

12 December 2025

1 The Danish Institute for Human Rights' hearing response to Sahel Future Generations Programme (SFGP) 2026-2029

First and foremost, it is commendable that Denmark remains engaged in the Sahel, not only through humanitarian assistance but also through long-term development assistance.

The overall objective - "to support democratic change agents in the region, prevent irregular migration, and address root causes of instability and violent extremism" - as well as the three Strategic Objectives (Democratic Voices, Economic Opportunities, and Resilient Communities) are highly relevant to the context and consistent with Denmark's engagement in the region. A reference to the strong and long-standing contributions by Danish organisations in the Sahel would be beneficial, as it would underline Denmark's broad and sustained focus on the region over decades.

From the Institute's perspective, we particularly welcome the emphasis on a human rights-based approach, gender equality, and on vulnerable groups, such as youth with limited access to employment.

We also appreciate the focus on complementarity between SFGP and Denmark's other engagements in West Africa, such as the Peace and Stabilisation Programme for West Africa, in which the Institute is a partner.

The programme's flexibility and four-year duration are strong advantages.

Key Recommendations

1. Maintain Danish Visibility and Bilateral Profile

A significant share of funding is earmarked for non-Danish partners. Since maintaining positive visibility for Denmark is a stated goal, we recommend allocating more resources to the Nordic Sahel Facility. This would strengthen the programme's bilateral profile and draw on Danish expertise, proven results, and long-standing partnerships, including with local organisations.

2. Deepen Human Rights Components

While we welcome the focus on democratic values and human rights, we recommend a stronger emphasis on the resilience of local human rights actors, organisations, and

defenders. These actors operate in extremely challenging contexts, under intense pressure, and often with minimal security training and capacity. If these voices are to survive, they need targeted support.

The Nordic Sahel Facility's ability to localise and empower human rights actors will be critical for success - especially given the absence of Danish or Nordic embassies in the region. The local knowledge, outreach, and networks of the fund manager and other international organisations will therefore be essential.

Moreover, human rights should not only be central to the Nordic Sahel Facility but integrated across all components of the programme. They are key when addressing migration, economic development, community resilience, and preventing violent extremism.

3. Eligibility of NHRIs

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in Mali and Burkina Faso are local actors that actively monitor the human rights situation, engage with civil society, and maintain dialogue with authorities at both local and national levels. They promote and protect human rights and support victims, survivors, and defenders. Mali's NHRI has maintained its A-status under the Paris Principles, and Burkina Faso's NHRI is aiming for A-accreditation in November 2026. Both institutions have demonstrated resilience, expertise, and legitimacy—an impressive achievement in the current context.

We recommend allowing not only CSOs but also independent institutions such as NHRIs to be eligible to apply under the Nordic Sahel Facility's Call for Proposals.

4. Strengthen Localisation

We recommend adding explicit provisions for safeguarding, risk mitigation, and long-term capacity strengthening of local partners, in line with MFA's commitment to localisation and equal partnerships.

The SFGP document should reinforce the focus on equal partnerships with local partners in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to ensure that their priorities and needs assessments form the basis of support—for example, through the Nordic Sahel Facility.