



DIGITAL FINANCIAL EDUCATION & COUNSELLING OF DAIRY FARMERS IN ASSAM

[Initiative under Assam Agribusiness & Rural Transformation (APART), ARIAS, Govt. of Assam, with the support of the World Bank]

Financial Education and Counseling of Dairy Farmers in Assam Digitally

[Initiative under Assam Agribusiness & Rural Transformation (APART), ARIAS, Govt. of Assam, with the support of the World Bank]



Implemented by FEC Consortium, led by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), Council for Social and Digital Development (CSDD) with Fair Climate Fund (FCF), and Indian Institute of Bank Management (IIBM) as consortium and Knowledge partners.



@2023

Guwahati| Assam| India

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Summary | 4 |
| 1. Introduction - About the APART FEC assignment | 6 |
| 2. FEC Components & Methodology | 7 |
| 3. Pilot Phase Reach Out (Jan - March 2023) | 8 |
| 4. Cycle 1 Reach Out (May-July 2023) | 9 |
| 5. Cycle 2 Phase Reach Out (August - October 2023) | 10 |
| 6. Outcome | 11 |
| 7. Key Challenges & Learnings | 12 |
| 8. Way Forward | 13 |
| Annexure | 14 |

SUMMARY 2023

| Pilot Activities | Outputs with narrative | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Activities | Pilot Phase (Jan - March 2023) | Cycle 1 (May - July 2023) | Cycle 2 (Aug - October 2023) |
| Total Dairy Farmers reached out | 560 | 447 | 1109 |
| Male Dairy Farmers reached out | 89% (498) | 56 % (250) | 55% (605) |
| Female Dairy farmer reached out | 11 % (62) | 44 % (197) | 45% (504) |
| Smartphone users | 127 (23 %) | 447 | 1109 |
| Base phone users | 433 (77) % | The focus is on smartphone users | The focus is on smartphone users |
| Total farmers registration | Out of 560 dairy farmers who attended the Krisarthak workshops, 548 farmers were registered digitally | Out of 447 dairy farmers who attended the Krisarthak workshops, all 447 farmers were registered digitally | Out of 1109 dairy farmers who attended the Krisarthak workshops, 1109 farmers were registered digitally |
| Bittiya Sakhi Mobile Chatbot LMS Registration for communication-related to Financial Education and Counseling | 122 registered in the Bittiya Sakhi Chatbot. Farmers were registered in the Krisarthak Mobile Chatbot | 447 were registered in the Bittiya Sakhi Chatbot. | 1109 were registered in the Bittiya Sakhi Chatbot. |
| Base phone Registration | 433 farmers (77.32%) farmers, who attended the workshops, had | The focus has shifted on smartphone users | The focus has shifted on smartphone users |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | base phones, out of which 426 farmers registered through a separate Kobo app to capture their details for any future communication related to Financial Education and Counselling | only for effective FEC Delivery | only for effective FEC Delivery |
| Districts covered | 2 (Baksa, Barpeta) | 11 (Baksa, Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Golaghat, Hailakandi, Sivasagar, Nagaon, Morigaon, Kamrup Rural, Jorhat) | 13 (Baksa, Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Goalpara, Hailakandi, Kamrup M, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Nagaon, Nalbari, Morigaon, Kamrup Rural) |
| Bittiya Sahayaks / Financial Facilitators | 8 Bittiya Sahayaks (7 male, 1 female) | 45 Bittiya Sahayaks | 62 Bittiya Sahayaks |
| Development Blocks covered | 8 | 31 | 40 |
| Value Chains covered | 1 (Dairy) | 1 (Dairy) | 1 (Dairy) |
| Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCSs) | 27 Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCSs) were covered across 2 districts | 11 Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCSs) were covered across 11 districts | 18 Dairy Cooperative Societies (DCSs) were covered across 13 districts |
| Certificate downloads after module completion | 70 (57%) out of 122 Chatbot FEC platform registration | 366 (82%) out of 447 Chatbot FEC platform registration | 1052 (94%) out of 447 Chatbot FEC platform registration |
| Counselling queries received through the Farmers Financial Health Survey (FFHS) and addressed | NA | NA | NA |

