continue to contribute to humanitarian crises.

In line with the principles contained in the 'Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations', the SRF will support the reduction of risks and vulnerability to shocks, stresses and longer-term changes through an increased focus on climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action. Across all of our work, including preparedness, response and recovery, we will consider changing climate and environmental risks in targeted humanitarian hotspots.

In line with the principle of "do no harm", the SRF partners will avoid, minimize and manage the damage we cause to the environment and the climate, while maintaining our ability to provide timely and principled humanitarian assistance. The SRF partners will implement sound environmental policies and systematically assess the immediate and longer-term environmental impact of all our work, including by minimizing the environmental footprint of our programmes, procurement, logistics and premises. The SRF Partners will be expected to consider how the multiyear nature of funding can enable progress in this area (e.g. investment in solar rather than diesel generators, etc).

Our action will be guided by the leadership and experience of local actors and communities. The SRF partners will support them to better prepare for changing climate and environmental risks, and will learn from local, traditional and indigenous knowledge on mitigation and adaptation measures, including nature-based solutions. The SRF partners will enhance cooperation across the humanitarian system, in particular between local, national and international actors to ensure a continuum of efforts to manage risks and to develop sustainable interventions.

To strengthen our collective capacity to reduce risks, anticipate crises, act early and ensure the sustainability of our activities, the SRF partners will enhance our understanding of evolving short- and long-term climate and environmental risks and opportunities. We will report on the progress of the implementation of mitigation measures related to environmental risks related to our operations. When feasible, we will produce and share relevant and accessible data and analysis, to help address data scarcity.

Key takeaways from the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian:

1. Step up our response to growing humanitarian needs and help people adapt to the impacts of the climate and environmental crises
2. Maximize the environmental sustainability of our work and rapidly reduce our greenhouse emissions
3. Embrace the leadership of local actors and communities
4. Increase our capacity to understand climate and environmental risks and develop evidence-based solutions
5. Work collaboratively across the humanitarian sector and beyond to strengthen climate and environmental action
6. Use our influence to mobilize urgent and more ambitious climate action and environmental protection
7. Develop targets and measures our progress as we implement our commitments

5. Response strategy and sectors of intervention

5.1. Integrated multi-sector and cross border response strategy

Life-saving response, access to essential services and referral: SRF will enable the most vulnerable conflict and displacement affected people to have their basic needs met more comprehensively to contribute to long term wellbeing. This will be done through a combination of life saving protection and humanitarian assistance and access to essentials services based on the socio-economic vulnerabilities and capacities of the most vulnerable population.

Based on the mapping of existing services and analysis of needs in the 4 sectors targeted by SRF (food security, nutrition, health and protection) in project areas, the SRF will promote an **integrated multi-sector and cross border response strategy** combining the delivery of direct assistance and referrals to existing services to respond to the maximum extent to the multiple needs identified in the SRF minimum assistance package. As part of this analysis process, local actors will be expected to be invited to substantively contribute to defining and prioritizing needs and support the development of comprehensive referral pathways in targeted project's areas. The mapping of existing services and coordination with local actors will also ensure there is no duplication of assistance/services and the proposed response strategy do not undermine existing structures including alternative community structures that have been established/evolved in the targeted locations.

Cross border response will be relevant to address specific issues for cross-border community affected by conflict and displacement but also in consideration of displacement dynamic in cross border areas to support informal or formal trans-boundary economy. cross border movements are often an essential part of refugee or border community households' strategies.

A standardized package: Food security, nutrition, health and protection integrated response: The likely geographic areas of focus will be where there is food insecurity, malnutrition and consequences of violence and conflict. Therefore, the expected minimum assistance package provided by consortia will

incorporate food security, nutrition, health and protection[6] and will respond to humanitarian needs registered in the country's humanitarian response framework[7]. Where markets are functional and when this is the most appropriate modality, the preferred approach will be to use multi-purpose cash transfers, possibly complemented with in-kind assistance where appropriate, and referrals to deliver on a range of needs and enhance access to essential services in an integrated way.

