

VOICE OF CIRDAP

Empowering The Rural Communities

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World Rural Development Day 2025

Integrated, Inclusive, Sustainable and Enterprising Rural Development



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

RURAL HEARTBEAT - 12: Evolving with Time, Step by Step for Rural Communities

The 40th Technical Committee Meeting of CIRDAP was held in Yangon, Myanmar, with full participation from all 14 member countries: Fiji, Philippines, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Iran. The meeting approved the 2026-27 Action Plan and expanded country-level roles, with Myanmar taking over the chairmanship from Malaysia for 2025-26. Notable deliverables in 2025 include the early release of the Rural Development Report (four months ahead of schedule, reaching 1.8 Lakh stakeholders), Introduction of self-financed programs, Strengthening social media outreach and the inaugural World Rural Development Day celebrations marked by initiatives like village outreach in Fiji, rural schemes awareness in Andhra Pradesh, India, and a ministerial exhibition, award ceremony in Myanmar. CIRDAP's Consultancy Wing is active, the Project Facilitation Center is operational, and the Rural Innovation Challenge has been initiated, with 16 new activities planned for 2026-27. The wholehearted support from member countries strengthened the role of CIRDAP as an intergovernmental organization focused on rural development, emphasizing cooperation, efficiency, and impactful programs.



With Warm Wishes

Dr. P. Chandra Shekara
Director General, CIRDAP



Together We Win - The 40th Meeting of the CIRDAP Technical Committee Held in Yangon, Myanmar during 25 to 27 August 2025

The 40th Meeting of the CIRDAP Technical Committee was held from 25 to 27 August 2025 in Yangon, Myanmar. The event officially commenced on 25 August 2025 with an inspiring opening ceremony. The inauguration began with welcome remarks by His Excellency Mr. Hla Moe, Union Minister of the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development of Myanmar, followed by an address from His Excellency Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP. Followed by an interesting video presentation on rural development programmes and impact on rural communities.



The session set the stage for meaningful deliberations on important agendas, including progress reports of CIRDAP activities, collaborative research programmes, international training initiatives, publications, the Rural Development Report 2025, and strategic plans for the years ahead. This marked the beginning of a significant three-day event where member countries worked together to review achievements, shape strategies, and chart future directions for sustainable and climate-resilient rural development across the Asia-Pacific region.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the fourteen CIRDAP member countries, namely Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam, along with officials from the CIRDAP Secretariat.



The **field visit of the Technical Committee (TC-40) meeting** on 27 August 2025 covered three locations in Yangon, Myanmar. These were Yemon Smart Village in Hlegu Township, located about 35 miles from the TC-40 meeting venue, ERAVATI Sule Grand Yangon Hotel; Dagon Myothit (East) Township and Tharketa Township. Participants visited key sites such as the Vegetable and Fruit Research and Development Centre, Fun Wha Dairy Farm, household metered water connections, and the National Races Village in these three townships.

1. The Vegetable and Fruit Research and Development Centre (VFRDC):

At the Research and Development Centre, the participants learnt about the production technologies of various vegetables and fruits along with their marketing channels. In the VRRDC, interaction covered natural farming technologies; vegetables and fruits seed production; vegetable farming and tissue culture. Later, members visited the labs and fields of vegetables and fruits.



2. The Fun Wha Dairy Farm

The members visited the dairy farms and observed the cold storage facilities for cooling raw milk, milk processing as well as the production of yogurt. The unit created jobs for several hundred local people.





3. Household Metered Water Connections in Yemon Smart Village

Each household in the village is connected to a government-supported water treatment and metered supply system, which ensures the provision of fresh and clean drinking water for the community which is managed by community.



4. Lay Daunt Kan Hatchery in Dagon Myothit (East) Township

Lay Daunt Kan Hatchery in Myothit (East) Township, yangon where the members saw modern fish farming practices, including fish farming technology services, juvenile fish distribution, and the cultivation of different fish species.



5. National Races Village in Tharketa Township, Yangon

The members visited National Races Village in Tharketa Township, about 30 miles from Yemon Smart Village. Here, members enjoyed a two-hour exploration of Myanmar's rich ethnic diversity through traditions, customs, cultural exhibits, and a vibrant cultural program. A vibrant performance of traditional dances and music was presented by artists representing various national races of Myanmar. The National Races Village features eight different traditional houses of the Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan ethnic groups, each showcasing distinctive attire, cultural practices, music, literature, and handicrafts. Members toured these traditional houses, which were built in diverse architectural styles and decorated with cultural artifacts.



