



Bridging the Gaps



25 YEARS OF SAVING LIVES

RET ALLIANCE
2025 GLOBAL REPORT

WHO WE ARE

In a world where crises and conflicts disrupt millions of lives, RET stands as a beacon of hope and transformation.

Founded in 2000, we have spent the past quarter century supporting communities afflicted by violence, armed conflicts, and disasters. Our journey spans 35 countries and more than 460 projects, positively impacting the lives of over 2.5 million individuals.

Our approach is holistic and community centered. We engage with adolescents, youth, young mothers, and families in refugee camps, as well as displaced communities in both urban and rural settings. By providing critical protection and education programs, we bridge gaps and promote resilience, empowerment, and community transformation.

We believe that young people are not merely beneficiaries but partners and future leaders of their communities. Our commitment extends beyond immediate relief.

We focus on building the capacity of youth to be positive changemakers and eliminate communities' dependency on aid. This includes formal and non-formal educational initiatives, as well as programs in food security, nutrition, economic empowerment, and entrepreneurship



LETTER FROM THE CEO

A Mission that Matters More than Ever



Zeynep G. Gündüz
President & CEO

Dear friends of RET,

Looking back on 2025, our organization and indeed our world have undergone tremendous change. This past year tested the humanitarian sector in ways none of us could have anticipated. Funding streams shrank, global attention shifted abruptly from one crisis to another, and organizations everywhere were forced to make difficult decisions. RET was no exception. We navigated project closures, tightened budgets, and shifting political landscapes, all while the needs of the communities we serve continued to grow.

And yet, through this uncertainty, one truth remained constant: **Our mission matters as much today as it did when we were founded 25 years ago.**

In 2025, we proudly commemorated a quarter century of saving lives and changing lives. Since our founding in 2000 by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, RET has stood alongside young people, women, and displaced communities facing the most difficult moments of their lives. Mrs. Ogata believed that education should be a promise, not dream; that it is also a powerful form of protection; and that it represents opportunity and is a catalyst for positive change. This mentality continues to shape every one of our programs. As we mark 25 years of service, we honor her legacy by renewing our commitment to education in its broadest sense: Learning as safety, learning as healing, learning as a pathway to livelihoods and leadership.

Looking ahead, we know the humanitarian environment will not become easier. That is why, in 2025, we finalized a five

year business development strategy designed not only to stabilize RET and the Alliance, but to strengthen us for the years to come. This strategy expands our donor base, deepens our multi year programming, invests in local leadership, and positions RET to remain a trusted partner in the world's most fragile contexts.

Even in a challenging year, we secured important new opportunities that will shape RET's future impact. New projects were awarded in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Mauritania, Panama, and Türkiye. These are countries where our presence is critical to community resilience and where our teams continue to deliver exceptional, life changing work.

As we close our 25th year and look toward the next 25, I remain deeply grateful for our staff, our partners, our donors, and the communities who trust us to walk beside them.

Together, we will continue to save lives, change lives, and build a world where every young person has the opportunity to thrive.

With gratitude and determination,

Zeynep G. Gündüz
President & CEO



1 in 70

**People globally
are forcibly
displaced,
around 117M**



14

**Countries
where RET was
active in 2025**



WHERE WE WORK

Since 2000, RET has supported communities affected by violence, armed conflicts, and disasters.

RET HQ Offices

Berlin
Geneva
Washington, D.C.

Regional Offices

Ankara
Panama City



Germany

Switzerland

Türkiye

Lebanon

Mali

Mauritania

Niger

Nigeria

D.R. Congo

Burundi

25

Years of humanitarian
impact across 35 countries



RET's story began with the vision of Mrs. Sadako Ogata, whose life's work reshaped what humanitarian protection could mean.

