

SRF

SAHEL REGIONAL FUND

SRFIN SIGHTS

February 2026

Edition N°2



ABOUT THE SAHEL REGIONAL FUND

The Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) is an NGO-led regional fund, hosted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). It provides predictable, flexible, multi-year funding to address the most severe humanitarian needs in the hardest-to-reach areas.

SRF promotes localization, builds resilience, and supports coordinated, evidence-based responses, through strong partnerships and risk management systems.

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[THE SAHEL REGIONAL FUND A LEVER FOR HUMANITARIAN RESET IN THE SAHEL](#)

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PROJECT UPDATES

SRF Mission in Eastern Chad: Strengthening coordination and quality of humanitarian responses

LOCALIZATION

Feedback from the Fund's Board on its mechanism, challenges, and perspectives. For this first issue, Mr. Moussa Ibrahima Touré, member of PONA and Director of the NGO AID LOCAL Mali, shares his views, particularly on localization and the humanitarian reset.

PROJECTS UPDATES

SRF Mission in Eastern Chad: Strengthening Coordination and the Quality of Humanitarian Responses



Last November, the Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) conducted a field visit in the Wadi Fira province, Eastern Chad, to assess the implementation of funded projects, strengthen coordination with partners, and identify levers for a more effective humanitarian response. This visit is part of the SRF's specific approach, which aims not only to fund humanitarian interventions but also to contribute to improving sector practices, particularly through strengthening the capacities of local actors. The objective was therefore to monitor supported actions, while also allowing for a concrete appreciation of collaboration dynamics, implementation mechanisms, and prospects for capacity building within the projects.

The mission allowed for meetings with several partners funded by the SRF, including Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and its consortium members (Relief International and the national NGO ADES), responsible for implementing the PMARRP – Multisectoral Project to Support Strengthening the Resilience of Vulnerable Refugee, Returnee, and Host Populations.

Concerning observations, but encouraging dynamics

The visit to the Marassabré camp in Guéréda highlighted the scale of operational challenges. Initially designed to host 10,000 refugees, the site housed nearly 40,000 people by the end of 2025. Access to healthcare remains extremely limited: for example, the NGO ADES can only provide about 50 medical consultations per day, a number largely insufficient given the needs. Difficulties also persist in the water, sanitation, and protection sectors.

At the same time, the mission observed positive coordination dynamics. Close collaboration is in place with local authorities and technical services such as ANADER and CNARR, as well as with other humanitarian actors present, including UNHCR, UNICEF, and IRC.

Strengthening collaboration for quality projects

Beyond monitoring activities, this mission illustrates the SRF's commitment to promoting better collaboration within consortia, as well as ongoing dialogue between international NGOs, national NGOs, and local institutions. Capacity building, coordination, and information sharing are essential levers for improving the quality and impact of funded projects.

LOCALISATION

Meeting the Board: Humanitarian Reset and Localization

The Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) met with its Board of Directors to strengthen the transparency of its mechanism and highlight its impact.

For this first issue, Mr. Moussa Ibrahima Touré, member of PONAHA and Director of the NGO AID LOCAL Mali, shares his views, particularly on localization and the humanitarian reset.



The humanitarian reset aims to rethink how humanitarian aid is designed, funded, and implemented. Does the SRF embody these principles of the humanitarian reset, and does it contribute to transforming humanitarian practices?

Absolutely, for the case of Mali, for example, the evolving context forces us to integrate changes into our operating methods. We see, for instance, how certain UN agencies with similar or complementary mandates now choose to work together, pool financial, logistical, and operational resources, or even share workspaces to reduce operating costs. This reflects an important change in posture: accepting the need to coordinate and cooperate in the face of common challenges.

That being said, **it is essential to keep in mind that this change, often associated with the humanitarian reset, cannot happen in haste.**

It is a gradual process, particularly because it involves transferring skills and responsibilities to actors who were not always prepared to take on these roles, especially regarding coordination.

Historically, this coordination role has been largely carried out by UN agencies or international NGOs, which possess the necessary technical expertise. Today, even though this expertise remains, financial constraints limit their ability to continue playing this role exclusively. They are therefore gradually withdrawing, transferring certain responsibilities to state technical services and national NGOs. However, these actors do not always, at this stage, possess all the required technical capacities and resources.

