

VOICE OF CIRDAP

Empowering The Rural Communities

ISSUE 14, OCTOBER 2025

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 - 14:**RURAL WOMEN, CIRDAP, AND THE ROAD TO EMPOWERMENT**

CIRDAP celebrated International Rural Women Day on 15th October in presence of 14 inspiring women from member countries namely Sri Lanka, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran and Nepal. It was indeed an opportunity to recognize and honor the dedicated rural women and to inspire the rest through their success stories. Manjulika Chakma who established Bain Textiles during 1965 to empower rural Tribal women in Bangladesh led the memorable program.

The International Day of Rural Women stands as a beacon, reminding we all that rural women are the primary engine of food security and local economies. Yet, their potential remains constrained by deep-seated socioeconomic challenges that impede our collective progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite their immense contributions, the status of rural women in the Asia-Pacific is one of significant disparity. The challenges they face are not merely economical; they are structural, hitting them hardest in critical areas. Economic Invisibility and Exclusion due to unpaid and informal labor, lacking equal rights to landownership or the necessary collateral to secure formal credit adds to the grim situation. This economic constraint is amplified by a significant digital gender divide, with digital literacy often lagging, preventing access to modern market information and financial technology.

As primary custodians of natural resources, rural women are on the front lines of the climate crisis, suffering food stress leading directly to higher rates of household malnutrition and poverty. On the other hand, Policy Marginalization is rendering key development programs ineffective at the grassroots level.

To address these barriers, CIRDAP actively promotes, Research, Training, Webinars and exchanges successful grassroots innovations across its member network. CIRDAP research program on sensitizing the stakeholders on Gender Responsive Budgeting in Nepal in Collaboration with Local Development Training Academy generated valuable impact and lessons. Success stories of inspiring rural women are in pipeline and International Leadership Development Training for Women Leaders is on the cards. Besides, showcased several successful women leaders through webinars.

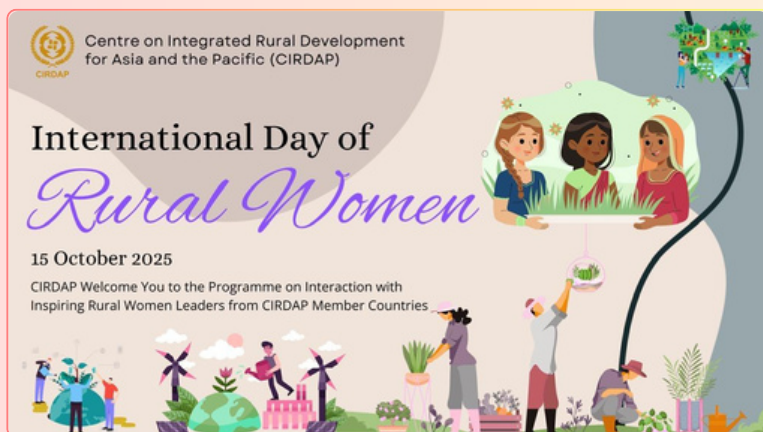
The Power of Collective Action through Women-led Self-Help Groups, Agri-Cooperatives, Leaping the Digital Divide, Building Resilience through Climate Innovation and developing effective women leaders are the priority now. By prioritizing these factors, CIRDAP reaffirms its commitment to transform the lives of rural women, positioning them not just as beneficiaries, but as the **central drivers** of a prosperous, resilient, and integrated Asia-Pacific future.



With Warm Wishes

Dr. P. Chandra Shekara
Director General, CIRDAP

Rural Women at the Heart of Sustainable Development: CIRDAP Celebrates International Day of Rural Women 2025



The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) proudly celebrated the International Day of Rural Women 2025 through an online event on 15 October 2025.



This year's celebration recognized the remarkable contributions of 14 inspirational rural women from CIRDAP Member Countries – Bangladesh, India, IR Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. These women shared their inspirational stories, demonstrating dedication, resilience, and innovation that have transformed rural communities and inspired change across the region.



Monjulika Chakma
Bangladesh



Umayangani Senevirathna
Sri Lanka



Mrs. Jyoti Readdy
India



Dr. Thet Thet Zin
Myanmar



Ms. Parvaneh Pourang
IR Iran



Geeta Adhikari
Nepal



Nasima Akter
Bangladesh



Shad Begum
Pakistan



Shahana Haque
Bangladesh



Uma Kumari Khatri
Nepal



Khaing Cho Lwin
Myanmar



Sangeeta Dalai
India



Ms. Hemmat Pour
IR Iran



Chandramalli Wijerathna
Sri Lanka



Sajida Mumtaz
Pakistan

CIRDAP was deeply honored to have Mrs. Monjulika Chakma as our Guest of Honor – a visionary entrepreneur from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and founder of Bain Textile (established 1965). Her initiative has revived traditional Chakma weaving, empowered women artisans, and preserved the rich cultural heritage of her community.

