

“As we are pursuing economic growth and economic development, we have to make sure it happens with and by and for everyone. That everyone gets opportunity.” —Betsy Hodges<sup>1</sup>

# 4

TOGETHER, WE GROW



The war on COVID-19 taught governments that investing in people-centric institutions during safe times pays rich dividends during disasters. This was vindicated by the critical role played by self-help groups (SHGs), joint liability groups (JLGs), farmer producers' organisations (FPOs), and off-farm producers' organisations (OFPOs) in proactively fighting-off the pandemic in rural India.

Leveraging various funds at its disposal,<sup>2</sup> NABARD has, over many years, been building these grassroots institutions for, of, and by the rural people, ensuring their participation. And unsurprisingly, these institutions proved to be the lifeline for their stakeholders and clientele during the pandemic. NABARD's multi-pronged approach of skilling, livelihood development, financial inclusion, digital inclusion, and engagement with the research community underlined by a strong positive bias towards disadvantaged peoples (e.g., tribal communities) and geographies (e.g., North Eastern Region) sustained well through FY2021. This chapter presents highlights of its outcomes on ground that bear out the success of the approach in building a vibrant development ecosystem for rural India.

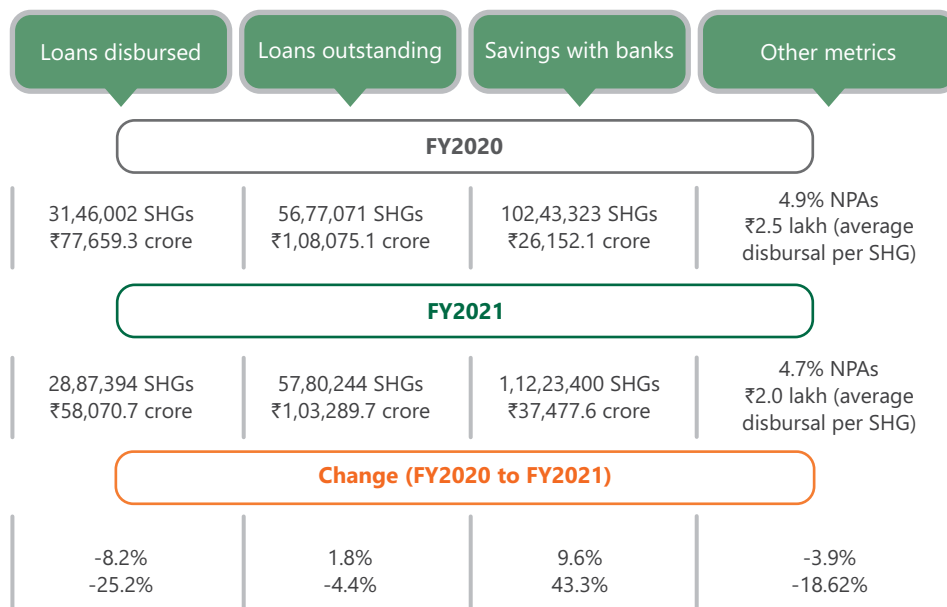
## 4.1 Building community institutions

### 4.1.1 Institutions for micro-finance

#### *Scaling up self-help groups*

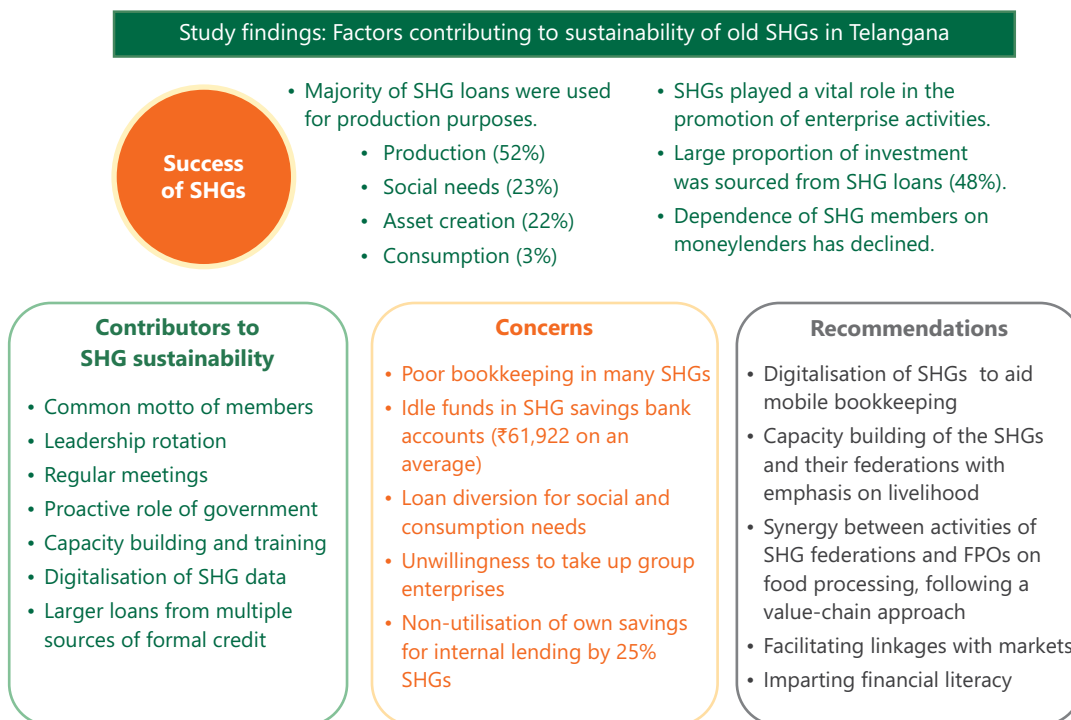
Since inception in FY1993, the SHG-Bank Linkage Programme (SHG-BLP) has improved the lives of women by helping them save, borrow, and build social capital. About 1.1 crore SHGs and an estimated 13.5 crore rural households are within the fold of SHG-BLP (Figure 4.1).

