

# Resetting CIRDAP

in the New Global Context



Round-table Discussion held on

5 July 2007



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

# **Resetting CIRDAP** **in the New Global Context**

**Proceedings of the Round-table Discussion held on**  
**5 July 2007**



**Centre on Integrated Rural Development for**  
**Asia and the Pacific**

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## **Proceedings of the Round-table Discussion on Resetting CIRDAP in the New Global Context\***

### **Introduction**

The Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), on the occasion of its 28<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary, organised a 'Round-table Discussion on Resetting CIRDAP in the New Global Context' at its auditorium on 5 July 2007, with a view to redefining its new and extended role as a regional organisation.

H.E. Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal, honourable Adviser, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MLGRD&C) of Bangladesh was the chief guest of the programme.

Just before attending the discussion, at 10:30 in the morning, the honourable Adviser H.E. Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal laid the foundation stone for an International Conference Centre (ICC) to be built with all modern facilities at the premises of 'Chameli House', Headquarters of CIRDAP in Dhaka.

The Government of Bangladesh will provide financial support of US\$2.3 million for construction of the ICC which is expected to be the venue for the proposed Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development in 2009. The other member countries of this intergovernmental organisation also expressed their interest in taking part in the internal decoration and furnishing of the ICC, including setting-up of ICT facilities.

### **Round-table Discussion**

The Chief Guest at the Round Table Discussion was Adviser Anwarul Iqbal. Amongst those present were Mr. Nazrul Islam, Secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division (RD&C) as Special Guest; Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Director General of CIRDAP; Dr. Nasreen Khundker, Director, Research; and K.A.S. Dayananda, Director, Information and Communication, CIRDAP. Academics, rural development practitioners, senior government functionaries and diplomats of the Asia-Pacific region attended the half-day discussion.

Setting the tone of discussion at the round-table, the Adviser mentioned that CIRDAP has been playing a very encouraging role as a prime regional institution with

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\* The Research Division, CIRDAP would like to acknowledge the assistance of S.M. Saifuddin and David Hilton who were the rapporteurs for the Round-table Discussion.

a huge network in the field of rural development, and it has promoted significant regional cooperation in this regard.

‘However, both the international and national context in CMCs have changed. We are in the era of globalisation and increased integration of national economies though many regions are still remote and de-linked’, he said.

The development paradigm has changed towards greater openness and free markets. In this context, he said, CIRDAP’s role needs to be redefined, and it is necessary to initiate some preliminary discussion on this matter, and this round-table is a first step.

The Adviser pointed out that ‘three main issues are to be discussed at the round-table: a) the new and extended role of CIRDAP as a regional organisation; b) the significant changes, both in the country context of CIRDAP member countries (CMCs) and the international context, which need to be taken into account in resetting CIRDAP; and c) the necessity to expand membership to include countries which were in the original list, but did not join at the time of CIRDAP’s establishment’.

### **Presentation of the Keynote Paper**

Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Director General of CIRDAP, presented the keynote paper on ‘Resetting CIRDAP in the New Global Context’. In the paper, he described CIRDAP as a regional forum for integrated rural development, explained the emerging policy issues and concerns, stated the scope of regional organisations, highlighted new mandates, and identified the gaps in policies and practices in the field of rural development and poverty alleviation.

The emerging policy level issues and concerns, he explained, are:

- Non-income dimensions of poverty such as access to education, preventive health care, etc.
- Mismatch between qualitative and quantitative dimensions in implementation of schemes.
- Market and non-market considerations – resource distribution in favour of the poor and empowering them and democratisation of markets.
- Participation and empowerment with a standard menu like economic growth, human development and social safety nets.

Dr. Paudyal also showed some gaps in policies and practices that need to be tackled:

- Access of the poor to knowledge and their organised capacity to deal with markets.
- Control of productive assets by the poor and re-designing budgetary and other public policies to reach resources to the poor.
- Development of appropriate technology for the enhancement of productive capability of the poor.

He mentioned that CIRDAP works in its 14 member countries through institutional network with the support of the Centre's three policy bodies: Governing Council, Executive Committee and Technical Committee. During the recent meetings held in this year, the policymakers have entrusted CIRDAP with new mandates, he said. The new mandates, the DG highlighted in his presentation, are given in the box.

#### **New Mandates**

The EC 26 and GC 16 meeting of CIRDAP, held in Manila from 28 May to 1 June 2007, has decided to hold a Ministerial-level meeting of rural development in 2009.

It has authorised CIRDAP to arrange country-level studies for reviewing the past policies and programmes on rural development and identify policy level issues and concerns.

In order to evaluate CIRDAP from its strategic and institutional perspectives, the GC has constituted an evaluation team consisting of CMCs (Iran, India and Malaysia), experts (FAO, IFAD and Japan) and CIRDAP staff.

The Evaluation Team will start work after the identification of policy issues and concerns in CMCs.

It was decided that the Government of Bangladesh will host the Ministerial Meeting in 2009, in Dhaka some time in October–December 2009.

The Government of Japan will provide financial support for organising the Ministerial Meeting.