As UN High Commissioner for Refugees from 1991–2000, she championed the idea that people fleeing conflict needed more than safety. They needed dignity, opportunity, and a future. **Her conviction that education protects, empowers, and strengthens communities became the foundation on which RET was built.**

From the earliest conversations between Mrs. Ogata and founding board member Mrs. Françoise Demole, RET was envisioned as an organization that would stand with young people caught in crisis, supporting them in emergencies and until they were stable enough to no longer need support. That founding commitment to lasting solutions still guides us today.

Over the past quarter century, RET has grown from the Refugee Education Trust into an alliance of international organizations – a natural evolution of Mrs. Ogata's belief that education is far more than schooling. It is protection, stability, and a pathway to self reliance.

Across our work, one truth has remained constant: The people we serve are not the crisis. They are its survivors, its leaders, and often its most powerful problem solvers. Their courage and determination continue to shape our programs and our purpose.

Today, RET's work is rooted in the messaging pillars that reflect our history and our future:

- **Saving lives and changing lives** – being present in emergencies, where protection cannot wait, and supporting long-term opportunities that lift families and communities.
- **Education as protection** – Echoing Mrs. Ogata's belief that learning keeps young people safe.
- **Education in the broadest sense** – Life skills, livelihoods, leadership, and the tools to rebuild.

As we mark 25 years of service, we honor Mrs. Ogata's legacy by carrying her mission forward: Standing with displaced youth and communities, protecting their rights, and helping unlock the futures they choose for themselves.



LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Consolidating Impact in a Year of Upheaval

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, we were forced to make sharper choices. Funding constraints, rising migration flows, and weakening public systems meant that doing “everything everywhere” was neither possible nor strategic.

Instead, we focused on protecting children and adolescents in high risk mobility corridors, strengthening inclusive education systems, and reinforcing cross border responses where institutional gaps widened.

21M

**Displaced
people across
the region in
2025**



In Panama, we concentrated on safeguarding children and adolescents moving through the Darién, which continues to be one of the world's most dangerous migration routes. Rather than expand geographic coverage, we invested in higher quality, UNICEF supported child protection services, safe spaces, gender-based violence (GBV) mitigation, and case management for unaccompanied and separated minors. These decisions deepened our role as one of the few actors able to operate consistently across reception stations and host communities. We also maintained a leadership presence in national anti trafficking fora, ensuring that frontline insights informed government responses.

In Costa Rica, we adjusted to a difficult human rights climate and retrenched public services by prioritizing institutional partnerships over program expansion. With the INL funded Hacete Escuchar program concluding in 2025, the team shifted toward inter institutional

GBV prevention capacity building, helping municipalities and national partners maintain protection standards despite shrinking state attention. This was a year of consolidation, where we chose to maintain influence rather than dilute impact.

Farther south, in Ecuador, where insecurity and school desertion surged, we focused on system level resilience. Through the *EstudiANDO* (Studying) Multi-Year Resilience Program, made possible by Education Cannot Wait, we led a national consortium to reintegrate out of school Venezuelan and Ecuadorian children, embed inclusive pedagogical practices, and help the Ministry of Education respond to a record number of learning interruptions.

Over 6,086 out of school children were identified and 3,751 reintegrated in 2025. To learn more about our impact, read the story of Jhondervi, a child supported in his academic reintegration.

JHONDERVI'S STORY



In Ecuador, our program *EstudiANDO* is making an impact. Jhondervi's story is just one example.

Jhondervi fled Venezuela as an infant, growing up in Ecuador facing constant barriers to staying in school. Through *EstudiANDO*, a Multi-Year Resilience Program made possible by Education Cannot Wait, he finally accessed the textbooks, school supplies, and emotional encouragement he needed to re enter the classroom and thrive.

Today, he is not only back in school but excited about learning and hopeful about his future. His story shows how a single opportunity can transform a young person's path, restoring dignity, stability, and the chance to dream again.

In Peru, where displacement and inequality continued to disrupt learning, we strengthened migrant teacher and remedial learning models instead of expanding to new regions. Through *Aprender Sin Barreras* (Learning Without Barriers), our Multi-Year Resilience Program made possible by Education Cannot Wait, we re-launched *DIVERTICLASES* and helped thousands of students recover foundational skills, with 76% demonstrating improved competencies in math and communication.

