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**World Rural Development Day  
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# THE VISION

## Rural Development: Where India's Future Takes Root



### FMR. M C DOMINIC

Founder & Editor-in-Chief Krishi Jagran and Agriculture World  
Founder & President -Agriculture Journalist Association of India (AJAI)  
Founder & Managing Trustee - MAC Krishi Jagran Foundation

India's progress in the 21st century hinges on the strength of its villages, where the foundations of true national transformation are laid. As India advances steadily toward its aspiration of becoming a Viksit Bharat by 2047, rural development must be seen not as a peripheral concern, but as the backbone of national transformation. It is in our villages that India's truest potential resides- in the richness of its soil, in the spirit of its farmers, and in the strength and solidarity of its rural communities.

Agriculture, which sustains more than half of our population, must evolve beyond subsistence and survival. It must be nurtured into a resilient, regenerative, and economically rewarding system- one that values ecological balance as much as it values productivity. This demands a paradigm shift: from short-term gains to long-term sustainability, from fragmented interventions to integrated ecosystems.

We must scale up investments in climate-smart agriculture, community-led rural enterprises, and farm-to-market linkages that strengthen local economies and ensure food and income security. Equally important is recognizing the role of traditional knowledge systems- age-old wisdom about soil, seeds, and seasons that, when aligned with modern innovation, offers scalable, cost-effective solutions uniquely suited to local needs.

Rural development must also be inclusive by design. Women farmers, youth innovators, and marginalized communities are not just stakeholders; they are the changemakers of tomorrow. Empowering them with access to credit, training, and digital tools is not just equitable- it is essential for rapid, meaningful progress.

True development is not measured merely in roads, buildings, or GDP numbers. It is reflected in access to clean water, good schools, thriving farms, nutritious food, and dignified livelihoods. It is visible in confident children, vibrant village markets, prosperous farmers who are empowered and self-reliant, and communities where no one feels left behind.

As we look ahead, let us be guided by one truth: India cannot rise unless its villages rise with it. The journey to a Viksit Bharat begins in rural India- with its people, its promise, and its potential. Let us walk this path together- with clarity, compassion, and collective resolve.

## Rural Development: Driving India's Inclusive Growth



**A**s we observe World Rural Development Day (July 6, 2025), one fact stands clear: rural India is not behind- it is a powerhouse of potential waiting to be unleashed. With over 60% of our population rooted in villages, rural development is no longer a welfare concern- it is a national necessity and a strategic priority.

The time has come to shift our approach from viewing rural regions as dependent areas to recognizing them as engines of innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth. Development today must mean more than infrastructure- it must enable opportunity. Our focus must be on systems, not just schemes: systems that uplift women farmers, promote diversified value chains, support Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and build long-term resilience to climate and market disruptions.

Agriculture is evolving rapidly, driven by digital platforms, clean inputs, and localized agri-entrepreneurship. Yet for these innovations to make a

lasting impact, we must ensure that our rural institutions- Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Self-Help Groups, cooperatives, and rural schools- are equipped and empowered to carry knowledge to the grassroots. These institutions are not auxiliary- they are pivotal to transformation.

At the same time, we must nurture models that integrate ecology, economy, and equity. Whether it's agro-ecological farming, community-run irrigation, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, or local food processing units, these initiatives represent a shift toward rural self-reliance and prosperity.

Let us also remember that behind every thriving village is a network of determined individuals- young agri-startups, women leaders, progressive farmers, and educators- who are redefining what development means on their own terms.

As we look ahead, we must reimagine rural India not as a recipient of development but as its very foundation. When we invest in the smallest farmer, the quietest village, the remotest idea- we are investing in the future of India itself.

**SHINY DOMINIC**  
Managing Director

## Rural Development for Nation's Prosperity



**R**ural development is the cornerstone of a nation's overall progress and prosperity. In countries like India, where a significant portion of the population resides in villages, the upliftment of rural areas is critical for inclusive and sustainable growth. It involves improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.

At its core, rural development focuses on the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, clean drinking water, housing, and sanitation. These facilities form the foundation upon which further economic and social improvements can be built. Equally important is access to quality education and healthcare, which empowers rural populations to contribute meaningfully to the country's economy.

Agriculture remains a central component of rural economies. Therefore, promoting modern farming techniques, irrigation facilities, agro-based industries, and market linkages plays a vital role in increasing rural

income. Encouraging entrepreneurship, self-help groups (SHGs), and skill development also opens up non-farm employment opportunities, reducing the burden on agriculture and curbing rural-to-urban migration.

Digital connectivity and e-governance have emerged as powerful tools for bridging the rural-urban divide. Through digital inclusion, rural communities gain access to government schemes, financial services, online education, and telemedicine.

Rural development is not merely about economic indicators; it is about empowering communities, fostering self-reliance, preserving local culture, and ensuring environmental sustainability. A prosperous rural India means a resilient, balanced, and stronger nation.

In conclusion, rural development is not a choice but a necessity for a nation's prosperity. Only when our villages thrive can the country truly achieve holistic and inclusive development.

**Agriculture World** and **KRISHI JAGRAN** feel proud to dedicate this special edition to World Rural Development Day and extend warm wishes to commemorate the Foundation Day of CIRDAP on 6th July.

**MAMTA JAIN**  
Group Editor & CEO

# Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP): Promoting Integrated Rural Development for the Rural Prosperity.



**H.E. DR. P CHANDRA SHEKARA**  
Director General, CIRDAP

**A**s a pioneer Intergovernmental, Autonomous and Regional organization, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) established on July 6 back in 46 years ago with a vision 'to be a Centre of Excellence and multi-level platform for cooperation in knowledge transfer and capacity building for developing countries in integrated rural affairs for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific Region'. 15 Asia and Pacific countries namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam are members of CIRDAP.



On July 6, 1979, the Asia-Pacific countries along with other countries came in hands together to create an organization which would promote Integrated Rural Development (IRD) in the Asia-Pacific region through regional cooperation amongst Member States, Link Institutes and Development Partners. This organization established through an international agreement

lodged with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Since its inception, CIRDAP seeks to improve the quality of life of the far-reaching marginalized rural people, the ultimate beneficiaries of CIRDAP are farmers and rural communities. Headquartered at Chameli House, Bangladesh, the organization fosters knowledge exchange, policy support, and capacity building to empower rural communities and drive sustainable development across Asia-Pacific.

In recognition of the contribution of CIRDAP for strengthening Rural Development in the Asia and Pacific region, the United Nations General Assembly has officially recognized 6th July as World Rural Development Day, coinciding with CIRDAP's foundation day. The recognition has been made the organization not only proud but also focusing to fulfil the responsibilities in Rural Development in Sustainable Development Goals – that 'leave no one behind'



## Genesis

The idea of an organization's which will deal with the rural poverty and development challenges came into mind during early 1970's within the discussions of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. A proposal amongst the government was crafted and consulted for a Centre on Integrated Rural Development (IRD) in Bangkok, Thailand, in March 1976. The Director General (DG) of FAO called a Conference of Plenipotentiaries to adopt the agreement to establish of the Centre. On July 29, 1978, this conference was held in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia and after two days on August 1, 1978 the agreement was adopted and signed. At the conference, it was decided Bangladesh will be the host country of the Centre.

CIRDAP started its journey initially with the six countries under the auspicious leadership of its founder leadership Azizul Haq in an office at the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Cumilla, Bangladesh. During the tenure of Mr. Azizul Haq, the member countries grew into 11 states. Currently, CIRDAP has 15 member countries. In 1985, CIRDAP relocated its office to the

historic building called 'Chameli House' in Dhaka. The building was handed over to the Centre by Bangladesh government. Over the years, CIRDAP had received continued support from key international development partners notably the Government of Japan and FAO.

Since its inception, CIRDAP has conducted a wide range of activities including training programmes – Thousands of Rural Development professionals from member countries have been trained in areas such as project management, gender mainstreaming, microfinance, sustainable agriculture, ICT etc.; Action Research – supported pilot projects across its member countries to test and document effective models of community driven development; and Knowledge Sharing & Management – through its publication, journals and digital platforms.

## Significant Milestones

In its long successful journey, CIRDAP has achieved several significant milestones.

- The first Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development held in Dhaka in April 8 & 9, 1987. This ministerial meeting gained a wide popularity amongst the development partners and stakeholder as the Ministers and Secretaries of the Rural Development and Agriculture Ministries attended the meeting. In this meeting, the 'Dhaka Declaration on Rural Development' was adopted.
- In 2008, the Ministerial meeting held in New Delhi, India adopted the Delhi Declaration to further enhance its role in promoting Sustainable rural livelihood, empowering women and leveraging ICT through providing a platform for exchange of ideas, sharing best practices and experiences.
- The second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development held in Dhaka in 2010 and the meeting provided CIRDAP a new direction and mandate.
- Former President of India Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam visited CIRDAP on its 33rd foundation day celebration on July 4-5, 2012. While in Dhaka, Dr. Kalam, delivered the lecture on 'Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas' (PURA). He also had a special interactive session with a group of children from Bangladesh and other CIRDAP Member States.
- In 2013, CIRDAP International Conference Centre (CICC) was established which has been turned into a modern hub for international and regional conference, dialogue and capacity building.

### How does CIRDAP work?

- CIRDAP provides technical and policy support to ministries and institutions involved in Integrated Rural Development (IRD) by enabling and helping national decision-makers, development practitioners, and planners to exchange ideas and experiences on IRD and to identify areas in which collaborative efforts can be promoted for the mutual benefit of member states.

- CIRDAP works to identify opportunities for collaborative efforts among member states to enhance integrated rural development and address common challenges, particularly in poverty alleviation.

### Mission of CIRDAP

To provide technical support and promote innovative best practices on sustainable IRD amongst member countries in Asia-Pacific in order to improve the lives of the rural people.

- To Utilize state-of-the-art ICT
- Provide flagship trainings and capacity development
- Enhance analytical capability in formulating policies & determining appropriate measures (impacts of globalization, trade liberalization, climate change and disaster risks, engagement of communities)
- Foster cooperation on development through collaborative research projects
- Disseminate knowledge gained and transfer of innovative technologies

### CIRDAP's Core Activities:

1. Research: Conducting studies and research on rural development issues to inform policy and program design.
2. Pilot Projects: Implementing and evaluating pilot projects that demonstrate innovative rural development solutions.
3. Training and Education: Providing capacity-building opportunities through training programs and educational initiatives to strengthen skills in rural development.
4. Exposure Visits: Organizing visits to successful rural development programs to allow decision-makers and practitioners to learn from each other's experiences.
5. Consultative Conferences/Policy Dialogues: Hosting conferences and dialogues to foster discussions among stakeholders, share best practices, and identify common strategies.
6. Dissemination of Information: Sharing knowledge, research, and best practices across member states to support informed decision-making.

### Organizational Structure

The Centre is administered by the Secretariat based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. CIRDAP has three governing bodies, namely Governing Council (GC), the Executive Committee (EC) and the Technical Committee (TC). The Governing Council (GC) is the highest policy and decision-making body of CIRDAP represented by the Ministers of the designated Contact Ministries of all member countries. It sets the overall policy and programme direction for the Centre. The primary role of the Executive Committee (EC) is to review and make recommendations to GC on matters concerning the management and operation of the Centre's activities. It is also responsible to provide guidance to the Centre on implementation of the policies and decisions. The Technical Committee (TC) is to provide technical advice on professional matters concerning work plans and strategies for implementation of the CIRDAP activities, and the interrelationships and coordination of activities carried out by the Centre under auspices of the member countries.

#### POLICY BODIES OF CIRDAP



### Secretariat

A full-time Director General, selected by the Governing Council for a four-year term is the chief executive of the organization. The work of the Centre is directed by the Director General in accordance with the policy and decisions adopted by the Governing Council under the guidance of the Executive Committee. Under the leadership of Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, who is an esteemed professional with over 35 years of experience in Agricultural Extension, Agri-Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Rural Development, and Public-Private Partnerships, the Secretariat plays a crucial role in managing programs, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting innovative approaches to sustainable rural development.

### CIRDAP Footprints of 46 Years Key Achievements

- From 1990s to 2020, CIRDAP has raised fund more than \$2 million USD through training and research projects
- The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific UNESCAP has recognized CIRDAP as one of its Network Centres of Excellence in Research and Training of Human Resource Development (HRD)
- CIRDAP is also a member of the Council of Advocates for World Micro-credit Summit Campaign
- CIRDAP was designated as the UN focal point institution for PopMap training in the region.

### Human Resource development

CIRDAP has been conducting Training Programmes, Exposure visits, Workshops, Research, Pilot Project, Consultative Conference/Policy Dialogue, Dissemination of Information etc., with the aim of capacity building in integrated rural development in Asia and the Pacific region. Since CIRDAP's inception in 1979, more than seven thousand people have participated and benefited in training and research activities. Many alumni are now leaders and senior officials in government, development agencies, academia and research institutes contributing to welfare of rural communities.

### CIRDAP Contribution: At a Glance

International Training Programmes completed – 255  
International Executives Trained – 7848  
Research and Action Research Projects completed - 212  
Partners – 54

### CIRDAP Research Programs - In search of Innovative Good Practices by Empowering Rural Communities

CIRDAP has implemented 212 Research and Action Research Projects across its member countries from 1979 to 2025, aligned with its Strategic Plan. Research Projects focus on improving the livelihoods of rural marginalized communities. Ongoing research projects include:

- Gender Responsive Budgeting in Nepal
- Inclusion of Transgender and Gender-Variant Youth for Rural Development in India
- Sericulture Value Chain in IR Iran
- Women and Youth Empowerment for Inclusive Development in Sri Lanka

These initiatives are executed in collaboration with national institutions such as Local Development

Training Academy (LDTA) - Nepal, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) - India, Agricultural Planning, Economic and Rural Development Research Institute (APERDRI) - IR Iran, and Hector Kobbekaduwa Agrarian Research and Training Institute (HARTI) - Sri Lanka.

### CIRDAP Capacity Building Programs - Empowering Professionals, Institutions and Policies to empower Rural Communities

CIRDAP has conducted 255 International Training Programs, Covering 7,848+ International Executives across member states. Training Programs are tailored to Policy Makers, Administrators, Academicians and Rural Development Practitioners. Upcoming training Programs include:

- Institutional Innovations in Rural Development (India)
- Agri-Cooperatives and Startups (Thailand)
- Digital Marketing in Rural Development (India)
- CIRDAP Knowledge Circuit (Myanmar)

### Training programs emphasize:

- Rural Development Models
- Institutional Capacity Building
- Technical Proficiency for Professionals
- Policy Reforms for Policy Makers

Trainings are conducted across member countries on a rotational basis through CIRDAP's Link Institutions. Faculty development is also a strategic priority for CIRDAP. The organization enhances the capacities of its own experts and those of its Link Institutions to improve implementation of IRD Models.

### Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Models – Strengthening Systems for Rural Development

Integrated Rural Development (IRD) has been one of the major rural development strategies in Asia and the Pacific countries since the last four decades. Through experimentation with rural development projects pioneered by different countries, characterized by pragmatic adaptation to local conditions, several concepts, philosophies and models have been successfully applied for improving livelihoods, reducing poverty and increasing food security of rural people.

CIRDAP established CIRDAP Exhibition and Museum on Integrated Rural Development in Asia-Pacific (CEMIRD) to showcase best practices on integrated rural development (IRD) models from CIRDAP member countries in both physically and digitally

A major mandate of CEMIRD is to identify and disseminate IRD models developed through member country initiatives. Key milestones:

- 11 IRD Models showcased at the CIRDAP Exhibition and Museum on IRD (CEMIRD)
- 35 IRD Models are under process of being compiled into a comprehensive Handbook on IRD Models
- Disseminated through Social Media Channels and CIRDAP Bulletin.

These models offer pragmatic solutions adapted to local contexts to improve livelihoods and food security.



### CIRDAP Webinar Series – Gathering and Sharing Knowledge

CIRDAP is regularly organizing Webinars by eminent professionals on current relevant issues in Rural Development for the benefit of CIRDAP member countries. Through the CIRDAP Knowledge Series, the organization has hosted 45 high-impact webinars led by global experts on:



- Climate Action
- Rural innovation
- Gender inclusion
- Community resilience
- Agricultural entrepreneurship and many more.

These are accessible to stakeholders across all member countries to encourage policy dialogue and skill exchange. Access recordings on CIRDAP's YouTube Channel. Publication on Policy Implications of the Webinars on CIRDAP Member Countries is in Progress.

### CIRDAP Publications – Messengers of Change

CIRDAP contributes to the global rural development discourse through:

- Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development (APJORD): A flagship peer-reviewed Bi Annual Academic Journal.
- CIRDAP Rural Development Report (Once in two years)
- Voice of CIRDAP (Monthly E-Bulletin)



### CIRDAP's Brand

All Publications reaches over 118,000 stakeholders globally. Additionally, six international publications are in progress to enhance knowledge dissemination.

CIRDAP Experts – Pooling the expertise to benefit Rural Communities

In order to avail the global expertise for assisting CIRDAP in addressing challenges in Rural Development in CIRDAP member countries, CIRDAP has created a platform to network Experts in Rural Development as CIRDAP Experts.

To strengthen technical capacity, CIRDAP maintains an Expert Database with 78 professionals across 15 nationalities. These experts:

- Contribute to publications and webinars
- Participate in project Formulation and Implementation
- Support institutional learning

### CIRDAP Partnerships

CIRDAP has established 62 institutional partnerships through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) currently contributing to rural development initiatives. Partnerships enhance program implementation, resource sharing, and innovation dissemination. Focus on joint training, research, and advocacy.

### CIRDAP Social Media Outreach

CIRDAP leverages social media platforms to reach a wider audience and share daily messages on CIRDAP activities and innovations. CIRDAP reorganized social media presence ensures effective communication with member countries. It has strategically strengthened its presence on digital platforms:

- Facebook: 240,000+ reach in 2024-25 through daily messages
- LinkedIn, Twitter: Active dissemination of events and knowledge resources daily
- YouTube Channel: 70 Videos and 42 recorded webinars uploaded, getting popular
- Krishi Jagran Collaboration: 3 million+ views

### CIRDAP International Conference Center (CICC) – 2300 Events, 2.53 Lakh Participants

The CIRDAP International Conference Centre (CICC) is a state-of-the-art facility designed to host a wide range of events, including international and national conferences, training workshops, and official meetings.

Since its inception, CICC has become a hub for knowledge exchange and collaboration, successfully hosting over 2,300 events with the participation of more than 253,731 individuals from across the globe. This remarkable engagement highlights CICC's role as a premier venue for fostering dialogue and development on critical issues in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

Since its inception, CIRDAP has achieved numerous milestones that underscore the importance of such an organization. As a pioneering institution, its mission has been to eradicate poverty and address development challenges through integrated rural development not only within the Asia-Pacific region but also beyond its

immediate sphere.

Over the years, many notable personalities, rural development practitioners, and researchers have been associated with the Centre. Their efforts have touched the lives of thousands of rural and marginalized people across Asia and around the world.