The invitation will be extended to all countries listed in Annex 1 of the CIRDAP Agreement such as China, Japan, RoK, Australia, New Zealand etc. UN agencies, major donor agencies and countries will also be invited.

He stated that, in the changing global and regional context, some key roles of CIRDAP can be identified as follows: (i) to continue its role as a servicing institution for CMCs in the area of rural development and poverty alleviation; (ii) to take up follow-up actions of ICARRD, especially in the areas of agrarian reforms, food security, environmental degradation, climate change and impact on farming communities; (iii) to analyse the impact of trade-related issues on rural communities and help countries devise strategies to cope with adverse impacts of trade; (iv) to play a bridging role between regional associations such as SAARC, ASEAN and ECO; (v) to include Japan, China, Republic of Korea and Australia, and other Pacific countries, who attended the 1978 Meeting on CIRDAP, as members; and (vi) to work with national and regional NGOs, making them work for the benefit of countries and play an advocacy role.

### **Discussion on the Keynote Paper**

The floor then opened for general discussion. The chair invited the participants to deliver their comments on the keynote paper. The participants who took part in the discussion were: Dr. S.I. Khan, Executive Director, Gram Bangla; Dr. Q.K. Ahmad, President of Bangladesh Economic Association; Mr. Mahe Alam, Former Secretary, Government of Bangladesh; Mr. M. Matiur Rahman, Ex-Secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division (RDCD); Mr. Diraj Kumar Nath, Ex-Secretary RDCD; Dr. Momtaz Uddin Ahmed, Ex-Research Director, CIRDAP; Azizur Rahman, Ex-Adviser, CIRDAP; Mr. Md. Qamrul Islam, DG-Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development; Dr. Golam Mostafa Talukder, Secretary, Ministry of Youth, Government of Bangladesh; Mr. Tawfique Arif, NPO, WHO, Bangladesh; Mr. Uttam Dev from Centre for Policy Dialogue; Mr. Mosharaff Hossain Bhuiyan, Registrar Co-operatives; Mr. A.T.M. Mohiuddin, Project Director, CELP/Joint Secretary; and Dr. A.K.M. Saiful Rashid from Community Development Participatory Organisation.

**S.I. Khan** suggested that there should be a shift in the focus of rural development to poverty alleviation and peoples' participation, especially community participation. He also mentioned that the agricultural yield in Bangladesh is very low, but he was able to increase agricultural productivity in his 'Gram Bangla' project in Tangail district with help from Japan.

He further mentioned the potential for increased fish production, especially integrated fishery and paddy cultivation, increased production of livestock, small industries development, and the need to disperse garments industries to rural areas. He also stressed the environmental problems which are likely to ensue due to

diversion of water and construction of dams in 38 rivers and the melting of glaciers in the Himalayas. In this context, rural development institutions should be strengthened, and planning should stretch right up to the union level, while there should be increased emphasis on renewable energy. Moreover, CIRDAP should act as a data bank and could initiate dialogue with beneficiaries, with the assistance of his organisation 'Gram Bangla.'

He also said, 'there are a lot of rural infrastructural projects in Bangladesh. But there is no coordination', and urged CIRDAP to coordinate these projects with development partners.

**Q.K. Ahmad** firstly commented on the topic of the round-table discussion, which he said should be 'Repositioning CIRDAP', rather than 'Resetting CIRDAP'. This repositioning is for addressing new issues and challenges in the era of globalisation. He mentioned that the CIRDAP member countries are at different levels of development, and one has to bring about unity in this diversity.

He mentioned that one of the major issues that need to be addressed is human resource development, especially employment. He also mentioned that South Asian countries in particular have failed to achieve MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty. For instance, in Bangladesh, one-third of the people are below the poverty line of one PPP\$. Therefore, development must be focussed on the bottom 30%. We thus have to bring about synergies in terms of economic growth, environmental protection and social development, for achieving sustainable development.

In this context, he also mentioned climate change and melting of glaciers at an alarming rate, which will exacerbate drought and salinity, and we may be faced with no water in the lean season. He also mentioned that urbanisation is competing for land and declining agricultural productivity is projected for South Asia. In terms of social development, he suggested that institutional structures must be inclusive, particularly for local government.

**Mahe Alam** stated that the most important thing is rural development. Many factors are involved in rural development, one of which is infrastructure development. Similarly important is the need for training, strengthening research and strengthening of rural institutions.

**Matiur Rahman** commented that CIRDAP could not make a breakthrough and give us a model for rural development. One country can learn from another. For instance, Bangladesh is a leader in micro credit and disaster management, while Thailand,

Philippines and India in collecting rain water. Similarly, India has instituted the Right to Information Act. CIRDAP can take leadership in disseminating these best practices.

He informed the participants that a survey was made on the rural people where it was seen that 50 per cent is living below the poverty line. Rural people are only getting Tk.178 per capita from the government institutions. So, CIRDAP can convince the government to improve the situation, he suggested.

