

# **Status of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in CIRDAP Member Countries**

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

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the paper is to give a brief overview of the status of agrarian reform and rural development of CIRDAP member countries. The paper is based on the Rural Development Report (RDR) 2007, which has been prepared focusing on the theme of agrarian reform and rural development. Thus, RDR 2007 marks an important break from the long CIRDAP tradition of preparing rather broad-based reports every two year providing updates on the state of overall rural development scenarios in the CMCs. Because of encompassing wide ranging issues such reports generally lack a clear focus on important contemporary issues, namely, agrarian reform, development of rural non-farm activities, rural employment generation and rural governance and decentralization which are closely interlinked and currently being widely discussed in the national and international forum as critically important determinants of sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation.

As a partner organization of FAO, it is also befitting for CIRDAP to join FAO efforts towards implementation of the ICARRD outcomes through emphasizing and echoing the much desired consensus reached in Porto Alegre, Brazil in March 7-10, 2006 towards eradicating poverty and hunger and promoting broad-based and socially inclusive rural development, based on effective implementation of “new wave” agrarian reforms in the developing countries. Thus, the major objective of the report has been to highlight importance of agrarian reforms, diversification of rural economy through promotion of rural non-farm activities, rural employment generation and rural governance and decentralization as pertinent issues for achieving sustained rural development and poverty alleviation in the CMCs.

The paper is divided into 6 sections. Section 1 is an Introduction. Section 2 gives a brief overview of major macro economic trends in the CMCs. Section 3 looks at the state of agricultural and rural development. Section 4 describes the Agrarian Reform Outcomes in the CMCs, while section 5 gives a synoptic picture of the institutional mechanism for implementation of agrarian reforms in the CMCs. Section 6 is a summary and conclusion.

## 2. Major Macroeconomic Trends in the CMCs

The fourteen member countries of CIRDAP spreading over wide geographical locations and distancing between Far East and Southeast Asia constitute a heterogeneous group exhibiting significant variations in their topographic and demographic characteristics and levels of socio-economic development. The CMCs together account for 23 per cent of the world's land area, 32 per cent of the world population and 40 per cent of the total population of the developing countries.

**Table 1: Recent Economic Performance: Annual GDP Growth Rate at Constant Prices**  
(per cent per annum)

Country	Per capita GNI (US\$) 2005	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Low-income</b>												
Afghanistan	190	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	6.0	13.8
Bangladesh	470	4.9	4.6	5.4	5.2	4.9	5.9	5.3	4.4	5.3	6.3	5.4
India	720	7.3	7.8	4.8	6.5	6.1	4.4	5.6	4.3	6.8	8.5	8.5
Lao PDR	440	7.1	6.9	6.9	3.0	6.1	8.3	5.8	5.8	6.1	6.4	7.0
Myanmar	220	...	6.4	5.7	5.8	6.1	4.7	...	...	...	3.0	5.0
Nepal	270	5.7	5.0	3.3	4.5	4.2	3.9	-0.5	3.5	5.0	3.4	2.3
Pakistan	690	5.1	6.6	1.7	3.5	3.3	4.5	2.2	3.0	5.0	6.0	7.8
Vietnam	620	9.5	9.3	8.2	5.8	4.8	6.8	6.9	6.2	6.8	7.7	8.4
<b>Middle-income</b>												
Indonesia	1,280	8.1	7.7	4.5	-13.1	1.7	5.1	3.4	3.7	4.1	5.1	5.6
Iran	2,770	3.7	6.6	3.4	3.6	8.3	5.8	5.4	6.7	6.2	5.6	5.9
Philippines	1,300	4.7	5.9	5.2	-0.6	4.3	6.0	3.2	...	...	6.1	5.1
Sri Lanka	1160	5.5	3.8	6.3	4.7	4.5	4.7	-1.5	4.0	5.5	6.0	5.1
Thailand	2750	9.2	5.9	-1.4	-10.5	4.5	4.7	1.9	5.3	6.4	6.2	4.5
<b>Upper-middle Income</b>												
Malaysia	4960	9.8	10.0	7.3	-7.4	10.9	6.2	0.5	4.1	4.6	7.1	5.3

Note: "...” means not available

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2004, 2006; Asian Productivity Organization (APO), Asia-Pacific Productivity Data and Analysis, 2003; Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Development Outlook, 2002

The CMCs have in general recorded notable strides over the last two decades in terms of GDP growth and rise in per capita incomes (See Table 1). Although GDP per capita has increased in all countries, there is variation in the Southeast Asian and South Asian countries. Within Southeast Asian Countries Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines rank high. Indonesia is in the moderate category. But Lao PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar are in the low category. In South Asia, Sri Lanka tops the list while Nepal is the lowest.

Despite the achievements in terms of economic growth, the CMCs are yet to go a long way towards eradicating poverty, achieving MDGs and fulfilling aspirations of the common people in improving their living standards and quality of life. The most discomfoting fact is that the Asia Pacific region accommodating the CMCs is still home for over 40 per cent of

the world's poor, 75 per cent of whom live and work in the rural areas. The CMCs are seen to exhibit average poverty ratios between a quarter and over half of the total population except Thailand and Malaysia.

**Table 2: Trends in Poverty and Income Inequality in the CMCs**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Headcount Index</i>		<i>International Poverty Line</i>			<i>Share of income or consumption, 1997-2002</i>		
	<i>Year</i>	<i>First Year</i>	<i>Last Year</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Population below \$1 a day (%)</i>	<i>Poorest 20%</i>	<i>Richest 20%</i>	<i>Gini</i>
Afghanistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Bangladesh	1974-2004	83.0	44.2	2000	36.0	9.0	41.3	0.318
India	1978-2000	51.0	28.6	2000	34.7	8.9	43.3	0.325
Indonesia	1970-1999	58.0	27.1	2002	7.5	8.4	43.3	0.343
Iran	2001-2003	11.0	11.0	1998	<2	5.1	49.9	0.410
Lao PDR	...-1997/98	...	38.6	2002	27.0	7.6	45.0	0.370
Malaysia	1973-1989	45.0	15.5	1997	<2	4.4	54.3	0.492
Myanmar	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nepal	1977-2004	40.0	30.9	2003-04	24.1	7.6	44.8	0.367
Pakistan	1979-1999	31.0	32.6	2002	17.0	8.8	42.3	0.330
Philippines	1971-1997	52.0	36.8	2000	15.5	5.4	52.3	0.461
Sri Lanka	1963-1996	37.0	25.0	2002	5.6	8.3	42.2	0.332
Thailand	1975-1992	30.0	13.1	2002	<2	6.1	50.0	0.432
Vietnam	1993-2002	50.9	28.9	1998	17.7	7.5	45.4	0.370

Source: ESCAP, Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 1998; UNDP, Human Development Report 2006.  
World Bank, World Development Report 2006.

Poverty trends based on the national headcount index and indicated by the data in Table 2 show significant decline in poverty in all the CMCs over different time periods. However, poverty still persists at an alarming level in most CMCs (except Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand where the proportions are relatively low) varying between a quarter to over 40 per cent. Again the percentage of population below the international poverty line (living on an income of less than one dollar a day) in most of the CMCs is also quite high, implying the need for concerted efforts towards progressive reduction of poverty. Income inequalities are also seen to be pronounced in the CMCs, as indicated by the gini coefficients, which ranges from 0.31 to 0.46.

While poverty exists in both rural and urban areas, it is more pronounced in the rural areas where the large majority of the CMC population reside and work (Table 3). The problem is further exacerbated by existing glaring income inequalities between rural and urban areas.

**Table 3: Distribution of Population Below Poverty Line by Rural and Urban Locations in the CIRDAP Member Countries**

(per cent)

<i>CMCs</i>	<i>Base Year</i>				<i>Latest Year</i>			
	<i>Survey year</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Survey year</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>National</i>
Afghanistan	...	...	...	...				
Bangladesh	1995-96	55.2	29.4	51.0	2000	53.0	36.6	49.8
India	1993-94	37.3	32.4	36.0	1999-2000	30.2	24.7	28.6
Indonesia	1996	...	...	15.7	1999	34.4	16.1	27.1
Iran	2001	11.0	11.0	11.0	2003	10.0	12.0	11.0
Lao PDR	1993	48.7	33.1	45.0	1997-98	41.0	26.9	38.6
Malaysia	1989			15.5				
Myanmar								
Nepal	1995-96	43.3	21.6	41.8	2003-04	34.6	9.6	30.9
Pakistan	1993	33.4	17.2	28.6	1998-99	35.9	24.2	32.6
Philippines	1994	67.0	46.1	53.5	1997	64.7	40.4	49.0
Sri Lanka	1990-91	22.0	15.0	20.0	1995-96	27.0	15.0	25.0
Thailand	1990			18.0	1992	15.5	10.2	13.1
Vietnam	1998	45.5	9.2	37.4	2002	35.6	6.6	28.9

Note: ... data not available.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators* 2006.

In terms of broad indicators of social development (Table 4) all CMCs are seen to have made notable progress of varying degrees. The average life expectancy at birth has consistently increased in all the countries. The average longevity has crossed 70 years in Malaysia and Sri Lanka. But for some of the countries like Afghanistan, the figure is still in 40s. Similarly, in the case of Human Development Index (HDI), Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia are in the medium category, while Lao PDR falls in the low category. In South Asian, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are in the medium category.

**Table 4: Key indicators of Social Development of the CMCs**

Country	Life expectancy at birth (years)						Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)			Adult literacy rate (% of people 15 and above)				Human Development Index (HDI)		
	Male			Female			1997	2002	2004	Male		Female		1997	2002	2004
	1997	2002	2004	1997	2002	2004				1997	2002-04	1997	2000-04			
Afghanistan	45 <sup>a</sup>	43	46.7	43 <sup>a</sup>	44	46.2	159 <sup>b</sup>	...	165	47	51	15	21	...	...	...
Bangladesh	57	62	64.2	59	63	62.5	77	51	56	49	50	26	31	0.371	0.509	0.530
India	62	63	65.3	63	64	62.1	65	67	62	66	68	38	45	0.451	0.590	0.612
Indonesia	63	65	69.2	67	69	65.3	49	33	30	90	93	78	83	0.679	0.595	0.711
Iran	...	...	72.3	...	...	69.2	...	35	32	55	85	50	80	...	0.732	0.746
Lao PDR	52	53	56.3	54	56	53.6	101	87	65	69	77	44	56	0.465	0.534	0.553
Malaysia	70	70	75.8	74	75	71.1	11	8	10	89	91	78	83	0.834	0.793	0.805
Myanmar	58	55	63.5	61	60	57.8	80	77	76	89	89	78	81	0.481	0.551	0.581
Nepal	57	60	62.4	57	60	61.6	85	66	59	41	62	14	26	0.351	0.504	0.527
Pakistan	62	63	63.6	65	65	63.2	88	83	80	50	57	24	28	0.453	0.497	0.539
Philippines	64	68	72.8	68	72	68.6	37	29	26	95	95	94	95	0.677	0.753	0.763
Sri Lanka	71	72	77.0	75	76	71.7	15	17	12	93	95	87	90	0.716	0.740	0.755
Thailand	67	67	74.0	72	72	66.7	34	24	18	96	97	92	94	0.838	0.768	0.784
Vietnam	66	67	72.9	70	72	68.8	40	30	17	97	94	91	91	0.560	0.691	0.709

<sup>a</sup> 1989-84

<sup>b</sup> 1995

... data not available

**Table 4: Continued**

Country	Sustainable access to improved sanitation (%)			Access to safe water (%) <sup>r</sup>			Under five mortality rate per 1000 live births		Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births		Under-weight children under age five (%)
	1990	2000	2004	1990	2000	2004	1996	2004	1990-98	2000	1990-97
Afghanistan	...	...	34	...	...	39	257	257	1,700	1,900	20
Bangladesh	41	48	39	94	97	74	112	77	850	380	56
India	16	28	33	68	84	86	111	85	570	540	53
Indonesia	47	55	55	71	78	77	71	38	650	230	34
Iran	...	83	...	...	92	94	...	38	37	76	...
Lao PDR	...	30	30	...	37	51	128	83	650	650	40
Malaysia	...	...	94	...	...	99	13	12	80	41	23
Myanmar	...	64	77	...	72	78	150	106	580	360	31
Nepal	20	28	35	67	88	90	116	76	1,500	740	47
Pakistan	36	62	59	83	90	91	136	101	340	500	38
Philippines	74	83	72	87	86	85	38	34	280	200	30
Sri Lanka	85	94	91	68	77	79	19	14	140	92	38
Thailand	79	96	99	80	84	99	38	21	200	44	26
Vietnam	29	47	61	55	77	85	44	23	160	130	45

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2004, 2006, UNICEF The State of the World's Children 1997, Microsoft Encarta 2000; World Bank, World Development Indicators 1998, 2004; ADB Key Indicators of Developing Asian and Pacific Countries 1997, 2003.

