



Grand Challenges Canada™  
Grands Défis Canada<sup>MC</sup>

## News Release

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### **GRAND CHALLENGES CANADA ANNOUNCES SAVING BRAINS, A BOLD NEW INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS THE SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING WORLD CHILDREN**

***Laureen Harper lends her support to the Saving Brains Initiative, recognizing its potential for transformative change to children's lives and futures.***

**Ottawa.** Grand Challenges Canada is pleased to announce Mrs. Laureen Harper, wife of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is the Honourary Chair of Saving Brains, an initiative designed to help developing world children reach their full cognitive potential.

"I am delighted to support this important initiative by Grand Challenges Canada." said Mrs. Harper.

It is estimated that over 200 million children a year fail to reach their full developmental potential because of the debilitating effects of being poor. These risk factors include:

- malnutrition
- infection
- unhealthy pregnancy and birth complications
- an absence of stimulation and nurturing

Within the first two years of life, suffering from these deficiencies can condemn a child to stunted intellectual growth and ultimately a lifetime of relentless poverty.

Said Peter A. Singer, CEO of Grand Challenges Canada: "Without attention to their brain development, poor children, their communities, and their countries, will remain trapped in a downward economic spiral. Grand Challenges Canada wants to reverse that spiral. There is no better way to build a bright future than to invest in the intellectual growth of developing world children the way we do in the developed world."

Grand Challenges Canada has challenged innovators to identify effective steps to promote the physical, cognitive and social development factors that contribute to a productive life. An initial Request for Proposals seeks to measure the impact of these risk factors on cognitive development. A further Request for Proposals, announced today, seeks the quantification of the economic impact on a global level of cognitive underdevelopment. The results of this research will be a laser-like focus on the work required to improve the intellectual potential of children.

“Up until now most of the research in this area is directed at quantifying mortality not loss of intellectual potential,” said Dr. Karlee Silver, Program Officer for Grand Challenges Canada. “With this new economic impact study, we will be able to measure the loss of productivity as a result of risk factors associated with cognitive impairment. This is key information to establish the scope of this challenge and motivate change.”

“Grand Challenges Canada is thrilled to have Mrs. Harper as Honourary Chair of the Saving Brains initiative,” said Joseph L. Rotman, Chair of Grand Challenges Canada. “Until now fulfilling children’s cognitive potential has not been a global health priority. With this initiative, and with Mrs. Harper’s support, Canada can make a huge contribution to improving the lives of children and transforming the future of developing countries.”

Grand Challenges Canada is funded by the Government of Canada through the Development Innovation Fund announced in the 2008 Budget. Grand Challenges Canada works in a consortium with Canada’s International Development Research Centre and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

For more information, visit [grandchallenges.ca](http://grandchallenges.ca)

#### **About Grand Challenges Canada**

*Grand Challenges Canada is a unique independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of people in developing countries by integrating scientific, technological, business and social innovation. Grand Challenges Canada works with the International Development Research Institute (IDRC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and other global health foundations and organizations to find sustainable long-term solutions to the most pressing health challenges. Grand Challenges Canada is hosted at the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health.*

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

#### **About Canada’s International Development Research Centre**

*The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) supports research in developing countries to promote growth and development. IDRC also encourages sharing this knowledge with policymakers, other researchers, and communities around the world. The result is innovative, lasting local solutions that aim to bring choice and change to those who need it most. As the Government of Canada’s lead on the Development Innovation Fund, IDRC will draw on decades of experience managing publicly funded research projects to administer the Development Innovation Fund. IDRC will also ensure that developing country researchers and concerns are front and centre in this exciting new initiative.*

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

#### **About Canadian Institutes of Health Research**

*The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) is the Government of Canada’s agency for health research. CIHR’s mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its translation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and a strengthened Canadian health-care system. Composed of 13 Institutes, CIHR provides leadership and support to more than 13,600 health researchers and trainees across Canada.*

*CIHR will be responsible for the administration of international peer review, according to international standards of excellence. The results of CIHR-led peer review will guide the awarding of grants by Grand Challenges Canada from the Development Innovation Fund*  
[www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca)

***About McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health***

*The McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health is based at University Health Network and University of Toronto. We develop innovative global health solutions and help bring them to scale where they are most urgently needed. The McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health hosts Grand Challenges Canada.*

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

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