

Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world.

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Summary

This paper is the third in the Child Development Series. The first paper showed that more than 200 million children under 5 years of age in developing countries do not reach their developmental potential. The second paper identified four well-documented risks: stunting, iodine deficiency, iron deficiency anaemia, and inadequate cognitive stimulation, plus four potential risks based on epidemiological evidence: maternal depression, violence exposure, environmental contamination, and malaria. This paper assesses strategies to promote child development and to prevent or ameliorate the loss of developmental potential. The most effective early child development programmes provide direct learning experiences to children and families, are targeted toward younger and disadvantaged children, are of longer duration, high quality, and high intensity, and

are integrated with family support, health, nutrition, or educational systems and services. Despite convincing evidence, programme coverage is low. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and ensuring primary school completion for both girls and boys, governments and civil society should consider expanding high quality, cost-effective early child development programmes.



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