### 3. State of Agricultural and Rural Development

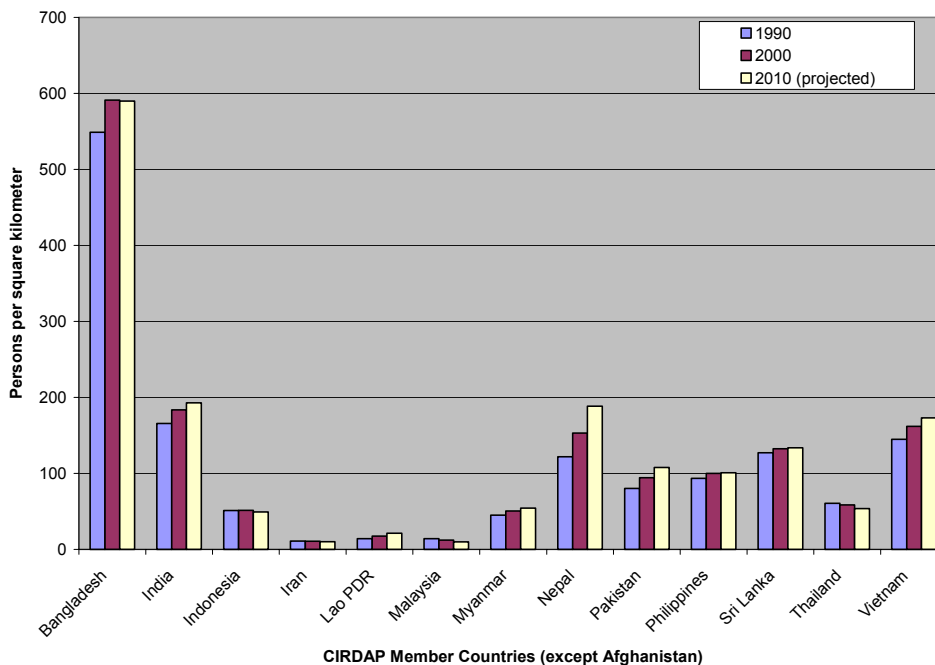
Agriculture remains the key sector of economic activity in the developing countries of the Asia-Pacific Region. However, there is large variation across countries in the size of the total population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood (Figure 1). Again, agriculture's contribution to GDP ranges from 8.4 per cent in Malaysia to 50.6 per cent in Myanmar, although its share in employment is higher.

A major source of weakness in the economy of many CMCs, and in the agriculture sector in particular, has been the absence of adequate diversification and industrialization efforts on a significant scale. Moreover, population explosion, law of heritance, natural calamities and other factors have led to increases in the proportion of landless people and declining average size of land holdings.

#### 3.1 Major Characteristics of Agriculture in the CMCs

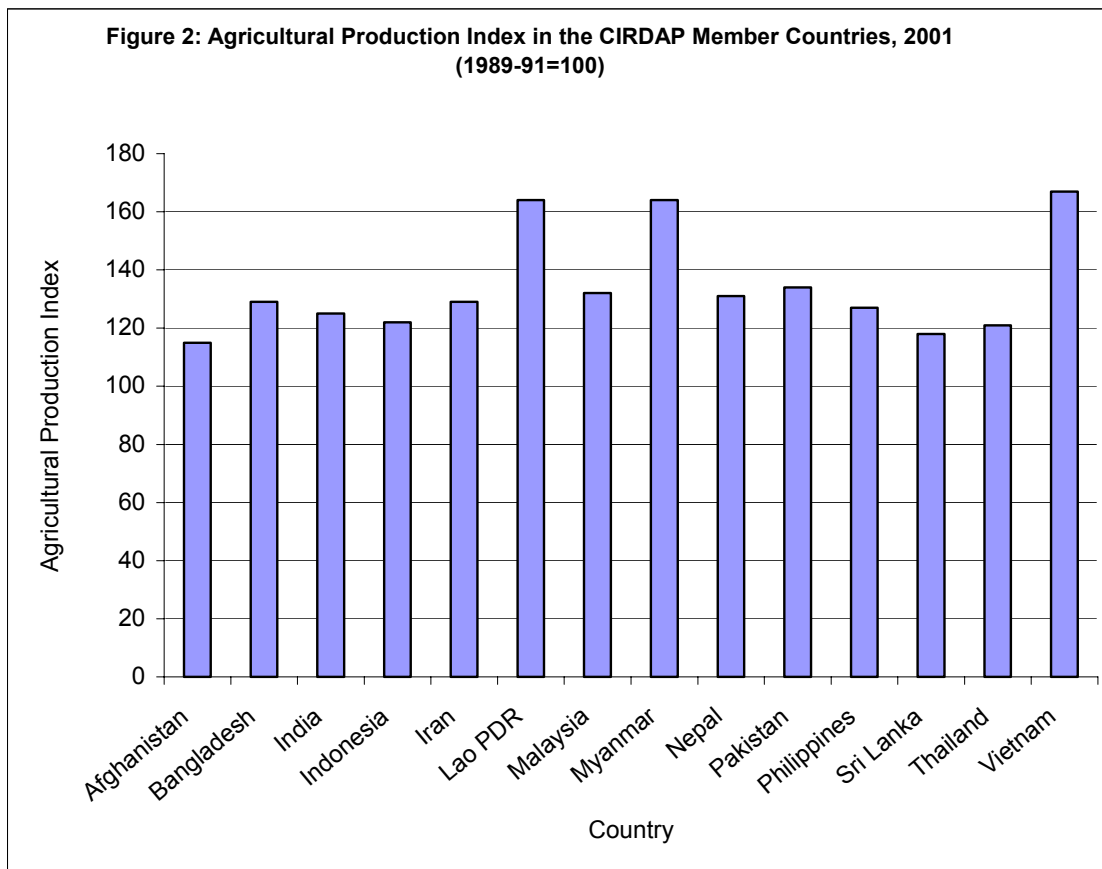
The important features of agriculture in Asia are the high density of the agricultural population (Figure 1), the prevalence of small and subsistence farms, and the scarcity of arable land. Many member countries have achieved impressive growth rates in agriculture in recent decades (Figure 2). Cereals and other food production grew steeply in 2001, compared to 1989-91, as indicated in Table 5.

Figure 1: Agricultural Population Density in CIRDAP Member Countries



Source: FAOSTAT Database.

Past patterns of agricultural growth were however insufficient or failed to adequately benefit the poor.



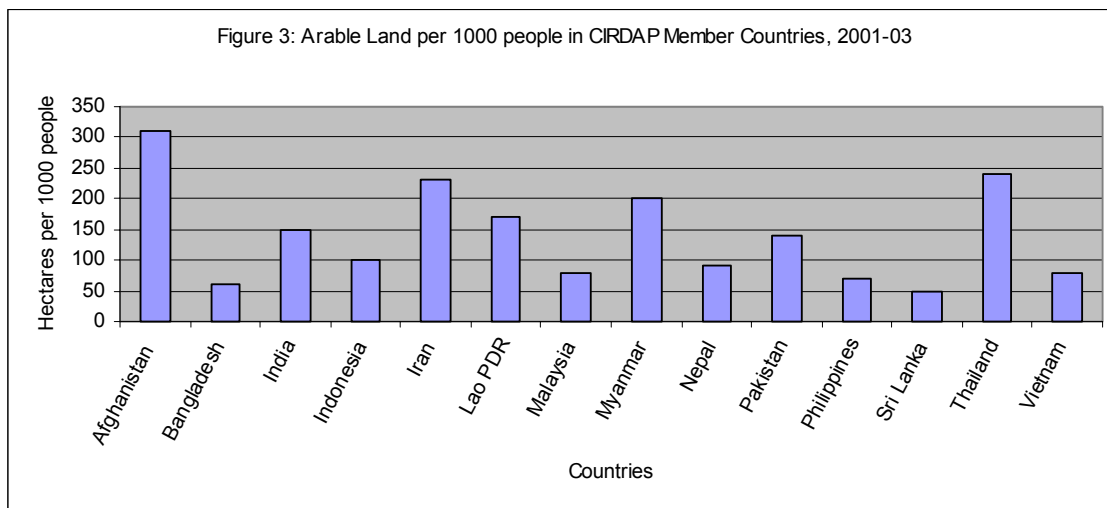
Source: CIRDAP, 2005

Thus, sustained high growth of the agricultural sector is required for most developing countries. But this growth must not put at risk the underlying natural resource base or impose costly externalities on others. It must also be equitable if it is to help alleviate poverty and ensure food security. These three goals— high agricultural growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability—are however, not necessarily complementary. Although much depends on the specific social, economic, and agro-ecological circumstances, a high degree of complementarity is more likely to be achieved when agricultural development is (1) broad based and involves small- and medium-sized farms, (2) market driven, (3) participatory and decentralized especially benefiting the land poor and the landless, and (4) driven by technological change that enhances factor productivity but does not degrade the resource base. It is important to note here that broad-based agrarian reform ensuring equitable land ownership and secure tenancy rights is an important prerequisite for making agricultural growth sustainable and equitable.

### 3.2 Land Use Patterns

The rural population density (rural population per sq. mile), per capita arable land, and agricultural land per worker are seen to vary widely across the CMCs. In most of the countries, the land frontier has virtually been reached, indicating limited possibility of expansion of total arable land area. Historically, such expansion has been the main source of agricultural growth in these countries. With increasing demand for diversified crop and livestock products, the area under food staples (largely cereals) also shows declining trends in most countries (Figure 3 and Table-6). The countries, therefore, have to increasingly depend on growth in yields to expand agricultural supply.

The land use patterns are also changing fast in the CMCs. The changes reflect major differences in resource endowments and uses across countries. Moreover, growing populations and changing consumption patterns put increased pressure on land and other natural resources, making it more difficult to achieve food self-sufficiency. The threshold for food self-sufficiency is estimated at 600-700 square meters per person. On average, most CMCs have per capita arable land, which is in excess of the threshold, but the figure is declining rapidly. According to an estimate as of 2002, the available arable land per capita for Sri Lanka was the lowest at 0.05 hectare, followed by Bangladesh, Philippines, and Vietnam (0.06 to 0.08 hectare); the largest was in Afghanistan, nearly 3 hectares (Figure 3).



Source: Data has been taken from World Development Report, 2006

The reduction of adverse impacts of such declines requires several measures e.g., removal of structural deficiencies, adoption of suitable technologies, and transfer of excess agricultural labour to non-agricultural sector. Broad-based development of the rural non-farm sector,

especially through exploiting the dynamic linkages between agriculture and non-agricultural sectors is thus the obvious policy choice.

**Table 5: Agricultural Production and Input Use**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Production index</i>						<i>Agricultural value added (2000 \$)</i>		<i>Irrigated land as per cent of crop land</i>		<i>Fertilizer consumption ('00 gms per ha of arable land)</i>	
	<i>Crop</i>		<i>Food</i>		<i>Livestock</i>		<i>Per worker</i>		<i>1989-91</i>	<i>2001-03</i>	<i>1989-91</i>	<i>2001-02</i>
	<i>1992-94</i>	<i>2002-04</i>	<i>1992-94</i>	<i>2002-04</i>	<i>1992-94</i>	<i>2002-04</i>	<i>1992-94</i>	<i>2002-04</i>				
Afghanistan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	33.8	33.8	63	19
Bangladesh	74.8	104.7	74.0	104.6	80.2	103.2	251	309	30.5	54.3	1049	1738
India	84.5	100.0	80.8	102.5	74.5	110.5	362	391	27.6	32.7	739	1044
Indonesia	88.0	112.7	90.3	113.1	99.4	127.3	498	564	14.2	13.3	1227	1321
Iran	83.0	118.1	82.1	113.3	77.6	103.3	2042	2438	41.1	44.1	760	921
Lao PDR	63.4	115.3	63.4	115.9	72.1	107.5	376	461	15.7	17.6	18	95
Malaysia	78.1	114.0	78.6	113.7	98.8	115.1	3918	4690	5.0	4.8	5386	6548
Myanmar	71.7	114.7	71.9	115.2	68.2	115.1	...	...	10.2	17.9	84	146
Nepal	75.2	111.2	77.2	109.4	82.4	107.3	191	208	41.6	47.1	320	333
Pakistan	80.3	102.5	77.3	106.0	75.6	109.1	603	688	76.8	83.9	921	1377
Philippines	87.3	109.6	81.5	112.2	67.4	120.7	907	1001	15.7	14.5	955	1313
Sri Lanka	89.4	98.8	94.4	100.0	107.5	109.9	713	743	27.5	34.4	2127	2862
Thailand	85.6	106.1	88.6	106.0	98.9	105.5	481	599	20.6	26.6	537	1039
Vietnam	67.0	116.6	70.1	118.3	64.7	124.9	225	294	44.8	33.8	1183	3172

'...' data not available

Source: World bank, World Development Indicators, 2006.

