

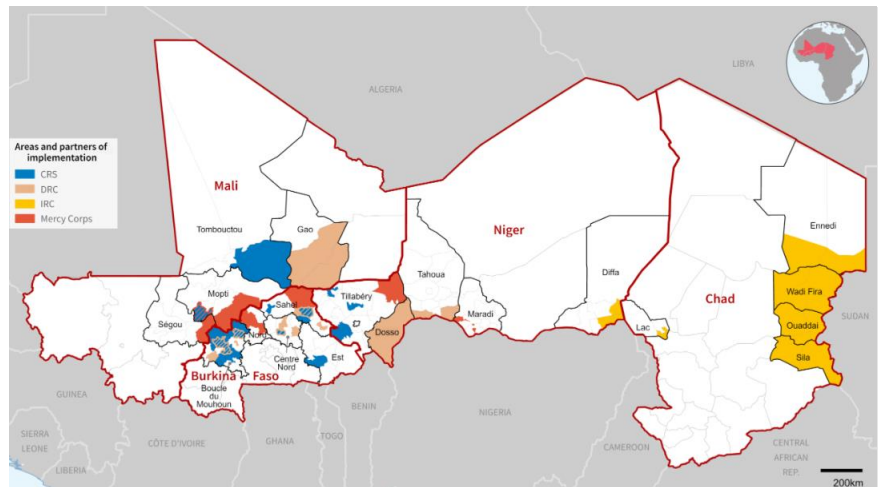


TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE SAHEL REGIONAL FUND

These terms of reference are for a call for consultancy to conduct the mid-term evaluation of the Sahel Regional Fund (SRF) implemented in the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger), the Lake Chad Basin and Eastern Chad under funding from the FCDO.

1. CONTEXT

The Sahel Regional Fund hosted by Danish Refugee Council and started on June 2022, is a regional humanitarian fund governed by leading NGOs, with an operational presence in Liptako Gourma (LG), Lake Chad Basin (LGB) and in Maradi region in Southwest Niger. The fund targets conflict-affected, hard-to-reach and under-resourced rural areas, as well as areas facing an influx of displaced and conflict-affected people. The SRF is supported by UK Aid (FCDO).



The aim of this new regional mechanism, led by NGOs, is to support the implementation of an efficient response model and gather evidence on a high-quality, good Value for Money (VfM) approach. It will closely coordinate with, and constructively challenge, the broader response to explore how we can collectively improve. The goal is to ensure that more vulnerable people in the Sahel hard-to-reach hotspots have as many of their basic needs met more comprehensively through a higher quality, better Value for Money (VFM) and principled humanitarian response.

To achieve this, the SRF seeks to provide predictable, flexible, multi-year funding for international and national humanitarian NGOs, to implement integrated multi-sector and cross-border response, to engage with local stakeholders and first responders strategically and inclusively, and to use data and evidence as drivers for interventions. This will also underpin a joint regional NGO advocacy agenda to influence policy and humanitarian reform.

The sectors of intervention of the SRF so far are lifesaving humanitarian assistance addressing food security, nutrition, health, protection and access to essential services based on socio-economic vulnerabilities and capacities – all while promoting an early recovery approach as the foundation for building resilience in the humanitarian hot spots of the Sahel region. Accordingly, the SRF currently finance three consortia composed of leading INGOs and national/local partners that deliver demand-driven humanitarian response and offer technical and geographical complementarities in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad.

2. OBJECTIVES

This midterm evaluation, scheduled for 2024, is to assess progress toward SRF goals, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and ensure that the SRF is on track to achieve its intended outcomes. This evaluation

will inform any necessary adjustments to strategies and resources. It will use the SRF Theory of Change as the main framework for assessing progress made by the SRF.

