

## Press Release

### Sanitation Innovation Accelerator 2016 declared its cohort of 6 organisations

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*Delhi | May 30, 2016 16:30 IST: The Sanitation Innovation Accelerator 2016 (SIA'16) had its official Launch Event at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016. A cohort of 6 innovations was formally introduced to a gathering of water and sanitation sectoral experts and investment mentors.*

**The Sanitation Innovation Accelerator 2016 is a unique nation-wide search for inclusive and sustainable solutions for rural sanitation in India. The first batch of the accelerator is a step towards a much larger program of providing an organised platform to identify, startup, finance and scale sanitation innovations in India.**

Prior to the launch, a 3-Day Boot-camp was held for the cohort at the TARU office, New Delhi from 23-25th May 2016. The boot-camp involved a workshop on understanding the larger sanitation sector challenges. The members, through different modes, had sessions on elements of business models and the need to work on each of these elements. The sessions culminated with understanding and prioritizing areas for the capacity building for each of the members for the next 8 weeks. The boot-camp was also an opportunity for the cohort to discuss their innovations and clarify any doubts they had regarding the accelerator program.

According to Vipul Kumar, Global Director - Clients at Ennovent and one of the core team members of the accelerator “the accelerator has received very encouraging response both from innovators as well as from various stakeholders in the sector. We are very excited to have a very promising cohort representing innovations from across the rural sanitation value chain led by committed and inspiring entrepreneurs. We had a very engaging 3-Day boot-camp followed by the launch event last week. We are looking forward to an intensive 8 weeks capacity building program that follows immediately. We have learnt greatly about the potential of sustainable innovation in the rural sanitation value chain in India and looking forward to further collaborations to design and implement programs to drive innovations in the sector.

Mr. Swapnil Chaturvedi also known as ‘Poop Guy’ from Samagra was the keynote speaker for the Event. According to him, “Entrepreneurship in sanitation is a very challenging space and one needs to conduct social experiments to look for innovative solutions”. This was followed by a speech by the Guest of Honour, Mr Sujoy Mozumdar, WASH Specialist, UNICEF India and former director of Swacch Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign). Mr. Mozumdar informed the audience that sanitation has always been looked at from the supply side i.e. run and monitored by the Government, as the space for others to get involved is not very clear.

The next session on “Moving Forward: Planning the next steps towards sustainability” started with the launch of the new website <http://www.innovations4sanitation.com/> for SIA 2016 while taking the audience through the journey of the accelerator program and planned next steps. It was followed shortly by the introduction of the SIA Cohort 2016 with a 5-Minute Pitch by each of the 6 finalists. The participants for the May-August 2016 Batch were - 3S- a Saraplast Enterprise, Nidan, Garv Toilets, Youth Aid Global Services Pvt. Ltd, Bharti Women Development Centre (BWDC) and WATSAN Envirotech Pvt. Ltd.

A panel of sectoral experts were invited to provide feedback on the pitch highlighting the gaps and additional areas to be addressed. The panel consisted of A. Kalimuthu, Program Director, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Institute, Mr. Joep Verhagen, Senior Water and Sanitation Specialist, WSP, World Bank, Mr. Kirti Prasanna Mishra, Cofounder of Ecociate and Ex-Partner of MartRural, Mr. Sujoy Mojumdar and Mr. Swapnil Chaturvedi.

The launch event was concluded by a Q&A session on the ‘Role of Business in addressing the sanitation challenges in India’. “Each member of the panel is a stalwart in the sanitation sector and comes with years of valuable experience in their respective fields. It is important to highlight that their collective knowhow and guidance will push the cohort in the right direction and solve important sector and industry challenges which will serve as a definitive step towards success of the cohort and the program.”, added Manu Prakash, Director & Practice Head-Policy & Public Services at TARU Leading Edge and one of the core member of the accelerator program.

One of the interesting highlights of the discussion was about the international experience of Mr. Joep Verhagen on BRAC Bangladesh. According to him, approaching sanitation as a pure business model has its own limitations. Joep shared his concern that as soon as sanitation businesses try to make the processes safer for the workers, like in Faecal Sludge Management, the costs of the business will likely go up, hence making it unviable.

However, the counter agreement from Mr. Kirti Prasanna Mishra (ex-partner MartRural) and Mr Prabhat Pani (from Tata Trusts) was equally powerful as they shared how similar challenges were faced by other emerging sectors during the initial days (e.g. Microfinance). The need of the hour is to continuously test and validate different models within the sanitation ecosystem until the space is mature enough to address the larger sanitation challenges in a holistic way. Ruchika Shiva who is co-leading the program on behalf of IRC said that it is crucial for us to engage with the different stakeholders to find sustainable solutions to address the sanitation challenge in India, this platform intends to bring successful initiatives from the grassroots, that are entrepreneurs and not for profit models, to work with them with a business perspective to test whether these can work on scale. This is a process of learning and unlearning for the cohort during the capacity building phase, for entrepreneurs to understand the need and value to engage with their customers beyond a one-time sale of a product/service, and for not for profits to understand the business dimensions that could help make their initiative sustainable and independent of time bound donor driven projects.

Shubho Broto Das, Manager - Startup Services at Ennovent and in-house start-up coach, stated "The boot-camp generated a few critical learnings and insights into the sanitation ecosystem in rural India and helped us discover various types of challenges, and entrepreneurial gaps that need to be addressed for transitioning the innovations into scalable, sustainable and profitable business models. Based on the needs, the cohort will be given access to our community of industry practitioners and investors along with a tailored capacity-building curriculum specifically addressing the needs ranging from identifying and diversifying revenue streams to strengthening end-to-end partnership models"

In August, after the completion of the 8-week capacity building program, the cohort members will present to a larger stakeholder group including investors.

## About Lead Organisers

**ENNOVENT:** Ennovent is a global innovation company for low-income markets. Ennovent works with its clients, partners and community to develop, fund and implement customized innovation solutions. These solutions discover, start up, finance and scale the best innovations for sustainability in developing countries. Since 2008, Ennovent has accelerated over 250 innovations in 15 countries through around 60 solutions.

**IRC:** IRC is an international think-and-do tank that works with governments, NGOs, entrepreneurs and people around the world to find long-term solutions to the global crisis in water, sanitation and hygiene services. The key ethos behind the work of IRC is sustainability, in order to create viable, lasting water and sanitation services. With over 45 years of experience, IRC runs large-scale programs in seven focus countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and projects in more than 25 countries. A team of around 80 staff supports its operations across the world.

**TARU Leading Edge:** TARU has 20+ years of advisory experience in addressing India's development challenges with deep expertise in India's WASH space. It has implemented 200+ projects on institutional, financial, economic, social and technical issues across diverse public systems, cultures and corporate formations. TARU has worked with innovators, corporations, multilateral agencies and government on rural and urban WASH issues including policy analysis, strategy development, action research, program design, project management, assessments and evaluations, campaigns and training.

Learn more about the [www.innovations4sanitation.com](http://www.innovations4sanitation.com)

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