



Grand Challenges Canada®  
Grands Défis Canada

## News Release

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### GRAND CHALLENGES CANADA WELCOMES *EVERY NEWBORN* SERIES AND ACTION PLAN

**Toronto** - Grand Challenges Canada, which is funded by the Government of Canada, welcomes the publication today in *The Lancet* of the *Every Newborn* series and the related action plan. *Every Newborn* highlights the challenge and unprecedented opportunities of focusing efforts on the newborn period. Key findings include:

- Nearly 3 million newborns die annually, accounting for 44% of deaths in children under age five. Closely linked are 2.6 million babies stillborn each year, almost half occurring during labour. Over the last decade, the rate of reduction for newborn deaths has been about half the rate of reduction achieved for children under age five.
- Care around the time of birth saves mothers, their newborns and prevents stillbirths and disability. By 2025, high coverage of care would save 3 million lives (women, stillbirths and newborns) each year.

In particular, Grand Challenges Canada wishes to underscore the following elements:

Saving Lives at Birth: The series highlights that “the day of birth is the most dangerous for mothers and their babies, resulting in nearly half of maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths.” In 2011, Saving Lives at Birth partners Grand Challenges Canada, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), the Government of Norway and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched a Grand Challenge to stimulate innovations to tackle the problem of deaths of mothers and children right around the time of birth. To date, 59 innovations have been supported and many are already showing life-saving results. These innovations will help implement the *Every Newborn* action plan.

- Saving Brains: The series highlights that: “Birth is the moment in the human lifecycle with the greatest risk of death, disability, and lost development potential and the most crucial moment to invest. The generation born today is the workforce of 2030 – a time when many countries, particularly those in Africa, hope to reap the “demographic dividend” that comes from having an employed, healthy and optimally productive

working-age population caring for a smaller dependent population. This dividend, and the potential for accelerated economic growth, cannot be fully realized without addressing newborn survival and health. This is why a healthy start to life must be at the heart of the post-2015 agenda.”

The series also notes that “missing in the current health goals is the clear link beyond survival to development outcomes, increasingly affected by insults around the time of birth and care of the baby, especially early nutrition.” It proposes “an action agenda in order to change the survival curve for stillbirths and newborns and to move beyond survival to improved health and development.”

Grand Challenges Canada welcomes this emphasis on ensuring that newborns both survive and thrive. Grand Challenges Canada’s “Saving Brains” initiative has supported to date 44 innovations totaling \$28 million CAD to develop sustainable ways to promote and nurture healthy child and brain development in the first 1000 days at scale with lasting impact on human capital in low-resource settings. Many of these innovations target the critical newborn period.

- Leadership & accountability: The Lancet series highlights the need for political leadership and accountability measures in the context of the post 2015 development goals. At the 2010 G8 meeting, Canadian Prime Minister Harper focused the world’s attention on women and children’s health, and launched the Muskoka Initiative, emphasizing the importance of accountability. Next week, Prime Minister Harper is convening a global and high-level Summit, *Saving Every Woman Every Child Within Arm’s Reach* in Toronto with a strong emphasis on maternal and newborn survival, and accountability including civil registration and vital statistics and post-2015 goals (both of which are strongly emphasized in the *Every Newborn* series).

“I commend the authors of *Every Newborn*, which underscores the importance of Prime Minister Harper’s high-level Summit next week. I feel proud that Canada is leading the charge towards *Saving Every Woman Every Child Within Arm’s Reach*,” says Dr Peter A. Singer, Chief Executive Officer of Grand Challenges Canada.

“*Every Newborn* demonstrates that focusing attention, effort and investment on mothers and newborns can render an impressive return on investment, saving lives and saving brains to help children reach their full potential,” says Dr Karlee Silver, Vice President Targeted Challenges of Grand Challenges Canada.

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

For more information about *Every Newborn* series: [thelancet.com/series/everynewborn](http://thelancet.com/series/everynewborn)



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**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 Canada (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)

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