

First of 5 Grand Challenges: Create point-of-care tools to diagnose range of illnesses

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The Hon. James Flaherty, Minister of Finance for Canada, today announced the launch of Grand Challenges Canada, an innovative initiative that will help redefine Canada's role in the developing world by bringing together Canadian scientists, developing world scientific researchers, and the private sector to solve some of the most persistent health challenges facing poor countries.

Grand Challenges Canada's mission is to identify global Grand Challenges, fund researchers and organizations to address them, and support the implementation and commercialization of the solutions that emerge.

The Government of Canada is committing \$225 million over five years to the Development Innovation Fund, announced in the 2008 Budget, to support the best minds in the world in a collaborative search for solutions to global health challenges.

Grand Challenges Canada was created to implement the realization of this goal working with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a Crown Corporation and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), a Government of Canada Agency.

Grand Challenges Canada is an independent not-for-profit organization governed by its own Board and guided by a Scientific Advisory Board, whose members are some of the world's most distinguished medical scientists from both the developed and developing world. Grand Challenges Canada is hosted at the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health.

A Grand Challenge is a specific critical barrier that, if removed, would help solve an important health problem in the developing world with a high likelihood of global impact through widespread implementation.

Grand Challenges Canada will identify, fund and support a total of five Grand Challenges in global health.

"Grand Challenges Canada will lead the way in making a better, safer and healthier world", said Minister Flaherty. "It is an ambitious new Canadian organization aimed at supporting global partnerships to solve the developing worlds most difficult and pressing health challenges."

"The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is supportive of the mission of Grand Challenges Canada and pleased to work together on the Grand Challenge of Point-of-Care diagnostics," said Dr. Carol Dahl, Director of Staff for the Global Health Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The purpose of this challenge is to improve the diagnosis of diseases afflicting millions in the developing world by bringing diagnostic tools to the patient's bedside.

"Innovation saves lives," said Dr. Peter A. Singer, Chief Executive Officer of Grand Challenges Canada and Director of the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health, University Health Network and University of Toronto. "Diagnosis is the prelude to effective treatment. Bringing diagnostic tools to the patient's bedside is better, faster, and cheaper than sending a sample to a laboratory 100 km away."

Diagnostic improvements could save more than 100,000 lives annually from [malaria](#)-related deaths alone and could reduce more than 365 million unnecessary treatments, which can lead to wasted resources and drug resistance.

Said Mr. Joseph L. Rotman, one of Canada's most philanthropic business leaders and Chairman of Grand Challenges Canada, "once these innovative solutions are created, it is up to a collaboration of business, academia, government and philanthropy to invest in and develop these advances and make them available and affordable to all who need them. It's gratifying to see that the Canadian Government has the far-sighted vision to support this extraordinary venture which will make such a difference in the world and to Canada's role in international development."

SOURCE Grand Challenges Canada