



Our ref.: 6461144/2025/S/TCG

14 November 2025

Annexes: 2 (available in English only)

Subject: **Invitation to attend the Online Inception Meeting of the CREWS South Asia Project on 9 December 2025**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to invite you to the online inception meeting of the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) funded project **"Unlocking South Asia Regional Synergies for Resilience Building through Enhanced Access to Early Warning Services (CREWS South Asia)"** also referred to as CREWS South Asia. By leveraging the South Asia Hydromet Forum (SAHF) and other ongoing programmes and initiatives in the subregion, this project aims to strengthen regional collaboration for improved hydrometeorological and early warning services in South Asia.

The meeting is scheduled to be held virtually online on **Tuesday 9 December 2025 from 08:00 to 10:00 UTC**. The meeting will bring together representatives from the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of SAHF Members, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and partner organizations contributing to the project.

A detailed agenda ([Annex -1](#)) along with the Terms of Reference for the Project Steering Committee ([Annex -2](#)) are enclosed with this letter. You are kindly requested to also extend the invitation to representatives from your institution, preferably those who are engaged in SAHF's thematic Working Groups (WGs) or other technical activities. As the project spans the full SAHF mechanism, participation of experts from all SAHF thematic WGs (Impact-based Forecasting, Numerical Weather Prediction, Climate Services, Hydrology, Capacity Enhancement, and Observational Networks) is strongly encouraged.

Kindly send the names, designations/titles, and contact details of your nominated participants to Mr Nakul Prasad (nprasad@wmo.int), Project Officer at the WMO Headquarters with a copy marked to Ms Danna Valdez (danna@rimes.int) at the SAHF Secretariat (RIMES) no later than **30 November 2025**.

I look forward to your institution's continued engagement in advancing regional collaboration for strengthening hydrometeorological, climate and early warning services across the South Asia region.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. Celeste Saulo
Secretary-General

To: Permanent Representatives and Hydrological Advisers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (limited distribution)

cc: SAHF WG Chairs and Vice Chairs

Annex -1

AGENDA

CREWS South Asia Project Inception Meeting

Tuesday 9 December 2025

08:00 to 10:00 UTC

Background

The Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) Initiative launched at UNFCCC COP 21 in December 2015 and is a mechanism that funds Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for risk informed early warning services. Their objective is to significantly increase the capacity to generate and communicate effective impact-based, multi-hazard, gender-informed, early warnings and risk information to protect lives, livelihoods, and assets in LDCs and SIDS.

CREWS implementing partners are the World Bank (WB), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), through a Special Program managed by the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR). WMO provides Secretariat services, and the World Bank serves as Trustee (see <https://www.crews-initiative.org/en> for more information).

In 2024, the CREWS Secretariat approved the pipeline for developing a project proposal by the implementing partners (WMO and UNDRR) centered around leveraging the South Asia Hydromet Forum (SAHF) and supporting the Member countries in SAHF to enhance regional collaboration in improving hydrometeorological and early warning services. Based on extensive consultations with the SAHF Member countries through the SAHF Secretariat (RIMES), the project proposal was formally submitted to CREWS in February 2025. Subsequently, the proposal was formally approved by the CREWS Secretariat on 24 June 2025.

Objectives

The inception meeting will mark the formal initiation of the project implementation and provide an opportunity to:

- Present the project's objectives, components, and implementation framework under SAHF
- Discuss the coordination arrangements among WMO and UNDRR as the CREWS Implementing Partners, RIMES as the Project Partner and SAHF Secretariat along with other project partners and the WMO/SAHF Member countries
- Review the draft workplan, phasing, and initial activities for the 2025-2026 period and their alignment within the SAHF workplan and other relevant plans of the project partners;
- Identify country focal points and outline modalities for participation in upcoming SAHF Working Group (WG) meetings, trainings and regional exchanges;
- Establish the CREWS South Asia Project Steering Committee (PSC) and review its Terms of Reference (ToR).

