



*Building Prosperous
Rural Communities
for a Sustainable Future*

THE SECOND CELEBRATION OF

WORLD RURAL DEVELOPMENT DAY 2026

(July 6)

THEME 2026

**Towards Vibrant,
Prosperous and Happy
Rural Communities**



INCLUSIVE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT



POVERTY GRADUATION
& LIVELIHOOD SECURITY



GREEN & SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE



PARTNERSHIP FOR
RURAL PROSPERITY



RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE
& CONNECTIVITY

Special Edition of CIRDAP

Rural Development Education at the University of Chittagong



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Rural development is a foundational pillar for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) worldwide, primarily because over three-quarters of the population living in extreme poverty reside in non-urban areas, where access to essential services and resources remains severely restricted. Investing in rural spaces is critical to safeguarding global food security, as family farms supply approximately 80% of the world's food and also empower rural populations who act as frontline defenders against climate shocks (UN, 2025).

In this context, rural development education directly accelerates the SDGs by providing students with deep insights and the technical skills, climate literacy, and economic tools required to lift themselves out of poverty. Moreover, it directly bridges global targets with grassroots capabilities through the following critical avenues:

Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger (SDG 1 & SDG 2): Rural education programs equip people with modern agricultural training, soil preservation techniques, and post-harvest management. World Rural Development Day serves as a global catalyst to fund these training pipelines, underscoring that global food security depends entirely on the knowledge base of rural youth and family farmers (World Bank DataBank, 2024; UN, 2025; World Bank, 2025).

Gender Equality (SDG 5): Rural development focuses on gender equality. It is crucial for empowering rural women, who make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce but often face unequal access to land and resources (UN, 2025).

Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6): Rural development focuses on clean water and sanitation that addresses the critical lack of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation infrastructure in remote and rural communities (World Bank DataBank, 2024).

Decent Work and Structural Equity (SDG 8 & SDG 10): By offering technical and vocational insights in the rural non-farm sector, including digital financial services, small-scale enterprises, clean energy, etc., rural development education diversifies household income (FAO, 2023; World Bank DataBank, 2024; UN, 2025; World Bank, 2025).

Climate Change Adaptation (SDG 13): Rural populations act as the frontline stewards of our planet's natural resources. Specialized rural training introduces communities to saline-tolerant

farming, nature-based water filtering systems, and disaster preparedness. This specialized literacy protects ecological infrastructure from climate shocks (UN, 2025; World Bank, 2025).

Life on Land (SDG 15): Rural development focuses on the sustainable management of forests, halting land degradation, and protecting biodiversity, which are the foundational assets of rural livelihoods (UN, 2025; World Bank, 2025).

In these ways, rural development is directly and indirectly linked with the SDGs. Therefore, comprehensive rural development education is very important globally in achieving the global goals.

In Bangladesh, comprehensive rural development is paramount, as approximately 67.3% of the population still resides in rural areas. The agrarian countryside forms the backbone of national sustenance; despite its small geographic footprint, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) ranks Bangladesh among the top 10 global producers of 22 agricultural products, securing high rankings for primary staples such as rice, lentils, and potatoes. However, the World Bank notes that national poverty has recently risen to an estimated 21.4%, underscoring an expanding wealth gap between urban industrial sectors and rural villages (FAO, 2023; World Bank DataBank, 2024; Khalid, 2024; and World Bank, 2025).

Furthermore, Bangladesh is exceptionally climate-vulnerable, with rural areas experiencing ongoing ecological displacement due to rising sea levels and riverbank erosion. To address these vulnerabilities and fulfill Article 16 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, which mandates the elimination of urban-rural disparities in living standards, the state must actively prioritize infrastructure development. Strategic investments in the Rural Non-Farm Economy (RNFE), climate-resilient roads, and digital connectivity not only diversify household incomes through small-scale enterprises but also stem the tide of chaotic internal migration that over-saturates urban mega-hubs like Dhaka and Chittagong (Khalid, 2024; and GoB, 2021).

However, central to the success of any rural development program is a skilled team of experts to think strategically about rural development and ensure its delivery. It concerns the factors that affect rural change, how we define progress, and what can be done to achieve the overriding objective of rural development: reducing and eventually eliminating rural poverty. Therefore, students of public administration need to understand the basics of rural development so they can engage in developing rural sectors in their practical lives. To achieve this objective, the Department of Public Administration at the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh, offers a course in its 3rd-Year Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) program on rural development, namely “Rural Development in Bangladesh.” The main aim is to investigate various dimensions of rural development, with particular attention to the relationship between rural and non-rural domains.