In other words, this evaluation will help determine whether the SRF is making progress toward its objectives by identifying attributable changes, highlighting areas for improvement, formulating global and specific recommendations, and defining major learnings related to SRF governance, communication, and management/technical support. This process will enable a comprehensive assessment of the following:

- Relevance and coherence of the SRF in the regional and national context.
- Effectiveness and efficiency in fund management.
- The progress of the SRF’s action plan and projects funded, with focus on potential results in the short, medium, and long terms.

The midterm evaluation will use specific metric criteria to be outlined by the consultant in the inception report. Among the criteria, the most important are:

Impact and Outcome	Achievement of specific goals and objectives Status of key indicators
Efficiency and resource utilization	Cost-effectiveness of fund allocation Timeliness and efficiency of projects funded and fund disbursement
Stakeholder engagement and satisfaction	Level of satisfaction among beneficiaries, local communities and other stakeholders Collaboration and partnership with local governments, NGO and other entities
Risk management and adaptability	Identification and mitigation of potential risks and challenges Effectiveness of contingency plans and responses to unforeseen events. Adaptability of projects funded to changing circumstances and emerging needs

3. EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation will cover all SRF implementing partners, in the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), in the Lake Chad Bassin (Chad) and in Eastern Chad. It will take into account the context of each country and, more specifically, each intervention zone.

The programming period to be covered by the review is June 2022 – June 2024.

This evaluation will not assess the implementation of the *projects* funded by the SRF but will focus on two sub-components:

- A programmatic component informed by project-level evaluation reports: each of the three funded project is conducting its own evaluation, and these reports will serve as primary resources for this midterm evaluation.
- A component consisting of a strategic review of the SRF, exploring aspects such as strategy, governance, and fund management. This review will be informed by consultations, interviews, and other relevant sources.

The assessment will be carried out in Dakar or remotely with a visit to Dakar. No in-country travel will be necessary.

4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The three main evaluation questions are accompanied by suggested sub-questions. The inception process will help complete and refine this list, providing a better framework for the objectives and expected results.

1. To what extent do the SRF contribute to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian action in the most affected areas in the Sahel?
 - ⇒ How relevant are the projects implemented by SRF partners to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries in the field?
 - ⇒ To what extent was the people-centred approach realized?
 - ⇒ To what extent did the SRF's theory of change contribute through the projects funded, to adaptive and responsive programming, and how well did it adapt itself over the implementation period to remain relevant?
2. Have the SRF partners improved their financial stability and flexibility, as well as their adaptive management, to sustainably address the most acute humanitarian and protection needs and emerging crises in the Sahel's most affected areas?
 - ⇒ To what extent do the resources allocated have been used effectively to achieve the expected objectives and outcomes?
 - ⇒ To what extent does the SRF's technical support enable partners to provide better responses?
 - ⇒ What challenges have SRF partners experienced in resource management, coordination, and communication within consortia?
 - ⇒ What are the major implementation challenges faced by consortia? What adaptive solutions have been implemented?
3. To what extent is the SRF collectively influencing change (positive or negative, expected or unexpected) in the policy framework and humanitarian system across the Central Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and Eastern Chad?
 - ⇒ To what extent is the SRF achieving its objectives through funded projects, particularly in policies and procedures at regional and national level?
 - ⇒ To what extent do consortia, their members, and humanitarian actors in the region and in country view the SRF as contributing to the reform of humanitarian funding at both national and regional levels? How did the SRF's governance system help to ensure that the opinions of humanitarian organizations (including national organizations) are considered in decision-making and in safeguarding collective interests?

5. METHODOLOGY

Above all, adherence to strong evaluation ethics is essential for any methodology, particularly when using SRF data.

During the inception phase, the evaluator will develop a comprehensive evaluation framework using a theory-based evaluation approach. This framework will map out the evaluation questions, related indicators, and data sources to guide data collection and design data collection tools. The MEAL team of the SRF will support this stage by offering reflection, support, information, data, and validation of tools and processes.

Primary data to be made available to the evaluation team will include narrative reports, mission reports, and midterm evaluation reports from the four projects funded by the SRF. These documents will be crucial sources of data, and the evaluation team is expected to synthesize them and conduct an evidence strength assessment and rating exercise.