This celebration highlighted not only the achievements of these outstanding women but also reaffirmed the vital role of rural women in advancing sustainable development, uplifting livelihoods, and preserving culture across Asia and the Pacific.

Let us continue to honor and amplify the voices of rural women – the backbone of rural economies and the heart of community resilience.

Call for CIRDAP Research Proposals 2026: Towards Vibrant, Prosperous and Happy Rural Communities

CIRDAP is pleased to announce a Call for Proposals for Research Projects 2026 under the theme “Towards Vibrant, Prosperous and Happy Rural Communities.” This initiative reaffirms CIRDAP’s commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable rural development through evidence-based research and knowledge sharing.

The call invites innovative and policy-relevant proposals from CIRDAP Experts, MoU Partners, Link Institutions, Academic and Research Organizations, Civil Society Groups, and Government Agencies across CIRDAP Member Countries. Priority areas include Community-driven development, Rural entrepreneurship, Youth engagement, Gender empowerment, Climate resilience, and innovations in rural service delivery.

Two projects will be selected for 2026, each receiving USD 6,000 in financial support along with technical guidance from the CIRDAP Secretariat. The research should be completed within one year, culminating in a publishable report or case study to enrich regional policy dialogue.

The deadline for proposal submission is **15 January 2026**. Proposals should be submitted electronically to director_research@cirdap.org with the subject line “Proposal Submission – Research Project 2026.”

For further queries, contact Dr. Ganga Dutta Acharya, Director (Research), CIRDAP Secretariat, at director_research@cirdap.org, Mobile: +9779841371697 (WhatsApp)

CIRDAP Signs MoU with SEARCA to Advance Education, Research, and Rural Development in Asia-Pacific



The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) proudly signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) on 22 October 2025 through a virtual ceremony. This partnership marks an important step towards fostering collaboration in education, training, and research to

promote sustainable rural and agricultural development across the Asia-Pacific region.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of HE. Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP and Dr. Mercedita A. Sombilla, Director of SEARCA, along with officials and representatives from both organizations.

Through this collaboration, CIRDAP and SEARCA aim to jointly implement programs, exchange knowledge and research materials, and strengthen institutional cooperation for the shared goal of empowerin rural communities.



CIRDAP - REEDS Upcoming Rural Development Innovation Challenge - 2026

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), in collaboration with the Rural Economic and Educational Development Society (REEDS), is preparing to launch an exciting new initiative titled the Rural Development Innovation Challenge. This upcoming programme aims to identify, support and promote groundbreaking ideas that can transform rural lives across CIRDAP's fifteen Member Countries in Asia and Pacific Region.

Rural communities across Asia and the Pacific continue to face multiple and interconnected challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate risks, limited access to education and healthcare, poor infrastructure, lack of digital connectivity, and restricted employment opportunities leading to youth migration. Recognizing these pressing issues, the Innovation Challenge will serve as a platform to inspire creative solutions and practical models that can address the challenges and contribute to sustainable rural transformation.



CIRDAP - REEDS International Rural Development Innovation Challenge 2026

ONE INNOVATION. ENDLESS CHANGE. COUNTLESS SMILES

Tell us about a Rural Innovation that has empowered and inspired a village or community and brought a transformative change to rural lives.

🌟 **Top 5 Innovations - Win USD 500 & Certificate Each!**

📖 **Features in a BOOK & Attend to International Conference**

🏆 **Next 10 Bright Ideas - Certificate of Appreciation**

Contact: Ms. Hurin Innat, Communication Officer, CIRDAP.
Email: communication_officer@cirdap.org or WhatsApp here: +880 - 1741589228
Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)



The CIRDAP-REEDS Innovation Challenge will call for submissions from experts, agencies, ministries, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and individuals from CIRDAP Member Countries. Entries may include innovative technologies, processes, policy models, success stories, or community-based initiatives that demonstrate measurable impact and potential for scaling up.

