

Sahel Future Generations Programme (SFGP) 2026-2029

Key results:

The SFGP will consist of three new projects and five existing projects, which are funded from previous appropriations. The outcomes will be within three specific objectives: 1) Protect and promote democratic voices by supporting civil society, media and community actors, including youth- and women-led organisations, 2) Improve economic opportunities for urban and rural youth, including women's participation, entrepreneurship and strengthening of their skills and qualifications, and 3) Strengthen rural communities in pursuing a peaceful, sustainable and more resilient use of natural resources.

Justification for support:


















The programme is fully aligned with Denmark's new development cooperation strategy and the recent Africa strategy. It responds to the continued need for support to democratic voices of civil actors, economic development and strengthening the resilience of rural communities in the three countries in Central Sahel and is a continuation of the Danish engagement following decades of cooperation. The worsening security situation and increasing environmental pressure, exacerbated by climate change, means that populations in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger face increasing economic pressure leading to increased poverty, conflict, illegal activities and irregular migration. This is not least the case for young people and women who will constitute specific target groups of the programme.

Major risks and challenges:

The main contextual risk is that the security and human rights situation is likely to worsen. It requires the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to lead a pro-active management of the programme. Security will limit on-the-ground monitoring activities, and the MFA has therefore selected well-known and trusted partners for project implementation. The reputational risk associated supporting the governments will require specific monitoring

Objectives for stand-alone programme:

The overall objective has been defined as "to support democratic change agents in the region, prevent irregular migration and address root causes of instability and violent extremism".

File No.	25-34690					
Country	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger					
Responsible Unit	AFRPOL					
Sector	43010 Multisector aid					
	DKK million	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Commitment		150	150	150	150	600
Projected Disbursement		116	116	184	184	600
Duration	May 2026 – December 2029					
Finance Act code.	06.32.01.24					
Head of unit	Ketil Karlsen					
Desk officer	Niels Bossen/Ida Dalgaard Steffensen					
Reviewed by CFO	In process: Jocelyn Sacopayo Schmidt					
Relevant SDGs <i>[Maximum 5 – highlight with grey]</i>						
 No Poverty	 No Hunger	 Good Health, Wellbeing	 Quality Education	 Gender Equality	 Clean Water, Sanitation	
 Affordable Clean Energy	 Decent Jobs, Econ. Growth	 Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure	 Reduced Inequalities	 Sustainable Cities, Communities	 Responsible Consumption & Production	
 Climate Action	 Life below Water	 Life on Land	 Peace & Justice, strong Inst.	 Partnerships for Goals		

Environment and climate targeting - Principal objective (100%); Significant objective (50%)

	Climate adaptation	Climate mitigation	Biodiversity	Other green/ environment
P1. Nordic Sahel Facility	0	0	0	0
P2. Pro-ARIDES	50%	0	0	50%
P3. R2R Central Sahel	0	0	0	0
Total green budget	DKK 67.5 million	0	0	DKK 67.5 million

Budget:

Project Name	Implementing Partner	Period	Strategic Objective (SO)	Budget (million DKK)
P1. Nordic Sahel Facility	Fund Manager / Call for	2026-29	SO1, SO2, SO3	225
P2. Pro-ARIDES	Delegated DGIS (SNV)	2026-29	SO 3	135
P3. R2R Central Sahel	Delegated ECHO	2026-29	SO 3	90
Management and reviews		2026-29		5
Unallocated		2027-29		145
Total				600

Sahel Future Generations Programme

2026-2029

Programme Document

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Acronyms

AES	Alliance of Sahel States
AFD	Agence Francaise du Développement
AFRPOL	Department for Africa and Development Policy
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CCDMP	Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement and Irregular Migration Programme in Sahel
CMR	Central Mediterranean Route
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDI	Denmark's Digital Democracy Initiative
DGIS	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DIIS	Danish Institute for International Studie
DKK	Danish Kroner
ECHO	European Commission department for civil protection and humanitarian aid
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
FACEJ	<i>Fonds d'Appui aux Créations des Entreprises pour les Jeunes</i>
FAMOC	<i>Fonds d'Appui aux Moteurs du Changement</i>
G5	Regional framework five West African countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IRP	Integrated Resilience Programme
ISS	International Institute of Social Studie
ISSP	Islamic State Sahel Province
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin
JS	Joint Secretariat
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MTR	Mid Term Review
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSF	Nordic Sahel Facility
ODA	Official development assistance
RDE	Royal Danish Embassy
SFGP	Sahel Future Generations Programme
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

SNV	Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers
SO	Specific Objective
UN	United Nation
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDP	<i>Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie</i> (Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland)
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WPS	Women Peace and Security

1. Introduction

This programme document outlines the background, rationale and justification, objectives, and management arrangements concerning the *Sabel Future Generations Programme 2026-2029* (SFGP). The programme is fully aligned with the Strategy for Strengthened Danish Engagement with African Countries (“Africa’s Century”, August 2024), which emphasises partnerships that promote peace, green growth, resilience, and opportunities for Africa’s growing youth population, particularly in fragile regions such as the Sahel. Furthermore, the strategic and specific objectives of the programme fully match Denmark’s current Strategy for Development Cooperation (“A changing world, partnerships in development”, June 2025) and will consist of three new projects and five existing projects, which will continue under SFGP during at least a part of the programme period.

2. Programme objectives

The programme will focus on the three Central Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali) and has an overall budget of DKK 600 million. Under the programme title *Sabel Future Generations Programme*, the continued Danish support to the region reflects Denmark’s continued commitment to contribute to a brighter future for the youth and coming generations in Central Sahel. The overall objective has been defined as *“to support democratic change agents in the region, prevent irregular migration and address root causes of instability and violent extremism”*. Based on the Identification Note, the scrutiny of on-going projects and an assessment of possibilities for new support, the overall objective is translated into three specific objectives (SOs):

1. Protect and promote democratic voices by supporting civil society, media and community actors, including youth- and women-led organisations.
2. Improve economic opportunities for urban and rural youth, including women’s participation, entrepreneurship and strengthening of their skills and qualifications.
3. Strengthen rural communities in pursuing a peaceful, sustainable and more resilient use of natural resources.

3. Programme context

3.1 Political, regional order and operating environment for Official Development Assistance (ODA)

The regional order in the Central Sahel is undergoing a profound reconfiguration. Between 2020 and 2023, military regimes seized power in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger and turned on a more authoritarian and sovereigntist pathway, turning their back on traditional partners while entering into close partnership with Russia. In September 2023, the three countries formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and formally left the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in January 2025. The move pushed ECOWAS into an institutional crisis, with fractured cohesion and a diminishing role in regional diplomacy, conflict prevention, and economic integration. Consequently, frameworks for constitutional rule and regional coordination have been weakened, and cross-border cooperation on challenges such as irregular migration and displacement, human trafficking and smuggling and violent extremism has been disrupted. AES leaders have positioned the alliance as a break from colonial influence while echoing pan-Africanist and anti-Western rhetoric. They have politically and militarily aligned with Russia, and Russian paramilitary forces (Wagner/Africa Corps) play a key role in the region, promoting Russian interests while in reality failing to deliver on security improvements.

The Western-aligned broader international engagement model, combining military assistance with ODA, including stabilisation, has come under increasing strain. French military operations, beginning in Mali in 2013 and later expanded through Operation Barkhane, were asked by the military regime to

leave Mali in 2022. In 2023, the UN's peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) was equally requested to leave. EU security support missions in Mali and Niger were scaled back or closed by the end of 2023, and the G5 Sahel, once central to the EU's regional strategy, has effectively ceased to function. However, EU Delegations, including staff from INTPA and ECHO, remain present with both development and humanitarian activities in all the three countries, albeit at a significantly lower level than before. Norway, Sweden and Denmark all decided to close their embassies in the Sahel and open in Dakar.

3.2 Security and conflict

The Central Sahel is experiencing a protracted and intensifying security crisis, marked by the territorial entrenchment of jihadist insurgencies and the collapse of state control across large swathes of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Armed groups, principally Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP), combine asymmetric warfare with rudimentary governance, enforcing parallel systems of taxation, justice, and coercion. Economic warfare, including blockades, infrastructure sabotage, and control of trade corridors, is a central tactic. Despite the AES states' political and military realignment, including closer ties with Russia and Wagner operatives, these regimes have failed to turn the tide and are steadily losing ground to terrorist groups. Meanwhile, jihadist spillover into northern Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire is increasing, threatening broader regional destabilisation. The combined impact of de facto jihadist territorial control, economic warfare, and regional spillover has created an increasingly volatile and ungovernable landscape.

Military regimes have failed to contain insurgent advances or mitigate the effects of parallel jihadist governance. In Burkina Faso, the auxiliary civilian militia called the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (*Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie*, VDP) has been mobilised by the state and implicated in ethnic-based violence. In Mali, the security forces have been supported by Russian mercenary forces, notably the Wagner Group and its successor, the Africa Corps, whose presence has been linked to serious human rights abuses. Mali further faces an acute intersection of security breakdown and economic disruption as jihadist forces effectively target fuel supplies and are encircling the capital, Bamako. In northern Mali, the government retains control of a few garrison towns. Burkina Faso has lost control over more than half its territory, with JNIM holding or contesting large parts of the north and east, and increasingly the centre. Niger is increasingly split between ISSP control in the northwest and JNIM infiltration in the southwest, while the southeast remains contested by Boko Haram.

3.3 Socio-economic context

The conflict has led to a surge in human rights violations, including repeated massacres of civilians, often with ethnic profiling, committed by both extremist groups and government-affiliated armed actors. Socio-economic vulnerability is widespread. The Central Sahel multidimensional poverty profile reveals deep structural disparities across rural and urban areas and across gender and age cohorts. In all three countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, more than 40% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty based on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) that assesses deprivations across health, education, and standard of living by using indicators such as child mortality, school attendance, nutrition, electricity access, and housing quality. MPI rates are higher in rural areas where access to education, health services, and basic infrastructure remains limited. All three countries of the Central Sahel fall into the "Low human development" category: Burkina Faso's HDI (2023 data, latest available) is approximately 0.459 (rank 186/193), while Mali and Niger both record around 0.419 (ranks 188/193).

The direct and indirect **impacts of violent conflict** are compounded by the effects of climate change, which act as vulnerability multipliers across livelihoods, mobility, and service delivery systems. This makes the Sahel crisis one of the **fastest-growing humanitarian emergencies** in the world: nearly

29 million people across the Sahel now need humanitarian assistance and protection. Within the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), almost **3 million people are internally displaced**, while approximately 387,000 refugees are registered in neighbouring countries. The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) index for each of these countries shows significant exposure across key sectors: food, water, human habitat, infrastructure and health. In the rural Sahelian context, where agriculture and pastoralism remain the backbone of millions of households, this resilience deficit has direct and severe implications. The triple-pressure of conflict, climate variability, and weak institutional adaptation means that when rainfall patterns deviate or surface temperatures rise, the protective buffers (e.g., crop diversity, pasture rotation, access to credit, extension services) are minimal or absent.

Food insecurity remains severe across much of the Central Sahel, particularly in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach rural areas. An estimated 12.8 million people face acute food insecurity in the lean season (2025). The northern and eastern regions of Burkina Faso, central-eastern Mali, and southwestern Niger continue to experience acute food access constraints due to ongoing insecurity, market disruptions, and displacement. In many of these zones, household food stocks have been depleted earlier than usual, and roadblocks, armed group activity, and climatic irregularities constrain market operations. The 2025 lean season is expected to result in emergency food insecurity across multiple localities, especially those under blockade or with high concentrations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). Rainfall variability and delayed seasonal onset in several areas raise additional concerns about future harvest losses and longer-term depletion of coping capacities (2025). Large segments of the rural population face sustained nutritional vulnerability, with children under five and pregnant women most at risk.

Demographic pressures overlap with insecurity, rural economic decline and urban under-absorption raise the risk that social deprivation becomes a driver of instability. A pronounced youth bulge, rapid urbanisation and increasing migratory pressure compound socio-economic and security challenges. In Mali, the proportion of the population aged 10-24 stands at about 33 % (latest UNFPA data). With median ages around 16–17, a rapidly expanding cohort of young people is seeking opportunities. Urbanisation is accelerating, driven by insecurity, failing agricultural production, and climate variability. Rural migrants and IDPs are settling in growing and underserved peri-urban areas. As job creation continues to lag, young people in both rural and urban settings face limited livelihood prospects. These dynamics act together in a vicious circle: the rural context of diminishing productivity and limited access to natural resources and services drives migration into cities; urban zones absorb this labour influx but often lack formal employment, increasing youth exposure to informal livelihoods, precarious work, migration journeys, anti-democratic narratives and, at worst, recruitment by armed groups.

Migration from the Central Sahel is predominantly intra-regional. Most migrants from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger relocate within West Africa, particularly to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. However, the Central Sahel is also an important area of both transit and origin of irregular migrants towards Europe. According to EU statistics (2024), asylum applications for the three countries totalled 21,880 (Mali: 16,454; Burkina Faso: 4,710; Niger: 625). Irregular migration from the region to Europe mainly follows the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR), which refers to arrivals in Italy and Malta from North Africa, and the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean Route (A/WMR), which refers to arrivals in Spain from North and West Africa via sea passages. Niger serves as a central transit corridor via the Agadez corridor, which connects to the CMR. The numbers of irregular arrivals via the CMR and the A/WMR continues to be significant. While the A/WMR has seen a sharp decrease in 2025 compared to 2024, the numbers of irregular arrivals via the CMR have seen a smaller decrease in 2025 compared to 2024. Migrants of Malian nationality make up the largest group among the nationalities on the Atlantic Route. While lower than the year before, high numbers of migrants dying while trying to cross the sea have continued in 2025, especially on the A/WMR. A worsening security context in the Central Sahelian countries is likely to exacerbate the situation around irregular migration further, both because

the armed groups are involved in the trafficking and smuggling, and because more Sahelians will want to look for a future elsewhere. The decision of the military regime in Niger to annul the Law 2015/36 prohibiting migrant smuggling has further upended irregular migration-related collaboration.

