



# Realising the potential of women's collective enterprises

**Bidisha Barooah**  
3ie



International  
Initiative for  
Impact Evaluation

# Why invest in women's collective enterprises for women's economic empowerment?

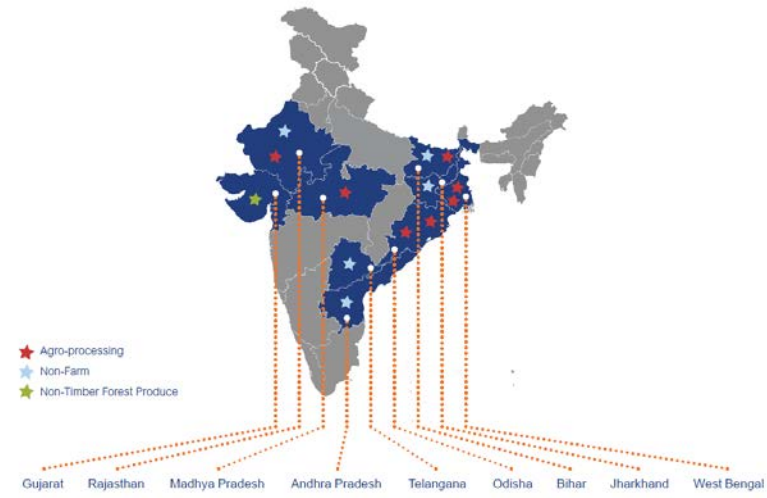
- Endowments, entitlements and investments that women receive are not the same as men
  - Women constitute 14% of landowners in India (Agarwal et al 2020)
- Women's economic empowerment: control over their economic lives
- Supporting women-run and led businesses can give resource-poor women ownership and agency over economic assets
  - Evidence of long-run effects of asset transfer+ financial inclusion programs in India (Banerjee, Duflo, Sharma 2021)
- Collective enterprises can alleviate the structural and systematic disadvantages that women's enterprises face
  - Collective action to access resources and markets
  - Collective bargaining
  - Reduction in costs
  - Economies of scale
  - Share risks
  - Problems of free-riding, inefficient investments, co-ordination