**FIGURE 4.1:** Progress of SHG–Bank Linkage Programme



Notes: NPA = Non-Performing Asset; SHG = Self-Help Group.

**FIGURE 4.2:** Effectiveness and sustainability of self-help groups



Notes: FPO = Farmer Producers' Organisation; SHG = Self-Help Group.

Source: Mahila Abhivridhi Society (2020), Sustainability of Old SHGs in Telangana (study sponsored by NABARD).



During FY2021, NABARD formed around 6.8 lakh SHGs; ensured bank credit for nearly 4 lakh; and released ₹170.2 crore against a sanction of ₹418.20 crore for promoting over 8.7 lakh SHGs. In the 150 backward or left-wing extremism (LWE)-affected districts, we spent ₹725.4 lakh on implementing women-SHG (WSHG) programmes in FY2021 (a 17.8% increase over FY2020) enabling 2.1 lakh WSHGs to open bank accounts and 1.3 lakh to avail bank credit. Since FY2013, ₹146.7 crore has been utilised out of WSHG Fund (as on 31 March 2021).

Over the years, SHGs have helped members initiate and sustain entrepreneurial activity; attain financial stability; and reduce dependence on private lenders

**Box 4.1: Role of self-help groups in mainstreaming *joginis* and *basavins* in Anantpur, Andhra Pradesh**

The Andhra Pradesh Devadasi Abolition Act, 1986 has had minimal impact on the lives of *basavins* (*joginis*) in the last 34 years as mainstreaming them is simultaneously a social, economic, and cultural challenge.

The *basavins* surveyed for a recent NABARD-sponsored study cited family pressures, community attitudes and beliefs, and fear of income loss as the reasons for their entrapment. Though all respondents were aware of SHGs, few were part of any such group.

Leveraging government schemes while forming SHGs of *basavins* could be an empowering option. The study recommended the formation of a dedicated state-level committee to ascertain that the benefits of current welfare programmes reach all the eligible *basavins*; formation of SHGs to extend livelihood, capacity building, and financial support; counselling services to address adjustment and mental health issues; and social reintegration through awareness drives involving women-SHGs, villagers, officials, and NGOs.

**Notes:**

1. NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation; SHG = Self-Help Group.
2. *Basavins* (Andhra Pradesh), *joginis* (Telangana), *mathammas* (Tamil Nadu), and *devadasis* (Karnataka) are virgin girls married off to the local deity as a vestige of a medieval social practice.

**Source:** The study on 'Improving livelihood opportunities for Jogini women in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh through SHG and other promotional schemes', Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad (sponsored by NABARD).

(Figure 4.2) while also carrying the potential to play a transformative role in social change (Box 4.1).

**Financing joint liability groups**

Banks promoted and financed 41.3 lakh new JLGs in FY2021, taking the total to 133.8 lakh. NABARD provided incentives to implementing partners (which was doubled to ₹4,000 per group this year); extended refinance to banks covering the loan amount; and executed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with banks to scale up JLG formation. We sanctioned ₹219.7 crore for promotion of 6.9 lakh JLGs across the country during the year. As on 31 March 2021, we had executed 70 MoUs in 22 states—49 with regional rural banks; 15 with the State Bank of India (in five states); 4 (one each) with Syndicate Bank (later, Canara Bank), Allahabad Bank (now, Indian Bank), Union Bank of India, and Bank of Baroda; and 2 (one each) with state cooperative banks in Jharkhand and Odisha. In addition, through an MOU, NABARD has appointed NABFINS as the JLG promoting institution for Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, and sanctioned a three-year pilot project for Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Jharkhand.

**4.1.2 Promoting technology adoption**

NABARD supports Farmers' Clubs (FCs) to enable technology transfer. Our current focus is on the consolidation or strengthening of existing FCs and facilitating reorganisation of well-functioning FCs into FPOs. A portal, 'Krishak Sarathi' ([www.krishaksarathi.com](http://www.krishaksarathi.com)), was developed to effectively monitor FC activities and ensure their sustainability.

**4.1.3 Seeding farmers' collectives**

The formation of FPOs has been an effective mechanism for the transformation of smallholders into viable agri-business entrepreneurs. Under Producers' Organisation Development Fund (PODF); PODF–Interest Differential; and Producers Organisation Development and Upliftment Corpus fund, NABARD extended financial support for the formation of FPOs, their capacity building/handholding, credit facilitation, and market linkages (Table 4.1).