**Table 6: Rural Population Density, Arable Land Per Capita in the CMCs**

Country	Rural population density (per sq. km)		Land use (per cent of land area)						Arable land ha per capita				
			Arable land			Permanent crop land			Other land	1979-81	1999-2001	2001-03	
	1995	2001	1995	2001	2003	1995	2001	2003	1995	2001			
Afghanistan	...	268	...	12.1	12.1	...	0.2	0.2	...	87.6	0.50	0.30	0.31
Bangladesh	1157	1228	67.0	62.1	61.3	5.0	3.1	3.4	28.0	34.8	0.10	0.06	0.06
India	410	460	57.0	54.4	54.0	4.0	2.7	3.1	39.0	42.9	0.24	0.16	0.15
Indonesia	732	591	17.0	11.3	11.6	7.0	7.2	7.4	76.0	81.5	0.12	0.10	0.10
Iran	...	160	...	8.7	9.9	...	1.4	1.3	...	89.9	0.36	0.24	0.23
Lao PDR	417	495	4.0	3.8	4.1	3.0	0.4	0.4	93.0	95.8	0.24	0.17	0.17
Malaysia	512	554	23.0	5.5	5.5	1.0	17.6	17.6	76.0	76.9	0.07	0.08	0.08
Myanmar	351	346	15.0	15.2	15.4	1.0	1.0	1.4	84.0	83.8	0.28	0.21	0.20
Nepal	659	668	21.0	21.7	16.5	12.0	0.6	0.9	67.0	77.7	0.16	0.13	0.09
Pakistan	405	438	28.0	27.9	25.2	6.0	0.9	0.9	66.0	71.3	0.24	0.15	0.14
Philippines	586	564	32.0	18.9	19.1	4.0	16.8	16.8	64.0	64.3	0.11	0.07	0.07
Sri Lanka	1549	1607	29.0	13.9	14.2	7.0	15.7	15.5	64.0	70.4	0.06	0.05	0.05
Thailand	278	326	40.0	29.4	27.7	2.0	6.5	7.0	58.0	64.2	0.35	0.25	0.24
Vietnam	1082	923	21.0	20.0	20.5	1.0	6.0	7.1	78.0	74.1	0.11	0.08	0.08

...data not available

Source : World Bank, *World Development Indicators 1998, 2004, 2006*.

### **3.3 Agricultural Policies and Major Issues in Agricultural Development**

The policy framework for developing agriculture needs to be integrated and holistic keeping the focus on farming systems development. Several dimensions of the framework should be explicitly addressed e.g. institutions, technology, research/extension, infrastructures, participation of local communities and partnership development with NGOs and community organizations. In the changed perspectives under globalization and market liberalization, agricultural pricing and market access issues have also assumed to be crucially important determinants of agricultural growth.

#### **3.3.1 Infrastructural Support for Agriculture**

Some countries in the Asian region have surplus food production, but it does not mean total food security (due to distributional and price distortions and allocation problems). There are also countries which have not been able to utilize all cultivable land and not been able to achieve optimal production levels, by using new technologies and new varieties of seeds. In spite of perennial rivers and high precipitation of rainwater, several countries have not been able to utilize to the maximum potential of land and water. The utilization of available water in some countries is only about 16 percent, the remaining going to the sea. Such lopsided progress is mainly due to the lack of infrastructure. In some big Asian countries the requisites of rural development – roads, communication, power, etc. and the basic needs in health and education, housing and sanitation have not received proper attention. With the advent of WTO and the challenges before the rural communities, infrastructure has become more important. Agriculture infrastructure like market connectivity, farm clinics, farm technologies, training schools, demonstration plot, farm technology incubators, privatized extension services, market yards, processing facilities for value addition etc. are more important than ever in a globalizing world and the Asian perspective abound with those opportunities.

#### **3.3.2 Investments in Agriculture**

Poverty alleviation is possible, at the shortest time, by improving farm productivity and profitability in agriculture. The profits generated and the surplus created can become a great source of investment for processing, marketing, rural industrialization, and can place demands on technology and competition. However, the general trend is decline in profitability, due to escalating costs on labour and inputs, without a corresponding improvement in productivity. This will have an adverse effect on general incomes of the rural poor and shrinkage of agriculture in GDP growth. For productivity improvements on a

large scale and to sustain long term growth and to fit into a global perspective, capital investments in the agricultural sector have to grow fast in the Asian region (in some countries like India, it is stagnant and in Malaysia it is optimal, whereas in countries like Vietnam, Myanmar, etc. it is growing fast). The public sector contribution to capital formation and private sector motivation to invest are crucial.

### **3.3.3 Technological Change and Improved Agricultural Practices**

Another issue is technology push for poverty alleviation via farm and non-farm sector growth. This calls for employment generation and productivity push via technological interventions. By participation, through their own indigenous knowledge, farmers can become entrepreneurs, as is happening in some countries of Asia (India, China, Malaysia, etc.). The formation of farmers clubs is a case in point. There are two ways to improve farm productivity. One is to expand the area under cultivation and the other is new and improved technologies to raise agricultural productivity. But using either of the two options will not be sufficient. Both have to be given considerations simultaneously.

Some parts of the rural areas in Asia, e.g. in China, are getting ready to receive foreign direct investments. If a part of FDI, through a clear cut defined policy at the national level (it did happen in India in 1992 as a proclaimed policy but not put firmly on ground) is channelised towards infrastructure suitable for rural industrialization, it would automatically reduce migration and industrialize the rural areas (particularly energy sector has to take the lead).

Also there are experiences of NGOs, whose work is mostly related to economic and social sectors. In some countries of Asia NGOs are encouraged and in some cases their presence is minimal. The micro-credit NGOs in Bangladesh have gained popularity. But we need NGOs in infrastructural and agricultural fields also. For example the Tarun Bharat Singh in drought prone Rajasthan (India) worked in 750 villages spread over 6500 sq. km., and once identified as “dark zone” is now declared a “white zone”, through water conservation approach of the NGO. The governments can build supportive infrastructure like (1) Agro Technology Parks, (2) Technology Transfer Centres for farming activity, (3) practical training facility, etc. to supplement the NGO efforts for better results.

Agricultural extension machinery is another area that needs to be brought into uniformity in Asia. There is a need to shift from “maintenance” to “management” and from “supply side” to “demand side” interventions.

There are also second generation issues – soil fatigue, water logging, young farmers reluctance etc. and methods like integrated pest management, integrated nutrient management, plant quarantine system, etc., which have to be taken up in a big way.

### **3.3.4 Trade in Agriculture, Food, and Agro-based Products**

It is important to recognize that due to the free market regime, many products produced by the rural poor of the least developed countries can face steep competition from imports. This is a very tricky area, given that all the CMCs are now pursuing the paradigm of free markets and globalisation, which prescribes no government interventions in the markets. However, the government cannot abdicate the responsibility of undertaking policies and programmes to alleviate poverty and reduce disparity. It is important, therefore, to find balanced roles of the state and market in addressing all the relevant issues towards achieving the goals of rural development and poverty reduction.

## **3.4 Rural Development Policies and Institutions: Issues Requiring Priority Attention of the CMCs**

As has been discussed before, despite considerable success achieved in reducing poverty, significant sections of the population in different CIRDAP member countries (CMCs) are still suffering from acute poverty. In most countries, poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon as a large population live in the rural areas.

Limited employment opportunities and poor skill and educational level are the macro-factors underlying low economic performance. In this context, unequal distribution of resource and opportunities across territories and communities are reported commonly. Environmental degradation, unplanned exploitation of resources for the market, political turmoil and corruption are also important issues.

At the level of policy, macro-economic stability and economic growth received priority along with targeted programmes for poverty alleviation. As an issue, poverty alleviation remained a part of rural development and gradually occupied the central place in the development agenda. Accordingly, top priority to this issue is a common policy approach in all the countries. In each country different ministries are engaged in it, and increasing involvement of the NGOs is also an emerging trend. Notion of poverty is not confined to economic deprivation; social deprivation is also adequately echoed. A variety of interventions is understood to be in place to create an enabling environment with an increased emphasis on rural-finance and other developmental inputs, including social and economic infrastructure.

But a lot remains to be done to alleviate poverty, improve distribution of income, achieve human development and raise productivity to improve economic and social well-being especially of the rural poor in many of the CMCs. Judicious policy intervention for attaining faster, sustainable and equitable economic and social development is thus called for. Agrarian reform ensuring access to land to the poor and tenurial reform guaranteeing secured property rights should constitute an important element of the overall policy packages to ensure pro-poor, equitable and sustainable rural development. A close look at the matrix of potential linkages between land reform and rural development presented in Annex-I will amply substantiate this point.

In the recent years, there has been a failure in articulating rural development policies in the changing contexts of globalisation and market economy paradigms as well as developing and capacity building of local governance to regulate, coordinate and sustain the development process at the local level. Increasingly, rural development (RD) is interpreted and understood as poverty alleviation (PA) programs and the existing institutional and policy framework of RD is weakened by I/NGOs and donors through their PA activities<sup>1</sup>. A redefined RD policy focussing the following perspectives is thus required to make it contextual and pragmatic.

#### **3.4.1 Development of Rural Non-farm Activities**

The Peasant Charter adopted in WCARRD in 1979 (WCARRD,1979) emphasized that rural development requires rapid growth of non-farm economic activities and opportunities for employment, especially through rural industrialization and expanded infrastructure for power supply, transport, communication, housing, water supply, marketing and storage facility. The experience of the Asia Pacific region in this regard has been varied. As noted earlier, most of the East and South-east Asian countries adopted appropriate policies and provided effective support measures to develop rural agro-based and agro support industries<sup>2</sup>. On the contrary, the South Asian countries, except India, neglected development of the non-farm sector. Rural non-farm sector development needs immediate attention in these countries.

#### **3.4.2 Information Technology in Rural Transformation**

Recent developments in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are indeed revolutionary in nature. Rapid innovations in telecommunication, semi-conductors, micro-processors, fibre-optics and micro-electronics brought about unprecedented growth for development. This gave rise to a debate on the potentials of ICT to enhance rural development.

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<sup>1</sup> A succinct exposition of this point is made by Ahmed, M.U. et al (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Empirical evidence is available in Ahmed, M.U. (2006).

Though infrastructure is one of the necessary conditions that is crucial for exploitation of ICTs, it is not a sufficient condition. Innovative software solutions that address the needs of the government as well as those of the people of rural areas are equally important. For realizing the potentials of ICTs, many countries in the region have launched several projects each with a different approach such as e-governance, information villages, grameen phones, wired villages, rural information kiosks, tele-centres, agriculture marketing portals, knowledge networks and many such initiatives.

ICT, particularly PC applications are broadly categorized into the following aspects specific to rural development:

- systems for decision support to administration
- systems for improving delivery system of services to citizens
- systems for empowering citizens to access information and enable network sharing.

### **3.4.3 Socio-cultural Concerns**

Gender discrimination and equitable social development still continue to be a serious concern in several countries. Similarly there is increasing evidence across the countries that ethnic and indigenous communities and tribal groups are marginalized in the development process. The Human Development Report 2004 of UNDP has emphasized this issue with hard facts and glaring examples. Moreover, the issues and concerns of women, children and elderly citizens are well documented but not adequately addressed. Hence, there is a need to go beyond the economic perspective and take explicit account of the socio-cultural concerns. It is seen in a number of countries that unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and participation across communities and geographic regions leads to social tension and conflict which is a threat to national and international security. An equitable distribution of resources through providing “land access” to the poor and the landless may thus constitute a right direction towards achieving socially inclusive rural development.

### **3.4.4 Alliance Building Amongst GO-NGO and Private Sector**

In the recent past, Self-help groups (SHG) emerged as a separate institution to interact with the private sector. The process is expected to gain momentum and strength in the coming years as awareness and awakening deepen among the people. But most of the institutions are operating in isolation. Increasing need is felt for greater formal and informal interface and interaction among these bodies, the Community based Organisations (CBOs), government

and private sectors. Considerable variations, however, exist in the nature and significance of such collaboration across countries in the CMCs and in other developing countries.

#### **3.4.5 Institutional Issues**

Several institutional issues also need to be addressed. Thus, local capacity/capability in management of rural development process needs to be strengthened. They also need to be given greater authority in allocation of resources and deployment of manpower. Similarly, rural institutions are mostly understaffed with inadequate trained manpower, and there is always a resource gap for rural development programs.

Most importantly, local governments are not authorized and equipped to coordinate and regulate various agencies, such as NGOs, CBOs, micro finance institutions, working for poverty alleviation and rural development to synergize their efforts. At the national level, there is a need to build an effective coordination mechanism to coordinate and regulate the agrarian reform and rural development efforts, which are carried out by several agencies of governments, non-government and private sectors. There is a similar need for coordination mechanism at the donors' level

#### **3.4.6 Regional Cooperation**

There are important regional organizations in Asia – ASEAN, SAARC, etc. and agreements like SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area), SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement), are taking effect gradually apart from bilateral agreements on particular issues. But adequate cooperation between organizations and countries involved is still to be achieved. Similarly, there are a number of issues such as human trafficking; HIV/AIDS, bird flu endemic etc. which need regional level knowledge development, periodic dialogues at the professional level and harmonizing pertinent issues.

