



Request for proposals: Qualitative evaluation of the impact of self-help groups on women's economic and social empowerment in India

Questions and answers document

The deadline for sending queries regarding this request for proposals was 23:59 GMT, 17 December 2018. Where relevant, questions have been edited to anonymise the information shared with 3ie and responses to similar questions have also been combined.

Eligibility criteria and proposal requirements

Q1: I'm really interested in your call for proposals, but I am an independent consultant, and I wonder if I could have access to potential applicants, to present my credentials and be part of the process.

and

I am interested in applying for this call for proposals. I am a researcher working in a state university in India. I would like to know whether I am eligible to apply for this call.

A1: The eligibility criteria for this request for proposals is available in section 6 of the [Request for proposals document](#). Only legally registered organisations and consortia of registered organisations, not individuals, may apply for this call. We encourage individuals and independent consultants to get in touch with relevant organisations who may be interested in submitting a proposal for this call. Since the deadline for applications is 23:59 GMT, 11 January 2019, we will be unable to share any information on potential applicants for this call until final submissions are made.

Q2: Our organisation is an NGO and is registered as a non-profit organisation and would like to apply for this call. We are currently partnering with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission on another initiative to integrate health interventions in self-help groups. Is our organisation still be eligible to apply for this request for proposals?

and

My co-applicants are from another organisation and wanted to confirm that they would be eligible to evaluate SHGs from within their own organisation?

A2: Yes, your organisation will be eligible to apply for the call as long as you are able meet the eligibility criteria, described in the [request for proposals](#). We also encourage you to read the

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draft [grant agreement template](#) to ensure that your organisation will be able to comply with 3ie's requirements, including the direct and indirect cost policies.

Q3: Can the grant holding organisation and lead principal investigators (PI) be different entities? (For example, is it possible that the grant holder is an international research and evaluation organisation, while the lead PI is an India based organisation with field presence and experience on SHG-based programming.)

A3: Yes, the grant holding organisation may be different from the organisation the lead PIs are currently affiliated with. Please read the draft [grant agreement template](#) to ensure that the grant holding institution will be able to comply with 3ie's contractual requirements.

Q4: Can the applicant organisations submit one integrated proposal to address both the evaluation studies and research questions? This will help synergise efforts and bring together the learning from both the related themes. Will the total grant size applicable for this integrated proposal be USD 90,000 (if we submit two proposals)?

and

Is it possible to write one proposal to apply for both projects? We have experience and interest in both women's empowerment perspective and issues around the structural factors. If we cannot apply for both in one proposal, could we apply for both of the two proposals (that would include the same states and study team)?

A4: If applicants are interested in both research themes, they are requested to submit two separate proposals along with the relevant documents, including budgets, as a complete application package. Where relevant the applicant should refer to the other proposal to indicate how there is a synergy between the two research themes. 3ie reserves the right to not award any grant in case the applicant does not meet the requirements on either proposals. If selected, they should, however, have the capacity to implement any and all grants awarded to them.

Q5: Our understanding is that the applicant may propose to cover one or more of the mentioned priority states as part of the study. Is that right?

A5: Yes, that is correct.

Q6: The timeline is very short. We can submit a proposal by your deadline, but various prior commitments will most likely prevent us from being able to complete the project by July 2019. Can the timeline be extended?

A6: Given a clear demand for this evidence from key stakeholders, we are operating within a very strict timeline and therefore will be unable to push the deadline for implementing and finalising the qualitative evaluation report. Please refer to Table 1 in the request for proposals document for the key dates for activities and deliverables. Both qualitative evaluations are expected to be completed by August 2019.

Q7: The proposal calls for, "small lab-in-the-field experiments and behavioural games" with an at-risk, marginalised population. Does 3ie require qualified evaluation teams to go through 3ie's interview review board (IRB) or can teams work with an external IRB? Is our assumption correct that high-quality, qualitative evaluations that will have policy implications and be integrated into an impact evaluation go through IRB?

A7: 3ie does not have its own IRB and the selected study teams will be required to attain an IRB clearance by the time the qualitative tools are finalised. Please also refer to section 3 in the [proposal form](#) regarding ethical clearances.

Q8: From the proposal, “3ie will invite selected applicants for a pre-award meeting within two weeks of announcement of results. Final award of the grant is conditional on the key members of the research team attending this meeting.” Where will the meeting take place? And can some or all of the research team members attend the meeting virtually?

A8: We still need to finalise the venue and dates for this meeting. However, remote participation may be possible subject to logistical requirements.

3ie impact evaluation

Q9: On page 2 of the request for proposals document you mention six questionnaires that have been developed for the quantitative impact evaluation. Can we be given access to these questionnaires as we develop our proposal?

and

Will any of the quantitative findings or measures from the impact evaluation be shared with the qualitative team(s)?

A9: 3ie will share the quantitative tools and other relevant study material with the successful applicant upon the grant being awarded.

Q10: In order to select states for the qualitative evaluation, we want to understand if you would be using the qualitative data for cross-analysis and triangulation with quantitative data as well, or will the qualitative evaluation be presented as a stand-alone study?