1. INTRODUCTION

The KriSarthak Financial Education and Counselling (FEC) assignment, is being implemented under APART, ARIAS Society, and supported by the World Bank. This assignment relates to the APART Project's Sub-component C (iii) 'Facilitating access to and responsible use of financial services.' In this, the focus is and shall be on one of the three core activities - **financial education and counselling (FEC)**. This FEC assignment aims to provide financial education and counselling services to many project farm beneficiaries and **reach out to 2,50,000 farmers in core value chains, including dairy, during 2022-2024.**

For this assignment, **financial services are defined to include payments, savings, credit, insurance, and pensions.** Credit includes agriculture credit and credit services for other lifecycle needs; insurance includes agriculture insurance as well as insurance for other key risks faced by target beneficiaries. The services are expected to be tailored to the needs of target beneficiaries and particularities of the primary value chain or value chain groups in which they are primarily active



Core Beneficiaries

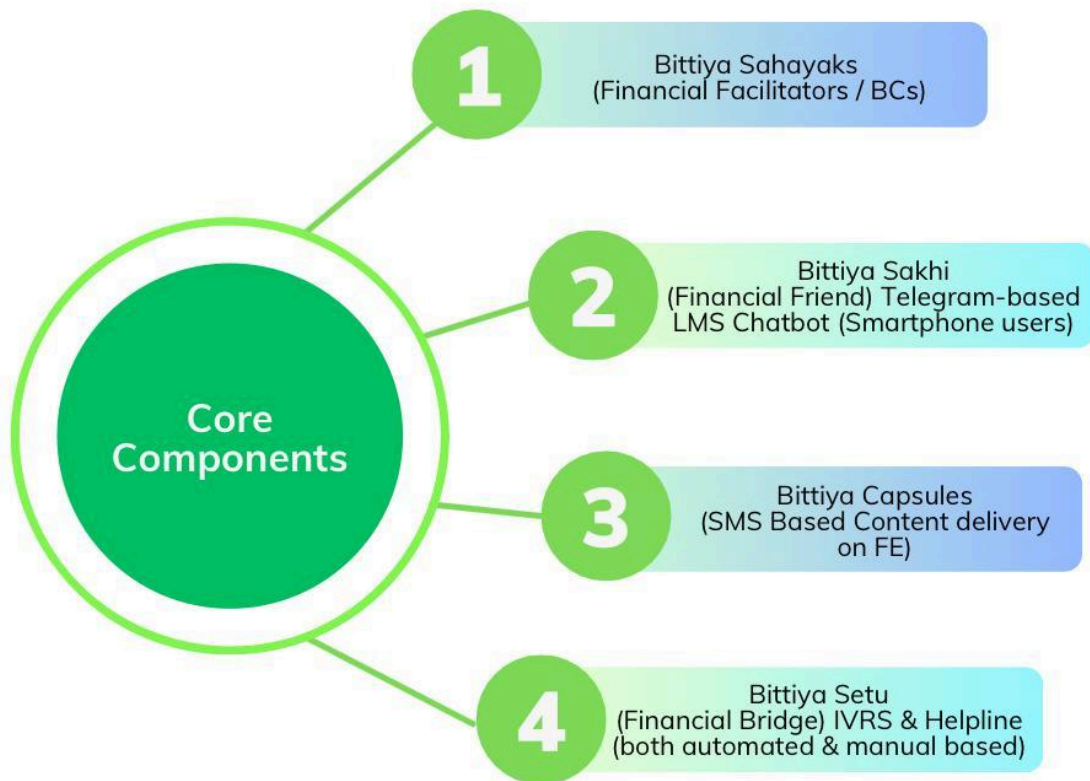
The target beneficiaries are members of the **Farmers Producers Companies (FPCs), Farmers Interest Group (FIG)s and Dairy Co-operatives Societies (DCS)** supported under APART.