**Diraj Kumar Nath** commented that as an intergovernmental organisation, CIRDAP is faced with a problem. Donors are no longer interested in intergovernmental organisations. Despite this, CIRDAP should continue to promote linkages with other regional organisations like SAARC, AARDO and ICIMOD.

He put emphasis on the networking role of CIRDAP. 'It should have linkage with most of the Link Institutions working separately in the member countries. All the Link Institutions should be coordinated by CIRDAP'.

He also mentioned some administrative issues. For instance, pilot projects division should focus on new issues and research should be need based. Training should be taken to the villagers, at the grassroots level. He further mentioned the need for better financial management and greater accountability at CIRDAP.

**Momtaz Uddin Ahmed** said that CIRDAP is currently fighting for its existence, and there is a lack of interest from donors. He also said that CIRDAP has its own Rural Development model and did make a breakthrough. Now it needs to make its existence felt. However, there is need for in-house support and better logistics. At the same time the CIRDAP agreement needs to be modified to ensure transparency. For the future, CIRDAP should focus on human development, the child labour issue and rural livelihoods.

**Azizur Rahman** mentioned that the Integrated Rural Development (IRD) concept has not been modified since Akhter Hamid Khan. 'But time has come, IRD should be redefined.' For this, a holistic approach is needed, he commented.

He opined that CIRDAP must move forward as the world is changing very fast.

**Md. Qamrul Islam** suggested that CIRDAP should involve policy-making bodies in the process of developing ideas and strategies which will strengthen rural development in the member countries.

He also offered to CIRDAP to take advantage of BARD. 'CIRDAP needs coordination in this. CIRDAP should expand its linkage from donors to government', he suggested. It should also concentrate on research, particularly on issues such as the environment, arsenic problem and health threats.

**Golam Mostafa Talukder** opined that CIRDAP has many success stories. 'Common thing in all programmes is to eradicate poverty.'

He wanted CIRDAP to look at issues concerning the youth as they are the most productive and dynamic group in society. In the case of Bangladesh, they make a very important contribution to the GNP in terms of the garments sector and remittances. CIRDAP should look for common programmes for the youth in all the member countries, and it can coordinate all the youth programmes, he suggested.

**Tawfique Arif** said CIRDAP is very slow in its pace of development. It is because CIRDAP is not getting proper financial support from the member countries.

He suggested that CIRDAP member countries should own this organisation, and CIRDAP should know their mission, vision and strategies. So that it can draw something from them.

He commented that rural development is the field CIRDAP can concentrate on. Water is another important issue, he suggested.

'While drawing water, we are drawing something which is undesirable-arsenic, surface water pollution. Water is being polluted from underground to surface. If this continues, we will go backward. 69 per cent of our population is under threat, and 22 per cent is being affected', he argued.

He also suggested CIRDAP to consider youths, adolescents, and in addition environmental issues. But before that need assessment is essential, he said.

**Uttam Dev** mentioned that one needs to define three things- the new global context, the IRD concept and CIRDAP's role. He asked 'what is the new global context? And replied that several new developments have come about in the global context: i) interdependent economies; ii) emergence of new technologies like GIS, information technology etc.; iii) global commitments by global leaders e.g. the Millenium Development Goals; iv) Renewable energy; vi) Development models of NGOs and development partners; and vii) increased economic growth but rising inequality.

He suggested some roles for CIRDP in this new context:

- It should be a bridge of communities; will disseminate knowledge, and work on networking
- It should act as a broker between government and rural organisations
- It should be a catalyst for change
- It should prioritise livelihoods and reduction in inequality.

**Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan** commented that he has not found any direct linkage between co-operatives and CIRDP, and co-operatives should be included in the future activities of CIRDP. He also suggested that CIRDP should play a bridging role between co-operatives and marketing.

**A.T.M. Mohiuddin** congratulated CIRDP for laying the foundation stone of the new International Conference Centre on its premises, which, he hoped, will lead to more dialogues and programmes.

He suggested that CIRDP should concentrate on strengthening its data base, automation of the library, up-date its website and should initiate one action-research project in each country. He also felt that research should be needs based and suggested that the 'Monga' problem in North Bengal should be researched. He also mentioned that CIRDP should attract other countries to its fold and spread to the Pacific.

He further suggested for CIRDP to focus on higher educational institutions, the rural-urban continuum, and new industrial relations.

**A.K.M. Saiful Rashid** suggested that CIRDP should play a role in decentralisation, biodiversity and environmental issues for its member countries.

**Professor Kaida** commented on the keynote paper and said that the points at the end should be developed into full proposals. He also suggested that 2-3 pilot projects should be taken up each year as role models e.g. on local governance and local level planning. CIRDP should also aim at reducing rural-urban migration by improving local facilities through development of growth centres and physical planning. Other issues of interest are rural housing, health issues and co-operatives.

**Director General, CIRDP** made an overall comment on the remarks of the participants on the proposed role of the Centre in the new global context. He said there are a number of questions raised. But all these are related to the basic

questions: 'Should we be an issue based institution or networking institution? Should we go with the donors for their money and agenda, or should we go to the member countries to fulfil their mandates?'