Meanwhile in Venezuela, we maintained essential GBV protection and women's leadership initiatives, prioritizing communities where institutional services continued to erode. We also continued to protect the communities that need it most, forge and strengthen relationships with local civil society, and ensure that we can continue operating – uninterrupted – where people need us most.

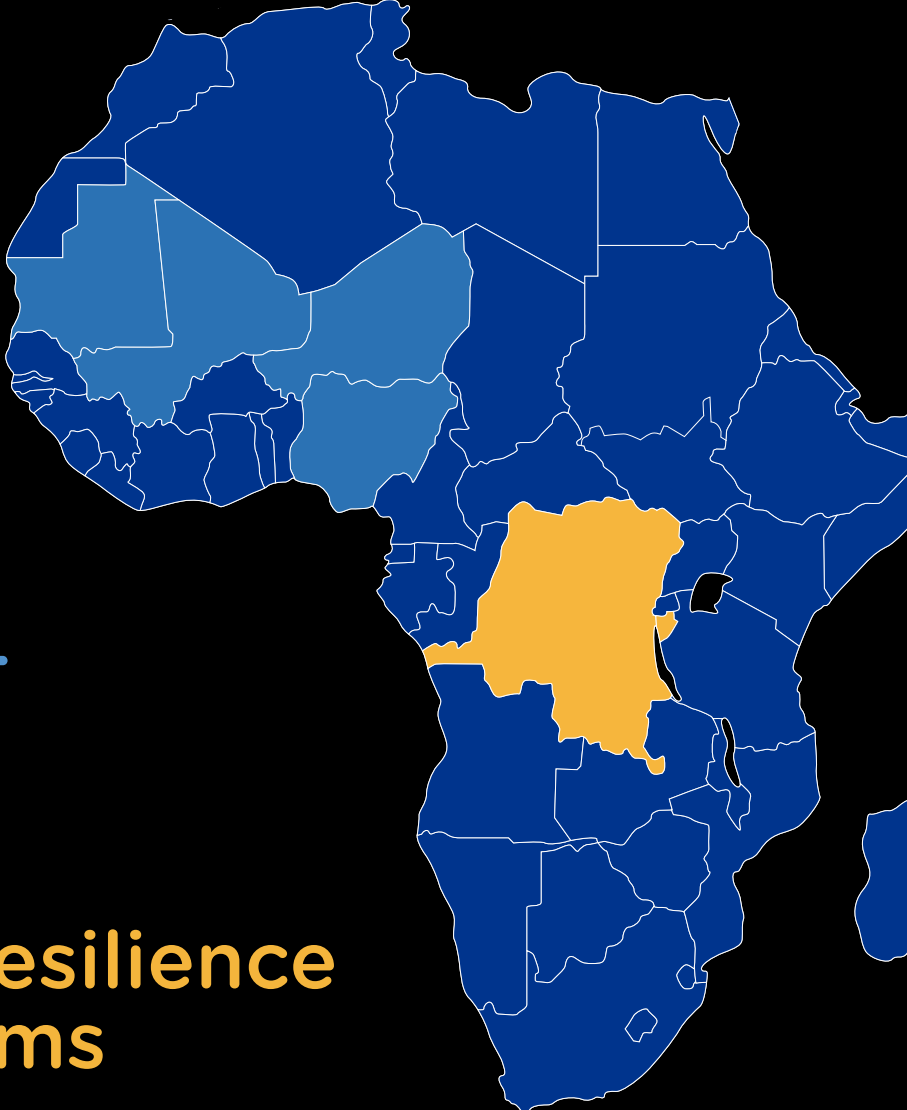


CENTRAL AFRICA

Strengthening Inclusion and Resilience in Fragile Systems

In 2025, our work in Central Africa in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R. Congo) was defined by a deliberate move toward inclusive education systems and resilient community structures, even as both contexts experienced volatility, economic shocks, and surging protection needs.