➢ **Food security:** The SRF will focus on humanitarian hot spots in the Sahel with the highest prevalence of IPC 3+ and where food gaps not captured by IPC are identified for conflict and displacement affected population. To respond to food assistance needs, the SRF strategy prioritizes unrestricted, multi-purpose cash transfer programmes adopting a multi-sector approach (food and non-food needs). Consortia will propose response options informed by a multi-sector needs assessment and a response analysis that considers the feasibility of different modalities and delivery mechanisms. Transfers values will be set based on analysis of the MEB (Minimum Expenditure Basket) gap and harmonized with other humanitarian actors and cash working groups, with close monitoring of food outcomes to ensure that the assistance meets sectoral needs. The duration of assistance will depend on consortia's intervention rationale, and linkages to social protection will be explored to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the response.

➢ **Nutrition**: The SRF will focus on addressing the most acute nutrition needs of children under 5 in areas where the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) emergency threshold of 10% has been exceeded in humanitarian hot spots for conflict and displacement affected population in the Sahel. The activities must support the health system and/or through Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (which is widely integrated into the health system). In locations where IPC score is unknown, screening will need to be undertaken jointly by the consortium partners to inform the response strategy and joint targeting process. Furthermore, the SRF will ensure nutrition sensitive intervention are mainstreamed in all sectors of intervention. Nutrition sensitive interventions are those interventions that influence the underlying determinants of nutrition.

➢ **Health**: The SRF will give priority to activities with the highest potential to save lives. The activities must support the existing health system, ensure accessible primary healthcare (including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services, as well as mental health services) and referral for conflict and displacement affected populations. Given the high occurrence of epidemics in the Sahel region and considering VFM, preventative approaches (e.g. supporting vaccination campaigns for routine vaccination or introduction of malaria vaccine[8]) and a timely response to epidemics is an area of interest for the SRF.

➢ **Protection**: The SRF will encompass both prevention and response to violence through an adapted response with specific services (such as mental health and psycho-social support, child protection or GBV responses). Comprehensive protection pathways and referral systems based on data protection protocols will be strengthened at area level, in close coordination with other sectoral actors. The protection lead partner in SRF consortia will be responsible for driving the minimum protection cross-cutting standards (AGDM, safeguarding, protection mainstreaming, PSEAH-AAP).

Provide flexibility through SRF funding modalities and support preparedness efforts to act ahead of conflict, climate shocks and famines to better prevent, manage and anticipate humanitarian emergencies. Anticipatory approaches to humanitarian action can bolster the resilience of communities. The effectiveness

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[6] This prioritization of sectors, based on priority needs identified in the problem analysis, will be discussed and endorsed with SRF board members. SRF could also support beyond this area of focus if this is prioritized by Country Humanitarian Response Plan and joint needs assessment.
[7] Humanitarian response plan and HCT humanitarian protection strategy
[8] https://www.who.int/news/item/06-10-2021-who-recommends-groundbreaking-malaria-vaccine-for-children-at-risk

of such approaches depends on having in place sufficiently reliable information and tools through early warning systems, forecasting including indicators or other criteria to trigger action and making sure these warnings lead to early action. Evidence gathering in this respect will be critical for the SRF.

The SRF funding modalities will provide flexibility to reallocate funds to emerging crises but consortia will also be expected to mobilize additional resources to sustain their response. Tapping in the opportunity provided by SRF for flexible funding modalities, consortia will be expected to maintain preparedness capacities through the integration of a flexible, early action component to address, in a timely manner, immediate and lifesaving needs resulting from a rapid-onset crisis or a deteriorated situation occurring in the area where their SRF funded interventions are taking place, or in other areas where they have the capacity to quickly surge in the targeted Sahel humanitarian hot spots. This involves assessing/quantifying risks, planning humanitarian operations (costed preparedness plan), and reallocating funding according to pre-agreed triggers and in line with flexibility provided by the SRF Operation Manual, in a timely and predictable manner.

Resilience: The SRF will retain the flexibility[9] to target priority non-emergency humanitarian needs in integrating an early recovery approach[10] as a foundation for building community resilience in Sahel humanitarian hot spots. Where possible, the SRF will seek to protect and/or rebuild livelihood and build on existing capacities. Considering the multiplier effects that multi-purpose cash may have in local economies and offer opportunities to promote longer-term financial inclusion and social protection, the early recovery component could also focus on market strengthening activity, digital inclusion and literacy.

> **Early recovery** is an approach that addresses recovery needs that arise during the humanitarian phase of an emergency; using humanitarian mechanisms that align with development principles. It enables people to use the benefits of humanitarian action to seize development opportunities, build resilience, and establish a sustainable process of recovery from crisis.