In my opinion, he continued, we should go to the member countries, and one of our mandates should be to strengthen government institutions.

'We can do some action research programmes, but at the end of the programme who will take over?' Thus government has to play a key role. He raised these questions and answered that in 2009, at the Ministerial Meeting on Rural Development, all these issues will come up.

### **Wrapping-up the Discussion**

As Special Guest, Nazrul Islam, Secretary, RDCD, wrapped up the discussion. He congratulated all those who participated in the discussion and thanked CIRDAP for organising the Round-table.

He said that the distinguished participants at the Round-table have drawn a correct picture of the prevailing situation in the CMCs in the changed global context. Based on this, the CIRDAP network needs to work very closely and effectively to change the fate of the one quarter of the world's poor living in rural areas in the CMCs.

The Special Guest urged CIRDAP and its dynamic leadership to take note of the valuable contributions and suggestions so that a new charter can be drawn, which will enable CIRDAP to perform effectively as a unique regional networking organisation, with emphasis on creation and dissemination of knowledge on issues of rural development.

'CIRDAP is playing a good role. As a host country, Bangladesh appreciates CIRDAP', he said, adding that regional cooperation is to be promoted. 'Trade, financial relations, and globalisation can proceed simultaneously. So, we should think of resetting and reinventing CIRDAP.'

He suggested for CIRDAP to play a key role in bringing to focus all rural development issues. At the same time he warned that no single strategy can alleviate poverty in all countries.

Referring to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), he said that some progress has been made.

The Special Guest also thanked DG CIRDAP for the initiative to reset CIRDAP, and urged the member countries to address the financial constraints of the Centre.

### **Vote of Thanks**

Vote of Thanks was delivered by Dr. Nasreen Khundker, Director Research, CIRDAP. She, on behalf of CIRDAP, expressed her sincere gratitude to Chief Guest Anwarul Iqbal and Special Guest Nazrul Islam for their presence at the Round-table Discussion despite their heavy commitments.

Dr. Nasreen thanked Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Missions, representatives from different national and international organisations, and development partners for their continued support to CIRDAP. She was also thankful to the electronic and print media for their presence and covering this important event.

She similarly thanked the distinguished participants for their valuable comments and suggestions. 'These have sharpened our understanding of the issues, particularly on the future role of CIRDAP', she said.

### **Outcome of the Round-table Discussion**

The participants actively took part in the Round-table Discussion and delivered their suggestions and recommendations to help CIRDAP reset its position in the new global context. Their suggestions and recommendations are given below:

- ◆ CIRDAP should concentrate on decentralisation in the CMCs. For decentralisation, local level planning is necessary.
- ◆ It is recommended that CIRDAP convince member country governments to strengthen local government. CIRDAP is also requested to accelerate rural development activities at the union level.
- ◆ CIRDAP should focus on human resource development. For this, institutional help, training, and productive employment are mandatory. Human resources have to be productive.
- ◆ CIRDAP has been recommended to look for common programmes for the youth in all the member countries. CIRDAP can coordinate all these youth programmes.
- ◆ CIRDAP should address the issue of adolescents and child labour.

- ◆ It is also suggested that CIRDP should focus on institutions of higher education, the rural-urban continuum, and new industrial relations.
- ◆ CIRDP should shift its focus to increasing productivity in agriculture, fish production, integrated fishery and paddy cultivation, land distribution, community development, water, environment, and renewable energy issues.
- ◆ CIRDP has been urged to coordinate rural development projects with development partners, especially for infrastructural projects.
- ◆ CIRDP should work for sustainable development which includes not only economic growth, but social development and protection of the environment. Institutional structures must be inclusive, particularly at the local level.
- ◆ IRD should be redefined. For this, a holistic approach is needed.
- ◆ CIRDP should focus on co-operatives and play a bridging role between co-operatives and marketing.
- ◆ CIRDP is urged for developing a role model for rural development. Analysing the vision, mission, strategy and success story in each member country, CIRDP can develop this.
- ◆ It is suggested that the challenge for CIRDP is to address the diversity amongst member countries and find the unity in this diversity. It should also produce some benchmark data for the member countries for sustainable development.
- ◆ CIRDP is suggested to involve policy-making bodies in the process of formulating ideas and strategies which will strengthen rural development in the member countries.
- ◆ CIRDP member countries are suggested to own CIRDP and address its financial constraints.
- ◆ Research activities of CIRDP should be based on needs assessment of its member countries
- ◆ CIRDP is strongly recommended to be linked with other regional organisations- SAARC, AARDO, ICIMOD.
- ◆ Emphasis is put on the networking role of CIRDP. Most of the Link Institutions working separately in the member countries should be coordinated by CIRDP. In Bangladesh, CIRDP should take advantage of BARD.