Programme

Meeting Chair: Ben Churchill, Head, WMO's Regional Office for Asia and the South-west Pacific

Moderator: RIMES

Timekeeper: WMO

| Time (UTC) | Item No. | Agenda | Speaker |
|---------------|----------|--|---|
| 06:00 - 06:05 | 1 | Opening, and welcome remarks | Meeting Chair |
| 06:05 - 06:10 | 2 | Introductory remarks | Cyrille Honoré , Director, DRR, MHEWS and Public Services Division |
| 06:10 - 06:15 | 3 | Donor remarks | John Harding , Head, CREWS Secretariat |
| 06:15 - 06:25 | 4 | Introduction to SAHF | RIMES |
| 06:25 - 06:35 | 5 | Overview of the CREWS South Asia Project | WMO |
| 06:35 - 07:15 | 6 | Project workplan presentation and discussions | WMO UNDRR RIMES MeteoSuisse/University of Oxford |
| 07:15 - 07:45 | 7 | Establishment of CREWS South Asia Project Steering Committee | WMO |
| 07:45 - 07:50 | 8 | Remarks by SAHF Executive Council | SAHF EC Chair/Co-Chair |
| 07:50 - 07:55 | 9 | Implementing Partner remarks | UNDRR |
| 07:55 - 08:00 | 10 | Closing remarks | Meeting Chair |

Annex-2

Terms of Reference for the Project Steering Committee – CREWS South Asia Project

Background to the project

South Asia (SA), home to 25% of the world's population, is acutely vulnerable to diverse hydrometeorological and climate hazards due to its varied geography, dense population, and socio-economic challenges. Between 2000 and 2024, the region witnessed 957 reported disasters that affected over 1.4 billion people, claimed over 230,000 lives, and caused economic damages estimated at US\$ 210 billion. Major hazards affecting the region include floods, droughts, and cyclones, which have transboundary impacts and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations. The Hindu Kush-Karakorum-Himalaya (HKKH) region, feeding rivers that sustain 1.5 billion people, faces cascading risks such as floods, landslides, and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), exacerbated by climate change. These impacts threaten to diminish living conditions for up to 800 million people and result in GDP per capita losses in SA that are projected to exceed the global average by up to 7%.

Coastal and low-lying areas, particularly in Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Pakistan, are severely exposed to cyclones, storm surges, and rising sea levels, causing recurrent damage to livelihoods and critical infrastructure. For instance, Bangladesh incurs annual disaster losses of US\$ 3 billion, roughly 1–2% of its GDP, while Cyclone Sidr in 2007 alone caused losses of US\$ 3.8 billion. Meanwhile, droughts remain the single most impactful hazard in terms of people affected, with over 730 million impacted in the last two decades. Heatwaves, another emerging concern in rapidly urbanizing areas, have caused significant loss of life, as seen for instance during the 2015 heatwaves in India and Pakistan.

1-CREWS South Asia project components

The CREWS-financed **CREWS South Asia** project aims at strengthening regional collaboration for improved hydrometeorological and early warning services in South Asia. It is implemented jointly by all three implementing partners and in close collaboration with the Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia as regional partner. The project consists of three components, namely:

Component 1: Strengthen regional collaboration to enhance hydrometeorological services. This component is aimed at (1.1) strengthening SAHF as regional collaboration mechanism, (1.2) facilitating pooling of expertise, and (1.3) improving hydrometeorological and early warning services through regional collaboration and strategic planning.

Component 2: Improving the quality and efficiency of forecasting and early warning services. This component consists of four distinct but inter-connected subcomponents aimed at enhancing the capacities of NMHSs across the region to deliver high-quality and effective services, following a value chain approach. The first subcomponent expands partnerships to co-develop observation networks and improve data exchange, laying a solid foundation for weather forecasting. The second subcomponent focuses on strengthening weather forecasting capabilities through the implementation of a regional capacity development programme. The third subcomponent focuses on prototyping new forecasting techniques and EWSs to inform strengthening of early warning services in the region. The fourth subcomponent enhances last-mile connectivity by improving regional protocols and procedures, ensuring that no one is left behind when disasters strike.