The course covers conceptualizing rural development, its importance, elements, and determinants; sustainable rural development; rural development approaches; some paradigms of rural development based on modernization and dependency theories; and dilemmas in rural development. Secondly, the course tries to examine the rural economy of Bangladesh, especially its size and structure, characteristics, problems, rural poverty and poverty reduction strategies and policies in Bangladesh, and institutional, technological, and disadvantaged-focused rural

development interventions in Bangladesh, with some specific examples of rural development programs, such as Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (V-AID), Comilla Model, Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), Cooperatives-Based Rural Development, Comprehensive Village Development Program (CVDP), and Small Farmers Development Program (SFDP), etc. Thirdly, the course includes agricultural development, especially agricultural research, extension, and crop production, fisheries and livestock development, rural energy, and climate change and environmental degradation. Finally, the course includes the officials and non-official pioneers of rural development in Bangladesh since the British period, partners of rural development: government and NGOs, rural development policies, followed by rural development in Korea, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, so that students may compare rural development interventions in different settings. Needless to say, the course curriculum is revised over time.

This is a very comprehensive course on rural development for the students of Public Administration at the University of Chittagong. The course is designed in such a way, so that, by the end, students may explain and critically review current debates in rural development on rural livelihoods, agriculture, and the rural non-farm economy; critically evaluate past and existing attempts to supply rural services, such as infrastructure, finance, research and extension, health and education; analyze critically alternative rural development policies in terms of their potential impact on rural poverty, equity, and economic growth; and outline and evaluate different approaches to the management of various resources and their potential impact on rural development goals.

It is worth noting that, for student evaluation, there are several in-course and summative assessments. Within the in-course assessment, there are class tests, quizzes, presentations, and assignments. The very unique, interesting, and engaging part of this course is the field attachment program, arranged each year with technical support from the Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development (BARD), Kotbari, Cumilla, Bangladesh, a well-renowned research and training academy for rural development worldwide.

In 1994, Professor Dr. Tofayel Ahmed (late), former Professor of the Department of Public Administration at the University of Chittagong, who was a renowned local government and rural development expert in Bangladesh, and a former BARD faculty member, started this program in collaboration with the BARD. Since then, each year, all students in the course are sent to the Academy for almost a week to gain practical knowledge of BARD's rural development activities. The attachment program includes both theoretical and practical exposers. With some theoretical knowledge, students are divided into several groups and assigned different topics related to rural development. The groups then finalize their research design. The groups are then sent to the local villages of Cumilla Sadar Upazila (sub-district) to collect field data.



The course instructor is addressing the inaugural session of the attachment program at the BARD



A group of students preparing for data collection



A group is collecting data in a village



A group is collecting data in a village



A batch of 3rd year Hons is at BARD for the attachment program

The topics includes rural development issues, such as primary education, nutrition and child health, agricultural development, fisheries development, irrigation, land use pattern, use of chemical fertilizer vs bio-fertilizer, biodiversity, environmental management, green and clean energy, rural housing, women development, financial inclusion, micro finance, small and micro enterprise development, cultural development, cooperatives, local governance, youth development, social leadership, women empowerment, and NGOs, and development, etc. Students collect field data from the selected villages in groups and prepare their own reports, which are to be presented formally at the concluding session of the attachment program. They are evaluated officially by the BARD faculty members and finally by the course teacher. It accounts for 25% of the course marks.

Nonetheless, the rural development course and its topics are very familiar and popular among students in the Department of Public Administration's Master's program as well. Master's thesis students select topics related to rural development with their special interests. Many MPhil and Doctoral students have conducted and are currently conducting research on rural development issues. Since last year, the students of this course have started celebrating World Rural Development Day in the department.

We believe the educational framework on Rural development at the Department of Public Administration, University of Chittagong, aligns with the theme of the World Rural Development Day, which the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) officially declares on July 6 every year. We feel proud that Bangladesh pioneered this historic global initiative, leading the UN resolution to establish the day in honor of the founding of the Center on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) on July 6, 1979, and the Department of Public Administration, University of Chittagong, is serving to achieve the aim of the day.

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