

SAVING LIVES AT BIRTH:

A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

SavingLivesAtBirth.net

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Washington, D.C.— Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development, was launched today to seek innovative prevention and treatment approaches for pregnant women and newborns in rural, low-resource settings. This partnership leverages the collective resources of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Government of Norway, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Grand Challenges Canada, and The World Bank. Partners expect to provide nearly \$14 million for this grant program’s first round of funding. Over 5 years, the partners aim to invest at least \$50 million in groundbreaking and sustainable projects with the potential to have a transformative effect on the lives of pregnant women and their babies in the hardest to reach corners of the world.

At an event in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, Special advisor to the Prime Minister of Norway on global health, Dr. Tore Godal, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Melinda Gates, CEO of Grand Challenges Canada, Dr. Peter A Singer, and The World Bank Vice President for Human Development, Tamar Manuelyan Atinc, addressed the critical need for innovations that go beyond conventional approaches and have the potential to save the lives of millions of women and babies in the hardest to reach communities of the world.

“To make advances in maternal and newborn health, our real opportunity lies in harnessing the power of innovation—scientific, technological, and behavioral—to build a continuum of invention from bench to bush,” said USAID Administrator Shah. “Innovations in products and the platforms we use to deliver them will allow us to expand our reach to women who will likely never set foot inside a hospital.”

“The day of birth is still the most dangerous day for the mother and the newborn. This is the most brutal expression of discrimination against women,” said Jonas Store, The Foreign Minister of Norway. “Capturing new opportunities in innovation can make a big contribution to a safe birth and women’s health.”



“Healthy mothers and newborns are the foundation of healthy and prosperous societies,” said Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “We must partner to develop new technologies and seek new ways of delivering solutions to women and children who need them most. This initiative will speed up progress we’re already making—and will lead to new kinds of progress that we have yet to conceive.”

"This new initiative is a great opportunity to bring more innovation to our shared goal of saving more mothers and babies in the poorest countries," said Tamar Manuelyan Atinc, World Bank Vice President for Human Development. "Our aim will be to leverage these pilots and take promising innovations to scale in order to make a real difference in poor people's lives. This requires working in close partnership with governments and national stakeholders."

This Challenge addresses the period when women and their newborns are most vulnerable. "Shockingly, each year, in the brief window of time between the onset of labor and 48 hours after birth, 150,000 women and 1.6 million children die," said Dr. Peter A. Singer, CEO of Grand Challenges Canada. "Today, we are starting to slam shut this window, and to save these lives, using innovation."

Currently, a pregnant African woman is 135 times more likely to die during childbirth than some of her Western counterparts. The goal of Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development is to change the tide on this staggering statistic in Africa and across all regions.

Strong proposals will include bold ideas that look beyond conventional approaches in three main areas: (1) developing new technologies; (2) creating more reliable and efficient ways to deliver health services; and (3) engaging communities in novel ways and furthering understanding of the benefits to both mother and child when they receive health care at the time of birth. In order to be eligible for selection, applications must be submitted by April 29, 2011.

For more information on the Challenge visit www.savinglivesatbirth.net.