3.4 Gender dimensions

Gender inequality in the Central Sahel is a structural driver of vulnerability, reinforcing cycles of poverty, displacement, and exclusion. The region ranks among the lowest globally on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), with Niger at 171st, Mali at 164th, and Burkina Faso at 146th, reflecting high adolescent birth rates, low female educational attainment, and weak political representation. These disparities intersect with insecurity, limiting women's access to livelihoods, services, and decision-making, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread and takes multiple forms, including sexual violence, early and forced marriage, and survival sex, often exacerbated by displacement and eroded community protection systems. Adolescent girls are especially vulnerable in blockaded areas and informal settlements. Legal protections are weak or poorly enforced, while medical, psychosocial, and legal support remains scarce. Social stigma deters reporting, further silencing survivors. Education and healthcare disruptions have deepened the gendered impacts of the crisis. Meanwhile, women's voices remain underrepresented in peacebuilding and governance processes. Addressing gender inequality is thus essential to building sustainable resilience across the Central Sahel.

3.5 Civil society and civil space

Across the Central Sahel, civic space is contracting under the weight of authoritarian consolidation, state securitisation, and geopolitical realignment. The military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have each adopted increasingly repressive measures that undermine freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Independent civic actors have been marginalised or silenced while segments of the population have mobilised in support of the military authorities, often in anti-French and anti-Western terms. Civil society organisations (CSOs), human rights defenders and independent media are operating in a climate marked by legal uncertainty, arbitrary enforcement, and elevated risks of harassment and intimidation. This reflects deliberate efforts to silence dissent and reframe governance narratives around sovereignty, anti-imperialism and regime loyalty. Civic actors face a narrowing set of engagement options, with implications for international cooperation, inclusive development, and support for democratic transition.

In **Mali**, authorities have introduced laws restricting the right to assembly and imposed heavy constraints on independent media and CSOs. Journalists and activists critical of the transition or of military conduct have faced harassment, threats, and arbitrary detention. International human rights organisations have documented a climate of fear that has diminished civic activism and public debate. In **Burkina Faso**, the authorities have suspended several media outlets, restricted social media, and detained journalists and human rights defenders on vague national security grounds. CSOs, particularly those working on governance, human rights, and gender equality, report shrinking operational space and increased surveillance. In **Niger**, the junta has curtailed press freedoms, arrested civil society leaders, and suspended key civil society platforms. For all three countries, many journalists, bloggers and influencers have been forced to flee their country and continue their activities either from safe countries in the region (e.g. Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire) or from Europe (often France).

3.6 Programme scenarios

The following scenarios have been developed based on the interplay of political, security, economic and climate-related dynamics described. See Annex 1 for further details.

Scenario A – Managed Containment (optimistic). Limited political openings and pragmatic coexistence between the AES and ECOWAS (and to the international community) prevent further rupture. Security improves modestly through local negotiations and reduced clashes, while corridor reopening and moderated inflation ease economic strain. Despite persistent structural weaknesses, average climate conditions and functioning local coping systems support stability. A somewhat more permissive civic environment enables women mediators, CSOs, and youth-led organisations to engage in peacebuilding and inclusive dialogue.

Scenario B – Protracted Instability (baseline). Military regimes entrench authoritarian rule and sever ties with ECOWAS, while Russian influence deepens. Insecurity persists amid entrenched jihadist zones, militia abuses, and impunity. Economic hardship worsens under volatile prices, poor harvests, and shrinking livelihoods, driving migration and conflict over resources. Civic space contracts sharply, with women and youth activists facing repression yet maintaining limited digital and diaspora-based engagement. Gender-based violence increases alongside displacement and militarisation.

Scenario C – Authoritarian Consolidation (pessimistic). AES regimes harden control under anti-Western rhetoric and Russian backing, leading to regional isolation and sanctions that cripple economies. Security forces and militias escalate abuses, while civic and media freedoms are extinguished. Economic collapse and shrinking rural production drive unemployment and irregular migration. Women's and youth voices are silenced, and gender-based violence becomes pervasive. Humanitarian needs rise as civic and development space contracts to survival level.

Scenario D – Coup and jihadist Deal-Making (worst case). State collapse or military defeat in an AES country leads to national and local pacts with jihadist factions, creating de facto zones of extremist governance and illicit economies. Security incidents decline locally, but at the cost of extremist control and exclusion of women and minorities. Economic life centres on smuggling and informal trade, while climate shocks deepen fragility. The Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda collapses, civic actors vanish, and only diaspora or underground networks sustain minimal advocacy.

4. Programme rationale

Due to the political challenges in the region, the Danish political approach is to remain engaged with the populations of the Sahel, while avoiding supporting the military regimes in power. A clear focus on the narrative of the engagement becomes important in face of the geopolitical competition and disinformation present in the region. Hence, the programme will aim to create positive visibility around Denmark and the EU and therefore also have a preference for Danish, Nordic and European partnerships. The programme will build on existing Danish experiences in the region both in terms of Danish flagships and partners delivering solid results also considering that the programme will be managed from Copenhagen with less facility for direct monitoring.

The populations of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso face a complex, interlocking set of struggles driven by persistent insecurity, the effects of climate change (the region warming 1.5 times faster than the global average), and weak governance. These factors contribute to a cycle of vulnerability, displacement, and food insecurity for people who primarily depend on agriculture and pastoralism for work and nutrition. Most rural regions face competition among populations for resources, which exacerbates communal tensions that armed groups are known to exploit. A substantial portion of the Central Sahel's population lives under severely curtailed freedom of expression. The combined pressures from repressive military regimes, extremist groups, and a general climate of fear have created

a multifaceted crisis that affects nearly every individual's ability to speak freely, report on injustices, or access reliable information.

As highlighted in Denmark's Africa Strategy, these interlocking pressures are also major push factors for migration. Rapid population growth, shrinking economic opportunities, climate-driven resource competition, and deteriorating security conditions create structural conditions in which irregular migration becomes, for many, a perceived necessity rather than a choice. By addressing the root causes of irregular migration and contributing to resilience and democratic and civic space, the programme aligns directly with Denmark's commitment to address and prevent irregular migration and to supporting communities in building viable, secure futures at home. In addressing root causes to migration, the programme logic and foundational strategy complement, firstly, two of Denmark's route-based migration programmes launched in 2024 (The Whole-of-Route Programme and the Regional Migration Governance Programme for the Mediterranean) with the aim to address and prevent irregular migration in a safe, orderly and rights-based manner. This entails both efforts to enhance migration governance and management in key countries along the migratory routes and strengthening the protection of people on the move. Secondly it complements Denmark's Rome Process Financing Facility Programme launched in 2025 through the African Development Bank with a primary objective to tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in Africa by investing in sovereign infrastructure projects that promote climate resilience, inclusive economic opportunities, and long-term stability. Given the increasingly oppressing military regimes, the programme is a response to the continued need for support to democratic voices of civil societies, media, and community actors. The programme also responds to the priorities of population in the three countries in Central Sahel facing increasing economic pressure due to low job creation unable to match the rapid growth of young people in urban and rural areas and a decreasing agricultural production because of the security situation, soil impoverishment and climate change. All this instability, insecurity and socioeconomic obstacles may contribute to increasing irregular migration and push people into engaging with armed groups and illegal activities.

The overall strategic objective and specific objectives of the Danish support aligns with the overall purpose of Danish development cooperation as defined in the Act on International Development Cooperation, which is fully aligned to the Development Aid Cooperation (DAC) criterion for qualifying as ODA. Furthermore, the strategic objectives fully match Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation from June 2025 "A changing world, partnerships in development" with the prioritised focus areas on job creation (young people targeted), response to conflict (support locally led, long-term development efforts in protracted crises) and just, sustainable and green transition (increase climate adaptation through nature-based solutions and climate smart agriculture).

Bilateral donor engagement in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have shifted significantly in recent years as political transitions and global policy changes have reshaped external cooperation. Germany has curtailed direct cooperation with the central governments in Mali and Burkina Faso. It now concentrates on humanitarian assistance, transitional development support and selected stabilisation initiatives, mainly delivered through non-state and multilateral channels. The Netherlands remains an important bilateral actor, particularly through large regional programmes such as Pro-ARIDES, which supports resilience, local governance and food security across the three countries through long-term, multi-country arrangements. Sweden has closed its embassies in Bamako and Ouagadougou and phased out its bilateral development cooperation with Mali, while continuing humanitarian assistance and engaging primarily through regional mechanisms focused on SRHR, gender equality and support to civil society. Norway maintains a comparatively stable engagement centred on humanitarian aid, climate adaptation, peacebuilding and education in crises, with funding largely channelled through UN agencies and civil-society organisations. France has withdrawn its military presence from all three countries and,

in the case of Mali, halted its official development assistance, resulting in a suspension of AFD activities and a sharp contraction of its development and stabilisation footprint there. At the same time, United States foreign assistance to the region has been reduced following the application of legal “coup restrictions,” and broader budget cuts under the Trump administration have led to the scaling back of several development and governance programmes across West Africa, including in the Central Sahel. Collectively, these developments reflect a broader trend of reduced bilateral presence, increasing reliance on regional and thematic instruments, and greater use of non-state and multilateral channels in the Central Sahel.

The parallel development among the Nordic countries with the closing of embassies in Central Sahel and opening of embassies in Dakar, Sénégal, could be an opportunity for stronger collaboration on the support to Sahel from the embassies based in Dakar. Dialogue is currently on-going with Norway and Sweden that have shown preliminary interest in joining the initiative.

SFGP has complementarities with other regional programmes supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Western Africa. Through MULTI and MIGSTAB, Denmark is funding stabilisation efforts and addressing irregular migration in the region, e.g. through the multiannual “Whole of route”-programme 2024-2028 that focuses on preventing irregular migration and contribute to more safe and orderly migration, by facilitating access to effective protection services and systems and more accurate information. The regional Peace and Stabilisation Program for West Africa (2025-28) is mainly focusing on border areas including the spread of instability from the Sahel to Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin with civil society in engagements with the Danish Institute for Human Rights and peaceful cross-border pastoral mobility and social stability in the Sahel. Finally, the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) project Atlantic Corridor is also operating in the Sahel (Burkina Faso).

In addition, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) under Denmark’s Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) implements the Digitalise Youth Project (2025-2026) that covers Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, and several countries sharing borders with these countries, including Benin, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, and Togo.

SFGP will also integrate well-implemented ongoing projects. Some are standalone projects like the civil society fund (FAMOC) and the youth entrepreneurship project (FACEJ) in Mali, and others are projects under the Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement and Irregular Migration Programme in Sahel 2021-2024” (CCDMP) that ends 2025, like “Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme” (ASAP+) that will be granted a no-cost extension and “Programme Agro-alimentaire pour la Résilience Intégrée et le Développement Économique du Sahel” (Pro-ARIDES) where SFGP will finance a next phase.

Incorporated in the strategic objectives are outputs and activities that are aligned with Danish cross-cutting priorities, incl. Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), Leaving No-one Behind (LNOB), gender and youth, climate change and environmental considerations.

5. Project portfolio of the programme

This section describes the rationale of the choices for selecting projects under each of the three specific objectives. The project portfolio is composed of projects with existing funding and projects with new grants under SFGP. Some of the existing projects are envisaged to terminate within year 1 or 2 of the SFGP, whereas an extension will be considered for other projects, which entails an additional budget allocated from SFGP unallocated funds. Further description of each project is provided in annex 3, whereas the further justification is provided in the project document (in the final version).

Table 1: Overview of project portfolio Sahel Future Generations Programme 2026-2029

Project name	Implementing Partner	Countries	Period	Strategic objectives	Budget (million DKK)
P1. Nordic Sahel Facility	Fund Manager / Call for proposal	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger	2026-29	SO1, SO2, SO3	225
P2. Pro-ARIDES	SNV	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger	2026-29	SO3	135
P3. R2R Central Sahel	ECHO	Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger	2026-29	SO3	90
P4. FAMOC	NIRAS	Mali	2024-27	SO1	145
P5. FACEJ	PROMAN-ACK	Mali	2024-27	SO2	176
P6. ASAP+	IFAD	Burkina Faso, Niger	2021-?	SO3	190
P7. Urban Water Supply	KfW	Mali	2021-26	SO3	239
P8. Peace building and reconciliation through artistic citizenship for young artists	Royal Academy of Music	Mali	2021-27	SO1	8

Note: The grey-faded projects are funded from earlier appropriations.

5.1 Specific objective 1: Protect and promote democratic voices by supporting civil society, media and community actors, including youth- and women-led organisations

Basing cooperation on the experience of Danish and international NGOs working in the three countries is considered the best opportunity to strengthen human rights and democratic voices in the region. Given the contracting civic space, increasing harassment of CSOs, and the risks faced by human rights defenders and others associated with Western-aligned agendas, as well as related duty-of-care considerations, implementation through trusted partners with proven regional experience under SO1 will be essential. The volatility of the context further underscores the need for agile programming and flexible implementation modalities.

Early consultations suggest a strong, shared commitment among Nordic countries to develop a revitalised and coordinated approach in the Central Sahel that is value-driven, operationally agile and aligned with the EU. Denmark will take the lead in establishing a **Nordic Sahel Facility (NSF)** with a Joint Secretariat (JS) in Dakar, covering activities in **all three Central Sahel countries**. The NSF will undertake calls for proposals that contribute to SO1 in combination with SO2 and/or SO3 across the three countries. The exact modality for such a facility will be determined during the formulation phase, and the JS will be contracted through a competitive process.