5.2. Need based and people centred approach

The needs based and people centred approach puts affected people at the centre of assistance design, encouraging sectors to combine their efforts into one coordinated and harmonized assistance package. This will put the needs and vulnerabilities, rights and capabilities expressed by the people at the core of the SRF initiatives to assist and protect.

This approach will enable conflict and displacement affected people to meet their basic needs more comprehensively and achieve long term wellbeing through life savings assistance and access to essentials services based on their socio-economic vulnerabilities and capacities complemented by an early recovery approach as foundation for building resilience in Sahel humanitarian hot spots.

The basic needs and people centred approach will facilitate the delivery of an immediate safety nets to be complemented by specific protection, sector intervention and access to essential services[11]. The basic needs approach using Multi-Purpose Cash Transfer (MPCT) is expected to provide better value for money

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[9] see SRF Operation Manual for the modalities of this flexibility
10 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/clusters/early-recovery

11 https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/590aefc77/basic-needs-approach-refugee-response.html
Basic Needs Analysis and Response Toolkit, 2018

as this can be potentially more effective and timelier than in-kind assistance when delivered at scale to a large conflict and displacement affected population.

The basic needs approach requires a joint multi-sectoral needs assessment and response analysis, a common identity management, accountability to affected people and monitoring system.

To do this, household economy analyses must be carried out to identify the minimum level of expenditure that a displaced household needs to meet the costs of food, basic household items, rent and water each month. Additional analysis is conducted to understand needs beyond these immediate consumption needs. Existing data and analysis should be used where relevant to ensure consistency and avoid duplication of efforts.
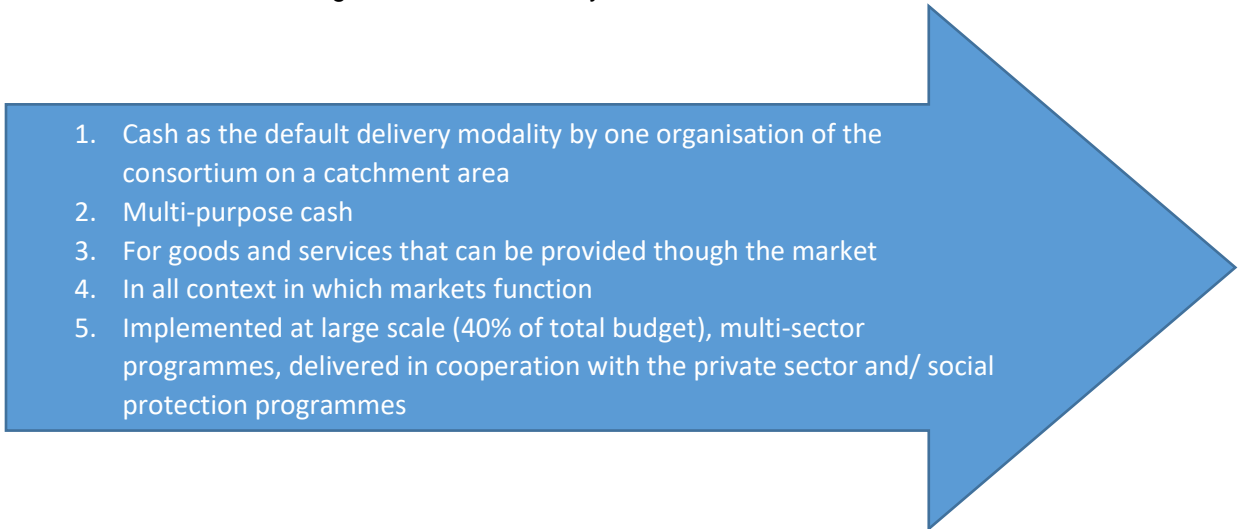
Cash as priority

1. Level: Cash-based programming should be considered the default delivery modality.

2. Type: Unless special circumstances dictate otherwise, cash-based programmes should provide beneficiaries with unrestricted and unconditional, so-called "multi-purpose" cash grants (rather than, e.g., vouchers).

3. Sectors: Cash-based programming should be strongly considered for all household needs that can be met through cash transactions. This includes commodity transfers (e.g., food, shelter materials, agricultural inputs, water, medicine) and services for which a functioning market exists (this can include education and health, depending on the context). Cash-based programmes should not be used to provide services for which no private market exists, indirect humanitarian services and public goods (e.g., protection and security, sanitation, coordination, "software" components of humanitarian programmes).