A10: The qualitative evaluations will be independent studies. The findings of these will be used to inform those aspects of the NRLM programme that, in our assessment, need in-depth exploration that the large-scale quantitative study may not be able to achieve fully. These two aspects are the empowerment impacts and the role of SHG federations.

Q11: On what basis or parameters were the 9 states for quantitative impact evaluation selected?

A11: The studies and research themes were chosen in consultation with the Ministry of Rural Development and other key stakeholders. The states chosen are those which account for the highest proportion of people living in poverty in rural India and where the programme was implemented since 2011-12 and has been operational for a while.

Q12: Should the study focus on capturing intra-state and/or regional differences or inter-state contextual differences? or both? In other words, what would complement your impact evaluation better -- capturing variations across different regions within a state or capturing differences between different states?

A12: Both types of studies are complementary to the ongoing impact evaluation. Capturing differences between states is a more interesting research question as it will also allow exploration of differences of how the programme has been implemented across states.

Q13: The request for proposals document mentions that 3ie's impact evaluation includes 27,000 households across 9 states. Do you have a sample size in mind for the qualitative evaluation as well?

A13: No, we do not have a specific sample size for the qualitative evaluations.

Q14: Given that 3ie is already undertaking an impact evaluation across 9 states, would you be able to connect us to local SHGs, VOs and CLFs as well as identify priority districts? We would incorporate a component on local partnerships accordingly in our proposal.

and

What are 3ie's expectations in supporting the evaluation process in general and more specifically related to organising site visits (such as, contact lists and communications with potential interviewees, space and refreshments for focus groups, in-country travel, etc.)?

and

To what extent will programme or implementing staff as well as beneficiaries be available to engage in the development and design of the evaluation (such as be part of an evaluation advisory group)? What kinds of information/support will 3ie provide the qualitative evaluation teams to engage these evaluation stakeholders – especially as their input will be needed in reviewing/providing input into the detailed pre-analysis plan and instruments?

A14: Where relevant 3ie will be able to put the selected study teams in touch with relevant stakeholders from the local SHGs, VOs, and CLFs. However, teams are encouraged to also provide information on how they will be partnering with these local entities to improve buy-in and understanding of qualitative evaluation design and questions.

All other costs associated with the implementation of the qualitative evaluation, including field travel and logistics, should be budgeted for in the proposal, and comply with 3ie's [direct](#) and [indirect cost](#) policies available on the website.

Q15: While the impact has to be assessed, however, are there some other parameters which indicate higher acceptance of the scheme i.e. number of SHGs, number of registered numbers, etc. This will help in selecting one high and one not-so-high state for the purpose of the research.

A15: Please refer to the National Rural Livelihoods Mission MIS database <https://nrlm.gov.in/outerReportAction.do?methodName=showIndex>. This will have information on coverage and implementation status.

Qualitative evaluation scope

Q16: Does the evaluation need to evaluate NRLM self-help groups, or could it evaluate non-NRLM self-help groups in total or in part?

A16: The study has to evaluate NRLM self-help groups. However, comparing NRLM and non-NRLM self-help groups and their models may be an interesting question that can be part of the proposal.

Q17: Can you confirm that the intended audience of these qualitative evaluations will be 3ie, programme managers, and policymakers and that findings will be integrated into the impact evaluation and for policy improvements?

A17: Yes.

Q19: Why is Bihar, considered one of the least developed states and therefore likely hardest place to create change, the most desired site for this qualitative work? What assumptions are being made about this site by the programme and/or in the impact evaluation?

A19: The NRLM programme focusses on states rural poverty rates are high. Not surprisingly, Bihar is a state where the programme has received much importance. The Bihar State Rural Livelihoods Mission (JEEViKA) is running a number of innovative interventions under the programme. This provides an interesting context to study the programme and its impact.

Programme information

Q20: Are there any baseline findings or research to be shared comparing each chosen states' level of economic female empowerment or rationale for why specific states were chosen to implement the NLRM?

A20: Please refer to the National Rural Livelihoods Mission website, <https://aajeevika.gov.in>. The baseline reports for several states are available on this website that will provide information on the current programme context and implementation plans.

Q21(a) Is there existing data about the profile of the VOs and the CLFs. If yes, request you to share these profiles with us.

(b) What is the system and the procedure for training and empowering VOs and CLFs?

(c) What are the parameters of performance assessment for SHGs, VO and CLF?

(d) What is the nature of the programming across the nine state where there have been NRLP interventions? This would help us develop criteria for selecting site visits for the evaluation that would provide a strong representation of the contextual and programmatic diversity of the NRLPs.

(e) To what extent are those who participate in VOs and CLFs provided similar access to or initial trainings/services for technical and financial resources?

A21: We request applicants to look at the existing literature and data available on NRLM's website, <https://aajeevika.gov.in> that provides relevant information on the programme.

Q22: We wanted to confirm to that the qualitative evaluation teams are permitted to suggest implementation plans that include visits to as many states as they deem necessary, as long as one of those states is Bihar?

A22: Yes, this is allowed as long as it is within budget.