Through this initiative, CIRDAP seeks to:

- Encourage innovation and creativity in tackling rural challenges.
- Promote low-cost, high-impact, and inclusive solutions.
- Empower women, youth, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable groups.
- Advance progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Innovation Challenge will offer recognition, awards, and opportunities for collaboration, spotlighting the most outstanding rural innovations emerging from within CIRDAP Member Countries.

◆ Stay tuned for more updates on how to participate in this upcoming initiative that promises to bring “One Innovation. Endless Change. Countless Smiles.”

For future announcements and details, please contact:

✉ communication_officer@cirdap.org

CIRDAP Knowledge Series-44

Dedicated Leadership is Critical for Development of Agriculture Cooperatives. Webinar on “How Can We Make Agricultural Cooperatives Sustainable, Enterprising, and Profitable: Success Story of Mulkanoor Cooperative, India”



'How can we make Agri-Cooperatives sustainable, enterprising & profitable: Success story of Mulkanoor Cooperative, India'

Monday, October 16th, 2025
 11:00 AM (Bangladesh Time)
 11:30 AM (Myanmar Time)
 10:30 AM (India Time)

[Click here for zoom link](#)

Honorable Speaker
Shri Aligi Reddy Praveen Reddy
 President - Chairman
 Mulkanoor Cooperative Rural
 Credit and Marketing Society Ltd.
 India

Jointly organized by CIRDAP and University of Cooperative and Management, Thanlyin (UCMT), Myanmar

Organized by CIRDAP
 lcd@cirdap.org

Venue: Virtual
 Via Zoom Conference
 www.cirdap.org

Coordinator
 Ms. Hurain Jannat
 communication_officer@cirdap.org

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), in collaboration with the University of Cooperative and Management, Thanlyin in Myanmar, organized an online webinar titled “How Can We Make Agricultural Cooperatives Sustainable, Enterprising, and Profitable: Success Story of Mulkanoor Cooperative, India” on 16 October 2025.

The webinar featured an insightful presentation by the Honourable Speaker, Shri Aligi Reddy Praveen Reddy, Chairman of the Mulkanoor Cooperative Rural Credit and Marketing Society Limited, India. Shri Reddy shared in detail the remarkable journey of the Mulkanoor Cooperative, beginning with the circumstances before its establishment and tracing its transformation into a model cooperative institution in India.



Rector Dr. Yi Yi Win, UCMT, Myanmar

The webinar was graced by Rector Dr. Yi Yi Win, together with 127 faculty and staff members from the University of Cooperative and Management, Thanlyin; Rector Dr. Ohmar San, accompanied by 32 faculty members from the University of Cooperative and Management, Sagaing; Deputy Director General U Aung Pyae Soe and Directors from the Department of Cooperatives; Director Dr. Zarni Min, Focal Point and CIRDAP Technical Committee Member

of Myanmar, from the Department of Rural Development; Director Research Dr. Ganga Dutta Acharya, representing the Director General of CIRDAP, along with other officials from CIRDAP; and representatives from CIRDAP Member Countries.

During the session, Shri Reddy elaborated on the vision and mission of the Mulkanoor Cooperative, its membership requirements and procedures, the wide range of services offered to members, and the organization's commitment to cooperation and welfare. He also explained the key factors behind its success, the entrepreneurial and profit - making initiatives undertaken, and the measures adopted to ensure its long - term sustainability.



Experts and participants from CIRDAP Member Countries actively took part in the discussion, exchanging ideas and learning about effective strategies to build sustainable and profitable agricultural cooperatives. The Honourable Speaker responded to all questions comprehensively, making the webinar both informative and engaging.

The session was highly appreciated by participants for its practical insights and relevance in promoting cooperative development and rural prosperity across the Asia-Pacific region.

A Day of Appreciation and Inspiration: CIRDAP's In-house Celebration of International Day of Rural Women 2025



The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) joyfully celebrated the International Day of Rural Women 2025 through an inspiring in-house event at the CIRDAP Garden on 15 October 2025.

The programme was co ordinated by Dr. Usharani Boruah, Librarian and Gender

Coordinator, followed by an encouraging speech from Dr. Ganga Dutta Acharya, Director Research, CIRDAP.

CIRDAP staff members shared their reflections and heartfelt messages on the vital role of rural women in achieving sustainable development.

It was a wonderful afternoon of appreciation, reflection, and togetherness — celebrating the strength, resilience, and achievements of rural women across our member countries.



You Want to Partner: CIRDAP Launches the Project Facilitation Centre

Ready to make your rural development dream a reality by transforming rural ideas into real impact?

