

NEWS RELEASE

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Laurier professor's solution for addressing malnutrition in children ranked No. 1 among remedies for world's biggest challenges

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**Contact: Dr. Sue Horton
Economics Professor and
Vice-President: Academic
519-884-0710, ext. 2221**

**or Kevin Crowley, Associate Director,
News & Editorial Services
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3070**

WATERLOO — Laurier economist Dr. Sue Horton has persuaded a distinguished international panel to rank her solution for addressing child malnutrition as the top proposal for solving the world's biggest challenges.

More than 50 economists associated with Copenhagen Consensus 2008 spent the past two years looking for the best solutions to 10 of the world's biggest challenges. An expert panel of eight top economists, including five Nobel Laureates, recently selected the combating of malnutrition in the 140 million children who are undernourished as the No. 1 challenge after Dr. Horton made her case to the expert panel.

Douglass C. North, a member of the expert panel and a Nobel Laureate in economics, said the proposal by principal author Dr. Horton and two colleagues was ranked first because "it has immediate and important consequences for improving the well-being of poor people around the world — that's why it should be our number one priority."

The proposal, written by Dr. Horton with the assistance of Harold Alderman of the World Bank and Juan A Rivera of the National Institute of Public Health in Mexico, suggests that providing micronutrients for 80 percent of the world's 140 million children who lack essential vitamins in the form of vitamin A capsules and a course of zinc supplements would cost just \$60 million per year. More importantly, this action would result in yearly benefits of more than \$1 billion.

"In effect, this means that each dollar spent on this program creates benefits (in the form of better health, fewer deaths, increased future earnings, etc.) worth more than 17 dollars," according to a statement by Copenhagen Consensus 2008.

"I am delighted that the Copenhagen Consensus has focused attention on this very pressing issue, and I hope it intensifies international efforts to pursue a solution," said Dr. Horton.

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“We are very proud of Dr. Horton’s international leadership in addressing such an important global challenge,” said Laurier President Dr. Max Blouw. “We are also delighted that her hard work has received the recognition it deserves.”

The goal of Copenhagen Consensus 2008 was to set priorities among a series of proposals for confronting 10 great global challenges. These challenges are: Air Pollution, Conflicts, Diseases, Education, Global Warming, Malnutrition and Hunger, Sanitation and Water, Subsidies and Trade Barriers, Terrorism, Women and Development.

A panel of economic experts was asked to address the 10 challenge areas and to answer the question, “What would be the best ways of advancing global welfare, and particularly the welfare of the developing countries, illustrated by supposing that an additional \$75 billion of resources were at their disposal over a four-year initial period?”

Ten challenge papers, commissioned from acknowledged authorities in each area of policy, set out more than 30 proposals for the panel’s consideration. Each paper was discussed at length with its principal author and with two other specialists who had been commissioned to write critical appraisals, and then the experts deliberated in private session.

Based on the costs and benefits of the solutions, the panel ranked the proposals, in descending order of desirability. More information about all the proposals and the final ranking can be found at: <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/Default.aspx?ID=788>