Arguments to Support Investment in Early Childhood

Support Material 2.1a
Module 2: Investing in Early Childhood
Session 2.1 Investing in Early Childhood
Six Reasons for Investment in Early Childhood

- Human Rights
- Scientific Rationale
- Economic Benefits
- Social Equity
- Social Mobilisation
- Achieve International Goals
Human Rights

- Children have the Right to survive and to thrive
- From surviving to thriving
- Beginning with those most likely to falter.
Scientific Rationale

- Prenatal to age 3 is the most important time.
- 1/10 has a deficiency/delay - many could have been avoided.
- More child development knowledge gained in last 50 years than in previous 2500.
Scientific Rationale:

- Most of adult mental ability is formed in the first three years of life - about half of that before birth (80% of brain growth)
- Early stimulation programmes can reduce school drop-out
- Malnutrition and anemia reduce learning ability
Interventions with stunted children in Jamaica

Baseline 6 mo 12 mo 18 mo 24 mo

DQ

- non-stunted
- both Rxs
- stimulated
- supplemented
- control

Grantham-McGregor et al, 1991
Economic Benefits

- Early investment
  - leads to increased school and workplace productivity.
  - helps break the intergenerational transmission of poverty – a step in Poverty Alleviation
Prevention is less expensive than Treatment

- Preventive care reduces costs of health care throughout life
- Preventing malnutrition avoids stunting
Economic Benefits cont.

- Early stimulation
  - prepares the child for the school and costs less than high dropout and repetition rates
  - supports the child’s development to now and throughout life
THE MISMATCH BETWEEN OPPORTUNITY AND INVESTMENT

Spending on Health, Education and Welfare

Brain’s “Malleability”

0 3 Headstart 10 Age Welfare Medicare
Public Education Research Medicaid Social Security

OPPORTUNITY LOST

Source: Bruce Perry
For every $1 spent on QUALITY early childhood programmes there is a $7 return in cost-savings.

UNICEF’s *State of the World’s Children 2001* report
Social Equity

- Interventions help disadvantaged groups most

- Nepal - preschool had greater impact on girls’ school attendance
- Guatemala - all effects of early food supplementation were on girls
Nepalese disadvantaged children: Percent children at school who are girls by non-formal preschool attendance

Data from 24 village development committees; in Arnold (2003) What’s The Difference? The Impact of early Childhood Development Programmes: Save the Children (US & Norway) and UNICEF.
Entry point for Social Mobilisation

- Young children are focal point of Communities organising
- In emergencies, child friendly spaces can lead to community mobilisation.
- Socialisation perpetuates cultural values
Achieve International Goals

- A holistic approach is key in meeting development targets
- **Global Movement for Children**
  - ensuring a good start in life for every child, caring for every child, investing in children.
Millenium Development goals:

- Survival
- Completion of 5 years of school
- Reduction in poverty and hunger
  - reducing MMR malaria deaths, malnutrition, and increasing access to safe drinking water
A World Fit For Children...

Every child should have...

“a nurturing, caring, and safe environment - to survive, be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent, and able to learn”
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