



## Request for proposals

# Swashakt: Empowering women through collective-based approaches

**Issue date: 25 February 2020**

**Initial proposal submission deadline: 14 April 2020**

**Revised submission deadline: 18 May 2020**

## 1. Introduction

The [International Initiative for Impact Evaluation \(3ie\)](#) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation invite proposals from organisations to submit proposals for implementation and/or evaluation grants under our new evidence programme, [Swashakt: Empowering women through collective-based approaches](#). Organisations engaged in implementing—at scale or through pilots—innovative economic interventions for women’s collective- and group-based enterprises in India are invited to submit proposals.

This evidence programme aims to generate evidence on [policy-relevant](#) interventions that enhance the viability, scalability and returns for women’s collective enterprises, thereby promoting women’s leadership and economic empowerment. The goal of this evidence programme is to generate high-quality evidence to inform the National Rural Livelihoods Mission because it is the single largest platform in India for forming and operating women’s collective enterprises. We expect to award between two to three implementation and evaluation grants for a period of three years with funding up to US\$1 million, depending on the scope of work. Depending on the type of intervention (pilot or at-scale), evaluations could include formative, process or impact evaluation components.<sup>1</sup>

We will consider funding proposals for:

- (i) the implementation and evaluation of an intervention;
- (ii) the evaluation of an intervention that has secured implementation funding; or
- (iii) implementation only, with evaluation teams to be matched to implementing teams by 3ie.

The focus of this call is on interventions serving non-farm and off-farm women’s collective enterprises in rural areas. We define women’s collective enterprises as those where a group of

---

<sup>1</sup> Formative evaluations seek to test the appropriateness, feasibility and acceptability of the interventions, whilst impact evaluations aim to assess the effectiveness and scalability of innovative interventions. Process evaluations seek to examine the implementation process to assess whether, how and why intended intervention components were or were not implemented.

women come together in a common economic activity such as those registered as a company or cooperative, or informal clusters that access markets together, drawing on business principles as well as leveraging social capital. These could be linked to self-help group (SHG) federations. 3ie will consider interventions that include connections with rural, peri-urban, urban, regional and/or global value chains. We are not currently seeking proposals for on-farm models or individual livelihood support models.

We are particularly interested in proposals that aim to expand and increase economic and social returns; build women's leadership; and expand technical and business strength of existing women's collective enterprises. The evaluations will focus on finding out whether this was achieved or is likely to be achieved as a result of the interventions. Proposals in partnership with State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs) are particularly encouraged.

We are also interested in supporting proposals for piloting and evaluating:

- (i) cost-effective, scalable business models (and social models that can help women in collective enterprises reach social and economic viability); and
- (ii) market-based approaches for expanding and growing viable models (including by capturing opportunities for public sector procurement or fair work practices and labelling).

Proposed interventions and evaluations are expected to capture the cost-effectiveness of the models, their distributional effects, and the mechanisms through which they function (or when models do not work well, what are the inhibiting factors). These interventions may be initiated or tested by private profit-making organisations, NGOs or state governments. The end goal is to inform the Indian government's National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) by identifying scaleable and transferable models that can increase economic gains for women.

## 2. Background

With less than 30% of its adult women engaged in economic activities, India has one of the lowest female employment rates in South Asia. Moreover, female labour force participation has been declining over time, with this decrease being more pronounced for rural women. Women are typically engaged in agricultural or informal jobs—sectors characterized by low and uncertain earnings. They work as own-account workers running small businesses or as employees without contracts and job security. Furthermore, India has the third-largest gender gap in entrepreneurship in the world. Getting India's women into quality employment is paramount to ensure increases in their welfare and rights.

The Gates Foundation's strategy for gender equality is to improve and increase quality work for women, expanding women's enterprise and deepening collective income-generating activities for them. This can lead to higher incomes, more financial security, greater bargaining power in markets and within their households, and greater empowerment. Such an approach has been favoured by the Indian government for nearly a decade.

