



Making Early Childhood Interventions Effective

An overview of *The Lancet's* new "Child Development" series
Presented by the Global Child Development Steering Group

2007 *Lancet* Series on Child Development

- More than 200 million children under age 5 years in low- and middle-income countries not reaching their developmental potential
- Identified major risks for poor child development
- Described available evidence on effective early interventions



2011 Series

- Reviews new evidence on:
 - causes of developmental inequality
 - effective interventions to promote young child development
- Provides evidence needed to set priorities for early childhood policies and to design effective programmes to reduce inequalities
- Estimates the cost of not investing in early childhood programmes



The developing brain

- The brain develops through dynamic interactions of genetic, biological, and psychosocial influences and child behavior
- Exposure to biological and psychosocial risks leads to deficits in brain structure and function, and impaired cognitive and social emotional development
- Disparities increase with early, multiple, and cumulative risks

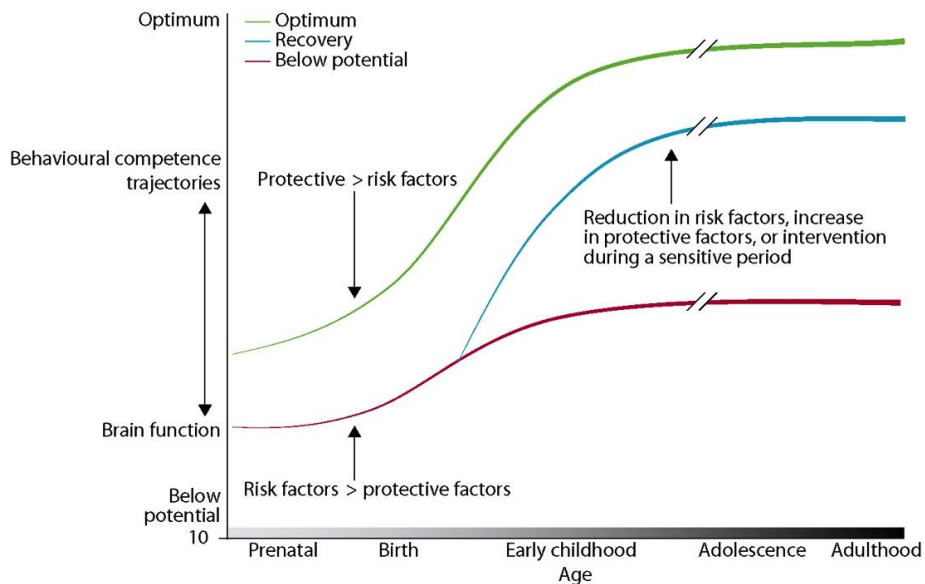


Life course impact

- Early exposure to risks sets children on a lower developmental path. Long-term effects on schooling and income contribute to continued inequalities in the next generation.
- Inequalities can be reduced with intervention in the early years



Development of inequality



Biological risks

- Further evidence for key biological risks: chronic undernutrition, iron and iodine deficiency
- Three additional biological risks:
 - intra-uterine growth restriction
 - severe and/or repeated malaria attacks
 - HIV infection



Psychosocial risks

- Lack of learning opportunities and poor quality caregiver-child interaction – major risk for poor development
- Three additional psychosocial risks:
 - maternal depression
 - exposure to societal violence
 - institutional rearing



Protective influences

- New evidence identifies protective influences which promote child development
 - breast feeding
 - responsive caregiver-child interaction
 - opportunities for young children to play and learn
 - maternal education



The good news

- We can reduce inequality by addressing multiple risks children face
- Interventions can effectively reduce developmental delays
- Particularly if interventions are early, of high quality, and integrated



Nutrition and health interventions

- Breastfeeding
- Micronutrient supplementation for mothers and young children (iodine and iron)
- Food supplementation in young children in populations with insufficient food; promotion of good feeding practices
- Reduce infections:
 - prevention and effective treatment for malaria, HIV
 - support for children and families affected by HIV



Nutrition and health are important, but...

Substantial gains in gains in children's development require:

- Improvements in parenting, stimulation and early education
- Reductions in stressful experiences including maternal depression and exposure to violence
- Increases in protective influences such as maternal education that reduce impact of risks



Reducing stressful experiences

- Prevent institutionalization
- Protection from exposure to societal violence and psychosocial support for children and families affected by societal violence
- Promote maternal mental health



Interventions for parents and families

- Interventions that improve parents' ability to provide stimulation and quality interaction
- Provided through home visits, guidance and support from health providers, and group parent training
- Can be delivered by para-professionals



Parenting interventions

- Impacts are larger when:
 - both parents and children participate
 - interventions involve modeling and practice of behavior.
 - most disadvantaged children targeted