About 83% of the FPO members are small producers and 46% women. Nearly all FPOs established market linkages with 808 of them being able to arrange bank credit for members. Data for over 12.8 lakh producer members from 3,857 FPOs was digitised. An evaluation of sample FPOs across states revealed tangible benefits

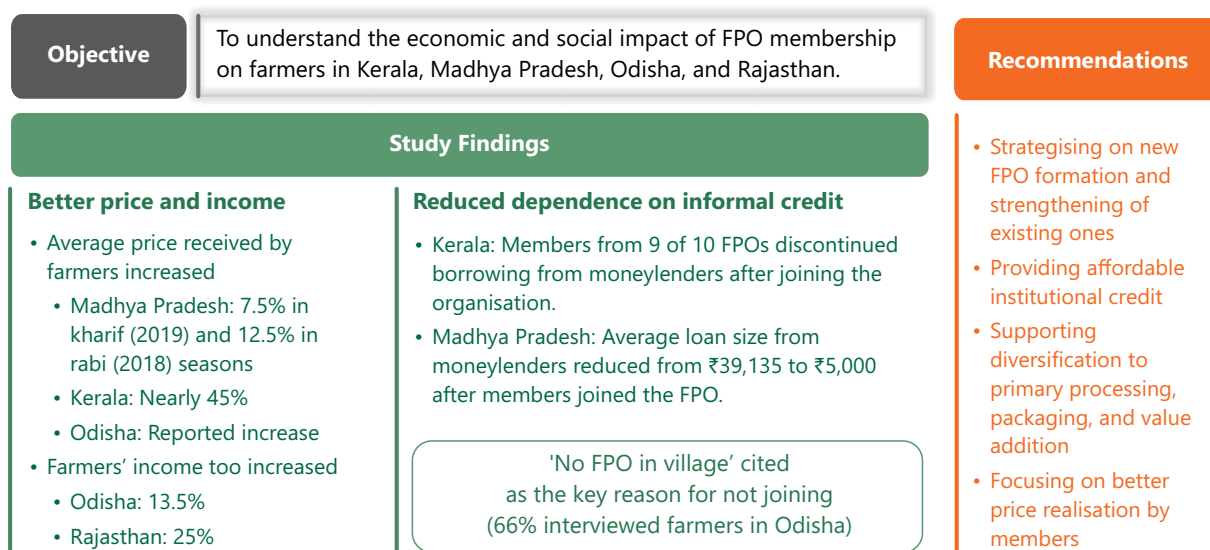
**TABLE 4.1:** Cumulative status of FPOs under PODF, PODF-ID and PRODUCE fund as on 31 March 2021

Particulars	PODF-ID	PODF	PRODUCE	Overall
Target FPOs	3,000	-	2,000	5,000
FPOs sanctioned	2,906	-	2,154	5,060
	[576]	-	-	[576]
FPOs registered cumulatively	1,627	-	2,094	3,721
	[633]	-	-	[633]
Grant sanctioned (₹ crore)	248.0	47.1	205.4	500.6
	[46.8]	-	-	[46.8]
Grant utilised (₹ crore)	68.2	21.8	176.4	266.5
	[38.6]	[4.1]	[11.3]	[53.9]
Farmers covered as shareholder (lakh)	4.7	-	9.1	13.8
Share capital collected by FPOs (₹ crore)	45.3	-	98.2	143.5
Producer organisation promoting institutions associated	663	-	779	1,442
Resource support agencies	15	-	17	32
Balance corpus on 31 March 2020 (₹ crore)	252.0	200.0	34.9	-
Corpus used during FY2021 (₹ crore)	38.6	4.1	11.3	-
Balance corpus on 31 March 2021 (₹ crore)	314.2	300.0	23.6	-

**Notes:**

1. FPO = Farmer Producers' Organisation; PODF = Producers' Organisation Development Fund (PODF); PODF-ID = PODF Interest Differential; PRODUCE = Producers Organisation Development and Upliftment Corpus.
2. Data in square brackets are for FY2021.
3. The corpus under PODF is ₹300 crore as on 31 March 2021 after drawing ₹4 crore and appropriation of profit of ₹104 crore during the year.

**FIGURE 4.3:** Impact of FPOs on member-farmers



Note: FPO = Farmer Producers' Organisation.

Source: In-house study conducted by four regional offices of NABARD namely, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan.

to members (Figure 4.3). To identify the challenges and strategies for FPOs, a detailed study was conducted (Box 4.2).

In FY2020, the Government of India (GOI) announced a scheme to develop 10,000 FPOs in five years. As one of the implementing agencies, NABARD



### Box 4.2: Strategies for farmer producers' organisations: Policy and execution

At the behest of NABARD, Dr Amar Nayak of Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar undertook detailed case studies of well-performing farmer producers' organisations (FPOs) across the country to identify factors behind their success. The study identified effective strategies for FPOs to tackle internal management and governance issues and leverage externalities to come up with recommendations on FPO policy and execution.

<i>FPO policy</i>	<i>Execution</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop clear operational guidelines to ensure policy coherence.</li> <li>2. Ensure coordination between central and state governments to generate consistent policy signals.</li> <li>3. Design FPOs that are aligned to local food consumption habits on the demand side and diversified cropping patterns for procurement of seeds and other inputs.</li> <li>4. Create FPO architecture at Gram Panchayat, block, and district levels for optimally connecting to consumers.</li> <li>5. Optimally align the 'one district-one product' approach of the national scheme for 10,000 FPOs to the institutional architecture of each district based on economies of scope.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Factor in the needs of producer members in multi-product and service business plan.</li> <li>2. Keep members' interest paramount while framing autonomous and effective governance structure.</li> <li>3. Make holistic development and empowerment of smallholders the long-term goal of public investments in FPOs.</li> <li>4. Emphasise geographic cluster size and membership needed within the cluster for long-term performance and sustainability of FPOs.</li> <li>5. Build equity to help FPOs handle their own credit needs in the early stages of development.</li> <li>6. Saturate the local and nearby markets of an FPO before expanding geographically to minimise transaction cost and boost net income.</li> </ol>

targeted the promotion of about 4,000 FPOs within the scheme period. During FY2021, NABARD promoted 634 FPOs against the target of 600.

