

VOICE OF CIRDAP

Empowering The Rural Communities

ISSUE 7, MARCH 2025



Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)

An Intergovernmental & Autonomous Organization Working For
Strengthening Integrated Rural Development Systems for 15
Asia and The Pacific Countries.



www.cirdap.org

CIRDAP - Voice of Rural Communities

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) is an Intergovernmental, Regional, and Autonomous organization. It was established on 6 July 1979 at the initiative of the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations with support from several other UN bodies and donors. The Centre came into being to meet the felt needs of the developing countries at that time as an institution for promoting Integrated Rural Development in the region.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared the date of 6 July as the World Rural Development Day, which is also the foundation day of Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), as a recognition of the organizations significant role in sustainable rural development endeavors in its member states in the Asia-Pacific region. The World Rural Development Day will be celebrated every 6 July as to inform and to remind everyone on his/her role and responsibility for collaborative actions on integrated rural development to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

From the original six members, CIRDAP has now grown up as a Centre of 15 member countries. The member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh (Host Country), Fiji, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

The main objectives of CIRDAP are to:

- * Assist National Action;
- * Promote Regional Cooperation; and
- * Act as a servicing institution for its member countries for promotion: Integrated Rural Development (IRD) through Research, Action Research, Pilot Project, Training, and Information Dissemination. Amelioration of Rural Poverty in the Asia-Pacific region has been the prime concern of CIRDAP.

The programme priorities of CIRDAP are set under four Areas of Concern:

- * Agrarian Development;
- * Institutional/ Infrastructural;
- * Resource development including human resources; and
- * Employment.

Within these Areas of Concern, the thematic areas identified are: Poverty alleviation through participatory approaches with emphasis on social sector development (e.g. Health, Education and Nutrition); Employment generation through Microcredit support, Infrastructure Development and Local resource mobilisation; Gender issues; Governance issues; and Environmental concerns for Sustainable Rural Development.

Operating through designated Contact Ministries and Link Institutions in member countries, CIRDAP promotes Technical Cooperation among nations of the region. It plays a supplementary and reinforcing role in supporting and furthering the effectiveness of Integrated Rural Development Programmes in the Asia-Pacific region.

Voice of CIRDAP – Monthly E-Bulletin of CIRDAP

Voice of CIRDAP (VoC) is a monthly newsletter published by CIRDAP. The purpose of the VoC is to highlight various facets of IRD in the Asia-Pacific region and activities of CIRDAP with stakeholders.

The designations employed and the presentation of materials in VoC do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of CIRDAP concerning the legal status of any country, city or area, or of its authorities or boundaries. News items, viewpoints on IRD and related issues are welcome. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor.

RURAL HEARTBEAT-7: Food Systems Approach is Critical for Rural Development

Food is critical for survival of the mankind. However, 402 million people in Asian and Pacific is undernourished. That means, 56% of the total global undernourished population lives in Asia and Pacific region. It is pertinent to recall here that nearly half of the Asia and Pacific population lives in rural areas. Hence, Food System Approach is critical for Rural Development.

Food System Approach considers Food not just as individual product. But as a complex system encompassing all aspects of food production, Processing, distribution, consumption and waste besides achieving food and nutritional security, while addressing, Social and environmental challenges.

Hence all the system players need to be involved in Food System Approach. Educating the farmers and fishermen who produce the food is the foundation activity in this direction. Empowering farmers to decide what to grow, how to grow, how much to grow while considering social and ecological aspects is important. Judicious use of fertilizers and pesticides, ensuring water use efficiency, Careful harvest and post-harvest handling besides taking active participation in value chain to gain additional employment and safeguarding Nutrition and income ultimately leading to sustainability. Group approaches is advisable to farmers to handle these interconnected and multidisciplinary activities.

Till then, sensitizing rural aggregators, local Traders, wholesale dealers and retailers on wastage, food safety and nutrition are useful by ensuring incentives. Agri Startups. Entrepreneurs, Agri cooperatives, farmer producer organizations and Agri business companies play important role at this stage.

Consumers who are the kings in the Food System Approach can transform the system efficiency by preferring ecofriendly and nutrition sensitive food products. This happens through sustained consumer education. Consumers have the capacity to drive the direction of food markets.