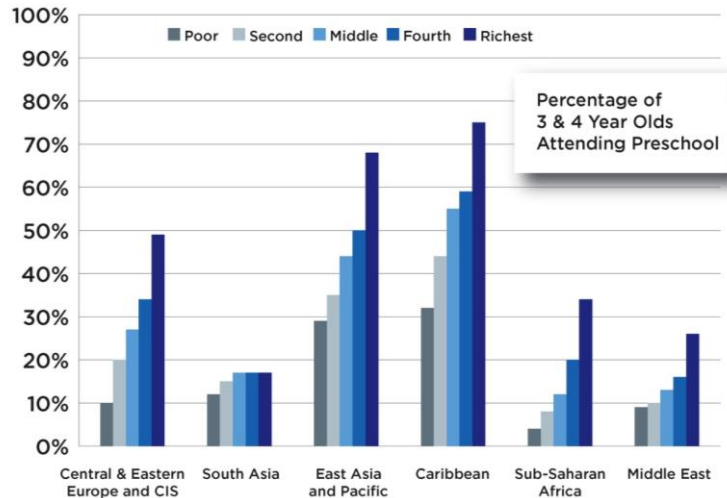


Early childhood education interventions

- For children 3 years and older centre-based programmes (preschools) are appropriate and effective in improving children's cognitive and social-emotional development and school readiness
- Impact is greater with higher quality programmes but informal and community-based programmes benefit development



Preschool enrolment by region and income –less than 20% for poorer income quintiles



Proportion of young children attending preschool in 58 low-income and middle-income countries by income quintile within country summed across sample countries by region. Data are from UNICEF's 2005 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 3 for children aged 3 and 4 years.

Promising directions for interventions

- Use of media including educational radio and TV for children over 2 years
- Cash-transfer programmes with early childhood components such as attendance at parenting sessions

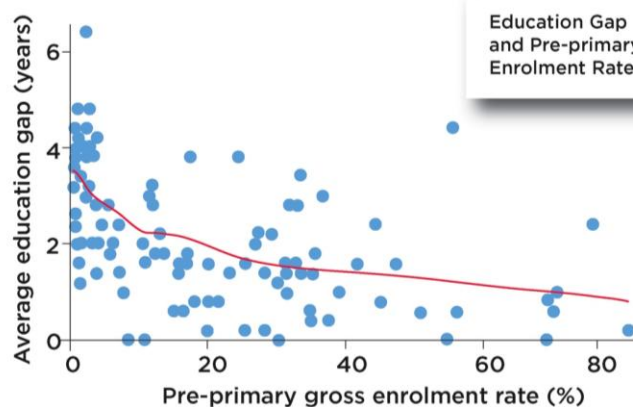


Estimating benefits of investing in early child development

- Used data from 73 countries to estimate long-term effects of one type of ECD intervention – preschool.
- Countries with higher preschool enrolment have smaller gap in attained schooling between highest income quintile and other quintiles



Preschool's lasting positive effects



Association of preschool enrolment and the schooling gap for 73 low-income and middle-income countries. Schooling gap defined as the gap between schooling attainment of the wealthiest quintile of youth compared with youth in other wealth quintiles. Average education gap is for those aged 15-19 years. Pre-primary gross enrolment rate is from 8-12 years earlier. Bandwidth=0.8.

Increasing preschool enrolment: Benefit-to-cost ratio of 6.4 - 17:1

- Increasing preschool enrolment benefits attained schooling
- Estimated increase in future earnings US \$11 - 34 billion
- Benefit-to-cost ratio from 6.4 to 17:1, depending on % preschool children enrolled (25% - 50%)
- Conservative estimate – only one early child development intervention



Integrated interventions

- Reducing inequalities requires integrated interventions early in life that target the many risks to which children are exposed.
- Need to identify opportunities for integration of stimulation and education programmes with nutrition and health services
- Evaluate strategies to take parenting and early education programmes to scale while maintaining effectiveness



Development and expansion of national or scaled-up early childhood programmes

- Ensure quality : evidence based programmes, training, continued supervision and support for providers
- Prioritize monitoring and evaluation to identify the most effective interventions
- Build policy support for multi-sectoral integration
- Sustainable funding mechanisms
- Evidence based policy recognizing early child development as fundamental to promotion of social justice and equity



Returns on investment in early childhood are substantial

- Early childhood is the most effective and cost-efficient time to ensure that children can benefit from school and later opportunities.
- Investment in early child development programmes to reduce risks and support development can break the cycle of inequity faced by millions of children and families



Global child development group

- Promote evidence driven early child development policy for children under 3 years
 - Co-ordinate multi country evaluation of early childhood programmes for children under 3
 - Identify characteristics of effective programmes
 - Investigate strategies for integrating early child development with other sectors



Authors

Alderman H, Baker-Henningham H, Behrman J, Black MM, Cabral de Mello M, Chang SM, Engle P, Ertem I, Fernald L, Grantham-McGregor SM, Hamadani J, Hidrobo M, Huffman S, Iltus S, Lozoff B, Meeks Gardner J, Nelson CA, O’Gara C, Powell CA, Rahman A, Richter L, Ulkuer N, Wachs TD, Walker SP, Yousafzai A.

Acknowledgments

Support for meetings of authors: Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNICEF, the Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative and the University of the West Indies.

Launch: The World Bank, the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Lancet



“Neglect of the children most in need is an outrage – and a huge strategic mistake”

–UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake

“Giving every child the opportunity to thrive as well as survive... is not only a moral imperative but an economic one.”

-The Lancet Chief Editor Richard Horton



Making Early Childhood Interventions Effective

An overview of *The Lancet's* new “Child Development” series
Presented by the Global Child Development Steering Group