A Credit Guarantee Fund of ₹1,000 crore with equal share from the GOI and NABARD was set up under NABSANRAKSHAN, a NABARD subsidiary, to incentivise banks to finance FPOs.

#### 4.1.4 Supporting collectives of off-farm producers

Off-farm Producer Organisations, which are collectives for producers of non-farm products in handloom, handicraft, and agro-processing industries, were extended an aggregate of ₹4.5 crore in committed grant assistance (for 8 OFPOs) benefitting 2,365 artisans and craftsmen across 7 states during FY2021 (Showcase 4.1). Since FY2017, ₹17.4 crore has been provided to 40 OFPOs across 20 states to similarly benefit 14,043 members.

To help OFPOs overcome the pandemic-induced disruption of business cycles, NABARD has provided ₹5 lakh as one-time revolving-fund assistance for all registered OFPOs.

## 4.2 Intervening for a better livelihood

### 4.2.1 Capacity building

NABARD sponsored 20,034 training programmes on micro-finance during FY2021 covering around 1.7 lakh participants from banks and other stakeholder institutions. Another 1,156 training programmes with grant support of ₹2.2 crore from the WSHG Fund were conducted in LWE areas for 41,000 participants. Capacity has been built cumulatively for around 42.2 lakh participants under the Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) and 3.7 lakh participants under the WSHG Fund.

#### SHOWCASE 4.1: Carpets from the Valley: A sweet story of collective effort from Kashmir

##### The challenge

The world-famous carpets of Kashmir, renowned for their design and finish, are cherished and treasured. However, the weavers have been in distress due to multiple causes: scattered and unorganised weaving activity; indebtedness to middlemen as job-workers; poor access to quality raw material; challenges with designs, institutional credit, and markets; and health hazards from traditional modes of knotting.



##### The initiative

An Off-farm Producer Organisation (OFPO) for 329 carpet weavers from 14 villages of Baramulla and Bandipora districts in Kashmir valley was supported with a grant of ₹30 lakh from NABARD.

##### Solutions

The OFPO member-weavers registered as Shehar Carpet Producers' Company Limited and mobilised a share capital of ₹4.9 lakh. To access design banks and conduct quality testing of raw materials, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology, Srinagar. NABARD also enabled training and capacity building. To overcome the pandemic-induced disruption to business operations during FY2021, the OFPO was provided with revolving fund assistance of ₹5 lakh. With this support, it undertook direct selling of carpets to exporters in Srinagar.



##### Impact

- A total of 61 weavers came out of debt trap.
- New designs from the design bank helped fetch good price for the carpets.
- Assured and timely access to quality raw material resulted in 20% higher profit for independent weavers.

#### 4.2.2 Skilling and building entrepreneurship

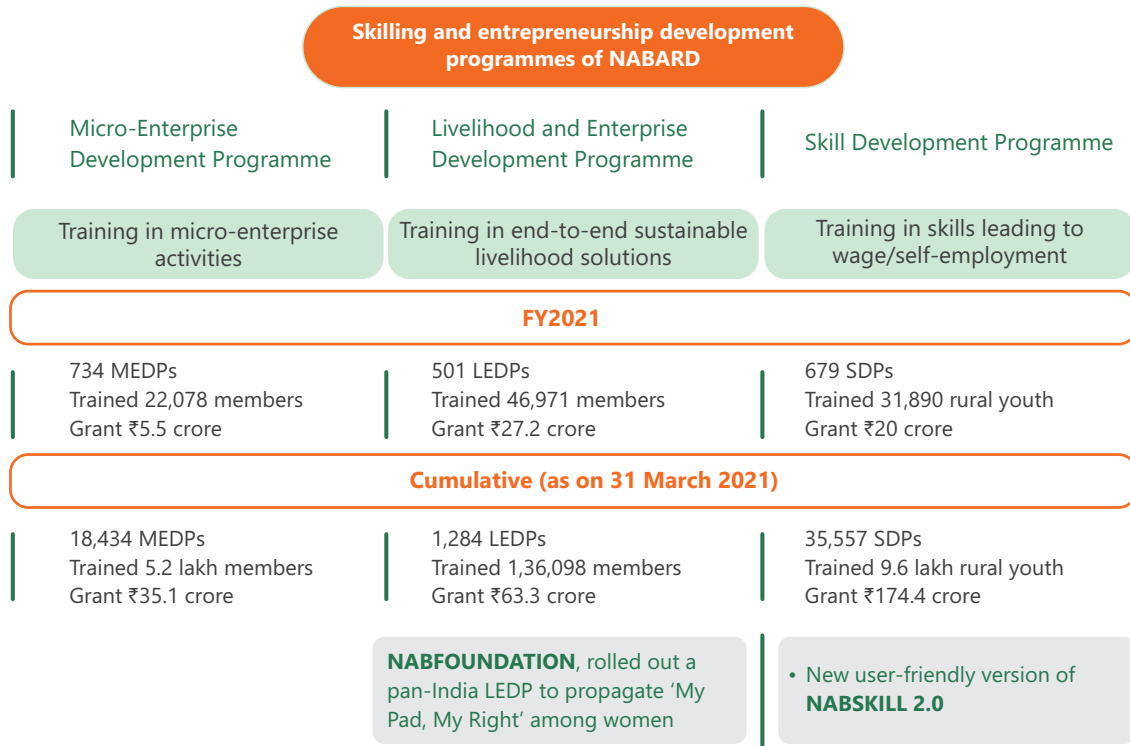
NABARD runs three types of skills and entrepreneurship development programmes: Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDP); Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme (LEDP); and skill development programmes. Of late, JLG members have also been made eligible for MEDPs and LEDPs. Participants are given a daily stipend; additional training inputs on marketing, e-marketing, branding, packing, demonstration units; and a certificate (Figure 4.4).