CIRDAP Knowledge Circuit 3 | Rural Development in Myanmar

On 26 August 2025, during the Fortieth Meeting of the CIRDAP Technical Committee in Yangon, Myanmar, the CIRDAP Knowledge Circuit 3 featured a dynamic series of presentations and discussions on Rural Development Policies, Programmes, Institutions, Innovations, and Impact of Myanmar.



The session was inaugurated with opening remarks by Mr. Thein Lwin, Director General of the Department of Rural Development and the concept of CIRDAP Knowledge Circuit was introduced by HE. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, DG, CIRDAP.

Key Presentations:

Dr. Zarni Minn, Director of the Department of Rural Development, Myanmar

Topic: From Tradition to Transformation: A Journey of Rural Development in Myanmar.

He highlighted Myanmar's evolving rural development journey, tracing progress from traditional practices to transformative policies, innovations, and their impact on rural communities.



Mr. Shihab Uddin Ahamad, Country Director of Water Aid Myanmar

Topic: Planning Together, Changing Together: Integrated Rural Development in Action

He shared insights on community-led and inclusive planning approaches that foster sustainable rural change.



Dr. Win Min Oo, Deputy Director of the Department of Rural Development, Myanmar

Topic: Sustainable Rural Water Supply Initiatives in Myanmar

He focused on practical models and policy frameworks designed to ensure long-term access to clean water for rural communities.



Representative from Plan International Myanmar

Topic: Rural Development Initiatives

The presentation highlighted innovative programmes that strengthen livelihoods, empower communities, and build resilience in rural Myanmar.

This session was moderated by the Country Director of Plan International Myanmar, Haider Yaqub and concluded with an interactive question - and - answer segment, where participants exchanged experiences and perspectives.



This knowledge-sharing platform underscored Myanmar's strong commitment to inclusive rural transformation and brought forward best practices and innovations that can serve as inspiration for CIRDAP Member States.

DG CIRDAP Visit to the University of Co-operative and Management, Thanlyin, Myanmar

On 28 August 2025, the University of Co-operative and Management, Thanlyin (UCMT), under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, warmly welcomed HE. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). The event was held at the Multipurpose Hall of UCMT and attended by faculty, students, and distinguished guests. Director General of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of Myanmar graced the programme.



The ceremony began with a warm reception, followed by cultural performances by UCMT students. These performances highlighted Myanmar's cultural richness and created an atmosphere of celebration.

Dr. Yi Yi Win, Rector of UCMT, delivered a welcome address, in which she expressed gratitude to CIRDAP for its consistent support in promoting cooperative education and rural development in Myanmar.



The highlight of the event was the Keynote Address by Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, who emphasized the importance of cooperatives as engines of inclusive growth and the vital role of academic institutions in building the capacities of future leaders. He also underscored the significance of innovation, knowledge-sharing, and regional collaboration in addressing rural development challenges across the Asia-Pacific region.

The ceremony concluded with the screening of the UCMT Documentary Video, which showcased the university's achievements and its vision for advancing cooperative education and research.

Dr. Shekara's visit to UCMT marked an important step in strengthening collaboration between CIRDAP and cooperative universities in Myanmar, paving the way for enhanced knowledge exchange and institutional partnerships in the field of rural development.



Empowering Women through Cooperatives in Myanmar: DG CIRDAP Interacts with Women Village Cooperatives

During visit to Myanmar, H.E. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, engaged in an interactive session with women cooperative members. The discussion provided valuable insights into how women are mobilizing resources, managing livelihoods, and addressing socio-economic challenges through cooperative structures.

The members shared their experiences on accessing financial support, highlighting both the opportunities and hurdles in securing loans. While cooperative mechanisms have enabled them to pursue livelihood activities, issues such as interest rates, repayment terms, and limited financial literacy continue to pose challenges.

Dr. Shekara appreciated the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of the women and emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperatives to provide affordable credit, skill development, and market linkages. He reiterated CIRDAP's commitment to supporting inclusive and sustainable rural development by empowering women through cooperative movements.



Bangladesh Biochar Initiative (BBI) Delegation Visits CIRDAP

On 11 August 2025, CIRDAP warmly welcomed Mr. Mahbubul Islam, Secretary of the Bangladesh Biochar Initiative (BBI), and Dr. Shaifulla, Adviser (Research) of BBI, for a courtesy visit and meeting with CIRDAP Director General H.E. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara. The discussions explored opportunities for collaboration in advancing biochar technology, promoting sustainable agriculture, and supporting climate-resilient rural development in the Asia-Pacific region.



CIRDAP Welcomes Two New Programme Officers

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) is pleased to announce the appointment of two distinguished professionals to its headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Dr. Babu Kaji Thapa has joined as Programme Officer (Research) and Dr. Venkatamallu Thadaboina has joined as Programme Officer (Learning). Their extensive knowledge and international experience will greatly contribute to advancing CIRDAP's mission of promoting integrated rural development across the Asia-Pacific region.



