

Launching Grand Challenges Senegal

RFP3

RMNCH

Concept Note



Grand Challenges
Senegal

Grand Challenges Senegal, hosted by the Institut Pasteur de Dakar

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Overview:

Grand Challenges Senegal operates as a non-profit innovation fund, hosted by the Institut Pasteur de Dakar (IPD) foundation. The purpose of Grand Challenges Senegal is to advance the ecosystem for public health innovation in Africa by investing in innovators based in Senegal and across Africa to advance healthcare solutions for the region.

Since 2023, Grand Challenges Senegal has successfully launched two RFPs and funded US\$1.5m across 18 projects. Grand Challenges Senegal is launching a third call for applications focused on innovations that improve Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (RRMNCH) outcomes.

RMNCH remains a critical area of concern across Africa in general, and West Africa in particular, where high maternal and child mortality rates continue to challenge the attainment of national and regional development goals. Despite efforts to improve health outcomes, and the introduction of novel technologies and evidence-based public health interventions, significant disparities persist where access to quality healthcare services is uneven and often limited by socio-economic, geographical, and cultural barriers. This is particularly true in Senegal where disparities remain unacceptably high. For many Senegalese, especially the rural poor, access to trained medical personnel, suitable health facilities and availability of regionally-appropriate innovations remains limited. GC Senegal aims to address this challenge.

❖ Maternal health

Averaging around 4.4 births per woman, Senegal continues the highest fertility rates in the world. Yet pregnancy is risky, especially in rural areas where as many as one in 19 women will die in childbirth. In addition, the lack of access to healthcare facilities significantly contributes to medical deserts. For some women, accessing the nearest hospital is a journey of many miles and is often poorly staffed and resourced.

Senegal has only around 3.1 nurses and midwives per 10,000 people, which makes it one of the countries least covered with qualified maternal care in the world (162 out of 187 countries).

In Senegal, the maternal mortality rate is estimated at 236 per 100,000 live births, and the under-five mortality rate is 47 per 1,000.

❖ Newborn and Child Health

In Senegal, although children are more likely to reach their fifth birthday today than 10 years ago, they continue to fall victim to easily preventable diseases such as neonatal infections,

malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, and prematurity, as well as limited access to healthcare. The neonatal mortality rate (NMR) has not changed significantly in recent decades, falling from 28 per 1,000 live births in 2005 to only 21 per 1,000 live births in 2019 live births.

Senegal's neonatal mortality rate is 21 deaths per 1,000 live births.

NMR in rural areas is 26 deaths per 1,000 live births and 20 deaths per 1,000 live births in urban areas.

Among the poorest households is 31 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 15 deaths per 1,000 live births among the richest households.

❖ **Sexual and Reproductive Health**

In Senegal, issues of gender-based violence and woman reproductive health remain major public health and human rights issues. The low level of knowledge of reproductive health issues and the lack of access to these services, as well as social norms and practices perpetuating gender inequalities, often lead to early marriages, high fertility rates, violence, and sexual abuse, early and unintended teenage pregnancies, and high rates of abortion and repeated abortions.

In Senegal, 37 percent of women aged 20 to 24 are sexually active, but only 11 percent use modern contraceptive methods.

Young girls are not taught about reproductive or sexual health, the topic remaining culturally taboo. As a result, for instance, Senegalese women have low knowledge of STIs and their consequences.

Sources: www.eib.org/en/stories/impact-investment-in-senegal

www.unicef.org/senegal/en/press-releases/revitalizing-collective-action-survival-mothers-and-children

https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Senegal/Maternal%20and%20newborn%20health%20country%20profiles/country%20profile_SEN.pdf

<https://www.msiunitedstates.org/reducing-maternal-mortality-in-senegal/>

Request For Proposal

To address these challenges, GC Senegal proposes to launch a Request for Proposal (RFP) aimed at identifying and funding innovative solutions to improve RMNCH outcomes in Senegal and across Africa. The RFP will prioritize projects that are culturally sensitive, sustainable, and capable of making a measurable impact on woman, maternal and child health.