#### **3.4.7 Knowledge Generation and Networking of Entire Asia-Pacific Region**

The agrarian reform and rural development programs are implemented by several Ministries, departments and agencies of government in the CMCs. Recently several donors, INGOs, NGOs, civil societies and private sectors are also involved in these sectors. Hence, there is a problem of holistic understanding of achievements and issues of multi-sectoral policies. Moreover, with the emergence of competent knowledge development and training institutions in private sectors and their increasing use by the donors, the competence of the government supported policy monitoring and knowledge development institutions have further weakened.

In this area, CIRDAP has been debating how it can help CMCs in developing and institutionalizing a comprehensive mechanism for collection of information from all agencies and generating a comprehensive knowledge base on progress and issues leading to policy formulation in rural development, poverty alleviation and achievement of the MDGs.

## Inter-dependence of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

Area	Rural Development	Agrarian Reform
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhancing capacity for participatory development, equitable distribution of resources and disaster management</li> <li>Development of social, physical and human capital</li> <li>Transformation of rural economy to increase productivity and achieve higher level of living standard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Productive and sustainable utilization of natural resources: land, water and forest.</li> <li>Access to/ right of the poor and marginal farmers to productive resources</li> <li>Common resources management for environmental sustainability</li> </ul>
Policy instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decentralization of authority and resources to local self governments</li> <li>Capacity building of local bodies to regulate, coordinate and facilitate development process</li> <li>Development of physical infrastructure such as road, irrigation, power, IT etc.</li> <li>Diversification of rural economy through farm and non-farm sector</li> <li>Social mobilization and micro finance for self-employment generation</li> <li>Special programs for gender and vulnerable groups</li> <li>Human development through rural education and health</li> <li>Social capital building for community mobilization and disaster management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies and legislations to increase the access of the poor and marginal farmers to land and other productive resources</li> <li>Integrated management of land resources and soil conservation</li> <li>improved water management</li> <li>integrated pest control management</li> <li>integrated plant nutrition system</li> <li>conservation and use of forest and livestock resources</li> <li>development of rural energy supplies</li> <li>development of social capital such as farmers' association, users' groups, CBOs etc.</li> </ul>
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of rural development, health, education, infrastructural development, industries, cooperative and agriculture banks etc.</li> <li>Rural development research and training institution</li> <li>Local governments, sectoral offices, NGOs, cooperatives, private business firms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of agriculture, forest and water resources.</li> <li>Agriculture Universities, research farms, livestock breeding farms, forest research centres</li> <li>District offices, extension agents, farmers associations, cooperatives, users' groups.</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equitable distribution of resources and opportunities</li> <li>Sustainable utilization and management of social capital</li> <li>Generation of productive employment opportunities</li> <li>Product development and export to urban needs</li> <li>Enhancement of living standard of the poor and marginal farmers</li> <li>Pro-poor policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Right of the poor and marginal farmers in productive resources management</li> <li>Increase production and productivity in farm, off-farm and non-farm activities</li> <li>Food security, and surplus generation for reinvestment</li> <li>Sustainable utilization of natural resources: land, water and forest</li> </ul>

## **4. Agrarian Reform in the CMCs: Concepts, Policies and Strategies, and Outcomes**

### **4.1 Background**

After a temporary retreat in the 1980s (termed as “unexplained absence” by Bernstein H. 2001), the agrarian reform issue came to occupy a central position in the contemporary development discourse especially since the 1990s. During the three post-war decades of fifties, sixties and seventies, agrarian reform was seen by both the reformists (proponents of redistributive land reform) and the revolutionaries (proponents of radical land reform) as one of the important levers of agricultural modernization and structural transformation of the backward agrarian societies.

While both groups saw agrarian reform as a growth-augmenting instrument required to build the foundations of either new capitalist or socialist states with the immediate goal of all the reformers being “land for the peasant” and hence eradication of poverty of the rural masses, much of the Third World Countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are still riddled with acute poverty primarily because of lack of access to land. Whatever the reasons for failure or limited successes of the earlier generation of agrarian reforms to eliminate poverty and transform the rural economy of most developing countries, there has been growing disenchantment regarding the prospects for the conventional reforms of the three post colonial decades<sup>3</sup>.

The relevance of the agrarian reforms implemented during fifties, sixties and seventies are now being questioned by many intellectuals (i.e. Borras, J. et. al. 2005, Jacob, E. 1980) as being obsolete, particularly in the context of paradigm shifts in the national development policies and international perspectives commensurating structural adjustments and globalization.

While controversies surround regarding the virtues of agrarian reforms, its importance as a prerequisite for broad-based economic development, social justice and human welfare is universally recognized. A close scrutiny of the on-going debates suggests that the

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<sup>3</sup> Prof. Rehamn Sobhan (1993) reviewing land reform experiences in 36 countries in the post-war period concludes that irrespective of the reform typologies, wherever quality land was distributed to the poor and the power of the rural oligarchy was dismantled through radical, egalitarian reforms, measurable poverty reduction and improvements in human welfare were invariably the results. The post-war experiences of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan in the capitalist world, and China, Cuba and more recently Vietnam in the socialist world are cited as classical examples of countries where equitable land distribution fueled economic developments.

controversies relate to the relevance of reform typologies in particular social, political and economic settings in their historical contexts. To quote, from Kay's seminal work on the subject in Latin American perspectives (Kay, C. 1998), "the era of radical agrarian reforms, however, is over. Despite the continuing arguments by scholars and activists in favour of agrarian reform as well as the recent upsurge in the ethnic and peasant movements for land redistribution in the region, there has been a shift from the state-led and interventionist agrarian reform programmes to market-oriented land policies.....".

This swing from 'top-down' or the 'centrist' agrarian reform regime to the decentralized market-driven reform process, based on the strategic considerations of sustainable development, social justice and democratization and popularly known as the "new wave" agrarian reform marks what Henry Bernstein (2001) calls, "rolling back the state" combined with trade liberalization and globalization<sup>4</sup>. Broadly termed as the rise of neo-liberalism, the liberalization of policies since mid 1980s are noted (Windfuhr, M. 2002) to have created an unfavorable environment for conventional redistributive agrarian reform.

In contrast to the classic redistributive land reform system carried mostly in right political contexts (either in revolutionary or in highly assertive Government authority), the new wave agrarian reform is proposed to be far more comprehensive, including reforms of land tenure and land rights, land market facilitation, market assisted or negotiated redistributive reforms, credits, technical assistance and marketing support. Interpreted in this broader sense, agrarian reform should be understood not only as a policy for the distribution of land (land reform) but also as a more general process (agrarian reform) embracing access to natural resources (land, water etc.), technology, finance, factor and product markets and in particular to the political power process (Leite, S. 2006).

Again, the issue of agrarian reform received the greatest impetus from the ICARRD held in Brazil in March 2006 when the member states declared that, "We believe in the essential role of agrarian reform and rural development to promote sustainable development, which includes, inter alia, the realization of human rights, food security, poverty eradication and strengthening of social justice, on the basis of the democratic rule of law" (ICARRD, 2006).

The issues of agrarian reform, sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation now figure as inextricably interlinked elements of both the national and international development agenda. Rural poverty is seen to be strongly associated with lack of access to land (and other

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<sup>4</sup> Paradoxically, the land policies pursued under the new wave reform have been driven mostly by the states and international agencies. Such land policies generally focus on land titling, secure property rights, land transfer and financing mechanisms, land markets, land settlement and registration etc. as opposed to the earlier emphasis on land expropriation for redistribution.

assets) either in the form of landlessness or because of insecure land rights. A positive relationship between equitable distribution of land and higher levels of economic growth is on the other hand well substantiated through empirical research (Deininger, 2003). Indeed, the experiences of several East Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan indicate how agrarian reforms resulting in egalitarian distribution of land is fundamental in creating the basis for sustained economic growth.

In the countries where agriculture is the mainstay of the economy and it is more market-oriented, access to land is the fundamental means whereby the poor can ensure household food supplies, generate income and create employment opportunities in both farm and off-farm pursuits. While access to land and poverty reduction cannot be seen in isolation from broader agricultural and economic policies, these issues are also closely linked with rural development policies and environmental outcomes.

#### **4.2 Agrarian Reform Policies and Outcomes in the CMCs**

In this section an attempt is made to review the agrarian reform policies and practices designed and implemented by the CMC governments to improve land access for the rural poor, the landless and other disadvantageous groups. Depending on the availability of information, the impacts and outcomes of the agrarian reform policies in promoting equitable access to land and ensuring sustainable rural development are also briefly highlighted.

An operational definition of the agrarian reform concept used in this study is first described. A broad definition of the concept of 'land access' is adopted to include the processes by which people, individually or collectively gain rights and opportunities to occupy and use land (for productive as well as other economic and social purposes), whether on a temporary or permanent basis. Viewed in this sense, agrarian reform measures will broadly consist of land tenure reform (i.e. establishment of secure and formalized property rights in land) and land redistribution through transfer of land from large farmers to small farmers, from rich to the poor, and distribution of government-owned lands among the landless and other poorer sections.

Agrarian reform also refers to changing the social relations of production and release of the productive forces for their progressive development and evolution of new organization of production distribution and investment (Hye, A. 1982). It also embraces other interlocking factors, such as extension, training, credit, marketing, infrastructure and farmers'

organizations etc. which are critically important for increasing agricultural productivity, efficiency and broad-based economic growth.

### ***Agrarian Reform Policies and Programmes***

The policies and processes used to address land access and tenure security issues vary widely both within and between countries and regions. Nevertheless, some general trends and common practices can be identified and lessons from good practices can be shared across countries. Here, we try to shed some light on the agrarian reform policies and measures used in CMCs.

### **Afghanistan**

With a land area of 652,000 sq.km., nearly 5 times larger than that of Bangladesh and Nepal, only a very small share of Afghanistan's land mostly in scattered valleys is suitable for farming. It is, however, a rural and agrarian country with 76% of the population living in the rural areas and over 70% of the total economically active population being dependent on agriculture for livelihoods. Proper use and management of meager farm land is thus very important.

#### ***Land Ownership and Land Tenure Rights***

There is no restriction on ownership, use and management of private land in Afghanistan. However, there must be legal ownership documents registered with appropriate authorities for tax purposes. Land can be transferred and other land transactions can be made, based on Sharia deeds and customary documents. Transfer of private land is controlled by local authorities.

Government land is managed by the agencies with which it is registered and can be leased for upto three years. The need for simplifying and rationalizing the ownership and transfer of private land and disposal of Government land (grazing land and community forests) to individuals, communities or organizations is emphasized.

Female rights to all properties including land are protected by sharia law, Civil code and Customary laws. Women can also dispose of their properties as needed and can enter into sharecropping arrangements. Sharecropping is common although it is highly discriminatory to the share cropper as he/she has to surrender 40% of the harvest to the landowner. This proportion rises to 60% if the landowner provides inputs (other than labour) along with land.

Private land ownership is highly unequal as 19% of total cultivable land of 3.4 to 4 million hectares was estimated to be owned by only 4% of the rural families in 1970 against an average ownership of only 1.2 hectares per household. Due to political turmoil over the last three decades, structure of land ownership has changed drastically, giving sharp rise to land disputes. Farm indebtedness and mortgages have also increased sharply during the period leading to distress sale of private land by the small owners.

### ***Land Use Planning***

In view of the growing population pressure on land, it is important to initiate a systematic land planning system in both rural and urban areas. For the purpose, establishment of a sound database for both private and non-private land ownership and use and development of appropriate institutional arrangements are necessary. The important prerequisites for an effective land planning system include consolidation of information on land ownership, registration of land leases and other land rights, cadastral surveys of properties and updating of laws and other legal practices relating to land. Expansion and strengthening of various institutions associated with land administration and management is also equally important.

### **Bangladesh**

Attempts at changing agrarian/land relations in Bangladesh through introducing land reform legislations and related policy measures can be traced as far back as in the 1950s. After the partition of undivided Bengal in 1947 (in East Bengal which became part of Pakistan, i.e. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Bengal which became part of India. After the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971, a number of legislations were introduced to reform the highly unequal land relations system<sup>5</sup>.

The historic East Bengal Estate Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 passed in February 1950 marks the first attempt to abolish the “Zamindari” System introduced through the “Permanent Settlement System” by the British Raj in colonial India in 1793. With the Zamindari system gone, the actual tillers of the land became direct tillers, sharecroppers received protection against eviction and most important of all, redistribution of surplus land above the ceiling of 33.3 acres among the landless and poor peasants took place. However, due to lack of strong political commitment and administrative efficiency, land redistribution attempts failed badly. Subsequently, the Ayub regime raised the land ceiling to 129.9 acres

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<sup>5</sup> A succinct and analytical review of the process and impacts of various reform measures has been made by Saha B.K. (2000-01) from a historical perspective.

under the East Pakistan Tenancy Act of 1961 leaving only insignificant fraction of land for redistribution (i.e. 163,741 acres, measuring only on estimated 0.07 acre to each landless labour after redistribution)<sup>6</sup>.