In addition to this initiative, **FAMOC** (Fonds d'Appui aux Moteurs du Changement) will continue in Mali, managed by NIRAS until 2027. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the project is planned for May 2026 and will consider additional funding from unallocated SFGP funds, ensuring adaptation to evolving risks and lessons learned.

5.2 Specific objective 2: Improve economic opportunities for urban and rural youth, including women's participation, entrepreneurship and strengthening of their skills and qualifications

Experience from previous Danish support to private sector development in the region suggests that even in situations with great unpredictability and security concerns, support to the private sector can have an impact on livelihoods and incomes and thereby offer a stabilising force and providing continued hope for young generations. It is well documented that vocational training, self-employment and job creation among vulnerable young people in the region function as a dike against descending into increased crime or even violent extremism¹. In the three countries, the security situation is most predictable in urban centres, which are therefore in focus for the activities under SO2. A considerable risk is the impact on the private sector from the overall worsening of trade and transport in the three countries.

As written under SO1, the NSF will cover all three specific objectives, thus also SO2 possibly in a combination with SO3 and probably in Mali, being the main country of departure for migrants in CS. Denmark will continue funding **FACEJ II in Mali** (Fonds d'Appui aux Créations des Entreprises par des Jeunes) until 2027. The programme has since its first phase starting in 2019 supported the start-up and growth of over 1800 youth-led enterprises, 39 percent of which are led by women. A possible extension of FACEJ will be decided as part of a mid-term review and funds for such an extension would be drawn from unallocated funds under SFGP.

5.3 Specific objective 3: Strengthen rural communities in pursuing a peaceful, sustainable and more resilient use of natural resources

The identification of partners has been undertaken on the requirement to the largest extent possible to continue cooperation with existing partners. Denmark has previously funded a few projects with this objective, both in the bilateral programmes and under the Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement and Irregular Migration Programme in Sahel, 2021-2024 (CCDMP).

The projects under the bilateral programme in **Burkina Faso** are closing end 2025, but the IFAD implemented **ASAP+** (Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme), having had delays in implementation, will continue with a no-cost extension and the support to the WFP managed Integrated Resilience Programme (IRP) in Niger ends formally in July 2026.

The delegated partnership with KfW “**Urban Water Supply and Sanitation in Kayes**” (Mali) will continue to its term in 2026. This project will be the only project within the water sector in SFGP. Government institutions (Ministries, local governments and state owned/controlled utilities) are controlling the planning, tendering and financing of all major projects within the sector. This implementation control by Governments, combined with national NGO's not being capable of designing complex Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, result in SFGP disregarding water sector projects.

¹ Etude sur les Liens entre Formation professionnelle & Extrémisme violent au Niger, Moulaye HASSANE & Moubarak WOURO -SAMA, SDC, July 2023

Due to the good experience with Pro-ARIDES under CCDMP phase 1, Denmark will provide co-funding to a second phase of this programme 2026-29. The objective of **Pro-ARIDES** is to Enable farming, pastoral and agropastoral households — including women and youth — in the Sudan–Sahelian zones of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to strengthen their resilience, improve food security and raise incomes. The project enhances agroecological practices and sustainable management of natural resources of 40,000 households and strengthens the economic resilience of 20,000 households and young entrepreneurs, primarily in rural areas. It also supports the establishment of legitimate local rules for resource management and conflict prevention, including in relation to land tenure, and enhances the agency of women, youth and marginalised groups. The Netherlands have provided funding for Phase 1 and 2 of Pro-ARIDES of Euro 100 million. Denmark co-funded phase 1 with Euro 5.4 million under CCDMP and will contribute Euro 18 million under phase 2.

The objective of the Relief to Resilience project in the Central Sahel (**ECHO R2R Central Sahel**) is to strengthen the resilience of conflict-affected and displaced communities by bridging emergency humanitarian assistance with early recovery and development support. The project will leverage DG ECHO's regional presence in Dakar and continued in-country presence and community-level access in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to apply an HDP-Nexus approach. The project will be flexibly targeted to early recovery, livelihood restoration, and community resilience in areas where conditions allow for moving beyond emergency humanitarian responses. Denmark will contribute DKK 90 million (EUR 12 million for 2026-2029 to DG ECHO under a delegated implementation arrangement using the EU *External Assigned Revenues* modality that has a 4 per cent administration management cost.

6. Programme budget

The total financial envelope (commitment) for Sahel Future Generations Programme is DKK 600 million for the period from programme start in 2026 to end of 2029. The proposed allocations to each specific objective and selected partners as well as phasing is shown below.

Table 2: Tentative Partner Budget and Phasing (commitments in DKK million)

Strategic Obj.	Project and partner	Total	2026	2027	2028	2029
	New Projects					
SO 1-2-3	P1. Nordic Sahel Facility	225	74	74	39	38
SO 3	P2. Pro-Arides, delegated to DGIS	135	37,5	37,5	30	30
SO 1-3	P3. R2R, delegated to ECHO	90	37,5	37,5	9	6
	Sub-total New Projects	450	149	149	78	74
	Management, reviews, studies	5	1	1	2	1
	Unallocated	145			70	75
	Total commitments	600	150	150	150	150
	Pre SFGP					
SO 1	P4. FAMOC, MFA	150				
SO 2	P5. FACEJ, MFA	176				
SO 3	P6. ASAP+, IFAD	190				
SO 3	P7. Urban Water Supply, delegated to KfW	239				
SO1	P8. Peace building and reconciliation through artistic citizenship for young artists, Royal Academy of Music	8				
	Total Pre SFGP	755				
	Grand total	1.355				

Note: The grey-faded projects are funded from earlier appropriations. Mid-term review of SFGP programme planned for 2028.

The included unallocated fund allows for the necessary flexibility in the allocations, depending on the development in the context and the lessons learned of projects supported. The unallocated funds are intended for one or several of three projects: An extension of P6 FAMOC or P7 FACEJ in Mali, beyond 2027 when the current appropriations are expected to run out, or a funding of the World Food Programme (WFP) Integrated Resilience Programme (IRP).

The objective of **IRP** in Niger is to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities in Niger by strengthening climate-resilient food systems, improving food and nutrition security, and building local capacities to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to recurrent shocks. The Sahel focused (Central Sahel plus Chad and Mauritania) IRP has since 2018 assisted 4M+ people, reached 3,200+ villages, trained 63,000+ trained (gov't staff, community leaders) and rehabilitated 300,000 ha of land through community organized committees. Denmark contributed DKK 100 million to WFP's resilience interventions in Niger in 2024 – 2026, around half of the contribution of the main donor, BMZ, after USAID had withdrawn. Denmark will consider contributing to the subsequent phase of the IRP from 2027, depending on funding levels from other donors and the experience from the current phase.

7. Programme management and reporting

7.1 Overall management

The SFGP will be managed by AFRPOL in accordance with Danida Aid Management Guidelines. At programme-level, a Programme Reference Group (PRG) will be established to ensure exchange of information between AFRPOL and other relevant units of the MFA. The PRG will furthermore discuss developments in the economic and security context in the three countries based on the analysis submitted by AFRPOL. AFRPOL will define the composition of the PRG according to an evaluation of needs.

7.2 Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

The projects under the SFGP will be monitored in accordance with MEAL principles of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. AFRPOL will have the overall responsibility for supervising the implementing partners and maintaining an overview of the programme progress towards achieving the strategic objectives, as well as disbursements, possible reallocations and use of unallocated funds. AFRPOL will furthermore, as part of their core functions follow and assess the development in the political and security context in the three countries and annually update the scenarios and the risk management matrix. AFRPOL will engage in the relevant level of dialogue with the implementing partners, as described in each project document with MEAL procedures being described, except for the management of the support to Pro-ARIDES (P3), which will be delegated to Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), P5 which is delegated to ECHO and the on-going Urban Water Supply Project (P8), which is delegated to KfW.

7.3 Reporting and Reviews

Each project will submit semi-annual progress reports and annual financial reporting, which will form the basis for approving annual work plans and budgets, as well as for continuous assessment of and adjustments to risks. Semi-annual project steering committees or partner meetings will be held by the responsible MFA unit. The MFA is entitled to carry out technical and/or financial missions, reviews, evaluations and independent audits during the grant period either themselves or through a third-party

monitoring contract. Table 3 below provides an overview of reporting, meetings and reviews and thereby the scope of the monitoring task of the MFA.

Table 3: Calendar for programme and project reports, meetings and reviews

	2026	2027	2028	2029 and 2030
Reports				
Inception report	P1, P2, P3			
Progress report (semi-annual)	P4, P5, P6, P7, P8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5	P1, P2, P3	P1, P2, P3
Meetings				
Programme reference group	1 meeting	1 meeting	1 meeting	1 meeting
Project steering committees (semi-annual)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5	P1, P2, P3	P1, P2, P3
Technical reviews				
Mid-term review - programme			1 review	
Project reviews	P4, P5	P1, P2, P3		
Audits				
Audited financial report	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5	P1, P2, P3	P1, P2, P3

P1 – P8 refers to the project numbers indicated in Table 1 and Table 2 above.

8. Risk management

Given the context for implementation of SFGP with a multi-dimensional risk situation, the risk management by the MFA will be essential in staying alert and able to lead a pro-active management of the programme. In case of a significantly worsening scenario, where e.g. the operation of local actors is hindered severely, the MFA could face a decision to discontinue activities.

Contextual risks

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response	Residual risk	Background to assessment
Security and human rights situation worsen	Likely	Major	MFA will monitor situation continuously possibly with assistance from Think Tanks (DIIS, ISS, ECDMP)	Major	Security and Human Rights situation is extremely volatile and a rapid shift to scenario D is realistic

Programmatic risks

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response	Residual risk	Background to assessment

Many projects of SFGP will be monitored virtually	Almost certain	Major	Transfer of monitoring responsibility to RDE in Dakar will ease monitoring with many partners having base in Dakar	Minor	Present situation in Bamako has shown the challenges in distant monitoring
Risk of need of a long inception phase before NSF is up and running	Likely	Major	MFA in Denmark will secure support and assistance through 2026 in facilitating and coordinating with Nordic colleagues	Minor	Establishing a Joint Secretariat for management of NSF is ambitious given the recent establishment of Nordic Embassies in Dakar
Country strategy for WFP Niger and possible extension of BMZ support only known by Q4 2026	Likely	Major	Support only signed after approved country strategy and secured BMZ financing	Minor	IRP implemented by WFP Niger depends highly on support from BMZ ending ultimo 2026

Institutional risks

Risk Factor	Likelihood	Impact	Risk response	Residual risk	Background to assessment
Reputational risk by having even a minimal participation from Governments	Likely	Major	Monitoring from MFA of transfer of funds, supplemented by focus on possible Government entities benefitting from locals being more proactive facing population needs	Minor	Irrespective of the decision to avoid any implementation by Government organisations, these still need to approve the programme
Pressure in getting SFGP signed might hamper the realisation of NSF	Likely	Major	MFA in Denmark will work on securing post appraisal participation from Nordic countries	Minor	The robustness of the NSF depends on having more than Denmark participating
Misuse of funds related to most partners working through local partners	Likely	Major	Partners are requested to document their remote monitoring and appraisal team should include financial expert to review financial procedures of partners	Minor	Security will limit possibilities of Value for Money controls of activities

Annexes:

Annex 1 Context analysis

Annex 2 Process Action Plan

Annex 3 Project summaries

Annex 1: Context Analysis

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Political and regional order

The regional order in the Central Sahel is undergoing a profound and ongoing reconfiguration, and the political situation remains difficult, with a geopolitical dimension as Russian political and security influence increases. Within 3 years, military regimes came to power in Mali (August 2020, May 2021), Burkina Faso (January 2022, September 2022), and Niger (July 2023). In September 2023, the three countries established the Alliance of Sahel States (l'Alliance des États du Sahel, AES), a mutual defence pact aimed at strengthening regional security cooperation. The three countries officially exited the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in January 2025, completing political separation (with ongoing legal and institutional disentanglement). Along the way, the AES turned from a defence pact into ambitions for a confederation of states. When announcing their departure from ECOWAS, the military-led AES was adamant that it was breaking away from its former colonial powers and had increasingly aligned itself with Russia, seeking military and technical support. This shift coincides with rising anti-French and anti-Western sentiment, exacerbated by the presence of Russian paramilitary groups such as the Wagner Group (now Africa Corps).

The AES formation has produced severe regional fragmentation. ECOWAS's political coordination and cooperative security role in West Africa has been broken for the first time in decades. Frameworks for constitutional rule, economic integration, and collective security have been undermined. The AES alliance now pursues closer security and institutional integration, including plans for a joint force and greater convergence around anti-Western rhetoric, pan-Africanist ideology, and state sovereignty. While trade and movement across AES-ECOWAS borders continue, cooperation on shared challenges like regional security, economic development, migration, conflict prevention, and displacement has been disrupted.

The Western-aligned broader international engagement model, combining military assistance with official development assistance (ODA), has come under increasing strain. A decade has come to an end in which the EU and its member states, including Denmark, worked closely with democratically elected governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to address escalating insecurity, much of it driven by jihadist insurgencies. The EU and Western-aligned engagement model combined military support with a broader stabilisation agenda. It provided training and assistance to national armed forces while also funding economic development, governance reforms, and community-based resilience initiatives, but is now severely challenged. The coups accelerated the collapse of this approach. French-led military assistance, launched in Mali in 2013 and later expanded through Operation Barkhane to include Burkina Faso and Niger, was the first to unravel. At the request of Mali's military authorities, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), also

established in 2013, completed its full withdrawal in January 2024. The G5 Sahel, once a key pillar of EU regional strategy and comprising Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Chad, has effectively ceased to function following the creation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). By the end of 2023, Niger had revoked both its EU civilian and military missions, and the EU's military training mission in Mali was terminated amid rising tensions and Russia's growing influence. As of 2025, only a reduced EU civilian mission in Mali and a small regional security advisory cell remain active, underscoring the extent to which European presence and influence have been rolled back. In September 2025, the AES countries announced at the UN that they would be leaving the International Criminal Court (ICC) jointly.