As history shapes the present, and the present guides the future, CIRDAP must look ahead with renewed purpose. The journey does not end here. As a way forward, CIRDAP is committed to strengthening partnerships with its member countries, knowledge institutions, stakeholders, and experts and national/international organizations. The Centre will continue to foster collaboration in key areas such as Digital knowledge sharing, Women's Empowerment, Nutrition, Secondary Agriculture, Rural Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Climate Change, and Disaster Management etc.

Upholding its vision as a **Centre of Excellence**, CIRDAP pledges to move forward with even greater resolve, guided by knowledge and commitment. On this auspicious occasion of the **World Rural Development Day**, CIRDAP reaffirms its promise to "leave no one behind" in the pursuit of the **Sustainable Development Goals**.



# Could Agriculture Emerge as a Profession of Choice



**DR. TARUN SHRIDHAR**

Director General, Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture, and former Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India

**A**griculture is not crop production as popular belief holds - it is the production of food and fiber from the world's land and waters. Without agriculture it is not possible to have a city, stock market, banks, university, church or army. Agriculture is the foundation of civilization and any stable economy" explains Allan Savory, Zimbabwean livestock farmer turned politician.

Wouldn't one like to see a day when a young urban middle class teenager promptly replies that I wish to become a farmer when I grow up when asked the question as to what his or her aim in life is. Not a doctor or engineer or civil servant, but a farmer.

However, it may appear to be a pipe dream of fairy tale proportions in today's disturbed times. Considering that agriculture has been in distress for long, current times may not be as dramatic as they appear; they also offer an opportunity to listen and think differently. So the dream could be realised if the root of the problems is addressed rather than the symptoms. A farmer truly understands the critical importance of root which gives the plant its strength, support and sustenance. Vision should be long term; seeing only till the end of a year or a short period would be narrow. Further, we should clearly understand the difference between having a vision and making a vision statement. We have a plethora of the latter, inevitably all by thinkers, scientists, academia, policy makers et.al, but none by the farmers. Vision, in contrast, is a shared dream, goal, target of all stakeholders. Before I too add my theoretical two bits to the multifarious solutions proposed for Indian

agriculture, a brief stock taking and analysis of the sector may be useful.

Within the current decade we shall gain the dubious distinction of being the most populous nation in the world; we already have the largest rural population. This would also mean that we have the biggest consumer base in the world. As on date, we are either the global leaders or holding one of the first three positions in the production of pulses, wheat, rice, jute, vegetables, fish etc. Owning the largest livestock population we have been the biggest milk producer for more than a decade now; and close on the heels of the first position holder in egg and meat production. So in absolute terms we are huge, but low productivity plagues us, be it per hectare, per cattle/livestock, per unit of input or effort. Half the country's population is engaged in agriculture, and this includes livestock, but contributes a meagre less than 16% to the national GDP. This simple fact itself gives a clear idea of how low our productivity is, and what a lost opportunity it amounts to.

Another bane is the small size of the holdings which is an inherent impediment to higher productivity; 86% agriculture land holdings are less than 2 hectares. Poor farm infrastructure, limited value addition, inefficient markets, lack of access to credit are some of the other formidable challenges. Contrary to the romanticism of rural life and farming visualised by the urbanites through cinema and other such mass media, the reality of farming is rather harsh; it has become a thankless task. No wonder that agriculture today is merely a basic food production system, it is long dead as a profession. Obviously, the farmer is wary of any long term investment and hence content to live from harvest to harvest. Such risk aversion stands against the principles of growth. The end result is that the farmer manages to share only a small fraction of the end retail price of his produce, the bulk being cornered by the trader, processor, retailer and other such entities along the supply chain. Against this background, what scenarios should we be envisaging and working on?

Food security was the guiding principle of the green revolution, we now need to move on to income security and there on to prosperity through agriculture. The

country has more than adequate surpluses to promote such a move. Moreover, our food production approach and system should move away from calorie centric production to nutrition focused produce, an approach of looking beyond basic cereals. This would lend greater profitability to agriculture.

The green revolution, no doubt, was a strong movement infusing modern technology, inputs and farming practices resulting in increased production, especially of foodgrains. Our inability to look beyond gradually resulted in the onset of stagnation, and now the past success of this revolution has become a burden in the form of low value farm surpluses. It is important to differentiate between food and agriculture. While food is one of the biggest items of household expenditure, the money flows more to value addition rather than agriculture. Therefore, doubling production does not necessarily mean doubling farmers' income. Contrast this with the white revolution i.e. the operation flood which was farmer focused rather than being technology centric and production obsessed. Milk production has been consistently growing at above 6% per annum compared to 2-3% of the crop sector, and the milk producer obtaining about 70% of the retail consumer price. Agriculture could do well through a paradigm shift in approach from production to value, a shift from quantity to quality, both of the produce and the life of the farmer; a model already demonstrated effectively by the white revolution.

Rainbow revolution is an attractive nomenclature given to an integrated development of agriculture encompassing cereal crops, horticulture, dairy, poultry, aquaculture,





meat production etc.; seeing the whole rather than a narrow focus on farm crops. It is a realisation that besides addressing the issue of meeting the rapidly growing consumption and demand of animal protein, it would also be a much greater contribution to enhanced farmer income. Future policies and strategies of agriculture must involve all livestock, poultry and fisheries activities as the real potential of growth exists here.

A simple and desirable solution to profitability is reducing input costs and increasing the monetary value of the output, a basic tenet all businesses work upon. So should it be in agriculture, the mantra being to produce more with less; much like the call for “more crop per drop”. Effective input controls would entail, inter alia, effective water management. At the other end of the spectrum would be output management by way of efficient supply chains and value addition. After all, isn’t it a pity that nearly 20% of our fruit and vegetables perish on account of poor supply chain, and a large quantity realises low returns due to lack of value addition. The situation in fish is no different. Various empirical studies indicate that in agriculture produce such as fruits & vegetables, milk etc. the return to the farmer could be as much as four times higher through value added products. A clear advice that investment in strengthening supply chains and building processing infrastructure should be accorded a high priority.

Possibilities are endless, so could be the suggested

interventions. Some of the other important and decisive ones are 1. Reforming the extension system; the research in new breeds, seeds, technology, practices etc. is still far out of reach of the farmer. He relies more upon his own traditional knowledge and experience rather than the extension system, which in any case is characterised by a complete disappearance. 2. Promote high growth and higher value commodities as we have already established the need to look beyond food security. This would also require facilitating crop diversification, and again the extension machinery’s role becomes critical. 3. Shift from basic farming to efficient, productive and, above all, sustainable farming; next generations should adopt it willingly as a profession not a burden.

Let us admit and recognise that existing thought and approach, and the solutions they offer are outdated and ineffective. We must also recognise that both the agriculture and farmers have been captives of a narrow vision dictated either by politics and populism, or by policy makers too distant from the soil. An honest vision should accord a recognition to agriculture as a prime engine of economic growth and not merely a source of votes. Remember the words of Dr MS Swaminathan, the architect of the green revolution in our country, “Agriculture can trigger job-led economic growth, provided it becomes intellectually satisfying and economically rewarding.”



# Rural Development in Bangladesh



**A**s we celebrate the World Rural Development Day, we honor the rural communities whose resilience, labor, and culture form the bedrock of sustainable progress. This day serves as a powerful reminder that true development must be inclusive, people-centered, and grounded in the needs and aspirations of rural populations.

On this auspicious occasion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to CIRDAP and to all stakeholders, organizations, and individuals dedicated to the cause or rural development.

Today is especially historic for Bangladesh, as it was our country-alongside a core group of others-that took the lead in proposing the declaration of World Rural Development Day at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). On 6 September 2024, the UNGA unanimously adopted the resolution, proclaiming 6 July as World Rural Development Day to be observed every year.

The date, 6 July, holds deep significance as it marks the establishment of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) on 6 July 1979. This global recognition honors CIRDAP's longstanding and impactful role in promoting sustainable rural development across its member states in the Asia-Pacific region.

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in rural development-from achieving self-sufficiency in food grains and reducing poverty, to improving life expectancy, lowering child mortality, raising literacy rates, empowering women, advancing agriculture, and expanding access to water, sanitation, and rural infrastructure. Rural development programs have been central to this success, particularly in alleviating poverty in remote areas.

Since its inception in 1979 with just six member countries, CIRDAP has expanded to 15 member states. Through its work in training, research, policy advocacy, and publications, CIRDAP continues to play a vital role in empowering millions of marginalized people across the region.

CIRDAP can further enhance its impact by supporting the institutional growth of key rural development agencies in Bangladesh such as the Rural Development Academy (RDA) and the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD). This support could include facilitating international exposure and establishing digital learning platforms for knowledge exchange.

Let this day renew our collective commitment to inclusive and sustainable rural transformation, and to building a future where no rural community is left behind.

Happy World Rural Development Day!



**H.E. ASIF MAHMUD SHOJIB BHUYAIN**

Chairperson of the Governing Council (GC) of CIRDAP

& Adviser Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development

& Cooperatives Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

# Rural Development in Vietnam



**DR. NGUYEN DO ANH TUAN**

International Cooperation Department  
Ministry of Agriculture and Environment- Viet Nam

Vietnam's agriculture plays a vital role in its economy. The agricultural sector is diversified into crops, livestock, fishery, and forestry, with each sub-sector evolving toward higher quality and sustainability. The crop cultivation sector is the largest, contributing over 40% of agricultural output, while livestock and fishery are also expanding rapidly. With six eco-regions offering various climates, Vietnam can produce a wide range of agricultural products, especially tropical fruits. Each region specializes in specific commodities like rice, coffee, pepper, and cashews, supported by dedicated farming zones. The Vietnamese agricultural industry is well-organized, with hardworking and skilled farmers.

Vietnam is a major global agricultural exporter, with a robust growth in export values, reaching around 53 billion USD annually. The country's trade relationships are expanding with more diversified import and export markets. In addition, Vietnam has signed 19 Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), further enhancing its global agricultural trade potential.

The country is also focusing on sustainability through its National Action Plan for Transforming the Food System. This initiative aims to promote transparency, responsibility, and sustainability, targeting higher food safety standards, reducing food waste, and fostering green practices.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Food Innovation Hub (FIH-V) seeks to drive innovation, improve food quality, and enhance the competitiveness of Vietnamese agricultural products in global markets. The country is set to see a significant increase in the income of farmers, thanks to the development of integrated value chains and access to new technologies.

Vietnam is actively seeking international collaboration



in agriculture to further enhance its capabilities and create mutual growth opportunities. With its diverse agricultural sectors, Vietnam welcomes partnerships with foreign organizations and businesses in various areas, including sustainable farming, food processing, research, technology transfer, and value chain development. The country's participation in numerous Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and its commitment to transparent, responsible, and sustainable food systems offer a solid foundation for fruitful agricultural partnerships.

Vietnam aims to strengthen its position in the global market by enhancing productivity, improving food quality, and adopting modern technologies. By working together, we can contribute to the sustainable development of the agricultural sector and ensure food security for future generations.



# Role of AARDO in Fostering Rural Development Across Asia and Africa

Over the past 30 years, the proportion of the global population living in rural areas has steadily declined. Since 2007, fewer than half of the world's people have lived in rural regions, with that figure falling to 42.75% by 2023. However, the trend in Africa and Asia contrasts sharply with the global pattern. Together, these two continents account for nearly 90% of the world's rural population, with 59% of Africa's population and 51% of Asia's population still residing in rural areas. Despite progress all over the world in all aspects of life, rural areas in different parts of the world still face challenges like poor infrastructure, limited healthcare, inadequate education, unreliable internet, and scarce job opportunities. Youth migration, aging populations, and weak local economies further strain resources, making development, access to services, and quality of life harder to sustain. In such a situation, African Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO) role becomes more crucial in promoting and facilitating rural development through knowledge exchange, advocacy, capacity building, and collaboration among various stakeholders.

Since its establishment in 1962, AARDO has been assisting its member countries in the fields of agriculture and rural development through various initiatives, including Human Resource Development (HRD) programs, specialized training workshops, study visits, and research studies. The organization has developed a strong network of Centres of Excellence and partnerships focused on rural development, while also actively distributing essential information related to rural economics. AARDO's efforts are aligned with global frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063, enhancing capacity-

building and supporting the achievement of both national and regional development objectives.

## I. Capacity Building for Rural Progress:

### (i) AARDO's Scholarship Initiatives

AARDO has established both short-term and long-term scholarship programs in partnership with various institutions located in India, Bangladesh, Egypt, R.O. China(Taiwan), South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Zambia, Ghana to enhance human capital development in its member countries. These programs typically cover a wide range of topics, such as Green Technologies in Agri-food Systems, Carbon Trading, SME Digital Transformation Strategies; Agricultural Practices using Drones: Plan, Design, Build and Fly; Advancements in Food Technologies: Bridging Innovation with a sustainable future; Millet for Global Food Security; Innovation in Water Resource management and its challenges, Agricultural nanotechnology: Catalysing food security and Sustainability; Advances in Camel Health, Production and Technology; Ground and surface water management : Best practices across Africa and Asia; Prosperity through Cooperatives: Fisheries Management & Aquaculture, etc., thus addressing various aspects of rural and agricultural development across both continents. In recent years, the Organization realised that the African-Asian countries need technology-based intervention for rural advancement and initiated long term course like masters programmes on technology, agriculture and management in countries like India, South Korea, and R.O. China(Taiwan). These scholarship programs have helped build a skilled workforce in rural areas, improve governance related to rural development, and foster long-term partnerships between member countries. Graduates of these programs typically return

to their home countries, where they play critical roles in policy formulation, technical innovation, and community-driven development.

In its endeavour in capacity building in AARDO member countries, the Government of India has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the success and development of AARDO through both financial and technical contributions. India has consistently made substantial financial contributions over and above its membership contribution and since 2009, providing and annual additional contribution of US \$200,000 and now enhanced further to US \$ 250,000 per annum for capacity-building programs of the officials of AARDO member countries. This renewed commitment aims to empower rural communities by fostering knowledge-sharing, capacity development, and sustainable practices in AARDO member countries. Moreover, India continues to offer scholarships through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme to help train officials from developing countries, facilitating South-South cooperation. The ultimate goal of these collective efforts is to uplift rural livelihoods and ensure a brighter, more prosperous future for rural populations in Asia and Africa.

### (ii) Study Visit & Deputation of Experts

Study visits and the deputation of experts are significant components of AARDO's initiatives aimed at enhancing rural development and agriculture in its member countries. Study visits allow representatives from member nations to explore best practices, innovative technologies,

and successful development models in various contexts. During these visits, participants have the opportunity to engage with local stakeholders, gain firsthand experience, and learn from practical case studies, which can then be adapted and implemented in their own regions.

## H.E. DR. MANOJ NARDEOSINGH

Secretary General of the African-Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO), New Delhi.





as this project mainstreamed several young men and women and created sustainable income opportunities for them through aquaculture. Similarly, several women were supported through a Rural Women Empowerment Revolving Fund in Jordan(2021), which offers interest-free, collateral-free loans to rural women for starting or expanding small businesses, after they were trained in entrepreneurship and financial management, which helped them in build confidence and independence while driving community development and advancing gender equality.

### III. Technology Transfer & The Affordable Technology Menu (ATM)

Technology Transfer involves the dissemination of innovative agricultural practices, tools, and techniques that can improve productivity and efficiency in rural areas. AARDO facilitates this by sensitizing its member countries by organizing online training programmes, workshops, and demonstrations, where agricultural professionals can learn about new technologies and their applications. By fostering collaboration between research institutions, governments, and other stakeholders, AARDO ensures that relevant advancements reach the grassroots level, enabling communities to benefit from modern agricultural practices. With the support from the office of the Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India, several innovations in the fields of agriculture rural development were gifted to countries like Ghana, Sudan, Zambia and Namibia recently.

The Affordable Technology Menu (ATM) initiative focuses on providing a range of cost-effective, accessible technologies tailored for smallholder farmers and rural enterprises. The ATM offers a curated selection of technologies that are easy to use, economically viable, and suitable for local conditions. These technologies may include efficient irrigation systems, low-cost tools for soil management, and simple post-harvest processing techniques. By prioritizing affordability and practicality, the ATM empowers rural communities to adopt innovative solutions that enhance productivity with a reduced costs, and improve overall livelihoods.

Together, these initiatives support AARDO's mission to foster sustainable rural development by equipping

member countries with the necessary tools and knowledge to enhance agricultural practices and promote economic growth in rural areas.

### IV. Strategic Partnership and Global Alliances

The Organization is dedicated to fostering strategic collaboration and networking with key international entities, including specialized agencies of the United Nations (UN), as well as regional and national organizations—both governmental and non-governmental—across both developed and developing nations. These efforts are designed to promote collective action toward advancing agricultural and rural development in member countries. AARDO has established formal agreements with several prominent organizations, including the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) in Sudan, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in Zambia, the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) in Turkey, the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) in New Delhi, India, , the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), also known as the World Forestry Centre in Kenya, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in the Republic of Korea, and the International Tropical Fruits Network (TFNet) in Malaysia, among others, to facilitate mutual cooperation. By collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders—including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academic institutions—AARDO leverages collective expertise and resources to address the multifaceted challenges of rural development. These partnerships enable AARDO to facilitate technology transfer, share best practices, and implement joint projects that bolster agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods.

### Digital Transformation of AARDO's Rural Development Programs During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AARDO swiftly transitioned its rural development programs from offline to virtual platforms, ensuring continued support for rural communities. It conducted online training on sustainable agriculture, micro-credit, and financial inclusion, while organizing webinars on gender equality and youth empowerment. E-learning modules focused on water management, business development, and

digital marketing empowered rural youth and women. Additionally, AARDO facilitated virtual knowledge-sharing platforms and used remote monitoring tools to track project progress. These digital initiatives not only ensured the continuity of vital programs but also broadened AARDO's reach, empowering more rural populations and accelerating its transition to digital rural development.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, AARDO's rural development initiatives reflect a holistic strategy aimed at empowering communities, improving livelihoods, and fostering sustainable agricultural practices across its member nations. Through various programs that emphasize knowledge sharing, capacity building, technology transfer, and the Affordable Technology Menu, AARDO promotes the implementation of innovative solutions suited to local contexts. By encouraging collaboration among member states and involving diverse stakeholders in the development process, AARDO effectively tackles critical challenges faced in rural areas while also nurturing resilience and economic growth. As AARDO aligns its initiatives with global frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, it remains dedicated to generating meaningful change and securing a prosperous future for rural communities. With India assuming the presidency of AARDO in February, 2025, the coming years are anticipated to usher in a new era of rural development initiatives for many African and Asian member countries.



# RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA



On behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, I extend our warmest congratulations to the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and its 15 esteemed Member States. We are deeply honoured to celebrate the declaration of July 6th as World Rural Development Day, an initiative led by CIRDAP that rightfully acknowledges the contributions and resilience of rural communities worldwide. This date holds particular significance for Malaysia, as CIRDAP was established through an agreement adopted in Kuala Lumpur on 29 July 1978, making this milestone a point of shared pride.

