

A woman with dark skin and short hair is holding a baby. She is wearing a dark blue top with a pink floral pattern. The baby is wearing a white dress with a colorful floral pattern and several colorful bangles on their wrists. The background is a textured teal color with two yellow shapes: a square at the top and a banner-like shape at the bottom.

SNAPSHOT: INVESTING IN THE EARLY YEARS

FOR GROWTH & PRODUCTIVITY



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Investing in the early years is one of the smartest things a country can do to eliminate extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and create the human capital needed for economies to diversify and grow.

Early childhood experiences have a profound impact on brain development—affecting learning, health, behavior and ultimately, income. An increasingly digital economy places even greater premiums on the ability to reason, continually learn, effectively communicate and collaborate. Those who lack these skills will be left further behind.

Yet today, millions of young children are not reaching their full potential because inadequate nutrition, a lack of early stimulation and learning, and exposure to stress adversely affect their development. Smart investments in the physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development of young children—from before birth until they transition to primary school—are critical to put them on the path to greater prosperity, and to help their countries be more productive and compete more successfully in a rapidly changing global economy.





Early childhood nutrition, and early stimulation and learning programs have been shown to extend school completion, improve learning outcomes, and increase adult wages:

- ▶ A 20-year study of children in Jamaica by Nobel laureate James Heckman, Paul Gertler and others showed that early stimulation interventions for infants and toddlers increased their future earnings by 25 percent—equivalent to adults who grew up in wealthier households.
- ▶ Evidence suggests a potential return rate of seven to 16 percent annually from high-quality preschool programs targeting vulnerable groups.
- ▶ Children in a long-term study in Guatemala who were well nourished (i.e., were not stunted) were much more likely to escape poverty as adults, and earned incomes 5 to 50 percent higher than children who were stunted as children.
- ▶ World Bank Group analysis suggests that the per capita GDP loss a country incurs for not having eliminated stunting when today's workers were children is 7 percent, on average, while Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia suffer larger losses of about 9 percent and 10 percent respectively.
- ▶ The same analysis suggests that scaling up the key interventions to reduce chronic malnutrition to 90 percent coverage over the next decade would have a rate of return between 15 and 24 percent, with an average benefit to cost ratio of 15 to 1.



