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## News Release

January 27, 2015

### CANADA ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION INVESTMENT TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICAN NATIONS

#### *Grand Challenges Canada funds innovative social franchising of BasicNeeds' Mental Health and Development Model*

**Toronto, Canada** – Grand Challenges Canada today announced an investment in an innovative social franchise approach to scale up the treatment and support of mental illness in resource-poor countries. The approach has been developed by international mental health and development NGO BasicNeeds, to ensure their award-winning model for those living with mental illness reaches as many people in need as possible.

Today nearly 75% of the 450 million people worldwide with mental illness and epilepsy live in the developing world, and 85% of these people have no access to treatment. The size of the problem is huge, with depression alone projected to be the leading global burden of disease by 2030. This urgent and currently unmet need for better treatment and expanded access to care for those living with mental disorders in resource poor settings is what the 'BasicNeeds Model' seeks to address.

BasicNeeds' unique approach works with existing health and community systems, and staff to



provide community based mental health treatment through outreach clinics, mental health camps and regular check-ups. However, treatment alone is not enough for sustained improvements to mental health, which is why the Model also increases an individual's access to emotional and practical support through self-help groups, improves their capacity to find meaningful occupation and employment, and ultimately works to changes health systems and policy for the better.

Through the implementation of its Model across 12 countries, BasicNeeds has presented strong evidence that its approach generates sustainable impact. It has enabled 86% of people with mental health problems in the communities they serve to access treatment (compared to 49% baseline), of which 73% reported reduced symptoms. The positive outcomes of reported reduced symptoms are underpinned by a reduction in mortality. Over the last 14 years, the lives of more than 600,000 beneficiaries have been improved. While this is a sizable number, it is only a drop in the ocean, when we consider the vast treatment gap.

The new investment announced today will enable organisations in Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria to deliver the BasicNeeds Model for Mental Health and Development themselves, under a social franchise agreement, with ongoing training and assistance from BasicNeeds International. Empowering and supporting in-country organisations to take on the independent delivery of the BasicNeeds Model will expand its reach in a sustainable and cost effective manner, whilst ensuring that quality remains central to the delivery and BasicNeeds brand. Over 3 years the funding is projected to help 10,000 people.

Simultaneously, BasicNeeds Ghana will initiate scale-up through the direct implementation of the Model in new regions in Ghana. To support this process, researchers at the University of Ghana will be rigorously testing the Model's cost utility as compared to standard approaches to mental health treatment provided by the Ghana public health system. This will involve measuring costs against economic welfare, functional capacity and Quality Adjusted Life Years gained.

Grand Challenges Canada is investing \$1 million CAD, bringing the total funding to \$2 million CAD from investments made by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Skoll Foundation, Caritas Nyeri, the Ministry of Health in Osogbo Osun State, Nigeria, and the Kenyan and Ghanaian governments.

"Canada is a world leader when it comes to promoting innovative approaches that tackle mental illness," said the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Canada's Minister of Health. "Our Government, through Grand Challenges Canada, is proud to support this initiative, which will provide effective and sustainable care for people affected by mental illness in Africa."

"There are few better examples of how a Bold Idea can have Big Impact than BasicNeeds which has improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people with mental illness in the developing world. Canada, through Grand Challenges Canada, is proud to help bring this model to even greater scale so that many more people can lead a life of productivity and participation in society," said Dr. Peter A. Singer, Chief Executive Officer of Grand Challenges Canada.

"We are absolutely delighted to receive this generous investment from Grand Challenges Canada to improve the lives of thousands of people suffering from mental illness in Africa. We are hugely grateful for this support. This investment in our social franchise programme will give us the opportunity to build the capacity of organisations in Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria to effectively implement our holistic model and make a difference to many more lives," said Chris Underhill, Founder President of BasicNeeds.

For more information, visit [grandchallenges.ca](http://grandchallenges.ca) and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn, and [basicneeds.org](http://basicneeds.org).

### **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 and 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 (DFATD) to catalyze scale, sustainability and impact. We have a determined focus on results, and on saving and improving lives.*

[www.grandchallenges.ca](http://www.grandchallenges.ca)

### **About BasicNeeds**

*BasicNeeds is an international development organisation founded by Chris Underhill MBE in 2000 to enable people with mental illness or epilepsy to have access to treatment, the opportunity to earn an income and to re-integrate themselves successfully into their families and communities. BasicNeeds’ community based approach to mental health treatment is holistic and innovative, going beyond purely the medical to incorporate social and economic recovery too. Since its foundation, BasicNeeds has transformed the lives of over 625,000 people with mental illness and epilepsy, their careers and families in 12 countries.*

[www.basicneeds.org](http://www.basicneeds.org)

### **FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

#### **LODE ROELS**

Press Officer  
Grand Challenges Canada  
T. +1 647.328.2021 / +1 416.673.6570  
[lode.roels@grandchallenges.ca](mailto:lode.roels@grandchallenges.ca)

#### **NATASHA ABRAHAM**

Communications Officer  
BasicNeeds  
T. +44 (0) 192.633.0101  
[natasha.abraham@basicneeds.org](mailto:natasha.abraham@basicneeds.org)