Most importantly, changes should start at home and village. The homemakers may be sensitized on nutritional aspect to be considered at the level of preparation and storage. Thus, every home becomes change agent. This should involve no cost interventions. Every home has the capacity to Support its own nutritional security through kitchen gardening in the backyard, which can be maintained in leisure time. Encouraging seed exchange among rural communities, makes the food system approach economical and sustainable.

Education and Technologies need to help all the above stakeholders to perform their role effectively while Policies and programs would ensure upscaling and sustainability.

Agriculture and line departments have the challenging role in operationalization of the sustainable Food System Approach. This needs broadening the very scope of functioning of Agriculture departments, Research institutions in terms of Shifting from mere production to Food System Approach.



Dr. P. Chandra Shekara
Director General, CIRDAP



Grand Celebrations of the International Women's Day – 2025 by CIRDAP as a promoter of Women Empowerment and Gender Equality



Honoring the Inspirational Women from CIRDAP Member Countries (CMCs)

On March 8, 2025, CIRDAP celebrated International Women's Day through a virtual event honoring inspiring women from its Member Countries (CMCs) for their remarkable achievements and contributions to Integrated Rural Development. The event was chaired by **Dr. Akanisi Kedrayate**, Former Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Law & Education, University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji. It featured compelling success

stories from the participants across Bangladesh, Fiji, India-(absentia), IR Iran, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, highlighting their impactful work in empowering rural communities.

THE HONORED PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:



Dr. Akanisi Kedrayate – Fiji



Ms. Mehri Maddahi Kivi – IR Iran



Ms. Hadis Bagheri – IR Iran



Ms. Mee Mee Htwe – Myanmar



Mrs. HMSJM Hitihamu
(Sagarika) – Sri Lanka



Mrs. Sufia Begum – Bangladesh



DR. RANI BANG, India

The program concluded with inspiring closing remarks from H.E. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, reaffirming the organization's commitment to promoting gender equality and inclusive development in rural communities.

CIRDAP and BIID Foundation Forge Partnership to Advance Nutrition and Youth Leadership



On 17th March 2025, the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and the Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID) Foundation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in key areas including nutrition, safe food, and youth leadership. A key objective of the MoU is to elevate the International Nutrition Olympiad (INO) as a global platform for promoting nutrition awareness and youth engagement. Through this partnership, both organizations will work together to facilitate knowledge exchange, action research, advocacy,

and the development of a Charter for Nutrition to help integrate nutrition more prominently into global development agendas. The MoU was signed by Mr. FAM Zakirul Huq, Head of Administration, CIRDAP, and Dr. Jannatul Mim, Convener of INO, in the presence of H.E. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, and Md Shahid Uddin Akbar, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of BIID Foundation. This partnership represents a meaningful step toward fostering healthier, more resilient communities through informed, youth-led action and integrated rural development.

CIRDAP Knowledge Series – 40: CIRDAP's Special Webinar on International Women's Day by Dr. Jacqueline Hughes, Secretary General, World Agriculture Forum, Netherland

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day
15 MARCH

CIRDAP WEBINAR SERIES - 40

'Women in Agriculture and Rural Development - Empowering Change'

Honorable Speaker
Dr. Jacqueline Hughes
Secretary General, World Agriculture Forum.
SDG Room, Royal Institute of Tropicals (KIT).
Mauritskade 64 1092 AD Amsterdam, Netherlands.

March 10, 2025 (Monday)
03:00 PM (Bangladesh Time)
09:00 AM (UK time)

[Click here for zoom link](#)

CIRDAP
Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)

Organized by CIRDAP info@cirdap.org
Via Zoom Conference www.cirdap.org
Coordinator Ms. Husrin Jannat communication_officer@cirdap.org

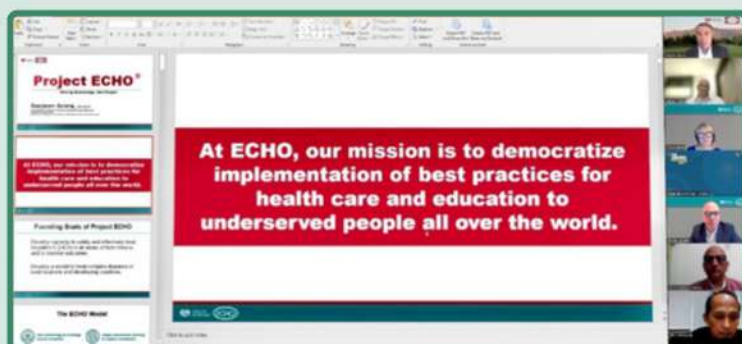
CIRDAP hosted a special webinar for the celebration of International Women's Day titled "Women in Agriculture and Rural Development – Empowering Change" on March 10, 2025. The honorable Speaker was Dr. Jacqueline Hughes, Secretary General, World Agriculture Forum, Amsterdam, Netherlands. The session was chaired by HE Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP. The event brought together experts, practitioners, and advocates to celebrate the crucial role of women in driving change in Agriculture and Rural Development. Dr. Jacqueline discussed the theme of the International Women's Day, emphasizing the importance of unlocking equal rights and opportunities for all while highlighting the challenges



