



Grand Challenges Canada®
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News Release

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CANADA FUNDS 65 INNOVATIVE HEALTH PROJECTS TO HELP SAVE EVERY WOMAN, EVERY CHILD

*New investments top \$12 Million:
4 scale-up projects and 61 seed grants announced
as Canada prepares to host world summit
on maternal, newborn and child health: May 28–30*

Toronto — Grand Challenges Canada, funded by the Government of Canada, today announces investments of \$12 million in projects worldwide, aimed squarely at improving the health and saving the lives of mothers, newborns and children in developing countries.

From a “lucky iron fish” placed in tens of thousands of Asian cooking pots to reduce anemia, to “motherhood insurance” to ensure that poverty doesn’t impede emergency care if needed during a baby’s delivery, to kits for home farming edible insects to improve nutrition in slums of Africa and Latin America, the 65 imaginative projects focus on a range of health problems that, despite major progress, continue to kill millions of women, newborns and children each year.

Four Canadian-based projects (from Guelph, Toronto, Waterloo and Winnipeg) with proven impact and sustainability will share \$2.6 million in scale-up grants and loans from Grand Challenges Canada, matched by \$2.6 million from private and public partners, bringing total “transition-to-scale” investments to \$5.2 million.

In addition, Grand Challenges Canada “Stars in Global Health” seed grants of \$112,000 each (\$6.8 million in total) are awarded to:

- 35 innovators from 13 developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America
- 26 Canadian-based innovators from the following cities: Vancouver (5 grants), Saskatoon (3 grants), Calgary, Victoria, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto (2 grants each), Kamloops, Oakville, Oshawa, Ottawa, Waterloo, Sherbrooke, Laval, Sydney.

The announcement coincides with preparations in Toronto to host ‘*Saving Every Woman Every Child: Within Arm’s Reach*’, a global summit on maternal, newborn and child health, being held from May 28 to 30. Organized by the Government of Canada, the Summit will assess progress on the

Canadian-led “Muskoka Initiative” inaugurated at the G8 meeting in 2010. Canada has been a world leader in promoting the health and reducing mortality rates of women and children in developing countries.

To be implemented across 25 low- and middle-income countries, all of today’s projects relate to the Summit goal of leveraging innovation. That also relates closely to one or more of the other critical issues at the heart of the Summit’s agenda:

- **Accelerating progress on maternal health**
- **Reducing newborn mortality**
- **Saving lives through immunization**
- **Scaling up nutrition as a foundation for healthy lives**
- **Building civil registration and vital statistics systems**
- **Building new partnerships with the private sector to leverage innovation and financing.**

For example:

- The little “Lucky Iron Fish,” now in growing use by cooks in Cambodia, has proven effective in reducing rampant iron deficiency among women – the cause of premature labour, hemorrhaging during childbirth and poor brain development among babies. Initial local reluctance to using a loose piece of iron in cooking pots was overcome by a clever design tapping into Cambodian folklore about a fish species that brings good fortune. In partnership with small businesses across Cambodia, plans for this year and next call for production and distribution of 60,000 lucky iron fish, made from recycled material at a cost of about \$5 each, which provide health benefits for roughly three years. (Lucky Iron Fish, Guelph, **a transition-to-scale investment**, grant #0355, **video** <http://bit.ly/1oJbyTr>, **images** <http://bit.ly/1I98Cyr>, more information <http://bit.ly/1mYhHvL>).



Innovative projects to improve survival of mothers and newborns include:

- Revising neonatal intensive care methods in Guyana to save lives of infants in respiratory distress (Toronto Guyana Help The Kids Organization, **a transition-to-scale investment**, grant #0320, **images** <http://bit.ly/1hCUHwH>)
- A pessary (silicone ring) placed around the cervix of high-risk mothers during the second trimester may help prevent prematurity. An estimated 15 million babies are born preterm every year and more than 1 million die from preterm birth complications. Many others are facing life-long disabilities or health complications. This project will adapt and validate the technique's use in low-resource. (Centre Hospitalier, Université de Sherbrooke, seed grant #0473, **video** <http://bit.ly/QEhlxB>)
- A low cost "safe motherhood insurance program" being started in the Philippines to overcome financial barriers that often delay poor women from getting appropriate care in labour. Working with insurance companies, the project represents a novel potential business model to further reduce the rate of maternal mortality worldwide. (Philippine Business for Social Progress, seed grant #0545, **video** <http://bit.ly/1nFeHDG> , **images** <http://bit.ly/1oxrYhx>).