This assignment aims to develop and implement an ICT-based FEC program for target beneficiaries to enhance their **financial inclusion, defined as their access to and prudent use of appropriate financial services.**

The desired outcome is that the beneficiaries of the FEC programme have an **improved understanding of the financial services that they have access to and have a strengthened capability to better access and use these services responsibly.**

2. THE FEC COMPONENTS & METHODOLOGY

The 4 components of Krisarthak are:

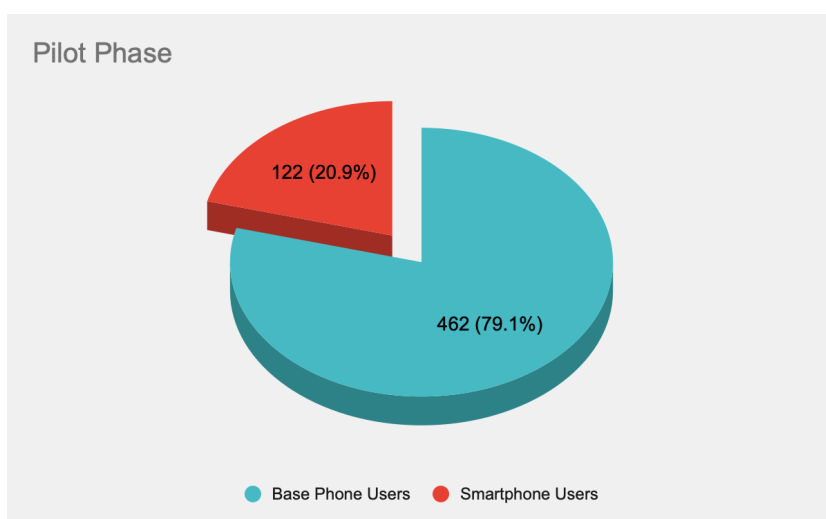
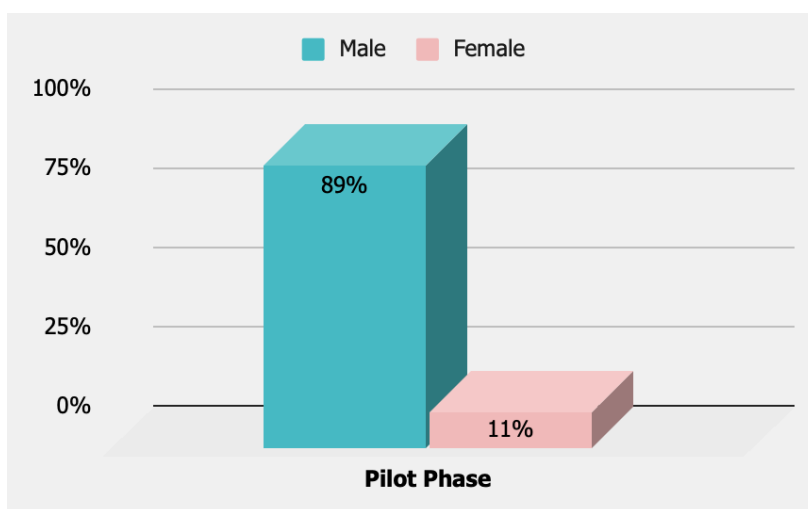


3. PILOT PHASE REACH OUT

(Jan - March 2023) of Dairy Farmers

The pilot phase was conducted from January to March 2023. With a focus on Baksa and Barpeta districts, **160 orientation workshops were held, including 27 dedicated to only dairy farmers.** This laid the groundwork for the program's core focus.

During the pilot phase, it reached 560 dairy farmers, primarily male (89%) but also including female participants (11%). A significant aspect of the pilot phase was the inclusion of farmers with diverse technological access. While 23% of the farmers were smartphone users, 77% used base phones.

