

BIRAC announces launch of SPARSH- *Touching a Billion Lives*

**Social Innovation programme for Products: Affordable & Relevant
to Societal Health**

Focus: Maternal & Child Health

1. Introduction

Biotechnology Industry Assistance Council (BIRAC), a Section 25 'Not for Profit' Company of the Government of India, has been set up as Department of Biotechnology's interface agency, which serves as a single window for nurturing and promoting innovation led research. BIRAC is committed to the innovative use of biotechnology tools to address the national and societal challenges and provide solutions through affordable product development.

BIRAC announces the **launch of SPARSH** combining social innovation and biotechnology for the well-being of the society.

SPARSH's objectives are:

1. Identify and provide support to cutting edge innovations towards affordable product development that can bring significant **social impact and address challenges of inclusive growth**.
2. Provide support in form of **impact funding of biotech product innovations** (with social goals) that can be **scaled**.
3. Create and foster a **pool of social innovators** in biotech and provide a **platform** to share best practices, understand intricacies of business models in social innovation and network.

2. Focus of SPARSH: Maternal & Child Health (MCH)

BIRAC's vision is "creation of affordable products addressing the needs of the largest section of society" which mandates it to foster biotechnology in national priority areas such as Maternal & Child Health (MCH). MCH remains one of the key determinants of health of a society. India shows poor MCH indicators especially infant mortality rate (IMR) and maternal mortality ratio (MMR). BIRAC's current focus under SPARSH pertains to fostering innovative solutions in the MCH arena which are:

- Prognosis of treatment of post-partum haemorrhage
- Neonatal and maternal screening for metabolic disorders, infections such as sepsis, infectious diseases such as HPV, HIV, Hepatitis, malaria

- Monitoring of physiological parameters such Hb count, ECG, blood pressure, neonatal and infant care and child birth
- Monitoring and treatment of fetal growth and restrictions
- Food & Nutrition: Innovative projects in food & nutrition that could make an impact in nutritional intake of expectant mothers and children especially those that incorporate bio-fortification (including micronutrient enhancement) or deriving valuable secondary products such as nutrients from primary agricultural products (nutrients from rice bran for example) could be supported under MCH theme.
- Delivery models using approved commercialized MCH products including telemedicine initiatives for mother & child

3. Components of SPARSH

The components of SPARSH in the area of MCH are:

3.1 Component I : Affordable Product Development in the MCH Arena

The MCH area needs products and services that can alleviate the current situation that India and several developing countries face.

BIRAC invites proposals for product development in the MCH arena in the following categories:

Category A: Idea to proof of concept (PoC): Proposals are invited for taking an **Idea to PoC** (in areas of devices, diagnostics, assistive technologies and nutrition) which is at an ideation or nascent stage and that would aim to bridge significant challenges in the MCH arena.

Funding Support: A grant up to Rs. 50 lakhs is available for a period of 18 months.

Eligibility: This category is open to:

- Biotechnology *start-ups/Indian National entrepreneurs (that have a registered company incorporated on or after January 1st 2010).
- Indian Academic Scientists, Researchers, PhDs, Medical Degree Holders, Biomedical Engg Graduates (who must be willing to incubate in a business *incubator)
- No DSIR certification is required

*** Please Refer Footnote at the end of this document**

How the Funding can be used:

- a. Funding is strictly for development of idea into a PoC that can alleviate MCH

situation

- b. Part of the funding could be used to access or conduct market research information, patenting costs, working capital during the period, travel and salary

How to Apply?: Please refer to the end of the document.

Category B: Proof of Concept to Validation: Proposals are invited in areas of devices, diagnostics, assistive technologies and nutrition in the MCH arena which have crossed the ideation and PoC and are in the stage of need for validation.

Funding Support: A mix of grant & loan not exceeding INR 100 lakhs is available over the period of 24 months.