4. Contexts: In principle, all humanitarian contexts (natural disasters or conflicts, short-term or protracted) should be eligible for cash-based programming. In-kind deliveries or fairs may be necessary where markets are not functioning, where governments object to cash programmes or where cash programmes entail greater risk for beneficiaries than in-kind deliveries. These exceptions, however, should be time-bound.

5. Implementation: Unrestricted, multi-purpose cash transfer programmes should adopt a multi-sector approach and should be delivered as large-scale programmes (rather than many organisations delivering small programmes in parallel). Private sector partners and/or national social protection programmes should remain involved in facilitating the technical delivery of cash.

1. Cash as the default delivery modality by one organisation of the consortium on a catchment area
2. Multi-purpose cash
3. For goods and services that can be provided though the market
4. In all context in which markets function
5. Implemented at large scale (40% of total budget), multi-sector programmes, delivered in cooperation with the private sector and/ social protection programmes

5.3.   Supporting the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders

Localisation is a key element of the humanitarian reform agenda. In the Sahel context, there is a need for fundamental changes in the Sahel humanitarian response to ensure that power and resources are shifted to national and local organisations that are well placed not only to participate in emergency responses but to lead them.

The SRF will provide space for local actors to lead, design and deliver principled humanitarian response in collaboration with affected people. SRF partners will play a crucial role in empowering and building technical and organisational capacity of local responders to support their partners to effectively develop their accountability systems and capabilities to respond to the level of compliance and assurances required by donors.

Considering the timeframe of the action, SRF partners will be expected to further advance their strategic approach to partnership and coordination with national and local CSOs to ultimately deliver high quality VfM emergency assistance. A long-term view on partnerships to reinforce and support local capacities, opportunities and motivations[12] will be part of SRF partner engagements. Partnerships will be based on a spirit of equality and the Principles of Partnership[13] with local actors given an effective voice in assessment, programme design and budgeting. Capacity strengthening efforts should be designed after a joint strategic analysis of the preparedness and response efforts.

It is acknowledged that different approaches and contexts will merit different programme designs. SRF partners may apply a mixed approach with various national and/or local NGO partners. Context should determine what is the most effective and sustainable approach to reaching the overall project's objective. It will be expected that the partnership strategy is informed by assessment showing that this is the best modality due to capacity and/or access constraints or in order to ensure respect for the humanitarian principles regarding impartiality, independence and neutrality. The SRF partner will also actively encourage national and local NGOs partners to take leadership roles in the clusters/sectors and inter-sectors coordination structure and process (as appropriate to the country context and based on their presence, capacities and willingness).

SRF partners will be expected to capitalize on the learning of this inclusive and equal strategic approach to partnership and coordination. This will inform the revision of the SRF tools and framework to adapt SRF system and process to ultimately allow local partners access direct emergency funding (from SRF and other sources) and play a more powerful role in the fund management governance structure. The Fund Management Unit will strive to map and consolidate all the capabilities required to partner effectively with local actors; the consolidation of the lessons shared by SRF partners will support the development of a clear localisation strategy that enable the role of national and local actors within the SRF governance structure and in the humanitarian response in Sahel.

5.4.   Striving for humanitarian access in hard-to-reach areas

Constrained humanitarian access in some areas in Sahel continue to deprive communities of essential assistance and protection and expose aid workers to increased risks. Incidents targeting humanitarian operations, whether directly or indirectly, further impede life-saving support.

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12 https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/bridging-intention-action-gap-future-role-intermediaries-supporting-locally-led-humanitarian-action

13 Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity

Actions funded will protect and assist affected populations in hard-to-reach places[14], targeting selected hot spots of conflicts and displacements. The collective engagement by SRF partners will contribute to access a sizeable number of affected people in hard-to-reach locations through dialogue/negociation with all conflict parties to increase humanitarian access and through joint regional and country-level advocacy for protection of civilians needs to be pursued, and International Humanitarian Law dissemination ensured.

Safety and humanitarian access are amongst the most significant risks identified in the SRF risk matrix. For high and very high inherent project-risks related to safety and humanitarian access, the SRF will carefully monitor the status of its risk management mitigation measures and the effectiveness of reducing the risks to an acceptable level. Focusing on real risk analysis, consistent applications of mitigation measures and collective engagement, SRF partners are expected to be able to maintain and regain access to areas deprived of humanitarian assistance.