Women's groups or self-help groups (SHGs) are being promoted as platforms for poverty-alleviation under the NRLM. Grassroots SHGs are being federated into larger groups of village organisations and cluster-level federations to promote livelihood activities. These federations have the potential to create and bolster income-generating activities for women beyond farming, thereby contributing to their economic empowerment.

A review by the Gates Foundation found that SHG federations are playing an important role in women's collective enterprise promotion. This has mostly been through (i) training; (ii) business development services; and (iii) providing linkages to public markets. For example, training is an important part of the enterprise development pathway of NRLM, both through third parties (such as Rural Self Employment Training Institutes in all districts) and directly. The National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP) is scaling up business development services

(SVEP) in 100 districts. Both Tamil Nadu and Kerala have tested enterprise promotion and capacity building via a cadre of enterprise mentors (one per cluster); connecting to market opportunities (especially government procurement); capping input costs; and providing interest subvention (4% in Kerala and Tamil Nadu).

Several SRLMs have made progress on linking collectives to public markets (government procurement). In Odisha, 40 sectors will procure through SHGs. Madhya Pradesh SRLM signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education for women's economic collectives (WEC) members to supply uniforms, potentially impacting approximately 25,000 women in 33 districts. Kudumbashree in Kerala supplies Integrated Child Development Scheme (Nutrimix), Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (construction clusters), canteens, and facilities management.

While NRLM has contributed to the development of women's collective enterprises, more can be done. Approximately 60% of the total women's collectives in India are NRLM groups, and the Mission is on track to reach the target of approximately 70–80 million households across 600 districts.<sup>2</sup> The southern states have been frontrunners in WECs adoption, with saturation levels of one WEC for every group of up to 100 people (one WEC per 56-86 people). There is significant room for growth in the northern states to reach the levels seen in the southern states. NRLM has largely focused on farmer-producer organisations to date. Access to markets is hence a major untapped opportunity, as are off-farm and non-farm incomes. National policies favour linking women's collective enterprises to public sector procurement opportunities, but this is currently done in an ad-hoc manner. NRLM is not playing a systematic role as a connector-negotiator. Lessons can be learned from outside the NRLM system.

The literature indicates that Indian SHGs have shown some degree of success in livelihood promotion by providing women access to financial capital. Hoffman et al. (2018) in their study of the Jeevika programme found that the programme led to some increases in women's participation in income-generating activities. Desai and Joshi (2013) found that SHG women in Rajasthan were able to find employment in non-farm work in a period of drought when agricultural wages were depressed. Gupta et al (2019) found that in a scenario when women's labour force participation is declining, NRLM led to stabilization of women's work.

Global evidence also suggests the potential of group enterprises while highlighting evidence gaps. A [3ie-conducted synthesis of impact evaluations](#) that examines group-based livelihood interventions across low- and middle-income countries finds that providing a combination of financial support and training led to agricultural households diversifying into non-farm income-generating activities, mostly in the form of small enterprises. However, not much is known about the productivity and sustainability of such enterprises. The same synthesis finds that group-

---

<sup>2</sup> Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, internal memo.

based financial interventions, when combined with linkages to social protection programmes and food entitlements, are effective in reducing vulnerabilities owing to the stronger social capital of groups.

### ***The case for women's collective enterprises***

Enterprises offer income-generating opportunities outside agriculture and may be particularly effective for women who lack the formal skills for employment in salaried jobs. However, small businesses struggle to sustain, grow and become profitable, generating only marginal income for their owners. Several constraints hinder small-and middle-sized enterprises. Lack of access to credit tops the list, followed by tedious business regulations. Lack of entrepreneurial skills, knowledge of, and access to input and output markets and global value chains lead to low productivity, profits and investments and prevent these businesses from scaling up. The inability of these businesses to grow prevents them from benefiting from economies of scale and keep them in a low productivity–low returns trap. For women entrepreneurs, these obstacles are compounded due to social norms and women's lack of bargaining power within households that limit their access to human, financial, physical and social capital. Organizing women's collective enterprises can be a viable option to promote economic empowerment for women for the reasons described below:

*Benefits of economies of scale:* Some important economies of scale that are brought about by WECs are the pooling of resources and sharing of information. Collectives can undertake combined sourcing of inputs, loans, investments in technology, skills and marketing of products that are likely to reduce costs. Collectives can work as a conduit for technological know-how and capacity development of women's small businesses. Scale may additionally enable enterprises to spread out demand- and supply-side risks.

