



## **Request for proposals: Qualitative study on sustainability of SHGs under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission**

### **Questions and answers document**

The deadline for sending queries regarding this request for proposals was 23:59 GMT, 2 July 2019. Where relevant, questions have been edited to anonymise the information shared with 3ie and responses to similar questions have also been combined.

### **Eligibility criteria**

**Q1: We are planning to submit a proposal for this call and wanted to highlight that we are also working as an implementation partner for NRLM's gender-based work. Given, this we wanted to make sure there will be no conflict of interest and we can go ahead and submit the proposal for the qualitative evaluation as well.**

**A1:** The 3ie-supported qualitative study will be implemented in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand and 3ie will support the team in identifying the Self Help Groups (SHGs) and federations to include in the study. However, if the organisation submitting the proposal for the study is also supporting implementation in the selected SHGs, this will be considered as a conflict of interest and the organisation may not be eligible to apply.

**Q2: We would like to partner with local organisations from two states for implementation, is that permitted?**

**A2:** Yes, that is permissible. However, if collaborating with local implementing partners, the selected SHGs from the two states should already be a part of NRLM.

Please note that only one organisation will be the grant holding institution.

**Q3: We are a for-profit private limited company. We would like to understand, what is the nature of grant and if we get the opportunity to work on this project, what can we bill as a part of this engagement?**

**A3:** Yes, your organisation can 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 draft grant agreement template available on the website to ensure that your organisation will be able to comply with 3ie's requirements, including the direct and indirect cost policies. For-profit organisations are eligible to apply, and are restricted to the same indirect cost limits as non-profit organisations. They may not charge a fee.

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**Q4: Please clarify the relevant experience in years and qualification in terms of degrees needed by the study team members.**

**A4:** 3ie will assess experience based on quality of previous, relevant work and not in terms of years of work and academic degrees. Please include copies of up to three evaluation reports or academic publications relevant for this call, which have proposed principal investigators (PIs) as named authors.

**Q5: Please specify for the team strength – number of team members and composition preference, if any.**

**A5:** The research team must comprise a lead PI, who will have demonstrated experience leading high-quality research on women's SHGs in India. We require that the team should comprise of a gender expert and a qualitative methods researcher at minimum. Research assistants and data collectors can be decided by the applicant team based on sample size proposed and time frame, and the overall study budget.

**Q6: Please mention the time frame of work experience (for e.g. under 5 years) which a firm can show as a relevant work experience**

**A6:** We require at least five years of relevant work experience of the organisation that plans to implement the proposed qualitative study. This will also be assessed based on the eligibility criteria and work experience of the study team members that are relevant to the scope of this study.

## **Scope of the proposal**

**Q7: Does the three-month time period for this award include seeking local ethical approval, or has ethical approval already been granted under the broader impact evaluation?**

**A7:** Yes, the three-month timeline for the study includes seeking local ethical approval for the qualitative study. 3ie will work closely with the selected team to seek this approval.

**Q8: Conceptually, village organisations (VO) are part of the structure but not federations of SHGs therefore VOs may not be seen as federations and therefore the role VOs will be separately studied and role of cluster-level federations (CLF) will be studied as federation of SHGs.**

**A8:** SHGs in a village are federated into organisations called VOs, which are then linked to CLFs. Hence, these are part of SHG federations. We expect the selected applicant to assess the role of both VOs and CLFs in the sustainability of SHGs.

**Q9: The proposal talks about defunct SHGs but not about the adopted SHGs and SHGs formed under the NRLM programme. We hope we will get the data before hand to draw the final methodology.**

**A9:** Yes, this data will be provided by 3ie.

**Q10: Please share the details of the state wise and district wise details of the SHGs, VOs and CLFs. Please also provide the age and duration of the defunct SHGs as it will help us develop the financial proposal**

**A10:** We request applicants to look at the [NRLM MIS data](#) to obtain this information for the two states. Please note that we do not expect applicants to indicate the exact SHGs that will be

include, but rather the number of SHGs and federations that will be part of the qualitative study sample.

**Q11: Are there any guidelines available that may be referred to understand the accepted operational definition highlighted for the following terms: sustained SHG, mature VOs, and mature SHG federations?**

**A11:** These are no standard definitions available for these terms. In the RFP, sustained SHGs are those that have survived till date. Mature VOs and CLFs are those that are functioning according to the prescribed norms of the state.

**Q12: Do we need to include both states (Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand) in the qualitative study or can we use sample from one state?**

**A12:** The qualitative study must include both states.

**Q13: Out of the 'n' number of aspirational districts, please confirm if 3ie has a sample size in practice for such evaluative studies or should the study take a sample as per statistical validation?**

**A13:** Since the proposed study is a qualitative evaluation, we do not expect the study to be statistically powered. However, based on related studies and previous literature on this topic, applicants should determine the sample size needed to undertake the qualitative study that should be complemented with a sound qualitative analysis.