These Principles are also critical given the nature of the anticipated remote management of the national and/or local partners in hard-to-reach areas. The establishment of any partnership between two organisations will lead to sharing of risk. This mutual transfer of risk will require a clear identification of risks and to address the security challenges resulting from it. This will be adequately analysed during the vetting process and then be reflected in the partnership agreement and in the risk matrix for close monitoring of such risks. National and/or local CSO will be supported in the development of security risk management plans and capacity building efforts.

5.5.   Engagement strategy with all key stakeholders

5.5.1.   Coherent and effective aid coordination for a principled humanitarian action

Whereas in acute conflict settings humanitarian assistance may focus more on the protection of civilians and on humanitarian access, in more stable contexts with acute needs, the priority is to develop synergies among Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding (HDP) actors at programme-level and to adopt a risk-informed approach. It is crucial to continue to advocate for the adoption of measures that prevent the blurring of lines between humanitarian and military, security, stabilisation or political agendas.

Based on a contextual conflict sensitivity analysis involving the different actors of the nexus, the SRF strategy aims that all activities will harness the linkages between long-term development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. The SRF will strive for coherent and effective aid coordination. The SRF funded partners will ensure participation in provincial, national and regional clusters/workings groups and leadership of the Consortia in inter-agency coordination systems (Inter-sector, HCT (Humanitarian Country Team), etc.) Opportunities for cooperation and synergies with other donors and actors will be sought through systematic and inclusive engagements with all key stakeholders at area level and will be supported at national and regional level.

The SRF will ensure that the activities supported by the Fund are responding to the humanitarian needs registered in the country's humanitarian response framework (humanitarian response plan and HCT humanitarian protection strategy). The SRF will ensure that its approach is complementary, not in competition with existing humanitarian funds and other humanitarian projects.

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14 According to DRC, Hard-to-Reach areas are areas which require specific extra effort to gain access to populations, or to ensure populations of concern have access to DRC, or wider coordinated services

5.5.2. Engagement with non-state and state actors

Coordination with other stakeholders will have the twin intent of mitigating the risk to the perception of principled humanitarian action and of enabling our humanitarian action to have a lasting positive outcome for all affected populations and communities where we intervene.

The SRF strategy promote the engagement with national, local government counterparts, non-state actors and armed actors to ensure protection space is maintained for displacement and conflict affected population and host communities. Engaging with non-state actors is key to ensure that vulnerable communities in conflict-affected areas living under their control are not left behind. This is also essential for the safety and security of humanitarian workers.

5.5.3. National and local duty bearers and community-based system

We recognize that humanitarian crises are increasingly protracted and complex and commit to contributing to sustainable and inclusive solutions for conflict and displacement affected populations.

The majority of the population refers to endogenous systems[15] or government-run services as their main protection systems. The SRF will aim at strengthening these systems and their stakeholders where weakened and compensating them where they are unable to provide appropriate assistance following a shock. The SRF promote the engagement in meaningful collaboration with local duty bearers, strengthening local capacities and community-based systems to ensure ownership of the emergency response to respond to crisis while respecting humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.

Where possible, the SRF partners' strategy will build institutional capacity of local duty bearers, to identify functioning systems within existing local institutions and work to strengthen these. Systematic engagement with local authorities and decentralized services will build productive relationships that enhance programme quality. By working with and through these stakeholders, the SRF will ensure that there is no duplication of services, build and guide an informed response, and promote ownership by local actors in the long term. These engagements will be inclusive, to ensure diverse voices are heard and different parts of the community represented. The SRF will ensure that participation of affected communities, through their inputs, feedback and voices sit at the centre of its endeavours.

The SRF will collaborate with private sectors actors to ensure that the way the assistance is done is not harmful to existing economic systems; but helps to strengthen these.

