



Global Health Strategies

# Annual Grand Challenges Meeting 2015

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**Media Coverage report**

October 18-21, 2015

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## Summary

The Annual Grand Challenges Meeting 2015 was held from October 18-21 in Beijing, China with the theme of “Innovating to drive development; collaborating to win challenges”. The meeting witnessed the convening of over 800 researchers, scientists, as well as high-level representatives from governments and organizations from across the globe to share proven practices, encourage partnerships and seek solutions to address health challenges across the world. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China (MOST) co-hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> Grand Challenges Annual Meeting, together with Grand Challenges Canada, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Wellcome Trust.

Over the past few years, the Grand Challenges initiative has proven to be a successful model in catalyzing and driving innovations for global health and development priorities. Since its launch in 2003, the Grand Challenges family of initiatives has invested \$1 billion in over 2000 projects across more than 80 countries.

The Grand Challenges India initiative was launched in 2013 by the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to promote scientific and technological advances in health through research and innovation, exclusively for Indian researchers. GCI has so far funded 17 researchers from across the country under three grant programs - ‘*Achieving Healthy Growth through Agriculture and Nutrition*’; ‘*Reinvent the Toilet Challenge*’; and ‘*All Children Thriving*’.

## Media coverage

GHS organized the media engagement for the Annual Grand Challenges Meeting 2015. On the whole, *the event was covered by 10 publications which included both English as well as Hindi news outlets.*

As part of the media engagement, GHS organized interviews with officials from the Department of Biotechnology and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as well as ‘All Children Thriving’ grantees.

Please note that although a number of outlets have carried stories on the conference this report only lists the prominent publications..

October 31

# When science ignites health solutions

The Grand Challenges project is pushing innovation to tackle universal problems



**Premature**

Does a woman with high stress levels run the risk of giving birth to a premature baby? That's the risk profile that Arindam Maitra and his team will try and predict as part of their project under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's (BMGF) Grand Challenges Initiative.

The aim is to develop clinical tools to assess maternal stress and the risk of pre-term births, which can lead to complex diseases and is one of the biggest causes of infant deaths," says Maitra, speaking from the Grand Challenges (GC) annual meet in Beijing this month.

health and young girls to as a teacher who might solve them."

Seven projects were selected for a grant from over 150 submissions in India to tackle child mortality and development, as part of the challenge "All Children Thriving". The maternal stress and pre-term risk project led by Maitra from West Bengal's National Institute of Biomedical Genomics is one of them.

**Encouraging research**

"We can do much more from what we have," says Renu Swarup, MD of Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), reflecting on the response to the initiative and the challenges that remain.

**LEAD STORY**

Looking for nimble-footed solutions to universal problems, the Grand Challenges initiative was founded over 10 years ago by the BMGF. Or, as Bill Gates explained in his "Saving lives through crazy ideas" blog last year, the Challenge was launched with the goal of "identifying the biggest problems in health and giving grants to researchers who might solve them."

Seven projects were selected for a grant from over 150 submissions in India to tackle child mortality and development, as part of the challenge "All Children Thriving". The maternal stress and pre-term risk project led by Maitra from West Bengal's National Institute of Biomedical Genomics is one of them.

**Cooperating challenge**

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...concludes that there's always in the worry of Sanku dying up the road, but then again, the only way to stop and looking at the future is to see what's ahead of you and trying to figure out what's next and what's ahead of you.

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**Encouraging research**

"We can do much more from what we have," says Renu Swarup, MD of Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), reflecting on the response to the initiative and the challenges that remain.

Grand Challenges is an umbrella term for competitive innovation aimed at tackling a national problem, she says, and researchers need to be encouraged to participate more in such initiatives. Nevertheless, she says, proposals from the earlier challenges are poised for a further scale-up in terms of enterprises taking the innovations forward. The earlier challenges aimed to improve healthy growth through agriculture and nutrition besides encouraging efforts to reinvent the toilet.

In India, Grand Challenges is conducted by the BMGF along with BIRAC (a Government enterprise) and the Department of Biotechnology. Now in its third year, the “All children thriving” challenge is in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The projects are given seed grants of \$500,000 for two years and full grants of \$2.5 million for up to four years.

The challenge looks for a combination of things that are required to set a child up for a healthy life, says BMGF’s Steven Buchsbaum. About 40 projects have been finalized this year between South Africa, Brazil and India, among others, he adds.

