Integrated Rural Development Models

100 Best Practices & Innovations from Asia-Pacific and Beyond

Editor: Dr. P. Chandra Shekara

Author: Tahsina Tabassum Sajuti

VIETNAM'S RURAL DIGITALIZATION: THE SCENARIO OF YEN HOA COMMUNE'S DIGITAL VILLAGE

Digital invention reshapes rural life through smart connectivity.



THE LOMANI GAU INITIATIVE OF FIJI ISLAND:

A COMMUNITY'S DEEP CARE FOR GAU ISLAND AS A MODEL FOR PACIFIC CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Community driven invention blends tradition and innovation for climate resilience.



SUSTAINABLE BIOGAS INNOVATION IN THAILAND

Biogas invention transforms waste into clean energy, reducing pollution and producing useful fertilizer.



SAHAJ - NAPAL AGRICULTURAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:

Transforming Nepal's Smallholder Farmers Through Agriculture



PEOPLE & INCLUSION

Empowering communities, promoting equity, and leaving no one behind.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Strengthening livelihoods through innovation, skills and local solutions.

CLIMATE & RESILIENCE

Building climate-smart communities for a resilient future.

DIGITAL & INNOVATION

Harnessing digital technology to connect, empower and transform.

PARTNERSHIP & COOPERATION

Working together across borders for shared growth and impact.

RURAL INNOVATION IN ACTION

Smart agriculture invention boosts farmer income through farming, data systems, and e-commerce platforms.



SOUTH KOREA'S SAEMAUL UNDONG AS A GLOBAL BLUEPRINT FOR COMMUNITY DRIVEN RURAL INNOVATION

Innovation grows strongest where communities embrace unity, self-belief & courage to create change.

YOUTH WOMEN'S COMMUNITIES

The heart of rural transformation and sustainable development.



POWER TO THE POOR SCHEME IN LAO PDR: ACTION

Energy access can serve as a catalyst for rural transformation.



GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS IN BHUTAN:

A wellbeing-focused model redefining rural progress through sustainability and culture.



MODELS OF CHANGE. PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY. STORIES FROM THE FIELD.

CIRDAP

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

Integrated Rural Development Models

100 Best Practices & Innovations from Asia-Pacific and Beyond

CIRDAP

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

Integrated Rural Development Models:
100 Best Practices & Innovations from Asia-Pacific and Beyond

July 2026

@CIRDAP

ISBN: 978-984-37-0629-4

Published by

Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)
Chameli House, 17 Topkhana Road,
GPO Box 2883, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh
PABX: +88-02- 41053923, +88-02-41053924, +880-2-41053925
Website: www.cirdap.org

Printed by

Dot Ad, *31 Purana Paltan, K.R. Plaza 1st floor, Dhaka-1000*

PREFACE



It is with great pride and a profound sense of purpose that we present *Integrated Rural Development Models – 100 Best Practices & Innovations from Asia Pacific and Beyond,* released on a day of exceptional significance: the 6th of July 2026. This date marks the 47th Foundation Day of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) and, most notably, the 2nd World Rural Development Day (WRDD), a designation officially conferred by the United Nations General Assembly in recognition of CIRDAP's transformative contributions to rural development across the globe. The UN's recognition of July 6 as World Rural Development Day is a resounding affirmation that rural development must remain at the very heart of the global development agenda. This book is our tribute to that vision.

Established in July 1979 through an international agreement lodged with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, CIRDAP is an Intergovernmental and Autonomous Regional Organization headquartered at Chameli House, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Centre serves 15 member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. CIRDAP's mandate is to provide technical and policy support to ministries and institutions engaged in Integrated Rural Development, while empowering national decision makers, development practitioners, and planners to exchange ideas and forge collaborative solutions for rural prosperity.

Integrated Rural Development is not a single blueprint but a living, evolving practice shaped by communities, guided by context, and measured by impact. For over four decades, CIRDAP has championed a holistic approach that weaves together agriculture and food security, livelihood diversification, digital inclusion, climate resilience, gender equality, cooperative development, infrastructure, and participatory governance. Identifying, documenting, and sharing successful IRD models is therefore not merely a knowledge management exercise but an act of solidarity and a commitment to leaving no rural community behind.

This volume brings together 100 carefully selected IRD success stories drawn from 22 countries, a rich tapestry of innovation spanning CIRDAP's membership and beyond. The 15 CIRDAP Member Countries are joined by Cambodia, China, Israel, Peru, South Africa, South Korea, Maldives, and Bhutan. From highland farms to coastal villages and digitally connected cooperatives to community led climate adaptation initiatives, each case study reflects the resilience and determination that define rural Asia Pacific and its allies around the world.

This book is intended as a practical resource and a source of inspiration for policymakers, administrators, researchers, academicians, rural development experts, and development partners alike. It is our sincere hope that these 100 stories will spark new conversations, inform better policies, and catalyse fresh partnerships. On this landmark occasion of the 2nd World Rural Development Day and CIRDAP's 47th Foundation Day, we invite every reader to see in these pages not just what has been achieved, but what remains possible for rural communities, for the Asia Pacific region, and for a more equitable world.

A profound appreciation is extended to Ms. Tahsina Tabassum Sajuti for her exceptional dedication and invaluable time invested in the collection of resources, meticulous screening, proper documentation, and thoughtful presentation of the 100 Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Models in a compelling story-based format.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. P. Chandra Shekara
Director General

EDITOR

Dr. P. Chandra Shekara

Director General,

CIRDAP, Dhaka, Bangladesh



As a leading Professional in the field of Rural Development and Agriculture, currently serving as Director General, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dr. P. Chandra Shekara has more than three decades of experience towards integrated rural development, especially in the areas namely Agricultural Extension Management, Agri-Entrepreneurship Development, Agricultural Marketing Management and Public Private-Partnership. Dr. Shekara headed three premier National Institutions in India which work for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India: Director General of CCS National Institute of Agricultural Marketing (CCS NIAM), Director General (In-charge) of National Institute of Plant Health Management (NIPHM) and Director General of National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE). He published 81 Research papers including 25 books.

AUTHOR

Ms. Tahsina Tabassum Sajuti

CIRDAP, Dhaka, Bangladesh



Ms. Tahsina Tabassum Sajuti is a Development Professional currently working at the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dhaka, Bangladesh. She holds Honours and a Master's degree in Economics from Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Specialising in research support, policy reporting, and editorial coordination, she has experience in assisting research projects, developing data collection methodologies, and analysing diverse data. She has also co-authored several journal publications and research reports, contributing to the broader academic discourse on rural development in the Asia-Pacific region. She oversees the automation and editorial workflow of the Asia Pacific Journal of Rural Development (APJORD), CIRDAP's flagship peer-reviewed academic journal. In addition, she serves as Associate Editor of Voice of CIRDAP, the organisation's monthly publication highlighting CIRDAP's recent activities, inspiring rural development initiatives, and key updates from across the Asia-Pacific region. She also leads digital advocacy efforts by developing engaging content and campaigns across social media platforms to enhance institutional visibility and promote regional cooperation.

TABLE

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 1	The 21st Century Village Programme – the Prosperous Rural Living of Malaysia	1
Model 2	Sahyadri Farms in India: Rooted in Solidarity, Growing Together	1
Model 3	Vietnam's Rural Digitalization: The scenario of Yen Hoa Commune's Digital Village	2
Model 4	Grameen Bank: Microcredit Model, Empowerment, and the Fight Against Poverty in Bangladesh	2
Model 5	Evergreen Village Development Project - The Rural Development model of Myanmar	3
Model 6	The Living Land Project - An unique rural homestay of Lao PDR	3
Model 7	The Lomani Gau Initiative of Fiji Island: A Community's Deep Care for Gau Island as a Model for Pacific Climate Adaptation	4
Model 8	Aruna: Digitally Revolutionising Indonesia's Small Scale Fisheries from Coast to Global Market	4
Model 9	Sustainable Biogas Innovation in Thailand	5
Model 10	Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (CDLIP) project of Sri Lanka	5
Model 11	Sahaj: Transforming Nepal's Smallholder Farmers Through Market Systems Development	6
Model 12	Raise the ARCs: How the Philippines is Empowering Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries toward Rural Prosperity	6
Model 13	Digital Doors for Rural Iran: The Transaction Services Model for E-Marketing and Rural Empowerment	7
Model 14	Empowering Rural Pakistan: The BISP Model of Inclusive Innovation	7

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 15	Empowering Young Innovators: UNICEF's Generation Future Programme in Rural Cambodia	8
Model 16	The Israeli Kibbutz Model as a Blueprint for Sustainable Development	8
Model 17	China's Targeted Poverty Alleviation: A Blueprint for Ending Extreme Poverty	9
Model 18	Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Story: A Journey towards Happiness beyond Monetary Measures	9
Model 19	From Villages to Vision: South Korea's Saemaul Undong as a Global Blueprint for Community Driven Rural Innovation	10
Model 20	Turning Waste into Wealth through Rural Innovation and Youth Empowerment in Maldives	10
Model 21	Power to Heal: Solar Energy as a Catalyst for Rural Health Resilience in the Andes of Peru	11
Model 22	The Siyakhula Living Lab Initiative: Bridging the Digital Divide in South Africa's Eastern Cape	11
Model 23	One House One Farm: Bangladesh's Grassroots Model for Smallholder Led Rural Transformation	12
Model 24	DAY NRLM as a World Class Model for Women Led Rural Livelihood Innovation in India	12
Model 25	Smart Ponds Smart Lives: Indonesia's eFishery as a Digital Innovation Model for Rural Aquaculture	13
Model 26	Sustainable Milk Production in Sri Lanka's Dry Zone: Transforming Crop Residues into Valuable Livestock Feed	13
Model 27	The Comilla Model of Rural Development – a Pioneering Framework for Rural Development in Bangladesh	14
Model 28	Thailand's Self-Sufficiency Economy Practices - The Role of Morality	14
Model 29	G RAM G Act 2025 "Reforming MGNREGA for Viksit Bharat" – India	15

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 30	Power to the Poor Scheme Empowers Rural Women in the Lao PDR	15
Model 31	IR Iran's Participatory Water Management System in Golestan Province as a Model for Farmer Led Irrigation and Agricultural Innovation	16
Model 32	Breathing Life into Care: Transforming Oxygen Access in Fiji	16
Model 33	Charting the digital services and payment revolution in Bangladesh	17
Model 34	Beyond the Mountains: Mahabir Pun's Digital Revolution in Nepal	17
Model 35	Smart Farming Brings Prosperity to Vietnam's Farmers	18
Model 36	Kudumbashree: A Model of Women-Led Rural Innovation in India	18
Model 37	CBIRD Sub Tai, Thailand: Integrating Conservation with Rural Livelihoods	19
Model 38	Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support Services Programme in Indonesia	19
Model 39	Cultivating Climate Resilience: Rural Agricultural Innovation in Sri Lanka	20
Model 40	Growing Together: Transforming Smallholder Farming Communities in Durgapur, Rangpur, Bangladesh	20
Model 41	Amul Cooperative Model: Transforming Rural Livelihoods through Dairy in India	21
Model 42	Malaysia Homestay Experience Program: Rural Tourism for Sustainable Livelihoods	21
Model 43	FAO and IR Iran Agricultural Innovation Lab as a Model for Rural Transformation	22
Model 44	The ENBAITA Agricultural Technology Supply Chain Model for Smallholder Empowerment in Nepal	22

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 45	Transforming Rural Education through Digital Innovation: UNESCO's ICT for Education Initiative in Myanmar	23
Model 46	From Facilitator to Leader: Rita Bramma and the Power of Farmer Driven Rural Innovation in Barisal, Bangladesh	23
Model 47	Building Value Chains from the Ground up: The Philippine Rural Development Project as a Model for Inclusive Agricultural Growth in the Philippines	24
Model 48	Akodara: Pioneering India's First Digital Cashless Village as a Blueprint for Rural Digital Transformation in India	24
Model 49	Empowering Small Farmers through AgTech Innovation: Bridging the Rural Technology Gap in Indonesia	25
Model 50	Mae Moh Agricultural Community: Smart and Sustainable Farming for Rural Economic Transformation in Thailand	25
Model 51	From Subsistence to Enterprise: EU Funded Agricultural Modernization Transforming Farmer Livelihoods in Sri Lanka	26
Model 52	Closing the Rural Health Gap: The ASTHA Community Paramedic Model for Sustainable Healthcare Delivery in Bangladesh	26
Model 53	Cultivating Resilience: Climate Smart Agriculture as a Pathway to Food Security and Farmer Empowerment in the Philippines	27
Model 54	Harisal Digital Village: Technology Driven Rural Transformation in India	27
Model 55	Transforming Rural Mountain Communities: BMZ Driven Sustainable Development in Laos	28
Model 56	Connecting Futures: Vodafone ATH Fiji Lights Up Rural Classrooms with Technology and Hope	28
Model 57	Vietnam's "Lang So" Digital Village e-Handbook	29
Model 58	Protecting Forests, Empowering Communities: The LASR Sustainable Landscape Programme in Indonesia	29
Model 59	Samurdhi – Building a Prosperous Sri Lanka Together	30

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 60	Digital Farming Revolution: Kalu Fakir Para, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	30
Model 61	Aaghosh Program: Conditional Cash Transfers for Maternal and Newborn Health in Rural Punjab, Pakistan	31
Model 62	Digitizing the Countryside: Vietnam's Smart Rural Transformation Programme 2021 to 2025	31
Model 63	Ba'Kelalan Malaysia: Where Mountain Communities Redefine Rural Progress	32
Model 64	From Isolation to Opportunity: TACDO's Rural Finance Revolution in Laos	32
Model 65	Camellia Village in China: Healing Water, Reviving Communities Through Ecological Innovation	33
Model 66	Roads to Prosperity: Transforming Rural Lives in Bhutan	33
Model 67	BAIF eDost India: Rural Women Powering the Digital Village Revolution	34
Model 68	Digital Agriculture Transforming Filipino Farmers: Bridging the Divide	34
Model 69	Mahavilachchiya: A Transformative e-Village in Sri Lanka	35
Model 70	Thailand's One Tambon One Product: Community Driven Rural Innovation	35
Model 71	Nepal's SBI Digital Village: Bridging the Financial Divide in Rural Communities	36
Model 72	Pakistan's e-Credits Initiative: Digital Financial Inclusion for Marginalized Farmers of Punjab	36
Model 73	Myanmar's Vocational Skills Development Project: Catalyst for Rural Resilience and Recovery	37
Model 74	Iran's Rural Women Weavers: Community Empowerment through Traditional Skills and Digital Innovation	37

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 75	Malaysia's Rimbunan Kaseh: A Smart Village Blueprint for Sustainable Rural Development	38
Model 76	Enhancing Vocational Education for Rural Workforce Development in Indonesia: Swiss Skills for Competitiveness (SS4C)	38
Model 77	Pure Fiji: Nature Rooted Beauty and Village Powered Innovation in Fiji	39
Model 78	LEDARS: Community Driven Climate Resilience and Rural Transformation in Bangladesh	39
Model 79	Roads to Opportunity: Connecting Ethnic Minority Communities Through Rural Infrastructure in Vietnam	40
Model 80	Hiware Bazar: How Water Wisdom Turned a Drought Stricken Village into a Prosperous Community in India	40
Model 81	Seed of Change: Agricultural Innovation Transforming Rural Sri Lanka	41
Model 82	Thailand RAIN Initiative: Cultivating Innovation for Stronger Agriculture	41
Model 83	Building Brighter Futures through Inclusive Skills Training in Myanmar	42
Model 84	Closing the Loopholes in Zero Deforestation Pledge for Palm Oil Development in Indonesia	42
Model 85	Developing Inclusive and Green Tourism Opportunities in Nepal	43
Model 86	Transforming Rural Futures Through Early Childhood Care and Education Innovation in Pakistan	43
Model 87	Stitching Dreams: Roghayeh's Tale of Revival in Yulqonlu, IR Iran	44
Model 88	Mang Village in Lao PDR Leads the Way in People-Powered Development	44
Model 89	From Field to Future: Farmer Exchange Program Driving Agricultural Innovation in Bhutan	45

Model No.	IRD Model	Page No.
Model 90	Bangladesh Promoting Green Growth in the Ready Made Garments Sector through Skills	45
Model 91	Markets Beyond Mountains: Cold Chain Innovation Connecting Remote Farmers to Global Opportunities in Fiji	46
Model 92	Connected Harvests: Mobile Technology Revolutionizing Smallholder Farming in the Philippines	46
Model 93	From Rice Paddies to Policy: Lessons on Agricultural Innovation Adoption in Vietnam	47
Model 94	Tradition Meets Innovation in Thailand's Rice Sector	47
Model 95	Certified Success: Shrimp Aquaculture in Malaysia	48
Model 96	Connecting Smallholders to Markets: Value Chain Innovation in Myanmar	48
Model 97	Books That Change Lives: Rural Literacy Innovation in Laos	49
Model 98	Voices from the Village: Rural Women Facilitators Transforming IR Iran	49
Model 99	Happy Model Community: Human Rights Led Rural Innovation in Nepal	50
Model 100	From Isolation to Opportunity: Market Driven Rural Transformation in the Philippines	50

1. The 21st Century Village Programme – the "Prosperous Rural Living" of Malaysia.

21st CENTURY VILLAGE

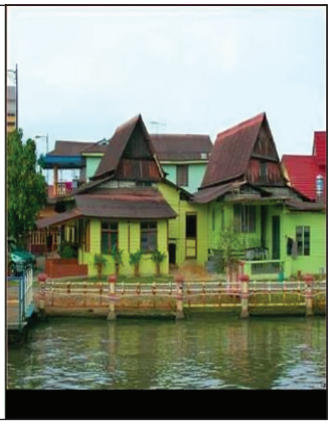
Objective:

To encourage young groups to stay and work; or run a business in their village.