Over the years, CIRDAP has played a pivotal role in advancing rural development across the Asia-Pacific region. It has served as a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and dissemination of best practices in integrated rural development (IRD). Through its diverse portfolio of training programmes, collaborative research, policy dialogues, and model initiatives, CIRDAP has empowered Member States to strengthen rural development frameworks, enhance institutional capacities, and adopt innovative solutions tailored to local challenges. These collective efforts have significantly improved the lives of millions in rural communities, fostered regional solidarity, and supported the implementation of impactful, people-centred development strategies.

For Malaysia, rural development has been a cornerstone of national progress since our independence in 1957. Our journey began with transformative initiatives such as the establishment of the Federal Land Development

Authority (FELDA), which pioneered land settlement schemes that lifted thousands out of poverty and created a new generation of landowners. This early momentum was further strengthened under the New Economic Policy (1971–1990), which targeted poverty reduction and bridged rural–urban disparities. Today, Malaysia enjoys rural electrification coverage of 98.27% and clean water access at 97.04%—a testament to decades of sustained investment in rural infrastructure and social equity.

Building on this foundation, we now embrace a forward-looking approach through our Rural Development Policy 2030, which envisions rural areas as prosperous, inclusive, sustainable, and holistic communities. Under the national MADANI framework, Malaysia is driving transformative programmes that revitalise rural economies, strengthen food security, and nurture resilient communities. These include the Village Integrated Economic Development Project (PROSPEK), which empowers villages to build self-sustaining economic ecosystems, and Projek Rakan Kebun SKoD, a community-based farming initiative aimed at promoting food self-sufficiency and reducing living costs. Our Desa Lestari (Sustainable Village) programme



supports holistic community development by leveraging local leadership and assets to foster vibrant and self-reliant villages.

Central to our efforts is the development of human capital. The Department of Community Development (KEMAS) plays a vital role through its extensive preschool network of over 10,000 centres and by championing lifelong learning and community programmes. We are also investing heavily in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and fast-tracking digital transformation in rural areas—equipping entrepreneurs with skills in e-commerce, digital marketing, and online business to ensure their meaningful participation in the global economy.

As we commemorate this inaugural World Rural Development Day, Malaysia's rural development journey reflects an evolution from foundational infrastructure building to the creation of dynamic, empowered, and sustainable rural communities. We remain committed to sharing our experiences, learning from our regional partners, and working together to build a more equitable and prosperous rural future across the Asia-Pacific.

Thank you.

**H.E. DATO' SERI  
DR. AHMAD ZAHID HAMIDI**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural  
and Regional Development of Malaysia



# Rural Development in Myanmar



**O**n the occasion of World Rural Development Day 2025, it is my great privilege to extend warm greetings and best wishes to the international community and our fellow member countries of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). Myanmar takes great pride in being an active and committed member of CIRDAP and warmly joins this meaningful observance by reflecting on our national achievements and ongoing efforts in advancing rural development.

Rural development holds critical importance in Myanmar, where 70 percent of country's population reside in rural areas. Rural poverty remains nearly three times higher than urban

**H.E. U HLA MOE**

Union Minister,  
Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development,  
Myanmar

poverty, presenting significant challenges to inclusive growth and balanced national development. In response, the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development has been implementing a range of inclusive and sustainable measures aimed at narrowing the development gap and improving the quality of life in rural communities.

Guided by the Myanmar Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan and the Rural Development Strategic Framework, substantial progress has been achieved across multiple sectors. These include the enhancement of the cooperative sector in agriculture and livestock-based production, the improvement of rural infrastructure, the comprehensive development of rural socio-economic life, and the advancement of small and medium-sized cottage industries.

Specifically, to strengthen the cooperative sector, activities involve the formation of cooperative societies, the sale of agricultural machinery and inputs on an installment basis, the provision of microfinance credit programs, and the implementation of capacity-building initiatives. In the infrastructure sector, extensive projects have been carried out to construct rural roads and bridges, establish safe water supply systems, and implement rural electrification. These efforts have collectively improved year-round access to social services, essential infrastructure, and markets,

To promote financial inclusion and livelihood enhancement, the Revolving Fund Project and Rural Business Fund Project have been effectively implemented, providing credit services for smallholder farmers and micro, small, and medium-sized business owners while



supporting income diversification. Complementary to these efforts, the Ministry has prioritized human capital development through vocational training and livelihood support programs tailored to local market needs. These initiatives have created job opportunities, supported micro-entrepreneurship, and empowered rural women and youth.

Notably, we have emphasized the importance of inclusiveness, coherence, and comprehensiveness in our poverty reduction efforts. Thus, the SMART Village Project was initiated to bring together various sectors, including ecological protection, and create a holistic approach that addresses the diverse challenges faced by our rural communities.

In support of small-scale industries, we ensure their proper registration and operation under the Small-Scale Industries Law, establishes incubation centers for vocational training and value-added production, sets up research laboratories for product safety testing, and extends microfinance services to facilitate livelihood activities and household income generation.

Looking ahead, Myanmar remains fully committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will continue to prioritize integrated, community-centered development approaches while deepening regional cooperation through CIRDAP and other international partnerships. On this special occasion, I wish to reaffirm Myanmar's dedication to advancing rural development and contributing to shared progress for a resilient, inclusive, and prosperous Asia-Pacific region.



# Rural Development in Iran



**H.E. GHOLAMREZA NOURI**

Minister of Agriculture Jihad  
Islamic Republic of Iran

**R**ural development has always occupied a pivotal position in the ideological and policy discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rooted in the principles of the Islamic Revolution, it has remained a priority for the nation's highest leadership—from the late Imam Khomeini (may peace be upon him) to Ayatollah Khamenei. This comprehensive approach integrates economic self-sufficiency, social justice, cultural preservation, and the empowerment of local rural capacities. Rural development is thus not merely an economic endeavor but a strategic pathway to achieving equitable growth, reinforcing religious and revolutionary values, and fortifying the nation's social fabric.

#### Historical Commitment to Rural Progress

Demonstrating this commitment, just four months after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Imam Khomeini established Jihad-e Sazandegi—a revolutionary institution dedicated to eradicating deprivation and advancing rural

and nomadic development. Through direct engagement with local communities, this organization implemented transformative projects in infrastructure, water supply, electrification, healthcare, and education, significantly improving living standards and connectivity in rural Iran. In 2000, a major institutional reform merged Jihad-e Sazandegi with the Ministry of Agriculture, forming the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad. This restructuring aimed to enhance efficiency and centralize governance for sustainable agricultural and rural development, marking a new chapter in Iran's rural policy framework.

#### A Farmer and Rural-Centric Vision for Sustainable Development

Today, the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad operates in alignment with the Islamic-Iranian Model of Progress, serving as the cornerstone of rural and agricultural advancement. Iran's national policies recognize rural development not as a secondary extension of agriculture but as a holistic strategy to elevate quality of life, ensure economic stability, and curb rural-to-urban migration. In recent years, the Ministry has shifted from an agriculture-centric to a farmer and rural-centric approach, emphasizing sustainable development, productivity, inclusivity, and food security. This paradigm seeks to empower farmers and rural stakeholders as the primary agents of progress in agriculture and rural prosperity.

#### Global Collaboration for Local Impact

Engagement with international organizations and knowledge exchange play a vital role in the Ministry's strategy. These partnerships enhance policymaking, boost productivity, and accelerate progress toward sustainable rural development. Notably, the Ministry's efforts in job creation, poverty alleviation, and human capital development earned it the prestigious Aziz-UI Haqq Rural Development Medal from the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP).

Through collaborative projects, research, and training



programs, the Ministry facilitates innovation and technology transfer in agriculture and rural development. Participation in international workshops—such as CIRDAP's training courses—supports knowledge sharing and the adaptation of successful global models to Iran's context.

Iran's membership in multilateral forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS further expands opportunities for resource sharing, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. The Ministry also welcomes CIRDAP's proposal to designate July 6th as World Rural Development Day under the United Nations, believing it will foster global coordination, awareness, and accelerated action for rural communities worldwide.

#### Toward a Shared Future of Prosperity

Given Iran's positive trajectory in rural development, we are confident in realizing our goals for this vital sector. By leveraging the expertise of CIRDAP member states and other international partners, Iran is poised to contribute meaningfully to global food security and rural progress. This exchange of knowledge and multilateral cooperation not only elevates the livelihoods of Iranian rural communities but also offers a replicable model for other nations.

Through unity—both national and international—we can forge a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for rural societies everywhere.

# Rural Development in Sri Lanka



**R**ural development has been a primary objective of national progress in Sri Lanka. After the establishment of the new government, special attention has been given to uplifting the living standards of rural communities. We undoubtedly acknowledge that our nation's heartbeat lies within the lives of people in the rural villages. Accordingly, numerous agricultural projects have been successfully implemented in villages for rural development, focusing strongly on increasing production and productivity in agricultural systems, and we have completed the first steps towards ensuring food security in the country.

Among them, we have taken a successful step forward by allocating necessary provisions for the development of rural infrastructure. Projects have been implemented to renovate and restore to proper condition kilometers of rural roads according to standards and return them to the ownership of rural communities. Through this, connectivity between remote villages and urban centers has significantly improved, access to markets for farmers has become easier, and we have engaged in the noble task of improving the transportation convenience of rural populations.

Sri Lanka has now taken a significant step forward in the agriculture sector. According to statistical data, 26.9% of the employed population is engaged in agriculture-related services. We are successfully moving forward with

projects aimed at increasing the income and production advantage of small-scale farmers by promoting modern agricultural technologies, directing farmers toward the use of high-quality seeds and fertilizers, establishing farmer organizations, and introducing good agricultural practices such as drip irrigation, greenhouse farming, and organic agriculture.

By setting a government-controlled price for one kilogram of paddy to encourage paddy farmers, and by renovating 11 paddy storage facilities for the 2025 Maha season and storing 45,000 metric tons of paddy, we have taken the first step toward making the country self-sufficient in rice—this is a victory we have already achieved.

Tea, coconut, and rubber are among our major export crops.

| Serial No | Crop    | Export Income (USD Million) | Annual Growth |
|-----------|---------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 01.       | Tea     | 1,435.86                    | 9.62%         |
| 02.       | Coconut | 856.39                      | 20.9%         |
| 03.       | Rubber  | 1,001.54                    | 7.66%         |

(Sources: publicfinance.lk, srilankabusiness.com, readsrilanka.com, newswire.lk)

From export crops like tea, coconut, and rubber, Sri Lanka earned a total income of USD 3,293.79 million in 2024. This shows a significant growth compared to the year 2023. This growth can be considered a strong advancement in Sri Lanka's export sector and a major contribution to the economy.

In 2024, Sri Lanka's cinnamon (Ceylon Cinnamon) export sector showed remarkable growth. A trade agreement has been signed to commence cinnamon exports to China from January 2025, which opens a vast market for Sri Lankan cinnamon.

In April 2023, cinnamon export income was USD 53.3 million, and by April 2024, it had increased to USD 56.1 million. The total income for 2024 was approximately USD 250 million (Sources: lankanewsweb.net, readsrilanka.com).

The Sri Lanka Cinnamon Development Department has set a target to double cinnamon export income to USD



500 million in 2024. To achieve this target, plans are already in place to increase the annual capacity by 25,000 metric tons and expand cinnamon cultivation into newly identified areas.

Furthermore, under the Department of Agriculture, six agricultural schools have been established in various parts of Sri Lanka, aiming to enhance agricultural education and direct more youth toward agriculture. By providing training and financial assistance for agricultural entrepreneurship projects for youth, we are engaged in the massive task of reorienting a young generation that had distanced itself from agriculture. Another goal is to broaden the product flow through value-added products made from village-level agricultural production.

Special attention has been paid to identifying rural poverty and directing rural women—beyond their domestic duties—toward contributing to family economic growth and income generation, thereby contributing to national development. Projects have been implemented for this purpose, including training programs, attitude development initiatives, empowerment programs, and microfinance facilities, establishing a strong foundation for rural development.

Finally, the rural development projects currently underway in Sri Lanka stand as testimony to the strong commitment toward sustainable development. The achievements made thus far are rooted in the strength, innovation, and unity of rural communities. Going forward, continued investment, resource provision, and community participation are essential, and it is our responsibility to move forward without leaving any village behind.

Thank you.

**H.E. K.D. LAL KANTHA**

Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Lands, and Irrigation, Sri Lanka

# Fiji's Journey Towards Inclusive Rural Development and Disaster Preparedness



**H.E. SAKIASI  
DITOKA**

Minister for Rural and  
Maritime Development and  
Disaster Management,  
Fiji

Today, as we join the global community in celebrating World Rural Development Day, we reflect with pride on the progress Fiji has made in uplifting our rural and maritime communities.

The Fiji Government's vision for rural development is rooted in inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability. For a country that is very susceptible to the impact of climate change and the extreme intensity of natural disasters, this vision becomes more prevalent than ever. Being a small island nation amongst the bigger economies that are members of the Centre of Integrated Rural Development for the Asia Pacific, Fiji is privileged to join them in our solidarity to give prominence to the development of rural areas in our respective countries. Our citizens who live in rural areas deserve to be served with a perspective of equality and fairness so that they are not left behind. As rural development practitioners we stand committed to our aspirations that we will support our citizens with passion and determination to uplift their standard of living, empowering them to enhance their skills, resources and talents, whilst they enjoy their lives with pride in their living environment.

Fiji's rural region is home to 44.1% of our population. These communities hold vast potential for sustainable growth, innovation, and leadership. This potential is what drives the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management to transform rural development in Fiji, guided by the Coalition Government's National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050. As the agency that administers the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024, it is imperative that we foster a culture of resilience and disaster risk reduction initiatives bundled in our rural development programmes. The Ministry has been in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Governance for Resilience Project (Gov4Res) and the United Nations



for International Organisation for Migration on such programmes. We also acknowledge and appreciate our unwavering commitment and support from prominent partners, including the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea, for providing resources to support the Ministry in various initiatives towards disaster risk reduction for the safety of our vulnerable communities across the country. We acknowledge that CIRDP is also including these topics in its development programmes as they are our common needs and we must embrace changes that require us to be adaptable and resilient countries.

As we mark this special day, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the community leaders, government officials, development partners, and every Fijian across our remote rural and maritime communities who continue to contribute to this shared mission - where all communities - urban, rural, and maritime - can enjoy equal opportunities and the same level of access to rural development. We will do our best in ensuring that rural voices are heard and prioritised in our national development agenda.

Happy World Rural Development Day! God Bless CIRDP and its member countries.

**Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank You!**

# Rural Development in Myanmar



**O**n the occasion of World Rural Development Day 2025, it is my great privilege to extend warm greetings and sincere best wishes to the international community and fellow member countries of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). Myanmar is proud to be an active and committed member of CIRDAP and is pleased to join in this meaningful global observance by reflecting on our national efforts and highlighting the tangible impacts of our rural development initiatives.

Rural development continues to be a central pillar of Myanmar's national agenda. With over 70 percent of our population residing in rural areas, promoting inclusive and sustainable rural progress is essential not only for improving individual livelihoods, but also for achieving balanced, equitable national development. Despite years of progress, rural poverty remains nearly three times higher than in urban areas, compounded by limited access to infrastructure, essential services, and livelihood opportunities.

In response to these enduring challenges, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar through the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development and the Department of Rural Development (DRD) has adopted a comprehensive, integrated approach guided by national frameworks such as the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) and the Rural Development Strategic Framework.

A cornerstone of this strategy is infrastructure development. Under the Rural Roads and Bridges activities, the DRD has successfully constructed and rehabilitated more than 35,000 kilometers of rural roads and over 3,000 bridges, significantly improving connectivity

**MR. THEIN LWIN**  
Director General  
Department of Rural Development

in remote and hard-to-reach areas. These infrastructure upgrades have been transformative, reducing travel times, enhancing market access, and linking rural communities with schools, health facilities, and administrative services—thereby narrowing the rural-urban divide and unlocking new opportunities for social and economic inclusion.

Equally important has been the expansion of access to clean water and sanitation. Through the Community Water Supply and Sanitation activities, safe drinking water systems such as tube wells, rainwater harvesting facilities, and gravity-fed pipelines have been installed in thousands of villages. These efforts are complemented by improved sanitation infrastructure and hygiene education campaigns, leading to substantial gains in public health, particularly in disaster-prone and water-scarce regions. Collectively, these initiatives have improved daily life and bolstered community resilience.

An innovative dimension of our rural strategy is represented by the SMART Village Project, a model that integrates infrastructure, energy, education, agriculture, water supply, and climate adaptation within a locally tailored, multi-sectoral framework. By encouraging the adoption of green technologies, digital tools, and disaster-resilient infrastructure, the SMART Village Project seeks to future-proof rural communities. These villages serve as pilot sites intended for broader replication, reinforcing Myanmar's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to building climate-resilient rural systems.

Another vital component is participatory governance through the Village Development Planning (VDP) Programme. This initiative empowers communities to identify and prioritize their own development needs, fostering a bottom-up approach that enhances local ownership, transparency, and trust. Thousands of micro-projects—ranging from infrastructure improvements to livelihood training—have been implemented through this process, reaching hundreds of townships and strengthening the relationship between rural communities and local administrations.

A cornerstone of economic empowerment in rural Myanmar is the Mya Sein Yaung Project, also known as the Evergreen Village Development Project. Through the provision of revolving funds, this initiative enables communities to initiate and expand income-generating activities tailored to local contexts. Since its launch, the project has reached more than 13,000 villages and over 3 million people. Its success is rooted in a strong model of community ownership, where elected village committees manage the funds, ensuring transparency, sustainability,

and meaningful impact. The project continues to enhance household incomes, promote entrepreneurship, and foster economic resilience at the grassroots level.

Supporting this economic empowerment agenda is the Rural Business Fund, which broadens access to credit for smallholder farmers, rural entrepreneurs, and self-help groups. Combined with financial literacy training and business planning support, this initiative has enabled families to diversify their livelihoods and reduce dependence on subsistence farming. Special attention is given to women-headed households and marginalized groups, further advancing the goal of inclusive, gender-responsive development.

Human capital development is equally critical to sustaining rural transformation. The DRD has implemented wide-ranging vocational and skills training programmes focused on youth, women, and vulnerable populations. Training areas include agriculture, food processing, tailoring, construction, and mobile phone repair, among others. These programmes often provide graduates with starter kits or linkages to local markets, enabling them to convert newly acquired skills into productive livelihoods. In doing so, they reduce rural-urban migration and help anchor economic opportunity within communities.

At the heart of all these efforts lies a shared commitment to community ownership, transparency, inclusivity, and resilience. The results are not just visible in statistical progress, but in the lives of rural people—women leading savings groups, young people launching businesses, children accessing education through improved infrastructure, and families enjoying clean, safe drinking water for the first time.

Nonetheless, challenges persist. Geographic remoteness, seasonal flooding, the impacts of climate change, and limited fiscal resources continue to test the resilience of rural communities. Yet, the Government of Myanmar remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing rural development through innovative, adaptive, and collaborative solutions. Continued engagement with regional partners, particularly through platforms such as CIRDAP, remains essential to overcoming these obstacles and sharing successful practices.

As we commemorate World Rural Development Day 2025, Myanmar reaffirms its dedication to inclusive, people-centered rural development. We strongly believe that rural transformation is not only a path to poverty reduction, but also a vital foundation for peace, stability, and shared prosperity. It is our sincere hope that our experience contributes to the regional dialogue and that together, we can build a future where no rural community is left behind.