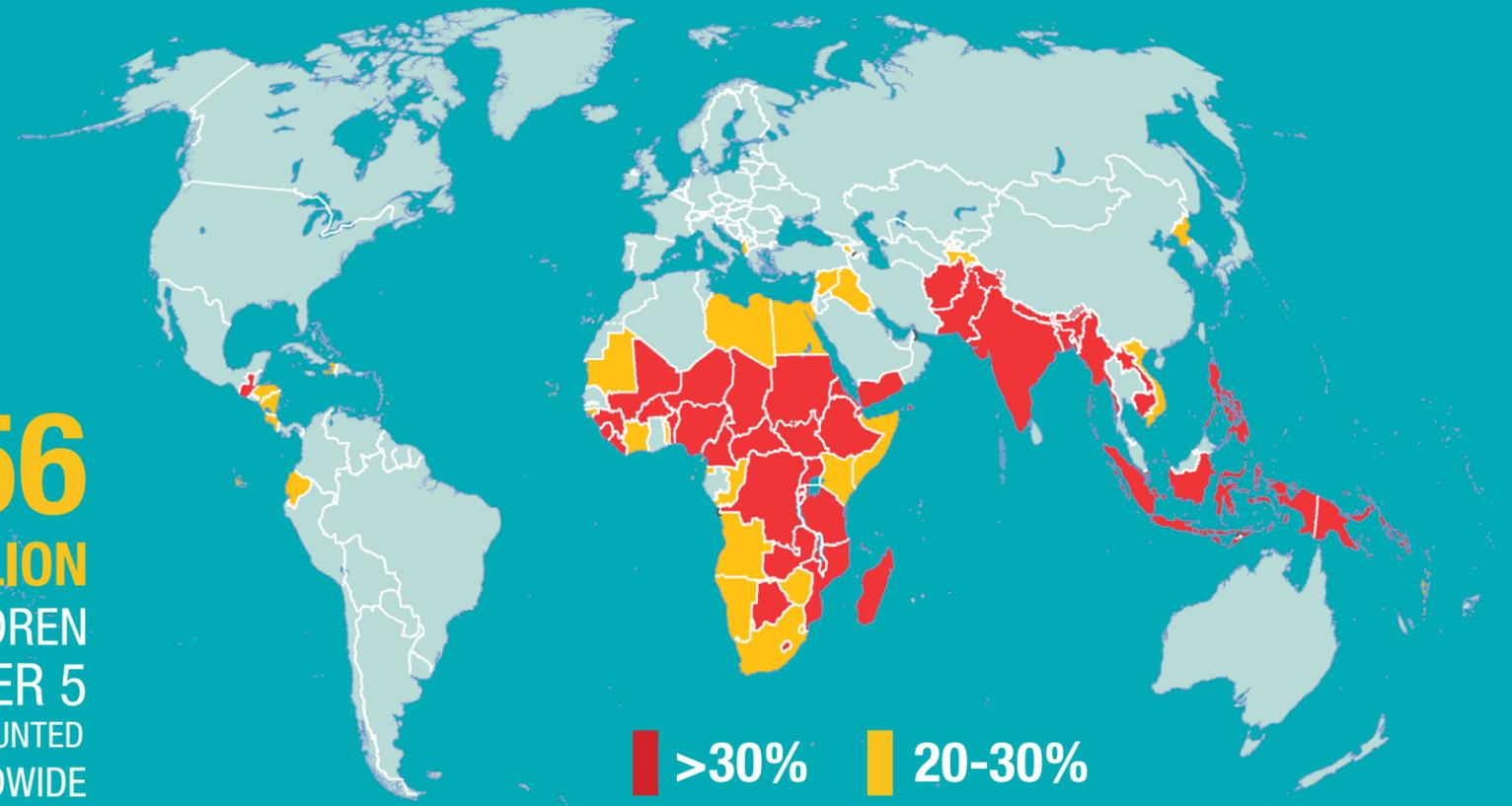
Improving development outcomes across the world, especially among poor families, requires investing in (i) early childhood nutrition; (ii) quality early childhood programs that support families to provide early stimulation and learning opportunities from birth onwards; and (iii) protecting children from the kind of stress which undermines their development.

The challenge is daunting:

- ▶ One quarter of children under age five worldwide—that's 156 million children per 2016 estimates—evidence chronic malnutrition (are short for their age, or stunted).
- ▶ Even in lower middle income countries—such as India, Indonesia, and Guatemala—over one-third of children at the national level, and up to 80 percent of children in some areas, are stunted.
- ▶ Only half of all three to six-year-olds have access to pre-primary education. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 20 percent of children can access these critical learning opportunities.
- ▶ Across developing countries, fewer than half of children under five have access to three or more books at home, limiting their development opportunities.
- ▶ One in 200 children in the world are displaced, exposing them to the kind of stress that can undermine their development.

Photo by Dominic Chavez.

156
MILLION
CHILDREN
UNDER 5
ARE STUNTED
WORLDWIDE



>30% **20-30%**

We have evidence on what interventions work, and they are feasible and cost-effective to implement.

It starts with ensuring that mothers and mothers-to-be are well nourished. Their newborn babies should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months and receive appropriate feeding and micro-nutrients thereafter. Families should receive quality healthcare and immunizations, and enabled to practice good household hygiene. Parents also need support so that they can positively engage with their children and undertake age-appropriate learning activities with them. They also need to be able to protect their children from the kinds of stress which can harm their development, such as that due to violence or neglect, displacement, disasters or impoverishment.

SNAPSHOT:
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THE CHALLENGE



THE STRATEGY

In response to convincing evidence on the benefits of investing in young children, as well as growing demand from countries, the World Bank Group is increasing its support to countries to invest in the early years of life.