After liberation in 1971, the Government of Bangladesh made several attempts to protect land right of the peasantry. Through the Residential Order No.98 of 1972, the retainable ceiling of land per family was re-fixed at 33.3 acres. However, a very insignificant amount of cultivable land could be declared surplus and only a small part of it could be acquired and redistributed. The overall impact was thus insignificant in terms of both efficiency and equity.

In 1984, a Land Reforms Ordinance was promulgated based on the recommendation of Land Reform Committee formed in 1982 in order to improve the production relations in the agricultural sector. The ownership ceiling was retained at 33.3 acres, and the sharecropping practices were revised to safeguard rights of the tillers and sharecroppers. In 1988, a “cluster village development” programme was undertaken to resettle the landless people on Government lands, but only 800 such villages could be formed for 32,000 households by 1996. In 1996, a new agricultural Khas Lands Management and Resettlement Policy was introduced again with limited impacts on settling the landless poor.

The legislative measures undertaken by successive governments in Bangladesh do not appear to have brought perceptible benefits to the land poor and landless in Bangladesh. However, some polarization and awareness might have been created among the rural poor and the landless relating to their rights and prerogatives within a highly unequal and inefficient agrarian structure as indicated by unequal distribution of landownership and increasing trend of landlessness (Saha, B.K. 2000-2001).

In the absence of any organized peasant movement, the land reform programmes have so far been initiated and implemented only by the state operations in Bangladesh. Of late, some NGOs are observed to show interests in matters of land and agrarian relations through taking part alongside the government in the distribution of the Khas/Char lands among the landless.

## **India**

Despite considerable level of industrial development and India’s high-tech image, agriculture remains the largest economic sector with two out of three Indians earning their livelihoods directly or indirectly from agriculture. In view of slow growth of agriculture (1.5% per

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<sup>6</sup> Details on the redistributive impacts of these two land reform measures are available in Abdulah, A.A. (1976).

annum during 2002-2005) in the recent years, stagnant yields and problems of landlessness and rural poverty, the present Government of India has put agrarian reform on top of its development agenda (Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007).

Over the past five decades after independence in 1947, land relations in India have undergone significant changes with all the large intermediaries being abolished and ownership right being conferred upon a considerable number (20 million) of tenants who became owners of an estimated 17.3 million acres of land. This brought to an end the dominance of feudal landlordism run by the rent-seeking, parasitic intermediaries such as zamindars, jagirdars and inamdars who were predominant in India's feudal agrarian structure and the concomitant land relations system. Soon after independence, avalanche of legislations were enacted in the states for abolition of the intermediary tenures and have been implemented with varying degree of success<sup>7</sup>.

However, the common feature of an agrarian economy with high concentration of land holdings in the hands of a few land owners on the one hand and increasing number of marginal farmers and landless workers on the other, remains more or less unabated<sup>8</sup>. Complete turnaround of a systematic problem of a huge scale in a vast country like India is a difficult proposition especially when agriculture is a state subject. While the semi-feudal agrarian relations pattern still prevails in some states, the character and depth varied from region to region demanding varied solutions.

Under the great impacts of peasant uprisings (i.e. the Kisan Sabha Movement of 1936, Tebhaga Movement of 1946-47 etc.) and freedom movement, princely states and intermediary tenures were abolished in India and paved the way for land reform programmes that began just after independence. Indeed land reform received top priority as a national policy immediately after independence to correct the highly unequal agrarian structure. The reform measure introduced and implemented through a variety of legislations aimed at abolition of intermediaries, rationalization of the rights and obligations of various categories of tenants, fixation of ceilings on landholdings, consolidation of holdings, updating of land records and cooperation of the small landholders land ownership pattern in the interest of increased productivity and equitable growth. As of end of September, 2000, the total amount of land declared as surplus for redistribution all over India is put at 73.49 lakh acres of which 52.99 lakh acres have been distributed to an estimated 55.10 lakh beneficiaries. Thus, a lot more remains to be done to improve the land ownership pattern, ensure security of the tenants

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<sup>7</sup> For a historical treatment of the legislative measures and their implementation procedures and impacts on the abolition of the intermediary interests, see (Krishana, Rao, Y. V. ed., quoted in Shah, B.K., 2000).

<sup>8</sup> The number of small and marginal farmers is estimated to have increased from 33.9 millions in 1953 to 65.71 millions in 1982 (Rao, K.Y.V, quoted in Shah, B.K., 2000).

and share-croppers, distribute and reclaim all government waste land to the agricultural workers and poor farmers.

While conflicts and discontent are inherent in the outmoded agrarian structure of the most Asian countries, the problems of increasing inequality and widening rural poverty need to be resolved through reforming and modernizing the agrarian structure.

## **Indonesia**

A prolonged colonial occupation, conflicting legal practices (i.e. traditional vs modern laws, government land issues) increased demand for land under high population pressure but limited availability of farm land (only 70.8 million hectares or 37% of territorial land) etc. pose critical problems to land questions relating to ownership, management, use and utilization of land in Indonesia. Besides imbalance of land authority, uncertainty of protection to land rights at the village community levels and imbalance in land use and utilization pattern due to different geographical composition and population distribution among the islands, the rapid conversion of meager agricultural land to non-agricultural usage is causing severe threats to sustainability of agricultural practices and aggravating the problem of landlessness among the farmers in villages. According to 2003 Agricultural Census Report, the number of landless peasant farmers increased from 20.8 million in 1993 to 25.4 million in 2003.

The consequences of this shift of land use from agricultural to non-agricultural practices (i.e. real estates, industrial estates, trading and services etc) have various adverse impacts, such as:

- i) decreasing food availability leading to food insecurity;
- ii) diminishing livelihoods opportunities leading to unemployment and social tensions
- iii) high cost of investments in agricultural infrastructures (i.e. irrigation)

Yet another serious problem causing severe difficulties in land administration and management in Indonesia is the high incidence of agrarian conflict arising from the land development practices used by government as well various communities, such as development of forest areas for plantation, real estates, tourism facilities etc. It is thus imperative that the agrarian reform process and practices in Indonesia must play decisive roles in achieving sustainable rural development, food security and poverty alleviation.

### ***Agrarian Reform Policies and their Implementation***

Following the independence of the country, the Government of Indonesia initiated agrarian reforms, starting with the elimination of “tax-exempted villages” (1946) and private lands (1958). The country-wide comprehensive tenure reform began in 1960 with the issuance of Law No. 5 of 1960 based on the Profit Sharing Agreement whereby the land-owner and the peasant would be entitled to fair share of profit. The law also provided protection to the rights and obligations of both parties.

The Basic Agrarian, Law No.5 of 1960 was passed during Sukarno’s Government in order to solve the problems of agrarian imbalances. Four fundamental weaknesses are reported to have led to the subsequent failure (after Sukarno’s exit through a military coup in 1965) of this attempt which include: lack of political will, elite ruling class and lack of peoples organizations and availability of data base.

Law No.56 of 1960 regarding Decree on Agricultural Land ownership was issued to implement the agrarian reform initiative which regulated: (i) determination of the maximum width of agricultural land authority and ownership; (ii) prohibition of splitting lands into small pieces; (iii) redeeming and return of pledged lands. To strengthen implementation of the reform programme the Govt. issued Regulation No. 224 of 1961 determining land distribution and compensation process through:

- a) prohibition of access land
- b) prohibition of absentee ownership
- c) setting of maximum limit for distribution of absentee land
- d) regulation of redemption of pledged land
- e) reorganizing the profit sharing agreement
- f) prohibition of splitting of agricultural land

These provisions aimed at improving the land ownership pattern and providing security to the tenants were carried to enhance income and living standards of the farmers as prerequisites for rural poverty alleviation and ensuring justice and economic prosperity. However, weak political support and commitment, weak law enforcement, non-availability of adequate funds, inadequate information, weakness of the implementing agencies and lack of cooperation among them and lack of human resources etc. impeded achievement of desired results from the earlier reform programmes leaving lot of work to be done.

Based on the vision of “Land Cultivated for Peoples” prosperity, the Government has developed a revised agrarian reform policy through issuance of Presidential Decree No.34 of

2003 relating to National Policy on Land Matters aimed at achieving an integrated national land administration settlement and management system.

## **Iran**

Since ancient times, land tenure in Iran was varied which included state ownership, lands for the benefit of the masses or charities, and land under customary ownership or control of tribal and nomadic pastoralists reflecting Islamic tribal and nomadic cultures. Following the Iranian “Constitutional Revolution” of 1906, several attempts were made to change the land tenure system by replacing the customary institutions. However, not much happened until introduction of the “White Revolution” of King Shah in 1963 which comprised a package of policies for economic and social reforms for the development of the country. The US backed revolution had two important objectives of carrying out agrarian reform and nationalization of natural resources.

Under the agrarian reform law, a landowner could keep his land in one village or spread it over parts of several villages adding to the equivalent of the total possession. The government was authorized to purchase the rest at a specified rate. However, a significant loophole remained in the system by keeping the “mechanized “ farm lands out of this reform proposal which led to large tracts of pastures being ploughed up to retain the pre-reform ownership.

Before the White Revolution much of the arid and semi-arid lands in Iran was under common property ownership. Each one of the 700 Iranian nomadic tribes has their customary lands and most villages also had rangelands for their grazing needs. Following the nationalization measure, forests and rangelands under both communal and individual ownership (supported by official ownership documents) were confiscated. While this fulfilled the Government’s major reform objective of depriving the tribal chiefs of political power and forcing the tribes and nomads to sedentarise, the overall impacts are considered by the civil society representatives to have adversely affected the social fabric and many of the customary institutions. Nomadic pastoralists were also barred by law from grazing their livestock’s without having grazing permits. Further, even with grazing permits there is no real ownership as the permits are only short term and refer to specific use rights.

According to civil society opinion, the reform measures altered the structure of rural society and livelihoods systems and weakened the customary institutions of natural resource management through communal practices and mutual aid associations. However, the measures could not offer better alternatives and replaced the concessional systems with more expensive and rigid bureaucratic system. Despite redistribution of 7 million hectares of

agricultural land (Out of a total 12 million hectares) the gap between large and small land owners is noted to have aggravated further. Access to land became insecure, rural to urban migration sharply increased and drive towards food self sufficiency became threatened, making Iran increasingly more dependent on imports of food.

A dialogue among various communities, government, civil society and academics organized through a national workshop suggested that the government ownership and management of land and other natural resources instead of solving land problems aggravated them further. Hence, the local and indigenous communities should control the arid land management projects and manage their rangelands on the basis of their own knowledge, skills and institutions. As the nomadic pastoralists appear to be the effective stewards of arid lands using customary approaches and institutions and provide best guarantees against desertification, they should be allowed to regain their land rights through reversing the nationalization process and reopening their migration routes for environmental conservation and assuring sustainability of their livelihoods. However, government and international donor support to improve the existing practices may be extended to up-scale the “Sustainable Livelihoods for Nomadic Pastoralists” projects and all policies aimed at sedentarising the nomadic pastoralists may be discontinued.

## **Nepal**

In view of wide spread poverty (31% of population below poverty line according to 2003/2004 National Living Standards Survey) and its significant geographical, ecological, ethnic and gender-wise variations, sustainable agricultural and broad-based rural development constitutes a priority development agenda in the Tenth Plan (2002-2007) of Nepal. While rural local development covers a wide array of programmes and activities, land reform and management figures prominently as one of the important components of rural development<sup>9</sup>.

### ***Agrarian Reform Policies and Initiatives***

In tandem with the broad national objectives of sustained economic growth and rural poverty alleviation through proper mobilization and utilization of available resources, the Government undertook specific policy measures and legislative initiatives from time to time to address the issues related to inequality in the distribution of land and other productive

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<sup>9</sup> Details on the national rural development policies, programmes and processes are available in Narayan, B.K. (2007).

natural resources. Some of the leading examples are Lands Act 2021 (1964), Forest Act 2049 (1993) and Water Resources Act 2049 (1992).

The Lands Act 2021 is being implemented since 1964 to reduce inequality in the distribution of agricultural land through fixation of maximum ceiling on individual land ownership and protecting land rights by land registration. Of the six amendments brought to the Act, the fourth amendment ensures ownership of 50% of land cultivated by a tenant and provision of credit facilities to purchase the owner's share if so desired by the tenant. Under the Land Act 2021, the land ceiling has been fixed at 5 hectare in the Hills (96 Ropanies) and 16 hectare (25 bighas) in Terai..