Furthermore, the evaluator should explore other areas based on exchanges linked to the themes and issues already identified and approved by the SRF team. The evaluator should store, share, and make the collected data accessible to facilitate verification.

Qualitative data will be the main data source and available quantitative data will be used as supplementary.

The evaluation should draw heavily on existing data sources, including monitoring reports and information, to minimize duplication and potential contradiction. However, it will also need to generate data (e.g. through midterm evaluation reports of projects funded by the SRF, data from regional organizations and institutions, exploratory interviews at regional and/or national level). These multiple data sources will enable data triangulation, minimizing the need to rely on a single data source, and enhancing the robustness of the analysis.

Data quality, i.e. the relevance and limitations of the data used for evaluation, should be initially described in the inception report and documented in the final report.

For data collection, the following methods can be used:

- Document reviews, including published and internal documents (planning documents, guidelines, internal reports, monitoring, and projects midterm evaluation reports).
- Analysis of existing data, e.g. monitoring and evaluation reports.
- Exploratory and thematic discussions with FMU and project teams at regional, country, and local levels.
- Stakeholder interviews if needed remotely, based on a stakeholder mapping exercise, covering internal key informants with varying degrees of seniority and involvement in project implementation, as well as a range of external stakeholders with little and/or no involvement in implementation.
- Case studies: the evaluation could include case studies focusing on specific themes and geographical contexts. For example, collaboration with deconcentrated services and local authorities, contribution to programmatic decisions at local and regional level etc.

6. STAKEHOLDERS

Several stakeholder groups form the target audience for this evaluation, as they will be interested in its findings and recommendations. Due to their influence or involvement in the operationalization of the SRF, they should also be considered potential key informants for the evaluation and would be consulted remotely. These groups include:

Stakeholder	The stakeholder will use the findings to:
Fund Management Unit (FMU) and SRF Board	Understand the clear steps that need to be taken to meet SRF objectives, and the implications in terms of institutional responsibilities and resources.
Implementing partners	Identify ways of strengthening the capacity of consortia teams in activity planning, program design, implementation and adaptation, and representation and advocacy. Clarity of the processes and management structures of each consortium and each of the NGOs involved (lead, international and national), capitalizing on experience and commitment for greater continuity.
Members of global humanitarian community interested in humanitarian funding models	Learn from the experience of the SRF to improve policies and practice in humanitarian funding to NGOs
Administrative and technical authorities	Lessons learned on the impact of the fund on vulnerable populations and the need for their support to ensure sustainability.
Working groups/clusters and sectoral technical teams	Share experiences and challenges of access, field collaboration and interaction with other humanitarian funds, projects and programs. Understand how to integrate support and reinforcement of SRF implementation into their current functions/actions.
External stakeholders	Have a clear idea of the SRF, its objectives and strategy.
Major donors in the Central Sahel region, the Lake Chad Basin and Eastern Chad	Lessons learned about the fund's activities and potential, as well as opportunities for synergy, integration and expansion.

7. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE EVALUATION

1. *Property/ownership*

Ownership of the process and deliverables rests exclusively with SRF. Documents or any publications will not be shared without SRF approval.

The evaluation will focus on SRF's strategies and results. Evaluation results will be shared with donors, technical implementation partners, regional and national stakeholders, local authorities of the country of implementation and assisted communities.

2. *Quality*

The evaluation will comply with the OECD/DAC criteria, agreed at international level to ensure that the evaluation addresses issues widely recognized as important by the development evaluation community.

Relevance	The extent to which the aid activity is adapted to the priorities and policies of the target group, the beneficiary and the donor.
Effectiveness	A measure of the ability of an aid activity to achieve its objectives.
Efficiency	A measure of how resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.
Impact	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
Sustainability	Measuring the continuity of the benefits of an intervention after development aid has been completed. Projects must be environmentally and financially sustainable.