*Access and integration into improved value chains, networks and markets:* Women entrepreneurs face prohibitively high costs of interfacing with markets. Factors such as high transportation costs, perceived high opportunity costs of women's time, and restrictive social norms are often reflected in longer supply chains for women entrepreneurs. Further, women entrepreneurs may be less connected to people who control resources and markets. Collectives can potentially provide direct access to larger and new input and output markets and thereby reduce dependence on intermediaries. This, in turn, will lead to the participating women capturing higher profits.

*Bargaining power:* Organizing women into groups for economic activities provides them with a system of mutual support and may lend them more bargaining power within their household as well as vis-à-vis the market. Economic inclusion may thus lead to improved participation of women in the community and eventually to their empowerment.

## **3. Scope of the proposal**

### **3.1. Type of interventions**

We will support the implementation and evaluation of interventions and projects that promote and accelerate scalability, market access and bargaining power of women's collective enterprises. This can be achieved through projects and interventions that provide:

### *3.1.1. Appropriate business training for women's enterprise collectives.*

The evidence on what works for layered training and business support is mixed, so we want to deepen that base. Recent reviews by Chinen et al (2019) and Mckenzie and Woodruff (2013) have shown that while overall business training leads to very modest increases in the launch of new businesses, profits and sales, these need to be combined with financial, mentoring and technical assistance services. Life-skills and gender-sensitive training curriculum have shown some promise as well. More recently, mindset and behaviour-shifting business training is being tested, but with mixed evidence (Alibhai et al 2019, Campos et al 2018).

Research has shown high dropout rates from training programmes. While these may lead to better business knowledge, these do not lead to better practices. Berge et al. (2011) find training increases profits in the short run, but it becomes statistically insignificant in their longer-term follow-up. Thus, innovations in training delivery are needed. Experiential learning, customising and targeting training programmes for women entrepreneurs are being tested, but their potential is unknown (Bardasi et al 2018).

Given this background, we will consider funding the evaluation and necessary implementation costs of business training interventions that aim at improving (a) participation in; (b) delivery of; and/or (c) design and curricula of training. Examples of interventions that we are interested in funding include:

- (i) mentorship models;
- (ii) training combined with financial assistance, technical assistance, life skills and empowerment interventions;
- (iii) innovations in training curricula to include lesser researched dimensions of entrepreneurial skills and behaviour, such as behaviour change or adaptive training; and
- (iv) apprenticeship models or experiential learning models.

The training interventions considered may include specific components for enhancing women's empowerment, for example informing women entrepreneurs of their political and personal rights and entitlements. In such cases, the evaluations will also seek to disentangle the effects of the various components of the intervention.

### *3.1.2. Access to improved value chains and networks*

Much research has shown that women entrepreneurs have a less effective network compared to men and mostly depend on non-formal sources such as family and friends for information, advice and services (Shaw et al 2009, Klyver and Grant 2010). They are unable to access experienced advisors due to socio-cultural norms that restrict women's mobility and interactions.

Thus, innovations that link WECs to efficient and supportive networks may provide them with much-needed social capital.

The interventions may aim to do so by forming (i) forward linkages of collective enterprises to public procurement systems (B2G) or large businesses (B2B) and/or (ii) access to enterprise networks and/or (iii) easy access to market-related information through technological innovations. There is limited rigorous evidence on the impact of such interventions, although the potential may be immense. The Public Procurement Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises Amendment Order of November 2018 created a special provision for procuring 3% of the

demand from women-owned MSMEs.<sup>3</sup> There are other innovative initiatives by the public and private sectors that link WEC to export and high-end markets.<sup>4</sup> One of the main arguments in favour of such linkages is that they ensure sustained and relatively less volatile demand and pre-negotiated prices for WEC products.