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[15] In which rights holders, families, local civil society groups, local committees and community leaders are stakeholders

Annex 1: Stakeholders' analysis and engagement strategy

Stakeholders	Interest/incentives	How could this affect the Fund - positively?	How could this affect the Fund - negatively?	Actions required to manage/mitigate
Duty Bearers at national level	• The security crisis is rooted in discontent and grievances against the Government/ system: • Lack of services • Perceived discrimination against groups (rural, nomadic, communities…), • Perceived valued promoted which are clashing against local/ other values (ex. Education/ gender/…) • Lack of opportunities (socio economic) • Experiences of violence/ discrimination. • Limited recognition of its responsibility in the causes, high risk of protraction of the crisis/displacements • Politicization of the displacements (prevents formal resolution of the conflict) • Absence/ limited discussion held with the NSAG • Encourage returns, limited/ no plan for local integration/ relocation. This increases the non-access to services (etc.) • Local integration of IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) is made difficult • Increased resources spend on security, decrease in resources spent in services (justice, education, health, …) • Low accountability to the population. • Increased tensions towards humanitarian response: • Questioning the humanitarian principles, effectively making it illegal to discuss with other parties to the conflict/ access territories and populations not under government control.	• Interest to ensure the affected population benefits from assistance. • Access to assistance reduces the possibility of grievance and further population movements / discontents. • Technical services of the State have faced reduction in their capacities (budget allocation, infrastructures to accommodate demand, loss of human resources…), and are welcoming support. • Currently there is a relative limited control by the Authorities on the INGO (International Non-Governmental Organisations).	• Limitation in the recognition of the humanitarian principles, pressures to ensure the humanitarian response aligns with the Government's approach to the crisis. • Limited access to affected population/ hard to reach areas • Interest of the authorities to channel fundings. They have ongoing relation/ discussions with the UN and foreign governments/ donors, but not with INGO. INGO are the least controlled stakeholders, the humanitarian response is openly criticised by the Authorities (Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad). • Trend to increase limitation and obligation for the	• To ensure the fund supports existing responses (scaling up). • Ensure all external communication and advocacy led by a member of a consortium is agreed by all members of the consortium and in line with the SRF engagement strategy with stakeholders • To explore the signature of MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) describing the scope of assistance and capacity building with local institutions/decentralized services that the consortium will be providing • Where possible, international actors should seek to avoid activities which undermine national institution-building, such as developing parallel systems without thought to transition mechanisms and long-term capacity development. • Maintain annual visits to the Minister to review their priorities, feedback on SRF and needs in the region/

			INGO, including in the areas, sector, Human Resources they can deploy.	country as well as annual presentation of achievements • To regularly engage with development forum to share good practices of the humanitarian-development collaboration in project areas.
• Limitation of access (+ pressures to ensure Humanitarian actors do not criticize the Government/ expose violations of rights) • Focus on the "stabilization agenda". • Are carrying the bulk of the response, with varying levels of engagement depending on the cluster/ sector.				
Duty bearers at decentralized level [16]	• Limited basic services due to lack of financial resources, infrastructures, technical capacity • Existing infrastructures/services without staff (desertion or discontinued human resources) • The scope/magnitude of protection needs • Demographic pressure, migration and wave of internal displacements stretching out capacity of existing basic services • Lack of centralized profiling system for the most vulnerable for a concerted response and monitoring to multiple and complex needs • Lack of clear, transparent, fast-tracking mechanisms to be enrolled as recipient of national humanitarian aid • Lack of capacity to deliver civil documentation • Absence of preventive mechanism of displacements • Lack of coordination with humanitarian coordination and between decentralized services in some locations or lack of humanitarian access in other locations • Lack of legal protection and legal assistance • Low accountability to population • Perceived or actual discrimination against groups (rural, nomadic, communities…), • Perceived valued promoted which are clashing against local/ other values (ex. Education/ gender/…)	• Interest to ensure the affected population benefits from assistance. • Access to assistance reduces the possibility of grievance and further population movements / discontents. • Technical services of the State have faced reduction in their capacities (budget allocation, infrastructures to accommodate demand, loss of human resources…), and are welcoming support. • Currently there is a relative limited control by the Authorities on the INGO. • Interest to strengthen coordination with INGO	• Limitation in the recognition of the humanitarian principles, pressures to ensure the humanitarian response aligns with the Government's approach to the crisis. • Limited access to affected population/ hard to reach areas • No or lack of coordination mechanisms in place between decentralised services and humanitarian actors • Trend to increase limitation and obligation for the INGO, including in the areas, sector, Human Resources they can deploy.	• To ensure that all interventions in areas not controlled by the State are agreed on prior to their deployment, and the fund is informed of the organisational risk. • Systematic engagement with local authorities and institutions/decentralized services to build productive relationships that enhance programme quality. • We must ensure that we are building institutional capacity of local duty bearers. Identify functioning systems within existing local institutions, and work to strengthen these. • Promote advocacy/protection leads for area/catchment (considering best operational presence and network) to engage with consistency and effectively with LG and their decentralized services and represent a consolidated perspective from humanitarian actors