It is not necessary to examine each criteria in depth during this mid-term assessment.

3. *Ethical*

Evaluation must comply with ethical principles for research and evaluation.

4. *Independent and rigorous*

The evaluation must be independent, externally quality-assured, and as rigorous as possible.

5. *Accountability*

Accountability to affected populations is a fundamental principle of the SRF. Part of which is sharing the results of the evaluation in a meaningful way with the people.

6. *Gender and excluded groups*

Gender issues, including violence against women and girls, will be given priority in the design of the evaluation. Where appropriate, the evaluation should also examine cross-cutting exclusion and disadvantage, e.g. women of different ages, abilities, ethnic groups, etc.

8. RISKS AND CHALLENGES

It will be important that the evaluation is sensitively undertaken to mitigate potential risks and challenges. Risks include:

- Not all stakeholders feel that the assessment process has been inclusive and that they all could contribute.
- Representatives of all key external stakeholders are not consulted, and their contributions are not managed effectively.
- The necessary data are not available and/or are not of good quality.
- Responses rates to the online survey are low or highly variable.
- The evaluation is not on schedule, resulting in conclusions not being available by the end of September 2024.

9. EXPECTED DELIVRABLES

The main expected deliverable in French and English are:

1. An **inception report** in French **or** English, will be submitted approximately ten days after signing the service contract, detailing how the evaluation questions will be addressed. It will include the overall design, proposed methods, data collection strategy, risks/challenges and mitigation measures, timetable, roles and responsibilities, and will clearly indicate how the evaluation team will communicate and report to the SRF. It will also include a plan for the evaluation and stakeholder mapping, and the timeframe for data collection, report writing and the dissemination of results at national, regional, and global level. Additionally, it will detail tools and media to be used for data collection, processing, and analysis, as well as the outline of the evaluation report.
2. A **Preliminary report** in French **and** English, containing the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, will be prepared and presented to SRF and key stakeholders (SRF Board). This will be prepared before submission of the final evaluation report, to be discussed and refined if necessary. The evaluation team will use it to facilitate a workshop with key stakeholders, to be held in Dakar (Senegal).
3. The **final evaluation report**, in French **and** English, with an **executive summary** of no longer than two pages. It will comprise of a summary of all activities, findings and conclusions, recommendations, main lessons learnt, key informants met, tools and media used.

The evaluation team will also provide, in French **and** English, an **infographic** (one pager) of the main findings and recommendations, to make them easily accessible and comprehensible for dissemination. This **infographic** and the **executive summary** will be published, and are intended to facilitate, communicate and, if necessary, enable the conclusions and recommendations to be considered both internally and externally.

Note: Each stage will only be approved once it has been reviewed by the SRF. For example, the evaluation will only proceed to the implementation phase once the inception report has been accepted.

The SRF team will provide support and guidance and ensure that the approved schedule is adhered to and implemented according to contractual terms.

10. POTENTIAL TIMEFRAME

The service is scheduled to start on September 15, 2024, and end no later than November 15, 2024. A maximum of 45 open working days are planned for this evaluation.

The tentative schedule is as follows:

Activities	Number of days
Orientation meeting	2 days
Inception report: draft, review and finalization	8 days
Data collection and analysis	15 days
Presentation of main conclusions and recommendations	2 days
Draft report	10 days
Final report, including "4-pages executive summary" and "1-page Infographic".	8 days

The detailed timetable for the service will be proposed by the evaluator in his or her service offer, including precise dates, roles and responsibilities, and deliverables.

11. COMPETENCIES OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

SRF is looking for a service provider (independent consultants, firms, consulting firm, etc.) to undertake this evaluation. The quality, skills and experience of the team leader and team members will be assessed alongside the quality of the proposition. And the same team should be available to conduct the same evaluation in phase 2 of the SRF.