Thus, we will consider funding the evaluation and necessary implementation costs of interventions that improve WEC value chains and networks through linkages to:

- (i) government procurement;
- (ii) large businesses; and/or
- (iii) other enterprises or value-chain actors.

The interventions considered may include other specific components for enhancing women’s empowerment. In such cases, the evaluations will also seek to disentangle the effects of the various components of the intervention.

**Table 1: Mapping of interventions and outcomes**

Pathway	Type of interventions	Indicative outcomes (please see <a href="#">section 3.4</a> )
Collective Enterprises	<p>1. Training or mentoring (i) training combined with financial assistance, technical assistance, life skills and empowerment interventions; (ii) innovations to improve participation in, design and delivery of training.</p> <p>2. Access to value chains and markets: (i) forward linkages of WEC to public procurement systems (B2G) or large businesses (B2B); (ii) access to enterprise networks; (iii) easy access to market information; (iv) innovations in the above using digital technology.</p> <p>3. Bargaining power (i) facilitation to rights and entitlements when combined with 1 and 2 above</p>	<p>(i) Number of jobs created (ii) Number of women in enterprises (iii) Enterprise productivity (iv) Revenue generated (v) Women’s incomes (vi) Women’s access to assets (vii) Women’s agency</p>

<sup>3</sup> Kudumbashree created and supported procurement of Nutrimix through WECs, solving skills challenges through training and input pricing constraints through group purchasing. The approach increased access to capital through 4% interest subvention by the government and reduced information asymmetry by linking women to an assured public market. This increased scale to 238 units and provided a daily wage of US\$3.6 per woman.

<sup>4</sup> *Industree* links women artisans to professionals and export markets.

### 3.2 Types of enterprise models

We are interested in women's collective enterprises that bring together a number of similar businesses run by individuals or groups. These models may be implemented or tested in partnership with the government. These may or may not pool resources of all members but have to take up activities along the value chain. We will not support models that do not have the possibility of being replicated through SHG federations or generate learnings for NRLM. Thus, proposals that we receive will need to elaborate on the ownership of these collectives and their relevance to NRLM.

### 3.3 Eligible interventions

Interventions eligible for consideration for 3ie support (evaluation and implementation, or evaluation only) will be at two different stages of development:

- (1) pilots; and
- (2) implementation at scale.

Eligible proposals will include (i) models of WEC and linkages that have been known to work in a context and are being scaled up; (ii) models of WECs and linkages that have shown some promise of working in other sectors or contexts and are being replicated or adapted through SHG federations; (iii) interventions that have been known to work for other businesses and are being scaled up or replicated with WECs; (iv) innovative interventions that are being tried on WECs for the first time, provided these are supported by strong theories of change; and (v) models and interventions that have been scaled up by WECs without any rigorous evidence.

For at-scale interventions, 3ie will provide approximately three years of funding. For pilots, 3ie will support funding for a period of six to eight months. Pilots that exhibit feasibility of implementation will be considered for a second round of support for up to three years to test them at scale. ([Table 2](#) summarizes the eligibility criteria for the different types of implementation and evaluation grants).

### 3.4 Types of evaluation grants

Evaluations funded will be of two types:

- (1) full impact evaluations (IEs), including process and cost evaluation of the selected at-scale project (unless already available); and
- (2) formative and/or process evaluations of pilots for six to eight months, followed by impact evaluation (including process and cost evaluations) if findings from the former are encouraging.

We encourage evaluations that use some [gender-sensitive methods](#). Funded evaluations will develop and validate the theories of change through the study of previous literature and on-the-ground experience and assessments. Sub-grantee teams will work closely with implementing partners to critically explore the program's theories of change assumptions that map the causal pathways from activities to outcomes and impacts.

Impact evaluations supported by the sub-grants will use a combination of methods that include qualitative and quantitative techniques to measure the attributable change in output, outcomes and possible impacts of the programme. Research teams should explain how they will ensure that the study is relevant to the policy and programming priorities of the implementing agency as well

as NRLM. Selected teams will be required to work collaboratively with the implementing agency and develop a stakeholder engagement plan which would include the respective SRLMs and NRLMs, among other organisations. ([Table 2](#) summarizes the eligibility criteria for the different types of implementation and evaluations grant).