# Rural Development in Bangladesh



It is with immense pride that I convey my heartfelt greetings and best wishes to all stakeholders, policymakers, practitioners, and development enthusiasts across the Asia-Pacific region on the historic occasion of the first celebration of World **Rural Development Day**.

The declaration of World Rural Development Day by CIRDAP is a truly visionary initiative. It recognizes the fundamental reality that the world remains, at its core, a rural world, with approximately 43% of the global population still living in rural areas. For Bangladesh, the significance is even greater, as around 61% of the country's population resides in rural communities. By focusing global attention on rural development, this occasion serves as a timely reminder that sustainable national progress is inseparable from the well-being and empowerment of rural people.

As the Director General of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), I feel deeply privileged to lead an institution that has been a pioneer in advancing rural development for more than six decades. Since its establishment on 27 May 1959, BARD has played a crucial role in shaping rural development practices. Guided by the vision of becoming

**MR. SAIF UDDIN AHMED**

Director General  
Bangladesh Academy for Rural  
Development (BARD), Cumilla, Bangladesh

a leading institution for better ideas and practices in rural development, BARD's mission is to nurture the trend of sustainable rural advancement through training, research, and action research, and to propose innovative strategies that open new horizons for rural prosperity. BARD's legacy is closely tied to the globally acclaimed Comilla Model of Rural Development, a landmark initiative that transformed rural development paradigms in the 1960s. The Comilla Model evolved out of a series of experimental pilot projects conducted in Comilla Kotwali Thana, BARD's designated social laboratory area. It was driven by the search for practical and innovative solutions to rural poverty in a densely populated agrarian society.

The Comilla Model was built upon four key components:

- 1. Two-Tier Cooperative System**, promoting farmer-led institutions for collective action and empowerment.
- 2. Rural Works Programme (RWP)**, creating rural infrastructure and employment through community participation.
- 3. Thana Irrigation Programme (TIP)**, expanding irrigation facilities to boost agricultural productivity.
- 4. Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC)**, strengthening local capacities and shifting rural development from a colonial administrative approach to a pro-people service delivery system.

Through these initiatives, the Comilla Model brought about a paradigm shift—moving away from top-down, bureaucratic interventions toward participatory, community-driven rural development. It not only improved livelihoods by enhancing agricultural productivity and rural infrastructure but also laid the foundations for a more inclusive and responsive rural governance system.



The development and success of the Comilla Model were rooted in a meticulous and participatory methodology:

- **Establishment of BARD** as a specialized training, research, and pilot project institution.
- **Survey research and action research** in a designated laboratory area to develop viable rural development models.
- **Thorough consultations with villagers**, identifying their problems and collectively designing solutions.
- **Close collaboration with the National Planning Commission** for strategic alignment with national policies.
- **Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and refinement** of the pilot projects based on field realities.
- **Assisting government agencies** in scaling up and replicating successful models across the country.

The impact of the Comilla Model extended far beyond its initial pilot area. It inspired the establishment of several **independent institutions** in Bangladesh that continue to play vital roles in rural development. Examples include the **Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB)** for cooperative development, the **Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)** for rural infrastructure, the **Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC)** for irrigation development, and the **Upazila Complexes** for decentralized rural service delivery — all of which evolved from the pioneering ideas and practices initiated under BARD's action research framework. Building on the strong foundation laid by the Comilla Model, BARD continued its tradition of innovation. In the 1980s, BARD introduced major initiatives like the **Small Farmers and Landless Labourers Development Project (SFDP)** and the **Comprehensive Village Development Programme (CVDP)**, further deepening its commitment to participatory and integrated rural development.

To date, BARD has **experimented with 74 action research projects**, many of which have significantly influenced national rural development policies and practices. Moreover, BARD has conducted **over 750 research studies** and continues to produce around **10 new research studies** each year, helping to shape new ideas and strategies for sustainable rural development.

Today, BARD's core functional activities include:

- **Training of government officials**, local government representatives, NGO personnel, and community leaders, conducting an average of 195 training courses and reaching over 8,300 participants annually.
- **Research and evaluation** studies generating evidence for policy and programme development.
- **Seminars, conferences, and workshops** at both national and international levels.
- **Advisory and consultancy services** for the government and development organizations.
- **Piloting innovative projects and models** for sustainable rural development.

Amidst the evolving landscape of rural transformation in the 21st century, BARD remains at the forefront of action research in emerging and priority areas, including:

- **Agricultural mechanization and collective farming** through community enterprises.
- **Floodplain aquaculture and safe food production.**
- **Adaptation practices for livelihood improvement in charlands.**
- **E-Parishad initiatives** to strengthen service delivery and rural governance.
- **Rural tourism and handicrafts promotion** for income diversification.



- **Social inclusion programs** targeting women, differently-abled individuals, and elderly populations.
- **Community-based support models for rural elderly and persons with disabilities** to enhance social inclusion through participatory action research.

BARD has been hosting the International Conference on



Governance and Development (INSEARCH) for more than a decade. Hosting the INSEARCH Conference at BARD has reinforced its role as a center for applied and policy-relevant research. By bringing together global experts to explore governance, education, and environmental sustainability, the event supported BARD's mission to advance community-based solutions aligned with the SDGs.

BARD maintains partnerships with national and international organizations to advance inclusive and sustainable rural development. Domestically, it collaborates with ministries, agencies, NGOs, and academic institutions. Internationally, BARD has worked with FAO, UNDP, ILO, and AARDO on capacity building, action research, and policy advisory. These collaborations have strengthened BARD's capabilities and global influence in shaping rural development agendas.

BARD's collaboration with CIRDAP remains a source of pride, as CIRDAP itself began its journey from BARD's campus in Cumilla. Over the years, BARD and CIRDAP have worked together in joint training programs, research studies, and policy support initiatives aimed at advancing integrated rural development across the Asia-Pacific region.

As we celebrate the first World Rural Development Day, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles of inclusive growth, people's participation, innovation, and sustainability. Guided by the spirit of the Comilla Model, BARD remains dedicated to fostering a future where rural communities are not merely recipients of development but are active agents of their own transformation.

Let us work hand in hand to uphold the vision of prosperous, equitable, and sustainable rural communities. Wishing all the successes of **World Rural Development Day** in advancing inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

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# Rural Development Through Innovation, Accountability, and Community-Led Governance



**DR. K. PRABHAKAR**  
Assistant Professor & Head (i/c)

It is an honor to contribute to the Special Edition of Agriculture World magazine on the occasion of World Rural Development Day, a landmark achievement led by the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). As a proud member of the CIRDAP Experts Group since its inception, I am privileged to share my contributions to advancing rural development through research, training, and innovative tools that foster good governance and social accountability.

With 19 years of experience in the development sector, I have had the opportunity to work with esteemed institutions like the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), Bangalore, and the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad. At PAC, I developed the Citizen Report Card Plus (CRC+), an innovative supply-side accountability tool designed to assess internal program data, track progress, and provide policy directions for reforms. Additionally, I authored a comprehensive manual on social accountability tools, including CRC, Community Score Cards (CSC), and budget analysis, empowering development practitioners to enhance service delivery.

Since joining NIRDPR in 2014 as Assistant Professor and Head (i/c) of the Centre for

Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (CPME), I have focused on strengthening governance frameworks through community-led approaches. One significant initiative was a training program on Social Accountability Tools for Good Governance, which included a session on the Community Score Card (CSC). This tool was piloted in three villages—Deoli, Ladiyapur, and Khandawli—in Faridabad, Haryana, to improve the Public Distribution System (PDS). By engaging communities to identify issues and provide feedback, the CSC facilitated measurable improvements in PDS service delivery. Pre- and post-test evaluations using CSC indicators demonstrated enhanced performance and quality at the grassroots level. These findings were published in the African-Asian Journal of Rural Development (Vol. LIII, No. 2, July–December 2020 <https://surl.li/bdnetu>), highlighting the transformative role of community participation in service delivery.

In 2022, as part of CIRDAP's Expert Team of Excellence, I delivered a webinar on "Governance to Good Governance: Need & Role of Social Accountability Tools", emphasizing participatory mechanisms to strengthen rural governance. These efforts underscore the importance of empowering communities to drive sustainable development.

On this World Rural Development Day, I reaffirm my commitment to fostering inclusive, accountable, and community-driven rural progress. I am grateful to CIRDAP for its leadership and vision in promoting integrated rural development across the Asia-Pacific. Together, let us continue to inspire and implement solutions that uplift rural communities and ensure equitable growth.

## Key Publications:

1. Citizen Report Card + - Facilitating Accountability and Reform in Governance" An Application of CRC+ in police services and maternal health -An Implementation Manual" published by Public Affairs Centre Bangalore -2015
2. Microfinance Facilities Available to SHGs and Its Impact on Livelihood Options in Rural Areas of Karnataka" published by Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development

(APJORD) CIRDAP, Vol. XXVI Number 2 December 2016 ISSN 1018-5291

3. "Accountability in the Karantaka state Police" -chapter in Edited book "Developing country perspectives on public service Delivery by Anjula Gurtoo and Colin Williams" published by Springer international -2015 , ISBN : 978-81-322-2159-3 <https://goo.gl/k1DQwd>

4. Tools for assessing supply side governance: From demand side to supply side functional marker analysis (FMA) & selective expenditure tracking (SET) approach policy analysis: Paper published by Design Research Society (DRS) 2022: Bilbao 25th June -6th July 2022 -conference proceedings; Research Papers, ISBN 978-1-91229-457-2, ISSN 2398-3132 [doi.org/10.21606/drs.2022.198](https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2022.198), 25-6-2022

5. Community Participation and Service Delivery in Public Distribution System - Community Score Card as Empowered Approach for Social Accountability published by International Journal of African -Asian Journal of Rural development (African Asian Rural Development Organization - AARDO) Vol LIII, No.2 July- December 2020 issue, pages 117-136 ISSN 0972-3021

6. MGNREGA Assets and their Impact on Agriculture-A Study of Selected Districts from All the States in India" published by International Journal of African -Asian Journal of Rural development (African Asian Rural Development Organization - AARDO) Vol L1, No.1 January -June 2018 issue, page 73-93 ISSN 0972-3021

7. Aadhar Enabled Public Distribution System - An e-Governance Initiative of Accountable, Transparent and Time-Bound Service Delivery, published by International Journal of Transparency and Accountability in Governance (IJTAG) – published by the Centre for Transparency and Accountability in Governance (CTAG), National Law University, Delhi, Vol IX, 2023, Page No 169- 185, ISSN No: 2395-4337, UGC Care List. <https://nludelhi.ac.in/download/IJTAG%20IX%202023.pdf>

**All Publications details:** Referrer the link <https://nirdpr.irins.org/profile/216477>

# Rural Development in Philippines



**M**ABUHAY!  
It is a distinct honor to share this message through Agriculture World, a widely respected publication that champions integrated rural development—especially as we celebrate World Rural Development Day and the Foundation Day of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP).

At the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), we stand in full solidarity with the global rural development community in commemorating these significant milestones. These occasions remind us of our shared commitment to uplifting the lives of rural people, and to building communities that are empowered, self-reliant, and just.

Let me share with you the Philippines' strides toward this shared goal.

Since President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. assumed office on July 1, 2022, DAR has accelerated land distribution to our agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). As of April 2025, we have distributed 204,108 Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs), covering 248,090 hectares of farmland to 198,651

**H.E. MR. CONRADO M. ESTRELLA III**  
Secretary, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)  
Governing Council (GC) Member of the  
Philippines

beneficiaries. Each title handed over is not just a piece of paper but a symbol of justice, empowerment, and hope.

Equitable land ownership is the foundation of rural development. Without it, there can be no meaningful progress, and we are not stopping there.



Historically, our beneficiaries have struggled with annual land amortization payments. Many could not meet these obligations, affecting their productivity and burdening them with debt. Recognizing this, President Marcos Jr. championed the idea of condoning unpaid obligations. This vision culminated in the passage of Republic Act No. 11953, the New Agrarian Emancipation Act, which has freed over 213,000 ARBs from ₱11.6 billion in debt across 283,040 hectares—with more to follow.

This transformative law allows our farmers to redirect their resources toward improving their farms and exploring sustainable livelihoods. It has given them not



only economic relief but also renewed dignity.

We are also pressing forward with the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) Project, which empowers ARBs by providing clear, secure, and individually titled land ownership—enabling easier access to credit, investment, and market opportunities.

These programs reflect a more profound truth: rural development is not just about land. It is about people—about equipping our farmers with the tools, freedom, and opportunities to thrive.

As we mark this twin celebration with CIRDAP, we proudly share our story with fellow member countries. Through mutual learning, collaboration, and solidarity, we can raise rural development standards across Asia and the Pacific.

Let this day renew our shared commitment to putting our farmers at the heart of development, ending rural poverty, and building an inclusive, abundant, and strong countryside.

Mabuhay ang mga magsasaka! Mabuhay ang repormang agraryo! Mabuhay ang CIRDAP!



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# Rural Development in Nepal



**O**n the auspicious occasion of World Rural Development Day, I extend warm greetings and best wishes to all the citizens of the member countries of CRIDAP, especially those living and working in the rural heartlands of respective countries. This day is a reminder of the vital importance in shaping the socioeconomic framework of rural communities. Moreover, this is a very special day to reiterate the importance of the alignment of all initiatives for the rural development and transformation supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. As a member of CIRDAP, we recognize the immense value of regional cooperation and knowledge sharing in overcoming shared rural development challenges and building resilient rural communities across Asia and the Pacific.

Over the past decades, Nepal has made significant footsteps in rural development. Community forest, rural and agricultural road expansion, agriculture modernization and irrigation, entrepreneurship development and employment generation, decentralized education, health, nutrition and WASH,

services, and targeted social protection schemes have transformed rural communities. The introduction of cooperatives and microfinance has given rural women and marginalized groups access to credit, allowing them to become active participants in the economy.

Moreover, the devolution of power through federalism has provided local governments with a stronger mandate to implement development projects according to the needs of their constituencies. This shift has laid the foundation for more participatory, transparent, and accountable rural development.

Despite the progress, we must acknowledge that there are many challenges to be addressed. Climate change is affecting agricultural productivity, increasing the vulnerability of small farmers. Limited market access, poor transportation networks, and digital exclusion are keeping rural Nepal disconnected from larger economic opportunities. Gender disparities and the social exclusion of marginalized communities continue to hinder inclusive development. Furthermore, youth from rural area are increasingly migrating to cities or abroad in search of better education and employment. While remittances contribute significantly to the national economy, this trend is also leading to a shortage of workforce in villages and a decline in agricultural engagement.

To address these challenges, our development efforts must be holistic, inclusive, tailored and targeted. Investments in education and skill development, sustainable farming practices, market access, productivity, linking local products with regional and global value chain and digital connectivity are essential to ensure rural development.

Nepal is strongly committed to the principles of integrated rural development, which emphasize a multi-sectoral, participatory, and sustainable approach. We have prioritized rural development in our federal structure, empowering local governments with constitutional authority and resources to address their unique needs and priorities.

The future of every nation lies in the balanced development of both urban and rural areas and strong rural urban linkage. We must foster resilient

rural economies by supporting smallholder farmers, promoting agro-processing industries, encouraging rural tourism, and expanding entrepreneurship. The green economy, particularly organic farming, and climate-smart agriculture, can offer rural communities both sustainability and prosperity.

Strengthening rural infrastructure including roads, irrigation, communication, and market systems is crucial. Equally important is the capacity building of local governments so they can effectively plan and implement development activities. Moreover, we must ensure social inclusion in every aspect of rural development. Women, Dalits, Indigenous Communities, and People with Disabilities must be given the resources, voice, and representation they deserve. The use of technology is another key area with transformative potential. Digital literacy, mobile banking, e-commerce, telemedicine, and remote learning can bridge the gap between rural and urban areas. The government, private sector, and development partners must collaborate to make these innovations accessible in every village.

On this global day of recognition, we also thank our international development partners who have supported rural transformation through technical expertise, financial assistance, and knowledge sharing. South-South cooperation, regional collaboration, and global development forums offer valuable opportunities for learning and collective progress.

On this World Rural Development Day, I would like to renew our collective commitment to bridging the urban-rural divide and ensuring that no one is left behind. Together, we can create vibrant rural communities that thrive in harmony with nature and tradition, while embracing the opportunities of modern development. As we mark World Rural Development Day, let this not be a day of celebration alone, but one of renewed commitment. Every citizen, policymaker, institution, and youth must play their part in building a just, inclusive, and self-reliant society. The development of our villages is not just a policy matter, it is a national imperative and a moral responsibility.

**MR. RABILAL PANTH**

Secretary, MOFAGA  
Government of Nepal

# Rural Development in Philippines



On the momentous occasion of World Rural Development Day 2025, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) of the Philippines reaffirms its unwavering commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable development in our rural heartlands. As the primary government agency mandated to implement agrarian reform, the DAR has been at the forefront of transformative programs aimed at empowering landless farmers and enhancing the productivity and resilience of agrarian communities.

The Department's initiatives, including the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and its extensions, have placed land ownership in the hands of millions of Filipino farmers, providing them with the foundation for economic self-sufficiency and social equity. As a national government agency that reaches up to the municipal level - with a Central Office and Regional, Provincial, and Municipal Offices - this setup helps the DAR run its programs efficiently and address the unique issues in rural areas more effectively.

Beyond land distribution, the DAR actively implements vital support services encompassing:

- **Provision of crucial infrastructure:** Construction and rehabilitation of farm-to-market roads, irrigation systems, and post-harvest facilities to improve market access and reduce losses.



- **Capacity building and training:** Equipping agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) with modern farming techniques, entrepreneurship skills, and financial literacy to enhance their productivity and income-generating opportunities.

- **Agrarian Justice Delivery:** Ensuring equitable resolution of agrarian-related disputes and protecting the rights of ARBs.

- **Sustainable Livelihood Development:** Facilitating access to credit, market linkages, and value-adding activities to diversify income sources and build resilient livelihoods.

The DAR, in collaboration with other government agencies, also implements the Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty (PAHP) Program. It aims to mitigate hunger, ensure nutrition and food security, and reduce poverty in rural and urban communities by providing access and availability of various local nutritious products for government and private institutions by engaging agrarian reform beneficiaries organizations (ARBOs) to supply their needed requirements.

In return, the ARBOs, through DAR's support, directly supply fresh agricultural produce to various government institutions like schools, hospitals, and even jails. This

initiative provides a stable market for ARBs' products, ensures income stability, and contributes significantly to the national food supply. It also strengthens the ARBOs' entrepreneurial capabilities and their role in local food systems.

The impact of these programs is evident in the increased agricultural productivity, improved household incomes, and enhanced social well-being witnessed in our agrarian reform communities across the Philippines. We have seen



a rise in vibrant rural enterprises, greater participation of ARBs in local governance, and a renewed sense of dignity and hope within these communities.

Through land distribution, comprehensive support services, and strategic partnerships with other government agencies and international organizations, DAR is actively building a future where our agrarian reform beneficiaries are not just land owners but also successful entrepreneurs, food producers, and vital contributors to the national economy. The toil of our farmers fuels our progress, ensuring food security, economic resilience, and a vibrant rural landscape for all.

