

**Address of HE Dr. P. Chandra Shekara, Director General, CIRDAP
On the occasion of the 47th Foundation Day of CIRDAP and the 2nd World
Rural Development Day, 6 July 2026 at CIRDAP**

- ❖ Good morning to all of you and wish you all happy World Rural Development Day.
- ❖ Thank you all for joining the joyful celebration of 47 th Foundation Day of CIRDAP
- ❖ Today's Chief Guest His Excellency, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh and Chairperson, CIRDAP Governing Council,
- ❖ Special Guest His Excellency, Mir Shahe Alam, Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Bangladesh,
- ❖ Guest of Honour, Mohammad Showkat Rashid Chowdhury, Secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, Bangladesh
- ❖ Guest of Honor, Md. Shahidul Hassan, Secretary, Local Government Division Bangladesh
- ❖ Guest of Honor, Shah Asif Rahman, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh
- ❖ Distinguished Diplomats representing CIRDAP member countries, and countries of Asia and Pacific Region, Inter Governmental and Regional Organizations, International Organizations, Officials of Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Development Partners of Bangladesh, Press and Media
- ❖ **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honor and privilege to welcome you all again for celebrating the **2nd World Rural Development Day** and the **47th Foundation Day of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP)**.

Today is more than a ceremonial occasion. It is an opportunity to reaffirm our shared vision for a future where rural communities are prosperous, resilient, inclusive, and empowered.

❖ **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Rural communities are the foundation of our economies and societies. They produce our food, preserve biodiversity, protect cultural heritage, and contribute significantly to national development. Yet they continue to face unprecedented challenges, including climate change, food and income insecurity, unemployment, technological disparities, migration, and increasing economic uncertainties.

The World Rural Development Day which is celebrated along with CIRDAP foundation day with a theme **Towards Vibrant, Prosperous and happy rural communities** reminds us that sustainable global development cannot be achieved without sustainable rural development. It calls upon governments, development organizations, academia, the private sectors, and rural communities themselves to work together to build a future where no rural citizen is left behind.

❖ **Distinguished Guests,**

For forty-seven years, CIRDAP has remained committed to promoting integrated rural development across Asia and the Pacific through regional cooperation, policy dialogue, capacity development, research, innovation, and knowledge exchange. Since its establishment in 1979, CIRDAP has served as a unique intergovernmental platform where member countries learn from one another and jointly develop practical solutions to common rural development challenges.

One of our long-term strategic aspirations is to expand CIRDAP's regional outreach to another 40 countries of Asia and Pacific with diverse experiences, innovations, and development opportunities. We firmly believe that meaningful rural transformation can only be achieved through partnerships that transcend national boundaries and institutional mandates. I am happy to share with you all that CIRDAP has approached all the forty non-member countries in Asia and Pacific and Honorable Minister has addressed request letters to all the non-member countries. Thank you, excellency, for your support. Hope to expand CIRDAP family with your cooperation.

❖ **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

The unwavering commitment and valuable contributions of our Member Countries remain the cornerstone of CIRDAP's achievements.

First, I would also like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh in its current capacity as the **Chair of the CIRDAP Governing Council** and the **Vice Chair of the Executive Committee**. Their visionary leadership, steadfast support, and constructive guidance have significantly strengthened CIRDAP's programs and regional cooperation. I would like to place on records, appreciation of CIRDAP for the transformative Rural Development initiatives of Honorable Minister and Bangladesh such as Farmer card which provide farmers direct access to government subsidies and other facilities, Family card which provides monthly cash support to marginal and low-income families and large-scale excavation of rivers and canals for irrigation and flood control.

I am happy to share that next Governing council, and Executive committee meetings will be hosted by Bangladesh.

Myanmar has also been an active and valued member of the CIRDAP family. I would like to acknowledge Myanmar's remarkable leadership in hosting the **40th CIRDAP Technical Committee Meeting (TC-40)** in Yangon during **August 2025**.

Equally significant was the successful organization of the **3rd CIRDAP Knowledge Circuit at Myanmar**. The event highlighted Myanmar's experiences in rural development policies, institutions, innovations, and community-based development practices, providing valuable lessons for all CIRDAP Member Countries. Earlier CIRDAP knowledge Circuit was organized in India and next will be in Nepal and Sri Lanka where all the member countries get exposed to Rural Development programs, Policies Innovations, Institutions and Impacts of the host country for cross learning purpose

❖ Distinguished Guests,

Capacity development remains one of CIRDAP's important flagship activities. As on date, 350 international training programmes covering 8242 officials representing CIRDAP member countries have been conducted.

I wish to express our profound gratitude to the Government of India for its generous and continuous support in sponsoring fully funded international training programs. In 2026 alone, three collaborative international training programs have already been successfully completed on Geo-informatics, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods; and Climate change in which 63 officials from 11 CIRDAP member countries participated.

I also sincerely appreciate Government of India for reserving **five scholarships every year** for officials from CIRDAP Member Countries to pursue the **Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Development Management (PGDRDM)**. This initiative is making a significant contribution to developing future professional rural development leaders across the region.

Also, I would like to express sincere thanks to the Government of Malaysia and Pakistan for hosting international trainings on Rural Tourism and Disaster Management in collaboration with CIRDAP.