While the assistance has been doubled to ₹1 lakh for MEDPs from FY2021, support for LEDPs has also been enhanced to ₹8.8 lakh (from ₹6.4 lakh) for farm sector activities and to ₹7.15 lakh (from ₹4.98 lakh) for non-farm sector activities.

Notably, in October 2020 a prominent initiative, 'My Pad, My Right', launched pan-India LEDPs for women covering 35 districts through NABFOUNDATION, a subsidiary of NABARD (Box 4.3).



**FIGURE 4.4:** Promoting skills and entrepreneurship



Notes: LEDP = Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programme; MEDP = Micro-Enterprise Development Programme; SDP = Skill Development Programme.

**Box 4.3: 'My Pad, My Right'**

Under the 'My Pad, My Right' initiative, SHG members are being trained to produce and market sanitary pads through pan-India Livelihood and Enterprise Development Programmes (LEDPs). Alongside generating livelihood for SHGs in the targeted districts, the project aims to improve menstrual hygiene accessibility for women in rural India. During FY2021, ₹1.6 crore was utilised (from a total project outlay of ₹2 crore), machines installed in 33 districts, and production started in 29 districts.



Padmashri Arunachalam Muruganatham, who designed the award-winning low-cost pad-making machine is the technical partner for the project. The LEDPs were launched by the Minister for Women and Child Development and Textiles, Smriti Irani.



Rapid skill development by NABARD through Pipal Tree Ventures

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NABARD sanctioned a ₹5 crore mega project to rapidly re-skill 10,000 reverse migrants in construction work and generate wage- or self-employment. The project benefits rural youth from Uttar Pradesh (Raebareli, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur, Maharajganj, and Allahabad); Bihar (Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Rohtas, and Gaya); and Jharkhand (Hazaribagh).

#### 4.2.3 Promoting livelihood activities

NABARD promoted a range of livelihood opportunities by leveraging technology adoption and transfer, extension, innovation, off-farm activities, revolving-fund assistance, marketing support, supporting start-ups, and backing incubators.

##### Strengthening the farm sector

During FY2021, NABARD sanctioned ₹20 crore (and disbursed ₹12.6 crore) for 166 projects. These included Krishak Samridhhi; zero budget natural farming; certified seed production; fodder and vegetable production through hydroponics; integrated farming systems; demonstration of bio-flock fish farming; commercial beekeeping; high density guava cultivation; and quail farming.

In collaboration with institutions under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, state agricultural universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and other research institutes, NABARD facilitated 270 exposure visits for 8,022 farmers to see new or innovative farming methods

in action, spending ₹2.1 crore under the Capacity Building for Adoption of Technology programme.

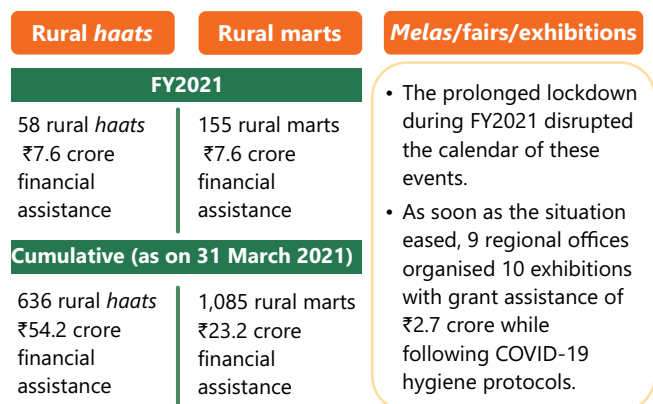
NABARD also supported *krishi melas*, fairs, workshops, etc., that showcased agri-products, machineries, and innovative practices, spending more than ₹1.2 crore on these activities.

##### Developing the off-farm sector

###### Marketing initiatives

NABARD has been supporting producers in both farm and off-farm sectors to market their produce effectively by setting up rural *haats*, rural marts, and participation of artisans and craftspeople in national or regional level exhibitions and *melas* (Figure 4.5; Showcase 4.2).

FIGURE 4.5: Progress of marketing initiatives







## SHOWCASE 4.2: Unlocking opportunity with rural mart: Green Pasture Agro Producer Company Ltd

### Initiative

During FY2020 lockdown, the farmer producers' company (FPC), Green Pasture Agro Producer Company Ltd. continued running a rural mart with NABARD's support. The FPC promoted by Bade Area Agri & Allied Farming Co-operative Society, took up the initiative with permission from the district administration.

### Beneficiaries

Farmers and consumers in Dimapur and Kohima districts in Nagaland.