Considering the scarce availability of cultivable land (2.5 million hectares distributed equality among 3.4 million farm households) policies have been taken to allocate parts of forest lands as Community and Leasehold Forests to create forest based income and employment opportunities. The Forest Act 2049 of 1993 has made provisions to hand over management of some potentially productive forest to nearby communities. Additionally, patches of forests are also allocated to specific target groups of poor households residing nearby on a long term lease of 40 years.

The Water Resources Act 2049 of 1992 recognizes water users as legal entities and accords priority to agricultural uses of water over those of electrical, industrial, navigational, recreational and other uses. There have been necessary amendments to the country's civil code to enable women to have shares in the parental properties.

These agrarian policies and legislative initiatives led to increased access of the peasants to land and forest and the ownership of land and other resources and also contributed to poverty reduction. A number of specific programmes, such as Community Forestry Development Programme, Biogas Support Programme, Improved Immigration Programmes etc. are also being implemented to accelerate the poverty-oriented and sustained rural development and national economic growth.

However, the civil society groups, local level NGOs and various community based organizations through undertaking several case studies (ICARRD, 2006) identify selected adverse socio-economic consequences of the above initiatives which deserve close policy attention.

A case study presented in the ICARRD-2006, representing civil society perspectives<sup>10</sup> briefly reviews the policies and legislations concerning use of land, water and forest resources noted some of the shortcomings inherent in them. Because of the nation-building process being based on the principles of uniform state language, religion and identity and described variously as ‘Nepalization’, ‘Hinduization, or ‘Sanskritization’ the rights of the indigenous populations to their traditionally used resources have been curtailed through various policies and regulations relating to ownership, control and use of resources. This has further marginalized them and eroded their livelihoods practices and opportunities. Because of restrictions imposed on their specific property ownership and use of their traditional resources, evictions from their ancestral lands and due to lack of appropriate policies to preserve their traditional and alternative livelihoods opportunities, the ethnic, cultural and livelihoods diversities of the indigenous Nepalese people are greatly threatened.

A two-pronged strategy is thus recommended:

- (i) to secure rights to the ownership and traditional use of resources by the indigenous marginalized groups and
- (ii) help development of alternative livelihoods by enabling them to cope with the practices of the state, society and markets of the modern world.

## **Pakistan**

In view of inheriting a feudalistic land tenure system characterized by highly unequal and anti-developmental landownership pattern, Pakistan carried out three rounds of redistributive land reform programmes between 1959 and 1977. While all the three reform programmes implemented in 1959, 1972 and 1977 tried to address the problems of large-scale feudal land ownership and elimination of revenue-free estates (owned by the Jagirs), all of them allowed high retention limits. For example, the 1959 reform programme set the ceilings of 600 acres on irrigated land and 1000 acres of reunified land. These ceilings were respectively 150 acres and 300 acres in 1972 and 100 acres and 200 acres in 1977.

It was thus hardly surprising that the agrarian reform programmes were minimum in their redistributive impacts and in eliminating the power of the large landowner as a social class. Besides recovering rather small amount of surplus land (i.e. 1,804,013 hectares, less than half of the excess land) could only be redistributed to the tenants and small holders. Thus the primary objective of providing the poor and the marginal farmers with access to land under cooperative partnership was only partially achieved.

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<sup>10</sup> An executive summary is available in (ICARRD, 2006).

## Philippines

The Philippines had a chequered history of agrarian reform policy making since American occupation of the country in 1898 to address the problems of land concentration and inequitable distribution of land causing poverty and underdevelopment in the rural areas inhabited by about 73% of the Filipinos even to-day. The first real attempt to implement a redistributive land reform is marked by the passing of Presidential Decree No.2 (PD-2) by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972. According to PD No. 2 the whole country was declared as land reform area. Subsequently, PD No. 27 initiated the distribution of rice and corn lands to actual tillers through operations land transfer (OLD) whereby tenants were to become full owners after paying fifteen equal amortizations. However, Marcos's land reform attempt achieved only limited gains due to lack of support services and cumbersome process of obtaining land by the intended beneficiaries. Further, high retention limit (7 hectares) and limited coverage of the reform area (only rice and corn lands being distributed to the actual tiller though PD-27 issued later) also led to limited results<sup>11</sup>. Despite limited success, some observers are inclined to term PD. 27 as the springboard of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme introduced later.

By far the most comprehensive and ambitious programme of agrarian reform programme introduced in the Philippines in 1988 by the Corazon Aquino administration was the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) which was instituted through passing of the Republic Act No.6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law on June 10, 1988 after an year of immense debates by different stakeholder groups.

The primary objective of CARP is to promote an equitable distribution and ownership of land, based on the principles of providing (i) highest consideration to the welfare of the landless farmers and farm workers; (ii) due regard to the rights of landowners to just compensation; (iii) recognition to the rights of all relevant stakeholders (iv) support to agrarian and rural development, and (v) provision of support services to the programme beneficiaries.

CARP represents a highly organized and systematic reform programme by combining the features of social justice, participatory rural development and delivery of agrarian justice which includes both land distribution and delivery of support services. CARP's coverage and scope is also one of the broadest and comprehensive in the sense that it covers all agricultural

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<sup>11</sup> Attempts at ensuring land access by the poor and the landless and improving tenurial practices made by both colonial and post-colonial independent governments prior to Marcos in the Philippines are discussed in (ICARRD 2006). Indeed, Philippines experimented several agrarian reform laws since American colonization of the country which facilitated operationalisation of the agrarian reform programmes overtime.

lands, both private and public, and envisages redistribution of 8.01 million hectares to target beneficiaries of nearly 5 million farmers. The task of redistribution of lands lies with the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

CARP has thus three major components which are designed to achieve the economic and social development goals. The components are: land tenure improvement (LTI); programme beneficiaries development (PBD) and delivery of agrarian justice. The LTI encompasses land acquisition and distribution activities which include major processes such as land survey, land transfer, registration of awarded lands and issuance of certificates of land ownership awards to the agrarian reform beneficiaries.

PBD, on the other hand is the service delivery (to the Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries or ARBs) programme which involves provision of necessary support services (i.e. infrastructure, credit, technology, information, marketing etc) to increase productivity, enhance household incomes, create income earning opportunities and actively participate in community governance. These services are designed to improve the Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) and the agrarian reform to promote gender equality so that the women beneficiaries receive the same benefits and privileges as do their male counterparts.

Closely interlinked to LTI and PBD is the delivery of agrarian justice which involves the determination and adjudication of agrarian reform matters and delivery of free legal assistance to the ARBs affected by agrarian disputes.

### ***CARP Outcomes***

A CARP impact assessment study conducted in 2000 summarizes the following programme gains and impacts<sup>12</sup>:

- i) Changes in tenurial relations (increase in owner cultivatorship among ARB and Non-ARP population and decline in share tenancy and incidence of owner non-cultivators between 1989-1999). Between 1972 and 2005, the Government of the Philippines acquired 3, 695, 744 hectares of land through DAR.
- ii) Higher investments in farms and human capital development by the ARBs, indicating a more secure land tenure and secure land ownership.
- iii) Better perception of economic and social conditions and greater optimism about the future.

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in ICARRD, op. cit.

- iv) Reduction of the probability of being poor because of having better access to assets and thus obtaining greater coping capacity.
- v) Improvements in incomes and social capital.
- vi) Introduction of high-value added crops through arrangement of contract farming with corporate farms.
- vii) Contributions to peace and security and reduction of social conflicts, especially through reduction of peasant unrest.

The findings of a recently published (DAR and GTZ, 2006) comprehensive study jointly carried out by DAR and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) also broadly corroborate the important positive socio-economic impacts of CARP. Over two million farmers beneficiaries are reported to have received a plot of land of their own and roughly one million tenants received secure tenancy rights under the programme. With coverage of about 40 per cent of the rural population and 75 per cent of all cultivable land, the CARP is considered to be one of the most successful agrarian reform programmes of the recent times. Overall, the reform programme is noted to have improved wellbeing of the rural society and contributed significantly to socio-economic stability in the countryside.

However, despite making significant contribution towards improvement of the living conditions of a substantial part of the country's rural population much more remains to be done in terms of acquisition of privately owned land, inclusion of many more beneficiaries in the ARBs and more importantly bringing the rest of the overall reform programme to successful completion by the year 2008. In particular, it remains most important for the Government/DAR to demonstrate the political will and commitment to accelerate the compulsory land acquisition programme and efficient delivery of support services to the ARBs and other rural dwellers.

### ***Bottlenecks to the Agrarian Reform Efforts***

Side by side with obtaining important positive results, the CARP is also facing bottlenecks in many aspects relating to the implementation process. The most important among such impediments is the landlord's resistance which stalled the process of acquisition of secure land rights for the beneficiaries. Among other problems, distortion of land markets (i.e. illegal land transactions) lack of adequate credit availability and increasing backlog of land distribution are important.

Despite some shortcomings, the CARP has been unique in many ways. Being pursued in a participatory democratic way, it is forging strong unity among the various social stakeholders groups towards promoting pro-poor rural development and national economic growth.

## **Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka being subjected to two prolonged periods of colonial occupation under the Dutch and the British rules, having post-colonial governments with sharply distinct ideological inclinations and being characterized by different topographical features (i.e. dry-zone lands vs wet-zone lands) experienced a variety of agrarian reform measures carried under a maze of legal interventions. For example, the Crown Lands Encroachment Ordinance (CLEO), 1840, Waste Land Ordinance 1897, Land Development Ordinance (LDO), 1935, Land Acquisition Act No.9 of 1950, Land Tenure Reform Programmes of 1953, and Land Development (Amendment) Act of 1981 are some of the important milestones relating to overall land administration and management and land ownership and tenure reform policies and programmes.

Sri Lanka is a densely populated country with deteriorating land-people ratio due to increasingly high pressure of population on land, especially in the Wet-Zone area and overall limited availability of a sizeable non-plantation or smallholder sector. As a result, fragmentation of land, uneconomic (or miniature) size of holdings leading to low productivity and landlessness (11% of the farm operators in 1982) are associated with widespread poverty among people engaged in small-scale farming. Nearly a quarter of the population are reported to be in poverty and two-fourth of the poor are dependent on agriculture and related pursuits (HARTI, 2006).

### ***Agrarian Reform Policies and Implementation and Outcomes***

In order to achieve faster rate of growth of agriculture, create adequate farm and off-farm employment opportunities, reduce poverty and sustained rural development, the Sri Lankan Government has instituted a range of policies and programmes overtime to provide access to land, improve tenurial security and stabilise the land markets. Such policies and programmes included Dry Zone Resettlement policies/ programmes (i.e. Dry-Zone Irrigated Land Settlement Programme or DILSP) to relieve landlessness in the wet-zone, Regularization of Encroachments in the forest land's, Land Reform Programmes to ensure equitable land distribution, and Land Tenure Reforms to provide guarantee to the tenurial security for the tenant cultivators etc. which were introduced to remove structural debilities affecting the agricultural sector which comprises plantation and non-plantation or smallholding sector.

In Sri Lanka, the state exerts heavy influence in the land market as it directly or indirectly controls huge proportion of land mass of the country and significant proportion of land under

agriculture. However, the land acquired and distributed (i.e. 2052.88 acres between 1935-1985) under land reform laws and privatized or handed over to the private sector have not achieved desired results to solve the agrarian problems. For example, problems of lack of clear titles, consolidation of land into viable units, restricted land transfer rights, continuation of inefficient share cropping practices etc. have impeded the process of creation of a productive and prosperous smallholding sector and achievement of self-sustaining growth in the farming sector. Increasing landlessness and unemployment among the second and third generations of settlers is thus considered to have become inevitable due to slow growth of smallholding sector and lack of growth in the nonfarm sector.

## **Thailand**

Rural poverty alleviation through agrarian reform and rural development is a national priority agenda in Thailand. In the Governments national policy guidelines for 2005-2008 set out in the 9<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006), reduction of poverty and empowerment of Thai people is emphasized as an important national development goal.

To solve the problems of unequal landownership, landlessness and rural indebtedness causing widespread rural poverty in the rural areas, the Agricultural Land Reform Act (ALRA) was promulgated in 1975 and an Agrarian/(Land)Reform Programme (ALRP) was initiated in the same year to ensure access to land and reform the tenurial structures. The major objectives of the programme were to:

- a) convert the tenants and the landless to owner-operators;
- b) provide landownership to squatters in public lands and
- c) ensure fair share between tenants and leasers

These objectives were later revised to fit with the mission of Agrarian Land Reform Office (ALRO), a government agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative and responsible for distribution of acquired land among the intended beneficiaries. The revised objectives were to:

- a) distribute land to farmers according to ALRA
- b) enable farmers to access capital resources
- c) ensure self-development of the farmers in the land reform area and
- d) increase the perennial plantation, food resources and income generation activities and processes

### *ALRP Implementation and Outcomes*

The implementation of the land reform process in Thailand is carried out in three phases: preparatory, land distribution and land development activities. Through conducting pre-feasibility studies land reform areas (LRAs) where land reform law takes effect are selected on the basis of certain criteria (i.e. tenancy rates, productivity etc.) in both private and public lands. The land distribution phase involves partitioning of land into lots and allocating them to the farmers. While the land development phase can take place either before or after land redistribution, the emphasis is on carrying out various extension activities after land acquisition along with the provision of various support services including credit and infrastructure development services.

