

Brazil, Gates Foundation sign deal on preterm births

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Brazil and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced Tuesday a deal to earmark \$8 million for projects to reduce premature births nationwide.

More than 10 percent of infants born in Brazil arrive prematurely. Brazil is among 15 countries with the highest number of premature births in the world, according to data from the World Health Organization and the Health Ministry.

The main cause of death for infants under the age of seven days is linked to [preterm birth](#).

"We are going to mobilize the scientific community with innovative projects to help the country resolve this problem, with solutions having a global impact," said Carlos Gadelha, a health ministry official as he announced the accord here.

"It is a huge global challenge and not just for Brazil," said Steven Buchsbaum, of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "Fifteen million children are born premature in the world each year and these births leave them vulnerable to diseases and hampers their cognitive development."

Buchsbaum said that little money has been spent on preventing premature birth, and the process of human gestation is "still a scientific mystery."

Some 52 percent of deliveries in Brazil are done by caesarian section, a percentage that rises to 90 percent in private hospitals, said Maria do Carmo Leal of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation.

She outlined a study funded by Brazil's health ministry as a starting point to help reduce preterm births.

The Gates Foundation hopes to apply results of the Brazilian projects in countries with high rates of preterm births.

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