- ◆ Some roles for CIRDAP have been suggested in the new global context:
  - It should play a bridging role between communities; will disseminate knowledge, and work on networking
  - It should be a catalyst for change
  - It should prioritise livelihood and reduction in inequality.
- ◆ CIRDAP should strengthen its data base, update its website, and go for automation of its library. It should also undertake one action research project in each country. It should expand its membership.
- ◆ CIRDAP should undertake 2-3 pilot projects each year as role models e.g. on local governance and local level planning. Rural facilities should be increased to reduce rural-urban migration.
- ◆ CIRDAP is suggested to be an excellent performer in its core areas.
- ◆ CIRDAP management is urged to be dynamic and give proper logistic support to the professionals. If necessary, Operations Manual and the CIRDAP Agreement can be revised.

## **Annexes**

**Twenty-eighth Founding Anniversary of CIRDAP:  
Setting the Tone of Discussion at the Round-table on Resetting  
CIRDAP in the new global context by the Chief Guest, H.E. Mohammed  
Anwarul Iqbal, Adviser, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development  
and Co-operatives, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

*Distinguished Guests,  
Director General of CIRDAP  
Ladies and Gentlemen*

Let me extend my heartfelt thanks to the Director General, CIRDAP for inviting me to this important function on the occasion of the 28<sup>th</sup> Founding Anniversary of CIRDAP. On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh and on my behalf, let me welcome you all to this special Round-table.

Bangladesh being the host country of CIRDAP, the Headquarters of which is located in Dhaka, the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives, CIRDAP's Contact Ministry, maintains very close relationship with CIRDAP and tries to accord the necessary support and facilities as far as practicable. Today, I feel proud for this opportunity of laying the foundation stone of the New International Conference Center of CIRDAP and also to initiate this Round-table discussion on Resetting CIRDAP in the new Global context.

You all know that CIRDAP was established in 1979 under the aegis of FAO to assist national action, promote regional cooperation and act as a servicing institution in the area of rural development in the Asia-Pacific region. Since its establishment, the Centre has been playing a very encouraging role as a prime regional institution with a huge network in the field of rural development. We can confidently say that it has promoted significant regional cooperation in this regard. However, both the international and national context in CMCs have changed. We are in the era of globalisation and increased integration of national economies, though many regions are still remote and delinked. The development paradigm has also changed towards greater openness and free markets.

I have had the opportunity to discuss with the present Director General on many occasions regarding the role to be played by CIRDAP under this changed global context. During our interactions, we felt that CIRDAP's role needs to be redefined in

light of developments in the national context of CMCs and in the international arena. The issue was also discussed elaborately at the just concluded Executive Committee and Governing Council Meetings held in Manila last month. The policy bodies decided to organise a ministerial meeting in 2009 to come up with specific recommendations/suggestions in order to reset the Centre to cope with the present context. So, it is necessary to initiate some preliminary discussion on the matter and this Round-table is a first step in that direction

The DG, CIRDAP in his keynote paper has already highlighted the main issues for discussion at the Round-table. Your considered views and suggestions will help sharpen our focus. Three main issues are to be discussed at the Round-table: a) the new and extended role of CIRDAP as a regional organisation; b) the significant changes, both in the country context of CMCs and the international context, which need to be taken into account, in resetting CIRDAP; and c) the necessity to expand membership to include countries which were in the original list, but did not join at the time of CIRDAP's establishment. Your thoughts and deliberations on all those issues will be part of the new vision for CIRDAP, enabling it to function more effectively in the years to come.

With these few words, I would like to declare the discussion open.

Congratulations to CIRDAP.

Thank you.

## **Wrapping-up and Closing Remarks**

**by the**

**Special Guest, Mr. Nazrul Islam, Secretary, Rural Development Division,  
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives,  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

At the outset, I wish to convey my best wishes to the distinguished guests and participants of the Round-table discussion on Resetting CIRDAP in the New Global Context on the occasion of its 28<sup>th</sup> Founding Anniversary. I am happy that CIRDAP has organised such an important and timely event. As we know, CIRDAP was established in 1979 for providing specific types of services for the cause of rural development in its member countries. I can say with confidence that CIRDAP has been playing this role very effectively and efficiently. As the host country of CIRDAP, Bangladesh has always appreciated this role.

The DG, CIRDAP in his paper and the distinguished participants at the Round-table have drawn a correct picture of the prevailing situation in the CMCs in the changed global context. Based on this, we need to work very closely and effectively to change the fate of the one quarter of the world's poor living in rural areas in the CMCs. I urge CIRDAP and its dynamic leadership to take note of the valuable contributions and suggestions of those present at this Round-table, so that a new charter can be drawn for CIRDAP. This charter will be rooted in the present vision of CIRDAP but will incorporate elements of a new vision, which will enable it to perform effectively as a unique regional networking organisation, with emphasis on creation and dissemination of knowledge on issues of rural development

With these few words, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to CIRDAP for inviting me to this occasion. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Excellencies and distinguished guests for gracing this occasion with their kind presence.

I, moreover, thank Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Director General, CIRDAP for initiating this attempt to give CIRDAP a new life bringing various important issues to the forefront and continuing to maintain close contact with the CMCs.

Thank you.