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[16] This remains general and will be contextualized by Consortia for the selected catchment areas in the expected protection risk analysis

	• Integration of IDP vary greatly between urban and rural areas (higher degree of integration in rural areas) • Restriction to access basic services and markets • Recognition of the legitimacy of endogenous system to address local conflicts			• Update on quarterly basis local authorities on assistance provided and support to decentralised services (including on beneficiary level of satisfaction to be seen as more collaborative and reliable partners) • Plan for joint monitoring visits with Local Governments and their decentralised services • Regular engagement with development actors to identify clear synergy and referral pathways in the project areas.
Stakeholders: Humanitarian Response	• Limited coordination with local response/ assistance mechanisms: competition for resources • Limited overall funds cannot cover all the needs. • General improvement in accountability to affected population and in risk mitigation • Decreased value for money (increased costs related to risk mitigation and compliance) • Good presence in urban/ peri-urban centres/ zones where access is granted by Gov. • Limited medium/ long term programming (including to address root causes and solutions in a protracted crisis). • Weak general coordination between INGO, and between UN (including open tensions). • Divides within the UN according to mandates, difficult to mitigate when the displacement context is complex: multiple layers (conflict, environmental degradation, criminality…), unclear status of the victims (questioning nationalities,	• Multiple agencies are present and already active providing assistance. The fund can rely on existing expertise and presence to scale up actions. • Clusters and coordination are in place to ease information sharing, advocacy and to further the impact of the response and of the evidence collected. • Internal tensions within the UN, including on the collective approach on the "One UN", gathering diverse agencies with	• Feeling of competition or de-multiplication of funds with the UN-led coordination efforts. • The creation of the fund may be felt as a duplication of the UN-pooled funds, CERF, Common Humanitarian Fund, funds available through the START Network. • Strong partnership between UN agencies and the authorities may lead to an alliance of forces	• Ensure that the Fund's approach is complementary, not in competition with existing humanitarian funds (criteria of selection for proposals) • Adopt an area-based approach to coordination to identify and strengthen synergies in project areas. • Ensure clear communication and coordination between existing funds/ interventions and the ones supported by the Fund. • Ensure participation and leadership of the Consortia supported by the Fund to inter-agency coordination systems (Clusters, HCT, etc.) • Ensure that the activities supported by the Fund are

	displacements patterns…), and gender/age gap. • Clusters are deployed in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Far North Cameroon and Chad. • Over 60 INGO are active in more than 1 country, • among those 17 are active in 5 countries or more (including a regional representation) • The ones active in all 6 countries + at the RO are: CARE, ACF, IRC, Red Cross. • 12 UN agencies are active in the humanitarian response (IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, UNMAS, UNDC, UNOPS, OCHA, WHO, UNDP). To add to these, there is the MINUSMA and the office of the humanitarian coordinator (in country). • Potential establishment of ICVA in Dakar • Increasing funding gap and limited data to support clear priorities	conflicting agendas (humanitarian, development, peacekeeping force) and their limited direct access to the affected population opens up the possibility for non-UN stakeholders to take a stronger role.		responding to the humanitarian needs and registered in the country's humanitarian response framework (humanitarian response plan and HCT humanitarian protection strategy). • Engage with development actors to identify synergy and clear referral pathway to sustain combined efforts from humanitarian organisations in catchment areas and at national level • Manage a consultative process with UN actors to ensure their buy-in to the proposed reform underpinned by field evidence and operational research (e.g., OCHA in observer role and joint humanitarian evaluations or external peer reviews from independent stakeholders) • Work collaboratively with regional NGO forum (environed as ICVA) to promote a more principled and effective response and to support coordination synergies at national/regional level • Engage all donors to learn from the SRF strategy and experience to support the proposed reform
Civil society	• Significant social split on gender (family rights vs patriarch), age (innovation and youth	• Multiple and dynamic civil society which is	• Lack of interactions and recognition of the	• Ensure that consortia supported by the Fund do