### 3.5 Types of proposals

In response to this call, we welcome proposals of three types:

1. Implementers and independent evaluators and researchers that have teamed up and are seeking both evaluation and implementation support funds. The evaluation and research teams must declare conflicts of interest and propose mechanisms to mitigate the same.
2. Evaluation or research teams seeking funding for the evaluation only and that are able to demonstrate that the implementation partner has adequate funding and is committed to the evaluation. Proposals will have to demonstrate that the evaluation and research team has no conflict of interest.
3. Implementation team interested in being evaluated to gain knowledge about the effectiveness of their project and interventions. The implementation team could already have secured implementation funding and only be seeking to be teamed up with an evaluation team, or it could seek some support for the implementation rollout. In such cases, 3ie will match the implementing team to an evaluation team. Proposals from implementation agencies that have not partnered with evaluation teams and need 3ie to match them will be required to supply information about the state of implementation and its funding, the rollout plan for the project or intervention, the description of the intervention including target group, objectives and theory of change, and the policy or programming question(s) they are interested in.

**Please note:** We request teams of evaluators or researchers who may be interested in the third type of proposals to submit their qualifications separately. Such teams need not submit a full proposal and will be matched to implementation teams by 3ie based on their qualifications, availability and requirements of the evaluation. For team composition requirements, see [section 4, sub-section 7](#).



**Table 2: Implementation and evaluation funding**

Type of Implementation funding	Quality of existing evidence	Phase 1				Phase 2			
		Duration	Amount of implementation funding	Type of evaluation	Amount of evaluation funding	Duration	Amount of implementation funding	Type of evaluation	Amount of evaluation funding
At-scale project	(i) Feasibility studies have been done; or (ii) Formative studies or proofs of concept are available; (iii) But impacts are not known	3 years	Up to US\$600,000	Impact Evaluation+ process evaluation+ cost-effectiveness study	Up to US\$400,000				
Pilot project	(i) Strong theory of change; (ii) Some evidence of working in other sectors; or (iii) Some evidence of working in the same field but in a different context, e.g. different state/country, urban women, male farmers	6- 8 months	Up to US\$100,000	Formative evaluation/ Process evaluation	Up to US\$80,000	3 years	Up to US\$500,000	Impact evaluation + cost effectiveness study, if findings from Phase 1 show that the intervention is feasible and can be tested	Up to US\$320,000

### 3.5 Types of proposals

In response to this call, we welcome proposals of three types:

1. Implementers and independent evaluators and researchers that have teamed up and are seeking both evaluation and implementation support funds. The evaluation and research teams must declare conflicts of interest and propose mechanisms to mitigate the same.
2. Evaluation or research teams seeking funding for the evaluation only and that are able to demonstrate that the implementation partner has adequate funding and is committed to the evaluation. Proposals will have to demonstrate that the evaluation and research team has no conflict of interest.
3. Implementation team interested in being evaluated to gain knowledge about the effectiveness of their project and interventions. The implementation team could already have secured implementation funding and only be seeking to be teamed up with an evaluation team, or it could seek some support for the implementation rollout. In such cases, 3ie will match the implementing team to an evaluation team. Proposals from implementation agencies that have not partnered with evaluation teams and need 3ie to match them will be required to supply information about the state of implementation and its funding, the rollout plan for the project or intervention, the description of the intervention including target group, objectives and theory of change, and the policy or programming question(s) they are interested in.

**Please note:** We request teams of evaluators or researchers who may be interested in the third type of proposals to submit their qualifications separately. Such teams need not submit a full proposal and will be matched to implementation teams by 3ie based on their qualifications, availability and requirements of the evaluation. For team composition requirements, see [section 4, sub-section 7](#).

