SDC Solar 1st Project Steering Committee (PSC)

27th November 2025

Embassy of Switzerland, New Delhi

Minutes of meeting

Introduction

The overall purpose of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) is to review and approve annual work plans, monitor progress in project execution, provide strategic and policy guidance, and to support communication and dissemination of project outcomes. The committee will have decision-making authority to review the overall project development over the project lifetime.

The first meeting was held in-person at Embassy of Switzerland, New Delhi on 27th November 2025 attended by 8 regular members and 4 co-opted members.

Agenda

Time	Session	Facilitator
2:00 – 2:10	Welcome remarks	Ms. Mirjam Macchi Howell Head of the Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction and Environment, SDC
2:10 – 2:20	Remarks by PSC Co-chair	Dr. Vidhisha Samarasekara Program Director- Water-Climate Change and Resilience, IWMI (On behalf of Mark Smith, DG, IWMI)
2:20 – 2:30	Introduction	All
2:30 – 2:40	SDC Phase 1 Learnings	Dr. Darshini Ravindranath Project Lead, SDC-SoLAR, IWMI
2::40 – 3:10	SDC Phase 2 overview	Dr. Darshini Ravindranath Project Lead, SDC-SoLAR, IWMI And Dr. Muluken Adamseged Deputy Project Lead, SDC-SoLAR, IWMI
3:10 – 3:30	Reflections from the field	All partners
3:30 – 4:00	Discussion on future steps	All

Discussion

- Ms. Mirjam Macchi Howell, Head – Climate, DRR & Environment, SDC initiated the meeting by welcoming all members and partners. She emphasized SDC's commitment to solar energy for climate resilience and inclusive development and highlighted the importance of collaborative learning across South Asia and East Africa.
- Vidhisha Samarasekara (On behalf of IWMI DG Mark Smith) appreciated strong SDC–IWMI collaboration under Phase I and reaffirmed IWMI's commitment to deepening evidence-based policy support in Phase II. She highlighted that this project is beyond irrigation, integrating agrivoltaics, carbon credit markets, climate finance, to help advance transformation of water systems through the combined efforts of partnerships.
- Darshini Ravindranath, IWMI Project Lead for Phase 1 shared Key Learnings from Phase I (2019–2025).
- Darshini Ravindranath and Muluken Adamseged then presented Phase II Overview (2025–2028) with an emphasis on Gender and social Inclusion (GESI), decision-support tools such as the SolaReady dashboard and country specific workplans for the next 6 months.

Partner Reflections

The PSC was preceded by a field visit to project sites in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. Partners were invited to shared reflections from these visits.

- Abdulkarim Seid noted that the project can act as a strong foundation for future expansion, and that consolidating all outcomes on a common platform would be beneficial and particularly that stakeholders across the board should be invited to participate in program design and implementation. In response, Vidhisha and Muluken explained that global and national forums are already structured to support such integration, and that work with international financial institutions, and the work of decision support tools such as the solar suitability mapping offers significant potential to bring these outcomes together.
- Vincent Kabuti noted that while the private sector in Kenya is actively promoting solar energy, the government now needs to accelerate efforts to provide sustainable irrigation solutions. He emphasized that the project can support this by informing policy development and strategic pathways. Vincent also pointed out that the cost of solar installation in Kenya remains very high, underscoring the need to identify cost-reduction mechanisms. He added that Ethiopia faces similar challenges, and that private-sector models from South Asia should be examined for potential adaptation.
- Elias Awol emphasized that the field visit to Mandla clearly demonstrated the importance of solar energy for women and for strengthening value chain integration. He noted that Agrivoltaics is a suitable solution for areas with limited land, and that these could be explored in East Africa too. He highlighted the importance of linking finance with scaling solar - Ethiopia faces a key challenge in linking microfinance with solar technologies, and this requires further assessment to identify viable solutions.
- Md. Sarwar noted that Bangladesh's three hill tract districts face significant electricity shortages and that scaling off-grid models like witnessed in Mandla could be a solution. Farmers there are willing to pay for irrigation services, and the example from Mandla could be replicated to introduce solar solutions that reduce costs and ensure a reliable water supply.

- PC Sharma emphasized the importance of financial modelling, noting that it differs across countries and that a scalable model must be identified. He stressed the need to ensure full utilization of the solar energy generated—whether off-grid or on-grid. Utilization patterns should be tailored to local ecosystems, as demonstrated in Mandla with the introduction of a rice milling machine to make better use of the available energy. He also acknowledged ISA's expanding work in East Africa, particularly through its STAR-C (Starsky) Hub, which is helping countries strengthen capacity, promote solar uptake, and develop replicable models for sustainable energy solutions.
- Alok Sikka explained the purpose of the SolaReady Dashboard, which assesses a region's solar suitability by considering adaptation, mitigation, and groundwater conditions, with the WEF nexus at its core. He noted that it serves as an informed decision-making tool for farmers, who are the primary investors in solar systems and therefore need a clear understanding of the expected returns.

<u>Key highlights</u>

- Decision-Support tools and platforms can be critical for scaling: Focus on stronger government integration for Solar Phase II tools (digital platforms, suitability indices).
- Financing and cost reduction identified as critical challenges in the context of East Africa
- Field insights reinforced the potential of solar innovations, particularly on finance models for marginal farmers, especially women.
- Emphasis on learning across regions and enhancing south–south exchanges and partnerships
- Importance of periodic reviews through PSC and CPMC mechanisms.
- The need for continuous technical support across different stakeholder groups and linkages to markets

Ms. Mirjam extended appreciation to all partners and wished us good luck for the project. The next PSC meeting proposed for mid-2026.

Participants

S. No.	Name	Designation	Organization	Country	Category	Status
1	Mirjam Macchi Howell	Head of the Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction and Environment,	SDC	Bern	Co-chair	Present
2	Mark Smith	Director General	IWMI	Sri Lanka	Co- Chair	Not present
3	Suman Chandra (IAS)	Deputy Secretary	Ministry of New and Renewable Energy	India	Member	Not present
4	P C Sharma	Joint Director	International Solar Alliance	Global	Member	Present
5	Mohammad Sarwar Hossain	PD (SIP) & Deputy Chief Engineer	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC)	Bangladesh	Member	Present
6	Eng. Vincent Kabuti,	Irrigation Secretary,	Ministry of Water, Sanitation & Irrigation	Kenya	Member	Present
7	Elias Awol	CEO, Smallholder Irrigation Development,	Ministry of Agriculture	Ethiopia	Member	Present
8	S. M. Monirul Islam	Deputy CEO and CFO,	Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL)	Bangladesh	Member	Not present
9	Divya Kashyap	Deputy Head of Cooperation	SDC	India	Member	Not Present
10	Darshini Ravindranath	Project Lead	IWMI	India	Member	Present
11	Alok Sikka	Country Representative	IWMI	India &Bangladesh	Co-opted member	Present
12	Abdulkarim Seid	Country Representative	IWMI	Ethiopia & Kenya	Co-opted member	Present
13	Vidhisha Samarasekara	Program Director	IWMI	UK	Co-opted member	Present

14	Muluken Adamsegad	Deputy Project Lead	IWMI	Ethiopia	Co-opted member	Present
15	Messmer-Kratzer Valentin (Virtual)		SDC		Invited	Present
16	Tripti Agarwal	Project Coordinator	IWMI	India	Coordinator	Present

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