Figure 1: Locations and sectors

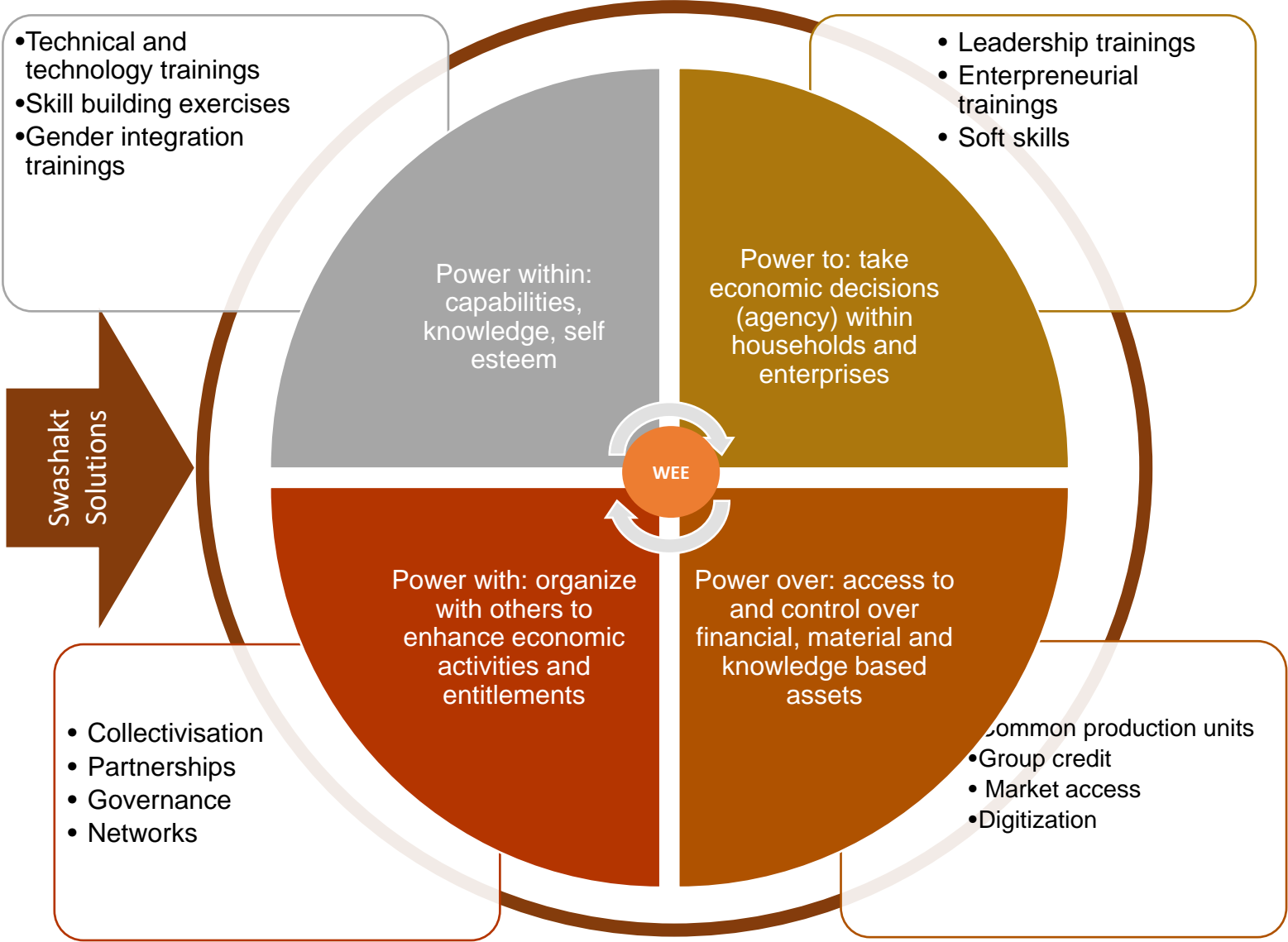
# Swashakt: projects span 9 states and several sectors

- Success stories of collectives in India such as SEWA, Kudumbashree, SERP
- SHGs are a platform for rural women: Over 80 million women mobilized in SHGs
  - Increase in access to financial assets
  - Improvements in income and income sources
  - Better linkages with social programs
  - Women’s economic inclusion
  - All impacts are higher with further collectivization of SHGs or federations (Kochar et al 2020)
- 3ie with support from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Swashakt program in 2020.
- The 9 Swashakt projects set up and replicate models of women’s collective enterprises across 9 states in India.



Name of project	Product	Type of WEC
Collectively run agro-processing enterprises in the Eastern Gangetic Plains	Makhana, Vermicompost	FPC
Strengthening Women Farmer Producer Organisation in Tribal Communities of Gujarat, India	Mahua residue, Mango, Turmeric	PC
Rural Retail Shops: Empowering women through collective-based approaches in Bihar	Services	Association
Women's Entrepreneur Collective- NEEDS	Bamboo craft	PC
Scaling up RUDI, a SEWA Women Collective Enterprise from Gujarat	Local agricultural produce	Aggregation
Creating agency of women in weaving value-chain in India, impacting 1,700 women weavers by 2023 through collectivization	Cotton woven handloom	FPC
Crafts Incubation Hub, Rajasthan	Handicraft	Aggregation
Economic and Empowerment Impacts of Millet Processing and Value Addition Enterprises by Women SHGs in Tribal Areas of Odisha	Millets	SHGs
Gramyashakti: Developing rural women’s spice processing enterprises in three Indian states	Spices	FPC