faced by women in various sectors, particularly Agriculture. The speaker addressed unconscious bias and its impact on gender perception, sharing her experiences as a woman in research and stressing the need for self-awareness, empathy, and humility in

leadership. The discussion also focused on the potential of women in Agro-processing and Micro-enterprises, emphasizing the need for training, support and collaboration between governments, NGOs, and private sectors to empower women in Agriculture and promote gender equity in communities.

CIRDAP Partners with the Project ECHO for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation



On 6th March 2025, CIRDAP formalized a strategic partnership with Project ECHO, University of New Mexico, through a virtual Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony. This landmark collaboration aims to harness Project ECHO's innovative tele-mentoring model to enhance knowledge dissemination and capacity building for integrated rural development and poverty alleviation across CIRDAP Member Countries.

The MoU was signed by H.E. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, and Dr. Sanjeev Arora, Founder and Director of Project ECHO. The partnership marks a pivotal step towards leveraging technology to build stronger, more resilient rural communities. Through the ECHO model—an interactive virtual platform connecting experts with practitioners—CIRDAP will facilitate the sharing of best practices and scalable solutions in areas such as health, education, agriculture, and livelihoods. This initiative underscores CIRDAP's commitment to promoting inclusive, sustainable development by empowering rural stakeholders with timely, expert-led learning and support.

CIRDAP-NEDAC International Collaborative Training -‘Startups, Technology Entrepreneurship and Partnerships for Vibrant Agri Cooperatives’ on July 21 – 23, 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Last date for receiving the applications : July, 5, 2025

Please contact to Mr. F.A.M Zakirul Huq at his email: aocirdap@cirdap.org and Phone: +8801317810378

‘Who is the most inspirational woman in your life’ – Heartfelt tribute by CIRDAP family



On 6th March 2025, CIRDAP celebrated International Women's Day with a heartfelt gathering at the serene CIRDAP Garden. The event commenced with a warm welcome address by the Librarian, setting a tone of appreciation and reflection. This was followed by an inspiring speech from the Director General of CIRDAP, H.E. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, who



emphasized the significance of the day and the vital role of women in shaping communities. As part of the celebration, staff members shared personal stories about the inspirational women who have profoundly influenced their lives, creating a powerful moment of collective

admiration and respect. The program also featured a lively game competition that brought energy and joy to the event, culminating in a prize distribution ceremony that recognized enthusiastic participation.

IRD Model 7: Rural Innovation at Sahyadri Farms: Empowering Smallholder Farmers through Sustainable Practices

Sahyadri Farms has emerged as a beacon of hope for smallholder farmers in India, particularly in the horticulture sector. With the belief that "Alone we can do little; together we can do so much," the company has transformed from a modest venture into one of India's leading fruit and vegetable export companies, empowering over 18,000 farmers and generating a significant economic impact.

In 2012, four smallholder farmers, led by Mr. Vilas Shinde, embarked on a journey to overcome the challenges faced by farmers in rural India. They came together with the goal of improving farming practices, ensuring fair prices for farmers, and making Indian agriculture competitive globally. Sahyadri Farms, now India's leading Farmer Producer Company (FPC) in horticulture, covering 31,000 acres and growing nine crops. The company's primary mission is to enable smallholder farmers to adopt the latest technology and best practices to cultivate high-quality produce and participate meaningfully in the global market.



Sahyadri Farms – An Overview

- **Turnover:** ₹1,548.9 crore in FY 2023-24 (55 percent increase from the previous year)
- **Farmers Served:** Over 18,000 registered farmers
- **Land Area:** 31,000 acres
- **Crops:** Grapes, tomatoes, mangoes, bananas, pomegranates, sweet corn, and more
- **Produce Processed:** 2,75,327 metric tons
- **Export Revenue:** ₹352 crores
- **Domestic Revenue:** ₹654 crores
- **Full-Time Employment:** 1,300 jobs
- **Seasonal Employment:** 4,000 jobs
- **Infrastructure Investment:** ₹558 crores in cold storage, processing plants, and technology

Sahyadri Farms has become a benchmark for agricultural transformation. Its farmer-centric approach, technological innovation, and sustainable practices continue to empower rural India and set a global example for inclusive agri-business development.