Meanwhile, the remaining ECOWAS states have moved towards a more accommodating approach. ECOWAS's approach shifted from confrontation to dialogue by early 2024, when it began softening its stance as punitive measures, initially strongly advocated by Nigeria, faltered. Diplomatic efforts, including mediation by the UN, AU, ECOWAS and individual countries such as Senegal, Togo and Ghana, are being used to keep channels open. Official rhetoric has moderated, with calls for dialogue and even reintegration replacing threats. On the ground, essential cooperation in trade, infrastructure, and security is quietly resuming, acknowledging interdependence. At the political level, in Senegal, official delegations from Mali and Burkina Faso attended the April 2024 inauguration of Senegal's President Diomaye Faye. Similarly, Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama, who was inaugurated in January 2025 with the attendance of Burkina Faso's military ruler, marked a shift to accommodation and an acknowledgement of the AES regimes. This recognition also involves ECOWAS continuing to pursue the AES countries' rejoining the regional bloc.

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Security

Two jihadist groupings dominate in Central Sahel, these are Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP). ISSP's rivalry with JNIM is fierce, they vie for recruits, territory, and resources, but open combat between them has lessened since ISSP secured its core turf (infighting casualties dropped from 600 in 2022 to <100 in 2024). Both groups seem to recognize their mutual interest in not exhausting themselves in fratricidal war, even as sporadic clashes continue.

JNIM was formed in 2017 and is an Al-Qaeda affiliate and the dominant jihadist coalition in Mali and Burkina Faso. JNIM's strategy blends guerrilla warfare with governance and population control. JNIM

focuses on ousting state institutions by targeting government authorities and subsequently filling the void. JNIM also practices “economic warfare”: sabotaging roads, bridges, and telecom networks to weaken state economies and sever the state’s reach. Notably, JNIM has made blockade tactics a hallmark. JNIM’s top leadership maintain a “big tent” approach, recruiting from various ethnic groups (Fulani, Tuareg, Bambara, etc.) to embed themselves in local conflicts and grievances. As of 2025, JNIM is active across eight West African countries, making it the region’s most pervasive militant network.

ISSP emerged in 2015 as a splinter from Al-Qaeda networks. ISSP is the Sahel’s Islamic State affiliate, led by jihadists who broke from JNIM and pledged loyalty to ISIS’s global caliphate. ISSP’s presence is concentrated in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region (eastern Mali, western Niger, and to a lesser extent northern Burkina). ISSP earned a reputation for extreme brutality, including systematic massacres of civilians from communities perceived as pro-government or aligned with rivals. However, in late 2022 ISSP’s strategy shifted from mass violence to territorial control. Under pressure, the group moved towards building a durable proto-state. They now use a mix of coercion and governance that mirrors earlier ISIS efforts in Syria/Iraq. ISSP’s internal structure has evolved to incorporate local recruits and foreign fighters (some reports indicate militants from Mauritania, Nigeria, Libya and beyond are joining).

In **northern Mali**, rural areas of Kidal and Timbuktu regions remain under jihadist or rebel control, partly enabled by JNIM’s long-standing ties with local Tuareg rebels and communities. Government presence is limited to garrison towns.

In Mopti, northern Ségou, and parts of the Timbuktu Region (Gao and Menaka), JNIM’s “Katiba Macina” faction holds sway over much of the rural hinterland. JNIM has established “support zones” in these areas, taxing locals (zakat), closing schools, banning voting, and punishing collaborators, with little government interference. Notably, in 2023 JNIM brokers struck local non-aggression pacts with community militias in parts of central Mali (e.g. north of Macina town), leading to a cessation of clashes in those localities. Such deals indicate JNIM’s de facto governance, as communities accommodate jihadist authority in exchange for relief from violence. Meanwhile, the Islamic State’s Sahel branch (ISSP) and JNIM fought fierce battles in 2022–2023 over central Mali’s Menaka and Gao regions. ISSP emerged dominant along the Mali-Niger border, driving JNIM out of most of Menaka Region and areas south of Gao by mid-2023. The UN reported ISSP doubled the area under its control during this campaign. Today, ISSP controls large parts of northeastern Mali, where it has set up a proto-caliphate with its own courts and administration.

In **southern Mali**, JNIM has made alarming inroads and have sustained presence in all of the southern regions. It has consolidated support zones in northern Koulikoro and western Ségou regions, just north of Bamako, using these rural bases to sever roads and isolate major towns. JNIM now controls most villages in northern Koulikoro Region and along the Ségou–Koulikoro border, areas once firmly under government control. The Malian army’s presence there has dwindled indicating that the state has effectively ceded the countryside. JNIM uses these southern havens to launch IED ambushes and complex attacks on military posts and convoys. Bougouni and Sikasso regions are increasingly dominated by JNIM and are attacking convoys moving goods from Côte d’Ivoire towards Bamako.

Mali’s capital Bamako is now under direct threat. Since 2023, JNIM has doubled its rate of attacks in the Bamako region, striking army checkpoints and roads just outside the city. In September 2024, JNIM even mounted a coordinated assault inside Bamako, attacking a gendarmerie training school and the main air force base, killing over 70 security personnel. This was JNIM’s first attack in the capital in nearly a decade, symbolically challenging the junta’s authority at its heart. The group’s strategy has been

to avoid mass-casualty terrorism against civilians, focusing on military/government targets to erode the regime's legitimacy and portray the jihadists as a viable alternative authority.

Burkina Faso also faces a dire territorial reality: jihadists (primarily JNIM) control or contest over half of the country's territory, especially in the north and east. The government's writ has retreated to provincial capitals and a few central zones, while the countryside is largely at the mercy of militant groups. **Northern Burkina** (Sahel and Nord Regions): This zone, bordering Mali and Niger, has been a jihadist hotbed since 2016. JNIM and its local offshoot, Ansaroul Islam, dominate. As of late 2024, around 40 towns ("enclaves") across northern and eastern Burkina are under jihadist blockade, trapping over 2 million civilians and covering over half the country's land area. The army's resupply convoys to these enclaves often come under heavy attack. Across the north, government troops largely bunker in garrison towns, while JNIM units patrol freely in rural areas. The militants enforce their own rules: markets and schools have been shut, and villagers must pay "protection" taxes or flee. Over 6,000 schools (25% of Burkina's total) are closed due to violence, mostly in northern and eastern provinces. The humanitarian situation is dire, with malnutrition and starvation risks soaring in blockaded zones.

Eastern Burkina (Est and Centre-Est Regions): The entire east has effectively become a jihadist sanctuary. Burkinabè forces have almost no ground presence beyond a few towns; they rely on sporadic drone strikes to harass jihadists in the forests. Using a systematic siege strategy (also deployed in Mali), JNIM isolates any community aligned with the state. The humanitarian fallout has been catastrophic: blockades have caused massive inflation, hunger, and collapse of health services in enclaved eastern towns. The strategy of population control through sieges and terror has emptied much of the eastern countryside as people flee. Local communities and officials attempted negotiations with JNIM to lift blockades in 2022. Still, the military regime under Captain Ibrahim Traoré rejected any talks, opting instead to fight back by arming civilian auxiliaries.

Central Burkina and Southwest: JNIM's advance toward the capital has been checked somewhat in 2023. In early 2023, Burkinabè forces and volunteer militias (VDP) launched a counteroffensive in the Centre-Ouest Region (around Koudougou) to push back a budding JNIM cell west of the capital. However, north of Ouagadougou in Centre-Nord, JNIM remains very potent. It continues to encircle Kaya (a strategic garrison town some 100 km from the capital) by controlling the rural communes to its north and east. In Burkina's far southwest (Cascades/Hauts-Bassins), jihadist activity is lower but not absent. JNIM elements have intermittently operated along the borders with Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, using forest routes for transit and smuggling. The Burkinabè junta's focus, however, remains on the north and east where the insurgency is fiercest.

Niger has two-fold jihadist threats, ISSP and JNIM in the west (Tillabéri/Tahoua regions, part of the tri-border theatre), and Boko Haram/ISWAP in the southeast (Diffa region, around Lake Chad). The western insurgency has intensified as French and U.S. military support was cut off following Niger's 2023 coup, while the southeastern Boko Haram conflict (though outside the "central Sahel" focus, it interlocks with the region's instability) grinds on.

In western Niger (Tillabéri & northern Tahoua), the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) has entrenched itself. By late 2023, ISSP was openly levying taxes (zakat) on communities in Tahoua and Tillabéri – reported extortion incidents jumped 30% post-coup. The group even dictated religious life (enforcing strict observance of Eid in areas under its influence). These are clear indicators of Islamic State governance taking hold on Nigerien soil. ISSP has also launched increasingly deadly attacks on Niger's army to guard its turf. The Nigerien junta has shifted its limited capabilities to the southern border (to contain any spillover from Burkina), implicitly ceding parts of the northwestern frontier to the ISSP. A range of minor incursions signal that Niamey, too, is being encircled from the west by ISIS-linked militants.

western Niger is effectively partitioned: the north (Tillabéri-Tahoua) is an ISSP bastion, and the southwest border zone is a JNIM infiltration corridor, with the state controlling only the immediate Niamey hinterland and a few heavily defended towns.

In southeastern Niger (Diffa Region, Lake Chad basin), the dynamic involves Boko Haram and Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP). These groups are not part of the Sahel insurgency per se, but their presence underscores regional contagion. For over a decade, Boko Haram/ISWAP have terrorised the Nigerian-Nigerian-Chadian border around Lake Chad. As of 2025, ISWAP (the Boko Haram offshoot aligned with ISIS) holds sway over islands and villages on Lake Chad’s Niger side, launching periodic raids. Violence in this zone has displaced hundreds of thousands, and parts of the Diffa region remain no-go areas without military escort. While this Lake Chad conflict is geographically separate from the central Sahel (being ~1,000 km east of Mali), it has a similar effect – weakening Niger’s border security and creating a humanitarian emergency. The UN calls the Lake Chad and Liptako-Gourma regions the two epicentres of violence and humanitarian disaster in the Sahel.

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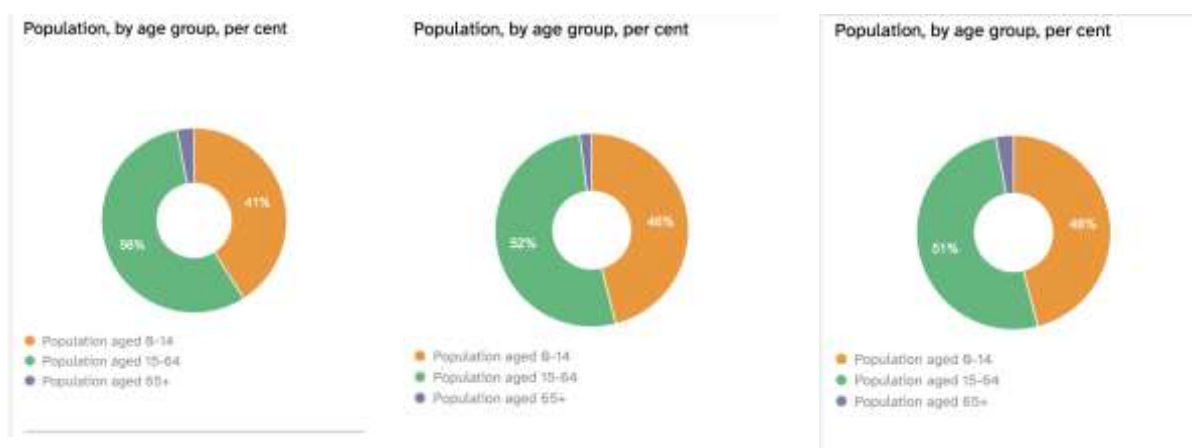
Socio-economic context

All three countries of the Central Sahel fall into the “Low human development” category: Burkina Faso’s HDI is approximately 0.459 (rank 186/193), while Mali and Niger both record around 0.419 (ranks 188/193). Total population figures (UNFPA 2025) for the three countries are: Burkina Faso 24.1 million; Mali 25.2 million, and Niger 27.9 million (Table A1-1)

Demographic pressures overlap with insecurity, rural economic decline and urban under-absorption raise the risk that social deprivation becomes a driver of instability. A pronounced youth bulge, rapid urbanisation and increasing migratory pressure compound socio-economic and security challenges. In Mali, the proportion of the population aged 10-24 stands at about 33 % (latest UNFPA data). With median ages around 16–17, a rapidly expanding cohort of young people is seeking opportunities. Urbanisation is accelerating, driven by insecurity, failing agricultural production, and climate variability. Rural migrants and IDPs are settling in growing and underserved peri-urban areas. As job creation continues to lag, young people in both rural and urban settings face limited livelihood prospects. These dynamics act together in a vicious circle: the rural context of diminishing productivity and limited access to natural resources and services drives migration into cities; urban zones absorb this labour influx but often lack formal employment, increasing youth exposure to informal livelihoods, precarious work, migration journeys, anti-democratic narratives and, at worst, recruitment by armed groups.