### 3.6 Types of outcomes

3ie will require all funded projects and evaluations to report on some common indicators that will be measured comparably (see [Table 1](#)). Without being exhaustive, some indicative outcomes that the projects and evaluations will report on are:

1. **Business outcomes** such as the number of jobs created, productivity, revenue generated, financial sustainability.
2. **Participant economic empowerment outcomes** such as women's employment status, hours in income-generating activities, incomes, access to assets.
3. **Non-economic indicators of women's well-being** such as self-efficacy, time use, mental health, aspirations for children, agency and empowerment within the household.
4. **Household socio-economic and demographic outcomes**
5. **Project implementation and quality indicators** such as participation, cost-effectiveness, inclusivity.

To explain why impacts may or may not manifest, evaluations will examine programme implementation, group functioning and management practices to explain contributing factors or bottlenecks using qualitative and quantitative methods. The implementation of interventions or

projects will be strictly monitored by tracking the key performance indicators agreed with the implementation agencies at the contracting stage.

## 4. Characteristics of successful proposals

We seek proposals that clearly demonstrate the following attributes:

**1. Projects or interventions with the potential to improve the economic empowerment of women** by increasing the number of jobs for women, their incomes and access to assets and revenue of enterprises. Proposals must present a clear theory of change linking interventions to the outcomes stated. It should clearly lay out the assumptions underlying each link, validated by explicitly stating the theory that underpins them, which will reflect a thorough understanding of the context. Studies will be expected to collect data for indicators along the causal chain.

**2. Projects or interventions with innovative approaches** that respond to the scope defined in [section 3.1](#). Proposals should include a justification for why the intervention is innovative and critical for filling gaps in knowledge and policy. 3ie considers a proposal to be innovative if (i) it has been known to work for WECs in a context and is being scaled up and replicated; (ii) it has shown some promise of working in other sectors and is being replicated or adapted through WECs; and (iii) innovative interventions that are being tried on WECs for the first time, provided these are supported by strong theories of change.

**3. Mixed-methods for evaluation.** The analysis of the causal chain, as embodied in the theory of change approach, requires a mix of factual and counterfactual analysis that draws on both quantitative and qualitative data. By incorporating mixed methods for data collection and analysis, we expect impact evaluations to answer how, why, at what cost and for whom the intervention will work. Implementing partners should be able to highlight willingness and ability to develop a robust M&E system for programme monitoring.

**4. Gendered-approach to programme design and evaluation.** Proposals must demonstrate that the projects or interventions are designed to meet the differential requirements of women entrepreneurs. Evaluations must include methods to understand impacts on gender relations either in the entrepreneurial system or in the household.

**5. Feasibility.** Implementation teams must provide a letter of support stating their intent to make available all necessary project- or intervention-related information for evaluation purposes and their commitment to rolling out the project or intervention. All necessary legal and administrative permits to roll out the project or intervention must be stated.

**Note:** Applicants will need to state clearly whether they are requesting support for implementation or evaluation or both. Applicants seeking implementation and evaluation support, or only evaluation support, must provide all information on implementation as well as on the evaluation proposal, as detailed in the proposal template available on this [webpage](#). Implementation teams are encouraged to secure financial support from other sources. If applicants are considering other sources for funding and if they are selected for such support, they will need to demonstrate that funding from these sources has been secured at the time of signing the grant with 3ie.

**6. Policy relevance.** Applicants should explain how they will ensure that the study is relevant to the policy and programming priorities of the implementing agency. They will provide an initial stakeholder mapping with their proposals, as well as a clear stakeholder engagement plan describing how they will work with and share evaluation insights with the implementing agency, SRLMs and NRLM.

**7. Composition of the evaluation team.** Evaluation teams must demonstrate the required skills mix and experience in appropriately mixing methods, and a strong record of carrying out experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluations. The team must also demonstrate the ability to do process and cost-effectiveness assessments. Teams must include an expert on women's enterprises and a local researcher. The local researcher must be an Indian resident.

**8. Quality of evaluation proposals.** Applicants who apply for evaluation funding will need to ensure that the technical quality of the evaluation proposal is high.