The team should have :

- A solid, track-recordable expertise and experience in conducting impact evaluation.
- Solid experience in a range of evaluation and research methods.
- Solid experience working and/or collaborating with humanitarian donors and organizations.
- Good knowledge and experience of innovative humanitarian financing mechanisms, particularly Pooled funds.
- Good knowledge of the Grand Bargain, demonstrating a substantial contribution to the implementation and promotion of the Grand Bargain's objectives.
- Solid, proven skills in research in Sahelian countries: knowledge of the context, constraints, organizations present...
- A good knowledge of the SRF core sectors (health, nutrition, protection, livelihood, NFI/Shelter...) in a context of permanent and growing conflict is an asset,
- Expertise in taking in account protection, gender equality, accountability to affected populations and/or violence against women and girls/gender-based violence in evaluations.

12. MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION

The SRF MEAL Manager here acting as the Evaluation Manager will monitor the evaluation process and ensure the link between the evaluation team and SRF partners. DRC headquarter will also support the process.

A working group led by SRF's MEAL team will be set up to analyze bids and select the service provider, then undertake the technical analysis of the deliverables. This group will support the inception process and review the quality of key documents, including the inception report, draft report and final report. It will have the following responsibilities:

- Support the independence, thoroughness, and quality of the evaluation.
- Strive to identify the most useful, relevant and appropriate evaluation questions and key informants.
- Advise on evaluation products to ensure their quality and relevance, that the results are balanced, evidence-based, accessible, and usable.
- Advise on particularly sensitive issues (and use a confidential appendix if necessary).

13. COMPOSITION OF THE BIDS

Technical offer

- Professional and technical capacities
 - o Summary of similar experience, including references and deliverables provided,
 - o Team composition, specifying roles and responsibilities, periods of intervention, deliverables to be led, similar experience and team members' CVs.
- Explanatory note on the understanding of terms of reference, evaluation questions and expected results,
- Presentation of the methodology: data collection, processing and analysis, mission organization (timeline, roles and responsibilities, deliverables by stage...), resources and means,
- Ethical consideration
- Evaluation timeframe: activities and tasks, period, responsible person(s), expected deliverables.

Financial offer

The financial offer should include a detailed budget and clearly indicate the total amount of the offer, including taxes.

The details should include the number of working days, the rate per expert mobilized, transport and mission expenses, etc.

Experts are expected to work with their own equipment, which means that purchase of equipment cannot be included in the bid.

It is expected from the selected service provider to be available to carry out the same evaluation during phase 2 of the SRF in 2026, on condition that the SRF is satisfied with this first evaluation.

14. SCORING OF BIDS

The bids evaluation will be done by an evaluation committee using the following criteria and weighting:

Criteria	Weighting (%)
Experience, technical and professional capacities of the evaluation team (Documented experience, including knowledge of financing mechanism such as pool-fund and knowledge of Central Sahel countries)	60%
Proposed methodology, approach, and scheduled timeline	40%

The financial offer will be evaluated separately, the best financial offer will obtain a score of 100%. The scores of the other financial offers will be calculated on a pro rata basis. For example: if 5000 GBP is the best offer and receives a score of 100%. The other bids: 5500 GBP and 6000 GBP and will receive financial scores of 91 (5000/5500=90.9%) and 83 (5000/6000=83.3%), respectively.

The final score will be the average of the technical and financial offer scores.

15. ADDITIONAL INFORMATIONS AND SUBMISSION

- Interested candidates can request more information by addressing an email to cheikhou.ngom@drc.ngo or yes.manguele@sahelregionalfund.org; and this up to August 5th, 2024.
- Bid should be submitted by email at: tender@sahelregionalfund.org; tender.ro03@drc.ngo; by August 12th 2024 at 5 p.m. UTC, with the mention "SERVICE OFFER FOR THE SRF MID-TERM EVALUATION_2024" for English or « OFFRE DE PRESTATION POUR L'EVALUATION à MI-PARCOURS DU SRF_2024 » for French.
- Bids submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

SRF holds the right to suspend or cancel the selection process at any time, without obligation to share information.