Challenge Statement:

Develop innovative and scalable solutions that address causes of maternal and child mortality, while improving access to comprehensive, high-quality care for women and young girls across Senegal.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this RFP are:

1. To identify and support innovative projects that address key challenges in RMNCH in Senegal by supporting research, pilot projects, and scalable models that introduce new technologies, practices, or systems to enhance maternal and child health outcomes.
2. Empower Women and Strengthen vulnerable Communities health systems to ensure sustainable, community-led solutions, while integrating innovative digital health tools and approaches to improve service delivery.
3. Enhance Access to Quality Healthcare Services ; Improve access to comprehensive maternal and child health services, with a focus on underserved and rural populations. Invest in strengthening the capacity of healthcare workers through training, mentorship, and technology.
4. Strengthen delivery of sexual and reproductive health services, ensuring they are affordable, culturally sensitive, and tailored to the specific needs of women and adolescent girls.
5. Promote the adoption of best practices and policies that enhance RMNCH at the community, national, and regional levels.

Scope of the RFP

The RFP will be open to Non-for-profit organizations, For profit organizations, Academic institutions and NGOs.

We will consider innovations that focus on the following areas:

- Avoid preventable maternal and neonatal deaths
 - Early detection of complications in pregnancy and for newborns
 - Development and deployment technologies for detecting pregnancy-related complications and neonatal conditions. This includes preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, infections (such as sepsis), and congenital disorders in newborns.
 - Therapies for pregnancy-related diseases such as gestational diabetes, eclampsia, or infections.

- Safe and Affordable Childbirth and postnatal care
 - Innovative medical devices or portable equipment that can improve the safety of childbirth in low-resource settings.
 - Technologies for monitoring labor progress and detecting potential complications without the need for complex medical equipment, making it accessible for use by midwives and health workers in remote areas.
 - Strengthen emergency obstetric care for handling maternal emergencies

- Improve access to Woman Healthcare
 - Improve Access to STI Prevention and Treatment Services
 - Initiatives that increase access to screening, diagnosis, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), with a particular focus on underserved populations. This includes scaling up access to rapid diagnostic tests for common STIs, such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV.
 - Sexual Health Education

- Culturally-Sensitive Health Communication and Behavioral Change

Projects that integrate behavioral change science into sexual and reproductive health education, empowering women with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about their sexual health and STI prevention.

- Innovative Approaches to HPV Prevention, Screening, and Treatment

- Improving maternal and child health through innovative nutrition strategies:
 - Innovations in micronutrient supplementation, food fortification, and biofortification to support maternal and child health.
 - New approaches to enhancing nutrition for mothers, infants, and young children.

Ideally, the proposal will:

- o Demonstrate a high potential for achieving significant and measurable health improvements in underserved populations.
- o Proposals led by woman and innovators under 35 will be encouraged and reviewed favorably.
- o Target vulnerable and marginalized groups, including adolescent girls, rural women, and children living in extreme poverty
- o Be suitable for environments with limited infrastructure.
- o Be affordable
- o Have a solid business plan
- o Demonstrate sustainability : ensure that interventions are community-led and sustainable, focusing on long-term capacity building and resilience.
- o Be innovative: we encourage proposals that utilize novel approaches, technologies, or partnerships to overcome existing barriers and accelerate progress.

Budget and Timeline

GC Senegal is seeking a funding amount of US\$2,000,000 with up to 10 projects supported in RFP3 (US\$ 150,000 per innovator). _

- o Launch date: June 1st, 2025
- o Implementation Timeline
 - June 2025: GC Annual Meeting in Washington DC and announce launch of RFP3
 - June to July 2025: Solicit proposals
 - July to September 2025: Identify and fund grantees
 - Mars 2026: Completion of projects

Eligibility criteria

The proposals have to meet the following criteria:

- Match the focus of the call
- Match the areas of focus
- Match the geographic scope:
 - Institution based in Senegal or the ECOWAS region
 - Implementation in Senegal or the ECOWAS region
- Match the financing window
- Include a validation plan
- Provide thought towards scale up and sustainability
- A Project Lead may only be listed on one (1) application. An institution may, however, be the applicant on multiple applications, if all applications have different Project Leads