**Full Text of the Keynote Paper:  
Resetting CIRDAP in the New Global Context  
by Dr. Durga P. Paudyal, Director General, CIRDAP**

**1. CIRDAP as a Regional Forum for IRD**

The outcome of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) 1979, named as 'the Peasants' Charter', adopted a broad-based strategy for national progress based on growth with equity and participation. It emphasised the redistribution of economic and political power, fuller integration of rural areas into national development efforts, expanded opportunities of employment and income for rural people and development of farmers' associations, cooperatives and other forms of voluntary autonomous democratic organisations of primary producers and rural workers. In order to implement the broad principle, it laid down several plan of action in the areas of access to land, water and other natural resources; people's participation; integration of women in rural development; access to inputs, markets and services; development of non-farm rural activities; education, training and extension and a number of international policies for agrarian reform and rural development. As a part of the strategy for implementation of WCARRD, the role of the regional level inter-government organisation was envisioned and, accordingly, CIRDAP was established under the aegis of FAO in 1979 as a regional, inter-governmental and autonomous institution, with the objectives to:

- assist national action and promote regional cooperation relating to integrated rural development (IRD) in the region;
- act as a servicing institution for CIRDAP Member Countries;
- encourage joint collaborative activities for its member countries; and
- promote poverty alleviation measures in cirdap member countries through people's participation in the development process.

Prior to the establishment of the Centre, a Conference of Plenipotentiaries was held in Kuala Lumpur in 1978, where several countries of the Asia-Pacific region participated as signatories and observers. Not all countries joined CIRDAP. List of

signatories of the 1978 Conference and the countries referred to in the Annex-1 of the Agreement is enclosed (page 27).

At present CIRDAP has 14 member countries namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Centre works through a network of contact ministries and link institutions in its member countries. CIRDAP policy formulation and project implementation activities are supported by three policy bodies: Governing Council, Executive Committee and Technical Committee. The Governing Council is represented by Ministers responsible for Rural/Agriculture Development, and the Executive Committee is represented by secretaries/permanent secretaries/secretary generals of the Ministries of Rural/Agriculture Development in CIRDAP Member Countries (CMCs). The Technical Committee is represented by the Heads of Link Institutions of CIRDAP member countries. In the Headquarters, CIRDAP activities are conducted through Research, Training, Pilot Projects and Information and Communication Divisions.

As the second milestone of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), 1979, the International Conference of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) was jointly organised by FAO and the Government of Brazil with the slogan "***A Vision for the Future***" from 7-10 March, 2006 in Porto Alger, Brazil. The Conference appreciated the role of regional organisations that were originally established to support follow-up to WCARRD (e.g. CIRDAP, CIRD-Africa and others) and that lessons be drawn to contribute to realistic and appropriate follow-up for ICARRD. Members recommended that technical support should be provided to strengthen these regional organisations, to enable them to generate comprehensive knowledge at both national and regional levels, to facilitate inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral coordination on rural issues at the national level, and to support policy dialogue, cooperation, exchange of good practices, and monitoring at the regional level.

## **2. Emerging Policy Level Issues and Concerns**

There has been a radical shift in the thinking of RD policy makers and international institutions on the concerns of development of rural areas and rural people in recent times. Some of these are:

- Non-income dimensions of poverty such as access to education, preventive health care, etc.

- Mismatch between qualitative and quantitative dimensions in implementation of schemes.
- Market and non-market considerations—resource distribution in favour of the poor and empowering them and democratisation of markets.
- Participation and empowerment with a standard menu like economic growth, human development and social safety nets.

After the globalisation some new concepts have emerged and there is further re-thinking in all the countries—rich, poor and those equipped to face challenges. These are indicating measures for institutional, political, social and economic reforms. This led to two policy instruments.

- Recognise the poor as active agents of development from a macro perspective and remove barriers for their participation in the development process and social progress.
- Use macro policy instruments to support the developmental needs of the poor—traditionally aimed at influencing the formal sectors, while the poor are locked up in informal sectors characterised by poor infrastructure, technology and skilled levels, disintegrated markets, etc. Conventional macro instruments—fiscal, financial, monetary and external sector policies (trade, security, etc) can be used pro-actively to service their needs.

One can however see many gaps in policies and practices with reference to the above discussion such as:

- Enhancing the entry of poor into knowledge based society (access to information technology, etc).
- Enhancing the capacity of the poor to compete in the markets: regionally and globally.
- Restructuring monetary policies to provide credit, savings and insurance products.
- Institutional building to cater to emerging and future needs.
- Control by the poor of productive assets and re-designing budgetary and other public policies to reach resources to the poor.
- Promoting social entrepreneurship among rural communities and infrastructure utilisation on a mass scale.

- Development of appropriate technology for the enhancement of productive capability of the poor.

### **3. Scope of Regional Organisations like CIRDAP**

Over the past few decades, there has been a spurt in the activities of regional organisations or associations like SAARC, ASEAN, ECO, NAFTA or EU. Some of these are either free trade areas or have preferential trading arrangements. The aim is to realise the benefits of greater openness and free trade. Trade is thus seen to be the driving force of development, though other areas of common interest are some times identified. However, SAARC is primarily concerned with poverty alleviation as it has the largest proportion of poor.

