Regional cooperation workshop on enhancing forecasting, monitoring and preparedness for floods and droughts in South Asia

Annual Session 2022

Online session
3-5 August, 2022 (TBC)

Background

South Asia region has a never-ending struggle with natural disasters which result in fatalities, property damage as well as economic losses. Floods and droughts are known to be the most common disasters with significant impact on lives and livelihoods. Due to this, many initiatives have been implemented in South Asia to strengthen the capacity for early detection of floods and droughts and taking actions to minimize the associated damages. Global and regional agencies have developed and operationalized regional and national scale forecasting systems in South Asian countries. However, even with many such initiatives, floods and droughts are seen to impact millions of people and result in great damage to lives, livelihoods and economy.

RIMES convened five regional meetings/workshops on floods since its inception in 2015 with support of World Bank and UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) in 2015, UNESCAP in 2016, sidelines of RIMES (Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System) council meeting in 2018, and UNESCAP and UKMO (United Kingdom Met Office) in sidelines of ESCAP Disaster Resilience Week in 2019. The floods and droughts regional meeting organized along the sidelines of UNESCAP DRR week in August 2019, which was an expert dialogue on floods and droughts in the region recommended establishment of a forum for operational forecasted to discuss challenges, existing mechanisms and capacities of NMHSs for floods and droughts, learn from experiences in the region and discuss training and capacity building requirements at regional scale so all countries can benefit. Therefore, the first forum under the title “Regional Cooperation Workshop on Enhancing Forecasting, Monitoring and Preparedness for Floods and Droughts in South Asia” was held online from 8th to 10th December 2020.

Officials from NMHSs in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka along with experts from global and regional agencies took part in this workshop. The personnel from NMHSs presented the current forecasting capacities, capabilities and challenges in order to use the available products. How tools such South Asia Flash Flood Guidance System (SAFFGS) and platforms such as SASCOF (South Asia Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum) have helped in reducing damages of floods and droughts were also discussed and what more could be done by regional agencies were further discussed during this event. The introduction to the concept of
“Regional Learning Platform” was given by UNESCAP and how this platform would help to explore solutions to existing issues of NMHSs were also discussed. At the conclusion of the event, the way forward was discussed and it was identified that continued support is required by NMHSs to establish linkage between regional and national agencies to make best utilization of available data, tools and products, capacity building requirements are to be met with trainings by regional and global agencies and implement Regional Learning Platform to address the gaps.

Therefore, this year’s Regional Cooperation Workshop on Enhancing Forecasting, Monitoring and Preparedness for Floods and Droughts in South Asia will be held to understand the current status of forecasting following the previous workshop and also to identify what more is required to address the gaps and challenges faced by forecasters. Operational climate forecasters from national hydrometeorological services and agencies involved in flood and drought forecasting in the region would be the main focus groups of this event.

The main objectives of the workshop are:

- Understand the current capabilities and challenges of the officials from NMHSs in South Asia
- Maintaining and progressing the regional dialogue and knowledge sharing on national and transboundary aspects of flood and drought management and Early Warning Systems
- Establish the progress and status of Regional Learning Platform and identify and prioritize needs that can be addressed through it