Component 3: Ensuring that early warning programmes are driven by people-centered and gender responsive principles; and promoting private sector engagement. This component focuses on increasing the effectiveness of EWSs by ensuring that they are people-centered, end-to-end, and accessible to all. The first subcomponent aims to narrow the divide between the weather and climate science underpinning EWSs and the end-users through the establishment of a virtual platform to co-produce user-tailored knowledge and services. The second subcomponent aims to strengthen the capabilities of NMHSs in engaging with the private sector by leveraging their respective comparative advantages, forging sustainable partnerships to deliver broader socio-economic benefits.

2-Project Steering Committee Members

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) shall consist of WB, WMO, UNDRR, SAHF Secretariat (RIMES), and the SAHF EC co-chairs. Membership should consider gender balance. The role of the PSC Chair will be held by.

Project Steering Committee Members should have skills complementary to those of the programme and which could include expertise in the following areas: weather and hydrological forecasting, disaster risk management with a focus on Early Warning Systems, management of operational NDMOs/NMHSs, as well as capacity development and communications.

Any change to the composition or nominees of the participating member institutions of the PSC shall be communicated to the Chair.

Project Steering Committee Terms of Reference

The PSC will provide overall strategic guidance, ensure quality of governance, the effective delivery of project activities on time and with the expected quality of results and sustainability of the achievements.

The Project Steering Committee will meet in person or virtually at least once *every year* and at other times deemed necessary by the project leads when seeking guidance on specific issues. Additional Steering Committee meetings may be organized on an as-needed basis, at the request of PSC members.

The Project Coordination Unit consisting of the Implementing Partners (WB, WMO and UNDRR) and RIMES will liaise closely with the PSC Members to ensure the latter are adequately informed on the progress of the Project to enable them to perform their advisory role.

The Project Steering Committee is expected, *inter alia*, to provide the following to the project:

I) At PSC meetings:

- a. Provide advice on the strategic direction of the project implementation including: progress, cohesion of the technical aspects of the work plan, research uptake, capacity building and M&E methodology;
- b. Provide feedback on the implementation plan and activities for the following 6-12 months period, with proposal of adjustment, if needed, to ensure delivery of intended outcomes/outputs;
- c. Contribute to achieving and support promoting the project's outcome and sustainability, using established and new platforms; advise on Project risks and potential mitigation measures;
- d. Provide guidance and recommendations including for developing synergies, collaboration and leveraging opportunities with other initiatives in the countries, region and globally;
- e. Provide advice and support with the high-level engagement¹ with relevant ministries and platforms;
- f. Provide guidance to ensure that all aspects of the project are supported and sustained by decision makers, policy makers and users in the region; and
- g. Any other specific items of concern.

The agenda of each PSC meeting and relevant reports will be circulated to the Steering Committee members at least (1) week prior to the meeting, to allow the members to prepare for the different topics and matters that require decisions. The minutes of the meeting will be sent within two weeks after the meeting.

II) On an ad hoc basis or as necessary, perform the following activities and advise the Project Management Unit on:

- a. Endorsement of annual progress report prior to submission to the CREWS Secretariat
- b. Provide suggestions on the wider context of the project and emerging opportunities;
- c. Provide suggestions on effective communication to intended users; and
- d. Provide suggestions on opportunities for effective partnerships with target institutions in other developing countries and relevant continental and international institutions.

3-Members and observers to the Project Steering Committee (TBC)

| Institution | Name | Designation |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| WMO | | |
| UNDRR | | |

¹ Engagement with high level representatives from relevant ministries at the national level and regional level, among others, to ensure the sustainability of project interventions.

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| RIMES | A.J. Subbiah | |
| SAHF Chair | M. Mohapatra | |
| SAHF Co-Chair | Karma Dupchu | |

Observers: World Bank, MeteoSuisse, UK Met Office and other project partners (as identified during project implementation)