

NEWS



Melinda French Gates (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

Melinda French Gates Unveils \$250 Million Initiative to Address Global Women's Health Crisis

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Melinda French Gates, co-founder of the Gates Foundation and a leading philanthropist, has launched a groundbreaking \$250 million global initiative aimed at improving women's physical and mental health. The announcement of the Action for Women's Health initiative, made two months ago, comes at a critical time as women's health worldwide faces alarming neglect and rising disparities.

French Gates, now operating through her independent organization, Pivotal, has committed these funds to support community-driven organizations addressing urgent issues such as maternal mortality, malnutrition, and reproductive health. The initiative invites organizations globally to apply for grants of up to \$5 million to scale innovative solutions that improve health outcomes for women and girls.

A Global Health Crisis

French Gates highlighted the severity of the crisis, noting that women in every corner of the world face barriers to basic healthcare. Despite advancements in medicine, more than 700 women die every day from childbirth-related complications, and

over one billion women and girls suffer from malnutrition.

“This is unacceptable,” French Gates said in her announcement. **“To fully exercise power over their lives, women need to be mentally and physically healthy. Yet, women’s health is being neglected everywhere.”**

The situation is particularly dire in the United States following the Supreme Court’s 2022 decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, which removed federal protections for abortion access. French Gates described the aftermath as a “maternity care desert” with rising maternal mortality rates and increasing restrictions on reproductive healthcare.

Globally, women in low- and middle-income countries continue to face long-standing challenges, such as lack of access to quality maternal and reproductive care. French Gates stressed the urgency of the initiative, emphasizing that improving women’s health is foundational to the well-being of broader societies.

Call to Action and Funding Opportunities

The Action for Women’s Health initiative has opened an opportunity for women’s health-focused organizations to apply for significant funding. Projects must demonstrate a proven track record in improving women’s health and be ready to scale their efforts.

“Organizations around the world are taking innovative approaches to these challenges,” French Gates said. **“This call is about getting them the resources they need to reach as many people as possible.”**

The initiative is managed by Lever for Change, a non-profit affiliate of the MacArthur Foundation. Cecilia Conrad, CEO of Lever for Change, noted that the program aims to reach historically underfunded community-informed groups with deep expertise in women’s health.

“With this new open call, we hope to uplift outstanding organizations in communities that have not had access to this kind of funding,” Conrad said.

A Broader Commitment to Women and Families

This \$250 million pledge is part of French Gates’ larger \$1 billion commitment over the next two years to support women and families globally. It follows her 2019 billion-dollar pledge to empower women worldwide.

The timing of the initiative also underscores its importance in the political context, with French Gates calling the upcoming US elections pivotal for women’s rights and family wellbeing. She has publicly endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris, emphasizing the need for leaders who prioritize reproductive healthcare.

“Women’s health is at stake globally, and we need action,” French Gates said. **“Whether in the US or in low-income countries, women deserve access to care that allows them to thrive.”**

Hope Amid Challenges

While the global state of women’s health remains dire, French Gates expressed optimism about the impact of community-driven solutions.

“This is about making sure women everywhere can access the care they deserve,” she said. **“The resources we provide today will help organizations expand their reach and impact tomorrow.”**

With the launch of Action for Women’s Health, French Gates continues her mission to prioritize women’s health and rights, delivering a powerful message that the world cannot afford to overlook half its population.



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