SANITATION INNOVATION ACCELERATOR (SIA) 2016

• **Background**
  Ennovent, IRC and Taru Leading Edge (‘TARU’) forged a partnership alliance to develop a Sanitation Innovation Accelerator (‘Accelerator’) for India’s rural markets. Sanitation innovation is an inclusive and sustainable solution to sanitation challenges anywhere in the sanitation chain; from containment and collection to treatment, safe disposal and reuse of faecal waste. The Accelerator is a unique nation-wide program to discover, startup, finance, and scale early-stage entrepreneurial innovations and enterprises with wide-ranging and sustainable solutions in the rural sanitation ecosystem in India.

The initiative brings together international and national technical expertise on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene with a specialization in accelerating innovations for sustainability in low-income markets in developing countries. The aim is to build the Accelerator gradually in several phases to ensure better alignment of activities, resources and effectiveness.

• **Location, Date**
  Pan India, 2016

• **Areas**
  Rural

• **Stage/Scale**
  Pilot Project

• **Objective of the assignment**
  The objective of the Accelerator is to promote solutions that can impact a large number of people. Sanitation innovations are expected to bring substantial improvements to existing technologies or approaches, tailored to meet the objectives of clients and partners, and solve their innovation challenges. Participation in the program was absolutely free of charge for the cohort members with all costs (accommodation, meals and resource material) borne by the core team.

• **What was done**
  The Sanitation Innovation Accelerator was initiated with an aim to identify, source, build capacities to scale such enterprises, especially in rural areas where it is more difficult to reach large numbers of people.

  In the first phase of the project, scheduled from March 2016 to September 2016, a pilot was set up with the objective to test the process and systems of the Sanitation Innovation Accelerator. Almost half of the 88 innovations submitted focused on awareness raising approaches or product development and most of the applications lacked a viable business model. 30 businesses complied with all the selection criteria and based on a second round and third round of interviews and due diligence and capacity assessments, 6 innovations were shortlisted for a coaching trajectory to improve their business. During the programme, the
This case study was curated by the India Sanitation Coalition.
• **Innovation**
  
  This innovation accelerator was unique as it
  
  • was the first of its kind innovation accelerator in the rural sanitation space. Most of the innovations are targeted towards the urban sanitation segment.
  
  • was the first of its kind innovation accelerator in the WASH sector that targeted and sourced innovations across the value chain (B-U-M-T)
  
  • explored innovations across both for-profit and not-for-profit models and organisations.

• **Lessons learnt**

  • Scalability
    
    Almost all the applications received under the Sanitation Innovation Accelerator 2016 (SIA ’16) had come out with an innovation that was highly localized in focus with a limited geographic reach, restricted to 1-2 regions within a state and had no scalability potential.

  • Revenue Streams:
    
    Most businesses in the rural ecosystem focus on merely monetizing their product or service usage and have not looked at diversifying its revenue streams. However, there were a few limited players who thought out of the box and focussed on several revenue streams feeding the growth of their core product.

  • Forward and Backward Linkages:
    
    One of the interesting findings from managing the accelerator was the lack of diversified participation across the value chain. The representation was highly skewed towards a product innovation (toilet) at an individual or household level, without ensuring linkages with other elements in the chain. This was observed among both, for-profit and not-for-profit innovators.

  • Traditional Non-Startup Approach
    
    Most entrepreneurs targeted the B-2-B client segment and focussed purely on the supply side (creating a product) while neglecting the needs and requirements of the end-user community.

  • Managing partnerships and relationships
    
    Most of the applicants had limited knowledge of the existing players, as well as low visibility of existing / potential business partnerships across the value chain, and technical and financial support opportunities from key ecosystem player including donors, investors and intermediary organisations.

  • Scalable Innovation Program
    
    The rural sanitation ecosystem needs an innovative spark to instill a “for-profit” mindset as well as unique startup approaches to solve existing sanitation challenges including prototyping, which is accompanied by a customer development process. A structured program is required to support existing and potential social enterprises in monetizing their business model and building a scalable framework

• **Financials**

  Not Available

• **Implementer Contact Persons**

  • Manu Prakash
    
    CEO – Taru Leading Edge
  
  • Vipul Kumar

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- **Country Director – Ennovent India**
  - **Ruchika Shiva**
  - Country Coordinator - IRC

- **Sources and References**
  - “Enabling Rural Sanitation: Understanding the Business Perspective”