Component:

Rural Business Challenge (RBC)

Desa Lestari



The 21st Century Village Programme, known as Desa Lestari, is a strategic initiative under Malaysia's Rural Development Policy 2030 designed to transform rural areas into vibrant economic hubs. Launched in 2013, the programme addresses the urban rural divide by enhancing infrastructure, creating local wealth, and empowering marginalized communities. By utilizing village cooperatives as the primary engine for growth, it fosters sustainable ventures in sectors like high value agriculture, ecotourism, and manufacturing.

The initiative focuses on four key pillars: youth entrepreneurship via the Rural Business Challenge, large scale food production, cooperative capacity building, and integrated modern farming. These efforts aim to curb urban migration by providing young graduates and local residents with viable business opportunities and modern living standards. Through rigorous assessment and federal support, the programme has successfully revitalized villages like Bario and Kampung Lonek, proving that community driven development can lead to lasting prosperity. Expanding toward a goal of 200 villages by 2025, the programme remains a vital model for inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.

Rural Development Policy 2030 (2018), Ministry of Rural Development, Malaysia.

2. Sahyadri Farms in India: Rooted in Solidarity, Growing Together



Born from the belief that collective strength transforms lives, Sahyadri Farms began with just four smallholder farmers. Today, it stands as India's largest integrated fruits and vegetables value chain, serving over 18,000 registered farmers across 31,000 acres, with a remarkable 55% turnover increase in FY 2023 to 2024.

100% owned by farmers, its impact is built on:

- Eliminating unnecessary middlemen to ensure farmers receive fair value for their produce
- Providing access to better technology, quality inputs, and financial support
- Reducing post-harvest losses that waste not just food but labour, investment, and resources
- Offering world class infrastructure including a modern pack house, cold storage, and agro advisory services
- Connecting smallholder farmers to global markets with trust, quality, and transparency

Sahyadri Farms is not merely a company. It is a movement proving that dignity and sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmers are well within reach.

https://www.sahyadrifarms.com/

3. Vietnam's Rural Digitalization: The Scenario of Yen Hoa Commune's Digital Village



Nestled in the mountainous Ninh Binh Province, Yen Hoa Commune is one of 12 pilot "smart villages" under Vietnam's national Digital Transformation Programme to 2025. With 7,500 residents and 90% smartphone ownership, the commune is turning connectivity into tangible progress:

- A commune website drawing 87,000 annual visits and a fully digital public administration system support efficient civic engagement and service delivery.
- E-commerce platforms Postmart.vn and Voso.vn are opening national markets for local agricultural products, backed by Viettel and Ninh Binh Provincial Post Office.
- The Telehealth app has facilitated over 2,500 medical consultations, linking rural residents directly to provincial and central hospitals.
- Digital tools in education and a five-domain intelligent monitoring system are modernising both classrooms and local governance.

Yen Hoa offers both a blueprint and a candid lesson for rural communities navigating the digital age.

https://www.fao.org/digital-villages-initiative/asia-pacific/digital-villages-list/digital-villages/yen-hoa-commune-(viet-nam)/en

4. Grameen Bank: Microcredit Model, Empowerment, and the Fight Against Poverty in Bangladesh

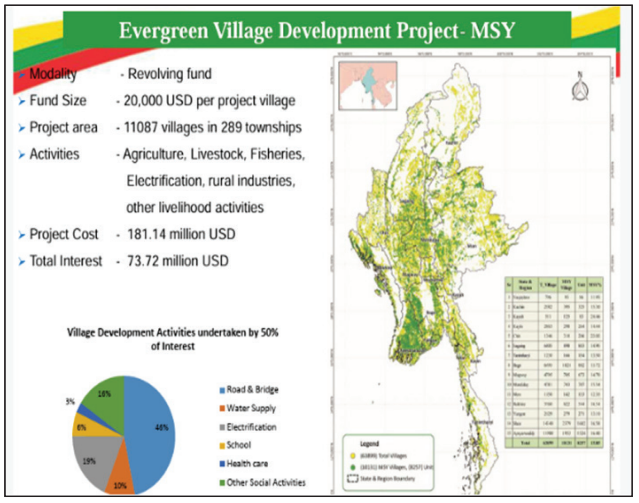
BANK FOR THE POOR
GRAMEEN BANK

Founded in 1983 by Nobel Laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Grameen Bank pioneered a revolutionary model of collateral free, group based microcredit to uplift Bangladesh's rural poor. Key highlights of the model and its impact include:

- Over $42.12 billion disbursed to more than 10.88 million borrowers, 98% of whom are women, across 81,678 villages covering 94% of Bangladesh.
- A repayment rate of 95.94%, outperforming many conventional financial institutions.
- A holistic approach encompassing housing, health, education, and entrepreneurship guided by the celebrated "Sixteen Decisions" framework.
- Specialized programs including the Struggling Member Loan for beggars, higher education scholarships, and disaster relief support.
- A diverse portfolio of ten loan products and seven savings schemes tailored to the needs of the poorest communities.
- A globally replicated model that continues to inspire microfinance institutions across developing nations.

https://grameenbank.org.bd/

5. Evergreen Village Development Project - The Rural Development Model of Myanmar

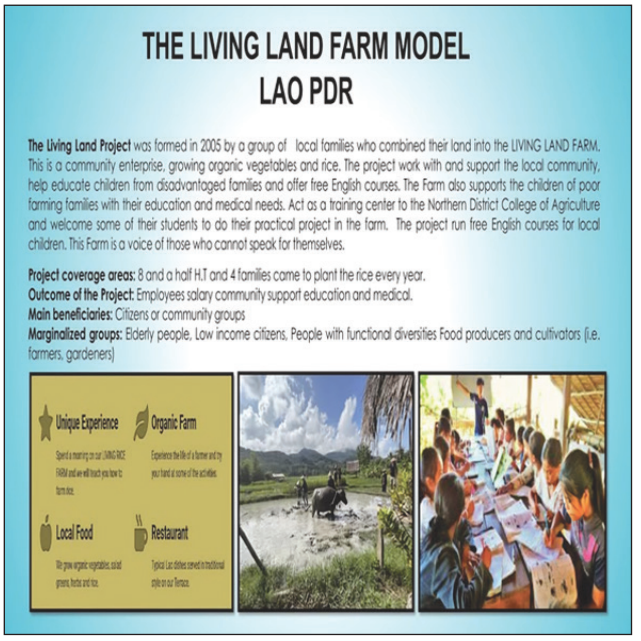


Evergreen Village Development Project (MSY) is a key initiative spearheaded by the Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. The project aims to reduce rural poverty by enhancing rural livelihoods and household incomes.

It emphasizes participatory approaches; gender equality; and transformative, inclusive development. Since 2014-15, the project has been implemented in 12,085 villages in 289 townships in Myanmar with the initiative of providing a mixture of individual and group loans, primarily utilized for livelihood development and enhancement.

https://rksi.adb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/myanmar-rural-vitalization-and-poverty-alleviation.pdf

6. The Living Land Project - An Unique Rural Homestay of Lao PDR



Situated in the UNESCO heritage city of LAO PDR, Luang Prabang; the Living Land Project was formed in 2005 by a group of local families who combined their land in to the LIVING LAND FARM. Apart from Rice, the project started to grow organic vegetables recognizing that there is better alternatives to the destructive use of the land with pesticides, herbicides and chemicals.

Also by attracting tourists from the different part of the world, the Living Land Community helps visitors to learn how to practice traditional Lao rice farming methods along with the ancient rice harvesting, planting methods as well as threshing and winnowing rice.

https://livinglandlao.org/

7. The Lomani Gau Initiative of Fiji Island : A Community's Deep Care for Gau Island as a Model for Pacific Climate Adaptation



Established in 2005, LomaniGau meaning "to care deeply" unites all 16 villages of Gau Island, Fiji, in a community based climate adaptation initiative blending indigenous wisdom with modern governance:

- More than 16 no take marine zones have been established, banning destructive fishing, wildfires, and deforestation while rehabilitating coastal habitats.
- The traditional practice of tabu (temporary harvesting bans) is integrated with modern tools including renewable energy and integrated resource management.
- Women, youth, and community leaders actively participate in decision making and livelihood diversification through ventures such as copra, kava, and cattle farming.
- The Vunilagi Demonstration Centre in Malawai Village serves as a showcase for sustainable rural development locally and internationally.

LomaniGau proves that climate adaptation must be locally owned and culturally grounded, offering the Pacific a practical framework for resilience.

https://www.floatingstorieslab.org/lomani-gau

8. Aruna: Digitally Revolutionising Indonesia's Small Scale Fisheries from Coast to Global Market



Co-founded in 2016 by Utari Octavianty and two college friends, Aruna has grown into Indonesia's largest integrated fisheries commerce platform, connecting small scale fishermen to global markets through fair trade and transparent pricing:

- End to end technology spanning upstream fish sourcing, midstream data management, and downstream retail connects over 40,000 fishermen to local and global buyers.
- Average fishermen incomes have risen three to ten fold, from $80 to over $600 per month, two to three times Indonesia's average wage.
- Fish products are now exported to eight countries across North America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and China.
- Aruna has raised $100 million across eight funding rounds from leading global investors.
- Recognised in Forbes 30 Under 30, Aruna stands as powerful proof that youth driven technology can transform generational poverty into dignified and sustainable livelihoods.

https://www.fao.org/digital-villages-initiative/asia-pacific/agritech-founders/startup-leaders/utari-octavianty/en

9. Sustainable Biogas Innovation in Thailand



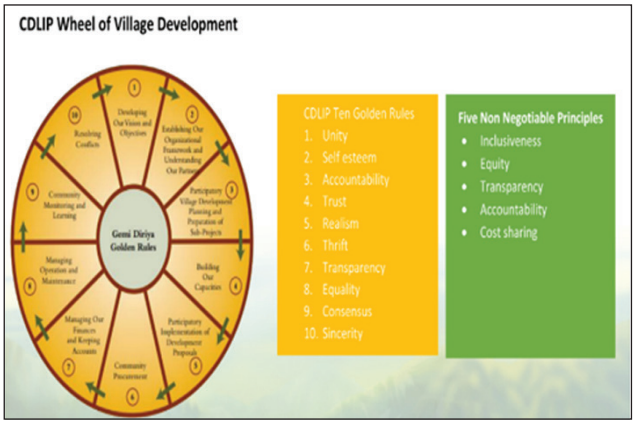
In southern Thailand, waste is being turned into a valuable resource! Two palm oil factories in Krabi Province have adopted a groundbreaking biogas system that captures methane from wastewater, reducing harmful emissions and powering local communities with clean energy.

By using the innovative CIGAR (Covered In-Ground Anaerobic Reactor) system, methane gas is trapped, converted into renewable electricity, and supplied to the grid, cutting down Thailand's reliance on fossil fuels. What's more, the sludge is turned into fertilizer, boosting agricultural productivity!

This integrated rural innovation also brings new jobs, technology transfer, and sustainable practices to the area, enhancing local livelihoods.

https://www.myclimate.org/en/get-active/climate-protection-projects/detail-climate-protection-projects/thailand-biogas-7140-7170/

10. Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (CDLIP) project of Sri Lanka



Launched in 1999 and scaled nationally under the Gama Naguma program, Sri Lanka's Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (CDLIP) transformed over 1,000 villages through participatory, community owned development backed by $181 million in World Bank support:

- Village Organizations with 50% women participation led local planning, infrastructure development, and microfinance through Village Savings and Credit Funds.
- Rural roads, irrigation canals, and clean water systems were built under community managed Village Development Plans requiring 30% community contribution.
- Livelihood innovation funds supported women entrepreneurs, youth led cooperatives, and agricultural diversification, with some household incomes rising by over 300%.
- The project earned the World Bank's "People First" Award and UNDP recognition as a best practice in Asia Pacific poverty reduction.

https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/638751468302932713/pdf/E21470EA0P047110REPORT1Dr1111Dfinal.pdf

11. Sahaj: Transforming Nepal's Smallholder Farmers Through Market Systems Development



Funded by Switzerland and implemented by Swisscontact, the Nepal Agricultural Market Development Programme (NAMDP), known as Sahaj meaning "facilitate," is a 12 year bilateral initiative integrating smallholder farmers into commercial agriculture markets across Nepal's eastern Province 1:

Phase 1 (2016 to 2020) created 1,800 new jobs and raised farm incomes for 45,800 households across 50 districts through market linkages in goat farming, maize, vegetables, and post-harvest management.

Phase 2 (2020 to 2024) targets 20,000 farmers with an expected annual farm income increase of NPR 300 million, focusing on cardamom, dairy, vegetables, and maize value chains.

Women and disadvantaged groups are prioritised, with 40% of new jobs and dedicated financial and training support reserved for them.

Sahaj demonstrates that market driven, inclusive agricultural development can build lasting rural resilience and prosperity.

https://www.swisscontact.org

12. Raise the ARCs: How the Philippines is Empowering Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries toward Rural Prosperity

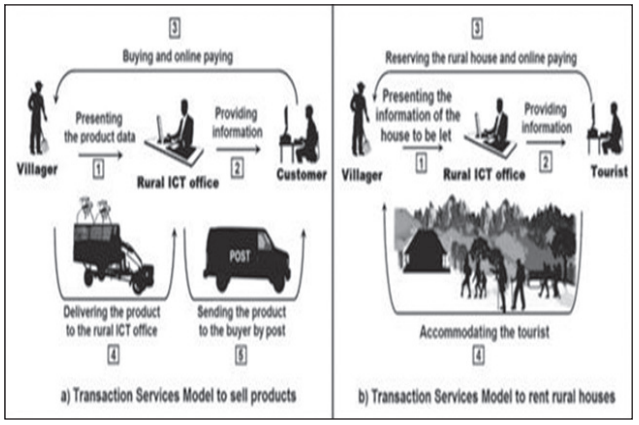


A flagship initiative of the Department of Agrarian Reform, ARBDSP transforms land reform beneficiaries into productive, self reliant rural stakeholders through integrated support across 154 Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs):

- Over 74,841 beneficiaries have been capacitated with farming skills, while 443 organizations with 35,000 members have been strengthened across the country.
- Farm machineries worth PHP 31.5 million have been distributed, and 180,696 beneficiaries in Northern Mindanao alone have received enterprise and infrastructure support.
- The Partnership against Hunger and Poverty program generated over PHP 1.5 billion in gross sales by linking farmer organizations to institutional buyers.
- Programs covering climate resilient farming, microfinance, affordable housing, and disaster preparedness ensure holistic and sustainable community development.