Dr. Babu Kaji Thapa, Programme Officer (Research)

Born in Tanahun, Nepal, Dr. Babu Kaji Thapa brings more than twenty-five years of experience in agriculture, rural financing, and socio-economic research. He served at the Agricultural Development Bank Limited of Nepal for twenty-four years, where he rose to the position of Deputy General Manager and successfully led major international projects, including the USD 100 Million VITA Project supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the USD 18 Million FPP Project supported by the World Bank.

Dr. Thapa holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture, a Master of Arts in Sociology, and a Master of Public Administration from Nepal, along with a Doctor of Philosophy from India. He has worked with prominent organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, ActionAid, and the Government of Nepal. With proven expertise in project design, agricultural credit, impact evaluation, and research, as well as representing Nepal in international forums across the Asia-Pacific region, Dr. Thapa will play a key role in strengthening CIRDAP's research and knowledge base.



Dr. Venkatamallu Thadaboina, Programme Officer (Learning)

Dr. Venkatamallu Thadaboina is a social science researcher with over twenty years of professional experience in programme management, monitoring and evaluation of development projects, rural livelihoods, e-Governance, local self-government, and rural development administration. He holds both a Master of Philosophy and a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration, with a research focus on e-Governance and rural development.

Prior to joining CIRDAP, Dr. Venkatamallu served as a Research Officer at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in Hyderabad, India, from 2010 to 2017 and again from 2020 to 2025. During the period from May 2012 to April 2017, he was posted in the Rural Livelihoods Division of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Between 2017 and 2020, he worked on deputation at the Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies, Osmania University, as an Assistant Professor, where he conducted training programmes and consultancy research studies funded by the Government of India. Earlier in his career, while pursuing his doctoral degree, he contributed to three national-level research projects on panchayati raj and e-Governance in India.

He is the recipient of a prestigious national fellowship from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Government of India. He has presented papers at numerous national and international conferences, authored the book E-Governance and Rural Development, contributed to book chapters, and published nine research articles in leading journals. Additionally, he has developed study materials in Public Administration for undergraduate and postgraduate distance education courses at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in Hyderabad, India.

IRD Model- 11

FAO and IR Iran Launch Joint Programme to Boost Agricultural Innovation

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in close collaboration with the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO) in IR Iran, has initiated a joint programme to strengthen agricultural innovation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The first step of this collaboration is the establishment of an Agricultural Innovation Lab (i-Lab) in Karaj, aimed at enhancing national capacity to address pressing challenges in food and nutrition security, agricultural productivity, and environmental sustainability.

The FAO-Iran i-Lab will serve as a platform to bring together researchers, technologists, youth, start-ups, public and private sectors, and policymakers. Through this collaborative effort, the programme seeks to design, pilot, and scale up innovative ideas, services, and tools while transforming new solutions into public goods that benefit society at large.

At the inaugural workshop, experts from the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, AREEO, and international specialists discussed priority areas, frameworks, and procedures for the programme. According to FAO Representative in Iran, Mr. Gerold Bödeker, the initiative, modelled on FAO's experience in nine pilot countries across

Africa, Asia and Central America, is expected to strengthen the resilience, productivity, and competitiveness of Iran's agriculture and food systems.

The i-Lab will provide mentorship, funding, networking opportunities, and a supportive environment for start-up teams, while also promoting entrepreneurship and encouraging collaboration between academia, government agencies, and the private sector. It will further support capacity development through training workshops and entrepreneurship events, enhancing effective interaction between research institutions and industries.

By creating an enabling ecosystem for innovation, the FAO-Iran i-Lab aims to develop sustainable solutions to critical challenges, including climate change, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, and food security. As the lead United Nations agency in advancing climate-smart agro-rural development, FAO remains committed to assisting member countries in unlocking the potential of innovation, linking networks of actors, and strengthening institutions and policies for a more resilient agricultural future.



CIRDAP-NIRDPR Research Programme on Empowering Transgender Communities in India through Livelihood Promotion

CIRDAP and NIRDPR, India, are executing an action research project titled "Action Lab for the Inclusion of Transgender and Gender-Variant Youth in Mainstream Livelihood" in India.

As a component of this initiative, a three-day Training Programme focused on Transgender Communities through Coconut Shell Handicrafts was held from July 28 to 30, 2025, at the Lions Club in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu, in collaboration with the Sahodari Foundation, India. This practical training was designed to provide rural transgender individuals with skills in coconut shell handicraft, which included the production of kitchen tools, jewellery, and decorative artefacts. The transgender participants who trained in Pollachi started the making of products and have received orders for cups, snack bowls, and candle stands crafted from coconut shells. The NIRDPR team is actively seeking CSR funding to create a space for transgender individuals to further their entrepreneurial activities.