Regional organisations like CIRDAP, ICIMOD and APO etc. are unique in the sense that the primary purpose is exchange of ideas and information between countries for the purpose of sustainable development, particularly the development of backward sectors, areas or communities. As such CIRDAP fills an important niche and it has to integrate itself with their specialised activities. Indeed, this means rural development institutions within countries have to be activated so that rural development gets its right and proper agenda.

CIRDAP, as a regional organisation and through its program activities has covered certain areas and worked with certain organisations. Since globalisation have both positive and negative impacts on the poor (and the poor and middle income countries), CIRDAP has tried to expand its networks in the recent past to reach out exhaustively. As a regional organisation living in a new globalisation process, it has developed its own vision first to link with regional forums like SARRC and ASEAN and is looking forward to include new frontiers and concerns. Specific international/UN bodies, which were created to address specific concerns like child labor (ILO), micro level industrialisation and technologies (UNIDO), child and family welfare (UNICEF), rural energy (UNEP), primary education (UNECISO), etc are some of the areas/organisations that need to be tapped, as the benefits are mutual.

### **4. New Mandates**

The EC 26 and GC 16 meeting of CIRDAP, held in Manila from 28 May to 1 June 2007, reviewed the new context of rural development at the national and international level. It was discussed that with the paradigm shift to globalisation and market economics and recognition of the role of civil society organisations in rural

development and poverty alleviation, new areas and approaches need to be identified for promoting regional cooperation through a regional level inter-governmental organisation like CIRDAP. Similarly, with the emergence of major economies such as China, ROK, India and others in the region, new avenues for resource mobilisation need to be identified and agreed upon to make a meaningful impact on rural development and poverty alleviation. Hence, the EC/GC decided to hold a Ministerial level meeting of rural development in 2009. In order to discuss in the Ministerial Meeting, CIRDAP has been authorised to arrange country level studies for reviewing the past policies and programs and identify policy level issues and concerns, such as:

- Despite remarkable achievements with regard to agriculture, rural development and poverty alleviation over the past few decades in the countries of the Asia-Pacific Region, it still holds nearly three quarters of the world's poor.
- There is a widening gap of poverty and prosperity across geographic regions, ethnic communities and gender groups.
- The twelfth SAARC Summit decided to declare the decade of 2006-2015 as the SAARC Decade of Poverty Alleviation. They also endorsed the SAARC Development Goals (SDGs) and called for the implementation of the Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation, to address these issues.
- There are also several new players in the area of rural development and poverty alleviation such as NGOs, civil societies and the private sector and their role is increasingly recognised.

#### **4.1 Redefining the Role of CIRDAP**

CIRDAP was established in 1979 in the contemporary national and international policy context. At the national level, government was the main agency for rural development policy formulation and implementation, while at the international level; FAO had taken the leading role for providing technical support. There has been a sea-change in both contexts. Hence there is a need to evaluate CIRDAP from its strategic and institutional perspectives, such as:

- Redefining the role of CIRDAP in the new context of globalisation.
- Institutional linkage of CIRDAP with FAO and other UN bodies and international organisations.
- Institutional networking between CIRDAP and CMCs at an operational level.

- Institutional linkage with other inter-governmental organisations such as ECO, SAARC, BMSTEC, ASEAN, ICIMOD, GMR (Greater Mekong Region) etc.
- Resource generation to make a significant impact in the new challenges
- Expansion of membership to other countries (as Annexed in the CIRDAP Agreement) and other regions (e.g. Middle East, Central Asia etc.).

The EC 26, GC 16 has already constituted an evaluation team consisting of CMCs (Iran, India and Malaysia), experts (FAO, IFAD and Japan) and CIRDAP staff. The Evaluation Team will start work after the identification of policy issues and concerns in CMCs.

#### **4.2 Organising the Ministerial Meeting in 2009**

It was decided that the Government of Bangladesh will host the Ministerial Meeting in 2009, in Dhaka, Bangladesh sometimes in October–December 2009. The Government of Japan will provide financial support for organising the Ministerial Meeting. The invitation will be extended to all countries listed in Annex 1 of the CIRDAP Agreement. UN agencies, major donor agencies and countries will also be invited. The meeting will be held for 3 days: the first two days as the High Official Segment, for discussing policy papers and finalising the Declaration, and the final day as the Ministerial Segment for final declaration and pledges for support.

#### **4.3 Construction of International Conference Centre at CIRDAP HQs**

In order to meet the infrastructural requirement for the forward-looking strategy of CIRDAP, the Government of Bangladesh has committed to provide financial support, to the tune of US\$ 2.3 million, for the construction of an International Conference Centre (ICC), with all modern facilities. The ICC is expected to be the venue of the Ministerial Meeting in 2009. The proposal of GOB for the construction of ICC was highly appreciated in EC 26 and GC 16 and other CMCs also showed their interest to take part in the internal designing, mechanising and furnishing, as per request of CIRDAP.

