

Born On Time: new Canadian-led initiative tackles leading cause of child mortality

World Vision, Plan International Canada, Save the Children, the Government of Canada and Johnson & Johnson partner to prevent preterm birth

(Toronto, ON, February 8, 2016) – As [International Development Week](#) gets underway, major investments from public and private sources have created a Canadian-led initiative to tackle prematurity, now the leading cause of death in children under age five. Announced today, [Born On Time: A Public-Private Partnership to Prevent Preterm Birth](#) brings together expertise and resources from World Vision, Plan International Canada, Save the Children, the Government of Canada and Johnson & Johnson.

In Spring 2016, *Born On Time* will begin implementation in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Mali, where the burden of newborn death is high and governments are committed to improving survival rates. The five-year initiative will address the risk factors which can lead to preterm birth: Lifestyle, Infection, Nutrition and Contraception (LINC). Working closely with local stakeholders, the partners will take a comprehensive approach throughout communities and regional health facilities with activities including:

- Training health care providers and community health workers to provide quality care for mothers before, between and during pregnancies;
- Strengthening referral systems for high risk deliveries, and preterm, low-birth weight babies.
- Improving local health facilities with essential equipment, supplies, and supply chain management;
- Working with community and religious leaders, traditional birth attendants, youth groups and radio broadcasters to raise awareness of family planning methods, healthy lifestyles, taboos related to preterm birth, and gender equality issues;
- Empowering women's self-confidence, negotiation and leadership skills.
- Training health workers and managers in data collection and reporting of preterm births.

Born On Time is funded through a \$20 million (CAD) contribution from the Government of Canada, and an additional \$10 million (CAD) from Johnson & Johnson. Designed to expand, *Born On Time* welcomes additional support from organizations interested in joining the effort to ensure every birth is full term, and every child has an opportunity for the healthiest start in life.

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QUOTES

“Despite a remarkable drop in global child mortality since 1990, too many babies still don’t survive or thrive because they are born too soon. Mothers urgently need access to existing, practical solutions to help them reach full term pregnancies and care for premature babies. *Born On Time* will focus intensely in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Mali, where preterm birth is a contributing factor in more than a third of newborn deaths,” said Michael Messenger, President & CEO, World Vision Canada.

“Early pregnancy is a key factor in pre-term birth. While addressing the health needs of teenage girls who become pregnant is a vital necessity, we also need to work to prevent early pregnancy by empowering girls with sexual health information as well as education and livelihood opportunities that help them reach their full potential,” said Patricia Erb, President & CEO of Save the Children Canada.

“Effective support for new mothers to reach full term and better prepare for childbirth, as well as quality care for the newborn, particularly those that are born too soon – can have a huge impact on saving newborn’s lives. *Born On Time* provides an important opportunity to nurture solid partnerships and use our comprehensive field knowledge, expertise, experiences and resources to jointly address ongoing challenges around pre-term birth, specifically in the developing world,” said Tanjina Mirza, Vice President of Plan International Canada’s International Programs.

“The Government of Canada is proud to partner with World Vision Canada, Plan International Canada, Save the Children, and Johnson & Johnson on this initiative to prevent preterm births in Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Mali. The Government will continue to seek opportunities where it can work with NGO’s, the private sector and others to help improve the health and reproductive rights of women and girls across the developing world,” said Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada’s Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Global Affairs Canada.

“*Born on Time* is a bold collaboration that is tackling the challenge of reducing preterm births in a new way,” said Joy Marini, Executive Director, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health at Johnson & Johnson. “We have a long heritage of reducing preterm births in order to improve the chance of a healthier life for a newborn baby. We’re proud to invest in this unique partnership.”

FACTS

- Premature birth has become the single greatest cause of under-five mortality, accounting for 18 per cent of all deaths ([UNICEF](#))
- Each year, approximately 15 million babies are born preterm (before 37 completed weeks of gestation), and this number is rising ([WHO](#))
- Three-quarters of deaths due to preterm birth complications could be saved with existing, cost-effective interventions. ([WHO](#))
- Preterm birth is caused by risk factors related to Lifestyle, Infection, Nutrition and Contraception (LINC) such as: short intervals between births, adolescent pregnancy, maternal malnutrition, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), chronic disease such as diabetes, poor psychological health, high stress and substance abuse.

MEDIA RESOURCES

[Download photos](#)

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Born On Time: A Public-Private Partnership to Prevent Preterm Birth brings together expertise and resources from [World Vision](#), [Plan International Canada](#), [Save the Children](#), the [Government of Canada](#) and [Johnson & Johnson](#). This key partnership is amplifying an international movement spearheaded by the United Nations' MDG Health Alliance to help mothers deliver healthy babies on time. As a catalytic initiative, *Born On Time* supports the UN's Every Newborn Action Plan, as well as the new Every Woman Every Child global strategy. With an intense focus in three countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mali), *Born On Time* will also drive progress towards achieving the global goal for newborn survival (SDG 3.2). For more information, visit bornontime.org