



CENTRE ON INTEGRATED RURAL
DEVELOPMENT FOR ASIA AND
THE PACIFIC (CIRDAP)



MALAYSIA

The second celebration of

WORLD RURAL DEVELOPMENT DAY 2026

(July 6)

Special Edition of CIRDAP

MALAYSIA'S RURAL
TRANSFORMATION:
BUILDING VIBRANT,
PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY
RURAL COMMUNITIES

THEME 2026

“Toward Vibrant,
Prosperous and Happy
Rural Communities”



Dato' Sri Suriani Ahmad

Secretary General
Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD),
Malaysia



INCLUSIVE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT



POVERTY GRADUATION
& LIVELIHOOD SECURITY



GREEN & SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE



PARTNERSHIP FOR
RURAL PROSPERITY

MALAYSIA'S RURAL TRANSFORMATION: BUILDING VIBRANT, PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY RURAL COMMUNITIES

*By Dato' Sri Suriani Ahmad, Secretary General
Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD), Malaysia*

On the occasion of World Rural Development Day 2026, it is my pleasure to share Malaysia's continuing journey in advancing inclusive and sustainable rural development. This year's theme, *"Toward Vibrant, Prosperous and Happy Rural Communities"*, resonates strongly with our national aspiration to ensure that rural communities are not merely recipients of development, but active participants and drivers of progress.

Rural areas remain an integral part of Malaysia's development landscape. Home to approximately 8.1 million people, or nearly one-quarter of our population, rural communities continue to contribute significantly to the nation's economic, social and cultural fabric. Over the years, Malaysia's rural development agenda has evolved beyond addressing basic needs and poverty eradication. Today, our focus is on creating resilient rural ecosystems that generate economic opportunities, empower communities and enhance overall quality of life.

At the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD), our efforts are guided by the Rural Development Policy 2030 and supported by the MRRD Strategic Plan 2026–2030. These frameworks are aligned with the 13th Malaysia Plan, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. Together, they provide a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening rural economies, developing human capital, improving infrastructure connectivity, expanding entrepreneurship and enhancing public service delivery.

Infrastructure development continues to be a key enabler of rural transformation. Access to quality roads, clean water, electricity, housing and digital connectivity remains essential in ensuring that rural communities can participate fully in modern economic activities. In recent years, Malaysia has continued to invest significantly in these areas, enabling greater mobility, improving access to services and creating new opportunities for economic growth across rural regions.

At the same time, we recognise that sustainable development is ultimately about people. Through programmes implemented by agencies under the Ministry and other strategic institutions, we continue to invest in education, skills development and entrepreneurship. Early childhood education programmes, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and community-based capacity-building initiatives are equipping rural citizens with the knowledge and competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly digital and competitive environment.

The digital economy has also become an important catalyst for rural growth. Malaysian rural entrepreneurs are increasingly leveraging e-commerce platforms and digital technologies to access wider markets and create new sources of income. This

transformation is helping rural businesses overcome geographical limitations while fostering greater innovation and competitiveness.

As for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, rural tourism presents another significant opportunity. Through initiatives such as Desa Kirana programme, we are showcasing the unique strengths of our villages, including their natural beauty, cultural heritage, local products and community-based tourism experiences. Beyond attracting visitors, these initiatives help generate sustainable income, create local employment & opportunities and preserve the identity of rural communities.

A distinguishing feature of Malaysia's rural development model is our emphasis on collaboration. Rural development is a shared responsibility that requires the collective efforts of government agencies, private sector partners, academia, civil society and local communities. Guided by a Whole-of-Nation approach, Malaysia continues to strengthen coordination mechanisms to ensure that development interventions are integrated, responsive and impactful.

We also believe strongly in evidence-based policymaking. Through strategic research initiatives and continuous engagement with stakeholders, we strive to ensure that our policies remain relevant to emerging challenges and opportunities. As rural communities face global trends such as digitalization, climate change, demographic shifts and economic transformation, adaptive and forward-looking policies will be increasingly important.

Malaysia's rural development journey is still evolving. While significant progress has been achieved, we remain committed to ensuring that no community is left behind. Our vision is clear: rural areas that are vibrant in their economic activities, prosperous in their opportunities and happy in the well-being of their people.

As we commemorate World Rural Development Day 2026, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to working closely with regional and international partners, including CIRDAP, to share knowledge, exchange best practices and advance rural development for the benefit of future generations.

Together, we can build rural communities that are not only sustainable and resilient, but also places where people aspire to live, work and prosper.