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Strengthening Last-Mile Communication in South Asia

Concept Note

SLMC Regional Review and Planning Workshop and Flood Forecasting on a Shoestring Budget (FFSB) Technical Workshop

Novotel Bangkok Future Park Rangsit, Pathum Thani, Thailand

Date: 8-11 June 2026 (4 days)

Background

The "Strengthening Last Mile Communication (SLMC) in South Asia Project" is being implemented by RIMES in pilot locations in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to build climate resilience through improved access and use of early warning information among last-mile users in the region. More than two years since the project started in October 2021, it has accomplished various activities anchored towards this objective, including the implementation of forecast interpretation trainings, community-based DRM activities (e.g., hazard, exposure, vulnerability and capacity assessment, search and rescue [SAR], and first aid trainings, DRM simulations, etc.), customization of the Integrated Forecast Dissemination Portal (INSTANT), installation and distribution of low-cost early warning system (EWS) and communication equipment, and support to local level DRM planning. The implementation of the SLMC project has been made possible through the valued support of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), initially with generous funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and is presently sustained by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) / Office of International Disaster Response (IDR) of the U.S. Department of State.

Mid-term during the course of project implementation, intervening similar initiatives and developments from other humanitarian agencies, focusing in the same pilot countries/ areas, opened opportunities for project complementation and synergies to maximize available resources and prevent duplication of efforts. Some of these similar undertakings include the Scaling-up Forecast-based Action and Learning (SUFAL) Project, Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CARE) Programme, South Asia Hydro-met Forum (SAHF), and the Asia Regional Resilience to a Changing Climate (ARRCC) Programme, among others.

In view of this opportunity for complementation, the request has been received to modify and/or expand some of the project activities based on emerging demands from the stakeholder partner agencies in the beneficiary countries. The supplemental project activities to be implemented include the provision of support for the conduct of local-level seasonal/ monsoon forums to help local authorities formulate seasonal preparedness strategies and plans, and the inclusion of disaster risk management (DRM) field schools in community-based DRM programs to strengthen local disaster risk knowledge and management capacity. This will ensure that by the end of the project, specific indicators defined in a to-be-developed community hazard-ready qualification guidelines, tailored for priority hazards identified in the target locations, will be met and accomplished in the pilot communities.

As the SLMC project enters its final implementation phase, there is a need to systematically review progress achieved across the pilot countries, document lessons learned, identify remaining operational and institutional gaps, and strengthen sustainability arrangements with government partners. The

project has generated valuable experiences in strengthening last-mile communication, impact-based forecasting, community preparedness, and disaster risk management planning, which provide important lessons for future investments in people-centered early warning systems. The regional workshop will provide a platform for participating countries to exchange experiences, assess implementation progress, identify successful practices for replication and scaling, and develop recommendations for sustaining and expanding project outcomes beyond the current implementation period.

To support an end-of-program stocktake of SLMC implementation and strengthen handover readiness with government partners, a four-day regional event will be held at the Novotel Bangkok Future Park Rangsit, Pathum Thani, Thailand, combining: (i) a one and half day SLMC regional review and forward planning workshop and (ii) a two-and-a-half-day Flood Forecasting on a Shoestring Budget (FFSB) technical workshop. The SLMC segment will align partners on remaining deliverables, identify integration opportunities with complementary initiatives, and agree on practical priorities to sustain last-mile early warning services. The FFSB segment will convene selected experts and country representatives to share low-cost, scalable flood forecasting approaches and technical lessons applicable across the region.

Objectives

Specifically, the workshop hopes to achieve the following objectives and key outcomes:

Objectives	Target Outcomes
Regional SLMC review and knowledge sharing across pilot countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared understanding of implementation progress, innovations, and constraints across pilot sites • Consolidated lessons learned and actionable recommendations for last-mile communication and community engagement • Identified opportunities for harmonization and peer support across countries
Planning and prioritization for remaining SLMC activities and strengthened handover readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritized actions and updated sequencing for the remaining implementation period (through end September 2026) • Agreed roles, responsibilities, and timelines for outstanding deliverables and government handover steps • Risk and mitigation actions documented for timely completion
INSTANT platform and associated tools: technical progress review and country requirements alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validated country requirements and integration needs (data flows, dashboards, dissemination workflows) • Agreed technical roadmap for customization, testing, and operationalization • Documented capacity development and O&M support needs

<p>Identify priorities and opportunities for a future phase of SLMC and scaling of successful approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country-level priorities and investment needs identified • Common regional priorities and technical support requirements documented • Opportunities for scaling successful interventions and strengthening sustainability identified • Preliminary inputs generated for future project design, resource mobilization, and regional collaboration
<p>FFSB technical workshop: shared understanding of the approach and practical steps for application</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common understanding of the FFSB concept, scope, and minimum operational requirements • Technical demonstrations and practical exchange on low-cost flood forecasting workflows, operational requirements, and implementation considerations. • Country-level action notes capturing interest areas, prerequisites, and next steps
<p>Consolidate operational readiness and agree practical country-level pathways to apply FFSB within existing early warning systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared understanding of the end-to-end FFSB operational workflow, including verification, uncertainty management, and product tailoring needs • Agreement on forecast-to-action arrangements: communication flow, decision triggers, and coordination roles aligned with national EWS mechanisms • Country-level action notes capturing feasibility assessment, prerequisites, partners, indicative timeline, and follow-up support needs

Expected Outputs

The workshop is expected to generate the following outputs:

1. SLMC Regional Review and Planning Workshop

- Country presentations documenting implementation progress, achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and sustainability considerations.
- Consolidated regional lessons and recommendations for strengthening last-mile communication and community engagement.
- Identification of remaining implementation priorities and actions through September 2026.
- Preliminary roadmap outlining country priorities and opportunities for a potential next phase of SLMC.
- Recommendations for sustaining and scaling successful approaches within national and local early warning systems.

2. Flood Forecasting on a Shoestring Budget (FFSB) Technical Workshop

- Improved understanding of FFSB concepts, methodologies, and operational requirements.
- Increased awareness of low-cost flood forecasting tools, workflows, and implementation approaches.
- Technical demonstrations showcasing practical forecasting applications and operational workflows.
- Country-level action notes identifying potential applications, prerequisites, technical requirements, and follow-up support needs.
- Strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange among forecasting practitioners, technical experts, and partner institutions.

Participants

The workshop will bring together approximately 20–25 participants from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Maldives, Laos and India including representatives from National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs), disaster management authorities, local government institutions, and SLMC project focal points. The workshop will also include technical experts from UCAR and partner institutions, as well as RIMES technical and program staff.

The FFSB component will additionally engage forecasting specialists and practitioners interested in exploring low-cost, scalable flood forecasting approaches suitable for operational implementation in resource-constrained environments.