**Q14: Is there a present evaluation standard practiced by 3ie in forming methodology of Primary Target Groups for large-scale studies? Is there an available guideline that must be adhered while building the design specifying selection of target participants for the study?**

**A14:** Please refer section 5 in the request for proposals document, which mentions the minimum methodological requirements we expect from proposals.

## **3ie impact evaluation**

**Q15: Will there be access to the quantitative assessment findings or measures that will be shared to the qualitative team?**

and

**We request you to kindly share the research instruments or share the conceptual framework to understand the thematic areas that were included as part of the evaluation design. This will also help us in designing the approach for qualitative research.**

**A15:** The complementary questions for the qualitative study have already been identified. 3ie will share the quantitative tools and other relevant study material with the successful applicant once the grant has been awarded.

**Q16: Is there an evaluation framework available that we can refer that addresses and outlines the range of the aspects of the NRLM programme specified here?**

**A16:** 3ie will share preliminary findings and details of the impact evaluation with the selected study team.

The quantitative evaluation uses a cross-sectional difference-in-difference estimator, following other studies that have similarly used cross-sectional data to implement a difference-in-difference regression. We exploit the phased implementation of NRLM and the consequent variation in the age of SHGs in a cross-section of data as the basis for identifying ITT estimates of the effect of the programme on a range of household outcomes, but also as the basis for an instrumental variable regression that identifies the effect of SHG quality on this same set of outcomes. However, in contrast to other studies that have exploited the phased implementation of NRLP across blocks to implement a difference-in-difference regression, the foundation of our estimator is the variation in phasing across villages within treatment blocks. The implementation of the programme occurred at the level of the cluster, with guidelines calling for the phased introduction of the programme across villages in the cluster, commencing with villages that were poorest in terms of criteria such as the ranking of the village in terms of the proportion of its households from scheduled castes and tribes, relative to other villages in the cluster.

Differences in the duration of exposure to NRLP across early and late implementing villages, approximately four years, frequently larger than that across early and late implementing blocks. And, in contrast to the lack of observable criterion underlying the selection of early NRLP blocks, available MIS data, discussed subsequently, suggest that the phasing of the programme across villages within a cluster was based on observable measures of poverty.

The first difference between outcomes in early and late implementing villages within a cluster cannot be taken as indicative of the effect of the programme, since it compounds the effects of program duration with differences in poverty: early implementing villages are intended to be poorer as well as more remote. Including a second difference between early and late implementing villages in late implementing or control blocks removes the effect of non-programme differences between early and late villages. Specifically, our proposed difference-in-difference regression will compare the difference in outcomes between early and late implementing villages in early implementing blocks that differ significantly in their exposure to the programme, to the difference in early and late implementing villages in late implementing blocks. This latter set of villages characterized by a much smaller difference in programme exposure. We will provide the list of villages to Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh to the selected team.

**Q17: Please share more detailed findings from the preliminary survey that could help with the more understanding of the project objective.**

**A17:** The findings are preliminary and not available for wider circulation. 3ie will share preliminary findings and details of the impact evaluation with the selected study team.

**Q18: What kind of on-ground support will 3ie provide to the selected team?**

**A18:** Apart from the support outlined in the request for proposals document and clarified in this Q&A document. 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 collaborating 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.

## **Proposal submission guidelines**

**Q19: In the request for proposals the duration of the project mentioned is three months whereas the budget template is for five months.**

**A19:** This is a 3ie financial budget template. Please customise the template for the three-month duration of the study.

**Q20: As per the sample grant agreement template, under the tranche payment share in column 2, there is a mention of 0% against the deliverables for the second tranche disbursement. We understand that it is a typo error and that it should be 10%.**

**A20:** The grant agreement uploaded on the website is a sample only and the final deliverable and disbursement schedule will be finalised at contract signing.

Please note that there will be three tranche payments. The first payment will be at grant signing. The second tranche payment must be supported by (1) one or more evaluation deliverables; and (2) the funds utilisation report. The final tranche payment must be supported by (1) the final qualitative report, (2) a progress report that includes study and engagement related activities and (3) a fund utilisation report. 3ie mandates that the first tranche payment cannot be more than 30 per cent of the total grant and the last tranche at least 10 per cent.

**Q21: Please clarify the subcategories under the costs of report production**

**A21:** This includes costs associated with report preparation, editing and proofing.

**Q22: We request you to extend the deadline for submission from 15 July to 19 July 2019.**

**A22:** 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.