

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2019
**ENABLING RURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR
ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE**

Rural Development Forum 2019
Communiqué



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

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A 2-DAY RURAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM ORGANISED BY CIRDAP HELD ON 7-8 JULY, 2019 IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH

INTRODUCTION

CIRDAP Rural Development Forum 2019 titled “Enabling Rural Environment for Enhancing the Quality of Life” was held on 7-8 July 2019 at Dhaka, Bangladesh, organised by the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) marking its 40th Anniversary. The Forum was inaugurated by H.E Mr. Tazul Islam, Honorable Minister of Local Government and Rural Development & Cooperatives (LGRD&C), Government of Bangladesh and was attended by Mr. Md. Kamal Uddin Talukder, Secretary (RD&C), LGRD&C and H.E Vicente Vivencio T. Bandillo, the Philippine Ambassador to Bangladesh who represented the Chairpersons of Governing Council and Executive Committee of CIRDAP.

The Forum Participants included diplomats and dignitaries from CIRDAP member countries, development Practitioners from international development organizations, Scholars, students, and Researchers.

In the course of deliberation, participants at the forum noted the following:

1. Poverty in CIRDAP countries is still widespread and the poor people are mostly concentrated in locations which are away from roads, markets, schools, health facilities and other social institutions. The economic, social, political and other forms of exclusion are pervasive for women and girls at both national community levels and within households. The key barrier to inclusive rural development in the region arise from high and rising levels of inequality in assets, opportunities, social networks, and participation.
2. The smallholders constitute more than 80 percent of the farming community worldwide and provide over 80 percent of the food consumed in a large part of the developing world. The Asia and the Pacific (AP) region are home to 74 percent of the world’s smallholder farmers of the estimated 570 million farms worldwide. South Asia is the worlds’ hungriest region with a Global Hunger Index score of 30.5. The dispersion of this poorer segment is higher in rural areas and among smallholdings of farming community.
3. The livelihood choices of smallholder Farmers are constrained owing to limited resources, limited access to basic services including markets, finance, information and technology and are vulnerable to external shocks.
4. The participants noted that rural non-farm sectors are constrained by lack of access to information to rural poor, lack of access to finance, inadequate initiatives for capacity building of the rural people.

5. The participants noted that the gender discrimination is evident in the CIRDAP member countries. Low literacy rates due to different barriers to education, gender stereotyping, non-recognition of women's contribution in both farm and non-farm sector, non-inclusion of unpaid care and domestic work, and violence against women are key challenges faced by the women at different level.

In the light of observations made by the participants, the following recommendations were made:

1. The linkages among the stakeholders, including government, NGOs, private sectors, communities should be strengthened and reinforced to build a relationship of trust, goodwill and commitment. CIRDAP can identify areas of mutual interest for joint collective activities to benefit the member countries both individually and collectively.
2. Smallholders farmers in CIRDAP member countries should be empowered through mobilizing smallholders into farmers' organizations (FO), making farming attractive to youth, ensuring Access to Market, access to Finance and technology, enhancing institutional capacity on climate change adaptation and resilience etc. A wide variety of policy initiatives are needed for scaling up the delivery of formal and quasi-formal financial services, especially to the poor households. This will help improve the access of the poor families to financial services and prevent serious problems, such as falling into debt traps or losing one's productive assets.
3. In order to ensure that the voices of farmers are heard, Small Holders need to be mobilized through farmers' organisations (FO). Smallholders' farmers should be interrogated into more formal value chains possibly by facilitating bulking their inputs needs and produces to be sold in bulk through aggregation points.
4. Considering the potential of technology in enhancing rural livelihoods, emphasize should be given on promotion of agro-innovation, agro-processing, soft skill development of farmers.
5. In order to promote non-farm sector as a strategy for poverty alleviation in the rural areas, CIRDAP member countries need to take all possible measures for mobilizing domestic resources including tax and non-tax revenues; creating strong, diversified and stable financial sector; developing domestic institutional investors; providing incentives to the private sector to increasingly participate in development activities.
6. A regional climate resilient framework for livelihoods and land use practices should be established especially in the climate change hotspots of the countries and necessary mechanism for scaling up to initiate a transformational change across the climate vulnerable landscape.

7. Noting the importance of appropriate information and knowledge democracy, the participants noted that government and development organizations give emphasize on information dissemination in the region by documenting, disseminating and thus promoting innovative and successful practices.
8. Noting that any development which is not inclusive will not sustain in the long run, the participants noted that inclusion of the most marginalized in geographic location, gender, ethnicity, disability should be a priority. To ensure gender equity, access to finance, community resources and market; capacity building, participation in decision making, equality in law, policies and services, protection from violence and discrimination, access to basic needs such as nutrition, health care, maternity care etc. need to be ensured to create enabling environment for rural women.
9. The huge possibility of youth, who accounts the majority of the rural population, should be harnessed through providing skills, training and financial assistance to youth, making agriculture sector attractive to the young people, providing technical and vocational education at least at secondary and higher secondary level. Countries should investment on youth focusing on skills development and self employment in rural areas. Efforts should be taken to ensure participation of youth in decision making and promotion of platform and structural mechanism where youth can raise their voice such as hosting youth parliament where the youth share their views and make demands to the government should be pursued.

Conclusion

The participants emphasised on the importance of partnership and collective action in creating an enabling environment for enhancing the quality of rural livelihood through building resilient rural communities, and facilitating effective local, national and regional cooperation for inclusive sustainable development in rural areas. It was agreed that government, public sectors, NGOs and other development participants across CIRDAP Member Countries (CMCs) should work together to support each other in order to reinforce collective efforts for inclusive and sustainable rural development and successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region.