Department of Agrarian Reform: https://darpmsgov.wixstudio.com/arbdsp
darpmsgov.wixstudio.com/arbdsp

13. Digital Doors for Rural Iran: The Transaction Services Model for E-Marketing and Rural Empowerment



Iran's Transaction Services Model is a digital initiative connecting rural ICT offices to a national e-commerce platform, transforming how villages participate in the modern economy:

- Farmers and artisans can register agricultural products, handicrafts, and rural homestays directly through local ICT offices onto a national e-commerce website.
- Customers pay online with funds securely transferred to villagers' Post Bank accounts, ensuring safe and transparent financial transactions.
- Rural ICT offices manage the full service cycle including banking, postal delivery, and product handling, making the system accessible even to digitally inexperienced communities.
- The model is generating new employment opportunities, boosting rural tourism, and opening national and potentially international markets for locally made products.

Iran's Transaction Services Model demonstrates that simple, well designed digital infrastructure can unlock profound economic opportunity for even the most remote rural communities.

https://www.scribd.com/document/807547506/1-s2-0-S2214317319301866-main

14. Empowering Rural Pakistan: The BISP Model of Inclusive Innovation



BISP, launched in 2008, is Pakistan's largest social protection programme, targeting vulnerable rural households through a World Bank approved Poverty Scorecard that ensures evidence based beneficiary selection.

- The National Socio Economic Registry, developed with NADRA through nationwide surveys, enables accurate identification of deserving families in remote areas using biometric verification to curb fraud.
- The Kafaalat programme delivers quarterly cash transfers directly to women, fostering financial inclusion and strengthening their role in household decision making across rural communities.
- Benazir Taleemi Wazaif incentivises school enrolment especially for girls, while the Nashonuma programme supports maternal and child nutrition, building long term human capital.

Through a nationwide digital administrative network, BISP combines financial inclusion, women's empowerment, and data driven governance into a replicable model for sustainable rural transformation.

https://bisp.com.pk/

15. Empowering Young Innovators: UNICEF's Generation Future Programme in Rural Cambodia



UNICEF's Generation Future programme, launched in 2021 in Stung Treng, Cambodia, empowers rural youth through digital skills, gender equity, and community led innovation as a replicable IRD model.

- Youth led projects including Code for Girls, MeaKea, and RULErs build STEM, coding, and leadership skills among over 432 students using affordable mobile tools.
- Girls are prioritised to break cultural barriers limiting women's access to technology and education in rural communities.
- Peer to peer learning and volunteer driven workshops prove that innovation thrives without expensive infrastructure.
- The programme offers a scalable model where youth empowerment and digital inclusion drive sustainable rural transformation.

Generation Future demonstrates a replicable IRD model where youth empowerment, gender equity, and community led digital innovation collectively drive sustainable rural transformation.

UNICEF Cambodia. (2023). Empowering Young Innovators in Rural Cambodia.

16. The Israeli Kibbutz Model as a Blueprint for Sustainable Development



The Israeli Kibbutz, founded in 1909, is one of the world's most enduring models of rural innovation, built on collective ownership, democratic governance, and voluntary association. Evolving from agrarian communes into diversified socio-economic communities, Kibbutzim offer a compelling blueprint for inclusive rural development. Its core innovations include:

- Democratic self-governance with elected leadership and collective decision making ensuring equity and accountability.
- Economic diversification from agriculture into manufacturing, technology, tourism, and services, contributing 9% of Israel's national industrial output.
- Gender equal participation, free education, and shared healthcare as foundations of community wellbeing.
- Adaptive reforms including differential wages and semi-privatisation to sustain relevance across generations.

The Kibbutz proves that rural communities can thrive collectively through innovation, adaptive governance, and shared values, offering globally transferable lessons for cooperative rural development.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.13169/worlrevipolieconn.6.2.0160?seq=1

17. China's Targeted Poverty Alleviation: A Blueprint for Ending Extreme Poverty



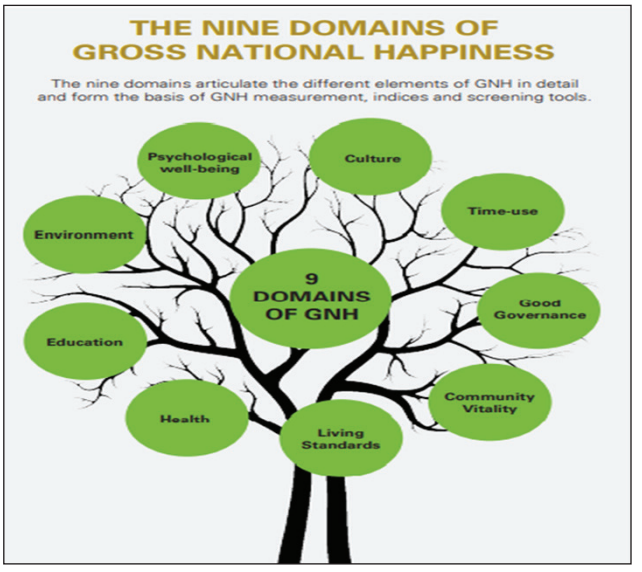
China's Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) strategy stands as one of the most ambitious rural transformation initiatives of the modern era, lifting over 70 million people out of extreme poverty by 2021. Anchored in data driven governance and community level deployment, the program presents a powerful model for the digital Integrated Rural Development (IRD) framework. Key pillars that distinguished TPA's success include:

- Deployment of 3 million cadres for direct household level intervention
- Industrial development and e-commerce integration to create sustainable rural livelihoods
- Gender focused micro-loans and vocational training empowering millions of women
- Expanded access to education, healthcare, and relocation support for vulnerable households

Despite ongoing challenges around data accuracy and long term sustainability, TPA's inclusive and targeted approach offers a replicable model for rural communities worldwide. Its evolution into China's Rural Revitalization Strategy affirms that precise, innovation led development rooted in local realities can reshape rural futures at a global scale.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354760607_Targeted_Poverty_Alleviation_in_China_A_Typology_of_Official-Household_Relations

18. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Story: A Journey towards Happiness beyond Monetary Measures



Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework offers a transformative model for the digital Integrated Rural Development (IRD) approach, demonstrating that true progress encompasses far more than economic output. Introduced in the 1970s, GNH measures wellbeing across nine domains including health, education, ecological resilience, cultural preservation, and community vitality. With a 2022 GNH Index value of 0.781, Bhutan's rural communities have benefited through its four core pillars:

- Free universal healthcare and GNH integrated school curricula building community resilience
- Mandatory 60% forest cover policy making Bhutan the world's only carbon negative country
- High Value Low Impact tourism protecting culture and ecology while sustaining rural livelihoods

Replicated in varying forms by Thailand, New Zealand, and the UAE, GNH proves that governance rooted in wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and cultural integrity can reshape rural futures.

https://www.gnhcentrebhutan.org

19. From Villages to Vision: South Korea's Saemaul Undong as a Global Blueprint for Community Driven Rural Innovation



South Korea's Saemaul Undong, or New Village Movement, launched in 1970, stands as one of the most celebrated examples of community driven rural transformation in the world. Rooted in the principles of diligence, self-help, and cooperation, the movement mobilised millions of rural citizens to overcome poverty and modernise their communities. For the digital Integrated Rural Development (IRD) Model, its core achievements offer enduring lessons in participatory innovation:

- Infrastructure development through community ownership, improving roads, irrigation, and housing
- Income generation and women's empowerment through savings campaigns and small enterprises
- A "can do spirit" that instilled self-reliance, collective confidence, and rational goal oriented behavior

Replicated across Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Myanmar, the movement's legacy affirms that rural innovation flourishes when communities lead their own change. Saemaul Undong demonstrates that combining local ownership, strong leadership, and government facilitation remains the most powerful formula for lasting rural development.

https://www-en.saemaul.or.kr/

20. Turning Waste into Wealth through Rural Innovation and Youth Empowerment in Maldives



The Maldives is redefining sustainability by transforming its waste crisis into an opportunity for innovation and inclusive growth. With support from the World Bank's Maldives Clean Environment Project and the Maldives Enhancing Employability and Resilience of Youth Project, the nation is adopting a circular economy model to protect its fragile marine ecosystem. Local communities and women-led groups are leading recycling initiatives, turning discarded plastics into reusable products, and promoting source segregation and composting.

At the same time, youth are being trained for green jobs and entrepreneurship through new "Waste to Wealth" programs, building a generation committed to environmental stewardship. This collective effort showcases how rural innovation, community participation, and skill development can turn challenges into sustainable prosperity for island nations.

https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/07/22/maldives-is-turning-waste-to-wealth-energizing-youth-to-safeguard-its-future

21. Power to Heal: Solar Energy as a Catalyst for Rural Health Resilience in the Andes of Peru



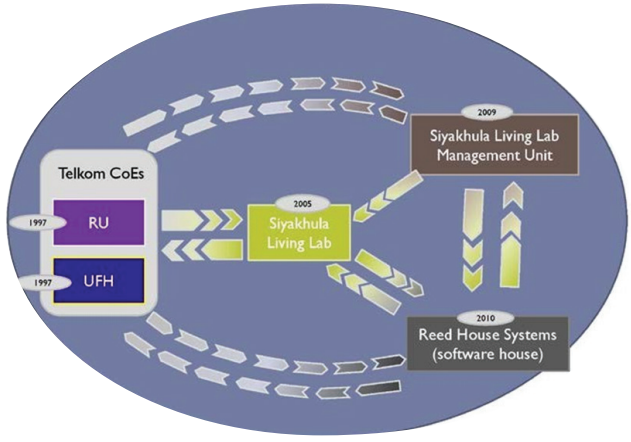
In the remote Andean communities of El Mote and Catuden in Contumazá, Peru, the absence of electricity once crippled basic healthcare delivery for nearly 2,900 people. In 2019, a collaborative initiative by Green Empowerment, Practical Action Peru, and local governments installed solar energy systems and solar water heaters, fundamentally transforming rural health outcomes. This model exemplifies the IRD approach by integrating clean energy with community wellbeing. The key innovations that drove this transformation include:

- Solar powered cold storage enabling timely vaccination of children across twelve surrounding communities
- Digital patient records and electronic government reporting replacing time consuming city commutes
- Solar water heaters supporting maternity care, sterilisation, and treatment of child hypothermia

Sustained through robust community training and strong local partnerships, this replicable model is now being extended to Uganda. For the IRD framework, Peru's solar health initiative proves that clean energy access is not merely a technical upgrade but a foundation for equity, resilience, and dignified rural healthcare delivery.

https://greenempowerment.org/solar-powered-health-clinics-in-peru-strengthen-community-resilience/

22. The Siyakhula Living Lab Initiative Bridging the Digital Divide in South Africa's Eastern Cape



The Siyakhula Living Lab (SLL), a joint initiative between Rhodes University and the University of Fort Hare, offers a transformative ICT driven model for rural innovation in South Africa's Eastern Cape. Anchored in co-creation and community ownership, the SLL directly addresses the digital divide that excludes rural populations from the knowledge economy. For the digital Integrated Rural Development (IRD) framework, its multi-dimensional approach delivers measurable impact through three foundational innovations:

- School based Digital Access Nodes providing broadband connectivity and computer literacy
- TeleWeaver platform enabling e-commerce, e-health, and e-governance for underserved communities
- A multi-stakeholder revenue model ensuring long term digital infrastructure sustainability

Backed by government and international academic partners, the SLL proves that lasting rural innovation requires technology co-designed with communities, not just delivered to them.

Siyakhula Living Lab: http://www.siyakhulall.org

23. One House One Farm: Bangladesh's Grassroots Model for Smallholder Led Rural Transformation



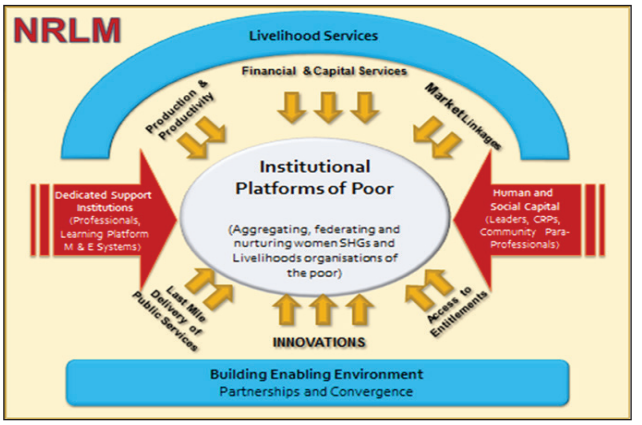
Bangladesh's Ektee Bari Ektee Khamar (One House One Farm) programme offers a compelling model for the digital IRD framework, demonstrating how smallholder farming combined with e-financial inclusion can drive grassroots poverty alleviation at scale. With an investment of USD 400 million covering 2.43 million rural households, the programme mobilizes cooperative structures and digital tools to unlock the productive potential of small and marginal farm families who already generate nearly 70% of the country's agricultural output. Its defining innovations include:

- Formation of 81,000 village cooperatives channeling grants and monthly incentives to smallholders and women led households
- E-financial inclusion and online fund management ensuring transparent and accessible resource delivery
- Skill development and empowerment training with a strong focus on rural women and marginal farmers

Reaching 40,527 villages across Bangladesh, OHOF affirms that sustainable rural innovation begins at the household level, where land, labour, and community solidarity become the most powerful engines of equitable development.

https://socialprotection.gov.bd/2017/03/one-house-one-farm-ektee-bari-ektee-khamar/

24. DAY NRLM as a World Class Model for Women Led Rural Livelihood Innovation in India



India's Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY NRLM), launched in 2011, is one of the world's largest poverty alleviation programmes, mobilising over 8.64 crore rural women into 80 lakh Self Help Groups across 723 districts. Rooted in the belief that the poor possess the innate capacity to overcome poverty, the mission channels that potential through community institutions, financial inclusion, and diversified livelihoods. Its core pillars for the IRD Model include:

- Universal social mobilisation of women into SHGs, Village Organisations, and Cluster Level Federations
- Financial inclusion through bank linkages, digital tools, and community based Bank Sakhis
- Farm and non-farm livelihood enhancement alongside women entrepreneurship through SVEP

With over Rs. 5.83 lakh crore in bank credit mobilised, DAY NRLM demonstrates that when rural women lead their own institutions, poverty retreats and communities flourish, making it a defining reference for inclusive rural development innovation.

https://aajeevika.gov.in/

25. Smart Ponds Smart Lives: Indonesia's eFishery as a Digital Innovation Model for Rural Aquaculture



Puntang village in West Java, Indonesia, exemplifies how targeted digital innovation can transform rural livelihoods in the context of the IRD Model. Since 2013, the startup eFishery has deployed its automatic eFeeder technology across fishpond communities, enabling smallholder fish farmers to optimize production and reduce costs. Its standout contributions include:

- Automated feeding technology reducing harvest cycles by up to 74 days and boosting production capacity by 26 percent
- Smartphone based registration, monitoring, and data collection improving feed efficiency by 30 percent
- Bundled e-commerce, marketing, and financing support empowering fisherfolk beyond the pond

Now expanding across Indonesia and beyond, eFishery proves that affordable, accessible digital tools can turn rural aquaculture into a resilient and scalable livelihood model, offering a replicable blueprint for digitally driven rural innovation across Asia and the Pacific.

https://www.fao.org/digital-villages-initiative/asia-pacific/digital-villages-list/digital-villages/puntang-(indonesia)/en

