Pen Pals, Glowing Parasites & Crop Camouflage Could Help Improve Lives

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SEATTLE, Nov. 1, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [1] today announced more than $21 million US in new grants through its Grand Challenges Explorations [2] (GCE) initiative. GCE is a tiered granting mechanism that funds innovative ideas to tackle key global health and development problems, and provides additional resources for projects that demonstrate initial promise. Included in today's announcement is the first group of grantees who were selected, in partnership with Cannes Lions [3], to identify new ways to communicate that foreign aid is working. Also new to this round are projects working to develop new anti-malarial drugs thanks to unprecedented access to 400 compounds in the "Malaria Box [4]."

Following promising results from initial GCE grants made earlier, 15 projects were awarded additional funding. A suite of Phase II projects take a variety of approaches that could contribute to the goal of malaria eradication, including:

- Filippo Mancia of Columbia University in the United States will examine the molecular details of how malaria-transmitting mosquitoes use their sense of smell to find humans, a first step in designing better insect repellents.
- Ali Salanti of the University of Copenhagen in Denmark will develop and test a combined malaria vaccine candidate with the cervical cancer vaccine that has the potential of protecting against both diseases simultaneously.
- Mark Mescher, Consuelo De Moraes, and Andrew Read of Pennsylvania State University in the United States are identifying and studying characteristic odors associated with malaria infection that could be developed into a simple diagnostic test.
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