Rather than expand geographically, we prioritized deepening support in communities where state systems were stretched thin and local capacities could be strengthened sustainably.



7M

**Internally
displaced in
D.R. Congo –
200,000 more
than 2024**



In Burundi, our choices centered on reducing barriers to education, especially for children historically left out of formal schooling.

In Kayogoro, our large scale distribution of learning materials ensured that rural classrooms, which often overcrowded and under-resourced, could continue functioning despite national shortages.

We also invested in inclusive pathways for children with disabilities and albino students, groups who routinely face exclusion both socially and structurally. We highlighted how targeted support (adaptive materials, sensitization efforts, and work with school leadership) helped increase enrollment and shift community attitudes toward belonging and protection.

While the country still suffers from high inflation, limited teacher capacity, and widespread classroom overcrowding, we reinforced school-based clubs, adolescent well-being programs, and reintegration support for adolescent mothers, reaching over 81,000 learners through UNICEF and ENABEL supported initiatives. These decisions aligned with national education priorities while addressing acute protection risks.

In D.R. Congo, we marked a pivotal transition year. After RET Germany's successful completion of a four-year BMZ-funded resilience project in August, we left communities with reinforced agricultural cooperatives, Village Peace Committees (CVPs), and nutrition sensitive farming systems. This will empower them to withstand shocks in conflict affected Ituri and North Kivu, as well as resolve local disputes before they spiral into larger conflict.

HOW KAUMBI BECAME SELF-RELIANT



In D.R. Congo, Kaumbi transformed her life through RET Germany's agriculture program. Once struggling to support her children, she learned to cultivate and manage her own crops, gaining the confidence and income she needed to stand on her own.

With new skills, tools, and training, she now grows enough to feed her family and sell in the local market, allowing her to pay school fees and plan for the future. Her journey shows how practical livelihood support can strengthen resilience, restore dignity, and open a path to true self reliance.

By late 2025, we launched a new program funded by the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) to continue strengthening resilience in communities where conflict undermines daily life.

The new program will build on the trust generated through the BMZ project's 99% overall achievement rate and focus on demobilizing youth – especially girls – in eastern D.R. Congo and making steps towards ending a protracted crisis that has displaced millions.