26. Sustainable Milk Production in Sri Lanka's Dry Zone: Transforming Crop Residues into Valuable Livestock Feed



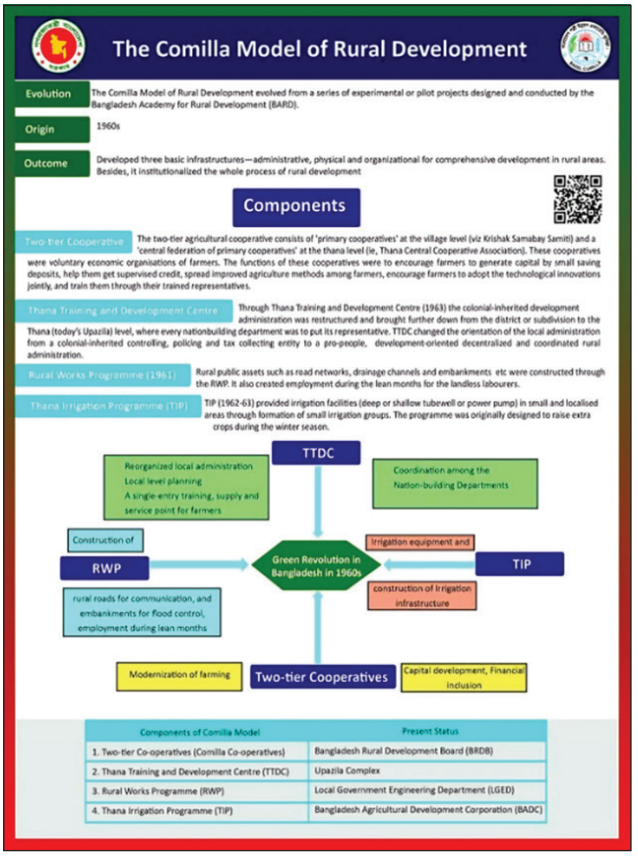
In Sri Lanka's dry zone, smallholder farmers are pioneering a circular agriculture model that converts crop residues such as rice straw into high quality livestock feed, offering a powerful example for the digital IRD framework. Rather than burning agricultural waste, farmers now process residues into dry pellets and feed blocks, simultaneously addressing environmental degradation and seasonal feed scarcity. This grassroots innovation delivers multiple dividends for sustainable rural development:

- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating open burning of agricultural crop residues
- Year round supply of nutritious feed pellets and blocks improving cattle health and milk productivity
- Creation of new rural enterprises through feed processing machinery, generating local employment and income

This initiative demonstrates that sustainable farming innovation need not rely on external inputs alone. By valorising on-farm waste, Sri Lanka's dry zone farmers are building more resilient, self-reliant agricultural systems, offering a replicable model for climate smart rural livelihoods across Asia and the Pacific.

https://www.scribd.com/document/414271455/Milk-Production-in-Dry-Zone-Sunil-Gamage

27. The Comilla Model of Rural Development a Pioneering Framework for Rural Development in Bangladesh

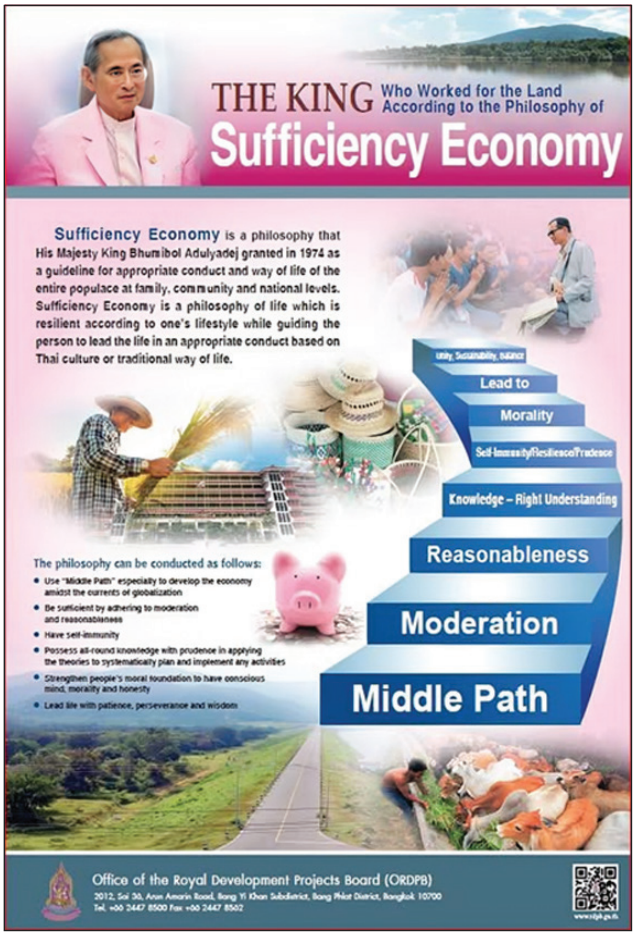


Developed in the 1960s under Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan, Bangladesh's Comilla Model remains one of the most influential grassroots rural development experiments in Asia. Built on cooperative participation, decentralised administration, and integrated multi-sector planning. Its core innovations were:

- A two-tier cooperative system linking village societies with centralised credit, training, and input services
- Thana level training centres and decentralised irrigation programmes expanding agricultural productivity
- Rural works programme building roads, bridges, and drainage through direct community participation

Comilla Model PDF – Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development (BARD)

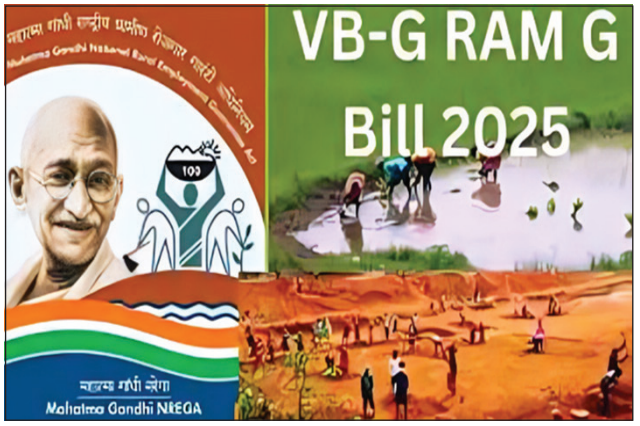
28. Thailand's Self-Sufficiency Economy Practices - The Role of Morality



The self-sufficiency economy of Thailand, which was established in 1974 by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King Who Worked for the Land, is a guideline for Thai society's conduct and way of life. It emphasizes unity, sustainability, balance, morality, self-immunity, knowledge, reasonableness, moderation, and the middle path. The philosophy is applied in agriculture and business sectors to improve the economic and social system. It has three stages: self-supporting, community, and sustainability. It also emphasizes education, academic knowledge, honesty, and strong mental and verbal strength.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Thailand. (2019). Human Development Report: Sufficiency Economy and Human Development. https://www.th.undp.org

29. G RAM G Act 2025 "Reforming MGNREGA for Viksit Bharat – India



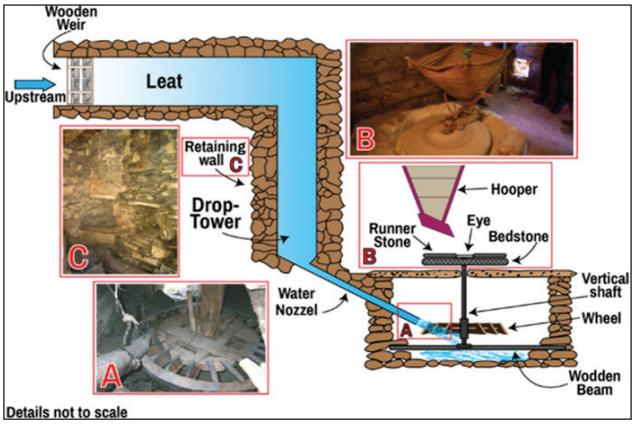
India's Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin Act 2025 marks a transformative evolution of rural employment policy, building on two decades of MGNREGA to deliver a more accountable, infrastructure driven, and digitally governed framework. Expanding guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days per household, the Act aligns rural work with national development priorities through four key verticals for the IRD Model:

- Water security works including groundwater recharge, harvesting, and flood drainage for climate resilience
- Core rural infrastructure and livelihood assets improving market access, storage, and income diversification
- AI powered digital governance, biometric attendance, real time dashboards, and mandatory social audits ensuring transparency

Anchored in decentralised Gram Panchayat planning and normative funding, the Act repositions rural employment as a strategic engine for sustainable growth, offering a replicable innovation model for inclusive rural development aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047.

https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?id=155090&NoteId=155090&ModuleId=3&reg=3&lang=2

30. Power to the Poor Scheme Empowers Rural Women in the Lao PDR



In northern Lao PDR, the Greater Mekong Subregion Northern Power Transmission Project, implemented by Électricité du Laos with ADB support, demonstrates how energy access can serve as a catalyst for holistic rural transformation. Reaching over 24,095 households across three provinces, the USD 20 million initiative prioritized equity and inclusion by targeting poor and ethnic minority communities. Its defining contributions:

- Free meters, wiring, and no interest credit enabling poor households to access electricity without financial burden
- Women empowered through time savings, home based enterprises, and improved community participation via television literacy
- Mobile phone usage rising from 67 to 86 percent, expanding market connectivity and rural business channels

Anchored in community engagement through the Lao Women's Union, this project affirms that when energy infrastructure converges with financial support and social inclusion, it becomes a powerful engine for sustainable, women centred rural development.

https://www.adb.org/results/power-poor-scheme-empowers-rural-women-lao-pdr

31. IR Iran's Participatory Water Management System in Golestan Province as a Model for Farmer Led Irrigation and Agricultural Innovation



In Golestan Province, Iran, the JICA supported Participatory Water Management Project in the Tazeh Abad irrigation area addresses a critical rural challenge: infrastructure built but underutilised due to weak farmer organisation and limited agronomic guidance. Launched in 2009 in partnership with Iran's Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture, the project offers a compelling framework for community driven water governance. Its core interventions include:

- Establishing farmer managed water user groups to optimise irrigation facility utilisation and canal maintenance
- Capacity building of provincial agricultural office staff for sustainable model replication across 40 irrigation areas
- Pilot site based learning enabling gradual, evidence driven extension of the water management model

By placing farmers at the centre of irrigation governance, the Golestan model demonstrates that rural water innovation succeeds not through infrastructure alone but through organised communities, shared ownership, and sustained technical support, offering a replicable lesson for IRD driven agricultural development.

https://www.jica.go.jp/english/overseas/iran/activities/activity03.html

32. Breathing Life into Care: Transforming Oxygen Access in Fiji



In Fiji, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in partnership with Cure Kids and WHO launched the Oxygen Project to decentralize and modernize lifesaving oxygen delivery across remote and off grid health facilities. By replacing fragile cylinder dependent systems with sustainable, community owned solutions, the initiative offers a powerful model for the IRD framework. Its transformative innovations include:

- Portable oxygen concentrators eliminating logistical barriers of cylinder transport to remote island communities
- Solar power integration ensuring uninterrupted oxygen supply in areas vulnerable to electricity disruptions
- Training of local biomedical engineers, solar technicians, and nurses building long term ownership and sustainability

Fiji's Oxygen Project affirms that context appropriate technology combined with renewable energy and local capacity building can transform rural health systems. It stands as a replicable IRD model where innovation, collaboration, and community empowerment converge to deliver equitable healthcare to even the most geographically isolated populations.

https://www.who.int/westernpacific/newsroom/feature-stories/item/innovation-for-health--oxygen-access-in-fiji

33. Charting the digital services and payment revolution in Bangladesh



Bangladesh is witnessing a remarkable transformation in rural livelihoods through digital innovation. In the remote char regions of northern Bangladesh, the Making Markets Work for the Chars project, in partnership with Agrigate Network Limited and mPower, is empowering farmers with technology.

Farmers now have access to Agrigate's easy-to-use app with Internet of Things solutions and QR-enabled digital cards. In 2023, 225 farmers received Smart Identification cards, while mPower's telemedicine service, Shudokkho, connected them with expert veterinarians anytime they needed.

Through this initiative, 538 Livestock Service Providers were trained to deliver digital veterinary services to nearly half a million farmers. This tech-driven approach not only ensures timely and high-quality animal care but also equips service providers with a comprehensive database, boosting efficiency and effectiveness.

A farmer from Rangpur proudly showcases his vaccinated healthy bull, a testament to the power of digital innovation in transforming rural livelihoods.

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/news/digitalisation-in-development

34. Beyond the Mountains: Mahabir Pun's Digital Revolution in Nepal



Mahabir Pun, a visionary educator from Nepal, transformed remote mountain communities through determination and innovative thinking. Growing up herding cattle, he pursued education against all odds, earning a Master's Degree from the University of Nebraska and returning to his ancestral village of Nangi after 24 years. His mission was clear: bring opportunity to children who struggled as he once had.

When donated computers arrived but internet seemed impossible, Pun emailed the BBC in 2001, sparking global attention. Volunteers helped him establish WiFi using TV dish antennas mounted in trees, and by 2003, Nangi was online. His key contributions include:

- Connecting remote Himalayan villages through wireless technology
- Founding the Nepal Wireless Project and Himanchal Education Foundation
- Establishing community education and digital access at elevations above 3,600 metres

In 2007, Pun received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, proving that one committed individual truly can change the world.

https://nirlog.com/2007/08/02/mahabir-pun-the-man-who-brought-wifi-to-himalayas/

35. Smart Farming Brings Prosperity to Vietnam's Farmers

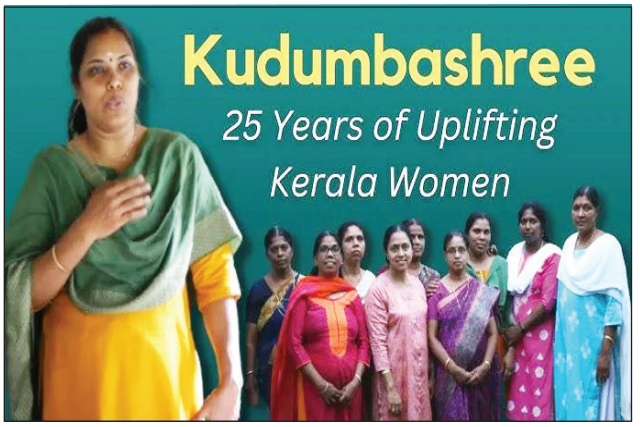


Thirty-year-old vegetable farmer Do Thi Thuy from Moc Chau, Son La province in Vietnam, is showing how smart farming can change lives. Through the FAO-led project "Smart Farming for the Future Generation" funded by the Republic of Korea, she has doubled her monthly income from vegetable sales to VND 7–10 million by adopting advanced greenhouse techniques, sustainable practices, and digital tools.

From high-quality seedlings and fertigation programmes to climate control systems and integrated pest management, the project is helping smallholder farmers boost yields, protect natural resources, and build stronger rural economies. Thuy says the results mean not just higher income, but also better education opportunities for their children—clear proof that smart farming is shaping a sustainable future for Viet Nam's agri-food systems.

https://www.fao.org/vietnam/programmes-and-projects/success-stories/smart-farming/es/

36. Kudumbashree: A Model of Women-Led Rural Innovation in India



Kudumbashree, meaning "prosperity of the family" in Malayalam, is a landmark initiative launched by the Government of Kerala in 1998 under the State Poverty Eradication Mission. Designed to eradicate poverty and empower women, it has grown into one of the largest women-led community networks in the world, encompassing approximately 48 lakh women across Kerala. The programme operates through a three-tiered structure of Neighbourhood Groups, Area Development Societies, and Community Development Societies. Its key intervention areas include:

- Microfinance and collective farming
- Micro enterprise promotion
- Gender empowerment and social inclusion

These initiatives have contributed to Kerala's remarkably low extreme poverty rate of 0.64%. Recognized as a National Resource Organisation under India's National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Kudumbashree continues to inspire replicable grassroots development models across the nation.

https://www.kudumbashree.org

37. CBIRD Sub Tai, Thailand: Integrating Conservation with Rural Livelihoods



The Community-Based Integrated Rural Development Centre (CBIRD) in Sub Tai, Thailand, established in 1985 by the Population and Community Development Association, stands as a remarkable model of rural innovation. Located near the ecologically vital Khao Yai National Park, the initiative addressed poverty and environmental degradation simultaneously by linking conservation directly to economic benefits. Its core interventions included:

- Low interest loans tied to conservation commitments
- A revolving carbon bank funding community enterprises
- Ecotourism and commercial ventures ensuring financial sustainability

These strategies reduced illegal logging and poaching by over 75% while nearly doubling village incomes within four years. Replicated across more than 150 Thai villages, the CBIRD model demonstrates that community driven approaches combining environmental stewardship with sustainable livelihoods offer a powerful and scalable pathway toward achieving rural resilience and biodiversity protection.