	vs conservatism and patriarchal settings), religious ("moderates"/ Local interpretation vs fundamentalism/ Wahhabism/ evangelical…), rural/urban, approach to inequality… • Local organisation and civil society are existing and dynamic. • Politically engaged (strong values: religious, political, cultural), not neutral/ independent: narrative to transform/ change the status-quo/ society • Not recognized/ included by Humanitarian response. • Close contacts/ partnerships with Dev. actors and networks. • Transformed by humanitarian response. • Research institutes and academics are active in the analysis of the situation, developing robust analysis and tools to follow up, with or without support/ partnership with INGO/ UN. • Lack organisational capacity to access direct funding to meet donor requirements	already active in the response. Most do not differentiate "humanitarian response" from the "development response". A coordinated approach to civil society engagement by the members of the Funds will improve the continuum of the response through the nexus. • Local stakeholders bring expertise and long-term approach. Bridging the humanitarian response with the development stakeholders.	civil society will limit the Funds' consortia to ensure that there is an engagement that furthers the humanitarian assistance and root it in the local response system. • Lack of funds and/ or difference between the humanitarian funds/ development funds made available to the national stakeholders leads to important transformation of the Civil society, driving its stakeholders to align with the demands of the humanitarian actors and act as implementing actors/ contracted agencies. Their mandate switches from community-based to humanitarian- response-based.	respect the global commitments on engagement with local stakeholders. • Ensure that all project supported by the fund show their integration in a long-term response towards solutions, even if this will not be supported by the Fund. • Ensure that in the risk analysis, the potential harm done to local civil society is considered. • Ensure all consortia supported by the Fund include at least one local partner • Ensure all consortia has clear capacity building plan to develop local partner capacity • Strengthen local partners capacity to access funding to response to crisis as first responder • Ensure representation of local organisations in the Governance board of the fund to represent their interest and support the reform
Private sector	• Generally affected by the security situation. Unequal economic development • Unequal distribution of profit • Collapse of rural economy (agriculture, husbandry/…), strengthening of urban centres, cross border movements	• Private sector can deploy the essential infrastructure and products for the humanitarian response to take	• Interest of some private actors to maintain the status-quo in terms of the conflict/ crisis, as it fuels the demand	• Ensure that the way the assistance is done is not harmful to existing economic systems; but helps to strengthen these.

	• Importance of the "parallel" rules to keep afloat, include corruption, nepotism, favouritism … • Economic interest to work with the humanitarian response for some sectors (financial services, telecommunications, …), agriculture…	place, with the knowledge that there will be a demand (ex. Planned volume of demand for a resource/ service/ good). • Value for money of services that are financially balanced and/ or create benefits. • Importance to engage with the private sector actors to ensure that the affected population engage as soon as possible towards solutions. • Interest of most private actors to have clear rules and a peaceful context.	for their business and opportunities. • The assistance may compete with existing economic systems. The conditions of the assistance may have a negative effect on these economic systems. • Absence of opportunities or risks that are too high for private actors to provide the necessary resources and services. • Absence of engagement by private sector limits employment and economic activities which, in turn acts as a driver to the forced displacement and engagement in the conflict.	
Rights Holders	• Structural violation of rights experienced, prior/ outside of the conflict-specific ones • Increased vulnerabilities of groups who were already vulnerable: women, children, youths, old people, rural population, nomadic population. General diminution of their rights (consecutive to the displacement, loss of resources and changes in values/ social norms). • Displacements in cumulative waves. • General trends in countries to politicise the displacements + trends to push	• The crisis in the 5 countries shows all the signs of a protracted crisis, the trend is not towards a slowing-down of the humanitarian needs which are rooted in: • Human/ environmental degradation and climate change.	• Interest of the Government not to engage in local integration/ resettlement of the displaced population, but to promote their returns: the narrative of the protracted crisis is not shared. • The situation may be seen as	• Ensure all interventions supported by the Fund's consortia are engaged towards solutions/ in a nexus approach. • Ensure stronger accountability toward displaced affected population with adequate representativity of all voices

	policies towards a decrease of rights/ stop to liberal policies (ex. Family code/…) • Limited consultation of the rights holders during the displacement and on decision which are affecting them (ex. On their returns in their zones of origin) • Unequal application of the law/ access to rights. • Absence/ incomplete legal framework (ex. Kampala convention has not been nationalized, etc.)	• Inequality in access to services, resources, and powers, with feelings of discriminations. • Conflicting values and social models promoted by leaders. • Lack of sufficient service coverage.	"bottomless", when the successive waves if populations in need are considered, as well as the general trend to increase.	