Since 1975, ALRO has been implementing the land reform policies of the Government designed to ensure access of the farmers and the poor as part of the broad strategy for poverty alleviation through sustainable rural development. The important tasks of ALRO include land allocation and land development for the farmers in the LRAs, ensure access to financial resources, support food security arrangements and increase the farmers incomes to make them economically self-reliant.

Since beginning till 2005, a total land area of 52 million rai was declared as land reform area, out of which 143 million (private and public) rai was allocated to 1.43 million farmers under the land reform programme. While this is considered significant achievements towards poverty alleviation and proper management of land and natural resources, efficiency of the implementation process is adversely affected by resistance from the rich farmers, lack of enough land and funds constraints.

### **Vietnam**

A series of land reform programmes carried in Vietnam since 1945 led to significant redistribution of land. However, de-collectivization programme began in 1978 and carried full-board in 1988 through Decree 100 and resolution 10 legalizing the renting of rice fields to cooperative members marked the most important turning point towards providing land use rights to the farmers. Depending on the number of family members, the land law of 1993 allocated land use rights to the farmers for a period of 20 years for annual crops and 50 years for perennial crops. This right could be traded, transferred, rented or used as a security and the size of plots was limited to three hectares.

The land redistribution programme reestablished family farming and led to spectacular results in terms of increased agricultural production, especially rice. From being a importer of food, Vietnam gradually emerged as one of the major exporters of rice and food products. Thus favourable agricultural and land policies can provide boost to agricultural production and national economic growth.

### **4.3 Impacts of Agrarian Reforms in the CMCs**

#### *Evidence of Land Reform Outcomes from selected CMCS*

Based on the estimates of proportion of agricultural land appropriated for distribution after land reform measures, the overall outcomes concerning increased access to land by the marginal farmers and the landless workers, reduction of inequality in landownership and solutions to the typical land relations problems such as lack of clear land titles, restricted land transfer rights and inefficient share-cropping practices etc. had not been equally satisfactory either globally or in the CMCs of the Asia-Pacific region<sup>13</sup>.

As observed from Table 7, based on limited information available from selected countries, the redistribution target of the reform programmes in most countries fell far short of the expectations. However, macro-level evidence suggest that a relatively more equitable distribution of land contributed significantly to poverty reduction in the countries of East and Southeast Asia compared to the countries in South Asia (Rosegrnt W. and Hazell, B.R. 2000). Persistence of widespread poverty and glaring inequalities in incomes and ownership of land in most South Asian countries suggest only limited impact of the agrarian reform measures carried out in these countries from time to time.

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<sup>13</sup> A critical evaluation of land reform impacts in 36 countries of the various regions of the world has been made by Sobhan R. (1993), based on land reform typologies and various objectives pursued by the reformers.

**Table 7: Post-Reform Situation of Rural Poverty, Land Concentration and Income Inequality**

<i>Countries</i>	<i>% of Rural Population in poverty</i>	<i>Distribution of land (Gini coefficient 2002)</i>	<i>Distribution of Income (Gini coefficient 2002)</i>	<i>Percentage of land distributed to the beneficiaries</i>
<b>Low-Income</b>				
Afghanistan				
Bangladesh	53 (2000)	0.62	0.32	< 0.1
India	30.2 (2000)	0.33	0.33	1.5 (1986)
Lao PDR	41.0 (1997)	0.39	0.37	
Myanmar	21.4 (1997)	0.77	-	
Nepal	34.6 (2004)	0.45	0.40	
Pakistan	34.8 (1999)	0.57	0.33	3.0 (1972)
Vietnam	35.6 (2002)	0.53	0.37	
<b>Middle Income</b>				
Indonesia	21.1 (2002)	0.46	0.34	
Iran	-	0.70	0.43	
Philippines	-	0.55	0.46	17.0 <sup>a</sup>
Sri Lanka	27.0 (1996)	-	0.33	41.0 <sup>b</sup>
Thailand	12.6 (2002)	0.47	0.43	13.9
<b>Upper-middle Income</b>				
Malaysia	12.4 (1996)	-	0.49	

Source: Sobhan, R. (1993), ICARRD (2006)

Notes: (a) % of land (paddy and corn land) acquired for distribution

(b) only plantation land. According to the latest country report (2006) on rural development, 24% of the total cultivable land (98, 368 acres) was vested with the Government for post-reform distribution.

In most of the South Asian countries (except the states of Kerala and West Bengal in India), the limited success achieved in acquiring and redistributing surplus land is ascribed to a complex of factors such as lack of strong political will, weak implementation mechanism, lack of up-to-date land records, and adequate financial system (Ahmed, S etc. al. 1992). Also lack of post-reform support services such as appropriate infrastructure facilities, technology, information, education and training, credit facilities and marketing assistance needed to sustain the escape from poverty turn them vulnerable to counter-productive reform outcomes.

Additionally, various legal difficulties, resistance from the surplus landowners and market imperfections etc. which constitute the institutional mechanism, delays the land acquisition and transfer process and slows down the overall land reform implementation process and impedes the reform outcomes.

Agrarian reforms carried in the Asian region in the last three decades have generally aspired to redistribute surplus land and improve tenurial arrangements to accelerate pro-poor and equitable economic growth and provide greater security and better terms to the tenants.

In the majority of the cases, the earlier reforms concentrated more on redistribution of surplus land and provide relatively less attention to the issue of tenancy rights, sharecropping and other land right issues. The reform process has so far been 'top-down' involving government administrative machinery as opposed to being decentralized, market-friendly and strategic

partnership oriented with participation of the civil society and other private sector stakeholders.

Though the reform process helped to eliminate feudal and large absentee landowning interests to a great extent in the countries of South-East and South Asia, it never cut deep enough to eliminate social differentiation and inequality and existence of intermediaries between the owners and tenants. Thus, the scope for a more modest and politically expedient tenancy reforms backed by strategic support from civil society and other relevant stakeholders still remains and are expected to provide significant poverty reduction benefits.

## **5. Institutional Mechanism for Implementation of Agrarian Reforms in the CMCs**

It is well documented in many studies (Jha, S.C., 1987) that shortcomings in the institutional framework have hindered effective implementation of rural development programmes in many Asian countries. Thus, development and functioning of an effective institutional framework is especially important for design and implementation of agrarian reform programmes in the CMCs.

.In view of the complex economic and social situations affecting the rural economies of most agriculture dominated countries, the governmental entities have to assume the leading role in the design and implementation of agrarian reform policies by way of providing necessary political, institutional and legal support. While cross-sectoral and inter-institutional efforts are involved in the task of integrating agricultural development with the broader framework of rural development, the ministry of the Agriculture and Rural Development (as well as the Ministry of Land in many countries) acts as the catalytic government agency in implementing the agrarian reform policies in most countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

A brief review of the implementation process in the CMCs is attempted below to highlight their efficiencies and outcomes

### **Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Land (MOL) plays the key role in formulating and implementing policies relating to land reforms and other land related issues such as land settlement and management and land surveys, maintenance of records, collection of revenues etc. Three attached departments of the government within the MOL, namely, the Land

Appeal Board, Land Reform Board and the Directorate of Land Records and Surveys perform the land administration and management functions according to mandate given by the Government. Weak and ineffective implementation of the legislative measures reflecting lack of strong political will and poor administrative/governance machinery inhibited desired results from the land reform measures. Lack of adequate financial support, complicated legal procedures and non-availability of exhaustive land records further weakened effectiveness of the overall land administration and management systems.<sup>14</sup>

Besides direct land distribution through land reforms, the MOL is currently implementing a rural development programme, called the “Adarsha Gram Project” II (or the Ideal Village Project) which is designed to alleviate rural poverty among the landless and homeless rural people of Bangladesh. As of February 2005, 25,385 landless families in 427 Adarsha Grams have been rehabilitated under the programmes. A Homestead of 0.08 acres with a house, community facilities and various socio-economic support facilities is provided to the programme beneficiaries.

Irrespective of the type and nature of land reforms, the access to and control of land by the poor cannot be properly ensured without organization of the beneficiaries at the local levels by the local stakeholders including government bodies, NGOs, civil societies and farmers’ organizations/peasant organizations. Developments along these lines are still at a nascent stage in Bangladesh. Only selected NGOs are organizing advocacy and awareness campaigns for distribution of Government Khas lands (Char lands in particular) among the landless in a few coastal areas of Bangladesh. However, participation and support of the NGOs and other private sector activist groups is important to create pressure from below against the powerful and vested landed interest, and of course, to go beyond lukewarm administrative efforts alone.

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<sup>14</sup> Detail on these issues relating to Bangladesh are available in Siddiqui, K.U. (1997)

## **India**

Land being a state subject, land reform experiences in India have been significantly varied at the national and regional levels in terms of enactment of laws and implementation of various reform measures. For example, the states of Kerala (having a rich history of broad-based social reform programmes) and West Bengal (where broad-based grassroots level participation in the reform process has been a key to land access by the poor) have been particularly aggressive in transferring land to the poor and the landless.<sup>15</sup>

In West Bengal, the distinctive feature of land distribution has been participation of the village people through their elected panchayet leaders in identifying factious land owners and selecting the beneficiaries. However, while the left-leaning government is noted to have strong political will towards implementing a genuinely redistributive land reform programme the commitment is regarded to have remained confined to administrative and institutional limits. As a result, fundamental changes in the agrarian relations did not take place. Only an impetus was provided for the development of peasant-capitalism replacing the feudal land relations system (Saha, B.K. 2002). In Karnataka and Maharastra States, populist policies led to successive land reforms that benefited castes comprising mainly the poor tenants (IFAD, 2000).

## **Nepal**

Land administration and management in Nepal is vested in the Ministry of land Reform and Management. However, the overall functioning of the ministry is noted to be too much revenue-oriented with revenue department and District Revenue Offices handling the tasks of land administration and assessment of land taxes.

Whatever the level of operational efficiency, the rural development administration system in Nepal is implemented through a highly decentralized institutional network. Under the Decentralization Act 2039 of 1982 and Decentralization Rules Act of 1984, the entire responsibility of plan formulation, resource mobilization and plan implementation and supervision relating to land –access matters was delegated to the District and Local Panchayats.

In addition, local bodies, such as, District Development Committees (DDCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs) are entrusted to carry out various development activities

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<sup>15</sup> Some State governments are also reported to have formed reform implementation Committee in which rural poor were represented to assist the government in implementation of the land reform programmes (Ahmed,S. et al, 1988).

concerning rural development. Both DDCs and VDCs are run by elected representatives of people. A large number of NGOs and local community organizations also work at the district and village levels along side the Government agencies towards implementing the local development programmes in a decentralized participatory framework.

## **Sri Lanka**

State ownership and control of land in Sri Lanka has been quite extensive due to hierarchical compulsion created by prolonged colonial occupation of the country and its varied topographical features. The Sri Lankan Government instituted a range of policies and programmes including agrarian reform legislations overtime to provide the small holders with access to land, improve tenurial security and stabilize land markets. However, a lot more remains to be done, to create a prosperous smallholding agricultural sector based on clear land titles and undisputed landownership. Broad-based reform of the agrarian relations system remains therefore as an important prerequisite for sustained agricultural and rural development.

## **Philippines**

The agrarian reform process in the Philippines has been most colourful with many interesting features. It has evolved continuously through the Philippines post-colonial history. However, the comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme (CARP) marked the most important landmark in the prolonged agrarian reform history because of being one of the broadest and most comprehensive reform programme in coverage and scope. A very distinctive feature of CARP is that it integrates both land distribution and delivery of post-reform support services which are emphasized as characteristics of a genuinely distributive land reform aimed at ensuring equity, social justice and pro-poor and sustained rural development.<sup>16</sup>

The process of implementation of the CARP also seems to have been unique in terms of having a structured institutional framework. While the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is the lead specialized agency for implementing CARP, it is supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Land Registration Authority (NLRA), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Public Works and Highway (DPLH), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and other government financing institutions in carrying out the tasks of land

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<sup>16</sup> However, the progress of implementation of the CARP has been slow due to strong political opposition, administrative weakness and financial constraints (Hayami, et. Al. 1990).

acquisition and distribution and making provisions for support services to both farmer-beneficiaries and displaced land owners.

To coordinate the tasks of implementing of the CARP, a Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) headed by the Philippine President became the apex policy making body in all matters relating to agrarian reform. A Provincial Agrarian Reform Coordinating Committee was also formed to coordinate and monitor the implementation of CARP in the seventy six provinces of the country.

