34th Session of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-34) for the Summer Season and Climate Services User Forum (CSUF)

Male, Maldives | 25-30 April 2026

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

South Asia continues to experience accelerating climate variability and extreme events, with the summer monsoon season (June–September) increasingly characterized by erratic onset, prolonged dry spells, short-duration extreme rainfall, heatwaves preceding monsoon onset, and compound flood–landslide events. In recent years, the region has witnessed record-breaking temperatures exceeding 50°C in parts of South Asia, deadly pre-monsoon heatwaves affecting millions, catastrophic flooding in Nepal and Pakistan triggered by intense rainfall episodes, and severe cyclonic activity in the Bay of Bengal impacting Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka. These events have underscored the growing volatility of monsoon behavior and its cascading impacts on agriculture, water security, food systems, public health, infrastructure, and national economies.

With nearly 70–80% of annual rainfall occurring during the summer monsoon in many South Asian countries, even modest deviations in timing, spatial distribution, or intensity can translate into significant socioeconomic consequences. With high population density, climate-sensitive livelihoods, and persistent vulnerability in several countries, there is a critical need for credible, consensus-based, regionally coordinated seasonal outlooks that can inform national planning, anticipatory action, and sector-specific preparedness measures. The South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) serves as a cornerstone regional mechanism to generate these consensus outlooks, ensuring scientific coherence across National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and facilitating structured dialogue with user sectors through the Climate Services User Forum (CSUF).

In parallel, the Weather and Climate Information Services (WISER) Asia Pacific programme is supporting transformational improvements in the production, accessibility, and use of weather and climate information services across the region. Under this framework, the South Asia Hydromet Forum (SAHF) Climate Services Working Group (CS WG) is being strengthened in its implementation of its work plan towards enhancing regional coordination, building producer and user capacities, improving decision-support systems, and institutionalizing co-production mechanisms. The project aims to strengthen the coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability of climate services in South Asia by improving technical capacity, strengthening producer–user engagement, and aligning regional platforms with national and global frameworks for climate services.

Support to SASCOF and CSUF is central to achieving these objectives. SASCOF provides the technical platform for generating consensus seasonal outlooks, while CSUF ensures that these outlooks are interpreted, translated, and applied in sectoral decision-making contexts. However, recent assessments and the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) conducted under the SAHF CS WG project have identified critical gaps: varying levels of technical capacity in seasonal forecasting and probabilistic interpretation among NMHSs; limited integration of sub-seasonal and longer-term climate information; uneven understanding among user sectors of forecast uncertainty and application; and insufficient institutional feedback mechanisms between producers and users.

By embedding targeted pre-COF training for forecasters, structured CS WG deliberations, and sector-specific training for users alongside SASCOF and CSUF, the WISER AP-supported initiative ensures that seasonal outlook generation is technically robust, regionally harmonized, and practically usable. This integrated approach strengthens both sides of the climate services value chain—enhancing the scientific quality of outlooks and increasing their uptake in agriculture, water management, disaster risk reduction, health, and other climate-sensitive sectors.

Activity Overview

The week-long Climate Services activities is scheduled to be held **on 25-30 April 2026 in Male, Maldives**. Co-organized by the Maldives Meteorological Service (MMS), Regional Climate Center (RCC), Pune of India Meteorological Department (IMD), UK Met Office (UKMO), and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa (RIMES), it aims to strengthen regional coherence, technical capacity, and user engagement across South Asia by integrating targeted pre-COF Training, SAHF CS WG meeting, SASCOF, and CSUF.

It specifically targets to:

a. Enhance technical capacity of seasonal forecasters through targeted pre-COF training informed by the TNA.
b. Review progress and strategic direction of the SAHF CS WG, including assessment findings and training plan implementation.
c. Develop a consensus seasonal outlook through SASCOF, supporting national climate outlook preparation.
d. Strengthen interpretation and application of seasonal outlooks among user sectors through tailored training and CSUF dialogue.
e. Promote inclusive, GEDSI-response climate services and strengthen feedback loops between producers and users.

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

I. 25-27 April 2026 – Pre-COF Training

Target Participants: Seasonal forecasters, NMHS technical staff

Purpose: Strengthen technical skills in generating, interpreting, verifying, and communicating seasonal outlooks using regional and global products.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes:

a. Strengthened producer technical capacity
b. Training materials aligned with regional priorities
c. Baseline and post-training evaluation results

II. 26-27 April 2026 – SAHF Climate Services Working Group Meeting

Target Participants: SAHF Climate Services Working Group Members, alternative focal representatives, regional partners

Purpose:

a. Review findings from the status report of the status of regional and national climate services
b. Discuss results of the TNA survey and validate the training plan
c. Present the DSS catalogue and gather feedback.
d. Define next steps and sustainability beyond the current project implementation.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes:

a. Updated Climate Services Working Group priorities (as also reflected in the live Work Plan document)
b. Endorsed training roadmap
c. Agreed coordination mechanism for continued engagement

III. 28 April 2026 – South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF)

Target Participants: Seasonal forecasters, NMHS technical staff, SAHF CS WG Members, regional partners, national and international experts, development partners, research institutions

Purpose: Prepare consensus seasonal climate information on regional scale that provides a consistent basis for preparing national level outlooks.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes:

Produce a Consensus Climate Outlook for the 2026 summer season covering the months of June to September.

IV. 29-30 April 2026 – Climate Services User Forum (CSUF)

Target Participants: Representatives from user sectors in South Asian countries, experts, regional partners, development partners, NMHSs

Purpose: Strengthen the user sectors' ability to interpret the SASCOF consensus outlook, translate probabilistic forecasts into sector-specific advisories, integrate climate outlooks into planning, budgeting, and anticipatory action, and identify sector needs for customized products and tools.

Expected Outputs/Outcome:

a. Documented user feedback
b. Strengthened producer-user co-production process
c. Better interpretation and translation of forecasts into sector-specific advisories