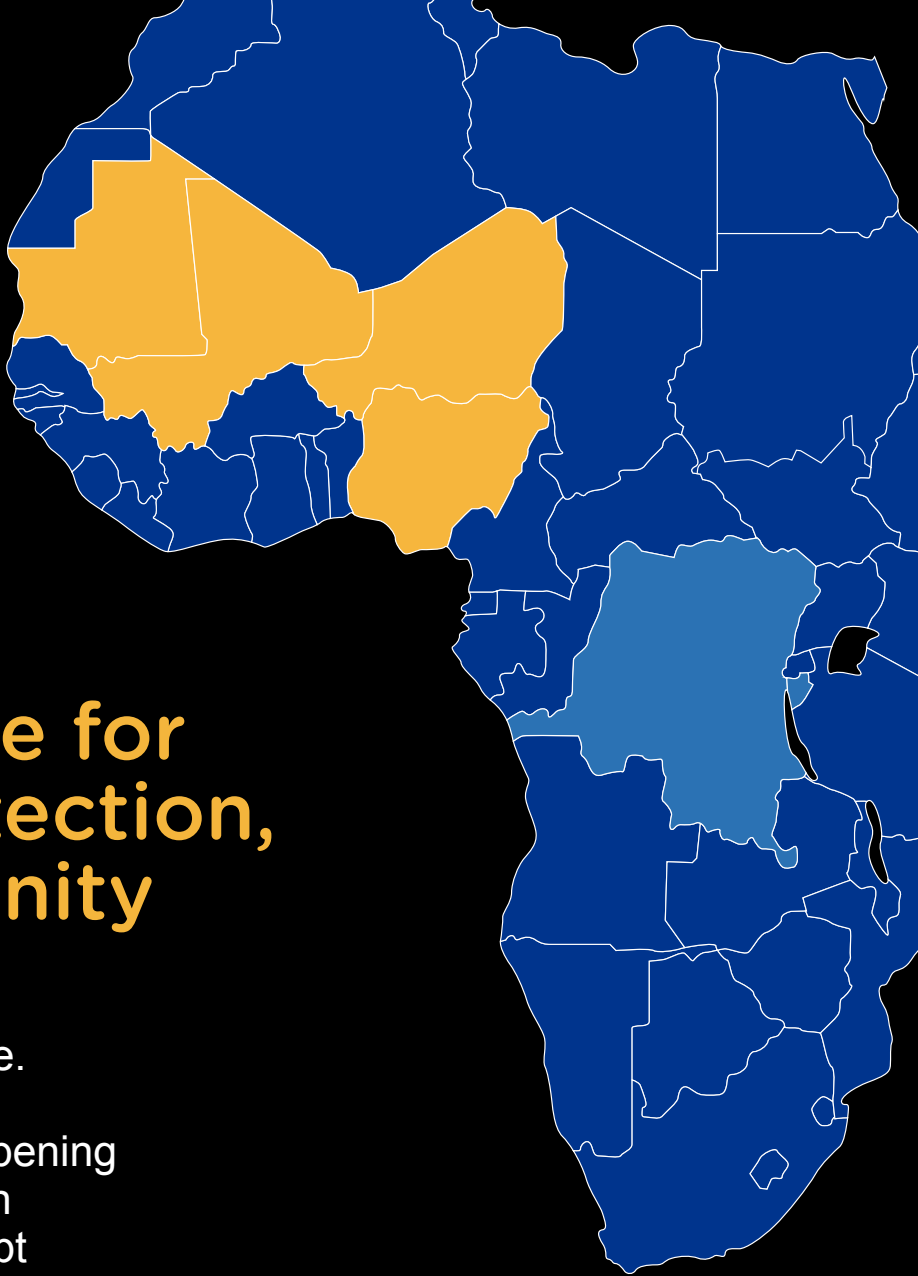


THE SAHEL

Holding the Line for Education, Protection, and Human Dignity

Across the Sahel, 2025 was a defining year for the RET Alliance. As international attention shifted elsewhere, the region faced deepening insecurity, shrinking humanitarian space, climate shocks, and abrupt funding cuts. Our long standing mandate to ensure that displacement never erases a young person's right to learn became more urgent than ever.

Our work across Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria reflects a deliberate strategy: Protect education systems, reinforce communities, and create pathways to stability where few remain. Here's a snapshot of what we achieved.



5.6M

**Forcibly
displaced in
the Sahel at
the end of 2025**



In Mauritania, funding was abruptly reduced at the beginning of the year, and our team in Mauritania made a decisive shift: Stabilizing communities first so education can continue. Food and nutrition assistance for 100,000 refugees and host families, delivered through cash transfers and secure distributions through the World Food Programme (WFP) helped prevent negative coping strategies and protected children from dropping out of school.

At M'Bera refugee camp, the Écoles Modernes initiative, funded by WFP, advanced our original mandate. We integrated school feeding, agroecology training, water/ sanitation/ health (WASH), and clean energy solutions, including a school garden covering 20–30% of meal needs and agro business training for 300 learners. This is education as protection. By keeping children in school, we can strengthen community resilience.

Meanwhile in Mali, RET Germany closed its first major, multi-year, BMZ funded project in the country, an achievement of scale and significance.

Over 5,800 youth gained agricultural and artisanal skills, including agro ecology, food processing, solar installation, plumbing, masonry, and repair trades. This is education in the broadest sense: Equipping youth to earn a living, reduce recruitment risks, and rebuild local economies.

The project also strengthened 25 cooperatives, advanced social cohesion initiatives, and delivered community peace actions and demonstrated our ability to change lives by linking livelihoods to peace and community transformation.

