

# Canada pledges Can\$3.5 bn for maternal, child health

May 29 2014

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Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper pledged Can\$3.5 billion Thursday for immunization, better nutrition and the introduction of birth certificates in developing nations to improve the health of mothers and children.

Harper made the announcement at a three-day summit he is hosting in Toronto, attended by Melinda Gates, Queen Rania of Jordan, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete and others.

The monies will flow from 2015—after Canada's current pledge of Can\$2.8 billion runs out—to 2020.

Harper said Canada would continue to focus the development aid on a handful of developing countries, and urged other nations and civil society to pitch in and broaden the program.

"We have come to a pivotal moment in global efforts to save the lives of women and children in developing countries," the [prime minister](#) said in a speech.

"While the world has significantly reduced the number of preventable deaths and learned valuable lessons since (2010), we need to finish what we started and sustain global momentum to 2015 and beyond.

"We have, within arm's reach, the power to end the [preventable deaths](#) of women and children in the developing world. Together, we hold these

precious lives in our hands. We have the responsibility to make renewed commitments and live up to them."

The number of women who die each year during pregnancy or childbirth has dropped from 523,000 deaths in 1990 to 289,000 in 2013, according to government figures.

Child deaths (under five years old) have also dropped from nearly 12 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 2012, in part due to increased vaccine use. Half of the deaths are linked to poor nutrition.

Bolstering the collection of vital statistics and health data, and promoting civil registration (starting with birth certificates), said Harper, will improve healthcare planning and decision making, and allow people later in life to participate in the democratic process and the economy.

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Citation: Canada pledges Can\$3.5 bn for maternal, child health (2014, May 29) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-canada-pledges-can35-bn-maternal.html>

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