In this context, the Fund has a key role to play, ensuring that national NGOs with real technical potential can gradually assume leadership responsibilities, particularly in sectoral coordination. This requires being particularly vigilant in the selection and recruitment processes. It is not about ticking a box by choosing any national actor, but rather identifying those who have demonstrated, over time, their technical capacity, credibility, and leadership.

For me, localization means above all recognizing that competent national actors exist, strengthening their capacities, and gradually transferring responsibilities and expertise to them. This does not mean, however, an abrupt break or the exclusion of international NGOs. This nuance is essential.



If localization is to truly produce a sustainable impact, then its implementation must be rigorous, supported, and based on the actual capacities of the actors. Only under this condition can change be effective and beneficial for the entire humanitarian system..

So, what about localization and capacity building for local actors?

When discussing localization, it sometimes makes me smile, because for many, it is still an abstract concept. However, localization is above all an approach, even a paradigm imposed by the current context.

From my point of view, localization today constitutes a key response to the majority of challenges we face in the Sahel. Integrating changing contextual dynamics and creating specific windows dedicated to localization are, in my opinion, two particularly innovative aspects attributed to the SRF.

We all know today that community engagement approaches are essential.

We often hear: "we are an international NGO, but our staff is 80% national." Yet, from the moment an organization positions itself as an international NGO, it remains governed by international frameworks, codes, and mandates. Having held management positions within international NGOs myself, I know there are subjects on which it is sometimes difficult, even impossible, for international NGO staff to speak out or act fully.

However, it is essential to empower and value communities while ensuring risks are minimized, especially the dynamics of risk transfer to the populations themselves. There is still much work to be done at this level. Many actors claim to implement community engagement, but it is important to make a clear distinction between community mobilization and community engagement.

Organizing a few-day workshop to present a project is not enough to say that one is doing community engagement. Engagement is a long-term process and takes place over time. Actors working in this field must see themselves primarily as facilitators of skills transfer to communities.



LOCALISATION

The SRF's approach: making localization operational

The localization of humanitarian and development aid is now widely recognized as a necessity. Yet, a gap persists between international commitments to localization and their implementation on the ground.

The central question remains: how can the ambition surrounding localization be transformed into sustainable operational practices? At the heart of this reflection are local actors and systems, which represent essential levers for a faster, more appropriate, and more sustainable response to crises.



Rapid Humanitarian Response and Local Organizations

Contrary to certain preconceived ideas, national organizations (NNGOs) are not simply implementers. They are strategic actors, rooted in communities, possessing a detailed understanding of contexts, and capable of building sustainable solutions.

However, the experience of many funding mechanisms has highlighted a real challenge: the gap between localization ambitions and operational constraints, notably:

- The capacity to respond effectively to an immediate crisis,
- The sustainability of local structures,
- The availability and retention of qualified human resources.

Recognizing these challenges does not weaken localization but strengthens it through a structured and realistic approach.

The SRF's approach: making localization operational

From its conception, the Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) was designed as a mechanism aiming not only for the effectiveness of the humanitarian response but also for strengthening local organizations' access to and management of funding. Hence the allocation of 30% of the budget to local NGOs.

The SRF acts through:

- Ten structured consortia bringing together 14 international NGOs (INGOs) and 30 national NGOs (NNGOs), fostering skills transfer and capacity building.
- Clear requirements regarding the share of the budget managed by local actors.
- Direct funding granted to national NGOs, such as the 4 national NGOs selected within the Localization window in Burkina Faso (OCADES, CRBF, A2N, and ATAD).

This approach helps gradually reduce the gaps between ambition and reality by creating an environment where local organizations can strengthen themselves while retaining a central role.

Challenges and opportunities: towards a new partnership model

International NGOs will inevitably evolve towards a role centered on technical support, skills transfer, and local capacity building. This transformation is a logical response to the imperatives of sustainability and ownership by national actors.

It is this dynamic that the SRF strives to promote: a model based on trust, mutual accountability, and the sharing of decision-making power.

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