Soumaïla's Story



In Mali's Ségou region, Soumaïla transformed his harvests and his confidence through RET's climate adaptive agriculture training. He grew up farming with traditional methods, but poor yields left his family vulnerable.

After learning new techniques such as seed selection, soil preparation, and the use of natural biopesticides, his production improved dramatically. Today, Soumaïla applies a blend of ancestral knowledge and modern practices, resulting in healthier crops and greater food security for his household.

His story shows how practical training can strengthen resilience and create new opportunities for young farmers.

Across Maradi, Agadez, Tillaberia, and Diffa in Niger,

we reinforced community-based protection systems for 31,938 direct beneficiaries, including survivors of GBV, at-risk children, refugees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

We delivered case management, dignity kits, psychosocial support, child friendly spaces, and extensive community sensitization. This is core to saving lives in a region marked by abductions, trafficking, and conflict.

In Diffa, RET supported over 5,800 farmers, strengthened 23 savings groups, expanded

climate smart agriculture, and improved household food security – demonstrating how livelihoods and protection work hand in hand.

Through the ongoing Niger–Nigeria cross-border BMZ-funded project, we – along with several local NGOs and partners – established 10 farmer field schools, restored 150 hectares, and created 30 mediation committees, embedding peacebuilding in daily community life.

In Katsina State in Nigeria, RET

Germany and local partner CCDRN focused on stabilizing households and preparing for scale. Around 520 youth and women received cash assistance that jump started or protected their businesses, followed by structured business training.

Four vocational centers were rehabilitated, eight market driven trades introduced, and government partners cofinanced infrastructure – proof of strong local ownership.

Under food security, we worked with the state irrigation authority to prepare land reclamation plans for climate resilient agriculture.

Peacebuilding efforts strengthened 12 conflict mediation structures and trained 42 community leaders in dialogue and early warning.

Across the Sahel, our strategy was clear:

- Anchor education as protection, even when survival needs dominate.
- Save lives through nutrition, cash, and protection services.
- Change lives through vocational, agricultural, and climate smart livelihoods training.

In one of the world's most volatile regions, we remained exactly where our mandate demands: Alongside displaced and vulnerable youth, ensuring their futures remain bright.





MIDDLE EAST & ASIA

Urgency, Protection, and the Fight to Keep Education Alive

In 2025, Lebanon and Türkiye found themselves at the epicenter of overlapping crises: Escalating regional violence, a surge in returns of Syrians to a still fragile Syria and mounting social pressures threatening the stability of host communities.

In this environment, our presence remained lifesaving, protection centered, and anchored in our founding mandate: Ensuring that refugee youth, no matter the crisis, have the right to learn, grow, and build a future.

1.3M

**Refugees
returned to
Syria in 2025**



In Lebanon, the Akkar Governorate entered the year among the most vulnerable regions, facing deep strain on food security, livelihoods, and social cohesion, with refugees, women, and people with disabilities least equipped to absorb further shocks.

At the same time, pressure on host communities in Northern Lebanon continued to mount, as competition over scarce resources tested relations between Lebanese residents and refugees sheltering among them, straining the social cohesion this project aims to protect.

In this environment, RET Germany's work in Akkar, through GATE Lebanon and with BMZ funding, grew more urgent. Seven Project Management Units were established, hosted at the Union of municipalities and staffed by more than 75 percent women. Fourteen demonstration plots served as field schools,

and Training of Trainers sessions equipped agricultural engineers to extend climate-smart practices to 1,300 smallholder farmers, 70 percent women, while 1,200 received tools and resources to apply it.

Our livelihoods and gender programming complemented this work by strengthening women's economic independence and community protection. Vocational training reached 350 women from vulnerable groups, 220 gained entrepreneurial skills through the Start Your Business program, and 20 women's associations received advocacy training on gender equality. This did more than build skills; it strengthened the social fabric of communities under strain, offering stability and a stronger voice for women.

