

# Thematic Incubation for DRR

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## ABOUT RIKA

RIKA is a social entrepreneurship startup (DIPP-29629) with an aim of bringing research into the core of disaster management activities in India and other parts of South Asia. Resonating the Sendai declaration in relation to the need for widening the scope of Science and Technology in the disaster management, we at RIKA envision to act as a bridge connecting academic research, policy makers and field practitioners to make informed decisions and use of new technologies

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The year 2019 has been a witness to 197 disasters events affecting millions of people across the globe [EMDAT] and the year 2020 began with an unprecedented pandemic of COVID-19. Besides, the huge lives lost, it has led to disruption and discontinuity in the normal functioning of the society, different sectors, businesses, etc. thereby leading to a global economic slowdown. In this backdrop, there is a need to bring in some innovative solutions through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Thematic Incubation is one such innovative approach to ensure pro-active participation of the multiple actors in the field of DRR. While in general incubators exist in varied sectors and focus on varied disciplines, the ones with a focus on specific subjects and whose business idea flourishes around that particular theme are called thematic incubators. Having a specified theme allows the focus on solving a pertinent problem or agenda. The themes may vary as per the needs of the society and interest of the stakeholders.

Thematic incubators bring together universities(academia), private sector, government stakeholders and enable the youth with necessary environment to engage in innovative solutions. Thematic incubators in the field of DRR are very few and they operate as laboratories for experimentation of ideas, development of models and prototypes and opportunities for pilot testing. Since DRR essentially includes communities at the centre, thereby the innovations cater to enhancing the resilience factors on varied themes. Thematic incubators bridge the connect between university learning and community participation. Thematic incubators are a participation platform for private sector to pitch in through funding and mentoring opportunities. It is also an avenue for private organizations also fulfill their sustainability goals. Government stakeholders can bank upon the ideas that germinate in such incubators and further provide aid to scale up potential solutions for some grassroot problems.

The incubator functions to train and mentor young entrepreneurs to bring in innovation through new products, services and integrate research into this process. The process of setting up an incubation typically takes 3 to 4 years. In the Indian context, incubation infrastructure is dominated by use of technology for commercialization. Incubation in the context of DRR and to address social sector problems is not yet fully explored.

### **Case Study of Thematic Incubators of RIKA India**

The innovative design of the thematic incubators provides the flexibility of venturing into a selected theme so as to align with the overall agenda of the corporate organization with the global sustainability agenda. RIKA India has set up three different thematic incubators. The thematic incubation on women entrepreneurship at Mody University cuts through the many layers of societal vulnerabilities. It is envisioned that with training and resources, women can take on entrepreneurial ventures in the field of risk resilience and sustainability. Doing so, the issues of the women during a disaster and in general can be better understood and tailor-made solutions designed by the women themselves be implemented. The National Institute of Technology, Nagpur is located in a recurring drought-prone area and Nagpur city is designated as a smart city. The specific theme of the incubator is to focus on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). The poor quality of drinking water, inadequate nutrition among women and children are some of the emerging issues to be tackled. The Incubator at Brac University Dhaka, a city with a very high population density is focused on the issues of sustainable city planning and design to combat climate change.

In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, many start-ups and incubators in life sciences are focussing on working towards solutions to mitigate the pandemic. There have been unique solutions like low-cost ventilators (Basu S.D., 2020), face shields and monitoring tools which have been adopted and implemented to benefit the society at large. The Covid-19 pandemic has not only impacted health sector but allied services too. To mitigate the challenge of restricted transport mobility, the organizations including commercial ventures, education institutes and government service delivery adapted by switching to online functioning.

### **Way Forward:**

- Thematic incubators play a significant role in societal development by hand holding the budding entrepreneurs, small firms, entrepreneurs, like-minded individuals, academicians, etc. and providing them an ecosystem for development of product and services to meet societal and environmental needs.
- The thematic incubators have an immense potential to catalyze the development of more sustainable and climate & disaster resilient infrastructure, services and societies.
- In the current situation of increasing unemployment, entrepreneurship training can provide a solution to tackle the problem. Further, there is a pressing need to encourage young professionals to undertake social entrepreneurial ventures.
- The intersection of health and disaster risk reduction (DRR) is emerging as an interdisciplinary field of paramount human consequences in the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Health-EDRM is an evolving academic approach that combines Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Ying Yang Chan and Shaw, 2020).

### **References:**

1. Basu S. D. IIT Roorkee develops low-cost portable ventilator to tackle COVID-19, 2020, Economic times 02.04.2020
2. Ying Yang Chan, E. and Shaw, R., 2020. *Public Health And Disasters: Health Emergency And Disaster Risk Management In Asia*. 1st ed. Springer Singapore.
3. Emdat.be. 2020. *EM-DAT / The International Disasters Database*.