### Activity and impact

Fresh and locally produced vegetables and fruits were sourced from Dimapur and other districts of Nagaland and supplied in and around Dimapur town as well as parts of Kohima, including home deliveries. During April–July 2020, when all establishments had stalled due to the pandemic-induced lockdown, the FPC achieved a turnover of around ₹65 lakh.



### Promoting geographical indications

Nizamabad Black Pottery;<sup>3</sup> Ghazipur Wall Hanging; Varanasi Soft Stone Jali Work;<sup>4</sup> Banaras Gulabi Meenakari Craft;<sup>5</sup> and Mirzapur Handmade Dari (carpet) are among the 72 products that have been registered as geographical indications (GI) with support from NABARD. We had issued policy guidelines for end-to-end support covering pre-registration to post-registration activities for GI products to improve quality, provide and expand market access, create awareness, strengthen producer's capacity to enforce their rights, subsidise cost of registration and enforcement, and marketing.

### Supporting start-up and innovation ecosystem

Agri-business incubation centres foster ideas, innovations, and technologies that focus on agriculture. They provide support and resources necessary for agri-start-ups and agri-entrepreneurs to develop ideas into viable commercial entities. Covering both agri-technologies as well as rural technologies, NABARD extends end-to-end assistance and grant support in setting up rural agri-business incubation centres at agriculture universities and similar institutions (Figure 4.6).

NABARD set up a ₹100-crore Catalytic Capital Fund in FY2020 to support agricultural and rural start-ups in 'Death Valley' phase through incubation centres and NABARD subsidiaries. Of the ₹10 crore sanctioned from this fund, NABARD disbursed ₹6 crore to NABKISAN Finance Limited (a subsidiary) and Madurai Agri-Business Incubation Forum (Box 4.4).

### Facilitating 'Stand Up India'

As a connect centre for the Stand Up India scheme,<sup>6</sup> the district development managers of NABARD facilitated 238 pre- and post-disbursement handholding events at district level through FY2021 to share best practices, review the programme, solve problems, and guide the potential borrowers.

### Managing the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme

In FY2021, NABARD cleared 239 applications for subsidy under the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme for Technology Upgradation of Micro and Small Enterprises of Government of India and released ₹1,901.6 lakh (cumulatively, ₹9,556.1 lakh) to support technology adoption by micro and small units in specified categories.

**FIGURE 4.6:** End-to-end support in setting up rural and agribusiness incubation centres



Notes: ABIC = Agri-Business Incubation Centre; RBIC = Rural Agri-Business Incubation Centre.



#### Box 4.4: NABARD supported Madurai Agri-Business Incubation Forum in Tamil Nadu



*Lobby of MABIF showcasing products developed by its incubatees*

Hosted at TNAU as one of the first NABARD-supported ABICs, the MABIF is a Section 8 company registered in May 2018. In the last two years MABIF has identified and assisted 86 start-ups, 243 FPOs, and 32 idea-stage start-ups with upscaling. Incubatees at MABIF are a mix of ideas, early-stage enterprises, and prototypes which have been leveraging the collective knowledge and experience at the ABIC to introduce nearly 100 new marketable products. MABIF has facilitated registration of 11 patents, 46 trademarks, 38 plant varieties, and 4 GIs. MABIF has also been exploring block chain, internet of things, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other such technologies to overcome agri-rural environmental constraints. 'Jallikattu', a flagship 'Ideathon' at MABIF for students has generated agri-rural innovation ideas for incubation.



*Chairman, NABARD inaugurating the administrative building of MABIF*

MABIF is enabling product fine-tuning, market validation, business plan preparation, and providing legal assistance to new ventures. It is transforming farming practices and technologies in its command area by providing consultancy services; helping farmers store and market their produce using own cold storage facilities; organising buyer–seller meets; facilitating farmer–FPO engagements; and helping small producers find external markets within Tamil Nadu and outside. The ABIC has resolved many ground-level issues for farmer- and agri-entrepreneurs to create a sustainable business ecosystem for agriculture.

#### Notes:

1. ABIC = Agri-Business Incubation Centres; FPO = Farmer Producers' Organisation; GI = Geographical Indications; MABIF = Madurai Agri-Business Incubation Forum; TNAU = Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Madurai.
2. MABIF is an Intellectual Property Rights Facilitation Centre with the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, Government of India.

### 4.3 Promoting financial inclusion

NABARD has adopted a differentiated strategy since FY2020 by providing grants under FIF at an enhanced rate of 90% of outlay for Special Focus Districts (SFDs) that are identified as aspirational, LWE-affected, credit-starved (by Reserve Bank of India), hilly districts, or districts from the North Eastern Region (NER), or islands of Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar. During FY2021, NABARD (through FIF) supported a host of activities under the five broad heads of financial literacy programmes; banking technology adoption; regulatory infrastructure support; support for connectivity and power infrastructure; and incentivising digital transactions. These were

- financial and digital literacy camps;
- demonstration of banking technology via mobile vans;
- handheld projectors;
- opening kiosk outlets in unbanked villages in NER states;
- setting up Centre for Financial Literacy;
- provision of Green PIN facility at automated teller machines (ATMs) and/or micro-ATMs for RuPay Kisan Card activation;
- authentication user agency/e-KYC<sup>7</sup> user agency membership of the Unique Identification Authority of India;

- deploying V-SATs;<sup>8</sup> micro-ATM and point-of-sale (PoS)/mobile PoS devices; mobile signal boosters; and solar panel for UPS<sup>9</sup> in SFDs; and
- on-boarding of platforms such as
  - » BHIM UPI;
  - » Public Financial Management System;
  - » Bharat Bill Payment System; and
  - » Central KYC Registry.