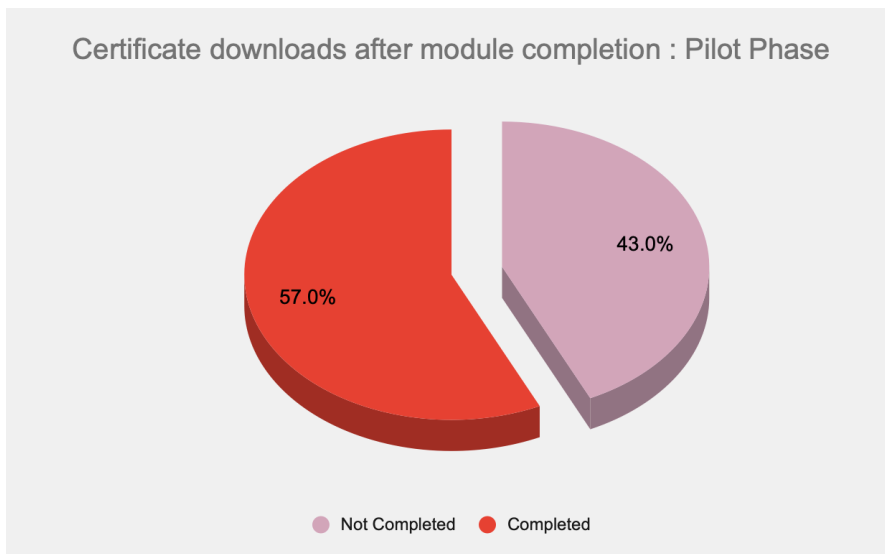


548 out of 560 dairy farmers were digitally registered during the workshops. Among these, 122 farmers were registered on Bittiya Sakhi Mobile Chatbot and a large number of farmers (77.32%) with base phones opted for registration through a separate Kobo app, demonstrating

adaptability in capturing data for future outreach.

Geographically, the pilot covered **8 development blocks in Baksa and Barpeta.** 8 Bittiya Sahayaks, mostly male (7), facilitated financial education initiatives.

Focusing on the dairy value chain, the program engaged with 27 Dairy Cooperative Societies. Encouragingly, 57% of Chatbot FEC platform registrations resulted in certificate downloads after module completion.



Overall, the pilot phase successfully laid a strong foundation for the program's wider impact, focusing on engagement, digital inclusion, and farmer education within the dairy value chain. Its achievements paved the way for the

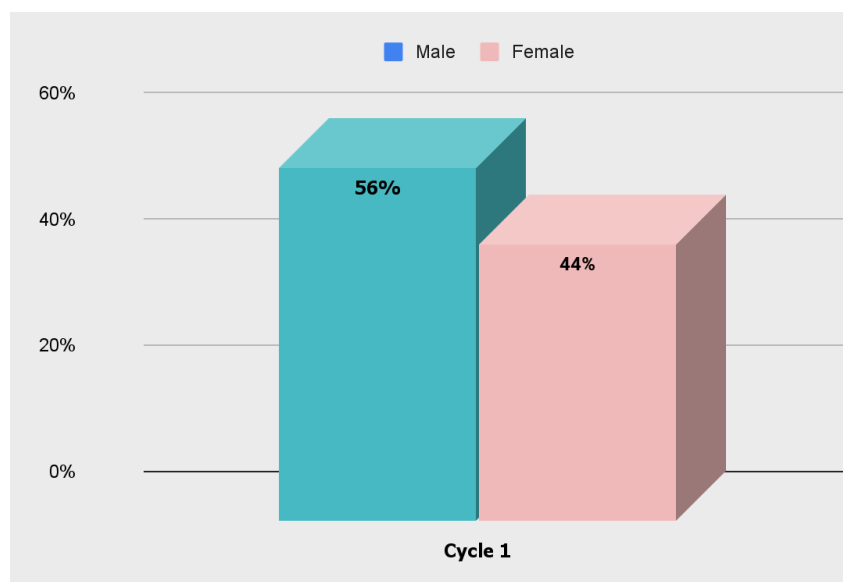
program's growth and positive outcomes in subsequent cycles.



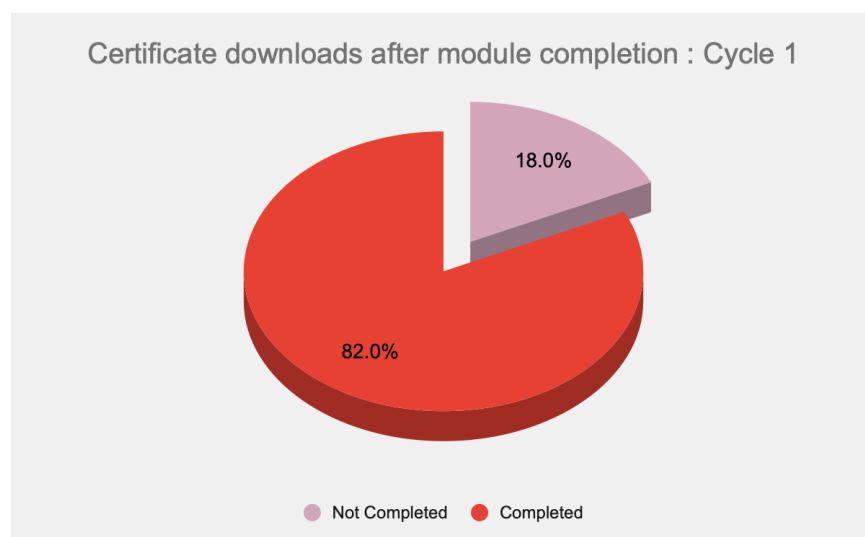
4. CYCLE 1 PHASE REACH OUT (May - July 2023)

