CHAPTER 6
NEED FOR AND SPIN OFF OF RESEARCH WORK

6.1 INTRODUCTION
Having analysed the hazard, risk and vulnerability of East Delhi District in the previous chapter, it can be surmised that the population and the community of East Delhi district are increasing becoming vulnerable to disasters due to macro and micro level issues. At the macro level, rapid environmental degradation, resource depletion, climate change, poverty, illiteracy and lack of safety nets and at the micro level, mushrooming of JJ Clusters, use of inflammable material for making living huts, large number of unauthorised colonies coming up in the flood plain areas of Yamuna, lower strata and economically weak society comprising majority of population and the highest density of residents makes this one of the most vulnerable districts of not only Delhi but probably among the whole country. Thus when any disaster strikes in this geographical location, they tend to disproportionately alter the social fabric leading to wide spread damage to infrastructure and loss of life.

It is experienced in the past that when-ever the disasters have occurred, and as the state authorities start counting the human and economic losses or administering relief, those persons who experience these disasters are conceptualized as a homogeneous group called the ‘victims’, a category which generally overlooks differences in terms of gender, caste, class, age, physical and mental ability (Fordham, 1999). These disruptions as a result of disaster defy all existing social differences and stratification affecting all and in a unique way unifying the community across boundaries. Being the first to suffer, the affected community generally rise like a phoenix and thus also become first real time responders in any disaster situation ignoring inherent differences between them. This community spirit or the social capital is thus a crucial strength on which the community balances itself in a disaster scenario. Thus the need to prepare the community.
6.2 NEED FOR RESEARCH

It has been demonstrated time and again that community is the first to respond in any natural or human induced disaster in any country, howsoever efficient its system of governance or disaster management may be. The best and the most efficient and cost effective management of disasters is to empower the community with information, knowledge, skills and resources so that they can mitigate disasters to the extent it is possible and be prepared to face them and hold on their own till the specialized assistance is made available from district/state/centre. Disasters are local events and community face its initial fury and fend for themselves during the ‘golden hours’, which are extremely crucial. A better aware and trained community can save lives by search and rescue of personnel trapped under the debris, providing them first aid and primary care and help in evacuation of people not affected by the disasters, to safer places. The last mile connectivity of communicating with affected people, with redundancy has to be planned before hand so that the people get enough time to manage their house-hold goods before evacuating to safe places and before the disaster strikes. When the earthquake of magnitude 9 on Richter scale struck, off the coast of Japan in March 2011, the inhabitants of Tokyo, some 498 km from the epicenter, got 40 seconds, to evacuate, as early warning, through SMSs. As the people had carried out a number of mock drills, as part of their preparation, they were able of come out of their apartments/houses in time, to save their lives and lives of their kith and kin.

In times of disasters, there is generally a time lag before help is received from the Government or any non government agencies. This is especially visible when the responders themselves get affected by the disasters, like in earthquake, tsunami, floods or terrorist related disasters. The community cannot be sitting idle, waiting for the response from outside. Unfortunately, as things stand, community of East Delhi district is not adequately aware of the disasters they are not vulnerable to nor are they capable of responding to disasters. The reliance is mostly on the government and non government agencies, which is a major gap to be bridged.
There is thus a need, for efforts to be made, to develop capacities within the community, living in East Delhi district, to respond optimally to any disaster situation. Considering that disasters are about human casualties and developmental losses and societal devastation, it is time that a consensus is reached across all sectors both public (like revenue, police, medical services, fire services, etc) and private (NGOs, volunteers, etc.) that disaster management has to be mainstreamed in all developmental activities that impinge on human beings and on infrastructures. Little research has been done on this aspect in India and almost nil in East Delhi district. Hence there is a need for carrying out research work focusing on all aspects of DM cycle, namely prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Risk reduction among the community and first responders has emerged as a corrective tool, to minimize the effect of disasters. A number of models on this issue have emerged with some focusing on a few aspects and the others on the entire gamut of disaster management continuum. Risk reduction is a behaviour change through imparting knowledge and appropriately demystified technical skills for coping with hazards and disasters to the last man in the remotest area. The need to carry out the research in this field is thus established.

6.3 SPIN-OFF
The outcome of research will not only be a gain in the academic field but more so help the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the East Delhi District, in particular, to get a well researched data to base on for their future development programs. On a larger canvas, it will help the decision makers and policy programmers at all India level, to base their plans for management of disasters. District is the cutting edge Government institution in India. It is a unique administrative set up, may be only of its kind in the world, where one person, the District Collector/Deputy Commissioner, controls all the activities and have access to all the resources in the District. Although systems are in place to provide relief after a disaster/emergency and has been practiced and tested year after year, it is the mitigation, prevention and preparedness fields, through which the capacities of the community and first responders have to be built on. The World Bank has declared that $1 spent on mitigation can save $ 7 by way of relief. This period before the disaster strikes, is the one where the gaps are existing and the Collectors/Deputy Commissioners are not finding solutions and time to act on. The outcome of my research will act as tool with which they can develop the capacities of the community. It is proposed to offer
some modules with which to develop capacities, which can be adopted in full or part, to suit the local conditions, thus saving lives and loss of infrastructure during disasters. Once the prototype module is successful in the East Delhi District, it can be adopted in all the districts of NCT of Delhi by Delhi Disaster Management Authority. It is recommended that a copy of the research work should also be submitted to the National Disaster Management Authority, for taking it up at the national level. The gains of development will thus be sustainable and help India attain the stature of World economic super power earlier than envisaged.