Table A1-1 – Population in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (2025)

Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger
Total population: 24.1 million	Total population: 25.2 million	Total population: 27.9 million



Source: <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>

Table A1-2 – Youth age 10-24

Burkina Faso

Year2017	Female		Male	
Age group	Number	Percentage of total female population	Number	Percentage of total male population
10-14	1,221,498	12.7	1,268,505	13.3
15-19	1,027,293	10.7	1,065,838	11.1
20-24	859,947	8.9	884,840	9.2

Source: GLOBAL_Revision of the World Population Prospects 2017

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/adolescent-youth/BF>

Mali

Year2017	Female		Male	
Age group	Number	Percentage of total female population	Number	Percentage of total male population
10-14	1,220,918	13.2	1,258,771	13.6
15-19	980,922	10.6	1,005,207	10.8
20-24	792,734	8.6	803,867	8.7

Source: GLOBAL_Revision of the World Population Prospects 2017

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/adolescent-youth/ML>

Niger

Year 2017	Female		Male	
Age group	Number	Percentage of total female population	Number	Percentage of total male population
10-14	1,409,652	13.2	1,470,054	13.6
15-19	1,130,206	10.6	1,145,639	10.6
20-24	886,277	8.3	816,285	7.6

Source: GLOBAL_Revision of the World Population Prospects 2017

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/adolescent-youth/NE>

Migration from the Central Sahel is predominantly intra-regional. Most migrants from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger relocate within West Africa, particularly to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. The Central Sahel is an important area of both transit and origin of irregular migrants towards Europe. According to EU statistics (2024), asylum applications for the three countries totalled 21,880 (Mali: 16,454; Burkina Faso: 4,710; Niger: 625). Europe-bound migration from the region is along the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR), which refers to arrivals in Italy and Malta from North Africa, often by people first travelling from West Africa (but also from Bangladesh or Egypt), and the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean Route (A/WMR) that refers to arrivals in Spain from North and West Africa via sea passages; across the Strait of Gibraltar from Tangier to Tarifa and a land route through the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. It also encompasses departures by boat from Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia to the Spanish Canary Islands. Niger serves as a central transit corridor via the Agadez corridor, which connects to the CMR. A worsening security context in the Central Sahelian countries is likely to worsen the situation around irregular migration further, both because the armed groups are involved in the trafficking and because more Sahelians will want to look for a future elsewhere. One of the first actions of the military regime in Niger was to annul the unpopular Law 2015/36 prohibiting migrant smuggling, an action that has further upended migration-related collaboration.

Impact of conflict. The human toll of the Sahel insurgencies has been devastating. Thousands of civilians are killed each year amid attacks by jihadists, intercommunal violence stoked by the conflict, and heavy-handed military operations. Jihadist groups, especially ISIS, have shown a willingness to massacre villagers. Hundreds of civilians have been killed in single incidents (e.g. ISSP's ethnic massacres in Mali/Niger in 2018-2019, JNIM's August 2023 massacre of volunteer fighters in Burkina. Both ISIS and JNIM also execute individuals accused of collaborating with the state or opposing jihadist rule; such executions (by beheading, stoning, etc.) are often carried out publicly to instil fear. Meanwhile, government forces have also been implicated in abuses. In Mali's counteroffensives up north, over 90% of engagements by Malian troops (and Wagner allies) in late 2023 targeted civilians or suspect civilians, reflecting a brutal counterinsurgency approach that has itself resulted in civilian massacres. The crossfire and collective punishments have led to a massive protection crisis: ACLED data consistently rank Mali, Burkina, and Niger among the most lethal conflict environments worldwide. By 2023, conflict fatalities in these three countries were nearly triple the levels of 2017. The violence has often been indiscriminate: markets bombed, passenger buses ambushed, aid workers assassinated (two aid workers killed in Burkina in Feb 2023, prompting Doctors Without Borders to temporarily suspend operations). As state authority erodes, criminality and banditry have also spiked, further endangering civilians.

The central Sahel conflict has produced one of the world's largest displacement crises. As of 2025, over 5 million people have been forcibly displaced across Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and neighbouring host countries. Within the three countries, there are around 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) as of late 2024, a figure that had swelled dramatically. Burkina Faso alone accounts for over 2 million IDPs (up from virtually zero in 2016). Mali has about 378,000 IDPs (as of the end of 2024), mostly from the central regions. Niger hosts a smaller but growing displaced population from Tillabéri/Tahoua and Diffa conflicts (plus refugees from Nigeria). Entire communities have fled jihadist-controlled rural areas into overcrowded urban camps or across borders. Likewise, tens of thousands of Burkinabè have fled into Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin to escape violence. This mass displacement has deepened humanitarian needs, with many IDPs lacking food, shelter, or healthcare. Host communities (often already poor) are under strain, and intercommunal tensions sometimes flare as resources dwindle.

Jihadist tactics have made humanitarian operations perilous or impossible in many areas. Road blockades and IEDs prevent aid convoys from reaching dozens of towns. In Burkina Faso, the UN estimates that over 2 million people are trapped in blockaded zones. Many are surviving on dwindling stocks or airdrops (the UN Humanitarian Air Service conducts limited food and medicine airlifts when possible). Aid groups face constant risk: they have been directly targeted by jihadists who accuse them of spying or supporting government forces, leading some NGOs to scale back. As a result, communities in enclaves suffer critical shortages of food, clean water, and medical supplies. Malnutrition is soaring; in Burkina's conflict zones, acute malnutrition among children under five jumped by 50% from 2022 to 2023. With fields abandoned and markets closed, an estimated 3+ million people in the central Sahel are now facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity. Vaccination rates have plummeted, and diseases like measles and cholera threaten displaced camps.

Education is severely affected, as thousands of schools have shut. In Mali and Burkina, entire generations of children in certain areas have been without formal schooling for years, either because jihadists banned secular education or because it's too dangerous for teachers to stay. Jihadists often promote madrasa-style or Quranic schooling as an alternative, indoctrinating youth in their ideology. Health systems have similarly collapsed in hard-hit zones: clinics were looted or staff fled, contributing to excess deaths from untreated illness. Traditional livelihoods are severely affected, and pastoralists cannot freely migrate with their herds due to violence, farmers abandon fields in fear of attack, and markets for produce or cattle have vanished. This leads to loss of income and deepening poverty in already poor communities, feeding a vicious cycle of marginalisation that jihadists exploit for recruitment ("join us or starve" coercion). The psychosocial impact on communities is profound: pervasive trauma from witnessing killings, fear and mistrust between neighbours (as jihadists infiltrate villages, they also sow suspicion – anyone could be an informant or an insurgent). Additionally, human rights abuses by security forces – such as arbitrary arrests or extrajudicial killings of civilians suspected of aiding jihadists – have created grievances among ethnic groups like Peuhl/Fulani, who often get profiled. This can drive some to view jihadists as protectors of their community against an abusive state [OBJ].

Finally, the conflict has shattered local economies and governance. State officials (mayors, prefects) have fled many areas or been assassinated. Jihadists frequently kill village chiefs or replace them with their own agents. As a result, customary conflict resolution mechanisms broke down, causing spikes in inter-ethnic violence (for example, Dogon vs Fulani clashes in Mali's Mopti region escalated without authorities to mediate). The rule of law vacuum is filled by harsh insurgent justice or vigilante retribution, undermining any sense of normalcy or trust in society.

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- [2025 UNDP OPHI Global Multidimensional Poverty Index \(MPI\)](#)

Contested digital domain

The information environment has become a strategic domain shaped by both domestic actors and external influence campaigns, complicating efforts to foster inclusive dialogue and shared civic understanding. Digital media landscapes across the three countries have become increasingly fragmented and contested, particularly among urban youth. The spread of mis- and disinformation through social media platforms, messaging apps contributes to shifting public opinion, often reinforcing narratives critical of Western actors and democratic governance models. Urban youth, who are more digitally connected than their rural counterparts, are both more engaged in public discourse and more exposed to manipulated or polarising content. Limited media literacy, declining trust in institutions, and the erosion of independent media have further constrained the availability of reliable information. Development actors need to take this contested digital domain into account, including its impact on community-driven participatory approaches. Survey data show that 66% of Burkinabè respondents consider military rule acceptable (up from 24% in 2012), while support for democracy in Mali has dropped by 23 percentage points over the past decade. In Niger, 63% of respondents expressed approval of military rule, and 67% said elections are not the best way to choose leaders. Across the three countries, large majorities continue to express favourable views of regional institutions such as ECOWAS. Yet, these attitudes coexist with growing scepticism toward Western influence and increased receptivity to alternative narratives.

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Gender dimensions

Gender inequality in the Sahel acts not only as a social injustice but also as a driver of vulnerability and exclusion, reinforcing poverty, displacement, and community-level instability. As such, gender-responsive approaches are essential to any resilience, livelihoods, or civic engagement efforts across the region. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) highlights deep gender-based disparities across the Central Sahel. Niger ranks among the most unequal countries globally, with a GII of 0.633 (ranked 171st), followed by Mali at 0.612 (164th) and Burkina Faso at 0.555 (146th). These values indicate significant losses in human development potential due to gender inequality across reproductive health, educational attainment, political representation, and labour market participation. High adolescent birth rates, low

female secondary education completion, and minimal parliamentary representation are standard across all three countries.

These structural inequalities intersect with broader fragility and conflict dynamics, limiting women's access to livelihoods, protection, and decision-making spaces, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas. Women and girls across the Central Sahel face elevated and compounding risks of violence, driven by armed conflict, widespread displacement, weakened protection structures, and entrenched gender inequality. In Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, gender-based violence (GBV) takes multiple forms, including conflict-related sexual violence, intimate partner violence, child and forced marriage, and survival sex, exacerbated by the erosion of community resilience and limited access to services. The disruption of education systems, closure of health facilities, and deterioration of rule-of-law frameworks have severely curtailed women's and girls' rights and access to protection. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable, with rising reports of early marriage, exploitation, and sexual violence in displacement settings and blockaded areas. Psychosocial and medical support is scarce or absent in many locations, while social stigma continues to silence survivors and inhibit reporting. At the same time, women's voices are underrepresented in peacebuilding and crisis response efforts, despite playing critical roles in sustaining families and communities under pressure.

Access to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and services across the Central Sahel is severely constrained, especially in displacement settings and areas under blockade. Women and girls face heightened risks of maternal mortality, unintended pregnancies, and unsafe abortions due to disrupted health systems, insecurity, and cultural stigma. Adolescent girls are particularly affected, with limited access to contraception, menstrual hygiene services, and maternal care. These gaps in SRHR not only threaten individual well-being but also reinforce intergenerational cycles of vulnerability. At the same time, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been significantly undermined across all three countries. Military rule, shrinking civic space, and escalating repression have sidelined women's participation in peace processes, governance, and local mediation efforts. Despite women's critical roles in sustaining social cohesion during crisis, their exclusion from formal decision-making structures undermines both the legitimacy and effectiveness of conflict response and recovery.

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Civil society and civic space

Across the Central Sahel, civic space is contracting under the weight of authoritarian consolidation, state securitisation, and geopolitical realignment. The military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have each adopted increasingly repressive measures that undermine freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Independent civic actors have been marginalised or silenced. At the same time, segments of the population have mobilised in support of the military authorities, often in anti-French and anti-Western terms (see previous section). CSOs, human rights defenders (HRDs), and independent media are operating in a climate marked by legal uncertainty, arbitrary enforcement, and elevated risks of harassment and intimidation. This reflects deliberate efforts to silence dissent and reframe governance narratives around sovereignty, anti-imperialism and regime loyalty. Repressive laws, intimidation of civil society, suppression of media, and legalised impunity are converging into a broader pattern of state control and authoritarian consolidation. These dynamics not only endanger the lives and work of HRDs but also imperil the prospect of inclusive, democratic transitions. Civic actors face a narrowing set of options for engagement, with implications for international cooperation, inclusive development, and support for democratic transition.

Burkina Faso has, since the military takeover in 2022, seen a drastic erosion of civic freedoms under the regime of Captain Ibrahim Traoré. While restrictions began under the previous civilian government, the junta has escalated repression under the guise of national security and anti-terrorism. Human rights organisations report arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and conscription of critics. In mid-2023, aid workers from a local safety-monitoring NGO were expelled on accusations of espionage, part of a broader trend of labelling NGOs as threats to sovereignty (HRW, 2024). The repression has created an atmosphere of fear, forcing journalists and activists into self-censorship. The junta’s actions, from conscripting critics to banning international media, have hollowed out civic space and undermined democratic norms. As RSF noted, “The government’s strategy is not just censorship, it is control through fear” (RSF Sahel Index, 2024).

- **Criminalisation of Information:** Amendments to the Penal Code in 2019 (Law No. 044-2019/AN) introduced prison terms for publishing information on security operations that could “undermine public order” or “demoralise the troops”. These vague provisions have been used to prosecute journalists and silence critical reporting (RSF, 2020).
- **Forced Conscription of Journalists:** In an unprecedented tactic, at least five journalists were forcibly conscripted under the April 2023 “general mobilisation” decree. (FIDH, 2025; CPJ, 2023).
- **Media Blackouts and Foreign Content Bans:** The junta has suspended outlets such as RFI and France 24 and imposed restrictions on the rebroadcast of foreign media content (CSC Decree, March 2023). These steps further isolate the population from independent reporting.
- **Intimidation of Civil Society:** Civil society actors operate under constant threat.

Mali has seen a deep decline in civic space since the August 2020 and May 2021 coups. The transitional government led by Colonel Assimi Goïta has systematically restricted freedom of expression, political participation, and civil society. The combined use of decrees, legal instruments, and intimidation has

neutralised civic oversight. Civil society groups report that fear of reprisals has led many to cease public activity altogether.