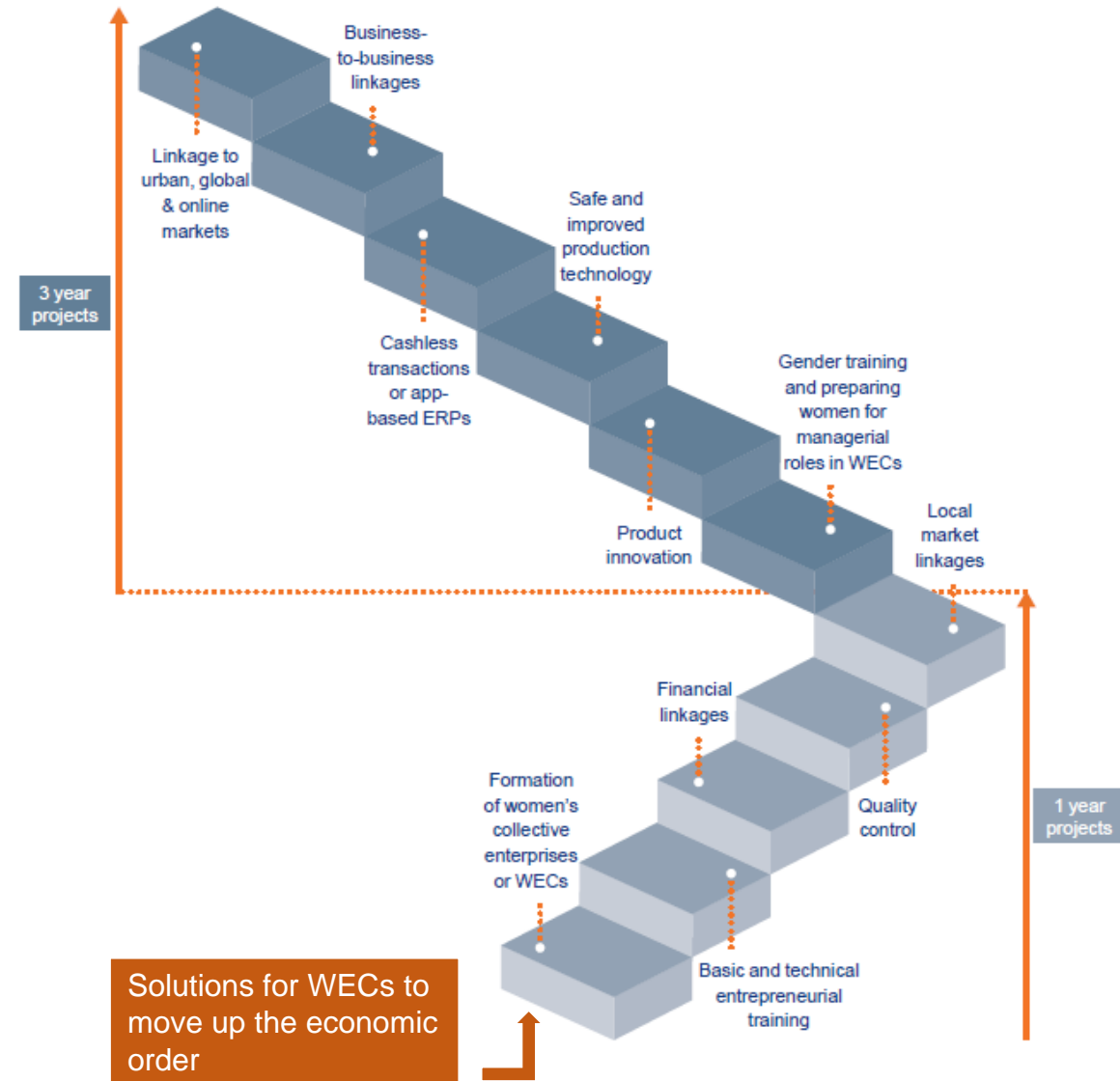
# Women's economic empowerment and collectives



Source: Perezniето and Taylor (2014), Dang et al (Forthcoming)

# Supporting collective enterprises through diverse solutions

- Identified challenges of WECs
  - Barely sustainable: weak economic models and financially unviable
  - Lack of self-sufficiency and internal capacity
  - Lack of replicability and potential for scale
  - No 'big push'
- Swashakt supports 'solutions' that set up a strong foundation for WECs, generate higher value for women and demonstrate potential for scale



# Women's economic empowerment and collectives

## Theory of Change