Further, to ensure active participation and support at the grassroots level, a Barangay (village) Agrarian Reform Council (BARC) was created by DAR which was primarily mandated to mediate, conciliate or arbitrate agrarian conflicts and issues brought to it for resolution. The BARC comprising of representatives of the farmers, farm workers, agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) and non-ARBs, agricultural cooperatives, NGOs as well as the DAR, DA, DENR and LBP had ensured a decentralized and broad-based participation in the CARP implementation process.

A few remarks on the integrated area development approach for delivering social services to promote development of dynamic, and vibrant agrarian reform communities (ARCs) is warranted at this point. Under the ARC approach, effective coordination, functioning and partnership between DAR, local governments unit (LGUs), NGOs and other people's organization (POs) has been a critical element determining effectiveness of delivery of support services to both ARBs and ARCs as focal points of development interventions engaged in farm and non-farm entrepreneurial activities. As noted before, the four major components of the ARC development strategy include land tenure improvement (LTI), social infrastructure and local capacity building (SILCAB), sustainable area-based local enterprise development (SARED) and basic social services development (BSSD)<sup>17</sup>. To ascertain ARC progress in these areas, DAR conducts ARC level of development assessment (or ALDA) on the basis of which deficiencies could be noted in four important areas: (i) organization maturity; (ii) economic and physical infrastructure support systems; (iii) farm productivity and income; and (iv) gender and development. Inadequate synchronization of targets and priorities, duplications of functions and organization tension, lack of integration between government service delivery agencies, inadequate local skills and resources etc. were identified as the major problems affecting efficiency of the overall ARC operationalisation process.

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<sup>17</sup> For details on the types of activities carried out and the expected benefits to be derived by both ARC and non-ARC communities, one may see, DAR (2006).

As DAR has developed into a long-experienced government implementation agency through providing full range of land acquisition, distribution, adjudication functions as well as provision of agricultural, health and information support services under the CARP, the government recognizes the need for keeping it as a full-fledged department not only to continue its present mandates but also to take over the functions of a new rural development entity after completion of its land acquisition and development functions by the end of 2008. Thus, in the end, a new department of Agriculture and Rural Development is envisaged to emerge and function as the pioneering agricultural and rural development organization.

## **Thailand**

The agricultural and land reform office (ALRO) under the Ministry of Agricultural and Cooperatives (MOAC) implements the land reform policy to provide access to land to the farmers and the poor in Thailand.

Besides ALRO, other agencies participating in the land allocation and distribution programmes include Cooperatives Promotion Department (CPD), Royal Forest Department (RFD), Department of Public Welfare (DPW), Department of Lands (DL) and the War Veteran Organizations (WVO). The land reform implementation area includes private lands where tenancy programmes exist and the public lands where illegal encroachment takes place.

The land reform implementation process is carried in three phases: (i) preparation phase; (ii) distribution phase and (iii) development phase. Based on the “sufficiency economy” philosophy and sustainable development strategies as stated in the Ninth Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006), the major responsibilities of ALRO include:

- i. allocation of both public and private lands;
- ii. infrastructure development in the reform area; and
- iii. increase of incomes through improvements of agricultural production and extension of support for farm and non-farm development activities.

There are also some other projects organized and implemented at the initiatives of the King along with ALRO for poverty alleviation and rural development. However, interaction of various internal and external factors impedes fuller implementation and achievement of the agrarian reform programmes. Pressure of population, income gaps, limited land availability, environmental conservation etc. are some of the major problems inhibiting the overall implementation process.

### *Building Capacities of the Government Institutions and Developing Coalition with other Stakeholders*

What the preceding section suggests is that the issue of effective rural governance is vitally important to the successful reform implementation process. Strong local level capacity building can play an important role in strengthening government accountability and transparency and ensure broader grassroots level participation in the reform process. Improved public administrative system based on good governance and strategic partnership and coalition building among the government, civil society and NGOs are the necessary prerequisites in this regard.

The modest success of agrarian reform efforts carried out either by the government with support from civil society or civil society/farmers' movements lacking necessary institutional and public support on the other hand tend to suggest the need for finding new rules to reform and fostering multi-stakeholder alliances. What are in fact needed are strong alliances between governments and civil society organizations coupled with the moral and financial support from the international donor community.

As a regional inter-governmental think tank and service providing organization, CIRDAP promote regional cooperation among the CMCs in the field of agrarian reform and broad-based rural development. The proposed cooperation can take place in the shape of sharing and learning from each others knowledge and experiences in the areas of common concern which would assist in better planning, effective implementation and avoidance of mistakes and shortcomings.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

This brief overview of the status of agrarian reform and rural development in CMCs and other issues discussed at length in the RDR 2007 suggests that while the CMCs have in general made significant strides over the last two decades in terms of GDP growth and rise in per capita incomes, they are yet to go a long way towards reducing poverty, achieving MDGs and fulfilling aspirations of the population in improving their living standards and quality of life.

The continuing high incidence of rural poverty, income inequality and various forms of social deprivation is a cause for concern. This in turn, calls for further emphasis on raising agricultural growth, encouraging development of non-farm activities and accelerating diversification and growth of the national economy. The need is thus for a broad-based and sustained rural development poised to meeting the challenges and opportunities arising from market liberalization, reduction of state control, resurgence of democratic and human rights and a burgeoning of grass-roots organizations and new social movements.

On the other hand, while all CMCs are pursuing rural development and poverty alleviation policies using different approaches they are often fragmented, project based approaches. A coordinated and holistic approach is needed to find an effective way forward.

Therefore, the issues of agrarian reform, pro-poor and sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation are considered as inextricably interlinked elements of both national and international policies and development agendas.

Keeping in view the exploitation of linkage potentials between growth in agriculture and that in the non-agricultural sector, a sustained and broad-based rural development strategy must also give priority to promotion of non-farm employment activities and development of small and medium enterprises.

Of the various factors that brought land reform at the centre stage of development discourse globally and underscore the justification of the “new wave” reforms include a combination of the ‘productionist’, (efficiency) ‘welfarist (pro-poor) and ‘political’ expediency arguments. And in so far as rural development consists of diversified occupational pursuits of the peasants and the employment seekers in the rural areas, creation of non-agricultural wage and self-employment, petty business and trades in the rural setting, agrarian reform has to constitute a strategic vector of the proposed socially inclusive and sustainable rural development strategy.

The most important arguments favouring broad-based agrarian reforms include conflict prevention and resolution, productive efficiency, economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction, equity and social justice. These are macro level impacts following from successfully implemented reform measures which lead to overall high national economic growth, but do not originate directly from agrarian reforms per se. A truly redistributive reform carried under a conducive policy environment (i.e. favourable macro and sectoral polices including in particular, agriculture and trade) creates cumulative impacts via a chain of positive changes which link agrarian reform with economic performance.

However, our primary concern being poverty alleviation through sustainable rural development, we have focused more on the short and medium term impacts of agrarian reforms, such as land redistribution, tenancy improvements and providing the poor with access to productive assets including land.

Agrarian reforms, carried in the CMCs at different times and at different stages of their development have in general been centralized, government-led operations. The reform process has been by and large top-down, involving government administrative machinery as opposed to being decentralized, market-friendly and strategic partnership-oriented with participation of the civil society and other private stakeholders including the reform beneficiaries. The Philippines appears to be an exception to this general trend by carrying out a reasonably decentralized and participatory agrarian reform programme and thus achieving relatively better results and outcomes. For the CMCs, emulating the Philippines example with necessary modifications may be suggested as a model case of considerably successful participatory reform programmes.

The overall implementation process of the agrarian reform programmes in the Asian region has been slow and achieved only modest results, especially in the South-Asian countries except in selected states of India (i.e. Kerala, West Bengal and Karnataka). Strong political backing with deeper commitment of the government and participatory reforms have been the keys to better success in these Indian States.

Though the reform attempts helped to eliminate feudal and large absentee land-owning interests in the countries of the Asian region, it could not cut deep enough to eliminate social differentiation, unequal land ownership and existence of intermediaries between the tenants and the owners. The case for carrying a “Second Wave” reforms agenda thus remains in many of these countries.

The limited success achieved in acquiring enough surplus lands and redistributing them among the intended beneficiaries is ascribed to a complex of factors. These include lack of strong political will, weak implementation mechanism and absence of adequate financial support. Additionally, various legal difficulties, resistance from the surplus landowners and imperfections of the land market (impeding voluntary sale and purchase of lands), also acted as formidable institutional barriers.

The extent of success achieved in implementing agrarian reforms is found to be significantly determined by the presence of an efficient institutional mechanism implementing the reform agendas. Lack of a strong political government, a highly coordinated administrative machinery and a decentralized and participatory governance system are the important

characteristics of an ideal institutional framework. Such institutional set-up for handling the reform programmes is lacking in most CMCs except in the Philippines and Nepal.

## **Policy Recommendations**

While a faster and broad-based growth of the rural economy comprising balanced development of both agriculture and non-farm activities remains the key to accelerated national economic growth in the CMCs, agrarian reform needs to constitute a strategic vector of such an inclusive and territorial growth strategy.

Promoting equitable access to land and ensuring secure tenancy rights is indeed an important prerequisite for high and sustained agricultural growth. Similarly, creation of employment and income earning opportunities in the rural areas through development of non-farm activities is important for reduction of persistent rural poverty, rural-urban income inequality, and raising socio-economic welfare of the rural population.

The need and scope for modest redistributive land reforms and politically expedient tenancy reforms backed by strategic support from the civil society and other private sector stakeholders still remains and are expected to provide significant poverty reduction benefits. The agrarian reform typology being suggested here is the “new wave” reform which is decentralized and market-driven and based on the strategic considerations of sustainable rural development, social justice and democratization. Henry Bernstein terms this as “rolling back the state” combined with trade liberalization and globalization.

In contrast to the classic/conventional redistributive land reform system, the “new wave” reform is also proposed to be far more comprehensive, including reforms of land tenure and property rights, market assisted or negotiated and backed by the provisions of adequate support and extension services to the reform beneficiaries. Such reforms characterized by participation of the civil society groups, NGOs and other stakeholders are more participative, democratic and much less coercive with better chances of success.

However, irrespective of the reform types, it has to be recognized that consideration and preservation of customary cultural practices, local knowledge systems, rights and needs of the marginalized groups such as women and indigenous people, diverse models of family farming and the common use of natural resources must be protected while carrying out agrarian reforms. Otherwise the outcomes may be adverse, as illustrated by the case of pastoralists in Iran.

It was commonly agreed by the ICARRD panelists that equality between men and women in regards to access to and control over land and other productive resources should be taken care of. Giving importance to the issues of food sovereignty (and hence small family farming systems as opposed to the large-scale commercial farming) and rights based approach to agrarian reform and rural development should also be stressed.

Besides design, direction and scope and coverage of reforms, a successful implementation of the land reform programmes is critically dependent upon strong political will and power and also sustained commitment from governments and other stakeholders participating in the reform process.

The issue of effective rural governance is vitally important to the successful reform implementation process. Strong local level capacity building can play an important role in strengthening government accountability and transparency and ensure broader grassroots levels participation in the reform process. An improved public administration system based on good governance and strategic partnership and coalition building among the government, civil society and NGOs are the necessary prerequisites in this regard.

In view of the persistent poverty among an overwhelming majority of the rural population, widespread underemployment and declining real wages in the rural areas, the resurrection of redistributive land reform measures also seems inevitable in most CMCs, especially those suffering from highly inequitable land distribution patterns.

Many CMCs on the other hand exhibit very low land –man ratios, limiting but not ruling out the scope of re-distributive land reforms, including allocation of public lands to the poor and marginalized populations. Women’s access to land is on the other hand restricted due to inheritance laws sanctioned by religion, even though changes in these laws are also feasible, as exemplified by the case of Nepal. Inheritance laws on the other hand, combined with population pressure, is a cause for increased fragmentation of holdings, making these economically unviable. This raises the important question as to whether private ownership and use of land, especially through inheritance needs to be restricted to those who till the land, as has been the focus of tenurial reforms in some countries with regard to sharecropped land.

Access to land and agrarian reform are therefore important, but challenging issues, which needs serious commitment and bold steps on the part of governments of all countries, including that of CMCs, requiring considerable alliance building with civil society groups and other stakeholders.

It should also be emphasized that agricultural pricing policies are crucially important to farm profitability, besides extension services and supply of inputs. Rising costs of agricultural production associated with oil price hikes, withdrawal of input subsidies, as part of pro-market policies, have put considerable pressure on farmers, and have also adversely affected consumers in many CMCs. The non-farm sector has been similarly affected by increased import competition. These policies, the WTO framework and the changing external environment, therefore need to be seriously reviewed, and appropriate action taken in this regard.

Lastly, as an intergovernmental organization mandated to help the CMCs to promote rural development and reduce poverty, CIRDAP can play a significant role both nationally and regionally by working as a source of knowledge generation and dissemination regarding a comprehensive and holistic rural development process with special emphasis on agrarian reform issues, rural employment generation and rural governance and decentralization processes in the CMCs.

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