In Türkiye, the country continued to host the largest refugee population in the world, with over 3.1 million refugees, including nearly 2.9 million Syrians, in 2025. The pressures of regional conflict and widespread hostility toward Syrian communities intensified throughout the year, narrowing social and economic opportunities for youth. Our programming in Türkiye directly responded by deepening work on inclusive education, skills training, and community stabilization.

Across the country, we operated learning and empowerment programs targeting marginalized Syrian and Turkish youth, particularly adolescent girls, who face high risks of dropout, early marriage, exploitation, and labor precarity. Through both formal and non formal education pathways, we provided education in the broadest sense: academic support, Turkish language learning, early childhood development, and specialized skills building.

At the same time, we equipped refugee and host community youth with lifelong vocational and digital skills, creating alternatives to negative coping mechanisms and strengthening long term resilience. These interventions, which were implemented within an increasingly volatile political atmosphere, changed lives by opening real pathways to employment, inclusion, and safety.



COUNTRY DONORS

Australia

- Australian Agency for International Development (AUSAID)

Kingdom of Belgium

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Canada

- Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), International Humanitarian Assistance Division (IHA)

Colombia

- Ministry of Education and the Government of Antioquia

Denmark

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

France

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Germany

- Federal Foreign Office (GFFO)
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- German Embassy in Costa Rica

Japan

- Embassy of Japan in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
- Embassy of Japan in Lebanon
- Embassy of Japan in Türkiye

Principality of Liechtenstein

- Office of Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Netherlands

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Norway

- Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Sweden

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Switzerland

- City of Basel, Canton of Basel-Landschaft
- Republic and Canton of Geneva, Ville de Genève
- Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC)

United Kingdom

- Department of International Development (UKaid), DFID
- FCO
- UK Embassy in Türkiye

United States of America

- Department of State (BPRM)
- Department of State (CARSI)
- Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)
- Department of State (GWI)



RET.
Bridging
the Gaps
in Africa.
The Americas.
Asia. Europe.
The Middle East.



INTERGOVERNMENTAL DONORS

ECHO

European Union, European Civil Protection
and Humanitarian Aid Operations

IOM

International Organization for Migration

OCHA

United Nations Office for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNFPA

United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR

UN High Commission for Refugees

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

WHO

World Health Organisation

RET ALLIANCE BOARD MEMBERS

The RET Alliance is a global network composed of three independent organizations (RET International, RET Americas, and RET Germany) that coordinate to implement projects and bridge the gaps. Board Members are listed alphabetically.

RET INTERNATIONAL

Anne-Shelton Aaron, Board Member

Co-founder of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Geneva

Thierry Galissard de Marignac, Chair

Former Partner at Banque Mirabaud & Cie

Patrick Odier, Board Member

President, Swiss Sustainable Finance and Building Bridges and former Senior Managing Partner of Lombard Odier

RET AMERICAS

Anne-Shelton Aaron, Board Member

Co-founder of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Geneva

Alan P. Dye, Secretary

Partner at Webster, Chamberlain & Bean, LLP, specialized in the representation of organizations

Zeynep Gündüz, Chair

President and CEO, RET International

RET GERMANY

Anne Willem Bjileveld, Chair

Former Director, Division of External Relations/ Director of Europe at UNHCR; Personal Envoy to High Commissioner for the Western Balkans

Elçin Demirel Topuz, Board Member

President and CEO, RET Germany

Dr. Bahadır Engin, Co-Vice Chair

HR management/ executive. Ph.D. in Social Policy and Employment: Working Conditions and Occupational Accidents

Ute Kollies, Treasurer

Former Head of Office for the UN Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Dr. Frank Nagelschmidt, Secretary

Attorney at Law, Partner at SES Attorneys at Law Berlin

RET Alliance Global Report 2025

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RET ALLIANCE GLOBAL NETWORK

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RET Germany (Berlin, Germany)

RET Americas (Washington, D.C., United States)



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