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) proudly presents the Project Facilitation Centre (PFC), a forward looking initiative designed to empower and support our network of partners across member countries!

This dynamic platform is your central hub for collaboration and innovation. We work to ensure that your transformative ideas are turned into impactful actions that drive inclusive and sustainable growth.

The Project Facilitation Centre strengthens your capacity by:

- ✓ Unlocking access to global funding opportunities.
- ✓ Mobilizing essential resources for your project.
- ✓ Streamlining project planning and implementation processes.
- ✓ Fostering coordination to enhance rural livelihoods.

Do not let your transformative ideas wait! Submit your project proposal, and we will facilitate it on your behalf with our Development Partners!

Operational Guideline for CIRDAP Project Facilitation Centre (PFC)

Please click the link below:

https://cirdap.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/PFC-Operational-Guide_final.pdf
For more information or inquiries, contact us at: director_research@cirdap.org



The Nepal Agricultural Market Development Programme, locally known as Sahaj, is transforming the agricultural landscape of rural Nepal through an inclusive and market-driven approach. Implemented under a bilateral agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland, this initiative is financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and jointly implemented by Swisscontact and the Center for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research, Extension and Development (CEAPRED).

Sahaj envisions a vibrant and inclusive agriculture sector that creates sustainable employment and income opportunities for rural communities. Its first phase, implemented from March 2016 to November 2020, successfully integrated smallholder farmers into commercial markets by strengthening agricultural input systems, enhancing productivity, and facilitating better market access. The programme partnered with over seventy-five private sector and ten public sector institutions through fifty targeted interventions across more than fifty districts. As a result, it generated eighteen hundred new jobs and raised the farm incomes of forty-five thousand eight hundred rural households, including women and disadvantaged groups.

Building on these achievements, Phase Two (December 2020 to November 2024) focuses on promoting investment and innovation in agriculture value chains. It aims to enhance forward market linkages, strengthen agro-processing, and boost the export potential of value-added products in Province Number One. Sahaj's core philosophy, "Partner in innovations for agriculture," guides this phase as it promotes sustainable growth through collaboration between small and medium-sized enterprises, local governments, and the private sector. The programme emphasizes three key pillars—agriculture services, non-agriculture services, and the enabling business environment—to address barriers to growth and foster resilient rural economies.



The expected outcomes of Sahaj Phase Two are remarkable: the creation of one thousand new jobs in the local economy, forty percent of which will be for women and twenty percent for disadvantaged groups, generating an annual income of Nepalese Rupees one hundred and fifty million. Additionally, twenty thousand farmers, including six thousand women and five thousand from disadvantaged backgrounds, will benefit from an annual increase of Nepalese Rupees three hundred million in farm income.

Through innovation, inclusive partnerships, and a strong focus on value addition, Sahaj continues to contribute significantly to integrated rural development in Nepal, empowering communities and creating a resilient, market-oriented agricultural economy.

Fostering Collaboration:

CIRDAP Joins the 17th Governing Board Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Centre in Dhaka

Dr. Ganga Dutta Acharya, Director (Research) of CIRDAP, attended the inaugural ceremony of the 17th Governing Board Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), held in Dhaka on 13 October 2025.



This significant gathering of senior policymakers, agricultural scientists, and representatives from all SAARC member states proved to be a valuable opportunity for networking and partnerships development in vital agricultural research and development initiatives in the region.

CIRDAP recognizes the significance of such forums in reviewing progress, sharing valuable best practices, and adopting strategies to advance sustainable agricultural development practices in Member countries. Our participation underscores CIRDAP's commitment to integrated rural development and collaborative efforts to achieve food security and resilience in Asia and the Pacific.

Strengthening Diplomatic Ties for Regional Cooperation: DG CIRDAP's Courtesy Meeting with the Russian Ambassador of Bangladesh



His Excellency Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General of CIRDAP, had a courtesy meeting with His Excellency Alexander G. Khozin, Ambassador of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The meeting was attended by Mrs. Anastasia Nemova, First Secretary, and Ms. Ekaterina Semenova, Deputy Chief of the Mission. From CIRDAP, Mr. F.A.M. Zakirul Huq, Head of

Administration, also participated in the discussion. The meeting focused on exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration and mutual engagement between CIRDAP and the Embassy of the Russian Federation.



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 Dr. Venkatamallu Thadaboina, Program Officer (Learning) and CIRDAP Email: po_learning@cirdap.org



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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.

CIRDAP Member Countries



Chameli House The Headquarter of CIRDAP



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