(i) *Formative evaluations:* 3ie expects a proposal for a formative evaluation when the intervention to be evaluated is new and untried but innovative and holds the potential for being scaled. A formative evaluation proposal may be for a small sample and should address at least three main issues. (1) It should aim to test whether the proposed intervention works in the context and with the planned implementation structures and processes. (2) It should aim to inform and assess the likelihood that it will be worthwhile to scale up the intervention. (3) It should inform how the existing intervention may be altered to overcome some initial challenges (but that will be tested subsequently).

(ii) *Impact evaluations:* To be eligible for impact evaluation grants, applicants will need to present detailed methods and timelines, and demonstrate the ability and feasibility of using experimental or quasi-experimental methods to help measure attributable change in targeted outcomes and impact variables.<sup>5</sup> Applicants should demonstrate how a mixed methods approach will be used, complementing the counterfactual-based approach with qualitative methods (e.g., focus group discussions, interviews, observation), and explain the rationale for using a sequential exploratory, sequential explanatory or a convergent design.<sup>6</sup> Applicants will also explain their proposed approach to estimating the cost-effectiveness of the intervention.

---

<sup>5</sup> Submitted full proposals must meet 3ie's definition of rigorous impact evaluation. They should have sound identification methods and should be adequately powered to measure outcomes. They should be able to account for common threats to causal validity, including programme placement bias, confounding, sample selection bias, biases arising from spill-overs and contamination, and biases in outcome data collection and reporting. Experimental designs involve random assignment of the intervention at individual or cluster levels. Quasi-experimental approaches employ statistical techniques to address the selection bias when the intervention is not randomly assigned. This includes instrumental variable estimation, regression discontinuity, difference-in-difference and statistical matching approaches.

<sup>6</sup> **Sequential explanatory design:** The quantitative component is followed by the qualitative. The purpose of sequential explanatory design is to explain quantitative results using qualitative findings. The quantitative results guide the selection of qualitative data sources and data collection, and the qualitative findings contribute to the interpretation of quantitative results. Study post quantitative analysis.

**Sequential exploratory design:** The qualitative component is followed by the quantitative. The purpose of sequential exploratory design is to explore, develop and test an instrument (or taxonomy), or a conceptual framework (or theoretical model). The qualitative findings inform the quantitative data collection.

(iii) *Process evaluations*: 3ie expects a proposal for a process evaluation when the intervention to be evaluated has already been rolled out. Process evaluation proposals should include elements of the formative evaluation as laid out above. Additionally, a process evaluation should include the following information: (a) an in-depth discussion of resources and structures in place and whether these are adequate to reach the expected project outcomes; (b) an assessment of the quality of implementation; and (c) a discussion of potential enabling or inhibiting factors to establish the likelihood of the project or intervention achieving its outputs and final objectives.

## 5. Timeline

The deadline for submitting proposals is **18:00 IST, 18 May 2020**. 3ie will invite selected applicants for a pre-award meeting on 16 June 2020. Responses to comments from reviewers are discussed at the pre-award inception meeting. The final award of the grant is conditional on the key members of the research and implementation team attending this meeting and satisfactory responses to the feedback provided by 3ie. 3ie expects to announce the final grant award on 23 June 2020. 3ie reserves the right to rescind the award of the grant if a team is unable to incorporate critical feedback.

**Table 3: Key dates for milestones and deliverables**

Activity or deliverable	Key dates (all deadlines: 18:00 IST)
Request for proposals published	25 February 2020
Deadline for queries	10 March 2020
Answers to FAQs posted online	18 March 2020
Application portal opens	23 March 2020
Deadline for proposal submission	18 May 2020
Provisional awards announced	Expected 30 June 2020
Inception workshop with provisional grant teams	Expected 14 July 2020
Signing of the grant agreement	Expected 21 July 2020

## 6. Eligibility

- Only legally registered organisations and consortia of registered organisations may apply under this call for proposals.