As we celebrate World Rural Development Day, the DAR remains steadfast in its mission to build prosperous and empowered agrarian communities. We

recognize that rural development is a continuous journey that requires collaborative efforts among government agencies, local communities, civil society organizations, and our international partners.

We at DAR, headed by Secretary Conrado M. Estrella III, are proud to share our experiences and successes with fellow member countries and stakeholders, and we look forward to continued collaboration towards a more equitable and sustainable future for all rural populations.

The journey towards Bagong Pilipinas, as championed by no less than our President, His Excellency Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos, Jr., is a collective one - anchored in the sweat and determination of our farmers and the unwavering support of the government. Together, as a nation, are cultivating a society rooted in equity, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

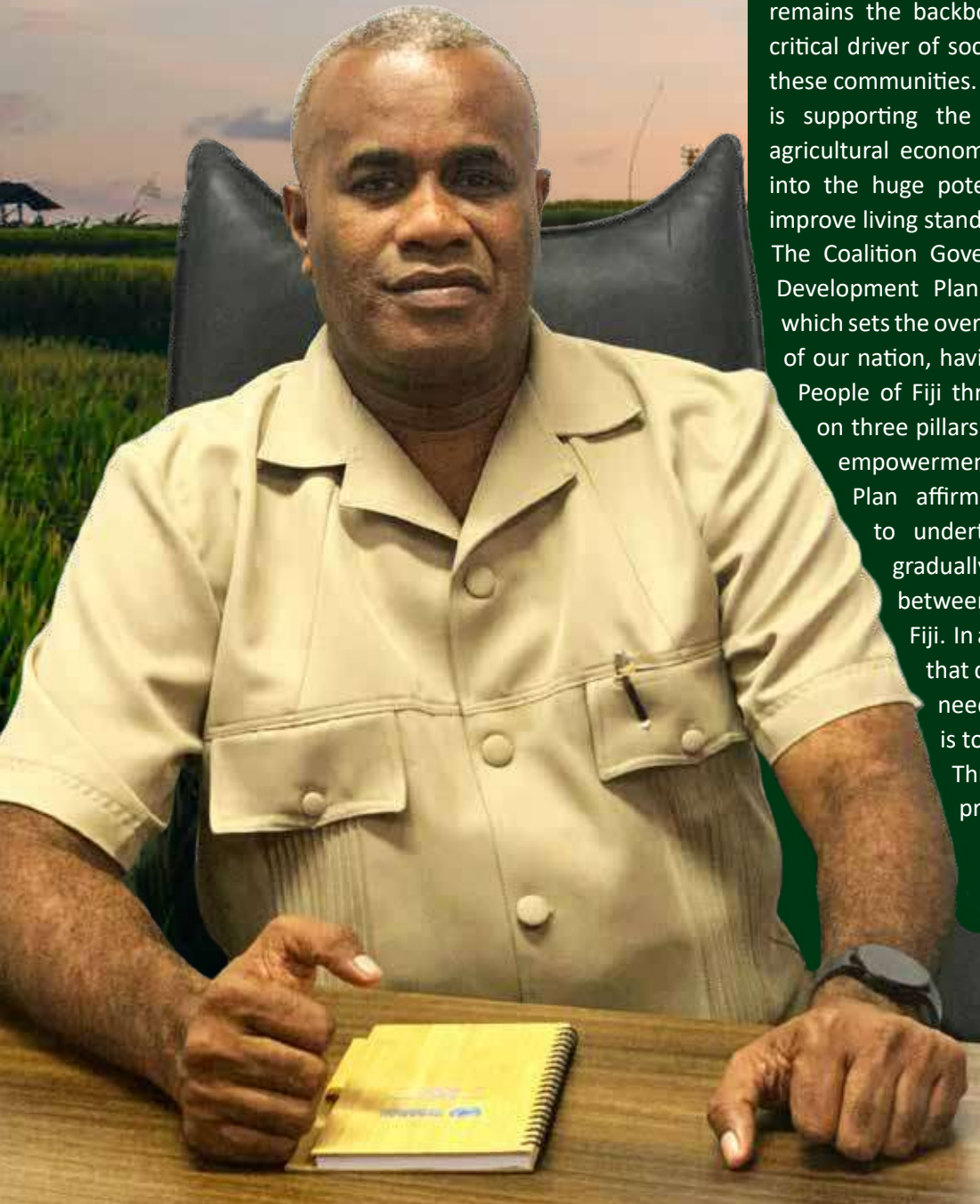
Mabuhay ang mga magsasaka! Mabuhay ang repormang agraryo! Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang CIRDAP!



**H.E. JOSEF ANGELO S. MARTIRES CESO II**

CESO Undersecretary, Support Services Office  
and CIRDAP Executive Committee Member  
Department of Agrarian Reform  
Philippines

# Building Resilient and Thriving Rural Fiji: A Commitment to Inclusive Development



Rural development remains central to Fiji's national development priorities. With **44.1%** of Fiji's population residing in rural areas and almost 71,000 agricultural households identify farming as their main economic activity, agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods and a critical driver of social and economic well-being in these communities. Nevertheless, the Government is supporting the development of other non-agricultural economic sectors in its efforts to tap into the huge potential to enhance growth and improve living standards of our rural citizens. The Coalition Government launched its National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050, which sets the overall strategy for the development of our nation, having a vision of Empowering the People of Fiji through Unity. The Plan focuses on three pillars of economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance. The Plan affirms Government's commitment to undertake transformation that will gradually reduce the development gap between the urban and rural areas of Fiji. In addition, the Plan also promotes that disaster risk reduction initiatives need to be adopted if development is to be sustainable and resilient. Through its core mandate of promoting inclusive and resilient

## MR. ISOA TALEMAIBUA

Permanent Secretary for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, Fiji

development in remote rural and maritime communities across Fiji, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management (the Ministry) currently co-ordinates planning and programme implementation through the Divisional Commissioners' Offices. The Integrated Rural Development Framework, which is currently under review, had been in place since 2009 is the mechanism used to consolidate efforts of all the Government agencies to serve the rural Fiji.

The Coalition Government is prioritising enabling access for service delivery. It has mapped out measures to improve connectivity and accessibility through the construction of better roads and jetties, and provision of basic infrastructure through bridges, coastal protection, water and sanitation facilities, electricity, better drainage, communication and transportation. The Government also prioritises mobility and access to markets through the construction, upgrading and maintaining of rural roads. In addition, measures are being taken to improve the condition and quality of schools and access to health care.

The Ministry's Community Access Road, Footpaths and Footbridges complements the Fiji Roads Authority and Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport's rural roads programmes. The target in the National Development Plan is to construct 500 kilometres of new sealed roads in rural areas. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways' target in the five years is to construct and upgrade 180 farm access roads to assist the farmers, most of whom are based in the rural areas. As for rural electrification, the Government is targeting 93% of the rural population to be accessible to electricity, and 67% of the rural population to be accessible to clean and safe water in adequate quantities. The agencies that contribute to accessing clean and safe water are the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, and the Ministry. The Ministry and WAF also have budgetary allocation to reach out to affected areas when there are water supply disruptions arising from dry-spells or droughts.

A significant tourism project that will boost the economic growth of the Northern Division's rural areas is called 'Na Vualiku Programme'. It is aimed at transforming Fiji's second largest island into a leading and thriving tourism hub. This is a \$400 million Fiji Government and World Bank collaboration to be implemented in three phases over the next 10 years. The Government will ensure

that the project achieve its aims to support sustainable tourism development, having resilient tourism infrastructure development, investments in nature-based tourism attractions and essential services and facilities, and promotion and management of protected areas. The project encourages private sector participation, targeting local resource owners as well. The project has great potential to create employment and even small and medium enterprises established by local communities.

The agriculture sector is generally associated with the rural areas across many developing countries, and the empowerment of women has been a common strategy across member CIRDAP member countries. Fiji, launched its 2022-2027 Gender in Agriculture Policy to address the gender gap in Agriculture in the country. The Gender in Agriculture policy is based on the data analysis from the Fiji Agriculture Census 2020 that shows some inequalities between women and men in the sector. The 2020 Fiji Agriculture Census recognized women's contribution to the agriculture sector, with 14% of farmers in Fiji being women. Through this Policy, Fiji is committed to achieve gender equality in agriculture, a sector of the economy that is a basis for food security, livelihoods and economic growth, including through tourism and trade.

Fiji acknowledge that CIRDAP is giving more attention to climate change and disaster risk reduction. The mainstreaming disaster risk reduction is the major thrust of the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024, and is a core responsibility of the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development. In addition, the Ministry works closely with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change for any community that has been identified for possible relocation.

Last but not the least, the development of a National Rural Development Policy has been recognised by the Coalition Government to be key in ensuring that there is better cohesion and co-ordination in its efforts to improving the quality of life of our rural people and reducing poverty. As we commemorate World Rural Development Day, the Ministry reaffirms its commitment to building resilient, self-reliant, and thriving rural communities. Being a small island state that is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the Ministry will collaborate with its counterparts in Government, development partners, and stakeholders to ensure that development of rural and maritime areas is undertaken responsibly and to lay the groundwork for a more equitable and sustainable Fiji. **Thank You!**

# Rural Development & Sustainable Agriculture



**DR. SHAIKH TANVEER HOSSAIN**

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Ambassador, IFOAM - Organics International

Ambassador, Asian Local Governments for Organic Agriculture (ALGOA)

Fellow Members and Citizens,  
I take this opportunity to greet you on the occasion of World Rural Development Day 2025. The event gives us a chance to stand with countries worldwide in the battle against hunger and in support of rural development. Accelerating rural development efforts is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and attracting international attention and response. It also gives us a chance to emphasize how vital it is to raise the standard of living for rural communities and the marginalized rural population. We should not keep anyone behind.

Since 2018, I have been actively associated with CIRDAP's many activities, including giving presentations at online webinars, as an expert in its rural development sectors. Prior to that, I oversaw the Asian Productivity Organization's (APO), Japan's joint projects with CIRDAP and acted as a APO's focal person. As my primary area of knowledge and experience aligns with CIRDAP's aim to provide technical support and promote innovative best practices on IRD across member nations, it is always a pleasure to see and work with them.

Having worked for national research, non-governmental, and intergovernmental organizations for over 29 years, I am involved with sustainable agriculture. I am passionate about using organic and agro-ecological approaches to make agricultural and food systems more sustainable. My extensive research on innovative sustainable agriculture on small farmers' living conditions has resulted improvement of rural livelihood. I graduated from Ehime University in Japan in 2008 with a PhD in agriculture, specializing in sustainable agriculture. I am pioneered the "Integrated rice-duck farming method" and the "Organic sack gardening technology" for the first time in Bangladesh. I was awarded the grand prize of the Organic Farming Innovation Award (OFIA) by the IFOAM-Organics International and RDA, South Korea in 2011, and

the Hivos Social Innovation Award (scaling category) in 2015 in the Netherlands for my Organic Sack Gardening Project. Among others, I helped Bangladesh implement the Landcare Approach as a cutting-edge tool for rural development and now serving as a Board Member of the Global Landcare, based in Australia. These innovations and programs have had a significant and proven impact on rural Bangladesh, especially in Eastern Bangladesh, in terms of reducing poverty, improving food security, increasing productivity, engaging women's participation, income generation, community development, climate change adaptation, improving nutrition, and farming in an environmentally sustainable manner. Last year in 2024, I was awarded the "Community Development Outstanding Award" from the Association of Agricultural Technology in Southeast Asia (AATSEA).

At the moment, I am an Ambassador for IFOAM-Organics International, Asian Local Government for Organic Agriculture (ALGOA), and Access Agriculture in addition to being the Director, Policy and Strategy of IFOAM-Organics Asia. These positions provide me with opportunities to support rural development and communities both within and outside of the region.

Rural development plays a critical role in our efforts to meet the SDGs, especially those that pertain to eradicating poverty, attaining zero hunger, providing clean water and sanitation, and creating sustainable communities.

Finally, as we commemorate World Rural Development Day 2025, let us promise to do everything in our power to make sure that our activities align with securing a bright future for all of us. Let us all make sure we eat a nutritious diet and support initiatives that help the less fortunate and the most vulnerable in our rural communities, who are mostly feeding the globe.

To everyone, happy World Rural Development Day! Let's keep up the fight to safeguard our people and the planet.

# Rural Development in Philippines



**W**e join the international community in commemorating World Rural Development Day and the Foundation Day of the Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). This milestone underscores our shared commitment to achieving an inclusive, sustainable, and equitable transformation in rural areas. On this significant occasion, we take great pride in highlighting the contributions of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to the advancement of rural development in the Philippines. The department's ongoing initiatives continue to have a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of millions of rural Filipinos.

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is the lead government agency in the Philippines responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and its successor, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER), as well as the newly enacted New Emancipation Law. The agency's primary mission is to distribute land to landless farmers and provide support services that empower rural communities and promote inclusive growth.



DAR operates through a decentralized system that consists of a Central Office, along with Regional, Provincial, and Municipal Offices across the country. This structure enables efficient program execution and allows for localized responses to the specific challenges faced by rural areas.

At the heart of the agency's mandate are the following core functions:

**1. Land Tenure Improvement:** Ensuring equitable land distribution through land acquisition and distribution (LAD), leasehold operations, and land surveys.

**2. Agrarian Justice Delivery:** Providing legal support to resolve land disputes, enforce agrarian laws, and uphold the rights of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).

**3. Program Beneficiaries Development (PBD):** Providing support services to ARBs and their organizations, including infrastructure development, capacity building, enterprise development, access to credit, livelihood assistance, farm productivity improvement on awarded lands, and market linkages.

DAR's comprehensive approach to rural development emphasizes social justice, economic empowerment, and national progress, going beyond just land reform. It has implemented transformative programs that significantly enhance rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity in the country. Some of the most impactful initiatives include:

#### **1. Land Acquisition and Distribution (LAD)**

Distributed millions of hectares of agricultural land to farmer-beneficiaries, empowering rural families with ownership and a sense of dignity. In 2023, Republic Act No. 11953, the New Agrarian Emancipation Act, provided

for the condonation of unpaid land amortizations for farmer-beneficiaries or agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), thereby relieving them of financial burdens and enabling them to fully own their awarded lands.

#### **2. Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT Project)**

Through the World Bank-funded SPLIT Project, DAR aims to subdivide and issue individual land titles to ARBs who previously received collective Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs). This initiative enhances tenure security and encourages increased agricultural investments and productivity.

#### **3. Social Infrastructure Building (SIB)**

SIB supports the development of group structures and institutions to empower agrarian reform beneficiaries and smallholder farmers. These social institutions provide essential services to enhance productivity and income, ensuring land security and access to basic needs.

#### **4. Enterprise Development and Economic Support (EDES)**

EDES focuses on interventions that diversify and innovate rural enterprises for agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) and smallholder farmers (SHFs). It promotes environmentally friendly technologies, market orientation, skill development, and employment generation to enhance productivity and income, thereby driving community economic growth.



**Ms. Lita M. Rosales**  
Director, Bureau of Agrarian Reform  
Beneficiaries Development (BARBD)  
and CIRDAP TC Member  
Philippines



#### 5. Climate Resilient Farm Productivity Support (CRFPS)

The CRFPS aims to enhance agricultural productivity in agrarian reform communities by increasing climate resilience among agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). DAR supports farmers with machinery, equipment, and training in climate-smart agriculture to improve yields and incomes while mitigating the effects of climate change.

#### 6. Value Chain Innovation for Sustainable Transformation in Agrarian Reform Communities (VISTA)

VISTA, co-funded by the Philippine Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), supports smallholder households in coffee and cacao production, with a focus on women, youth, and indigenous peoples in the Cordillera Autonomous Region and the Soccsksargen region. The initiative aims to reduce poverty, improve food security, enhance ecosystems, increase income, create jobs, and promote climate resilience through inclusive value chains and sustainable resource use.

These programs and projects have had a significant and far-reaching impact on rural development in the Philippines:

- **Poverty Reduction:** Land redistribution and support services have significantly improved the lives of many agrarian reform beneficiaries, enabling them to escape poverty through sustainable income and improved living conditions.
- **Social Justice:** Agrarian reform has addressed long-standing inequities in land ownership, promoting social

cohesion and peace in rural areas.

- **Gender Empowerment:** DAR has integrated gender equality into its programs, ensuring that rural women have equal access to land rights and opportunities for skill development.
  - **Food Security:** By empowering smallholder farmers, the DAR contributes to a more secure and sustainable domestic food supply.
  - **Local Economic Growth:** Communities supported by DAR often see increased local revenues due to enhanced productivity, better access to markets, and the growth of rural enterprises.
- DAR's work aligns closely with CIRDAP's vision of "sustainable, integrated rural development" throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Both institutions promote participatory development, capacity building, regional cooperation, and the empowerment of marginalized rural communities. As a long-standing member of CIRDAP, the Philippines is dedicated to fostering shared learning and collaboration for rural development.

The ongoing reforms align with the broader regional priorities advocated by CIRDAP, particularly in areas such as promoting climate resilience, encouraging digital innovation in agriculture, and creating inclusive value chains that empower small-scale farmers and cooperatives.

As we celebrate World Rural Development Day and CIRDAP's Foundation Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to empowering rural communities, protecting the rights of farmers, and investing in agriculture. Rural development is a shared responsibility that requires collaboration among the government, civil society, and rural populations. The Department of Agrarian Reform is dedicated to creating a just and equitable rural Philippines, ensuring that no tiller is landless and that all communities can thrive. Together, let's work towards achieving a vision of rural development that benefits everyone.

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# Rural Development for Sustainable Futures: Empowering Communities, Transforming Nations



The designation of 6th July as World Rural Development Day by the United Nations, following the collective advocacy of CIRDAP and its 15 member states, marks a moment of strategic and symbolic importance for the Global South. More than an observance, this day acknowledges the foundational role of rural development in building resilient nations, sustainable economies, and socially cohesive societies. It also commemorates the Foundation Day of the UN Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)—an institution whose vision aligns with India's own development ethos rooted in equity, community, and cooperation.

In today's geopolitical context, rural development is no longer a domestic welfare strategy—it is a global imperative. The architecture of food systems, migration flows, climate resilience, and economic equity is shaped in the fields and forests of our rural heartlands. For the Asia-Pacific region—home to the largest rural population globally—true prosperity demands the empowerment of rural communities not as passive recipients of aid, but as active architects of sustainable futures. The 2025 theme- “Family-Oriented Policies for Sustainable Development”—is a timely call to restore the family

**KUNWAR SHEKHAR VIJENDRA**  
Chancellor Shobhit Institute of Engineering & Technology  
(Deemed-to-be University), Meerut, India

unit as the centrepiece of development: where well-being, dignity of labour, and generational transformation converge.

At Shobhit University, we have embedded this philosophy into our institutional mission. We believe universities must transcend the traditional boundaries of instruction to become developmental engines—where academic knowledge is applied to solve real-world problems, where policies are informed by field realities, and where innovation uplifts the last-mile citizen. Rural and tribal transformation is not an extension of our agenda—it is its core.