- **Cybercrime Law (2019):** Law No. 2019-056 criminalises online expression deemed to “disturb public order”. HRDs and journalists have been prosecuted for social media posts critical of the regime. Human Rights Watch documents several cases where vague charges of “spreading false information” have been used to detain critics (HRW, 2023).
- **Media Bans and NGO Suspensions:** In 2022, the junta suspended France 24 and RFI after they reported on military abuses. It also banned all NGOs receiving French support (November 2022), directly impacting humanitarian assistance and civic actors (UN OHCHR, 2023).
- **Suppression of Political Dissent:** In 2024, the junta suspended all political party activity and media coverage of political debate. Arrests of political leaders and critics – including high-profile figures like Étienne Fakaba Sissoko and Oumar Mariko – have further stifled opposition (Amnesty International, 2024).
- **Human Rights Violations and Impunity:** Reports of torture, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearances have increased. The Moura massacre in March 2022, allegedly involving Malian and Wagner Group forces, remains uninvestigated despite calls by the UN and rights groups (FIDH, 2023).

Niger has seen sharp reversal in civic freedoms. The junta has quickly dismantled constitutional protections and revived repressive legal provisions. The crackdown has extended into all corners of civil life. Independent media outlets have been banned or brought under control. International NGOs have faced mounting restrictions. Human Rights Watch has warned that the junta’s use of “state security” charges is erasing civic space and eroding rights protections across the board (HRW, 2025).

- **Reinstating Repressive Cybercrime Laws:** Although the elected government had decriminalised defamation in 2022, the junta reversed this reform in June 2024, reinstating criminal penalties for “disturbing public order” online (FIDH, 2025).
- **Surveillance and Legalised Repression:** The 2020 Law on Interception of Communications (Law No. 2020-033) remains in force, enabling surveillance of activists. The junta has used this alongside emergency decrees to detain civil society figures and dissolve independent bodies like the Maison de la Presse (FIDH, 2025).
- **Use of “State Security” Charges:** Prominent political and civil society actors have been arrested under accusations of plotting against state authority. Former ministers, journalists, and even family members of former President Bazoum have been detained without due process, in violation of international law (Amnesty International, 2025).
- **Stripping of Citizenship and Statutory Bans:** New decrees empower authorities to strip individuals of nationality for alleged support of terrorism. At least 21 people were affected by this measure by the end of 2024 – a stark legal escalation with no clear procedural safeguards (FIDH, 2025).

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Annex 2:
Process Action Plan (PAP) for a development programme in Central Sahel

P360: 24/52107

	Action/product	Deadlines	Responsible/involved units	Comment/status
	The project/programme budget is inserted into the proposal for the Finance Act	February / March 2025	AFRPOL	Funding level (600 Mio. DKK for 3-4 years) Done
Identification				
	Process Action Plan for project/programme development up to the registering of commitments	Min. 14 months prior to the Minister's approval	AFRPOL in consultation with potential partners and Task Force	PAP to be updated at regular intervals Done
	Establishing a Task Force	17 January 2025	AFRPOL , Ouagadougou Bamako, Accra, LÆRING, TILSKUD, MULTI, HUMCIV	Invite relevant units in the Task Force to "sættemøde" Done
	Tentative budget frame decided	January 2025	AFRPOL/FL	Done
	Drafting of Identification Note	February-May 2025	AFRPOL and Task Force	Done
	West Africa (Embassies) meeting with AFRPOL on Identification Note	March 2025	AFRPOL, LEARNING and relevant embassies	Confirm direction/choices in Identification Note Done
	Task Force meeting on Identification Note	9 April 2025	AFRPOL and Task Force	Confirm direction/choices in Identification Note Done
	Call for expression of interest	June 2025	AFRPOL	Done
	Invitation of 3 consultants to bid for the tender	July 2025	AFRPOL	Done
	Evaluation of bids and selection of winner	July/ August 2025	AFRPOL	Done
Formulation, quality assurance and approval				
F1	Initiate development of Project/programme Document based on the Identification Note	August/September 2025	Consultant contracted in dialogue with AFRPOL	Done
F3	Meetings with stakeholders: Researchers, NGOs (Danish, international) UN, EU and other Donors	August/September	AFRPOL and consultant	Done

F4	Task Force meeting	2 September	AFRPOL & Task Force Consultants	
F5	SPA partner meeting	9 September	AFRPOL & Consultants	
F6.1	Draft Inception Note, including long-list of potential partners/interventions	22 September	Consultants	
F6.2	Incorporate initial Comments	26 September	AFRPOL & Consultants	
F6.3	Task Force meeting	29 September	AFROPOL & Task Force	
F7	Approved Inception Note	3 October	AFRPOL	
A1	Request for appraisal forwarded to LEARNING Draft TOR for appraisal	September 2025	Consultants with AFRPOL	
A2	Tendering for and contracting of appraisal consultants, including mobilisation period	October 2025	LEARNING, Ouagadougou, AFRPOL	One month mobilisation period
F8	Consultations with potential partners	September-November 2025	AFRPOL and consultants	ongoing
F9	Forward early draft of programme document to AFRPOL and LEARNING for consultation	5 November 2025	AFRPOL	An overall programme document (and not underlying project documents) will be presented in the programme committee.
F9.1	Comments on early draft PD	10 November 2025	AFRPOL to consultants	
F9.2	Submit second draft of program document	12 November 20	Consultants to AFROPOL	
F9.3	Submit final draft programme document and annexes	19. November COB	Consultants to AFRPOL	
F9.4	Internal process	20-21. internal review 21. COB: submit to management		
F9.5	Meeting to discuss programme document	25. November	AFRPOL and Consultants	
F9.6	Submit programme documents to the Programme Committee and public hearing	27 November 12:00	AFRPOL and LEARNING	
F10	Meeting in Programme Committee	9 December 2025	LEARNING and AFRPOL	
F12	Consolidated comments from Programme	16 December 2025	AFRPOL and LÆRING	

	Committee and public hearing			
F13	Finalisation of the programme document	12 January 2026	AFRPOL and consultants	Summary conclusions from the Programme Committee taken into account
F14	Finalisation of draft project documents and other underlying documentation developed (with partners)	12 January 2026	AFRPOL and consultants	
A3	Quality assurance: Appraisal (Desk/on-line)	January 2026	LEARNING	
A4	Draft Appraisal Report, including summary of conclusions and recommendations	13 st February 2026	LEARNING	
A5	Final appraisal report integrating comments from responsible unit and partner	23 February 2026	LEARNING	
F17	Technical Committee	February 2026	LEARNING/AFRPOL	
F15	Finalisation of Programme Document	February/March 2026	AFRPOL and consultants	
F16	Final Programme Document, annexes and appropriation cover note forwarded to LEARNING	15 March 2026	AFRPOL	
	Presentation for approval	April 2025	AFRPOL	
	The Minister approves the project	April 2026	AFRPOL	
Initial actions following the Minister's approval				
IA1	Grant proposals are published on Danida Transparency	After the Minister's approval (April)	LEARNING or AFRPOL??	
IA2	Specific projects to be signed with implementing partner(s)	May	AFRPOL	With implementing partners
IA4	Issue Call(s) for Proposal(s)	May	AFRPOL	
IA5	Register commitment(s) in MFA's financial systems within the planned quarter	After agreement(s) are signed	AFRPOL	
IA6	Communication Programme launch and SoMe, Initiate projects	Mid 2026	AFRPOL	With implementing partners
IA7	Inception review in context other regional programmes in WA	End of 2026	AFRPOL	Together with LEARNING

Annex 3: Project Summaries

Project title:	P1. Nordic Sahel Facility
Project responsible organisation:	Facility Secretariat / Fund Manager

	Overall project	Danish contribution
Implementation period	May 2026 – December 2029 (with possible extension)	May 2026 – December 2029 (with possible extension in a second phase)
Budget (Currency: Euro, USD or DKK)	Euro 50 million+	Euro 32 million
Geographic implementation area	Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (with fund management in Dakar)	Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

Objective:	To support democratic change agents in the region, prevent irregular migration and address root causes of instability and violent extremism.
Expected results (outcomes):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and promote democratic voices by supporting civil society, media and community actors, including youth- and women-led organisations. <i>This could for example include projects that strengthen local actors and enhance their capacity to engage effectively within the prevailing context, also in the digital sphere.</i> 2. Improve economic opportunities for urban and rural youth, including women's participation, entrepreneurship and strengthening of their skills and qualifications. <i>This could for example include youth and women entrepreneurship, strengthening financial services, including micro-finance, vocational training, job insertion, innovation labs, etc. Primarily within non-agricultural sectors.</i> 3. Strengthen rural communities in pursuing a peaceful, sustainable and more resilient use of natural resources. <i>This could for example include sustainable and climate smart intensification and diversification of agro-pastoral production systems, local economic development including strengthening of local professional associations, sustainable systems for land and water management, etc.</i> <p>A human rights-based approach will be applied across the three outcomes, which means that projects under the Nordic Sahel Facility may in many cases contribute to more than one of the facility outcomes.</p>

Project justification:	<p>The populations of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger face a complex, interlocking set of struggles driven by persistent insecurity, the effects of climate change, and weak governance. These factors contribute to a cycle of vulnerability, displacement, and food insecurity for people who primarily depend on agriculture and pastoralism for work and nutrition. Most rural regions face competition amongst populations for resources, and it exacerbates communal tensions, which armed groups are known to exploit. A substantial portion of the Central Sahel's population is living with severely curtailed freedom of expression. The combined pressures from repressive military regimes, extremist groups, and a general climate of fear have created a multifaceted crisis that affects nearly every individual's ability to speak freely, report on injustices, or access reliable information.</p> <p>Given the increasingly oppressing military regimes, the facility is a response to the continued need for support to democratic voices of civil societies, medias, and community actors. The programme also responds to the priorities of population in the three countries in Central Sahel facing increasing economic pressure due to low job creation unable to match the rapid growth of young people in urban and rural areas and a decreasing agricultural production because of the security situation, soil impoverishment and climate change. All this instability, insecurity and socioeconomic obstacles contribute to increased migration and can lead to people being attracted with armed groups and other illegal activity.</p> <p>This calls for an integrated, localised approach across development, humanitarian assistance, and peace and stabilisation efforts, including climate aspects where relevant.</p> <p>Gender inequality in the Central Sahel is a structural driver of vulnerability, reinforcing cycles of poverty, displacement, and exclusion. The region ranks among the lowest globally on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), with Niger at 171st, Mali at 164th, and Burkina Faso at 146th, reflecting high adolescent birth rates, low female educational attainment, and weak political representation. These disparities intersect with insecurity, limiting women's access to livelihoods, services, and decision-making, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas. Gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread and takes multiple forms, including sexual violence, early and forced marriage, and survival sex, often exacerbated by displacement and eroded community protection systems. Adolescent girls are especially vulnerable in blockaded areas and informal settlements. Legal protections are weak or poorly enforced, while medical, psychosocial, and legal support remains scarce. Social stigma deters reporting, further silencing survivors. Education and healthcare disruptions have deepened the gendered impacts of the crisis. Meanwhile, women's voices remain underrepresented in peacebuilding and governance processes. Addressing gender inequality is thus essential to building sustainable resilience across the Central Sahel.</p>
Short narrative project description:	<p>The Nordic Sahel Facility will constitute a technical and administrative hub for support channelled through Nordic NGOs to Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. On behalf of the participating (Nordic) donors, the facility will prepare and administer calls for proposals and provide overall monitoring and learning</p>

	<p>functions. A number of funding windows related to the three facility outcomes are envisaged under the facility, depending on the priorities of the funding donors. To the extent possible, this will include joint donor funding of specific funding windows. Budget size for projects supported is tentatively suggested to be around Euro 5-8 million with a duration of 2-3 years, with possibilities for extension.</p> <p>Calls for proposals should be formulated in cooperation between the donors funding the call and the facility. Calls are envisaged not to specified in too many details, allowing the applicant organisations to base their project proposals on their existing portfolio and individual experience with specific local partners. Direct support to government institutions will not be eligible for funding, and projects will therefore be focused on civic actors, media, the private sector and, possibly to some extent, decentralised or independent public institutions.</p> <p>Funding to CSO-managed projects could either be channelled through the facility in a fund management arrangement or be channelled directly from the donor organisation to the implementing partner.</p>
Justification for establishing a joint facility:	<p>This shared facility will enable participating Nordic countries to maintain an active engagement in the Central Sahel with a focus on communities and future generations utilising the entire resource base of civil society in all Nordic countries. This will provide opportunities for increased effectiveness, cross-learning and joint communication among the participating donor organisations. With no diplomatic representations in the three countries, the facility is placed in Dakar where the most Nordic embassies are accredited to the three countries.</p> <p>The facility will constitute a flexible implementation arrangement, which can adapt its calls to changes in the security and political context in the countries. Specific calls can quickly be launched responding to specific development in the situation. Other advantages of a joint facility include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared, joint analysis of the development of the situation among the participating donor organisations • Lower transaction and monitoring costs per project through shared monitoring arrangements and capacity, • Easing the administrative burden and cost for the participating embassies, • Proximity to information sources and knowledge about manoeuvre space in Central Sahel for the Facility Secretariat and Embassies, • Higher joint agility in terms of adaptability to scenario development in-country.