Against the backdrop of a global economy under pressure, Swarup concedes that there always is the worry of funds drying up for research. But then again, she adds, investors are looking at technology innovations beyond just IT and extending it to applied research and at smaller levels.

### **Ecosystem challenge**

The aim is to help provide an innovative ecosystem where funding is provided and researchers are connected to the right technology resource groups, she says. “In fact, though the situation is changing, the biggest challenge is to provide an innovative ecosystem,” adds Swarup.

Bill Gates’s anniversary blog is just as candid on the pace and outcomes of the challenge. “To be honest, we’re not as far along as I hoped a decade ago; the process of developing and perfecting new tools — going from proof-of-concept through clinical trials, regulatory approval, manufacturing, and distribution—is even slower and harder than I thought. But we’ve learned a lot, and we’ve made some promising progress,” says Gates of the challenges that remain.

**India Pledges \$25 Mn Investment For 5-yr To Nurture Healthcare Innovation****October 27**

World leaders adopted the Sustainable Development Goals or the Global Goals in September 2015 that aim to address problems like poverty, illiteracy, disease and overall lack of quality health care for all, among other key issues. In order to achieve these targets, it is crucial to intensify efforts to foster frugal innovation and research around the world. The Annual Grand Challenges meeting was held from 18-21 October in Beijing, China, served as a platform to discuss potential solutions centered on the power of research and development of innovative solutions to achieve the Global Goals.

Grand Challenges India was jointly launched by the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2013 to promote scientific and technological advances in health through research and innovation, exclusively for Indian researchers. Under the initiative, the DBT and the Gates Foundation have pledged an investment up to US\$25 million each, over the period of 5 years. Grand Challenges India seeks to promote and nurture innovations in vaccines, drugs, agricultural products, and interventions related to improving maternal and child health.

In India, an estimated 1.27 million children die every year before completing 5 years. 81% of under-five child mortality takes place within one year of birth which accounts for nearly 1 million infant deaths and 57 per cent of under-five deaths take place within the first one month of life accounting for 730,000 neo-natal deaths every year in the country. Globally, India continues to be the country with the highest number of people (597 million people) practicing open defecation.

"We must recognize the need of innovation in developing societies. Encouraging innovation is of principal importance to tackle the problems of open defecation, child morbidity and mortality and malnutrition among mothers and children. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, have come together to tap the vast potential available in India and drive health innovation in the country." said Mr. Trevor Mundel, President of the Global Health Division, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The first two grants under Grand Challenges India focused on, 'Achieving Healthy Growth through Agriculture and Nutrition' and 'Reinvent the Toilet Challenge'. The latest grants under the initiative 'All Children Thriving' were awarded in 2015. Collectively there are 17 researchers and social entrepreneurs from across the country being funded under the partnership. The aim is promote innovation aligned with achieving the SDGs 2, 3 and 6, i.e., end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; and ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Dr K. Vijayraghavan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India and Chairman, BIRAC stated that "In the past two decades, we have witnessed major advances in science and technology which have transformed the lives of millions in the country. We need to continue to drive innovation and research to meet existing challenges in health care. There is a need to create an enabling environment for research and innovation; where creative confidence and inventiveness is praised and encouraged in order to harness the immense potential available in India. Through partnerships such as the Grand Challenges initiative, we can utilize our vast pool of knowledge and scientific talent to address the health challenges plaguing the country."

**Fostering Innovation to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals**

**October 27**

The Annual Grand Challenges meeting was held from October 18-21 in Beijing, China. The Grand Challenges initiative, launched in 2003 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation seeks to encourage research and development to develop innovative solutions to tackle the myriad health and development challenges afflicting the lives of millions of poor across the globe. The meeting witnessed the convening of over 800 researchers, scientists, as well as high-level representatives from governments and organizations from across the globe to share proven practices, encourage partnerships and seek solutions to address the health challenges in the world.

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Dr. Renu Swarup, Managing Director, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council and Senior Advisor, Department of Biotechnology, Government of India said, “Developing an innovative multi-sectoral approach is imperative to deal with the health challenges that we face today. Fostering innovation is the way to realizing the world’s ambition of a better, healthier world and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-DBT-BIRAC partnership aims to fulfil this vision through the Grand Challenges India initiative and encourage Indian researchers from across the country to work towards developing solutions with far-reaching social impact.”