To actualise this vision, we have created a networked institutional framework of five interdisciplinary Centres of Excellence, operating under the leadership of Prof. M. Moni, Professor Emeritus and former Director General of NIC. Each Centre addresses a vital dimension of rural development. The Centre for Agricultural Informatics & e-Governance Research Studies (CAIRS) focuses on building digital ecosystems for precision agriculture and rural governance. The Centre for Agribusiness and Disaster Management Studies (CADMS) fosters climate-resilient farming, rural entrepreneurship, and disaster-preparedness models. The Centre for Informatics Development Solutions and Applications (CIDS) advances open-source digital public infrastructure tailored to grassroots needs. The Centre for Industry 4.0 Technology Studies and Applications (CITSA) works on skilling, automation, and decentralised manufacturing to stimulate rural job creation. And the Centre for Health Informatics and Computing (CHIC) addresses health equity through telemedicine, AI-driven diagnostics, and health awareness in underserved regions.

These centres work collaboratively to deliver integrated, evidence-driven, and community-centric solutions, bridging the critical gaps between technology and tradition, data and decision-making, grassroots need and governance design.

One of our flagship initiatives is the Smart Tribal Farming Project, launched in August 2022, which translates the recommendations of the Ashok Dalwai Committee Report (2018) on Doubling Farmers' Income into a living reality. As contributors to Volume 12B of the report-focused on Digital Technology in Agriculture—we proposed frameworks for digitally transforming over 14.5 crore farm holdings across India. This project, piloted across clusters of 10–15 tribal villages, applies precision tools like soil health analytics, multilingual mobile advisories, integrated pest management, digital agri-market

connectivity, and value-chain enhancement for forest products.

These initiatives are grounded in local knowledge systems, place women and youth at the centre, and are designed to deliver food, nutrition, health, and livelihood security at the household level. The emerging outcomes—higher productivity, improved market access, lower input costs—are not isolated gains but signals of scalable, systemic transformation. We regard this not as rural outreach, but as knowledge diplomacy—where India's grassroots innovation becomes a regional asset. Our institutional partnership with CIRDAP, formalised through an MoU in November 2024, reflects our commitment to South-South collaboration—a future where India's rural insights and informatics frameworks contribute meaningfully to CIRDAP member nations sharing similar agro-ecological and socio-economic challenges. As our engagement with AARDO and other global stakeholders expands, we envision building a regional coalition of higher education and policy institutions dedicated to rural regeneration, innovation, and social equity.

To commemorate this year's World Rural Development Day, Shobhit University, in partnership with UN-CIRDAP and AARDO, will host an International Webinar on “Smart Tribal Farming: Achieving Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Opportunities”. This platform will not only showcase successful models but will also co-develop a roadmap for regenerative agriculture, decentralised food systems, local processing infrastructure, and circular economies. It will also emphasise open digital ecosystems to connect farmers with real-time services in health, finance, education, and marketing—transforming survival economies into resilient, value-based rural enterprises.

In essence, rural development is the foundation of sovereignty, prosperity, and peace. It is in our villages that resilience is born, dignity is preserved, and sustainable futures are cultivated. India's aspiration to become a Viksit Bharat by 2047 must be rooted in the inclusive rise of its rural and tribal heartlands.

On this World Rural Development Day, let us reaffirm our shared resolve—to place the rural family, the tribal community, and the smallholder farmer at the very centre of development. For in empowering them, we do not merely serve them—we strengthen nations, elevate humanity, and honour our civilisational values.

Jai Hind.

# Driving Inclusive Growth Through Innovation and Collaboration in Rural Development

It is a matter of immense pride to contribute to the special edition of Agriculture World Magazine on the occasion of World Rural Development Day, celebrated globally on 6th July. This day symbolizes the importance of an organizations such as the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and also reflects its collective vision to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development in its region.

Our professional journey in the rural development sector has been deeply rooted in the values of equity, sustainability, and empowerment. Over the years, we have worked closely with farming communities, grassroots organizations, and local governments to co-create solutions that address the multifaceted challenges faced by rural populations in related to agriculture, livelihoods, health, and digital inclusion.

One of the most impactful initiatives that we have been organizing and managing is the Digital Agricultural Advisory and Quality Assessment System, which empowered smallholder farmers to access real-time market information, Quality Certificate Generation and quality-related recommendations through mobile-based platforms. This initiative has reached over 45,000 farmers across multiple districts of India and enabled them to improve crop quality, reduce post-harvest losses, and achieve better market prices. We integrated moisture-level tracking at the farm level to ensure transparency and build trust between producers and buyers, which significantly enhanced rural incomes and minimized wastage.

In collaboration with Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), we also spearheaded efforts to strengthen supply chains and promote collective marketing strategies. These partnerships not only improved the negotiation power of farmers but also enabled them to participate more effectively in Agri-market and tech platforms. In addition, our work in capacity building and field training

especially for rural farmers, women and youth has played a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurship and reversing migration trends in rural areas.

Our approach has always been to blend grassroots insights with technology and policy advocacy, thereby ensuring that rural voices are heard and represented in national and regional development agendas. Our collaboration with institutions like CIRDAP has been instrumental in communicating our impact across borders and learning from diverse best practices in the Asia-Pacific region.

As we celebrate World Rural Development Day, we reaffirm our commitment to advancing rural prosperity, promoting climate-smart agriculture, and nurturing local leadership. Together, let us continue to build resilient rural communities that form the backbone of our economies and cultures.



**DR. SHAKIL REGMI**  
RootsGoods Private Limited

# Advancing Rural Development Through Science, Leadership, and Community Empowerment

Throughout my career, which spans over thirty years, I have dedicated myself to strengthening rural development through strategic leadership, agricultural innovation, and community empowerment. As an agricultural extension expert, I have passionately worked to ensure that research translates into real impact for rural communities across India, Asia, and Africa.

At ICRISAT, where I led the ICRISAT Development Centre (IDC), I managed several projects worth more than USD 30 million. I built and mentored a multidisciplinary team, steering our collective efforts towards shifting the focus from mere project implementation to mastering the "science of delivery." I encouraged a culture of scientific rigour and dissemination, resulting in large-scale impacts on alleviating rural poverty that have influenced practice and policy at multiple levels. The work of team members led by me contributed to sustainable natural resource management, leading to higher agricultural productivity across the drought-prone areas of central India, eastern and southern parts of India.

My tenure as Director of ICAR-Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute (ATARI), Bengaluru, was a transformative phase, where I mentored and guided 81 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) across South India. I introduced systems to improve transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in frontline extension services through science-led approaches. I am particularly proud of strengthening partnerships across State Agricultural Universities, ICAR Institutes, and NGOs, which accelerated technology adoption among smallholder farmers.

Earlier, at ICAR-Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), I had the privilege of leading major initiatives like the World Bank-supported Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Project and the Technology Demonstration Component of National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA). I was instrumental in scaling climate-resilient agri practices across 100 of the most vulnerable districts across India by forging strong partnerships with the KVKs. It was deeply fulfilling to see outcomes such as 20-30% productivity increases, the establishment of village seed banks, custom hiring centres for mechanisation operations in smallholder farms, small-scale protective irrigation, and tangible reductions in distress migration.

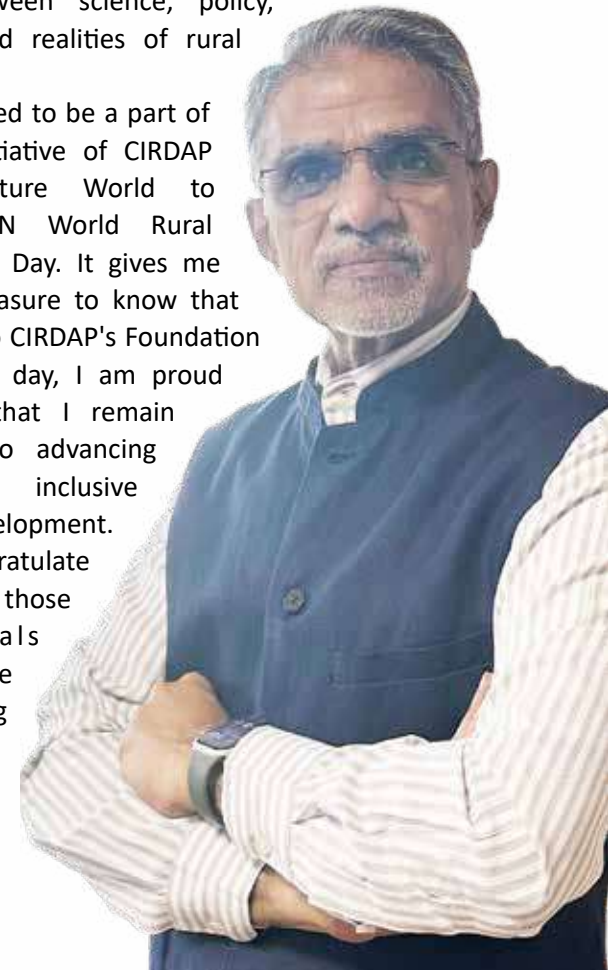
My passion for rural development became strong during my masters and doctoral studies. I studied the impact of one of India's largest rural development initiatives, the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), in select districts of south and north Karnataka to earn my PhD.

Through participatory approaches, I mobilised rural communities around watershed management, climate resilience, and livelihood diversification, improving incomes and quality of life for thousands of families. In parallel, I have contributed over 180 scholarly publications to the global body of knowledge and have received several prestigious awards, including the Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Award and the UNDP Mahatma Biodiversity Award.

Working in close collaboration with governments, research institutions, NGOs, and the private sector, I have learned that meaningful impact comes from building bridges between science, policy, and the lived realities of rural communities.

I feel privileged to be a part of the joint initiative of CIRDAP and Agriculture World to celebrate UN World Rural Development Day. It gives me immense pleasure to know that July 06 is also CIRDAP's Foundation Day. On this day, I am proud to declare that I remain committed to advancing sustainable, inclusive rural development.

I congratulate CIRDAP and those professionals who are working tirelessly to bring change in rural areas worldwide.



**DR. SREENATH DIXIT**  
Principal Scientist and Strategic Advisor  
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# Advancing Sustainable Agriculture and Agro-ecology: DAKSHIN's Vision for a Resilient Global South

**A**gricultural systems across the tropics and sub-tropics of the Global South stand at a pivotal crossroads, grappling with a complex web of challenges. Fragmented small landholdings, degraded natural resources, erratic rainfall patterns, and the predominance of rainfed and dryland farming systems have rendered rural livelihoods increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts and food insecurity. As the backbone of rural economies, agriculture is not only central to food and nutritional security but also serves as a critical driver of rural development. However, unsustainable agricultural practices, poor Natural Resource Management (NRM), the adoption of cropping systems misaligned with local agro-ecologies and limited access to affordable technologies and institutional support have exacerbated productivity and sustainability gaps. In the rainfed and semi-arid regions of the Global South, agriculture remains

predominantly reliant on erratic and unpredictable rainfall patterns. Fragile soils, degraded agro-ecologies, low soil organic carbon (SOC) levels, and pervasive water scarcity further compound the vulnerability of farming systems. These biophysical constraints have significantly restricted agricultural productivity and undermined the economic resilience and livelihood security of rural communities. Climate change with its increasing frequency and intensity of droughts, floods, disruptions in monsoon patterns and extreme weather events continues to exacerbate these risks across agri-food systems. In this regard, A transformative shift towards climate-resilient, resource-efficient, and community-driven agricultural models is essential. This calls for the widespread adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs) rooted in the principles of sustainable intensification, agro-ecology, integrated watershed management, conservation agriculture, and resource use efficiency.

In this context, The Development And Knowledge Sharing Initiative (DAKSHIN) is a promising initiative aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by the Global South. Inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits, it was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India in November 2023. DAKSHIN seeks to identify innovative development solutions emerging from the Global South and scale them for broader implementation across developing countries. DAKSHIN housed at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), located in New Delhi, India, with the vision to foster knowledge sharing and mutual learning for building capacities and developing sustainable, affordable, and locally relevant solutions. By systematically collating resources, experiences, and strategic approaches,

DAKSHIN seeks to overcome the developmental challenges confronting the Global South and to promote globally inclusive partnerships. The initiative is committed to advancing policy dialogue, strengthening capacity-building frameworks, facilitating technology transfer, and nurturing mutual learning among countries of the Global South to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in agriculture and allied sectors.

Since its launch, the Centre has established 143 collaborations with leading think tanks and universities across 86 countries, and is currently building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues. Through this network, DAKSHIN is actively engaged in joint webinars, bilateral workshops, collaborative research, and the co-creation of capacity development programs and scalable technology transfer initiatives. Several partner institutions have submitted project proposals focused on enhancing agricultural resilience and sustainability in their respective regions. DAKSHIN's agricultural initiatives are strategically grounded in the three foundational pillars of Ecology, Economy, and Equity, ensuring a holistic approach to sustainable rural

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Chief Coordinator DAKSHIN, RIS

**DR. A. SIVASENAREDDY**

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transformation. On the ecological front, the initiative emphasizes improving soil health, enhancing water use efficiency, promoting integrated natural resource management, and supporting sustainable production systems aligned with local agroecological contexts. Economically, DAKSHIN fosters inclusive rural growth by facilitating better price discovery for farmers, promoting circular and localized food systems that increase agricultural incomes, and improving access to markets, primary processing facilities, and decentralized storage infrastructure. From an equity perspective, DAKSHIN prioritizes the specific needs of rainfed and dryland regions, with a focused commitment to women farmers, pastoralists, nomadic tribes, and landless laborers, while contributing to the reduction of malnutrition and food insecurity across the Global South.

The DAKSHIN initiative emphasizes BMPs which encompass broadly climate-resilient agriculture, strengthening of rainfed and dryland farming systems, integrated watershed management, resilient seed systems, agro-ecological approaches, agro-forestry interventions, micro-irrigation technologies, digital agriculture solutions, integrated pest management, programmed implementation architecture and innovations in post-harvest management and value chain development. DAKSHIN is also developing replication framework based on the principles of South-South cooperation. Anchored in the pillars of Science, Scale, and Sustainability, the framework ensures that agricultural interventions are scientifically rigorous, scalable, and sustainable. Through international conferences, thematic workshops, webinars, outreach programs, publications and a weekly newsletter, DAKSHIN actively disseminates knowledge, promotes dialogue, and nurtures South-

South cooperation.

At DAKSHIN, we view research as a bridge between grassroots realities and policy dialogues. Along with collaboration with Global South think tanks and agencies, we have established institutional partnerships with key international and regional actors, including ICRISAT, CCARDESA, CIRDAP and others. We are also actively engaging in discussions with CGIAR centers (ILRI, ICARDA, IFPRI, IWMI, IRRI, CIFOR-ICRAF, IITA) and UN agencies (UNDP, IFAD, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNECA). We are engaging in collaborative discussions focused on technology transfer, joint research programs, capacity-building initiatives, and scaling sustainable innovations across countries of the Global South.

As we commemorate the first World Rural Development Day on 6th July, DAKSHIN reaffirms its commitment to placing smallholder farmers, rainfed and dryland farming systems, resource-use efficiency, and the empowerment of women farmers at the epicenter of rural transformation strategies. We envision a future where local agro-ecological solutions, grounded in traditional knowledge systems and strengthened by scientific innovations, drive agricultural policies and development programs. Partnerships across the Global South will be pivotal to scaling up proven models and ensuring inclusive and equitable access to knowledge, technologies, and markets. Sustainability in agriculture must be redefined to integrate ecological synchronization, climate resilience, and social equity, ensuring that farming systems enhance ecosystem services while supporting dignified rural livelihoods. DAKSHIN remains steadfast in its mission to facilitate this transformative agenda, contributing to CIRDAP's vision and collaborating with global partners to make rural development a shared global priority.

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# Igniting Rural Potential: A Call to Action on World Rural Development Day

The declaration of July 6th as World Rural Development Day by the United Nations, championed by the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), marks a significant milestone. As a committed collaborative partner of CIRDAP, the Rural Economic and Educational Development Society (REEDS) is deeply honored to contribute to this shared journey toward inclusive and resilient rural development.

This global recognition strengthens the collective efforts of organizations like ours, devoted to ensuring that no village, no community, is left behind. REEDS is eager to amplify the significance of this landmark day across its extensive network, pledging to transform it from a symbolic date into a vibrant movement that uplifts the dignity, aspirations, and unwavering determination of rural populations across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

Established in 1989 by passionate education and rural development advocates, REEDS emerged as a voluntary, not-for-profit organization devoted to holistic rural transformation. Over three decades of unwavering service, our vision has expanded and deepened, coalescing around the principle of inclusive rural empowerment.

We drive multi-sectoral initiatives that enhance rural livelihoods, fuelled by the conviction that empowering rural communities is not merely a social responsibility but a fundamental catalyst for national progress. We envision an India where every rural individual has the opportunities and resources to thrive, understanding that

**DR. RAVI K REDDY**  
Secretary, REEDS

rural development is intrinsically linked to the well-being of one-sixth of humanity—a matter of profound global significance.

## Steadfast Commitment, Recognized Impact

Our unwavering dedication to sustainable and inclusive growth has garnered significant recognition, reinforcing our mission and these honors fuel our commitment to fostering an empowered and equitable rural India.

- Gramodaya Bandhu Mitra Puraskar (2020) for outstanding contributions to rural development.
- Water Warrior Award (2016) at the India Today Safaigiri Awards for pioneering efforts in water and sanitation.
- Letter of Appreciation (2008) from the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh acknowledging REEDS' extensive role in the State's sanitation initiatives.

## Operational Strength and Strategic Collaboration

Headquartered in Hyderabad, India, REEDS operational footprint extends through project, program, and associate offices across four Indian states and maintains international presence in Canada and the USA. Our successful implementation of diverse interventions in 16 Indian states, showcases our ability to mobilize quality resources and deliver impactful results.

Our collaborative approach maximizes impact, enabling us to engage with national and international partners. Our extensive capabilities include community engagement, socio-economic studies, impact assessments, capacity building, awareness campaigns, and entrepreneurship development.

REEDS' strength lies in experienced leadership, guided by a high-calibre management team, an eminent Advisory Council, and a dedicated core team—supported by regional field personnel. Our decentralized, participatory framework ensures strategic alignment and grassroots responsiveness, while our governance, led by a dedicated Board of Governors, fosters innovation and sustainable development.

## An Integrated Approach Aligned with Global Goals

REEDS champions an integrated rural development approach, tackling the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of rural life. Our programs span critical areas such as awareness and education, entrepreneurship development, program evaluations, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and waste management. Our initiatives align with major national missions, including: Clean India, Digital India, Jal Jeevan Mission, Make in India, and Skill India; and contribute to key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably: SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 6: Clean Water & Sanitation, and SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth.