Major risks and risk mitigating measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security and human rights situation worsen. The development of the context will be monitored closely by the participating donor organisations with the use of the available knowledge partners in the three countries, in Dakar and in the Nordic countries. Furthermore, a conflict-sensitive approach will be required from the implementing CSOs. • Reputational risk by having even a minimal participation from governments, since governments would still need to approve cooperation projects. Mitigating measures include avoiding transfer of funds to government institutions, supplemented by attention to possible implementation involving governments. • Corruption and misuse of funds. Focus on financial management by the Fund Manager and introduction of remote monitoring tools in cases where supervision visits are not possible.
Management arrangements:	<p>The selection of the Facility Secretariat / Fund Manager is undertaken by Denmark through an EU tender process based on a budget appropriation in April 2026. The contract with the Fund Manager will include options for expansion and extension, depending on contributions from other donor organisations. It is envisaged that the contribution of other donor organisations to the Facility Secretariat / Fund Management is provided through Denmark.</p> <p>There are two possibilities for the flow of project funds: (1) The participating donor organisations can fund the CSOs selected through competitive call for proposals directly, with an agreement that the Facility Secretariat will undertake monitoring, or (2) the participating donor organisations can transfer all project funds to the Fund Manager, who will then be responsible for disbursements. The second option also includes an option of channelling funds through Denmark in a delegated partnership arrangement.</p> <p>An overall governance and oversight committee will be established with participation of the donor organisations (Dakar or central level), which will meet quarterly. Furthermore, a project steering committee with the implementing organisations, the Fund Manager and the donor organisations will be established for each project.</p>

Project title:	P2. Pro-ARIDES - Programme Agroalimentaire pour la Résilience Intégrée et le Développement Economique du Sahel
Project responsible organisation:	SNV (Lead) with its consortium partners: CARE-Netherlands, Wageningen University & Research (WUR), and The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

	Overall project	Danish contribution
Implementation period	Phase 1: from January 2021 to December 2025 Phase 2: from January 2026 to December 2030	The Danish funds from the Sahel Future Generations programme will contribute to the second phase of Pro-ARIDES (2026-2030). The implementation period of the Danish contribution will be 2026 - 2029.
Budget (Euro)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pro-ARIDES phase 1 and phase 2 funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Netherlands (€ 100 million) Danish contribution to Pro-ARIDES phase 1 (€ 5.4 million) 	<p>Total budget € 18 million.</p> <p>Estimated budget by year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2026: € 3 million 2027: € 7 million 2028: € 5 million 2029: € 3 million
Geographic implementation area	<p>In Burkina Faso, the <i>Bankui</i> Region (with the Province <i>Mouhoun</i>), the <i>Sourou</i> region with the Province <i>Sourou</i>), the <i>Nando</i> Region (with the provinces of <i>Sanguié</i> and <i>Boulkiemde</i>), the <i>Yaadga</i> region (with the provinces of <i>Passoré</i>, <i>Zondoma</i> and <i>Yatenga</i>) and the <i>Goulmou</i> Region (with the province of <i>Gourma</i>).</p> <p>In Mali, the <i>San</i> Region (with the Cercles of <i>Tominian</i> and <i>San</i>) and the <i>Bandiagara</i> Region (with the Cercles of <i>Koro</i> and <i>Bankass</i>).</p> <p>In Niger, the <i>Tillabéri</i> Region (with the departments of <i>Kollo</i>, <i>Say</i> and <i>Torodi</i>), <i>Dosso</i> Region (with the départements of <i>Tibiri</i>, <i>Dioundiou</i> and <i>Falmey</i>) and <i>Taboua</i> Region (with the departments of <i>Malbaza</i>, <i>Konni</i> and <i>Madaoua</i>).</p>	<p>The Danish contribution concerns the same region with an extension from 77 Communes to 83 Communes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burkina Faso: Extension into three new Communes. Mali: Extension into 68 villages of 17 existing Communes. Niger: Extension into three new Communes. <p>In addition to covering all 83 communes and expanding the outreach to 222 villages and 45,000 households, the Danish contribution will — as in Phase I — maintain the investment fund for local organizations and village communities, aimed at strengthening their resilience to climate change, enhancing food security, and improving livelihoods. It will also continue to support the feedback and complaint management mechanism. Additionally, the Danish contribution will support the integrated system for monitoring, research and learning to drive systemic change.</p>

Project objective:	Enable farming, pastoral and agropastoral households—including women and youth—in the Sudan–Sahelian zones of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to strengthen their resilience, improve food security and raise incomes. This will be achieved through better services, more inclusive local institutions, and fairer, more sustainable systems for managing natural resources.			
Expected results (outcomes):	The additional Danish funding will significantly strengthen the quality and impact of the programme across all its pathways (trajectories). The following table presents an initial estimate of the Danish contribution to key results of the project (not all results are included).			
	Outcomes	Initial	Danish contribution	Total Pro-ARIDES
	Trajectory 1 - Strengthening productive and nutritional autonomy through agrosilvo-pastoral practices and local support			
	APP households with higher production and net income	35,400	4,500	39,900
	Households adopting climate-resilient practices/technologies and diversifying crops and livestock	17,700	2,250	19,950
	Households with improved diets and nutrition security	17,700	2,250	19,950
	Trajectory 2 - Unlocking local entrepreneurship and building fairer economic relationships			
	Households (men, women and youth) with diversified income sources	17,700	2,250	19,950
	Viable and better-organised rural SMEs	125	5	130
	New jobs or self-employment opportunities with a growing share meeting decent work standards	380	15	395
	Trajectory 3 – Building legitimate local rules for resource management and conflict prevention			
	Households (men, women and youth) with recognised, secure land rights that they can actively exercise.	17,700	2,250	19,950
	Resource-related conflicts resolved peacefully each year	75%	75%	75%
	Trajectory 4 – Enhancing the agency of women, youth and marginalised groups			
	Decision-making positions held by women, youth and members of vulnerable groups in local institutions, producer organisations, SMEs and community structures	305	30	335

	<p>Households reporting expanded decision-making spaces for women and youth in production, consumption, investment and resource management 70,700 9,000 79,700</p> <p>Trajectory 5 – Building more effective and inclusive territorial governance</p> <p>Inclusive policies developed, revised or implemented at local level 230 20 250</p>
Project justification:	<p>The programme operates in a Sahelian context characterized by insecurity, tensions over natural resources, and the impacts of climate change. It builds on the resilience of Sahelian populations by supporting local dynamics and strengthening inclusive territorial governance.</p> <p>Trajectory 1 – Strengthening Productive and Nutritional Autonomy aims to enhance the self-sufficiency of agricultural, pastoral and agro-pastoral households through the promotion of agroecological practices and sustainable management of natural resources. By improving access to water, encouraging crop diversification and integrating local support services, it bolsters community resilience to climate change and contributes to food security. This trajectory also empowers young people as legitimate economic actors, reducing household vulnerability, social tensions and the risks of violent extremism, while offering better economic prospects to prevent irregular migration and political instability.</p> <p>Trajectory 2 – Economic Resilience seeks to strengthen the economic resilience of households and young entrepreneurs by combining entrepreneurial skills development, access to appropriate financing, and the structuring of a sustainable and inclusive local economic ecosystem. Young people and women benefit from training opportunities, rural business creation, and access to decent employment, thereby reducing their vulnerability to irregular migration or radicalisation.</p> <p>Trajectory 3 – Land Governance and Territorial Management of Natural Resources focuses on strengthening land tenure systems and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources (water, soil, and pastures). These efforts aim to reduce tensions and conflicts related to resource access, prevent community violence, and consolidate the foundations of security and trust essential for political and social stability. Planned actions include the participatory co-development of management tools, institutional strengthening of local structures, and inclusive mediation to prevent conflicts. This approach directly contributes to both climate and social resilience by addressing key drivers of violent extremism — poverty, social exclusion, unequal access to resources, and the marginalisation of youth and women.</p> <p>Trajectory 4 – Youth Empowerment and Participation reinforces the empowerment and participation of young people in local governance and economic bodies. The programme aims to increase the representation of youth and women in local decision-making positions and to promote their access to productive resources and markets.</p> <p>Trajectory 5 – Local Governance and Social Cohesion complements these efforts by strengthening local governance, social cohesion, and public accountability. It supports local authorities in planning and managing local resources, as well as in providing essential services to communities.</p>

Short narrative project description:	<p>The programme aims to strengthen resilience, food security, and livelihoods across the Sahel—specifically in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—by supporting effective decentralised institutions.</p> <p>It enhances community and environmental resilience through improved joint management of water and natural resources, thereby addressing the root causes of instability and violent extremism.</p> <p>In addition, a key pillar of the programme is to enhance the economic and social prospects of young people and women by promoting their inclusion in productive and decision-making systems. This contributes to preventing radicalisation, political destabilisation, and irregular migration.</p> <p>The implementation follows the following five trajectories of change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trajectory 1 – Strengthening productive and nutritional autonomy through agrosilvo- pastoral practices and local support• Trajectory 2 – Unlocking local entrepreneurship and building fairer economic relationships• Trajectory 3 – Building legitimate local rules for resource management and conflict prevention• Trajectory 4 – Enhancing the agency of women, youth and marginalised groups• Trajectory 5 – Building more effective and inclusive territorial governance																								
Local implementing partners and stakeholders:	<p>The programme is being implemented with the participation of twenty-three (23) local partners, including regional and national farmers' and pastoralists' umbrella organisations; local governments and research institutes in the three countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger).</p> <table><tr><th>Burkina Faso</th><th>Mali</th><th>Niger</th></tr><tr><td>1. Chambre Nationale d'Agriculture (CNA)</td><td>1. Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (CNOP)</td><td>1. Association pour la Redynamisation de l'Élevage au Niger (AREN)</td></tr><tr><td>2. Observatoire National du Foncier du Burkina Faso (ONF-BF)</td><td>2. Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel (AMAPROS)</td><td>2. Fédération des Coopératives Maraîchères du Niger (FCMN Niya)</td></tr><tr><td>3. Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles du Burkina Faso (FEPAB)</td><td>3. Agence de Développement Régional (ADR) de Ségou</td><td>3. ONG ADLI (ADLI)</td></tr><tr><td>4. Association Formation Développement Ruralité (AFDR)</td><td>4. Agence de Développement Régional (ADR) de Mopti</td><td>4. ONG GARKUA (GARGUA)</td></tr><tr><td>5. ONG Tin Tua (Tin Tua)</td><td>5. Near East Foundation (NEF)</td><td>5. Conseil Régional de Tahoua (CR Tahoua)</td></tr><tr><td>6. Institut de l'Environnement et des Recherches Agricoles (INERA)</td><td>6. Institut d'Économie Rurale (IER)</td><td>6. Conseil Régional de Tillabéry (CR Tillabéry)</td></tr><tr><td>7. Impact Research Institute (IRI)</td><td>7. Groupe ODYSSEE (GO)</td><td>7. Conseil Régional de Dosso (CR Dosso)</td></tr></table>	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	1. Chambre Nationale d'Agriculture (CNA)	1. Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes (CNOP)	1. Association pour la Redynamisation de l'Élevage au Niger (AREN)	2. Observatoire National du Foncier du Burkina Faso (ONF-BF)	2. Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel (AMAPROS)	2. Fédération des Coopératives Maraîchères du Niger (FCMN Niya)	3. Fédération des Professionnels Agricoles du Burkina Faso (FEPAB)	3. Agence de Développement Régional (ADR) de Ségou	3. ONG ADLI (ADLI)	4. Association Formation Développement Ruralité (AFDR)	4. Agence de Développement Régional (ADR) de Mopti	4. ONG GARKUA (GARGUA)	5. ONG Tin Tua (Tin Tua)	5. Near East Foundation (NEF)	5. Conseil Régional de Tahoua (CR Tahoua)	6. Institut de l'Environnement et des Recherches Agricoles (INERA)	6. Institut d'Économie Rurale (IER)	6. Conseil Régional de Tillabéry (CR Tillabéry)	7. Impact Research Institute (IRI)	7. Groupe ODYSSEE (GO)	7. Conseil Régional de Dosso (CR Dosso)
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			8. Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRAN)
			9. Laboratoire d'études et de recherche sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL Niger).
Justification for choice of implementing partners:	<p>The programme has entered into collaboration agreements with all local implementing partners and supporting partners and has secured the active participation of key stakeholders. These key stakeholders are considered to be the main drivers of the programme.</p> <p>Local implementing partners were selected in the first quarter of 2020 on the basis of their ownership of the programme and criteria relating to effectiveness, good management, scalability, sustainability and the programme's systemic change approach, with the intention of achieving mutually beneficial results in the programme's area of intervention.</p> <p>Support partners were selected in the first quarter of 2020 based on their capacity for knowledge management and action research, capacity building and conducting specific studies based on the programme's areas of work.</p> <p>These local implementation and support partners participated in the formulation of Phase I of the programme.</p> <p>The commitment of key local stakeholders is essential to the success of the Programme. These are regional, municipal and village organisations and institutions, the operational arms of the aforementioned local implementation partners, with whom Pro-ARIDES works. They lead the changes envisaged by the programme and are committed to monitoring the progress made.</p>		
Major risks and risk mitigating measures:	<p>The risks identified are political instability, flooding, and ongoing armed conflicts at the national, regional and international levels. Considering these contextual risks, the programme will continue to implement the mitigation and adaptation measures set out in its risk management plan, drawing on lessons learned. To minimise the risk of insecurity impacting human, material and financial resources, the programme has also adopted: 1) compliance with the security and safety management protocol in the implementation of the Pro-ARIDES programme, 2) the integration of conflict sensitivity into the Pro-ARIDES programme, 3) consultation with the authorities and other partners in the implementation of activities in areas of insecurity, 4) the development within the programme of a robust and sustainable strategy for the Endogenous Proximity Assistance Mechanism to ensure the programme's anchoring and sustainability in a context of insecurity, 5) the establishment of feedback and complaint management mechanisms, 6) Regular assessment of the context to measure risks, including through the possible use of specialised international organisations.</p>		