Reference:

<https://www.sahyadrifarms.com/>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358524651_Role_of_Farmer_Producer_Organizations_in_Empowering_Farmers_Case_Studies_from_India



DG CIRDAP's meeting with the Honorable Secretary of the Rural Development & Cooperatives Division, Government of Bangladesh

On 16 March, the Director General of CIRDAP, HE. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, met with Mr. Md. Nazrul Islam, the Secretary of the Rural Development & Cooperatives Division, Bangladesh. He is also the Vice Chairperson of CIRDAP's Executive Committee. Discussions covered key functional areas. He discussed about ongoing programmes and the Secretary assured the necessary support to CIRDAP activities.

CIRDAP faculty explore Rural Technology Park in National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad, India



On 3rd March 2025, CIRDAP faculty visited NIRD&PR in Hyderabad, India—a key link institute of CIRDAP dedicated to advancing Rural Development across the region. The visit included engaging discussions with NIRD&PR faculty, fostering meaningful exchanges on strategies and innovations in Rural Development. CIRDAP members also toured the NIRD&PR Library and the expansive Rural Technology

Park (RTP), a 65-acre hub of practical innovation. The RTP features live demonstrations of cost-effective, eco-friendly, and locally adapted technologies across various sectors, including rural housing, solar energy, sanitation, vermi-composting, handmade paper production, and beekeeping. This hands-on exhibition space plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable livelihoods, rural employment, and entrepreneurship through skill-building and real-world training.



Gender Responsive Budgeting-Local Development Training Academy, Katmandu, Nepal Hosts Capacity Development Program under CIRDAP Project



The Local Development Training Academy (LDTA), Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA), Government of Nepal, Katmandu organized its second event of CIRDAP's Project on 'Capacity Development of Elected Representatives and Officials to Implement Gender Responsive Budget (GRB)' at Selected Local Governments in Nepal" at Sunwal Municipality, Nawalparasi (Bardaghat Susta West), Lumbini Province during 24 to 25 February 2025. There were altogether 34 participants including 15 Local Representatives (Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Ward Chairpersons, and Executive Members) and 19 Municipal Staffs.

CIRDAP-Nimsme International Trainee Explore Innovation Hubs in Hyderabad, India



On 1st March 2025, international participants of the CIRDAP-nimsme International Training Programme on “Micro Enterprises for Rejuvenation of Rural Economy: Policies, Programmes & Learnings” undertook a field visit to prominent technological hubs in Hyderabad, India. The visit offered valuable exposure to India’s thriving innovation ecosystem and its role in supporting micro-enterprise development. As part of the



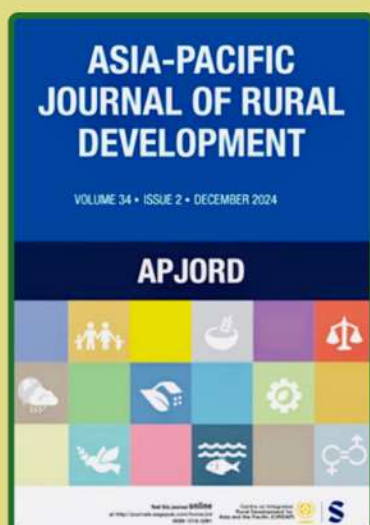
itinerary, the delegates toured T-Works, India’s largest integrated hardware prototyping center, established by the Government of Telangana. T-Works is dedicated to nurturing a maker culture by providing state-of-the-art infrastructure and reducing barriers to hardware innovation.

The group also visited T-Hub, a sprawling 585,000 sq ft startup incubator, which supports up to 1,000 startups and stands as a testament to India’s drive for global leadership in innovation and entrepreneurship. These immersive visits underscored how cutting-edge technology and institutional support can catalyze rural economic rejuvenation through micro-enterprise development.



DG CIRDAP’s meeting with the Honourable Secretary of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

CIRDAP Director General HE Dr. P. Chandra Shekara met Honorable Secretary of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India Sri. Shailesh Kumar Singh at Ministry HQ in Delhi on 25th March, 2025. DG briefed Secretary about ongoing activities of CIRDAP and acknowledged the wholehearted support of India. The DG of CIRDAP sought the support of India for future programmes of CIRDAP.



Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development (APJORD), Volume 34, Issue 2, December 2024 released

CIRDAP is pleased to announce the release of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Rural Development (APJORD), Volume 34, Issue 2, and December 2024. As a flagship publication of CIRDAP, APJORD continues to serve as a critical platform for addressing key issues and fostering discussions on Rural Development, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. This bi-annual academic journal is designed to provide a forum for academics, policymakers, NGOs, research scholars, and all other stakeholders interested in IRD to exchange insights, field observations, and empirical research on rural development. If you are interested in access to full journal, kindly visit this link below:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/jrda/34/2>

CIRDAP and DAKSHIN, New Delhi for Strengthening Global Collaborations for the #GlobalSouth



On 26th March 2025, HE Dr. P Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, had a productive meeting with Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva, Chief Coordinator of Dakshin-Global South Centre of Excellence at the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, India to explore potential global collaborations. This meeting marks a significant step towards fostering meaningful partnerships between CIRDAP and the Dakshin-Global South Centre of Excellence. CIRDAP look forward to the impactful initiatives that will benefit the Global South.

International Publication on 'Disaster Management and Climate change adaptation in Asia and Pacific: Policies, Programmes, Approaches and Learnings'

International Publication on 'Innovations in Rural Development in Asia and Pacific'

CIRDAP is planning to bring out these two International Publications, Your esteemed contribution in the form of an article (approximately 10 pages) would be a valuable addition, enriching the content with your insights and expertise. Please submit your articles to Ms. Hurain Jannat at her email: communication_officer@cirdap.org

DG CIRDAP Visited Krishi Jagran Office, New Delhi, India, Strengthening Partnership for Rural Development



On March 26, 2025, HE Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), visited the Krishi Jagran office in New Delhi. This visit marked a significant step in the continued collaboration between Krishi Jagran and CIRDAP, both of which share a commitment to advancing rural development across the region. During his visit, Dr. Shekara addressed the Krishi



Jagran journalists, sharing insights into CIRDAP's ongoing initiatives and its role in Rural Development. He also engaged in a productive discussion with Mr. Dominic, Group Chairman of Krishi Jagran, reinforcing the importance of their partnership.

Krishi Jagran, as a partner of CIRDAP and also a media partner of the World Rural Development Day (WRDD), continues to play a vital role in highlighting issues that impact rural communities, ensuring that their voices are heard at both national and global forums. This collaboration further strengthens their shared mission of fostering sustainable rural development in Asia and the Pacific.



Forthcoming Webinar on Financing Nutrition

On the occasion of the International Nutrition Olympiad 2025 (April 24-25, 2025), CIRDAP in collaboration with Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID) and iECHO Platform, Project ECHO University of New Mexico is going to organize a significant webinar titled '**Financing for Nutrition in Asia: Current Trends and Way Forward**' on April 17, 2025, at 11 am Bangladesh time (12 pm in Thailand time).

Attention To The CIRDAP EXPERTS

CIRDAP would like to seek the support of the CIRDAP Experts for their greater involvement in enriching the lives of rural communities on CIRDAP platform.

Experts are invited to contribute in the following ways:

1. Provide updated information as indicated below. This reply will be treated as Experts renewed interest in CIRDAP Activities:

Name, Designation, Office, Contact detail, Photo, Country, No. of years of Experience, Areas of Expertise in Integrated Rural Development (Mention only FIVE important areas) and Complete CV.

2. A monthly e-bulletin '**Voice of CIRDAP**' has been started by CIRDAP which is reaching 1.18 lakh stakeholders covering member countries every month. Experts are requested to give at least one Innovation on Rural Development with good photos in not more than one page for publication.

3. Please provide 2-3 minutes **video on any innovation, experience in Rural Development** which would be added to newly created CIRDAP YouTube Channel.

4. CIRDAP will be very happy to process/forward any of your national/International projects on Rural Development to funding agencies through **Project Facilitation Centre of CIRDAP**. If approved, the project will be led by the expert who prepare the project.

You are requested to send all the above information to Ms. Hurain Jannat, Communication Officer, and CIRDAP Email: communication_officer@cirdap.org with copy to chandradgcirdap@cirdap.org



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The Headquarter of CIRDAP**



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