Cumulatively, NABARD sanctioned ₹4,592.8 crore and disbursed ₹2,527.7 crore till 31 March 2021.

Following up on the first NABARD All-India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey (NAFIS) in FY2016 that covered 40,000 rural households across 245 districts, we are undertaking NAFIS 2.0 covering a much larger sample across all districts with FY2021 as the reference year.

Financial inclusion is a multi-dimensional phenomenon beyond just access to credit or bank account. Therefore, any measure of financial inclusion must capture breadth, intensity, and extent of financial and digital penetration. NABARD developed the state-wise NAFINDEX based on three household level dimensions: traditional banking products, modern banking services, and payment systems measured by 18 indicators of the NAFIS to represent financial inclusion (Box 4.5).

#### Box 4.5: NAFINDEX, an index of financial inclusion

NAFINDEX attempts to reflect state-wise household level access to financial services based on field data from NABARD All-India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey, FY2017. NAFINDEX has been constructed combining three dimensions—traditional banking products, modern banking services, and payment systems. The average all-India index stood at 0.337, suggesting a significant need to expand coverage of financial inclusion. NAFINDEX and dimension indices vary across states, many of which with lower traditional banking products' penetration demonstrated higher dimension values for modern banking products and payment mechanisms. This serves as a compass for expansion in states with poor access to banking products.



## 4.4 Digitally driving initiatives

**TABLE 4.2:** Select digital initiatives offering solutions to promote technology adoption

Initiative	Purpose	Status (31 March 2021)
e-Shakti	Creating a digital ecosystem to provide an 'end-to-end' solution to the Self-Help Group–Bank Linkage Programme to help standardise books of accounts and bring transparency and regularity in operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing in 281 districts across India</li> <li>• Credit linkage increased from 4.7 lakh (38% of total) to 6.5 lakh groups (53% of total) by FY2021.</li> <li>• On-boarded data pertains to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 12.3 lakh SHGs;</li> <li>» 140.9 lakh members; and</li> <li>» over 1.7 lakh villages.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
NABARD BHUVAN	Web-based monitoring of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NABARD-supported watershed projects</li> <li>• Impact evaluation (change detection through the analysis of satellite images of pre- and post-development phases or periods).</li> </ul>	On-boarded 666 watershed projects
Tribal Development	Ensuring accessibility of data on Tribal Development Fund projects for oversight	Covered 281 districts from 28 states benefitting 5.29 lakh families till date
Krishak Sarathi	Digitalising information on farmers' clubs for effective monitoring	Data for 24,450 farmers' clubs captured.
Nabskill 2.0 (a new user-friendly version)	Recording data related to trainers, trainees, placement agencies, and other skilling ecosystem stakeholders for NABARD initiatives	NABARD supported training towards gainfully engaging rural youth through wage and self-employment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9.6 lakh rural youth</li> <li>• 35,557 programmes</li> <li>• ₹174.4 crore in grant assistance</li> </ul>
NabPragna	Digitalising Research and Development (R&D) Fund operations for online sourcing and processing of proposals and effectively collaborating in studies with research partners	The portal is ready for roll out.
NABFPO	Capturing parametric data (membership, registration, and financial details, grading, etc.) for all NABARD-promoted farmer producers' organisations	On-boarded 4,071 FPOs
ENSURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling commercial banks, cooperative banks, and regional rural banks to submit financial data including ground level credit flow</li> <li>• Recording status updates on programmes and schemes promoted by NABARD and the Government of India</li> <li>• Facilitating online submission of subsidy applications by banks with complete traceability of application status</li> <li>• Enabling online submission of SHG–JLG returns by banks</li> </ul>	The portal captures data entered by client institutions and regional offices of NABARD and is fully functional.
Rajbhasha SETU	Digitalising various activities of Rajbhasha Department of NABARD with provision for entering data and preparing quarterly progress reports on the use of Hindi in official communication	It will be operationalised soon.
RIDF (web portal and mobile application)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing real-time data on Rural Infrastructure Development Fund sanctions and disbursement</li> <li>• Using mobile app to monitor, including geo-tagging of monitored assets</li> <li>• Facilitating online submission and processing of drawal applications</li> </ul>	The portal/mobile app has already been used for 154 RIDF project monitoring visits.
Student Internship Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automating the SIS for enhanced accessibility and reach of the scheme and transparency in the selection process.</li> <li>• Making available a ready-to-use management information system.</li> </ul>	In FY2021, 3,162 online applications were submitted for 75 pan-India seats.

Notes: FPO = Farmer Producers' Organisation; JLG = Joint Liability Group; RIDF = Rural Infrastructure Development Fund; SHG = Self-Help Groups; SIS = Student Internship Scheme.