## **India Pledges \$25 Mn Investment For 5-yr To Nurture Healthcare Innovation**

**October 28**

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**NBT**  
नवभारत टाइम्स

October 29

## सतत विकास लक्ष्यों के लिए आवश्यक है नवप्रवर्तन

बीजिंग, ए. यहां 18 से 21 अक्टूबर तक वार्षिक ग्रैंड चैलेंजिस सभा हुई. जिसमें सभी देशों से सतत विकास लक्ष्यों के लिए नवप्रवर्तन अपनाने पर जोर दिया गया. द ग्रैंड चैलेंजिस इनिशिएटिव को 2003 में बिल एंड मेलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन ने लांच किया था जिसका उद्देश्य है -दुनिया के करोड़ों गरीबों की स्वास्थ्य एवं विकास संबंधी चुनौतियों हेतु अभिनव समाधान विकसित करने के लिए अनुसंधान एवं विकास को बढ़ावा देना.

इस सभा में विश्व भर से 800 से भी अधिक अनुसंधानकर्ता, वैज्ञानिक और साथ ही दुनिया के विभिन्न देशों की सरकारों व संगठनों के उच्च स्तरीय प्रतिनिधि भाग लेने आए, जिन्होंने दुनिया की सेहत संबंधी चुनौतियों का हल करने की दिशा में साबित हो चुकी पद्धतियों को साझा किया, भागीदारी को प्रोत्साहित किया और समाधान खोजने की कोशिश की.

October 29

## विकास लक्ष्यों के लिए आवश्यक है नवप्रवर्तन

बीजिंग, चीन के बीजिंग में 18 से 21 अक्टूबर तक वार्षिक ग्रैंड चैलेंजिस सभा हुई। द ग्रैंड चैलेंजिस इनिशिएटिव को 2003 में बिल एंड मेलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन ने लांच किया था जिसका उद्देश्य है - दुनिया के करोड़ों गरीबों की स्वास्थ्य एवं विकास संबंधी चुनौतियों हेतु अभिनव समाधान विकसित करने के लिए अनुसंधान एवं विकास को बढ़ावा देना। इस सभा में विश्व भर से 800 से भी अधिक अनुसंधानकर्ता, वैज्ञानिक और साथ ही दुनिया के विभिन्न देशों की सरकारों व संगठनों के उच्च स्तरीय प्रतिनिधि भाग लेने आए; जिन्होंने दुनिया की सेहत संबंधी चुनौतियों का हल करने की दिशा में साबित हो चुकी पद्धतियों को साझा किया, भागीदारी को प्रोत्साहित किया और समाधान खोजने की कोशिश की। बिल एंड मेलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन में ग्लोबल हैल्थ डिवीजन के प्रेजिडेंट ट्रेवर मुंडेल ने कहा, 'विकासशील समाजों में हमें नवप्रवर्तन की जरूरत को पहचानना होगा। खुले में शौच, बाल रुग्णता व मृत्यु दर तथा मांओं व बच्चों में कुपोषण जैसी समस्याओं को हल करने के लिए नवाचार को बढ़ावा देना सबसे महत्वपूर्ण है। बिल एंड मेलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन और जैव प्रौद्योगिकी विभाग, भारत सरकार मिलकर आगे आए हैं।

October 28

## विकास लक्ष्यों के लिए आवश्यक है नवप्रवर्तन

बीजिंग। चीन के बीजिंग में 18 से 21 अक्टूबर तक वार्षिक ग्रैंड चैलेंजेज सभा हुई। द ग्रैंड चैलेंजेज इनिशिएटिव को 2003 में बिल एंड मेलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन ने लांच किया था जिसका उद्देश्य है-दुनिया के करोड़ों गरीबों की स्वास्थ्य एवं विकास संबंधी चुनौतियों हेतु अभिनव समाधान विकसित करने के लिए अनुसंधान एवं विकास को बढ़ावा देना। इस सम्मलेन में दुनिया भर से 800 से भी अधिक अनुसंधानकर्ता, वैज्ञानिक और विभिन्न देशों की सरकारों व संगठनों के उच्च स्तरीय प्रतिनिधि भाग लेने आए, जिन्होंने दुनिया की सेहत संबंधी चुनौतियों को हल करने की दिशा में साबित हो चुकी पद्धतियों को साझा किया, भागीदारी को प्रोत्साहित किया और समाधान खोजने की कोशिश की।