Partner description:	
Brief presentation of partner:	SNV is a global development organisation committed to a world where everyone can live with dignity and equal opportunities. Through our mission to strengthen local capacities and foster partnerships, we drive lasting transformation in agri-food, energy, and water systems. Our work goes beyond project delivery to achieve systemic, sustainable change. With over 1,600 staff—most from the countries where we operate—we work in more than 20 nations across Africa and Asia to create equitable and resilient futures.
Annual expenditures globally:	2023: Euro 160,200,000 2024: Euro 159,900,000 2025 (January – August): Euro 89,200,000
Annual expenditures in country:	2023: Euro 141,300,000 2024: Euro 141,500,000 2025 (January – August): Euro 76,400,000
Staffing in country/region:	Region West and Central Africa (WCA): Professional staff: (total and percentage female) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total headcount: 156 • % Female: 31% Administrative and support staff: (total and percentage female) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total headcount: 114 • % Female: 38%
Previous experience with Danida (Danish MFA or embassy):	Project name, location, duration and overall budget <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) II was a 31-months project implemented in Tanzania with a total budget of DKK 10M (EUR 1.34M). 2. The first top-up to the SIDA-funded MOPSS II programme was a one-year implementation project carried out across three cross-border areas spanning seven countries — Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Togo — with a total budget of DKK 10 million (EUR 1.34 million). 3. <i>Résilience Communautaire Dans le Secteur Agrosylvopastoral au Burkina Faso</i> (RESCOM) is a DKK 75M (EUR 10M) project running from August 2021 to December 2025 in the <i>Dédougou, Nord and Centre-Nord</i> regions of Burkina Faso. 4. <i>Actions Complémentaires Résilience Communautaire Dans le Secteur Agrosylvopastoral au Burkina Faso</i> (RESCOM) is a 2-year extension to the RESCOM project with an overall budget of DKK 22.5M (EUR 3M). 5. Top-up to the DGIS funded program Pro-ARIDES phase I is implemented in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger with a duration of 39 months (September 2022 – December 2025) and an overall budget of DKK 40M (EUR 5.4M). 6. The second top-up to the SIDA funded program MOPSS II is being implemented in three cross-border areas between seven countries – Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Togo – with a duration of 42 months (August 2025 – December 2028) and a total budget of DKK 50M (EUR 6.7M). 7. Green Mango for Better Livelihoods in Burkina Faso (DANIDA Green Business Partnerships) is a 36-months project running from April 2025 to March 2028, implemented in Burkina Faso with an overall budget of DKK 15M (EUR 2M).

P3: ECHO – FROM RELIEF TO RESILIENCE

Project title:	From Relief to Resilience: Danish Support to the Humanitarian–Development Nexus in Central Sahel
Project responsible organisation:	European Commission’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

	Overall ECHO project	Danish contribution
Implementation period	To be determined, with a start date around early or mid-2026	June 2026 – December 2029
Budget (Currency: Euro, USD or DKK)	To be determined	Total of DKK 90 million (EUR 12 million @ EUR 3 million /year. <i>A fee of 4% will be included in this amount for the management of the fund.</i>
Geographic implementation area	Central Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali)	Central Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali)

Project objective:	Enhanced self-sufficiency of populations affected by on-going humanitarian crisis and located in humanitarian priority areas in Central Sahel.
Expected results (outcomes):	Post-emergency assistance is provided to forcibly displaced people and those in blockaded areas focusing on livelihoods support and adaptation of basic social services.
Project justification including theory of change :	<p>As part of its field network, DG ECHO has active country offices in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, allowing both, a continuous analysis of the situation and the field management of the operations funded by DG ECHO in these three Central Sahel countries.</p> <p>The project envisaged in this document will allow the positive resumption of a concrete humanitarian-development Nexus approach in terms of resilience to forced displacement in the three countries, placing Denmark as the first EU Member State initiating this Team Europe approach, implemented through the External Assigned Revenues modality offered by DG ECHO. This Team Europe approach offers the space to leverage the added value of each of the parties involved, from the willingness to continue providing assistance to the population in the region by EU MS, and in this case, Denmark, and the presence and operational flexibility of DG ECHO.</p> <p>The three central Sahel countries have been impacted by conflict for the past decade, which led to the growth of humanitarian needs in these countries, but also a spill-over of the crisis to the Gulf of Guinea and a displacement crisis in Mauritania. In this scenario, the central Sahel crisis is among the fastest growing humanitarian crises across the globe, with around 14.9 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2025. The most affected groups remain those directly impacted by conflict, including populations stranded in conflict areas – particularly those in blockaded settlements and impacted by inaccessibility to agricultural land or livestock – and those affected by continuous displacement.</p> <p>Displacement is a crucial dynamic in the area. In the region, 4.3 million people are forcibly displaced, of which 400 000 individuals are refugees and 4.3 million are internally displaced (IDP). Crucial needs of these groups remain uncovered in key aspects, including food and nutrition, shelter, protection and shelter as well as access to basic services. The lean season</p>

	<p>of 2025 left 6 million people needing emergency food assistance, and the malnutrition situation also remained worrying with more than one million children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition in the three countries. In the medium term, the lack of livelihood opportunities is a major challenge for displaced populations. Basic social services are also strained. Public infrastructure is under attack and under pressure in areas of arrival due to increased number of citizens accessing them, if they remain functional, creating in turn tension with host communities who are indirectly affected by conflict too. Health, education and WASH services and infrastructure are weak and access to these fundamental benefits is simply lacking.</p> <p>The response of the humanitarian actors is implemented through flexible and rapid response mechanisms. In a very volatile humanitarian situation, these mechanisms aim to provide three months multisectoral assistance to population newly displaced. While relevant and well adapted to the humanitarian context, the rapid response mechanisms can only cope with the high-level of immediate humanitarian needs.</p> <p>Due to the persistent insecurity and protracted nature of the crisis, displaced people tend to stay in areas of arrival – which tend to be urban or peri-urban areas – for an extended period of time. While urgent needs can be covered, a gap in assistance to enable early recovery and self-sufficiency of the population affected by the crisis remains. Under these circumstances, efforts to find longer-term solutions after displacement and for those in blocked areas remains a priority, with a specific focus on assistance (1) to livelihoods to lessen the reliance on humanitarian assistance and (2) to the adaptation of basic social services to alleviate the pressure they are facing .</p> <p>Experience by DG ECHO in similar contexts (ex: Colombia, Myanmar) show that the integration of a nexus approach in the response to forced displacement and assistance to the population living in blockaded areas creates positive conditions to enhance self-sufficiency of the population assisted.</p>
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**Short narrative
project description:**

Pressing humanitarian needs continue, and while so will humanitarian assistance, a continuum of support is needed. Follow-up actions are necessary to contribute to fill the gaps on resilience programming. The main objective of this project is to support affected populations to go from relief to resilience by implementing a concrete approach to Nexus that bridges humanitarian assistance with early recovery and development programming. The specific aim of the action foreseen is to assist the affected population to regain a minimum of self-sufficiency.

In order to do so, the focus would stay in the two aforementioned priorities in terms of needs: support to livelihoods and to basic service delivery. Under these two possible lines of assistance, specific activities could be projected.

On livelihoods, a holistic package of activities from the rehabilitation of productive assets to the technical training on agricultural activities, accompanied the delivery of agricultural inputs and capacity-building on conservation of agricultural products could be implemented. Similar activities to support emergency livelihoods in relation to livestock – support to reconstitute minimal livestock and technical training – could also be part of the project. To the extent possible, these will include a strong coordination with relevant, decentralised national services. Activities on social cohesion would be added as required. Awareness-raising sessions among communities linked with the revitalisation of community frameworks for an enhanced collaborative management of community resources can be integrated.

Basic social services can also offer another avenue of work. This could be ranging from simple rehabilitation of water supply and sanitation systems, along with strengthened community water committees, to adapt and support health and education services in areas under pressure hosting a large number of internally displaced people from which could benefit new, protracted displaced villages and host communities.

Building on the short term humanitarian response, this project will be based on a flexible manner that can translate into an incremental approach to adapt to the evolving context of each of the regions of implementation, with the possibility to scale up, extend or withdraw, according to the operational environment and evolving priorities.

This project offers the possibility to enhance the resilience of communities targeted, building on the humanitarian assistance provided. The aim of the project is to start supporting households with not only short-term assistance but also medium-term aid, enabling gradual gains on their self-reliance. Thus, the overall caseload of people completely reliant on humanitarian assistance could be reduced so that a certain number of people are not dependent on it in the long-term.

A specific intervention logic will be elaborated for this project, defining the expected outputs from the joint EU and Denmark strategic and operational priorities to be considered under this project.

**Local implementing
partners and
stakeholders:**

- **Burkina Faso:** 12 partners/operations (6 NGOs, 4 UN, 2 Red Cross) in 2023; 19 partners/operations (11 NGOs, 6 UN, 2 Red Cross) in 2024 and 19 partners/operations (13 NGOs, 3 UN, 3 Red Cross) in 2025.
- **Mali:** 21 partners / operations (15 NGOs, 3 UN, 3 Red Cross); 25 partners/operation (20 NGOs, 3 UN, 2 Red Cross) in 2024 and 18 partners/operations (13 NGOs, 5 UN, 2 Red Cross) supported in 2025.
- **Niger:** 15 partners/operations (12 NGOs and 3 UN) in 2023; 23 partners/operations (17 NGOs, 3 UN, 3 Red Cross) in 2024 and 26 partners/operations (18 NGOs, 5 UN, 3 Red Cross) in 2025

**Justification for
choice of
implementing
partners:**

- Eligibility criteria: Potential implementing partners are those who are eligible to receive EU humanitarian funding [Humanitarian partners - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations](#)

- Projects selection criteria: Actions and partners are selected for funding in the framework of the annual Humanitarian Implementation Plans (HIP), according to criteria indicated in annual funding decision. The criteria used include relevance of the action; capacity and expertise; methodology and feasibility; coordination and transparency and cost and efficiency. Specific selection criteria can be decided for the operation, in close coordination with Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Major risks and risk The major risks include:

- mitigating measures:**
- Operational constraints, in particular access/humanitarian space/humanitarian security risk management; the presence, capacity, including absorption capacity on the ground of the implementing partners; logistics. As mitigating measures, specific operational considerations are indicated in the HIP (*possibility to add the 2026 HIP for West and Central Africa as an annex to the project*)
 - Administrative and funding management risks also exist and can be faced by DG ECHO partners, and these risks include financial risks during the implementation of the action, related to the misuse of allocated funds. These can include allegations on aid diversion, fraud or PSEAH. In order to ensure [accountability](#) and transparency on the use of European aid funds, DG ECHO has set in place strong measures. DG ECHO is regularly subject to annual reviews of procedures and can be subject to audits; similarly, DG ECHO conducts audits to partners to ensure a correct use of the grants and also to provide recommendations to improve the financial management by partners. Moreover, DG ECHO has internal regulations and partnerships with humanitarian organisations include provisions on ethics and consider integrity essential. Possible cases of misconduct, mismanagement or fraud related to ECHO-funded actions, partners or staff are expected to be reported by partners to DG ECHO (zero tolerance policy) and these will be treated in confidentiality in order to protect the rights of those involved and the privacy of the informants.

Management arrangements:

Implementation follows the same modus operandi and hence offers the same guarantees as for the EU budget in full compliance with the EU Humanitarian Aid Regulation and the EU Financial Regulation. Member State funding notably benefits from the strong presence in the field to ensure monitoring and oversight.

Any funding received is integrated in the DG ECHO control strategy, including audits and anti-fraud mechanisms, visibility obligation in order to provide the identical assurance on the proper use of the funds allocated. MEU MS receive the reporting on the funded actions.

Partner description:

Brief presentation of partner: Providing assistance to those most in need is a common work, for which DG ECHO collaborated with about 200 partner organizations. The diverse range of them allows for a comprehensive coverage in the most complex situations due to the different added values of humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, the Red Cross family and specialized agencies from EU Member States. While DG ECHO is only allowed to contractually with international partners, DG ECHO is contributing to the implementation of the localisation agenda and strongly encourages partners to develop, in turn, partnerships with local and national organization in the countries of implementation.

DG ECHO also has a large network of humanitarian experts, which covers the three countries in central Sahel, with offices in Bamako, Ouagadougou and Niamey. These three country offices are supported by a regional office in Dakar, leading a field network combining expertise in terms of local situation analysis and of technical solutions to be implemented in the response to be provided. This presence – which expands to the entirety of the countries via monitoring visits – enables for an updated analysis and overview of the humanitarian needs and situation, feeding into concrete intervention strategies. Moreover, close monitoring of relief operations is carried out by staff based in the countries, implementing yearly visits to projects and ensuring too technical support to partners whoever necessary.

DG ECHO's presence in the countries allows as well for the participation in coordination fora within the overall humanitarian community and in coordination among donors, interaction with relevant governmental bodies at operational level. The coordination with donors and other key stakeholders can also be facilitated by DG ECHO's regional office based in Dakar, and close cooperation with the Danish representation in Senegal can be guaranteed.

Annual expenditures globally: 2023: EUR 1.7 billion, with EUR 513 million to Sub-Saharan Africa.
2024: EUR 1.8 billion, with EUR 546 million to Sub-Saharan Africa.
(currency) 2025: EUR 1.9 billion, with EUR 545 million to Sub-Saharan Africa.

Annual expenditures in Central Sahel countries: 2023: EUR 119 million
2024: EUR 112.5 million
2025: EUR 102.8 million

(currency) *** to note that the figures refer to the three Central Sahel countries.

Staffing in country/region: DG ECHO has country office in all three countries of the central Sahel, based in Bamako, Niamey and Ouagadougou composed by both programmatic and administrative staff. In addition, DG ECHO's regional office for West and Central Africa, in Dakar, benefits from the presence of thematic experts in different sectors as well as other staff supporting the office itself and all the country offices in the region.

All operations are supervised by dedicated operational desk officers and financial officers in DG ECHO headquarters in Brussels.

Previous experience with Danida (Danish MFA or embassy): Non applicable.