Cycle 1 of the dairy farmer reached out successfully and engaged with 447 farmers, split almost evenly between males and females engaging 44% female & 56% male Dairy Farmers.

Geographically, Cycle 1 spanned across 11 districts, covering 31 development blocks, and focused specifically on 11 Dairy Cooperative Societies.



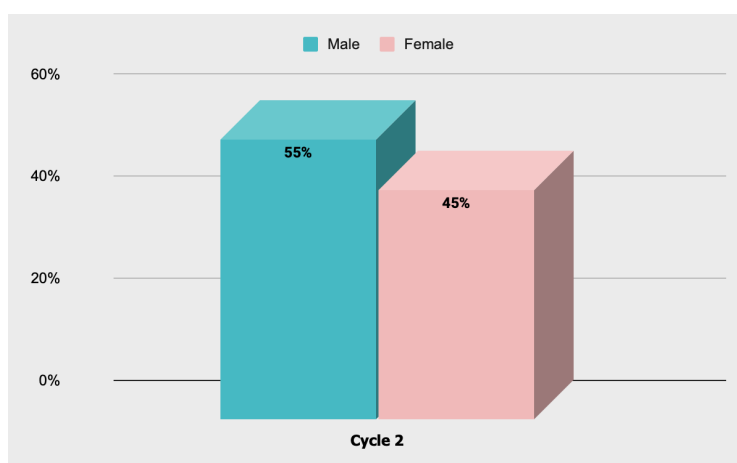
All 447 participating dairy farmers were digitally registered on the Bittiya Sakhi Mobile Chatbot. The implementation saw 45 Bittiya Sahayaks (Financial Facilitators) actively contributing to the program.



By the end of cycle 1, an impressive 82% of farmers who registered on the Chatbot FEC platform downloaded certificates after completing modules, reflecting the effectiveness of the program's educational content.

5. CYCLE 2 PHASE REACH OUT (August - October 2023)

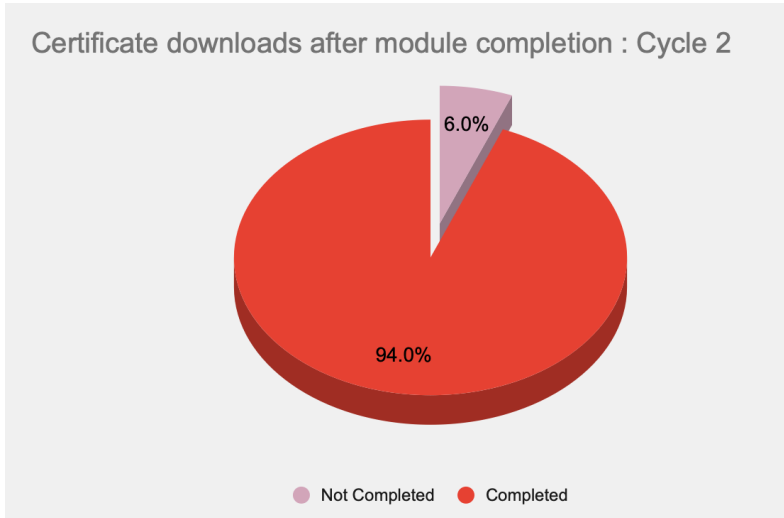
During the Cycle 2 of the program, running from August to October, witnessed impressive progress in both farmer engagement and digital adoption. During this phase a total of **1,109 dairy farmers were reached out with 55% male and 45% female farmers.**



All the 1109 participating dairy farmers got digitally registered on the Bittiya Sakhi Mobile Chatbot for financial education and counselling. The implementation also saw **the involvement of 62 Bittiya Sahayaks** (Financial Facilitators).