## 4.5 Engaging with the research community

NABARD supports research on agriculture and rural development issues to share insights with policy makers and the public. The Department of Economic Analysis and Research (DEAR) at NABARD initiates, assimilates, conducts, and anchors such research by extending research grants from the R&D Fund, currently maintained at ₹50 crore.<sup>10</sup>

In FY2021, the following knowledge, research, and related activities were undertaken at NABARD:

1. To revamp its R&D Fund activities and prioritise thrust areas for research activities, NABARD constituted a Research Advisory Committee of Experts (RACE).
    - a. The RACE is chaired by the NABARD chairperson (ex-officio), Dr G.R. Chintala.
    - b. Internal members include NABARD deputy managing directors (ex-officio), Shri K.V. Shaji and Shri P.V.S. Suryakumar.
    - c. External members (by invitation) include Dr Ashok Gulati, Dr Mahendra Dev, Dr P.K. Joshi, Dr Kanakasabhapathy, and Shri Tamal Bandyopadhyay.
    - d. Member secretary is the chief general manager, DEAR, NABARD (ex-officio), Dr K.J.S. Satyasai.
  2. NABARD engages with researchers by funding research studies, seminars/conferences, and NABARD Chair Units, etc.<sup>11</sup>
  3. Around 70 students were offered a unique opportunity to work in rural areas, get mentored by NABARD officers, and gather experience under our Student Internship Scheme.
  4. In-house studies were conducted on
    - a. viability of district central cooperative banks in West Bengal;
    - b. a quick pan-India assessment of the impact of COVID-19-induced lockdown on the rural economy based on feedback from our district-level officers.
  5. Two booklets on current issues were published:
    - a. *Writings on Indian Economy* (collected articles on the economy) and
    - b. *Achieving an Equal Future* (on gender issues written and edited by women)
  6. Grant assistance of ₹2.3 crore was released towards ongoing studies, some of which are<sup>12</sup>
    - a. 'Renewed effort at construction of state-wise rural infrastructure indices', by Economic and Political Weekly Research Foundation (EPWRF), Mumbai
  - b. 'Agrarian structure and transformation of the institutional framework of agriculture sector' using data from agricultural censuses by EPWRF, Mumbai
  - c. 'Improving livelihood opportunities for Jogini women in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh through SHG and other promotional schemes' by Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad
  - d. 'Identifying the most remunerative crop-combination regions in Haryana: A spatial-temporal analysis' by Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh
7. NABARD supported 111 webinars, seminars, conferences, symposia, and workshops with a financial assistance of ₹157.7 lakh during FY2021 to encourage debate and knowledge dissemination on themes such as
    - a. Impact of COVID-19 on agro and food processing industries
    - b. Vocal for Local
    - c. Innovative business models and roadmap for revival of domestic tourism for rural development
    - d. Sustainable development
  8. NABARD also extended financial support for publications such as *State of India's Livelihoods Report 2020*,<sup>13</sup> *The Bharat Microfinance Report 2020*,<sup>14</sup> and *State of Agriculture Financing Report*.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.6 Stronger grassroots institutions to withstand crises

NABARD has invested in people, their livelihoods, and grassroots institutions as part of its mission across both farm and non-farm sectors. This yielded dividends during the first wave of the pandemic in FY2021 when SHGs, FPOs, OFPOs, and other peoples' organisations supplied essential goods for the masses to keep the economy's wheels rolling. The AatmaNirbhar Bharat package and 'Vocal for Local' campaign too revolved around these organisations, assigning them deeper and wider roles.

Though each wave of the pandemic is leaving behind a trail of shattered lives and economies, the bitter experience is offering precious lessons for the future.



It has underscored the significance of inclusion and the importance of community institutions. In its wake, leveraging technology to bring people centre stage has become especially pertinent.

The way rural India delivered during the pandemic presents a strong and compelling case for us to continuously nurture, strengthen, and, most importantly, scale up these grassroots institutions during safer times to better face future calamities, for it is stronger institutions that can help us grow together in good times and bad.

## Notes

1. A Minnesota Democratic-Farmer–Labor Party member in the United States of America who served as the 47th mayor of Minneapolis.
2. Farm Sector Promotion Fund; Financial Inclusion Fund; Producers' Organisation Development Fund; PODF-Interest Differential; Producers Organisation Development and Upliftment Corpus fund; Gramya Vikas Nidhi; and Off-farm Sector Promotion Fund.
3. Black clay pottery.
4. *Jali* = Filigree.
5. *Meenakari* = Enamel painting of metal and ceramic surfaces.
6. Stand Up India (SUI) Scheme, launched by Government of India on 5 April 2016, and now extended till 2025, facilitates bank loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore for setting up a greenfield enterprise to at least one member of a Scheduled Caste/Tribe and at least one woman borrower per bank branch. NABARD and Small Industries Development Bank of India continue to be the connect centres for SUI.
7. KYC = Know Your Customer.
8. A very-small-aperture terminal (VSAT) is a two-way satellite ground station with a dish antenna that is smaller than 3.8 meters.
9. UPS = Uninterruptible power supply.
10. All DEAR, NABARD publications are on [www.nabard.org](http://www.nabard.org).
11. All Chair Units except the one in Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mumbai completed their tenure and hence, discontinued.
12. Complete reports are accessible on NABARD website under NABARD Research Study Series.
13. ADS (2020), *State of India's Livelihoods Report 2020*, Access Development Services, New Delhi. <https://livelihoods-india.org/download-subsection-file.php?key=K1hkTDluYjI4OHBCOHdFUEVMYzNIZz09>.
14. Sa-Dhan (2020), *The Bharat Microfinance Report 2020*, Sa-Dhan: The Association of Community Development and Finance Institutions, New Delhi. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MmM7JbctxnAz2TREC9pC\\_hhrkzum\\_hpf/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MmM7JbctxnAz2TREC9pC_hhrkzum_hpf/view?usp=sharing).
15. ADS (2021), *State of Agriculture Financing Report*, Access Development Services, New Delhi (final report being published).