Eligibility:

- All Indian biotechnology companies which have Indian promoters holding at least 51% of company's shares. (See Footnote at the end of the document)
- DSIR certification is required

Category C: Access to MCH through innovative pilot scale delivery models: Proposals are invited for validation and demonstration of delivery models of innovative healthcare products pertaining to MCH (which have gained necessary regulatory approvals) and services that can show positive social impact, sustainability of the operations and potential for scale up in the near to medium term. For example diagnostics and devices which are used for telemedicine initiatives for health monitoring of newborns or monitoring of vaccination programme using smartphones.

Funding Support: A mix of grant & loans for a period of 24 months is available. The project cost would be matched equally by BIRAC and the industry.

Eligibility & conditions for support:

- All Indian biotechnology companies (Start-ups, SBUs and large companies) which have Indian promoters holding at least 51% of company's shares.
- It is desirable that the projects show partnership or a consortium between product/service innovator company, an implementer/deployer (Research Foundations, Section 25 companies etc) and clinical partner(s).
- The product should have gained necessary approvals from the concerned regulatory authority (-ies) for pilot studies.
- DSIR certification is required

3.2 Component II: Social Innovation Immersion Programme (SIIP):

SIIP is a fellowship scheme under SPARSH which intends to create a pool of social innovators in the biotech arena who can identify specific needs and gaps in healthcare of different communities which can then be bridged and serviced through innovative product development and services.

To encourage researchers to understand the milieu of Maternal & Child Health and generate pipeline of possible technologies in this arena, BIRAC invites proposals from organisations such as Section 25: Not for Profit, For Profit, Foundations, Technology Centres, Incubators, Public Research Institutions, Private Research Institutions, Public & Private Hospital to initiate and operationalize a structured 12-18 months of social innovation immersion programme.

The need identification could be through immersion and embedding the fellows with clinicians and/or rural communities. The SIIP fellows will receive a fellowship from BIRAC (amounting to INR 35,000/month) and a mini-kickstart grant of INR 5lakhs per fellow.

Successful fellows in this programme are expected to be graduates and postgraduates from Lifesciences, Biotechnology, Biomedical, Medicine and Engineering background.

Eligibility:

- Indian Section 25: Not for Profit, For Profit, Foundations, Technology Centres, Incubators, Public Research Institutions, Private Research Institutions, Public & Private Hospital can apply providing a detailed operational & logistic plan for SIIP.
 - It is desirable that the applicant organisation have
 - a. A clinical partner for facilitating need identification.
 - b. Experts who can provide mentorship to fellows
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BIRAC will also be pleased to explore opportunities to partner with organisations like healthcare/biotech/biomedical area of operations which includes Research Foundations, Private and Public Health Organisation, Corporates etc for last mile delivery of approved

commercial MCH product(s) to increase the outreach (including through telemedicine approaches) and show high positive impact in low resource settings.

4. How to Apply for SPARSH?

Proposals for different categories of SPARSH can be submitted exclusively online after Registration at BIRAC's website: www.birac.nic.in. Hardcopies of proposals will not be considered for evaluation.

Application Process:

Registration for SPARSH can be done by existing and new BIRAC applicants. Existing BIRAC applicants do not need to re-register. Once successfully registered, applicants are eligible to submit Letter of Intent (LOI) for each component of SPARSH. Review of the LOI will be done once they have been successfully uploaded. Shortlisted LOIs will be informed for detailed proposal submission.

Important Dates:

30th September 2013: Deadline for submission of LOI

30th October 2013: Review of LOI

15th November 2013: Shortlisting of Successful LOIs. Shortlisted LOIs will be informed for detailed proposal submission.

Contact Details:

For further information on SPARSH. Please contact the following:

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Footnote:

***Definitions**

- a. **Biotechnology Start-up:** is defined as a company which is incorporated in the last 3 years (in this case on or after January 1st 2010)
- b. **A company** is defined as one which is registered under the Indian Companies Act 1956 and in which more than 51% of the ownership is held by Indian Citizens
- c. **An incubator** is defined as a facility designed for housing R&D driven start-up companies or individual incubates active in Life Sciences. It will provide an incubation space, access to common equipments, mentoring and oter required services to start-ups or individuals for the growth of the companies.
- d. **An 'Incubatee'** is defined as an individual or a company located in the Incubator and availing services of the Incubator.