## Transformative Initiatives: A Legacy of Impact

REEDS' impact-driven initiatives include:

- Organizing a series of five International Conferences on Life Skills and Livelihood Skills focusing on strengthening rural economies and improving quality of life.
  - Establishing a Resource Center with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote renewable energy for rural livelihoods.
  - Supporting MSMEs with literature and training, and facilitating finance under PMFME Scheme.
  - Monitoring rural development programs across 10 states and 100+ districts for the Ministry of Rural Development.
  - Verifying Open Defecation-Free status in 6 states, covering 11,000+ villages.
  - Leading extensive WASH awareness campaigns under Swajaldhara in over 1,800 villages.
  - Pioneering mobile and static drinking water units serving remote and disaster-affected communities with a combined capacity of 50 million liters per day.
  - Conducting hygiene education campaigns, impacting 300,000+ schoolchildren across 7,000+ schools (supported by UNICEF and state bodies).
  - Partnering as an Implementation Support Agency with Evident Action International to scale in-line chlorination technology in 120 villages to provide safe drinking water under the Jal Jeevan Mission.
  - Launching RISE (Resources and Innovation for Sustainable Enterprises) a transformative initiative to strengthen local and rural economies, furthering our commitment to empowering communities.
- Our collaboration with CIRDAP marks a pivotal milestone, deepening our global understanding of rural challenges and opportunities, expanding our global rural development impact and fostering cross-border solutions.

## A Call to Collective Action: Let's Build a Rural Renaissance

As World Rural Development Day approaches, REEDS is actively promoting its significance through awareness drives, community engagement across all its program areas and partner outreach ensuring its message reaches grassroots communities. We renew our impassioned call to all rural development champions, partners, and well-wishers: let us unite to celebrate and invigorate the spirit of rural empowerment. Let this day be not merely be commemorated but transformed into a catalyst for lasting change by decisive action, and meaningful connection. Spread the word. Be part of the change. Together, let's build a vibrant rural renaissance.

To learn more about our work and join our mission, visit: [www.reeds.in]

# Rural Development in Myanmar



On the occasion of World Rural Development Day 2025, it is my honor to present this comprehensive overview of Myanmar's ongoing journey toward inclusive and sustainable rural development. As a committed member of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Myanmar has continuously placed rural advancement at the heart of its national development agenda. We recognize that the well-being of rural communities is vital to the social, economic, and environmental progress of our nation as a whole.

This commitment is reflected in the various strategic initiatives led by the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, and implemented on the ground by the Department of Rural Development (DRD). These initiatives aim to bring transformative change to the lives of millions of rural people. Our national vision is guided by the Myanmar Comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan and the Rural Development Strategic Framework, both of which provide a cohesive and inclusive roadmap for rural progress. Central to this strategy are three mutually reinforcing pillars: infrastructure and basic services, economic empowerment, and participatory governance.

Through a decentralized and collaborative implementation model, DRD delivers development programmes that are responsive to the specific needs of each township and village. This localized approach ensures that the solutions we provide are both effective and rooted in the realities of rural life. One of our most significant achievements has been in infrastructure development, with over 35,000 kilometers of rural roads and more than 3,000 bridges constructed or upgraded. These vital transport links are opening up access to education, healthcare, markets, and social services—connecting people to opportunity and improving the quality of daily life in rural areas.

In parallel, our efforts to provide clean water and sanitation have had a profound impact on public health outcomes

across the country. A total of 36,345 clean water and sanitation activities have been completed, significantly reducing the prevalence of waterborne diseases and contributing to a safer, healthier environment. These interventions are particularly crucial in vulnerable and remote communities where access to safe water and hygiene infrastructure has traditionally been limited.

To further build resilience and self-reliance, we have prioritized the economic empowerment of rural populations. Programmes such as the Village Revolving Fund and the Rural Business Development Fund offer access to credit and enterprise development training for rural communities. These initiatives have supported more than 13,000 villages, positively affecting the lives of millions of rural citizens—particularly women, smallholder farmers, and the poor. By fostering inclusive financial systems and entrepreneurial capacity, we are helping communities unlock their economic potential and reduce poverty.

Human capital development is another key focus area in our rural development strategy. We are expanding access to vocational training in agriculture, trades, digital services, and other livelihood skills that prepare rural youth and women for meaningful participation in the modern economy. These investments not only strengthen local labor markets but also contribute to social inclusion and long-term sustainability. Empowering individuals through education and training enables them to become active agents of change in their communities.

Community participation forms the backbone of our approach. The Village Development Planning (VDP) process, which is implemented annually in over 2,000 villages, empowers local communities to take part in identifying their development priorities, allocating resources, and monitoring results. This participatory model fosters accountability, transparency, and ownership—ensuring that development efforts align with community needs and aspirations.

Looking toward the future, we have embraced innovation as a driver of rural transformation. The introduction of the SMART Village model, currently being implemented in 128 villages, reflects our ambition to build climate-resilient, future-ready communities. These SMART Villages integrate infrastructure, education, clean energy, technology, and sustainable agriculture into a single, holistic framework for rural advancement. By promoting innovation and sustainability, this model aligns closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and positions Myanmar as a leader in next-generation rural development.

Of course, we acknowledge that challenges remain. Geographic remoteness, climate vulnerability, and limited fiscal resources continue to pose obstacles to our efforts. However, these challenges also reinforce the need for adaptive strategies and strong partnerships. We remain committed to strengthening collaboration—both within Myanmar and with international partners such as CIRDAP—to share knowledge, build institutional capacity, and find context-specific solutions that can be scaled across the region.

As we commemorate World Rural Development Day 2025, Myanmar proudly reaffirms its unwavering commitment to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable rural development. We celebrate the resilience, strength, and contributions of our rural communities and pledge to continue working hand in hand with them. Let this occasion serve not only as a reflection of how far we have come but also as a renewed call to action—to ensure that no village, and no one, is left behind in our pursuit of a better future.



**DR. ZARNI MINN**

Director

Department of Rural Development  
Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural  
Development, Myanmar

# Rural Development in Indonesia



To start my speech today, allow me to say happy World Rural Development Day to all of us, the first vice president of Indonesia Mohammad Hatta once said that “country will not shine with on torch in the nations capital but will shine because of small candles in every villages”. These word of Mohammad Hatta are not marelly a figure of speech but are an affirmation that since ancient times, villages have had an important role in the civilization and progress of a nation.

## ***Brothers and sisters whom we are proud of***

The formation of a village begins with a communal lifestyle. During the ancient kingdoms, villages already fungctioned as administrative units that regulated people’s lives and become a place to manage agricultural land and trade interactions in addition to implementing local government policies. So by understanding about villages, we will know the history, formation, organization, development and how village communities can adapt admist the development of the times.

Talking about world Rural Development Day, it cannot be separated form how villages become advanced with all their innovations and creations. There are many factors that can influence the progress of a villages to become more advanced, independent and prosperous. There are several aspect that in principle influence the development of a village, namely economic, social, environmental and policy aspects.

### **1) Economic Aspect,**

Economy is one of the benchmarks for the success of development in villages and countries, in villages there



are many determinant factors that have an influence:

#### **a. Natural resource management and local potential development;**

Villages can utilize the potential of existing natural resources to create jobs for village communities and increase original village income, on the other hand, village government can identify and develop local potential to attract investors and increase village competitiveness.

**b. Investment;** the government and private sector can invest in villages to develop infrastructure, improve the quality of human resources and create business opportunities.

**c. Community empowerment;** village economic development must also involve active participation from the community through empowerment of community groups, village community institutions and villages customary institutions, as well as business entities managed by the villages.

**d. Transfer Fund:** villages economic development continues to be supported by transfer funds from



both the central and regional government and this is very necessary to support the implementation of village governance, village development, community empowerment and community development.

### **2) Human Resources Aspect**

The level education and health of the village community also plays a role in village progress, Villages with high level of human resources are certainly more skilled in managing community life in village. In addition, the health of population will determine the level of productivity and contribution to village development

### **3) Natural Resources**

Villages that have abundant natural resource potential and are well managed will increase the villages original income, thereby reducing dependence on transfer funds.

### **4) Environment**

A clean and healthy environment is also an important factor in the progress of a village. The awareness of the community and village government to maintain the quality of life has an impact to the maximum contribution to the village.

### **5) Government Policy;**

The last factor that influences village progress is government policy. Policies that support the village and its people will greatly assist in the implementation of good governance and can build active participation of all element in the village.

**DR. DRS. LA ODE AHMAD  
P. BOLOMBO, AP, M.SI**

Director General of Village Administrations,  
Republic of Indonesia





- 3. Increase consumption of healthy and diverse food**  
Promotion of nutritious, balanced and safe local food
- 4. Increase village community income**  
This program is intended to create new business opportunities through the development of local products an increase the add value of agricultural, livestock and fishery product.
- 5. Increase agricultural productivity**  
Development of agricultural technology that is appropriate to local village conditions and the education process for farmers.
- 6. Reduce dependence on food imports**  
By increasing local village food production, village can reduce dependence on food import.
- 7. Ensuring sustainability of natural resources**

#### To the happy reader

The real from of the current village development program is how villages can strengthen food security in their areas independently and sustainably. This food security program aims to ensure the availability, affordability and safety of food for all village communities. This program aims to increase local food, reduce dependence on imports and strengthen the food distribution system. Besides that, this food security program also includes empowering village communities through training and increasing the added value of local product.

Here are some of the goals of food security in the village

#### 1. Increasing food ability

Increasing food production from agriculture, livestock and fisheries in the village and building food reserves or village food barns.

#### 2. Increasing food affordability

Rural communities have access to nutritious and affordable food



This program pays attention to the importance of sustainable natural resource management to support future food society.

These are some of the things that I can convey in commemoration of the world rural development day. I hope that villages can become more advanced with quality governance and increasingly empowered communities, once again I wish you happy world rural development day.

"In celebration of World Rural Development Day, we proudly feature this inspiring message from La Ode Ahmad P. Bolombo, Director General of Village Administrations in Indonesia. His words remind us that sustainable development begins in our villages- where community, agriculture, and innovation come together to shape a nation's future."



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# Rural Development in Iran



Rural communities in Iran play a pivotal role in ensuring food security, preserving natural resources, and sustaining the nation's cultural heritage. As key contributors to agriculture, livestock, handicrafts, and traditional practices, they not only bolster the national economy but also serve as guardians of Iran's historical and cultural identity. Addressing economic disparities, improving infrastructure, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening social capital in rural areas are thus essential to national development. The Iranian government has prioritized **sustainable and participatory rural development**, implementing targeted programs across multiple sectors—agriculture, healthcare, education, community empowerment, resource management, and village revitalization. Below are key initiatives driving progress in rural Iran:

## 1. Agricultural Extension: Modernizing Farming Practices

To promote sustainable agriculture, increase rural incomes, and reduce poverty, Iran has implemented two major programs under its **new agricultural extension system**:

### a. Agricultural Zoning

- Agricultural lands are divided into zones, each managed by a government-appointed expert.
- Enhances farmer-expert collaboration, accelerates knowledge transfer, and integrates technical and local expertise.
- Ensures effective implementation of policies at the village and farm levels.

### b. Agricultural and Rural Knowledge Management Network

- Established under the **Law of Productivity Enhancement** to empower producers.
- Features **"Designated Researchers"** (academic or industry experts) who provide scientific and technical support to extension agents.

- Facilitates the dissemination of research findings and best practices.

## 2. Empowering Rural and Nomadic Women

Recognizing women's critical role in rural economies, the **Ministry of Agriculture** has launched key initiatives:

### a. Training Women Facilitators

- Over **27,000 villages** now have trained female facilitators to enhance project success rates.

### b. Professional Trainer Development

- Two qualified individuals per province receive advanced training to mentor grassroots women in development activities.

### c. Small Business Development

- Supports entrepreneurship in **sericulture, poultry farming, beekeeping, medicinal plants, and home-based agro-businesses**.
- Provides technical consulting and mentorship for rural women-led enterprises.

### d. Microcredit Funds

- By **2022, 4,275 microcredit funds** were established to finance women-led rural businesses.

## 3. Social Security for Rural and Nomadic Populations

The **Rural and Nomadic Social Insurance Fund (2004)** offers:

- **Retirement, disability, and survivor benefits** to improve welfare and reduce poverty.
- A safety net that encourages rural retention and economic stability.

## 4. Healthcare Accessibility in Rural Areas

- **Health houses** and small hospitals provide primary care in most villages.
- **Rural health insurance** and the **Family Physician Program** reduce medical costs and improve healthcare access.



## 5. Physical and Infrastructural Development

Key programs include:

- **Rural Housing Improvement Plan** – Enhances living conditions.
- **Disaster Recovery Projects** – Rebuilds villages affected by natural calamities.
- **Village Road Upgrades** – Improves connectivity and economic opportunities.
- **Rural Tourism Development** – Preserves cultural heritage while boosting local economies.

## 6. Rural Governance: Strengthening Local Participation

- **Village councils** are elected locally, ensuring community involvement in decision-making.
- The **village administrator (Dehyar)** acts as a liaison between the government and villagers, managing services like waste disposal, safety, and construction permits.

## 7. Cultural Preservation and Rural Revitalization

- **Village festivals, exhibitions, and mobile libraries** promote cultural heritage.
- **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)** recognition helps preserve traditional farming knowledge.
- **Tourism infrastructure** development supports sustainable rural economies.

## Rural Development as a National Priority

Rural communities are the backbone of Iran's food security, cultural identity, and economic resilience. Through strategic investments in agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare, Iran has significantly improved rural livelihoods while safeguarding its rich heritage.

These efforts not only enhance rural quality of life but also position Iran as a model for sustainable and inclusive rural development—a vision that aligns with global goals for equitable progress.

## DR. Ali KianiRad

Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics  
Director General (Head)

Agricultural Planning, Economic and Rural  
Development Research Institute (APERDRI)  
Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, Islamic Republic of Iran  
Iran Representative to CIRDAP EC

# Rural Development and Emergency Management

On behalf of The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS): Asia Region, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and its Director General and staff for successful establishment of the World Rural Development Day at the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 6 September 2024 “Noting the efforts of regional organizations, including the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), in assisting national action and promoting regional cooperation relating to integrated rural development, trusting that the observance of an international day will create a comprehensive platform to assess the challenges and opportunities of rural development, Decides to declare 6 July World Rural Development Day, to highlight the critical importance of rural development and transformation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; invites all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, farmers’ organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, the private sector and academia, as well as schools, to observe World Rural Development Day by presenting and promoting, as appropriate in national and regional contexts, concrete activities with regard to the sustainable development of rural areas and communities”.

TIEMS is a global forum for education, certification and policy in emergency and disaster management. TIEMS is dedicated to developing and bringing the benefits of

modern emergency management tools, techniques and good industry practices to society for a safer world. This is accomplished through the exchange of information, methodology innovations, and new technologies to improve society’s ability to avoid, mitigate, respond to and recover from, natural and man-made disasters. TIEMS provides a platform for all stakeholders within the global emergency and disaster management community to meet, network and to learn about new technical and operational methodologies. It also aims to exchange experience on good industry practices. This will influence policy makers worldwide to improve global cooperation and to establish global standards within emergency and disaster management. TIEMS has an international network of more than 10 000 experts worldwide, and such a network can be very valuable for finding expertise and for the exchange of experience and knowledge.

TIEMS as one of the strategic partners of CIRDAP during 2020-2023 had conducted several activities in collaboration with CIRDAP which can be listed as follows:

- TIEMS Annual Conference: Citizens and Cities facing new hazards and threats: Adaptive Management on Earthquake and Natural Disaster Management for Community Awareness and Resilience in Chittagong City, Bangladesh, 30 November – 4 December 2020;
- TIEMS Webinar on Anticipating a Resilient Future, 15 Oct 2021;
- TIEMS - CBI WEBINAR 2022: International Models in Emergency Management – Bangladesh, Thursday 2 June 2022;
- TIEMS Hybrid Annual Conference: Challenges and Emergency Management – Towards 2030 and beyond, 20 – 21 Oct 2022;
- 1st CIRDAP-BARD Flagship Training on Regional

Integrated Rural Development, Governance, Trade and Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific, 4 – 25 Nov 2022;

- 2nd CIRDAP-BARD Flagship Training on Regional Integrated Rural Development, Governance, Trade and Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific, 3 – 27 Nov 2023.

From 2025 onwards, TIEMS organized and will organize the following activities which can be used as part of the celebrations of the World Rural Development Day 2025:

- The Expert Consultation Workshop entitled “Enhancing Earthquake Resilience in Bangkok: Review, Updates and Risk Assessment” organized by TIMES in collaboration with the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage (ASA) and partners on 29 April 2025, the Jupiter 4 – 5, Muang Thong Thani, Bangkok, Thailand; and
- The 1st Training Programme on Regional Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management for Food Security in Asia-Pacific, to be held in the 4th Quarter of 2025 in Thailand.

TiEMS Asia Region looks forward to collaborating with CIRDAP and relevant partners for implementing important activities relevant to disaster management and climate change in the years to come. Let us celebrate the World Rural Development Day in 2025 for the benefits of all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, individuals and other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, farmers’ organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, the private sector and academia, as well as schools.

**DR. CHERDSAK VIRAPAT**

Ph.D. Regional Director for Asia

The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS)

Bangkok, Thailand

# Health & Productivity of Livestock: Role of herbals & way forward



**DR. ARUN ATREY**  
CEO & MD, ZENEX Animal  
Health Pvt Limited

**H**erbals have been integral part of Ayurveda (The Science of healthy living). This is the traditional system of health care. Ayurveda is a holistic, evidence-based science that emphasizes in harmony with the environment. Ayurveda, the Science of Life, based on strong pillar of positive health, focuses on total wellness through both preventive and curative measures. The key principle of the system is the pro-host approach, “Strengthening the body defense system to fight infection”.

The Herbal Medicines based on the Science of Ayurveda has been acknowledged globally for its usage and benefits in livestock, Poultry, Pigs, Camels and Pets. The herbal formulations are backed by scientific research and offer cost-effective benefits and have been found to be useful in improving health, immunity and production. The three critical areas where herbal formulations have been found useful are Control of Mastitis, Mitigation of AMR and Methane Mitigation. Besides, herbal formulations have been established as are leaders in supporting Digestive health, Skin, Liver, Reproductive health apart from its usage in improving Immunity of livestock.

As far as Poultry is concerned, the herbal solutions have demonstrated beneficial effects impact on Mycotoxin Control, Liver Health, Improving Vaccination response, Control of E coli and Salmonella. The herbals have been found useful in replacement of synthetic amino acids like Choline, Methiorenep and Vitamin C.

The most important part in ensuring the right response of herbal formulations is sourcing of quality herbs, their standardization for their active compounds, quality control, their processing, quality assurance and appropriate packing.

## Role in Improving Livestock Health:

Relevance of science of Ayurveda, as applied to animal health, tracks back to the time of the Mahabharata, with Ayurvedic preparations incorporating ingredients derived from plant origin. The scientific evaluation of plant materials/herbs testify the ancient wisdom blended with modern scientific precision & technology validating their usage for animal & human health care to achieve

health, wellness & maximum productivity from livestock. Emergence of the resistant pathogenic strains against antibiotics & deadly chemicals coupled with ever-growing concerns of toxicity & environmental contamination has led to scientific & technological advancement in last few decades, reviving the interest of modern scientist & health care practitioners in herbals.

The Herbal formulations made out of quality and standardized herbs help to improve the health & milk production when used along with balanced feed. Ayurveda, the precious gift from Mother Nature is playing a significant role & likely to play a greater role in future along with right nutrition.

