

Media Release

Regional Policy Dialogue: Experts Address Critical Issues of Sustainable Rural Livelihoods

Dhaka, 26 January 2010: The 4th Regional Policy Dialogue on Sustainable Rural Livelihoods was held at CIRDAP auditorium in the city today.

The day-long programme was organised by CIRDAP, in cooperation with Rural Development and Cooperative Division (RDCCD), Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh, with a view to addressing critical issues of rural livelihoods and examining the poverty scenario in the Asia-Pacific region so as to suggest how to improve livelihood opportunities in the rural areas.

The experts on rural development (RD) and poverty alleviation (PA) in the Asia-Pacific region took part in the policy dialogue.

They pointed out that rural livelihoods are now more diverse. Although agriculture has remained a prime source of rural livelihoods, income from different off-farm activities and remittances have been increasing promisingly. The young labour force has been leaving rural areas to gain higher income. Rural-urban interaction and exchange have increased significantly, thus, reducing the traditional rural-urban hiatus and differences in cultural values. This has changed the framework conditions for rural development with profound implications for future RD policies and strategies. Climate change has also brought new challenges and opportunities to rural areas, definitively influencing the shaping of future policies for rural development.

They also suggested agrarian reforms and other reformation process in gaining a modest way to reach the desired goal of sustainable development. The Indian agrarian reforms are elaborately discussed and some key lessons are drawn for other countries in the region.

The discussants put emphasis on the role of information and communication technology (ICT) to empower the rural poor as the rural poor require more information to fulfil their variety of needs such as availability of jobs, market information (price, location etc.), access to government programmes and services, maintaining social networks etc..

It was also pointed out that the experience of the CIRDAP member countries (CMCs) has traversed through this entire gamut of alternatives. After a country-wise regional study based on the experiences of the 14 member countries, it had been felt that there were several common features in the efforts of

the CMCs. The country studies and the overview reports formed a major input for the CIRDAP evaluation studies carried out in 2008.

Six papers on RD and PA were presented at the Regional Dialogue meeting. The papers are: *Rural Livelihoods in Asia-Pacific Countries: An Overview* by Dr. S.K. Singh, Director Training, CIRDAP; *An Overview of Rural Development Policies and Programmes in CIRDAP Member Countries with Special Reference to Sustainable Rural Livelihoods* by Dr. S. Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS, Singapore; *Challenges to Sustainable Rural Development: Sharing of Experiences of Bangladesh* by Md. Ataur Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD); *Sustainable Rural Development and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region* by Dr. Andreas Schild, Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD); *Resetting the Role of CIRDAP in the Changing Context* by Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Director General, CIRDAP; and *Agrarian Reforms in India: Long-term Concerns and Recent Trends: Some Key Lessons for Countries in Asia Pacific* by B.K. Sinha, Director General, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), India.

The participants also discussed how to reposition the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific to be contextual and relevant to the member countries in terms of rural development and poverty alleviation.

The delegates from 14 CIRDAP countries, donors, stakeholders and partners participated in the dialogue.

The regional policy dialogue was chaired by H.E. Dr. J. Khaleghani, Vice Minister for Jihad-e-Agriculture, I.R. Iran, and Vice Chairperson of CIRDAP Governing Council-17. He also wrapped up all the points discussed while Vote of Thanks was delivered by Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Director General, CIRDAP.

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