❖ Distinguished Guests,

We also remain grateful to our many academic institutions, development partners, and partner institutions whose collaboration continues to enrich CIRDAP's programs and outreach. In 2025, We started our journey in self-financed training Programmes with National Institute for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (ni-msme), India on *Micro Enterprises and Network for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives (NEDAC)*, Thailand on *Startups in Agricultural Cooperatives*. We are planning for another in Nepal on *Mountain Agriculture*.

CIRDAP, in collaboration with Shobhit Institute of Engineering and Technology (SIET), India announced 45 CIRDAP SIET Partial Scholarship Programme 2026 covering Agriculture, Computer Science, Bio Medical Engineering, Biotechnology and Agri Business Management for the benefit of CIRDAP Member countries

❖ **Excellencies,**

Research and Partnerships are the cornerstone of sustainable development. With the invaluable support and commitment of member countries. As on date, CIRDAP has successfully completed 215 Research projects in member countries and contributed to effective programmes and policies. Some notable current research projects are on *Gender Responsive Budget in Nepal; Transgender Livelihood in India; 'Women & Youth Empowerment in Sri Lanka: Women in Sericulture Value Chain' in IR Iran; 'Local Governance Transformation in Lao PDR; and Best Practices in Rural Development in Bangladesh and Nepal.*

I also would like to express our sincere appreciation to the FAO for partnering with CIRDAP to work on *Urban Aquaculture and Development of National Aquaculture Investment Plans*

For the collaboration of research, **Project Facilitation Centre (PFC)** has been established in CIRDAP to ensure single window facilitation to its Member Countries, Link Institutions, MoU Partners, and CIRDAP experts in preparation and execution of projects. Under which member countries can connect with each other and create valuable impact to the thousands of rural lives. This Centre is supported by a consultant sponsored by Michigan State University, USA

❖ **Innovation has become indispensable for rural transformation.**

Through initiative such as *the CIRDAP-REEDS International Rural Innovation Challenge 2026*, in association with Rural Economic and Educational Development Society – (REEDS), India, CIRDAP is creating opportunities for researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, youth, and development practitioners to develop practical solutions to rural challenges where we received 187 innovations on Rural Development from the Member Countries. This overwhelming response demonstrates that rural challenges can be effectively addressed through innovative, practical, and low-time and cost solutions. The interface dialogue between Innovators and CIRDAP member countries will be held in Sri Lanka for implementation purpose. The awards will be announced today on this auspicious occasion.

❖ **CIRDAP has undergone a transformative change while moving from physical to digital in reaching the member countries**

CIRDAP continues to publish research reports, policy briefs, journals, and technical publications regularly. As on date, 816 publications have been released by CIRDAP on various dimensions of Rural Development. All publications reach more than 1.28 lakhs stakeholders worldwide. One or the other publication reaches 12,500 stakeholders daily. Also, we are reaching out to 2.7 million people through our social media platforms.

CIRDAP knowledge series webinars on current topics are attracting the attention of Rural development professionals. 70 webinars have been addressed by experts on good global practices in Rural Development attended by 3533 stakeholders, are also placed in CIRDAP YouTube channel for the benefit of larger audience.

❖ Excellencies,

The coming years will be crucial for CIRDAP. We have developed an ambitious **Two-Year Programme of Work for 2026–27**, which is being implemented, focusing on strengthening regional cooperation and accelerating rural transformation across Asia and the Pacific. Our priorities include enhancing institutional capacity, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, digital transformation in rural areas, rural entrepreneurship, women and youth empowerment, food and nutrition security, disaster resilience, cooperative development, and evidence-based policymaking.

Through this Programme, CIRDAP has been expanding its regional training initiatives, policy dialogues, research programs, Webinars, innovation platforms, and technical cooperation activities. We shall continue to strengthen partnerships with governments, universities, international organizations, development agencies, and civil society organizations to ensure that our programs generate tangible impacts for rural communities. I am happy to share that we have doubled our academic activities compared to previous year in the process. 125 CIRDAP experts and 36 Partner Institutions spread across Asia and Pacific are playing important role in this aggressive outreach.

Establishment of Digital library on Rural Development for Asia and Pacific and constitution of CIRDAP 50 Commission for futuristic reforms are our ambitious goals for which we seek support of all stakeholders.

❖ Ladies and Gentlemen,

The World Rural Development Day is ultimately a celebration of people—the farmers who nourish our societies, the women entrepreneurs and farmers who sustain families and communities, the youth who bring creativity and innovation, the entrepreneurs who generate rural employment, and the millions of rural citizens whose resilience inspires us every day.

As we celebrate this important occasion, let us renew our commitment to building stronger partnerships, promoting innovation, expanding regional cooperation, and creating sustainable opportunities for every rural community across the world.

We are especially thankful to Government of Myanmar, Bangladesh and India for celebrating World Rural Development Day at National level through mega programs today.

Together, let us build a future where rural communities are not left behind but stand at the forefront of sustainable development.

I wish you all a happy celebration of the **2nd World Rural Development Day** and continued success in our shared journey toward rural transformation.

Thank you.