---

**Convergent design:** The qualitative and quantitative components are concomitant and integrated. The purpose of convergent designs is to examine the same phenomenon by interpreting qualitative and quantitative results (bringing data analysis together at the interpretation stage), or by integrating qualitative and quantitative datasets (e.g., data on same cases), or by transforming data (e.g., quantization of qualitative data), or to support a qualitative study with a quantitative sub-study (measures), or to better understand a specific issue of a quantitative study using a qualitative sub-study, or to analyze different parts of the causal chain with different methodological approaches.

- India-based grant-holding organisations should be registered under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and able to receive dollar-denominated grants.
- The grant-holding organisation and the lead PI for the evaluation team may be located anywhere in the world, but there must be a local PI in a substantial role.
- In the case of proposal types 1 and 2 (where the evaluation team and implementation team apply together for funding, and where only evaluation funding is sought) the proposal must be submitted by a single evaluation or research organisation. This organisation can work with others as sub-grantees or sub-contractors (subject to 3ie's [direct](#) and [indirect cost](#) policies). In the case of proposals of type 3, the proposal must be submitted by the implementing organisation.
- For-profit organisations that are not India-based are eligible to apply but are restricted to the same indirect cost limits as non-profit organisations and may not charge a fee.
- The applicant organisation must be able to sign the 3ie grant agreement, a sample of which is available on the [webpage](#).
- Organisations may submit more than one proposal and may be included on more than one proposal. They should, however, have the capacity to implement any and all grants awarded to them under the programme.
- All evaluation proposals should have sufficient resources for undertaking high-quality evaluations. If the proposal is dependent on other resources, this should be clearly indicated. If selected for this evidence programme, the applicant will need to ensure that these additional resources are available at the time of signing the agreement with 3ie. In the absence of this, the offer of 3ie grant support will be withdrawn.

## 7. Scoring criteria

Proposals will be filled [online](#), and [sample templates for your reference are available on the webpage](#). Proposals must clearly state if they are seeking (i) implementation and evaluation funds; or (ii) evaluation funds only; or (iii) implementation funds only, with matching for evaluation. Applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel of reviewers, composed of 3ie staff and external reviewers. 3ie may provide comments and request applicants to make changes to their proposals. Table 4 below provides the criteria that will be considered when assessing the proposals. Costs will be assessed separately, with a focus on gaining the most relevant knowledge for the budget spent.

**Table 4: Scoring criteria**

<b>Criteria for the implementation component of the proposals</b>	<b>Joint evaluation and implementation proposals</b>	<b>Implementing agencies' proposals</b>
Justification for interest in the evaluation of the project/intervention; planned use; policy relevance	X	X
Justification for the innovative approach, context relevance and impact potential of the project/intervention	X	X
Implementation feasibility of the project/intervention	X	X
<b>Criteria for the evaluation component of the proposals</b>	<b>Joint evaluation and implementation proposals</b>	<b>Implementing agencies' proposals</b>
Evaluation questions	X	X
Justification for using proposed evaluation methodology and its internal validity	X	
Evaluation team composition and qualification	X	
Stakeholder engagement and potential for uptake of findings	X	X

## 8. Submission guidelines

- Complete the proposal using the online [proposal submission portal](#). (Indicative budget templates, proposal templates and the request for qualifications can be found on the [webpage](#).)
- The proposed budget must follow 3ie's [direct cost](#) and [indirect](#) cost policies and include the cost of implementation, cost of the evaluation, and costs of engagement with key stakeholders and communication.
- Applicants must agree to comply with applicable 3ie policies, including [safeguarding](#), [research transparency](#) and [publication release](#).
- Applicants will need curriculum vitae (CV), not exceeding three pages for each proposed principal investigator (PI). It is a requirement that the local PIs will participate directly and substantively in the proposed evaluation. Applicants will provide only information relevant to the grant in their CV.
- If applicable, please include CVs (not to exceed three pages each) of additional researchers who will be involved in conducting the evaluation. Applicants need to provide only information relevant to the grant in their CV.
- Please direct any questions related to this call for proposals to [ep1@3ieimpact.org](mailto:ep1@3ieimpact.org) with 'Swashakt-RFP query' in the subject line by 18:00 IST, 10 March 2020.