Several innovative projects (13) designed to improve the health and survival of women, newborns and children through better nutrition include:

- Fortifying fish sauce in Cambodia with thiamin to raise levels in mother's milk and prevent infantile beriberi (University of British Columbia, seed grant #0490, **video** <http://bit.ly/1g1ZFYK>)
- Fortifying dal in Bangladesh with iron to reduce diarrhea, measles, malaria and pneumonia (University of Saskatchewan, seed grant #0495, **video** <http://bit.ly/1mRlg3H>, **images** <http://bit.ly/1uJyE0w>)
- Novel farming technologies to provide high-protein edible insects and address food insecurity in slums in Ghana, Kenya and Mexico (McGill University, Montreal, seed grant #0479, **video** <http://bit.ly/1g1CsGe>, **images** <http://bit.ly/1oxszzJ>).

Some 16 projects seek to advance health and reduce mortality rate through improved water and sanitation, including:

- A new marketing strategy to reduce open defecation and the use of toilets in rural Nepal (iDE, Winnipeg, **a transition-to-scale investment**, grant #0354, **images** <http://bit.ly/RwBmY0>)
- A safe new human waste disposal system for humanitarian emergencies (Université Laval, seed grant #0484, **video** <http://bit.ly/1mRIEz2>).

Projects that will combat malaria (seven in all), include:

- E-coupons delivered via mobile phones offering subsidized bed nets to target populations in Tanzania (Mennonite Economic Development Associates, Waterloo, and Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, **a transition-to-scale investment**, grant #0321, **images** <http://bit.ly/1nx18q7>)
- A simple way to lure, trap and kill malarial mosquitos with a deadly fruit meal in a device that is easy to make at home from plastic drink bottles. Manufacture of the traps creates a potential village income opportunity. (Ifakara Health Institute, Tanzania, seed grant #0555, **video** <http://bit.ly/1l3BIOh>).

Projects addressing childhood illness include:

- Engaging unlicensed drug shops in Uganda, which serve 60% of the nation's rural population, to accurately recognize and treat childhood illness (University of Calgary, seed grant #0492, **video** <http://bit.ly/1mOl3Ux>, **images** <http://bit.ly/Qm734T>)
- A finger prick blood biomarker to replace chest x-rays for pneumonia diagnosis (University of Alberta, Edmonton, seed grant #0486, **video** <http://bit.ly/1iJSjZ6>)
- Improving the survival rate of infants in Uganda after hospital discharge, including a mobile phone app to help identify babies at highest risk of dying and a Post Discharge Survival Kit for families (University of British Columbia, seed grant #0489, **video** <http://bit.ly/1jThV5T>, **images** <http://bit.ly/1ml8vxJ>).

All **Canadian-based projects**: 30 projects, including four transition-to-scale investments: <http://bit.ly/1mYhHvL>.

All projects listed **by health priority**: <http://bit.ly/1i4gVrD>.

Local project contacts: <http://bit.ly/1gi94Go>.

"Our government is proud of the progress on promises Canada and other nations made as part of the Muskoka Initiative to improve the health and save the lives of women, newborns and children in the developing world," said the Honourable Christian Paradis, Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie. "By supporting innovative proof-of-concept projects and the scale-up of proven ideas, and by leveraging additional private sector knowledge and funds, a difference is being felt in health conditions in developing countries. The creation of jobs here and abroad serves as an added benefit."

Dr. Peter A. Singer, Chief Executive Officer at Grand Challenges Canada, notes that Grand Challenges Canada selects projects that embody the **Integrated Innovation**® approach – the combination of science and technology with social and business innovation to find sustainable solutions to health challenges.

“All of the projects announced today illustrate the power of innovation to save and improve the lives of women and children,” says Dr. Singer. “Innovation really means that tomorrow will be a brighter day than today for those who need it the most in developing nations. I salute the global leadership Canada is showing in focusing the world’s attention on saving every woman and every child.”

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About Grand Challenges Canada

Grand Challenges Canada is dedicated to supporting Bold Ideas with Big Impact® in global health. We are funded by the Government of Canada; we support innovators in low- and middle-income countries and Canada. The bold ideas we support integrate science and technology, social and business innovation to find sustainable solutions to health challenges – we call this Integrated Innovation®. Grand Challenges Canada focuses on innovator-defined challenges through its Stars in Global Health program, and on targeted challenges in its Saving Lives at Birth, Saving Brains and Global Mental Health programs. Grand Challenges Canada works closely with Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD) to catalyze scale, sustainability and impact. We have a determined focus on results, and on saving and improving lives.

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