

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation discloses locally led R&D initiatives

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation today announced a series of initiatives and a call for proposals to advance locally-led innovation that supports work by scientists and researchers in developing economies. The announcement was made at the Grand Challenges annual meeting in Brussels earlier today.



Source: [Flxabay](#)

This year's meeting focused on lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, which highlighted the need for high-impact research and development platforms, partnerships, and policies that effectively bridge the gap between innovation and equitable access.

The meeting brings together researchers from around the world to share work, learn about cutting-edge advances in the healthcare field, and collaborate with other investigators.

"Health equity shouldn't just be a statement of why we do this work. It should guide how we do it," said Kedest Tesfagiorgis, deputy director of global partnerships and grand challenges at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"When we support locally led innovation, we maximise impact by bringing different kinds of knowledge and perspectives to the fore."

The Grand Challenges Global Call to Action is a 10-year initiative announced at last year's meeting to help ensure scientists and institutions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) play a central role in shaping the global R&D agenda.

As part of the initiative, the foundation announced the following two new projects:

- **Pathogen genomic surveillance and immunology in Asia:** This is an invitation for proposals from investigators in South and Southeast Asia to design and pilot a genomic surveillance programme or develop capacity for immunology and immune sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 to inform epidemic response.

Up to \$300,000 per year for up to two years will be available for each project, with potential additional funding for projects that include a focus on monoclonal antibody discovery.

- **Building data modelling capacity for gender equality:** This is an invitation for proposals from investigators in low- and middle-income countries for projects aimed at addressing disparities and gaps affecting women and girls in health.

This initiative is focused on innovative approaches to modelling that advance gender equality. Each project will receive up to \$500,000 over one to three years.

"Societies measure what they value, and for most of history, society hasn't valued women. This means we're trying to tackle global health and development challenges with missing information," said Anita Zaidi, president of the gender equality division at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"It is long past time to put women and girls at the centre of the data modelling that guides our solutions."

In partnership with the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the foundation will also provide grants to researchers investigating and detecting emerging pathogens in LMICs.

Researchers will receive up to \$200,000 each for up to two years, as well as operational support and technical training from the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub.

This funding commitment builds on a 2018 partnership between the foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub that is focused on building metagenomics capacity in LMICs through a Global Grand Challenges initiative.

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