

**Ministerial Retreat on Rural Development – CIRDAP**  
**New Delhi Declaration**  
**25<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

1. We, the Ministers/Senior Officials representing the Member Countries of the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), assembled on the occasion of the Special Meeting of CIRDAP Governing Council and Ministerial Retreat, hosted by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and jointly organized with CIRDAP during 24-26 June 2008, reiterate our commitment to rural development, to enhance sustainable livelihoods, promote gender equality and leveraging information and communication technology for alleviation of poverty in the region.
2. We appreciate the efforts of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, in making the economic growth processes more inclusive by reaching out to millions of poor households in the rural areas, through the implementation of special and unique programmes and projects for sustainable development, rural employment generation, rural e-connectivity, natural resources regeneration and management, rural infrastructure, minor irrigation, etc through a gender responsive approach. The Government's contribution in bridging the rural-urban digital divide by bringing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the door-steps of the rural households is highly appreciated. India's commendable job in promoting self-help groups of women and empowering them through member- based organization, micro-credit and enterprise-based activities together with strengthening of the decentralized governance system makes the Indian experience a model worth emulating. This Retreat has enhanced the knowledge base of the Member Countries.

**While recalling that**

- the Dhaka Declaration on Rural Development of 9<sup>th</sup> April 1987 to meet the basic needs, the hopes and aspirations of the rural poor, felt that low subsistence levels of living would adversely affect socio-economic development in the region; and
- the expression of political will and reiteration of commitment to a dynamic pro-poor sustainable rural development policy would go a long way in improving the quality of life of the poor in rural areas.

### **Recognizing that**

- some CIRDAP member countries have already made significant progress in rural development, generating sustainable livelihoods, employment, gender equality and empowerment, infrastructure and social sector growth;
- rural livelihoods can be made sustainable through social mobilization, self-employment and provision of appropriate backward and forward linkages;
- ICT helps nations to achieve development goals effectively, enhances the capabilities of the poor to be a part of an emerging knowledge society, strengthens their integration into a market economy, speeds up the production processes and facilitates faster communications between individuals, groups, enterprises, communities and government;
- Member Countries at different stages and levels of development in ICT utilization are trying to address the problem of 'digital divide' between rural and urban areas for greater efficiency, transparency and accountability in governance.

**We, therefore, call for the following affirmative actions in CIRDAP Member Countries (CMCs) to improve livelihoods and development in the rural areas**

### **Policy**

- Governments should foster gender equality and adopt suitable measures for women empowerment and the empowerment of rural poor.
- Governments should encourage both public and private sectors to expand market access of products made by rural artisans and self-help groups in order to promote sustainable livelihoods.
- Governments should review the existing laws and regulations for creating an enabling environment for greater use of ICT in rural areas for e-governance, delivery of services to citizens and empowering citizens to access information;
- The CMCs should encourage greater regional cooperation in the area of innovations and sharing of knowledge, best practices in women empowerment, marketing of rural products and leveraging of ICT for rural development.

### **Strategy**

- Community access to ICT may be expanded through successful e-community models such as information kiosks, wired villages, agriculture marketing portals, computerization of land records, grameen phones, etc. Technologies should be affordable, cost effective, simple and user friendly. They should use local resources including renewable energy sources wherever possible.
- Women's access to factors of production such as entitlement to land, natural resources, credit, knowledge and technology should be enhanced. Special efforts need to be made to increase their capacities through social mobilization, education, skill development and training. ICT should be effectively used to create awareness, promote equality and counter social prejudices against women;
- For improving sustainable livelihoods and increasing incomes of rural households, suitable technologies, product design and standards, quality control, value addition need to be ensured. Appropriate market supply chains and regional networks for marketing through trade fairs, exhibitions etc. of rural products need to be further developed.
- Collaboration and networking among rural development institutions, agriculture research institutions, community health institutions, universities and women's organizations are necessary and should be promoted among CMCs.

### **Role of CIRDAP:**

- CIRDAP should further enhance its role in promoting sustainable rural livelihoods, empowering women and leveraging ICT through providing a platform for exchange of ideas, sharing experiences and best practices, dissemination of information and facilitating networks, including marketing networks, among the CMCs for generating knowledge, training and capacity building.
- CIRDAP should work in partnership with other regional organizations such as SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC, ECO.
- CIRDAP should make efforts to expand its membership to other countries of the region especially those who were founders but have not subsequently joined the Organization.

**We resolve to support CIRDAP through increased commitment and augmentation of its resources to achieve the policy and strategy agreed upon as above.**

Text signed by :

1. **H.E. Mr. Mohammed Ehsan Zia**

Minister

Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development  
Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



2. **H.E. Mr. Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal**

Adviser

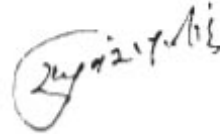
Ministry of Local Government, Rural  
Development and Cooperatives  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



3. **H.E. Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh**

Minister

Ministry of Rural Development  
Government of India



4. **H.E. Mr. Nasser C. Pangandaman**

Secretary

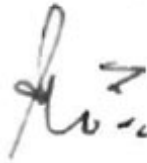
Department of Agrarian Reform  
Government of the Republic of the Philippines



5. **H.E. Hemakumara Wickramathilaka Nanayakkara**

Minister

Ministry of Agricultural Development  
Government of the Democratic  
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



6. **H.E. Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Joseph Kurup**

Deputy Minister

Ministry of Rural and Regional Development  
Government of Malaysia

7. **Drs. Arwan E. Surbakti, Msi**

Director of Institutions and Community  
Ministry of Home Affairs

Government of the Republic of Indonesia



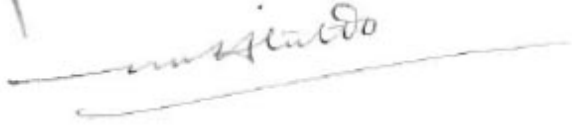
**8. Dr. J. A. Behzadnasab**

Director General  
Rural Development Planning Office  
Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture  
Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran



**9. Mr. Tin Htut Oo**

Director General  
Department of Agricultural Planning  
Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation  
Government of the Union of Myanmar



**10. H.E. Dr. Durgesh Man Singh,**

Ambassador of Nepal to India  
Government of Nepal



**11. Mr. Mohammad Saleem Khan Jhagra**

Secretary  
Ministry of Local Government and Rural  
Development  
Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



**12. Mr. Chan Chiumkanokchai**

International Agricultural Economics Specialist  
Office of Agricultural Economics  
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives  
Government of the Kingdom of Thailand