In fact, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has generously provided Chameli House Complex with over 3.5 acres of land to CIRDAP for the permanent location of its Headquarters. In 1990, the GOB also constructed an Annex building with additional office space and auditorium facility. Similarly, the GOB has provided

financial support of over US\$ 140 thousands in 2006 to renovate the old Chameli House building, which was underutilised for the last 10 years.

## **5. Resetting of CIRDAP**

In the new context of globalisation, knowledge and know-how are the potential sources of economic growth and development, along with the application of new technologies. The know-how includes global knowledge network in transforming the demands and the ways one thinks and works. It calls for integration, in a different connotation, of the content, context, and infrastructure in order to harness the potentials of the countries and to instil important values for success as well as to find a viable mechanism to raise capacity and the productivity of people to cope with and better address the diverse demands and needs of the countries. It requires the capabilities to access markets from local to global and changing the technological environment, besides adding value to information, product and services offered by the organisation, while opening wide access of information to a very large audience throughout the world. In order to make the globalisation process useful to the poor farmers, artisans, women etc CIRDAP has a vital role to play, in the years to come.

However, some of the recent international reports show disturbing findings. Several reports show that the market-led-globalisation framework has failed to generate sustainable results at several fronts such as food security, employment generation, human development and sustainable natural resource management. In this context, the role of CIRDAP can be redefined to focus more on mitigating the adverse effects of globalisation and help those who are left behind by the market forces by enhancing their organised capability for taking advantages. Keeping this point in mind, some of key role of CIRDAP can be identified as follows:

- Continue its role as a servicing institution for member countries responding to their needs in terms of various dimensions of development of rural areas for training and research and highlighting the current problems faced by countries;
- Sharpen its focus on decentralisation, local level planning, strengthening local governments and local resources mobilisation;

- Follow-up actions of ICAARD, especially in the areas of agrarian reforms, food security, environmental degradation, climate change and impact on farming communities in the Asia-Pacific region, etc.;
- Focus on the impact of trade on rural communities and highlight both negative and positive effects; helping countries devise strategies to cope with adverse impacts or make agriculture and the non-farm sector more internationally competitive;
- Help rural communities to link up with export markets within the region, particularly for traditional crafts or mass consumer products. Thus the realisation is that the benefits of trade are not only through reduction of tariffs and increased volume, but through increased value addition;
- Other positive and negative effects of globalisation can similarly be emphasised; problems of environmental degradation; issues related to women, etc. The approach should be not only to disseminate best practices, but focus on problems of national or regional dimensions, and for their solutions;
- Play a bridging role between associations such as SAARC and ASEAN, bringing the success stories and economic policies of ASEAN to the attention of policy makers in SAARC and vice versa;
- With the inclusion of Japan, China, ROK and Australia, and other Pacific countries, act as a buffer against the hegemony of some powerful countries in the North or the South itself, and in this sense can serve the same role as the non-aligned movement for South-South Cooperation. It can similarly act as a countervailing force against interests of powerful multi-nationals which may negatively affect rural communities; promote regional FDI on better terms, etc.;
- Link up with smaller organisations or knowledge-based institutions in different countries which can help them enhance agricultural and non-farm productivity, setting up of new ventures, etc. In this case, CIRDAP's role will be to mediate and facilitate linkage with policy makers; and
- Work with national and regional NGOs, making them work for the benefit of countries and play an advocacy role.

## **6. Conclusion**

In the end, given the present resurgence of CIRDAP, its established linkages with its partners and a renewed commitment of its member countries, CIRDAP has to be repositioned to take more challenges and thus there is a need to reset itself.

**Signatories of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in 1978 were:**

- |                            |   |                             |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. FOR BANGLADESH          | - | Korshed ALAM                |
| 2. FOR INDIA               | - | G.V.K. RAO                  |
| 3. FOR INDONESIA           | - | Salmon PADMANAGARA          |
| 4. FOR KOREA (Republic of) | - | SANGJIN CHYUN               |
| 5. FOR LAO                 | - | K. SAYAKONE                 |
| 6. FOR MALAYSIA            | - | DATO' ISHAK BIN PATEH AKHIR |
| 7. FOR NEPAL               | - | B.B. KHADKA                 |
| 8. FOR PAKISTAN            | - | KHAWAJA MUHAMMAD SAFDAR     |
| 9. FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA    | - | -----                       |
| 10. FOR PHILIPPINES        | - | Jose P. LEVISTE Jr.         |
| 11. FOR SRI LANKA          | - | -----                       |
| 12. FOR THAILAND           | - | K. DEVAHASTIN               |
| 13. FOR VIETNAM            | - | LE DUY TRINH                |

**List of States referred to in Annex 1 were:**

Australia	Indonesia	Pakistan
Bangladesh	Japan	Papua New Guinea
Bhutan	Korea, Republic of	Philippines
Burma	Lao	Samoa
China	Malaysia	Singapore
Democratic Kampuchea	Maldives	Sri Lanka
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Mongolia	Thailand
Fiji	Nauru	Tonga
India	Nepal	Vietnam
	New Zealand	



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