United Nations Development Programme. 2012. Community-based Integrated Rural Development Centre, Sub Tai, Thailand. Equator Initiative Case Study Series. New York, NY

38. Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support Services Programme in Indonesia



The Youth Entrepreneurship and Employment Support Services Programme in Indonesia represents a transformative rural innovation model dedicated to building sustainable futures for young people in agriculture. Operating across four provinces with a total investment of $72.6 million, the programme empowers 320,000 households by bridging the gap between rural youth and meaningful agricultural opportunities. Its key focus areas include:

- Building entrepreneurial and vocational skills in agriculture
- Creating sustainable job opportunities for rural youth
- Connecting young agripreneurs to financial support and market linkages

By nurturing the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs, the programme drives inclusive rural transformation from the ground up. This initiative demonstrates that targeted investment in youth capacity building and enterprise development is essential for achieving long term agricultural sustainability and rural economic resilience.

https://ap.fftc.org.tw/article/3398

39. Cultivating Climate Resilience: Rural Agricultural Innovation in Sri Lanka



Smallholder maize farmers in Galenbindunuwewa, Sri Lanka, are transforming their practices through bundled climate-smart solutions introduced by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). The BICSA pilot project has equipped farmers with weather index insurance, SMS-based agronomic advisories, and climate-resistant seeds, building strong adaptive capacity against erratic weather. Key innovations driving this transformation include:

- Weather index insurance as a financial safety net
- Climate resilient seed systems and agronomic support
- Solar powered agro-wells for water security
- Intercropping and organic composting practices

These tools have shielded farmers from economic losses while inspiring confidence to diversify crops and explore high-value exports like pomegranate, papaya, and moringa. Through collaboration among farmers, CGIAR, USDA, and private stakeholders, Sri Lanka is steadily building a resilient and prosperous rural agricultural future.

https://www.preventionweb.net/news/cultivating-change-sri-lankas-smallholder-farmers-explore-climate-resilient-solutions

40. Growing Together: Transforming Smallholder Farming Communities in Durgapur, Rangpur, Bangladesh



In northwest Bangladesh, where 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) partnered with Syngenta, Bank Asia, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to launch the Growing Together project, reaching 100,000 farming households through community centred agricultural innovation. The initiative tackled deeply rooted challenges including debt cycles, poor market access, and outdated farming techniques. Core pillars of the model included:

- Establishment of six for profit Farmer Centres offering training, machinery, and financial services
- Peer to peer agronomic learning through demonstration plots
- Women only farming groups fostering inclusive participation
- Direct market linkages with national and international buyers

Outcomes have been remarkable, with farmer incomes rising by 200 percent, yields increasing 20 percent, and pesticide use dropping by 50 percent. The project has since evolved into Joikko, a self-financing social franchise ensuring long term sustainability and scale across rural Bangladesh.

https://www.vsointernational.org/our-work/resilient-livelihoods/resilient-rural-livelihoods/growing-together-in-bangladesh

41. Amul Cooperative Model: Transforming Rural Livelihoods through Dairy in India

Established in 1946 in Gujarat, the Amul model revolutionized rural India by introducing a three-tier cooperative structure that eliminated exploitative middlemen and empowered millions of small dairy farmers. Spearheaded by Dr. Verghese Kurien, the model ensured that 80% of consumer prices directly reached producers. Its key pillars of success include:

- Democratic farmer ownership and governance
- Automated milk collection with instant digital payments
- Robust cold chain infrastructure and R&D driven diversification
- Strong branding through the iconic Amul Girl campaign

Scaled nationally through Operation Flood (1970 to 1996), the model lifted farmer incomes by 400%, generated 1.2 million jobs, and empowered women across rural communities. Today, with revenues exceeding USD 8 billion, Amul stands as a globally replicable blueprint for cooperative led rural transformation.

https://www.amul.com

42. Malaysia Homestay Experience Program: Rural Tourism for Sustainable Livelihoods



Launched in 1995 by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC), the Malaysia Homestay Experience Program has grown into a globally recognized model of rural tourism, currently encompassing 371 villages, 219 clusters, and over 4,200 registered operators. Rooted in authentic village hospitality, tourists live with host families and participate in daily rural activities. The program's core strengths include:

- Immersive cultural experiences through rubber tapping, fishing, and traditional cooking
- Capacity building in digital marketing, hospitality, and foreign languages
- Recognition through the UNWTO Ulysses Award in 2012

Despite challenges such as youth disengagement and competition from unregistered accommodations, the program generated RM7.99 million in revenue in 2020, welcoming over 121,000 tourists. It remains a powerful blueprint for balancing economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable community development.

https://www.motac.gov.my/en/muat-turun/homestays-in-malaysia/

43. FAO and IR Iran Agricultural Innovation Lab as a Model for Rural Transformation



In a landmark step toward modernizing its agricultural sector, Iran partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in February 2021 to establish the Agricultural Innovation Lab (i Lab), a pioneering platform designed to tackle pressing challenges in food security, environmental conservation, and rural productivity. Hosted at the AREEO campus in Karaj, the initiative unites a diverse ecosystem of stakeholders toward shared innovation goals:

- Connecting researchers, entrepreneurs, youth, and government agencies to co create agricultural solutions
- Piloting and scaling technologies addressing climate change, desertification, and soil erosion
- Building national capacity through training, mentorship, and entrepreneurship programmes

Drawing from FAO's experience across nine pilot countries in Africa, Asia, and Central America, the i Lab positions Iran as an emerging hub for sustainable, climate smart agricultural innovation.

https://iran.un.org/en/111962-fao-iran-start-joint-programme-reinvigorate-agricultural-innovation-country

44. The ENBAITA Agricultural Technology Supply Chain Model for Smallholder Empowerment in Nepal



Funded by USAID with USD 1.67 million and implemented by iDE, the Expanding Nepal's Business Access to Improved Technologies for Agriculture (ENBAITA) project transformed rural livelihoods by building last mile supply chains connecting Indian agro companies with Nepali smallholder farmers. Through its Commercial Pocket Approach, the project increased incomes of 51,515 farmers by USD 225 annually, achieving a remarkable benefit cost ratio of 13.6 to 1. The model's defining features include:

- Training 156 Community Business Facilitators (41% women) to deliver technologies and technical support
- Establishing 17 rural collection centers through public private partnerships
- Integrating crop finance, insurance, and digital SMS extension services

Post project, supply chains continued expanding independently, with partner companies scaling solar pumps, drip irrigation, and IPM solutions across Nepal, proving that market driven rural innovation yields lasting food security and economic resilience.

https://www.ideglobal.org/key-project/enbaita

45. Transforming Rural Education through Digital Innovation: UNESCO's ICT for Education Initiative in Myanmar



In just 18 months, UNESCO's ICT for Education initiative reshaped the landscape of rural learning across Myanmar, training 155 teachers in 31 schools spanning Mandalay, Bago, and Mon State. Supported by technology partners Ericsson and Qualcomm, the programme equipped educators with the tools and confidence to deliver digitally enriched, child centered lessons. The initiative's core achievements include:

- Deploying mobile broadband, tablets, and ICT tools across remote rural classrooms
- Introducing interactive applications such as Loud Class to foster student engagement
- Building sustainable teacher capacity in digital pedagogy across three regions

By placing technology directly in the hands of rural educators, the initiative bridges Myanmar's digital divide from the ground up, demonstrating that targeted teacher training is the most powerful catalyst for lasting educational transformation in underserved communities.

https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/transforming-rural-schools-myanmar-ict-one-teacher-time

46. From Facilitator to Leader: Rita Bramma and the Power of Farmer Driven Rural Innovation in Barisal, Bangladesh



Rita Bramma's journey from a village cooperative president in Barisal to the national presidency of Sara Bangla Krishak Society (SBKS) exemplifies the transformative potential of inclusive rural development. Beginning as a Farmer Business Facilitator under FAO's Missing Middle Initiative (MMI) in 2018, Rita supported four producers' organizations across Bangladesh, delivering training in financial literacy, business management, and organizational efficiency. Her landmark contributions include:

- Collectively mobilizing community members during COVID-19 to sell perishable goods and secure agricultural inputs
- Championing women's dignity, fair pricing, and cooperative entrepreneurship
- Leading SBKS to receive the prestigious 2023 FAO Achievement Award

Now driving the ACCESS project targeting 8,000 additional smallholder farmers across 80 new communities, Rita's story powerfully demonstrates that empowering rural women as institutional leaders is the cornerstone of sustainable agricultural and community transformation.

https://www.fao.org/index.php?id=120524

47. Building Value Chains from the Ground up: The Philippine Rural Development Project as a Model for Inclusive Agricultural Growth in the Philippines



The Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP), implemented by the Department of Agriculture and jointly funded by the World Bank, national government, and Local Government Units, represents a comprehensive model for climate resilient, value chain oriented rural transformation. With 21 new sub-projects currently rolling out across Mindanao under a 2.2 billion peso investment, the project delivers integrated solutions for smallholder farmers and fishers. Its strategic interventions include:

- Constructing farm to market roads, bridges, irrigation systems, and postharvest facilities
- Strengthening farmer cooperatives and associations through technical training and market linkages
- Prioritizing women's participation in enterprise development and post harvest management

By converging infrastructure, enterprise development, and governance reform within a single framework, PRDP demonstrates that coordinated public investment, community ownership, and private sector partnership are the essential foundations for achieving lasting inclusive growth across rural Philippines.

https://ppdo.ormindoro.gov.ph/programsprojects/philippine-rural-development-project/

48. Akodara: Pioneering India's First Digital Cashless Village as a Blueprint for Rural Digital Transformation in India



Nestled in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, just over an hour from Ahmedabad, Akodara stands as India's first fully digital village, offering a compelling proof of concept for the nation's broader Digital India vision. This ordinary village has been quietly reimagined through technology, where every day rural life seamlessly integrates digital solutions. Its groundbreaking innovations include:

- Village wide WiFi connectivity enabling internet access for all residents
- Mobile payment systems replacing cash transactions even at local kirana shops
- CCTV monitored anganwadis and audio visual teaching aids in schools
- ATM facilities bringing formal banking directly into the village

Akodara's transformation demonstrates that digital infrastructure need not remain an urban privilege. By embedding technology into the fabric of daily rural life, this Gujarat village presents a replicable, people centered model that bridges India's digital divide.

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/at-akodara-indias-first-digital-village/article7418012.ece

49. Empowering Small Farmers through AgTech Innovation: Bridging the Rural Technology Gap in Indonesia



With 17.2 million small farmers feeding a population of 280 million, Indonesia faces a critical challenge in ensuring agricultural technology reaches those who need it most. A landmark report titled "Transitioning Future Small Farms in Indonesia," developed through interviews with 131 stakeholders across Jakarta, West Java, Bali, and Aceh, charts a practical roadmap for connecting AgTech startups with rural farming communities. The report's transformative recommendations include:

- Conducting on farm demonstrations and prioritizing farmer return on investment
- Fostering long term partnerships between startups, NGOs, and farming cooperatives
- Leveraging blended capital and advocating for supportive policy environments

Supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and driven by a collaboration between the University of Technology Sydney and the Pijar Foundation, the research powerfully argues that farmer driven, authentically sustainable innovation, rather than one size fits all technological interventions, holds the key to building Indonesia's resilient and food secure agricultural future.

https://www.uts.edu.au/news/2025/04/enabling-indonesias-small-farmers-to-embrace-innovation

50. Mae Moh Agricultural Community: Smart and Sustainable Farming for Rural Economic Transformation in Thailand



In Lampang's Mae Moh Agricultural Community, a quiet revolution is reshaping traditional farming into a model of smart, sustainable rural enterprise. Backed by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and technology partner Distar Fresh, this pioneering initiative integrates cutting edge agricultural methods to generate fresh, chemical free produce while meaningfully boosting farmer incomes. The programme's defining innovations include:

- Vertical farming techniques that maximize limited land space and shield crops from natural risks
- Organic greenhouse cultivation producing chemical free vegetables for health conscious markets
- Direct market connectivity through digital platforms such as Farmbook

By seamlessly blending technology, environmental responsibility, and community enterprise, Mae Moh's transformation demonstrates that rural communities need not choose between tradition and innovation.

https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/general/2853878/pioneering-smart-farming-for-a-new-economy

51. From Subsistence to Enterprise: EU Funded Agricultural Modernization Transforming Farmer Livelihoods in Sri Lanka



In Vavuniya's Settikulam village, farmer Sokkalingam Sivarajah exemplifies the remarkable impact of the European Union funded Districts of Agriculture Sector Modernization Project, which is reshaping rural livelihoods across Sri Lanka's Northern, North Central, Eastern, Uva, and Central provinces. By training over 300 farmers across 300 acres in Hybrid Maize seed production, the project converts traditional cultivators into confident rural entrepreneurs. Its transformative interventions include:

- Providing solar powered irrigation systems, seed processing centers, and storage facilities
- Establishing "Ensured Seeds Economic Development Limited," a farmer owned public unlisted company
- Delivering training through Agriculture Technology Demonstration Parks across multiple provinces

This innovative model empowers farming families, particularly women, reduces costly seed imports, and creates shared ownership through company shareholding. It stands as a powerful example of how targeted EU investment cultivates lasting entrepreneurial transformation in rural Sri Lanka.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/sri-lanka/success-story-eu-funding-agricultural-sector-modernization-sri-lanka_en

52. Closing the Rural Health Gap: The ASTHA Community Paramedic Model for Sustainable Healthcare Delivery in Bangladesh



Bangladesh's rural communities face a critical healthcare deficit, with only four nurses and six physicians per 10,000 people against WHO's recommended 44.5 skilled professionals. Launched in 2011 and currently in its third phase (2023 to 2026), the ASTHA project trains young adults, 60% women, across twelve districts as Community Paramedics. The programme's core interventions include:

- Delivering a two year training combining medical knowledge with a six month hospital internship
- Modernizing 30 paramedic training institutes across northern, northeastern, and southern districts
- Supporting 1,440 graduates to establish private healthcare businesses

Financed by Novartis, Swisscontact, and Switzerland's SDC, ASTHA targets 185,000 rural community members with affordable healthcare while tackling youth unemployment, proving that community level health professionals are the cornerstone of sustainable rural development in Bangladesh.

High-quality healthcare services in rural areas - Projects - Site

53. Cultivating Resilience: Climate Smart Agriculture as a Pathway to Food Security and Farmer Empowerment in the Philippines



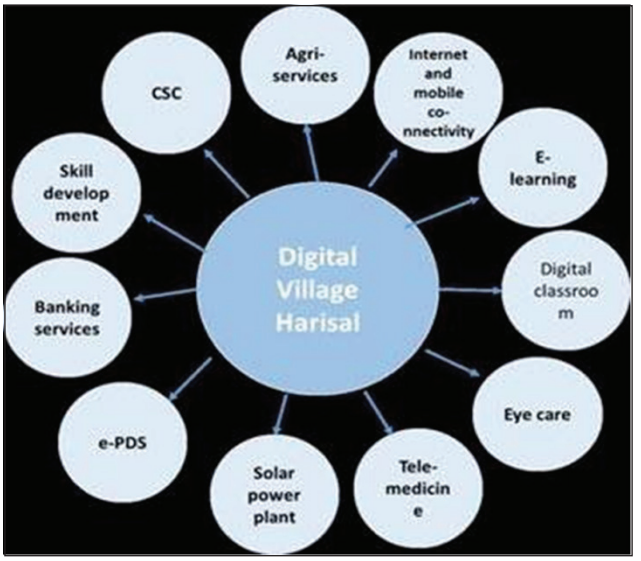
Filipino farmers face mounting climate threats including devastating typhoons, prolonged droughts, and rising sea levels that disrupt harvests and deepen rural food insecurity. With less than 1% of global climate funds directed toward agriculture, smallholder farmers urgently need accessible, affordable smart solutions. Innovative interventions driving transformation include:

- Satellite based farm management and AI driven advisory systems such as Farmonaut's Jeevn platform for real time crop monitoring
- Climate resilient crop varieties, soil conservation, and integrated agroforestry practices
- Precision agriculture technologies optimizing water management and resource allocation

Drawing inspiration from India's solar powered irrigation and Vietnam's methane reducing rice cultivation, the Philippines is charting its own climate smart agricultural path. A coordinated effort combining increased climate finance, policy reform, and community level technology adoption remains essential for building a sustainable, resilient agricultural future for Filipino farming communities.

https://farmonaut.com/asia/climate-smart-agriculture-empowering-filipino-farmers-to-adapt-and-thrive-in-the-face-of-global-warming/

54. Harisal Digital Village: Technology Driven Rural Transformation in India



Harisal, a tribal village in Maharashtra's remote Melghat region, demonstrates how strategic digitalization dismantles rural poverty and isolation. Through collaboration between the Maharashtra Government, Microsoft, and development partners, all 1,479 residents gained Wi-Fi connectivity, transforming village life. Key interventions include:

- Telemedicine expanding healthcare access for tribal communities
- E learning platforms improving education for 665 students
- Mobile banking and digital agriculture boosting farmer incomes
- Solar energy powering sustainable community development

Harisal's transformation proves that government and corporate innovation together can help isolated communities leapfrog traditional development barriers, offering a replicable blueprint for rural transformation across India and the Global South.

https://informatics.nic.in/uploads/pdfs/517b6ca2_18_20_distin_harisal_compressed.pdf

55. Transforming Rural Mountain Communities: BMZ Driven Sustainable Development in Laos



In Laos's mountainous rural provinces, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) commissioned initiative is generating meaningful change for approximately 150,000 people by combining essential infrastructure investment with inclusive community participation. The programme strategically integrates development across multiple dimensions to uplift vulnerable rural populations. Its core interventions include:

- Expanding water supply and healthcare infrastructure across remote mountain communities
- Supporting sustainable agriculture including organic vegetables and coffee production
- Developing ecotourism through private sector partnerships to diversify rural incomes
- Promoting sustainable natural resource management including protection of local fish stocks

By aligning community needs with private sector engagement and sustainable resource management, this innovative programme demonstrates that rural transformation in Laos's most isolated regions is achievable through coordinated, people centered development that balances economic growth with environmental responsibility.

https://www.giz.de/en/projects/integrated-rural-development-poverty-regions-laos-ii

56. Connecting Futures: Vodafone ATH Fiji Lights Up Rural Classrooms with Tech & Hope!



In a meaningful step toward digital inclusion, Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation's Mobile for Good programme is transforming rural classroom experiences across Fiji. At Talaiya Muslim Primary School, 27 students gained access to modern technology through a strategically coordinated corporate philanthropy initiative. Backed by strong multi stakeholder collaboration, the programme's key contributions include:

- Providing six cutting edge digital devices to a previously underserved rural school
- Delivering one year of free 4G Wi-Fi connectivity valued at USD 2,500
- Partnering with Philanthropy Pacific and Fiji's Ministry of Education for coordinated implementation and sustainability

This initiative powerfully demonstrates that strategic corporate social responsibility, when aligned with government partnership and community collaboration, can effectively bridge Fiji's rural digital divide, equipping young students with essential technology skills and opening transformative pathways toward a more connected, opportunity rich rural future.

https://www.vodafone.com.fj/docs/default-source/foundation/jeevan/jeevan22.pdf?sfvrsn=e538cf98_2

57. Vietnam's “Lang So” Digital Village e-Handbook



Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) launched the "Lang So" Digital Village e-handbook to accelerate grassroots digital transformation across rural communities. Available through dedicated websites, Facebook, and Zalo platforms, this freely accessible initiative empowers citizens to build locally tailored digital villages using their own cultural resources and community strengths. Its defining features include:

- Showcasing over 30 "Make in Vietnam" digital platforms addressing everyday community needs
- Presenting 50 inspiring success stories linked to 100 outstanding digital champions
- Enabling decentralized, community driven digital economy development at village level

By equipping rural citizens with practical digital skills and locally relevant technology solutions, Lang So demonstrates that meaningful digital transformation in Vietnam begins not in cities but from the grassroots, empowering every village to shape its own connected future.

https://en.vietnamplus.vn/e-handbook-promotes-digital-transformation-from-grassroots-level-post276732.vnp

58. Protecting Forests, Empowering Communities: The LASR Sustainable Landscape Programme in Indonesia



The Leuser Alas Singkil River Basin (LASR) Project, financed by Switzerland's SECO and running from 2023 to 2029, addresses accelerating deforestation and land tenure insecurity across three districts surrounding Aceh's globally significant Leuser Ecosystem, which stores an estimated 541 megatonnes of CO_2. Through multi stakeholder platforms uniting government, private sector, indigenous communities, and NGOs, the project delivers transformative interventions including:

- Real time satellite monitoring of deforestation risks to strengthen land use policy enforcement
- Participatory Land Use Planning mapping 300 independent palm oil smallholders onto traceable supply chains
- Supporting non extractive income opportunities for forest dependent and indigenous communities

By aligning economic resilience with rainforest conservation, LASR demonstrates that sustainable landscape governance, grounded in community rights and private sector accountability, offers Indonesia a replicable model for balancing rural livelihoods with irreplaceable ecological integrity.

Sustainable Landscape Program Indonesia (LASR)- Projects- Site

59. Samurdhi – Building a Prosperous Sri Lanka Together

Established in 1995, Sri Lanka's Samurdhi Authority translates its name's meaning of "prosperity" into action, delivering integrated poverty alleviation across all 25 districts through ten development programmes targeting the country's most vulnerable rural communities. Operating through a decentralized network of grassroots Samurdhi officers, the model addresses poverty across multiple dimensions. Its core interventions include:

- Micro credit schemes and livelihood training promoting rural entrepreneurship and self reliance
- Community Based Banking Societies expanding financial inclusion for low income households
- Digital inclusion programmes bridging the rural technology divide through IT training
- Targeted social welfare and security nets protecting elderly, disabled, and marginalized groups

Despite challenges around distribution efficiency and dependency concerns, Samurdhi remains Sri Lanka's cornerstone social development institution, demonstrating that holistic, community driven welfare programmes anchored in local governance can meaningfully uplift millions living below the poverty line.

https://dsd.samurdhi.gov.lk/

60. Digital Farming Revolution: Kalu Fakir Para, Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



Located 10 kilometers northwest of Cox's Bazar, Kalu Fakir Para village represents Bangladesh's emerging grassroots digital transformation, spearheaded by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and FAO support. Through a Digital Village Centre (DVC) and three Farmer Field Schools engaging 60 farmers, the initiative merges traditional extension services with modern technology. Its key innovations include:

- Deploying five Digital Champion Farmers trained to install offline agricultural apps on 300 smartphones
- Establishing a village aggregation center enabling bulk sales that raised produce prices by 10%
- Providing real time market, production, and agrometeorological data through dedicated Digital Service Providers

Despite challenges around smartphone access and COVID-19 disruptions, Kalu Fakir Para demonstrates that community owned digital infrastructure, when supported by government and FAO partnership, can meaningfully reduce input costs and empower smallholder farmers across rural Bangladesh.

https://www.fao.org/asiapacific/perspectives/digital-villages/en/

61. Aaghosh Program: Conditional Cash Transfers for Maternal and Newborn Health in Rural Punjab, Pakistan



The Aaghosh Program, a component of Punjab's Human Capital Investment Project implemented by the Punjab Social Protection Authority (PSPA) across 13 districts, addresses critical maternal and newborn health challenges among poor and vulnerable rural households. Anchored in the evidence based first 1,000 days framework, the programme delivers targeted health and nutrition interventions through conditional cash transfers of up to Rs. 38,000. Its core services include:

- Quarterly medical examinations and hospital based maternity procedures with trained staff
- Immunization courses, birth registration, and family planning awareness for children under two
- Digital registration through Electronic Medical Record App managed by Lady Health Visitors

By combining financial incentives with structured healthcare access, Aaghosh demonstrates that conditional cash transfer programmes rooted in community outreach and digital health systems can meaningfully transform maternal and child wellbeing across rural Pakistan.

https://phcip.com.pk/components/aaghosh/#

62. Digitizing the Countryside: Vietnam's Smart Rural Transformation Programme 2021 to 2025



Vietnam's government approved a landmark national programme accelerating digital transformation across all rural areas for the 2021 to 2025 period, targeting even the most dis advantaged ethnic minority, mountainous, and coastal communities. This ambitious initiative bridges the rural urban service gap while modernizing governance and strengthening the rural economy. Its headline targets include:

- Achieving 90% online processing of central level public documents by 2025
- Ensuring 70% of communes adopt digital technology in agricultural production and distribution
- Establishing at least one smart rural commune model in every centrally run province

By integrating digital governance, smart agriculture, and community feedback platforms, Vietnam's programme demonstrates that systematic, government led digital transformation can simultaneously modernize rural administration, boost farmer incomes, and create replicable smart village models for sustainable rural development nationwide.

https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-accelerating-digital-transformation-in-new-style-rural-building-post235576.vnp

63. Ba'Kelalan Malaysia: Where Mountain Communities Redefine Rural Progress



High above the clouds of Sarawak's Maligan Highlands, the nine villages of Ba'Kelalan stand as a living testament to grassroots innovation. Ba'Kelalan is a remarkable model of rural innovation driven by its Lun Bawang community. Despite its remote location, the nine villages have transformed their cool mountain climate into an economic advantage. Key innovations include:

- First commercial apple orchard in Malaysia (since 1988)
- Unique Highland Adan Rice cultivation using river irrigation
- Traditional mountain salt processing from natural salt springs
- Commercial strawberry farming launched in 2015

These community led enterprises, rooted in cooperation locally called "musang," demonstrate how indigenous knowledge combined with agricultural adaptation can sustain remote highland communities and inspire rural development across the region.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ba%27kelalan

64. From Isolation to Opportunity: TACDO's Rural Finance Revolution in Laos



In the remote villages of Laos, financial exclusion has long trapped communities in cycles of poverty. TACDO (Training and Consulting for Development) Consulting Centre is rewriting that story. For over two decades, this pioneering organisation has delivered hands on technical support and financial inclusion programmes across rural Laos, reaching more than 48,000 villagers since 2024 alone. Their transformative model operates through three powerful pillars:

- Village level financial service partnerships enabling accessible microloans
- Financial literacy and business management training for rural entrepreneurs
- Targeted empowerment programmes prioritising women headed households

From Mrs Chansouk purchasing farm inputs to Mr Viengphone securing his children's education, real lives are changing. TACDO demonstrates that when underserved communities receive the right tools, sustainable rural transformation becomes beautifully inevitable.

https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent_057_Empowering_y25.php

65. Camellia Village in China: Healing Water, Reviving Communities Through Ecological Innovation



What happens when a village chooses nature over concrete? Camellia Village in Yunnan Province, China, offers a compelling answer. Once burdened by untreated sewage threatening both health and livelihoods, this community underwent a profound transformation beginning in 2021 through the UNDP China supported "Happy Farmland" project. The initiative introduced groundbreaking ecological solutions that delivered measurable change across multiple dimensions:

- Zero energy tiered pond systems processing 50 cubic metres of wastewater daily
- Improved living conditions for over 400 villagers with drastically reduced carbon emissions
- Biodiversity enhancement through integration with natural ponds and peach orchards
- Eco tourism growth positioning the village as Yunnan's first eco migration destination

Recognised among the world's best poverty reduction cases, Camellia Village stands as powerful evidence that nature based wastewater solutions can simultaneously restore environments, strengthen economies and dignify rural lives.

https://www.undp.org/china/news/reviving-camellia-village-success-story-rural-transformation-through-sustainable-wastewater-solutions-yunnan

66. Roads to Prosperity: Transforming Rural Lives in Bhutan



In the steep mountain communities of Bhutan, distance has long been the greatest barrier to prosperity. The Remote Rural Communities Development Project (RRCDP) changed that across 26 village groups in six districts through precisely targeted interventions:

- Farm roads cutting market travel time by up to 8 hours
- Power tiller machinery supporting over 3,597 households
- Poultry farming and agricultural extension services boosting incomes

Seventy year old Tara Nidhi witnessed his first ever road while single mother Dechen built a thriving poultry business generating Nu. 50,000 monthly. RRCDP proves that well directed rural infrastructure investment does not merely connect communities physically but permanently unlocks human potential and dignifies mountain livelihoods.

https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/endpovertyinsouthasia/improving-agricultural-systems-and-raising-prosperity-rural-bhutan

67. BAIF eDost India: Rural Women Powering the Digital Village Revolution



In Pathardi, a remote tribal village in Maharashtra, India, a simple but powerful idea is reshaping rural life. The BAIF Development Research Foundation launched the eDost initiative, appointing digitally trained local women as community technology catalysts, eliminating the need for costly 20 kilometre trips to access basic services. These women deliver a remarkable range of doorstep solutions:

- Digital financial services including cash withdrawals, transfers and bill payments
- E governance, surveys and value chain digitisation support
- Education, life skills and e commerce facilitation for villagers

Pilot eDost Anjali Vazare conducted 1,300 transactions worth 14 lakhs in just three months, earning 20,000 rupees independently. By embedding technology within trusted community hands, BAIF eDost proves that rural digital transformation succeeds most powerfully when local women become its driving force.

https://baif.org.in/edost

68. Digital Agriculture Transforming Filipino Farmers: Bridging the Divide



The Philippine Institute for Development Studies highlights how digital agriculture can empower Filipino farmers through precision farming, e-commerce platforms, and data-driven decision support systems. A PIDS study emphasizes that technologies like precision agriculture have increased farmer incomes by up to 20 percent globally. Key recommendations to unlock this potential include:

- Harmonizing government data and advisory services
- Creating a centralized e-commerce platform under DTI
- Investing in rural ICT infrastructure and connectivity

Local innovations such as Albay's Digital Clustered Rice Farming covering 500 hectares and the Mango Pest Buster app demonstrate real grassroots progress. However, limited smartphone access and poor rural connectivity remain barriers. Experts agree that combining digital tools with traditional extension services and community organization will inclusively modernize the Philippines' agricultural sector and uplift vulnerable rural populations.

https://www.pids.gov.ph/

69. Mahavilachchiya: A Transformative e-Village in Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka's e-Village initiative stands as a pioneering model of rural digital transformation. Launched in Mahavilachchiya, North Central Province, the project introduced ICT infrastructure to a resource-limited farming community, fundamentally changing the trajectory of its youth. Led by the Horizon Lanka Foundation in partnership with ICTA, the initiative delivered:

- Computer training and internet connectivity for over 200 students
- Skills development in web design, graphic design, and e-commerce
- A 24-hour multimedia library and fully equipped computer lab

Secondary school students began designing websites and earning incomes surpassing those of their farmer parents. ICTA subsequently replicated this model across rural Sri Lanka, using ICT as a catalyst for socioeconomic mobility. Mahavilachchiya now stands as a national beacon of community-led digital innovation and inclusive rural development.

https://www.icta.lk/projects-si/e-village?lang=si

70. Thailand's One Tambon One Product: Community Driven Rural Innovation



Thailand's One Tambon One Product (OTOP) initiative, launched in 2001, is a landmark rural development model that empowers each of the country's 7,255 sub-districts to produce and promote a unique locally rooted product. Inspired by Japan's One Village One Product movement, OTOP harnesses cultural heritage and local resources to drive grassroots economic growth. The program delivers measurable impact across key development pillars:

- Income generation and job creation for rural artisans and entrepreneurs
- Preservation of traditional crafts, textiles, and regional cultural identity
- Skills training, product development, and quality certification support
- Expanded access to domestic and international markets

Spanning categories from handwoven silk and ceramics to herbal wellness products, OTOP has revitalized rural economies while promoting sustainable practices. Government agencies provide coordinated support through trade fairs, design assistance, and capacity building, making OTOP a replicable and enduring model of community led rural innovation.