The most important point is to have the quality, certified and standardized herbs, which in turns shall ensure efficacy of the formulations, or the herbs

**Ayurvet Limited, which is now part of Zenex Animal Health** has taken steps of developing phytogenic/herbal feed additives for animals. Backed up by more than 750 research papers and trials, herbal feed additives are approaching a point where they are a standard ingredient or supplement in modern livestock ruminant and non-ruminant diets



**DR. ANUP KALRA**  
Business Advisor, ZENEX Animal Health Pvt Limited  
& Former Executive Director Ayurvet Limited



### Ayurveda in One Health:

Infectious diseases are major economic burden on the dairy industry affecting milk production and milk quality especially among smallholder farmers. AMR is a serious issue and threat to human and environmental health. Considering the importance and implication on human health, it is need of the hour to find alternatives to antimicrobials in management of infectious conditions of dairy animals. This rich heritage of **Pashu Ayurveda** holds huge potential for contemporary health issues in the veterinary care especially in reducing antibiotics and chemical use thus in turn reducing antimicrobial resistance. Through **ONE HEALTH**, there has been increased focus to mitigate AMR. ONE HEALTH recognizes the interconnectedness of human health, animals' health and the environment. The use of herbal solutions has been in vogue for control of mastitis, wound management, replacement of antibiotics as feed supplements, improving overall health and immunity of livestock; thus, leading to limited use of antibiotics in treatment & as medicated feed additive. Lot of research has been done but needs further support.

### Herbals/Ayurveda for BVSc & AH

The teaching of herbs and their benefits for livestock was an integral part of UG program until late 80s. Now again, after a gap of 4 decades, the government has realized the importance of herbs based on Ayurveda, for improving health, productivity and improving farmer's income. It will soon be part of the syllabus of BVSc & AH students. Many veterinary colleges are already imparting education on Ayurvedic medicines to the students. The Ministry of AYUSH and our own Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying have inked an MOU

towards research, education, skilling and extension services. This would benefit all the stakeholders for sure, apart from improving animal health. The committee formed by the ministry has recommended the suggestive syllabus on herbals/Ayurveda for the UG students. It is good beginning made in the right direction. Also, several industry players have signed MOU with Universities for research and development on herbs and on the product development.

The industry academia and the ministries need to work more closely to address the issue of standardization of herbs, its quality assurance, ensuring right use of herbs with proper contents, its scientific validation and much more. In absence of the same, much might be lost or no results of the medicines, spoil the name of the sector.

**Herbals as Leaders:** In spite of many challenges, herbals are leaders in many categories for improving health and production viz:

1. Skin Care
2. Reproductive Health
3. Mastitis Control
4. Liver functions
5. Gut or Digestive Modulators
6. AMR Mitigation
7. Immunomodulators etc.

**Herbs Improve gut function:** Phytogenic substances from certain herbs viz. Aegle marmelos, Plantago ovata, Acacia catechu, Coriandrum sativum etc. and their extracts have also been shown to improve gut microflora and to exert pharmacologic actions within the digestive tract, as evidenced by their gut function-modulating efficacy.

**Herbs increase feed intake:** The addition of certain herbs viz. Woodfordia fruticosa, Zingiber officinale, Allium sativum, Trigonella foenum graecum etc. to poultry and pig ration is also known to improve feed efficiency.

**Herbs as digestive tonic and growth promoter:** Supplementation of certain herbs that have shown to modulate the rumen function for efficient cellulose breakdown & digestion, maintenance of normal ruminoreticular functions. Ruchamax is a potent



herbal formulation containing Allium sativum, Azadirachta indica, Calotropis orocera, Centratherum anthelminticum, Commiphora mukul, Eclipta elba, Embelica ribes, Picorrhiza kurora, Zinziber officinale and Piper longum etc. has shown in improving digestive functions in ruminant.

**Herbs as Hepato Efficiency Enhancers:** The herbal ingredients such as Andrographis paniculata, Eclipta alba, Picrorhiza kurroa, Phyllanthus niruri, Tephrosia purpurea, Tinospora cardifolia and Boerhavia diffusa (Superliv concentrate premix & Liquid) have been proved to improve feed conversion efficiency, body weight gain and reduce mortality in poultry and swine; owing to their Hepato-protective, Hepato-stimulants and growth promoting properties

**Herbs Anti-oxidant, Immunomodulator and antistressors:** Ayurvedic herbs that treat stress contain herbs with adaptogenic (antistress) effects. Herbs with high antistress & antioxidant activity like amla (Emblica officinalis), Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera), Tulsi (Ocimum sanctum), Shilajit and many more have proved to be potent oxygen free radical scavenger in vitro and in vivo models. Medicinal plants or herbs owing immunopotential properties can provide an alternative to conventional therapy for a variety of diseases, especially when the host's defense mechanism is to be activated under conditions of impaired immune response.

**Antimicrobial effect:** The medicinal or antimicrobial properties of plant-derived substances have been well

known for centuries. This property is mainly attributed to the essential oils of these plants namely Trichyspermum ammi, Cinamonum camphora, Mentha piperita & many more. Oregano and thyme are among those which have received a great deal of interest. These plants contain the monoterpenes carvacrol and thymol, respectively, and have demonstrated high efficacy in vitro against several pathogens found in the intestinal tract. This suggests that phytogenic feed additives may be suitable replacements for in-feed antibiotics.

The scientifically formulated formulations based on the rationale have been demonstrated to not only improve health but to improve the farm profits and farm profitability

### Way Forward:

- 1) Execution of MOU signed between Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Fisheries, Dairying and AH
- 2) Skilling of under graduate vets about ethnoveterinary and the inclusion of the same in course work of BVSc and AH
- 3) Skilling of the vets in service about the benefits of Ayurveda in improving Animal health.
- 4) Allocate more funds for Research and Development and standardization of herbs and herbal products
- 5) Purchase of Ayurvedic medicines for vet use by various state governments may be made mandatory. This should be kept quality as the priority area, rather than price.
- 6) Focus on cultivation of medicinal plants so as to ensure quality of raw material use in formulations.

### Conclusion:

Traditional system of medicines has stood the test of time for over 4000 years, should not be considered as an alternate to modern medicine; rather they should complement & enhance the production of livestock. Herbal additives have aroused much scientific interest over the past few years to explore their role as performance enhancers in livestock production. It is up to our scientist & industry how best they use this precious gift from Mother Nature for the health and welfare of livestock and in turn humankind.

# From Highlands to Islands, Fiji Champions People-Centred and Climate-Resilient Rural Development

**A**cross the Pacific, from the windswept islands to the inland highlands, rural and maritime communities remain at the heart of our region's identity - rich in culture, strength, and resilience. In Fiji, these communities are not just part of our story; they are central to our future. At the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Risk Management (the Ministry), we are driving a transformative agenda to ensure these communities are not left behind but instead are empowered as engines of national prosperity and regional sustainability.

With a mission to eliminate poverty, strengthen climate resilience, and bridge service delivery gaps, the Ministry has pioneered a holistic model of rural development that centres people, place, and partnership. Fiji's experience offers a powerful blueprint for other island and coastal nations navigating similar development challenges -



**MS. ARIETA DIMURI**  
Director Development Services Division  
Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development  
and Disaster Management Republic of Fiji

one that blends traditional knowledge with modern innovation, decentralised governance with central coordination, and local needs with national priorities.

## STRUCTURE AND MANDATE: A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

The Ministry leads Fiji's national vision for inclusive and resilient rural development. The Ministry's core responsibilities are grouped into two major categories, namely, Rural Development Programmes service delivery and National Disaster Risk Management. Our roles as outlined in our current 2021-2031 Strategic Development Plan are: (i) Rural Development Facilitator and Coordinator; (ii) Knowledge Broker; (iii) Relationship Manager; and (iv) Risk Reduction, Response and Recovery Coordinator.

The Ministry's operations are currently guided by the Integrated Rural Development Framework (IRDF) and the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024. The implementation of development programmes is decentralised across four divisional offices - Northern, Western, Eastern, and Central - and with the district development offices that maintain a vital presence within communities.

This integrated structure enables a seamless interface between central government, local communities, civil society, and development partners, ensuring no village, settlement, or island is left behind.

## FUNCTIONS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Ministry's core functions span across rural infrastructure, community empowerment, service delivery, and climate adaptation. Its mandate is aligned with the Fiji National Development Plan 2025-2029, the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Key priorities include:

- i. Expanding access to safe and clean water;
- ii. Facilitate access to adequate and safe housing and sanitation facilities;
- iii. Enhancing rural connectivity through roads, bridges, transport and communication links;
- iv. Empowering rural communities including women, youth, and vulnerable groups;
- v. Promoting innovation and wealth creation; and
- vi. Promote climate-resilient infrastructure and food security systems through mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction; and
- vii. Coordinating inclusive service delivery through decentralisation.

The Ministry ensures that the most geographically and socioeconomically marginalised communities—particularly those in outer islands—are prioritised in policy and practice.

## PROGRAMMES THAT DRIVE TRANSFORMATION

A suite of innovative and impactful programmes implemented by the Ministry that underpins its vision of having inclusive development for productive, sustainable and resilient rural communities:

### i. Rural Housing Assistance Programme (RHA)

This programme addresses housing insecurity for low-income rural families by co-funding cyclone-resilient homes. The RHA supports community dignity, health, and disaster preparedness - building safe homes and safer futures.

### ii. Rural and Outer Island Development Programme (ROI)

The ROI Development Programme targets the specific needs of isolated rural communities, delivering basic infrastructure for transportation, market collection centres, communication solutions, delivering solar energy equipment, and food processing equipment. It reinforces equity across Fiji's geographic divide and affirms that no community is too far to serve.

### iii. Community Access Roads, Footpaths and Footbridges Programme (CARFF)

CARFF is a programme that facilitates vital access to markets, schools, health centres and other essential services for thousands of rural Fijians. It also assists communities in providing climate adaptive solutions that allows safer movements within their communities, with other communities or facilities and amenities, particularly in disaster-prone areas or low-lying communities.

### iv. Seafarers Entrepreneurship Assistance (SEA)

The SEA Subsidy Programme aims to promote better accessibility in the maritime, coastal and riverbank

communities through the provision of Government subsidy by way of grant.

### v. Emergency Water Services and High-Risk Water and Sanitation Programme

As climate change intensifies and brings more frequent dry spells, droughts, cyclones, and floods, the Ministry's water-focused efforts have become a lifeline for many communities. The Ministry delivers emergency water to communities affected by these natural hazards, installs resilient infrastructure in high-risk areas, and builds long-term community systems for water security and sanitation health.

### vi. Self-Help Programme (SHP)

SHP is a hallmark of local empowerment, with the Government supporting two-thirds to the one-third community contributions to implement priority development projects. Villagers gain ownership and build capacity, with outcomes including social and income-generating assets.

### vii. Disaster Risk Reduction

The enactment of the National Disaster Risk Management legislation in 2024 will facilitate the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in the country's development programmes.

## A MODEL FOR THE REGION

Fiji is the only member country that has, as part of its operational arm, an inherent mechanism through the abovementioned law to support resilient and sustainable development. Being a small island development state that is prone to natural disasters and the impact of climate change, the country has an added advantage in this regard. Since 2021, the Ministry has been gradually integrating risk-informed development into its programmes, marking a key step in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction across all its work.

We remain committed to this journey as we aspire to achieve our vision for our rural and maritime communities, helping them to be productive, resilient and sustainable.

We extend our hand in partnership to CIRDAP and non-CIRDAP member countries, development partners, non-government organisations, and civil society organisations that share in the same vision as Fiji - to leave no one behind. Through our united efforts and shared purpose, we can make rural development a driving force for lasting prosperity - across our region and around the world.

*Vinaka vakalevu. Dhanyavaad. Thank you.*

# Smart Tribal Farming: Facilitating Digital Transformation to unlock Opportunities in 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages of India by 2030 facilitating to be part of Viksit Bharat by 2047

**T**he United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared **July 6th as World Rural Development Day**, to highlight the importance of Rural Development and its impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to recognize the crucial role of Women in rural areas and their contribution to Agricultural development, Food security, and Poverty eradication.

Agricultural sector is the backbone of Indian economy and it continues to employ more than 50 per cent of India's workforce since its independence, and of late, contributes almost 17–18 per cent of its GDP. Indian Agriculture confronts with its sheer complexity, inadequate factors of production, weather uncertainties, multiplicity of schemes and multiplicity of institutions, at farm level. India has delineated its geographical area into 15 Agro-Climatic Regions and more than 127 Agro-Climatic Zones, having different farming practices, evolved over the centuries, with changes in weather and climatic conditions, technological innovations and socio-cultural practices. By 2050, it is pronounced that there will be more than 2 billion additional people on the planet, requiring 50% more food from the same agricultural footprint.

**PROF. MONI MADASWAMY**

Professor Emeritus and Chairman  
Centre for Agricultural Informatics and e-Governance  
Research Studies (CAIRS)  
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh

## Strategic Use of Digital Technology in Farming System Life Cycle

In India, the Irrigated farming is practiced with assured water supply from sources of irrigation (canals, tanks and wells), whereas the Rainfed farming is practiced under a wide variety of soil type, agro-climatic and rainfall conditions ranging from 400 mm to 1600 mm per annum. Overall, the rainfed areas produce 40% of the food grains, support two-thirds of the livestock population, and are critical to food security, equity, and sustainability. Watershed development has become a trusted tool for the overall development of the village and people living within a watershed area under rainfed conditions. However, the Tribal farming in Tribal Areas is a risk-minimizing system and its relevance has increased, in view of ongoing climate change and erratic weather occurrence.

The Sustainable Food Production Systems for Self-Reliant and Climate Resilient Agriculture requires intensive application of Science and Technology within a well-defined framework to adopt "strategic use" of Digital Technology in Farming System Life Cycle, through seven DFI-2022 Mission Mode Programmes. This is detailed in the Chapter-10 of the Ashok Dalwai Committee on Doubling Farmers Income by 2022 Report 2018, in a time bound manner, for the benefit of more than 14.5 Crore operational farm holders in India and their farming activities viz. :-

- *Digitalised Agriculture: Digital Technology and Innovation in Agriculture: Digital India, Make in India, Skill India and StartUps India Programmes for Transformational Reforms in Agricultural Sector (SMART Irrigated Farming, SMART Rainfed Farming and SMART Tribal Farming);*
- *Digitalised Agro-Met Advisories & Agricultural Risk Management Solution;*
- *Digitalized Agricultural Resources Information System and Micro-Level Planning for achieving SMART VILLAGE & SMART FARMING;*
- *Digitalized Value Chain for about 400 agricultural Commodities;*
- *Digitalised Access to Inputs, Technology, Knowledge, Skill, Agricultural Finance, Credit, Marketing and*

*Agribusiness Management, to Farmers;*

- *Digitalized Integrated Land and Water Management System – Per Drop More Crop;*
- Digitalized Farm Health Management for reduction of Farmers' Losses.*



## Tribal Farming - A Risk-minimizing System in harmony with Nature

India is a land of more than 6.50 Lakh Villages. The Tribal population of India constitutes about 8.9% of the total population in India, and spread, predominantly, across the forest and hilly regions of the country. The tribal economy is mainly concentrated around the collection and processing of Minor Forest Products (MFP) and cultivation largely for the purpose of domestic consumption. The Tribal Community usually struggle to meet their economic needs mostly through the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNEGA) Programme. On rainy and inclement Weather days, the Tribal Community living in forests and hilly regions, face various difficulties.

India has about "1.45 lakh Tribal villages, with more than 25 per cent of the Tribal population in such village", who do practice agriculture but at a very primitive level of value chain. In fact, the tribal economies lack organized markets as well as financial institutions to promote tribal products. There is a huge demand for tribal produces, which are especially organic and natural food products, but the supply side of this economy is way below the demand side, and the community fails to profit from its produce. Tribal farming is recognized, traditionally, a risk minimizing system providing at least some food, even in adverse weather conditions.

**SMART Tribal Farming – Achieving Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihood Opportunities towards VIKSHIT Bharat by 2047**

Another Proactive and Development Initiative in 2022, has been in visualizing a **SMART TRIBAL FARMING Initiative - A Digital Transformation of Agriculture in Tribal Areas for Manifolding Tribal Farmers Income**, as pilot project in a cluster of 10-15 Tribal Villages in various Districts of India, in association with NGOs working with Tribal Communities and Higher Educational Institutions with digital infrastructures. This pilot project initiative (in Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, J&K, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and Manipur) is gaining its attention to facilitate for food, nutrition, health, livelihood security and economic productivity in Tribal Areas. Brochures detailing its project objectives are published for open innovation and value creation networks, for each project location. Under the **“Smart Tribal Farming Project”**, the following benefits, among the others, will accrue for the Tribal Communities in the Project Area: -

- 1. Empowering** the Tribal Communities through Digital Transformation of Tribal Agriculture (Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Floriculture, Apiculture, Livestock, Fisheries, etc.)
- 2. Establishing** Agricultural Commodity Value Chains.
- 3. Operationalising** Digitalised Agro-Met Advisories and Agricultural Risk Management Solutions such as Open Insurance System.
- 4. Digitalized Agricultural Resources Information System and Micro-Level Planning** to ensure optimum nutrients in soil and harvested agricultural products (food products) to minimise human diseases, based on AI/ML, GIS Technology and Data Analytics methods
- 5. Digital Mapping of Tribal Villages Cluster** forming into “Digital Twin Tribal Villages”.
- 6. Validation of ethno practices** in Farming Practices, Veterinary Health Services and Public Health Services through Digitalised Integrated Farm Health System.
- 7. Sustaining** Natural Farming Practices.

India is endowed with about 4500 Engineering Colleges, 45000 Non-Engineering Colleges (Higher Educational



Institutions - HEIs) and about 1500 Deemed to-be Universities offering Digital Technology related Courses and its applications in the area of **GRIN (Genomics, Robotics, Informatics and Nano Technologies) Revolution facilitating ever-green revolution**. This can be achieved by establishing a COE – Centre for Agricultural Informatics and e-Governance Research Studies (CAIRS) in HEIs across the Country to usher in Agriculture 4.0 in India, aligning with Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0. Adopting 10-15 Villages by each HEI for 5 Years, will make 6.5 Lakh Villages as “Smart Village”, “Smart Farming” and “Smart Farmer” in India by 2030, **the terminal Year of the UN Decade of Development**.

The **SMART Tribal Farming Initiative** is towards achieving “Food, Nutrition, Health, Livelihood Security and Economic Productivity of Tribal Communities” in India, facilitating Digital Transformation to unlock opportunities in 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages of India by 2030 facilitating to be part of Viksit Bharat by 2047. This Project Initiative is a Research Outreach Programme of Shobhit Institute of Engineering and Technology (Deemed to-be University) Meerut, India.

Its impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) viz., SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), will be tremendous. It recognizes the crucial role of Tribal Women in rural areas and their contribution to Agricultural development, Food security, and Poverty eradication.

This Project Initiative will be a “Change Maker” impact in about 1.45 Lakh Tribal Villages in India by 2047 (VIKSIT Bharat 2047). This will serve as a scalable and replicable model.

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