A similar training session is planned to conduct in West Bengal in mid-September 2025, focusing on spice grinding and business establishment. NIRDPR is also planning to formalize a Memorandum of Understanding with USHA International for apparel training as part of this initiative.



Technology for Rural Communities

Bluedoor Global Solutions: Pioneering Regenerative Agriculture with EarthenAgri™

Introduction

Conventional Plastic mulch films have been intensively used in agriculture, but at a hidden cost—soil degradation, microplastic pollution, ground water pollution and labour for removal of plastic remnants. EarthenAgri™, an innovation by Bluedoor Global Solutions in partnership with Phitons GreenTech, offers a sustainable alternative: Compostable mulch films that protect crops, enrich soil and vanish naturally into the earth.

Key Benefits

EarthenAgri™ mulch, made from PBAT with soil as filler, is fully compostable and naturally enhances soil health while improving crop yield and quality. Field assessments conducted across diverse agro-climatic zones in India have consistently confirmed its effectiveness, supported by Bluedoor's protocols for optimal use and faster soil integration.



Mulch Decomposition Timeline:

- **0 – 120 days (On soil):** Mulch film remains intact and functional.
- **120 – 150 days (On soil):** Film becomes brittle and starts decomposing.
- **By 180 days (After ploughed back into soil post crop harvest):** Completely degrades, leaving no residue.

Why This Matters:

Saves time and reduces costs – Conserves soil moisture, regulates soil pH and temperature and eliminates the need for retrieving plastic remnants and associated labour.

Improves soil and environment – Restores soil health naturally, enhances fertility, supports carbon sequestration and reduces overall carbon footprint.

Regenerative Agriculture at Scale:

Together with Phitons GreenTech, we are scaling impact by:

- Promoting climate-smart farming.
- Delivering cost-effective sustainability.
- Empowering farmers with knowledge & tools

Beyond Agriculture:

Phitons GreenTech innovations also include:

- Eco-friendly FMCG packaging
- Compostable medical disposables
- Sustainable textile polymers

Conclusion: Farming for the Future

Transitioning to compostable mulch is a necessary evolution toward sustainable agriculture. With EarthenAgri™, farmers don't choose between productivity and planet-friendly practices. At Bluedoor Global Solutions and Phitons GreenTech, we lead this change—because the future of farming shouldn't cost the earth. Grow responsibly. Join us in building a resilient, regenerative food system that doesn't cost the earth.

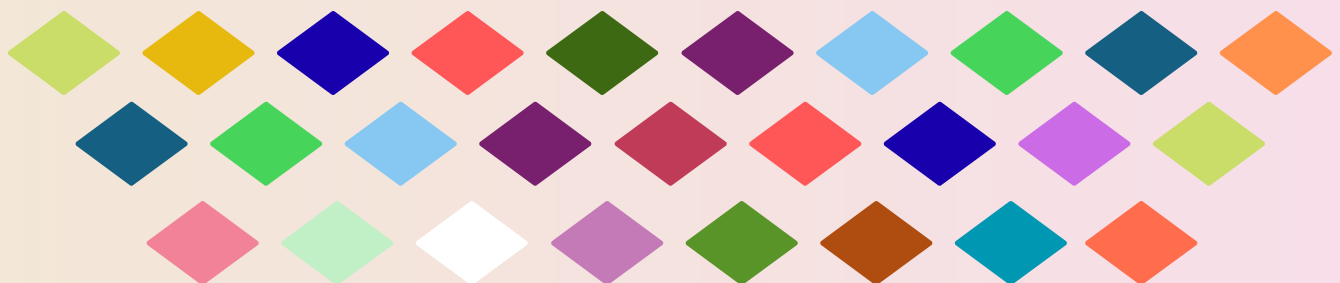
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DG CIRDAP Addressed 58th Annual Planning Conference (APC) of BARD, Cumilla

Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), attended as Special Guest and addressed the 58th Annual Planning Conference of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development in Cumilla on 16 August 2025. The conference served as an important platform to review the Academy's accomplishments in training, research, and action research during the fiscal year 2024-25, while also formulating the training, research, and action research agenda for 2025-26 through a participatory process involving policymakers, administrators, development partners, academics, and rural development professionals from national and international institutions.



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. Tahsina Tabassum Sajuti, Executive Assistant, Research and CIRDAP Email: ea_research@cirdap.org with copy to chandradgcirdap@cirdap.org



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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;
- 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.



**Chameli House
The Headquarter of CIRDAP**



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