One Tambon One Product (OTOP) to promote grassroots economy in Thailand – FAO

71. Nepal's SBI Digital Village: Bridging the Financial Divide in Rural Communities



Nepal SBI Bank's Digital Village initiative represents a transformative step toward financial inclusion in underserved rural areas. Launched in Jaharsing Pauwa, Kathmandu, a village of approximately 2,200 residents dependent on farming and animal husbandry, the project systematically converts communities into fully cashless ecosystems. The initiative delivers comprehensive digital and financial infrastructure including:

- ATM, Cash Recycler Machines, and Internet Banking kiosks for seamless transactions
- PoS machines, mobile banking, and free Wi-Fi connectivity across the village
- Savings accounts and ATM cards for every household
- Financial literacy programs and technology learning sessions

Beyond banking, Nepal SBI's CSR contributions include solar street lighting, medical equipment donations, and school support programs promoting hygiene and education. Modelled on State Bank of India's proven framework, this initiative establishes a replicable blueprint for digitally empowered rural development across Nepal.

https://nsbl.statebank/nepal-sbi-digital-village

72. Pakistan's e-Credits Initiative: Digital Financial Inclusion for Marginalized Farmers of Punjab



Punjab's small and marginalized farmers, long trapped in cycles of poverty through exploitative informal lending, found transformative relief through the e-Credits program. Developed by the Agriculture Department of Punjab, this digital initiative provides interest-free formal agricultural credit to farmers with landholdings under 12.5 acres. The program delivers measurable impact across key areas:

- Over 850,000 loans disbursed totalling more than 61 billion rupees
- First ever formal credit extended to landless farmers through group lending
- 93% of beneficiaries were new to formal banking with a 99% recovery rate

By automating registration and disbursement through basic bank accounts, e-Credits dismantled traditional barriers of documentation and collateral, successfully integrating rural communities into Pakistan's formal financial sector and strengthening agricultural productivity nationwide.

https://en.humsub.com.pk/2516/empowering-the-marginalized-kissans-of-punjab-through-digital-financial-inclusion/#google_vignette

73. Myanmar's Vocational Skills Development Project: Catalyst for Rural Resilience and Recovery



When political upheaval and economic collapse threatened to create a lost generation in Myanmar, the Vocational Skills Development Project (VSDP) stepped in with a ground level response rooted in practical, employment driven training. Since 2013, Swisscontact has partnered with private sector employers and local training providers to deliver demand responsive skills across rural and peri urban communities. The project achieves meaningful outcomes across three core sectors:

- Agriculture training reaching 970 farmers, with 64% women and 58% youth, in good agricultural practices and food processing
- Textiles training empowering displaced youth and ethnic minorities through demand driven tailoring programmes
- Infrastructure maintenance courses in house wiring, engine repair, and appliance servicing with 70% employment placement

Operating under its third phase since April 2023, VSDP prioritises women, internally displaced persons, and small enterprises across agriculture, textiles, and infrastructure. Despite extraordinary hardship, the project remains a steadfast model of skills led rural resilience and inclusive economic recovery in Myanmar.

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/news/vocational-skills-development-project-continues-to-address-multiple-dimensions-of-poverty

74. Iran's Rural Women Weavers: Community Empowerment through Traditional Skills and Digital Innovation



In Shadegan County, Khuzestan Province, Maryam Shaverdi's remarkable journey from a self-taught mushroom farmer to a community leader exemplifies the transformative power of rural women's entrepreneurship in Iran. Partnering with UNDP's Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project since 2005, Maryam channelled her traditional expertise into a thriving collective enterprise. Her initiative delivers inspiring outcomes across multiple dimensions:

- Training dozens of rural women in mushroom cultivation, quail farming, and traditional mat weaving
- Producing ecofriendly, plastic free handicrafts using natural palm leaves and organic dairy goods
- Connecting women artisans to exhibitions and preparing products for digital marketplace registration

What began as a solitary effort now unites approximately twenty women working from their homes, crafting sustainable livelihoods rooted in cultural heritage. Maryam's story powerfully demonstrates how individual determination, community solidarity, and project partnership can collectively transform rural women's economic futures in Iran.

https://www.undp.org/iran/news/tale-iranian-rural-womens-skilled-hands

75. Malaysia's Rimbunan Kaseh: A Smart Village Blueprint for Sustainable Rural Development



Malaysia's Rimbunan Kaseh village redefines rural living by merging technology, sustainability, and community welfare into one cohesive model. Recognised by the Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council as a potential worldwide template for rural poverty alleviation, this innovative settlement northeast of Kuala Lumpur delivers tangible community benefits:

- Affordable energy efficient homes built in just 10 days at USD 16,000 to 20,000
- Closed loop aquaculture systems where tilapia farming wastewater irrigates surrounding crops
- Supplementary household income of USD 400 to 650 monthly through integrated food production

Supported by Malaysia's Industry Government Group on High Technology, the model combines quality education, vocational training, and food security infrastructure within a single integrated community framework. With replication planned across 12 additional sites, Rimbunan Kaseh stands as compelling proof that technology driven village design can sustainably transform rural poverty into dignified self sufficient living.

https://www.upi.com/Science_News/Technology/2012/07/17/Malaysian-smart-village-described/66171342552218

76. Enhancing Vocational Education for Rural Workforce Development in Indonesia: Swiss Skills for Competitiveness (SS4C)



Indonesia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training landscape is undergoing bold transformation through the Swiss Skills for Competitiveness (SS4C) program. Implemented by Swisscontact and financed by Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, this 2024 to 2027 initiative aligns polytechnic graduates' skills directly with private sector industry demands across manufacturing, tourism, furniture, food processing, and petrochemicals. The program achieves compelling early results:

- Graduate employment rate rising impressively from 75.9% to 89.5% within one year
- 75 companies strengthened through structured dual vocational education and training services
- IDR 2.1 billion public and IDR 313 million private sector co-investments secured in 2024

Inspired by Switzerland's renowned dual vocational education expertise, SS4C builds industry relevant curriculum, upgrades lecturer qualifications, and fosters meaningful collaboration between ministries, polytechnics, and private companies. With nearly 2,200 institutions and one million students within its national scope, SS4C positions Indonesia's workforce competitively for sustained global market success.

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/swiss-skills-for-competitiveness-ss4c

77. Pure Fiji: Nature Rooted Beauty and Village Powered Innovation in Fiji

PURE FIJI

Pure Fiji, co-founded by Gaetane Austin and her daughter, is a pioneering Fijian beauty brand that transforms centuries-old indigenous knowledge into globally celebrated skincare products. Drawing on wild-harvested coconuts, dilo nuts, and tropical flora from the South Pacific, the brand uses cold-press Direct Micro Expelling (DME) technology to extract nutrient-rich oils while empowering over 500 women in remote rural villages to process ingredients locally. Key pillars of the model include:

- Village-level DME processing that raises incomes and retains value within rural communities
- Zero-waste production where even coconut shells are converted into organic fertilizer
- Revenue reinvested into clean water access, schools, and community healthcare
- Award-winning eco-packaging using handmade Pepa Ni Viti paper, a locally crafted Fijian material

With protected global trademarks and distribution through world-class spas and international retail, Pure Fiji proves that ethical, community-centered enterprise can achieve both social impact and commercial excellence.

https://www.purefiji.com/our-story

78. LEDARS: Community Driven Climate Resilience and Rural Transformation in Bangladesh



Since 1996, LEDARS (Local Environment Development and Agricultural Research Society) has been advancing the social, economic, and environmental well-being of marginalized communities across the southwest coastal belt of Bangladesh. Operating in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions, LEDARS — supported by Bread for the World (Germany) — integrates climate adaptation, livelihoods, and rights-based development into a unified rural innovation model. Its ground-level impact is anchored by several transformative interventions:

- 91 people's organizations formed to strengthen collective voice and community governance
- 5,250 bio-sand filters installed to ensure safe drinking water access in coastal villages
- Climate-adaptive farming and women-led enterprises promoted among 270 vulnerable households
- A state-of-the-art Knowledge Management Center driving youth-led climate research

A recipient of the Zayed Sustainability Prize 2023, LEDARS demonstrates how locally rooted, nature-based solutions can protect the Sundarbans ecosystem while securing livelihoods and dignity for the most excluded — including landless farmers, women-headed families, and coastal island communities.

https://ledars.org/slsccvp/

79. Roads to Opportunity: Connecting Ethnic Minority Communities Through Rural Infrastructure in Vietnam



In the mountainous Hoa Binh province of Vietnam, a World Bank and UK aid-funded Rural Transportation Programme has fundamentally changed life for ethnic minority families like the Muong community of Bac Son commune. What once required a two-day trek through difficult terrain to reach the nearest market now takes a matter of hours. Co-funded by IDA and the UK's DFID, the programme delivered measurable transformation across multiple fronts:

- 400 ethnic minority households in Bac Son directly benefiting, with 70% now owning a motorbike
- 28% increase in communes with all-weather roads during Phase Two (2001 to 2006)
- 210,000 people lifted out of poverty over the Phase Two project period across 40 provinces
- Phase Three (2007 to 2011) extended coverage to 33 provinces with sustained road maintenance

Faster market access enabled families to trade produce, attract dealers directly to their homes, and launch small enterprises. Improved roads also unlocked access to schools and healthcare, affirming that rural infrastructure investment is among the most powerful drivers of inclusive rural innovation.

https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/11/15/rural-roads-boost-ethnic-minority-livelihoods-vietnam

80. Hiware Bazar: How Water Wisdom Turned a Drought Stricken Village into a Prosperous Community in India



Hiware Bazar, a semi-arid village in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district, India, transformed from a poverty-ridden settlement facing chronic drought into one of the country's most prosperous rural communities. Guided by an elected sarpanch and a participatory gram sabha, the village channelled government Employment Guarantee Scheme funds into systematic ecological restoration rather than short-term relief. The results, achieved within a decade, stand as a landmark model of community-led rural innovation:

- Wells increased from 97 to 217 and irrigated land expanded from 120 ha to 260 ha
- Poverty-stricken families reduced from 168 out of 180 in 1995 to just 3 households
- Average household income rose 20 times, with over 54 families becoming millionaires
- Milk production surged from 150 litres per day in the 1990s to 4,000 litres daily

Anchored by a village water budget, forest regeneration, and over 660 rainwater harvesting structures, Hiware Bazar proves that community ownership of natural resources, backed by integrated planning, is the most enduring engine of rural prosperity.

https://www.downtoearth.org.in/environment/hiware-bazar--a-village-with-54-millionaires-4039

81. Seed of Change: Agricultural Innovation Transforming Rural Sri Lanka



In Sri Lanka's northern Anuradhapura district, smallholder farmers once battled unpredictable rains and poor yields with nothing but bamboo poles and polythene sheets. A transformative FAO project, funded by the Government of Canada, changed that reality for 92 farmers across four districts. Through structured training and modern tools, farmers gained access to:

- High quality onion and chilli seed production techniques
- Protective rain shelters and polytunnels
- Micro irrigation systems reducing pesticide dependency

Farmer Rathnayake saw his onion seed harvest leap from 2 to 3 kilograms to an impressive 12 to 15 kilograms per season. Fellow farmer Malani Senehelatha gained confidence in profitable cultivation after the training. Sri Lanka's Department of Agriculture now uses these farms as demonstration sites, ensuring this rural innovation continues to flourish nationwide.

https://srilanka.un.org/en/239863-sri-lankan-farmers-reap-success-through-innovative-agricultural-technologies

82. Thailand RAIN Initiative: Cultivating Innovation for Stronger Agriculture



The Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (RAIN), funded by USDA and implemented in partnership with Michigan State University, is transforming smallholder agriculture across eight provinces through a structured and farmer centered approach. Operating along rice, cassava, and fruit value chains, RAIN applies its signature five pillar methodology to drive measurable growth at the ground level:

- Source — identifying and validating cutting-edge agricultural technologies
- Support — building capacity within public and private sector institutions
- Scale — expanding proven innovations across farming communities
- Sell — connecting farmers to markets and boosting trade competitiveness
- Share — disseminating knowledge for replication and sustained impact

By empowering farmers to boost productivity and profitability, RAIN ensures a reliable supply of high quality agricultural products for American markets while strengthening Thailand's rural innovation ecosystem for long term resilience.

https://winrock.org/projects/thailand-rain/

83. Building Brighter Futures through Inclusive Skills Training in Myanmar



The Vocational Skills Development Programme (VSDP) in Myanmar advances gender equality by providing young women and men from disadvantaged backgrounds with market-oriented vocational training to improve livelihoods. Embedding Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles, the programme removes barriers through targeted measures:

- Female friendly courses including tailoring, beautician services, and cook apprenticeships
- Female instructors offering technical guidance and gender sensitive support
- Transportation and boarding facilities for women from remote areas
- Partnerships with local NGOs to mobilize and select women learners

These efforts have transformed lives. Graduates like Tin Zar Oo now co-manage a beauty salon, Zin Mar Lwin runs her own tailoring business, and Yu Par Aung proudly serves as a professional cook, demonstrating how skills training unlocks economic independence for women across Myanmar.

Ensuring equal participation of women and men in vocational skills development- News- Site

84. Closing the Loopholes in Zero Deforestation Pledge for Palm Oil Development in Indonesia



In Singgersing Village, Aceh Province, Indonesia, communities designated over 5,215 hectares of forest as protected through participatory land use planning. However, powerful palm oil interests exploited a critical loophole in Indonesia's Zero Deforestation Pledge, clearing pristine rainforest by classifying it under Other Land Use certificates, rendering standing forests legally "non forested." Key lessons from this crisis include:

- Customary land rights must be formally recognized to prevent exploitation by well-resourced corporations
- Participatory Land Use Plans require legal backing through village and district regulations
- Local land offices need stronger vetting mechanisms for land ownership transfers

The Earthworm Foundation now advocates for integrating community land use plans into formal policy frameworks, ensuring rural forest communities retain legal protection against deforestation driven by commercial agricultural expansion.

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/news/when-cutting-down-a-forest-is-not-deforestation-elaborate-efforts-to-exploit-loopholes-in-indonesias-zero-deforestation-pledge-for-palm-oil-development

85. Developing Inclusive and Green Tourism Opportunities in Nepal



Nepal's tourism sector, particularly in Pokhara, Sikles, and Tangting, faces mounting challenges including poor waste management, weak governance, and a shortage of skilled professionals. The Developing Inclusive and Green Opportunities (DIGO) project, running from 2025 to 2028, addresses these issues through sustainable destination management and community empowerment. Core interventions include:

- Capacity building for accommodation enterprises through sustainable business model development
- Upskilling training for tourism professionals developed with local academic institutions
- Community coaching cycles empowering local populations to co create sustainable tourism products

By introducing the Sustainable Tourism Destination Management approach, the project bridges the gap between market demand and local offerings. Expected results include 500 trained professionals, 104 enterprises benefiting from increased income, and stronger stakeholder collaboration, collectively steering Nepal's rural tourism destinations toward environmentally responsible and economically inclusive growth.

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/digo-developing-inclusive-and-green-opportunities

86. Transforming Rural Futures Through Early Childhood Care and Education Innovation in Pakistan



The Punjab Human Capital Investment Project (PHCIP) is reshaping rural education across Pakistan through its groundbreaking Bunyad initiative. By establishing 9,397 Early Childhood Care and Education classrooms across 13 underserved districts of Punjab, the programme is creating nurturing learning environments for children aged 3 to 5. Key features driving this transformation include:

- Age appropriate furniture, vibrant classrooms, and dedicated reading corners for Grades 1 to 3
- Distribution of ECCE kits supporting interactive and stimulating early learning
- Training of over 20,000 educators in child centred teaching methodologies
- Strong emphasis on gender equity, hygiene, inclusion, and environmental awareness

Benefiting over 1.16 million children, Bunyad is laying strong foundational learning blocks for rural communities, ensuring every child regardless of background receives quality early education and an equitable start toward a brighter future.

https://phcip.com.pk/

87. Stitching Dreams: Roghayeh's Tale of Revival in Yulqonlu, IR Iran



In Yulqonlu, a drought-stricken village in East Azerbaijan, Iran, Roghayeh, a 38-year-old woman, transformed her community by channeling traditional sewing skills into a thriving workshop. Supported by the Conservation of the Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP), a UNDP and Department of Environment initiative funded by Japan since 2014, this grassroots effort addressed economic hardship at its root. The intervention integrated three livelihood pathways:

- Training women in sewing, rug weaving, and greenhouse farming
- Establishing a community workshop in the village school to produce garments for local and urban markets
- Linking rural women artisans to city-based buyers, expanding their economic reach

What began as one woman's dream grew into a village revival. Roghayeh's siblings pursued education and new beginnings, while her peers secured steady incomes independent of unpredictable harvests. Building on a decade of Japanese generosity, a new contribution from Japan in December 2024 continues to strengthen wetland management and climate resilience across Iran, proving that community-led innovation remains the most enduring force for rural transformation.

https://www.undp.org/iran/news/stitching-dreams-roghayehs-tale-revival-yulqonlu

88. Mang Village in Lao PDR Leads the Way in People-Powered Development



In Mang village, nestled in the mountains of northern Lao PDR, food security and nutrition had long challenged its people. Through the IFAD supported Agriculture for Nutrition Project Phase II (AFN II), the community embarked on a participatory planning process that placed decision making firmly in local hands. Over 90 percent of households actively shaped their own development roadmap, prioritizing investments that truly reflected their needs:

- Repairing the irrigation system for year round crop diversity
- Building access roads connecting farmers to their fields
- Establishing a community market to improve food access and incomes

Since the planning process, construction of a nutrition school has begun and new agricultural production groups have formed. Mang village now stands as a powerful model of inclusive, community led rural innovation, proving that lasting development begins when people define their own future.

https://www.ifad.org/en/w/sustainable-development-takes-a-village.-this-community-in-lao-pdr-proves-it

89. From Field to Future: Farmer Exchange Program Driving Agricultural Innovation in Bhutan



In Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag, Bhutan, a nationwide farmer exchange program is bridging the long-standing gap between research institutions and rural farming communities. Led by the Dzongkhag Agriculture Sector, farmers visited four specialized research and development centres, gaining hands-on exposure to technologies designed to boost productivity and climate resilience. Key innovations introduced through the program included:

- Hydroponic and greenhouse systems for water efficient, year round crop production
- Advanced mushroom cultivation using low cost IoT enabled foggers for consistent yields
- Modern orchard and grapevine management suited to higher altitude conditions
- Apiculture training covering hive management and honey production as an alternative income source

Farmers returned with renewed motivation and practical knowledge ready for local adaptation. With extension officers conducting follow up field visits and peer learning platforms being established, Bhutan is demonstrating that connecting farmers directly with innovation is one of the most powerful pathways to sustainable rural transformation.

http://www.bhutantoday.bt/Excjamge-Program-E/

90. Bangladesh Promoting Green Growth in the Ready Made Garments Sector through Skills



The Promoting Green Growth in the Ready Made Garments Sector through Skills (PROGRESS) project is transforming Bangladesh's RMG sector through sustainable innovation, green skills, and inclusive employment opportunities. Supported by the Embassy of Sweden and the Embassy of Switzerland, the initiative aims to create secure and decent jobs, especially for women, while improving environmental and social compliance in factories. The project strengthens climate resilience and competitiveness by introducing industry driven training and sustainable production practices. Key interventions include:

- Upskilling and reskilling workers, particularly women
- Promoting green technologies and ESG compliance
- Developing Local Technical Consultancy Providers for factory support

By enhancing productivity, sustainability, and workforce capacity, PROGRESS contributes to a resilient and globally competitive garment sector that supports long term economic and social development in Bangladesh.

https://www.swisscontact.org/en/projects/promoting-green-growth-in-the-ready-made-garments-sector-through-skills-progress

91. Markets Beyond Mountains: Cold Chain Innovation Connecting Remote Farmers to Global Opportunities in Fiji



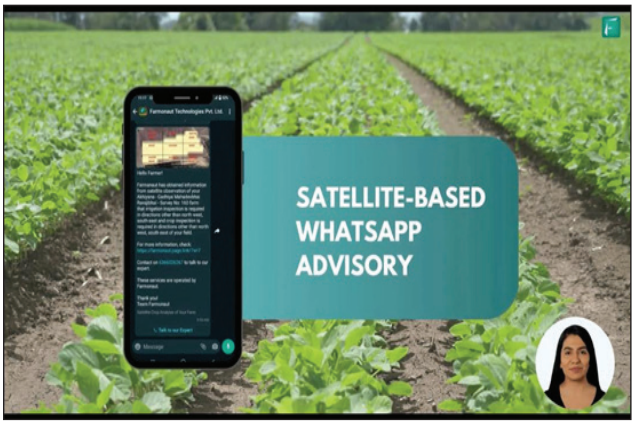
In Nadi, Fiji, Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka officiated the groundbreaking of the New Valley Processing and Cold Chain Facility, linking over 10,400 smallholder farmers across 126 clusters to high value markets. The model directly addresses the isolation faced by highland farming communities in provinces like Ra, Naitasiri, and Nadroga Navosa, offering:

- Full cycle support from land preparation and seedlings to farm gate procurement
- Cold chain infrastructure enabling safe transport of perishable produce to export markets
- Climate smart agro processing technologies to boost productivity and add value

Backed by public private partnerships and government investment, Fiji is proving that when innovation meets community, distance is no longer a barrier to prosperity.

https://www.pmoffice.gov.fj/pm-rabuka-breaks-ground-on-agricultural-facility-in-sabeto-nadi-08-05-2025/

92. Connected Harvests: Mobile Technology Revolutionizing Smallholder Farming in the Philippines



Across the archipelago of the Philippines, mobile phones are fundamentally reshaping how millions of smallholder farmers grow, sell, and sustain their livelihoods. From rice paddies in Nueva Ecija to coconut groves in Quezon, affordable devices and expanding network coverage are delivering agricultural knowledge and market access directly into farmers' hands. The transformation spans several critical areas:

- Real time weather and climate advisories reducing crop losses by up to 30 percent
- Digital market price dashboards cutting out middlemen and raising farmer incomes by 20 to 30 percent
- Mobile wallets and app based microcredit enabling faster financial inclusion for rural communities
- Satellite powered crop monitoring and blockchain traceability meeting export standards and building buyer trust

With mobile phone penetration among Filipino farmers projected to surpass 90 percent by 2026, the Philippines demonstrates that digital connectivity is no longer a privilege but a powerful equaliser, placing the tools of modern agriculture firmly in the hands of those who feed the nation.

https://farmonaut.com/asia/philippines-farmers-mobile-phone-7-tech-gains-in-farming

93. From Rice Paddies to Policy: Lessons on Agricultural Innovation Adoption in Vietnam



Vietnam's agricultural sector is undergoing a transformative shift, driven by innovations from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research spanning rice, cassava, aquaculture, and climate adaptation. Research by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment identified over 100 technologies in the country, with 19 already adopted by nearly 4 million households, demonstrating remarkable grassroots reach.

Key findings from the research include:

- DNA fingerprinting and remote sensing improve adoption tracking accuracy
- Farm surveys often carry reporting errors due to limited farmer awareness
- Expanding stakeholder surveys beyond farmers strengthens impact assessment

Despite this progress, millions of farmers remain unreached, signaling vast untapped potential. Building on this foundation, the new Dynamics of Agricultural Innovation in Vietnam project, led by the Center for Development Research and Vietnam National University of Agriculture, will deepen impact analysis through qualitative interviews and remote sensing integration, steering Vietnam toward a more sustainable and food secure agricultural future.

https://iaes.cgiar.org/spia/news/rice-paddies-policy-lessons-agricultural-innovation-adoption-vietnam

94. Tradition Meets Innovation in Thailand's Rice Sector



Thailand is reimagining its rice industry by empowering rural communities to transform premium rice into high value sustainable products. The Rice Department is actively supporting processing capabilities, improving rice breeds, and upgrading product brands to meet rising global demand. Two outstanding community enterprises illustrate this transformation vividly.

Standout achievements from these model communities include:

- Soisri village in Phayao produces five organic rice varieties and markets award winning branded products in major retail outlets
- Sri Don Mun community in Chiang Rai pioneers sticky rice craft beer, rice based teas, and eco products from rice straw
- Both communities have earned national recognition and agricultural certifications for quality and sustainability

Despite challenges including an ageing farmer workforce and limited land, these grassroots innovations demonstrate how tradition, technology, and strategic branding can together build a resilient and globally competitive rice sector throughout Thailand.

https://www.nationthailand.com/news/general/40040573

95. Certified Success: Shrimp Aquaculture in Malaysia



Warisan Hikmat Shrimp Farm in Kota Belud, Sabah stands as a remarkable model of rural aquaculture innovation in Malaysia. Founded in 1998 by Wah Keng Jieng with just two tiger prawn ponds, the farm has grown into a thriving enterprise spanning more than 18 hectares with 76 ponds dedicated to white shrimp production, exporting premium products to the European Union and beyond.

Milestones that define this outstanding rural enterprise include:

- First farm in Sabah to receive MyGAP certification and Fish Quality Certificate in 2009
- Farm based biosecurity practices successfully protected the enterprise during the early mortality syndrome outbreak in 2013 and 2014
- Annual production increased from 1,200 tonnes to 1,800 tonnes following certification

Continuous support from the Sabah Fisheries Department and the Fisheries Biosecurity Division has been instrumental in sustaining these standards. With plans to reach 2,000 tonnes annually, Warisan Hikmat demonstrates how rigorous certification, responsible farming, and institutional partnerships can elevate rural aquaculture to international competitiveness.

https://www.bimp-eaga.asia/articles/5-success-stories-good-agricultural-practices-malaysia

96. Connecting Smallholders to Markets: Value Chain Innovation in Myanmar



Launched in 2014 with United States Agency for International Development funding, the Value Chains for Rural Development project has transformed smallholder agriculture across Myanmar's southern Shan State and Central Dry Zone. Operating across five key value chains including coffee, soybean, ginger, sesame, and melon, this market systems approach has connected poor rural households to competitive commercial opportunities, strengthening food security and livelihoods throughout the region.

Remarkable results achieved through this five year initiative include:

- Over 106,000 acres brought under improved agricultural technologies and management practices
- Nearly 37,590 rural households directly supported through project interventions
- 23 new public-private partnerships formed in agricultural production and post-harvest transformation
- Nearly 7.5 million United States dollars leveraged in new private sector investment

A standout success was the formation of the Sesame Farmers Development Association in Magway Township, which secured premium export contracts for quality sesame. By combining volunteer expertise, community based extension services, and private sector collaboration, this innovative model demonstrates how inclusive value chain development can unlock the agricultural potential of rural Myanmar.

https://winrock.org/projects/vcrd/

97. Books That Change Lives: Rural Literacy Innovation in Laos



In a country where books were once virtually absent from rural villages, Big Brother Mouse has pioneered a transformative literacy movement across Laos. Founded in 2006 by retired publisher Sasha Alyson alongside Lao co-founders Khamla Panyasouk and Siphone Vouthisakdee, this not-for-profit publishing project has reimagined how knowledge reaches underserved communities through culturally engaging and accessible books.

Core innovations driving this rural literacy model include:

- School book parties evolved into the primary distribution mechanism reaching hundreds of rural villages annually
- Village reading rooms established in volunteer homes bring books directly into community spaces
- Locally authored content preserving Lao folktales, health knowledge, and cultural heritage

From picture books for young children to health guides for adults, Big Brother Mouse continues bridging the knowledge gap in rural Laos, demonstrating that community driven publishing can become a powerful engine of sustainable rural development and social transformation.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Brother_Mouse

98. Voices from the Village: Rural Women Facilitators Transforming IR Iran



Since its launch in 1999 by the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, IR Iran's National Program for Rural Women Facilitators has grown into a powerful nationwide movement empowering rural women across thousands of villages. Built on a two-way communication model, the program places community elected women aged 18 to 60 at the heart of participatory rural development, following a bold vision of one facilitator for every village.

Transformative outcomes achieved through this grassroots program include:

- Over 24,000 facilitators trained across Iran from 1999 to 2024
- Women enabled to join village councils, manage microfinance funds, and launch entrepreneurial ventures
- Participatory planning strengthened across health, agriculture, and employment sectors

With approximately 11,000 active facilitators currently serving rural communities, this innovative model demonstrates how investing in women as community leaders can unlock sustainable rural development, reduce poverty, and build more inclusive and resilient societies throughout Iran.

https://iate.ir/fa-IR/rnw.iate/12339

99. Happy Model Community: Human Rights Led Rural Innovation in Nepal



In the remote districts of Karnali Province and beyond, the Happy Model Community Campaign is redefining rural development in Nepal. Facilitated by Karnali Integrated Rural Development And Research Centre (KIRDARC) in Nepal is a national Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and driven by local women and adolescents, this participatory bottom-up initiative has transformed villages into human rights friendly model communities across six districts including Kalikot, Jumla, Mugu, Humla, Surkhet, and Kapilvastu, aligning grassroots progress with the Sustainable Development Goals. Extraordinary community transformations documented through this campaign include:

- Child marriage reduced dramatically from 72 percent to just 3 percent
- Gender based violence brought down to zero percent from 67 percent
- Access to basic education improved from 82 percent to 99 percent
- Improved toilet coverage reached 100 percent from 72 percent

By integrating education, health, governance, and social protection into one unified community led framework, this innovative model proves that sustainable rural transformation requires no complex expertise, only meaningful participation, strong local ownership, and unwavering commitment to human dignity throughout Nepal.

https://kirdarc.org/case_study/happy-model-community-campaign-women-adolescent-development/

100. From Isolation to Opportunity: Market Driven Rural Transformation in the Philippines



Rural poverty, weak market access, and geographic isolation once defined life for millions of farming and fisherfolk communities across the Philippines. The Philippine Rural Development Project, launched in 2014, reimagined this reality by investing in rural infrastructure, enterprise development, and data driven planning, reaching approximately 1.55 million beneficiaries over a decade.

Key pillars of this innovative model include:

- Farm to market roads reducing travel time by 41 percent and transport costs by 21 percent
- Community enterprise development raising annual marketed output by 122 percent
- Women representing nearly 45 percent of all enterprise beneficiaries
- Digital monitoring tools embedding accountability into government planning systems

With the ongoing Scale Up project targeting an additional 450,000 farmers through 2030, the Philippines stands as an inspiring model of equitable and sustainable rural transformation.

https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2026/04/07/scaling-rural-transformation-in-the-philippines-connecting-farmers-to-markets-jobs-and-opportunity

From Facilitator to Leader: Rita Bramma and the Power of Farmer Driven Rural Innovation in Barisal, Bangladesh

A Journey of empowerment, where local leadership and innovation drive sustainable change in rural Bangladesh.



Building Value Chains from the Ground up: The Philippine Rural Development Project as a Model for Inclusive Agricultural Growth in the Philippines

Empowering communities and building resilient value chains for inclusive and sustainable agricultural development.



Akodara: Pioneering India's First Digital Cashless Village as a Blueprint for Rural Digital Transformation in India

A digital revolution in a small village, setting a benchmark for cashless and empowered rural communities.



Empowering Small Farmers through AgTech Innovation: Bridging the Rural Technology Gap in Indonesia

Leveraging technology and innovation to empower small farmers and build a more resilient agricultural future.



Mae Moh Agricultural Community: Smart and Sustainable Farming for Rural Economic Transformation in Thailand

A model of smart agriculture and community collaboration driving sustainable rural economic transformation.



From Subsistence to Enterprise: EU Funded Agricultural Modernization Transforming Farmer Livelihoods in Sri Lanka

Modern solutions and partnerships transforming rural agriculture and improving livelihoods.



Closing the Rural Health Gap: The ASTHA Community Paramedic Model for Sustainable Healthcare Delivery in Bangladesh

Bringing essential healthcare closer to rural communities through trained local health heroes.



Cultivating Resilience: Climate Smart Agriculture as a Pathway to Food Security and Farmer Empowerment in the Philippines

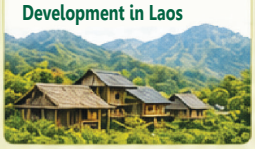
Building climate-resilient farming systems for a food-secure and empowered rural future.



Harisal Digital Village: Technology Driven Rural Transformation in India



Transforming Rural Mountain Communities: BMZ Driven Sustainable Development in Laos



Connecting Futures: Vodafone ATH Fiji Lights Up Rural Classrcoms with Technology and Hope



Vietnam's "Lang So" Digital Village e-Handbook



Protecting Forests, Empowering Communities: The LASR Sustainable Landscape Programme in Indonesia



Samurdhi - Building a Prosperous Sri Lanka Together



Digital Farming Revolution: Kalu Fakir Para, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



Aaghosh Program: Conditional Cash Transfers for Maternal and Newborn Health in Rural Punjab, Pakistan



Digitizing the Countryside: Vietnam's Smart Rural Transformation Programme 2021 to 2025



Ba'Kelalan Malaysia: Where Mountain Communities Redefine Rural Progress



From Isolation to Opportunity: TACDO's Rural Finance Revolution in Laos



Camellia Village China: Healing Water, Reviving Communities Through Ecological Innovation



PEOPLE & INCLUSION
Empowering communities and ensuring no one is left behind.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
Promoting resilient livelihoods through innovation and local solutions.

CLIMATE & RESILIENCE
Building climate-smart communities for a sustainable and resilient tomorrow.

DIGITAL & INNOVATION
Harnessing technology and innovation to transform rural futures.

PARTNERSHIP & COOPERATION
Working together across borders for shared growth and impact.