The program **covered 13 districts**, including several new additions like Goalpara, Lakhimpur, and Nalbari. This wider reach is complemented by an increase to **40 development blocks and engaged with 18 Dairy Cooperative Societies across the 13 districts.**

By the end of cycle 2, an impressive **94% of Chatbot FEC platform registrations resulted in certificate downloads** after module completion. This signifies the program's success in delivering valuable content and facilitating positive learning outcomes among the dairy farmers in Cycle 2.



6. Key Initial Outcome

01. Increased Knowledge of Financial Products & Services

It has been observed that there has been an increased understanding of financial products and services. With 68 % of dairy farmers registered in the Bittiya Sakhi chatbot completing all the 8 modules, it is evident that there has been a rise in knowledge about financial products & services. Timely feedback collected from the farmers reflects this trend along with other engagement processes including the call centres.

02. Applied Knowledge:

Feedback taken after financial counselling sessions has shown a rise in farmers acting on the advice given by the financial experts during the counselling session. Farmers have either gone to the banks for additional information or to avail of services.



7. Learnings & Lessons

The Pilot Phase, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2 of the Krisarthak program have all been implemented, and each of these three phases has brought forth important insights and lessons that have contributed to the program's expansion and efficacy.

- **Digital Literacy Challenges:** The findings indicate that a significant number of DCS farmers lack digital literacy, owning neither smartphones nor familiarity with their usage. Also, the low number in the usage of smartphone that was seen in the pilot phase was due to the following reasons:
 - Smartphone did not work in the workshop;
 - Did not come with smartphone in the workshop;
 - The data was not available in the phone;
 - There was no space in the phone to download Telegram;
- **Financial Literacy Needs:** Farmer's limited financial knowledge, with no prior interventions, underscores the program's crucial role in providing financial education
- **Time Constraints and Workshop Scheduling Challenges:** The majority of dairy farmers were actively engaged in other value chain activities which also unveils the scheduling challenges faced during workshop planning. Early morning sessions were necessary to accommodate their busy schedules, shedding light on the need for flexible and strategic scheduling.
- Moreover, there was an **absence of organized engagement with DCSs**. The DCS needed to be working in an organised manner. This signifies a notable gap in the program's outreach strategy.
- There has been **no engagement in the Call Centre** from this value chain and also none have filled up the Farmers Financial Health Survey form for further counselling of dairy farmers for their financial information, education and services needs.



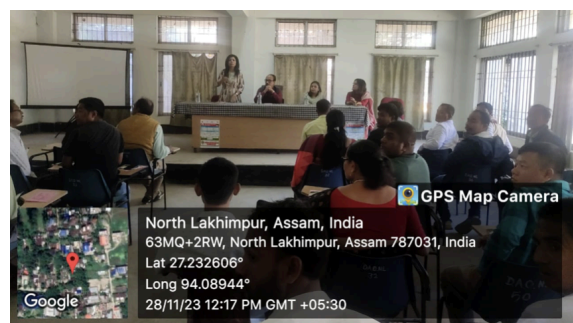
7. Way Forward

Reflecting on the findings and learnings from the Krisarthak program implementation, the Krisarthak FEC assignment is working on the following strategies to engage the dairy farmers:

- Strategic Engagement with Cooperative Societies with focused and flexible implementation schedules.
- Targeted interventions and workshops to enhance farmers' awareness of financial products and services.
- Flexible scheduling strategies, including evening and weekend sessions, to accommodate the diverse schedules of farmers and maximize workshop attendance.
- Conducting awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits of Call Centre engagement, survey participation and financial counselling service.
- Specific and need base digital intervention with dairy farmers.
- **Building digital capacities of the dairy cooperative societies** as per government priorities.
- **Linking Dairy farmers with relevant information and schemes** at DCS cluster level.
- Establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, regularly reviewing key performance indicators and adapting strategies based on real-time insights for agile decision-making.



Annexure







Kri Sarthak MIS