It is doing so through building global knowledge, making financing available, providing policy advice and technical support, and strengthening partnerships at the country, regional, and global levels.

The priorities are threefold: (i) reduce childhood undernutrition, (ii) ensure children receive early stimulation and learning; and (iii) protect vulnerable children. The Bank Group is committed to measurably scaling up its investments by 2020 in the key interventions required to deliver on these priorities.

Photo by the World Bank Group.

SCALING UP FINANCIAL SUPPORT & WORKING WITH COUNTRIES TO MOBILIZE ACTION:

The Bank Group will do more by supporting demand from countries, and by crowding in new sources of public and private financing to support investments in the early years through partnerships.

The Bank Group is engaging with high burden countries to identify opportunities to expand key interventions and consider where it can best provide support through its financial and knowledge services. It is enlisting experience and expertise from its specialists in education; health, nutrition and population; social protection, labor and jobs; agriculture; water; gender; disaster risk management; trade and competitiveness; fragility, conflict and violence; poverty; macroeconomics and fiscal management; and climate change.

In October 2016, President Jim Kim convened country leaders at the *Human Capital Summit* to recognize countries that are taking action to ensure every child has access to the early nutrition, stimulation and learning opportunities, and the nurturing and protection that will hardwire them and their countries for success.

CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE AND MAKING THE INVESTMENT CASE:

The Bank Group is helping build the evidence base so countries can better appreciate the challenge and identify the most cost-effective opportunities to respond. The Early Learning Partnership and the Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund substantially support these efforts.

The Bank Group published a new guide for policy makers and practitioners about how to invest in young children titled *Stepping up Early Childhood Development*. This guide identifies 25 essential interventions that span the education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and social protection sectors.

In partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Results for Development and 1000 Days, the WBG released *An Investment Framework for Nutrition* with new estimates of what it will cost to achieve the global nutrition targets. The estimates show that the world needs an average annual investment of US\$7 billion over the next 10 years to reduce stunting among children and anemia in women, increase exclusive breastfeeding rates, and mitigate the impact of wasting.

Impact evaluations of programs that invest in the early years in low- and middle-income countries help inform policy decisions. For example, in Mozambique, the Bank Group's evaluation of a community-based preschool program run by Save the Children showed that children enrolled in preschool were better prepared for the demands of schooling than children who did not attend preschool, and that they were more likely to start primary school by age six. The Government of Mozambique is now investing significantly more in young children from disadvantaged families.

COUNTRY RESULTS

PERU

In 2000, 31 percent of Peruvian 0-5 year olds suffered from chronic malnutrition. With support from the Bank Group, Peru used conditional cash transfers to target low-income families with young children. In just eight years, the country cut its chronic malnutrition rate in half, to 14 percent. This ranks among the most successful achievements in improving child nutrition in the world.

MOZAMBIQUE

84,000 young children in 600 rural communities will benefit from the extension of community-based programs that focus on early attention to cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and physical skills aimed at increasing chances of success in primary school and beyond.

SENEGAL

In Senegal, malnutrition was highly prevalent at the start of the millennium, and stunting affected as many as 34 percent of children under five. In 2001, Senegal, supported by the Bank Group, brought nutrition services into the communities and into households, including nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion, vitamin A supplementation, a network of community volunteers to support new mothers and caregivers, social cash transfers, and targeted food security support. The prevalence of stunting has come down to 19 percent.

INDIA

35 million children under the age of 6 (with a particular focus on ages 0-3 years), pregnant women, and families in 162 high-burden districts are benefitting from the expansion of India's Integrated Child Development Services and improved nutrition outcomes. The program spans across 1.4 million community-based facilities nationwide.

INDONESIA

More than half a million children aged 0-6 years in 50 poor, hard-to-reach districts received integrated early childhood services through a range of programs between 2007 and 2013.

MADAGASCAR

Reaching 2.1 million mothers and children under the age of five, the National Community Nutrition Program delivers growth-monitoring activities, culinary demonstrations, and nutrition education for primary caregivers through a network of over 7,000 rural sites.

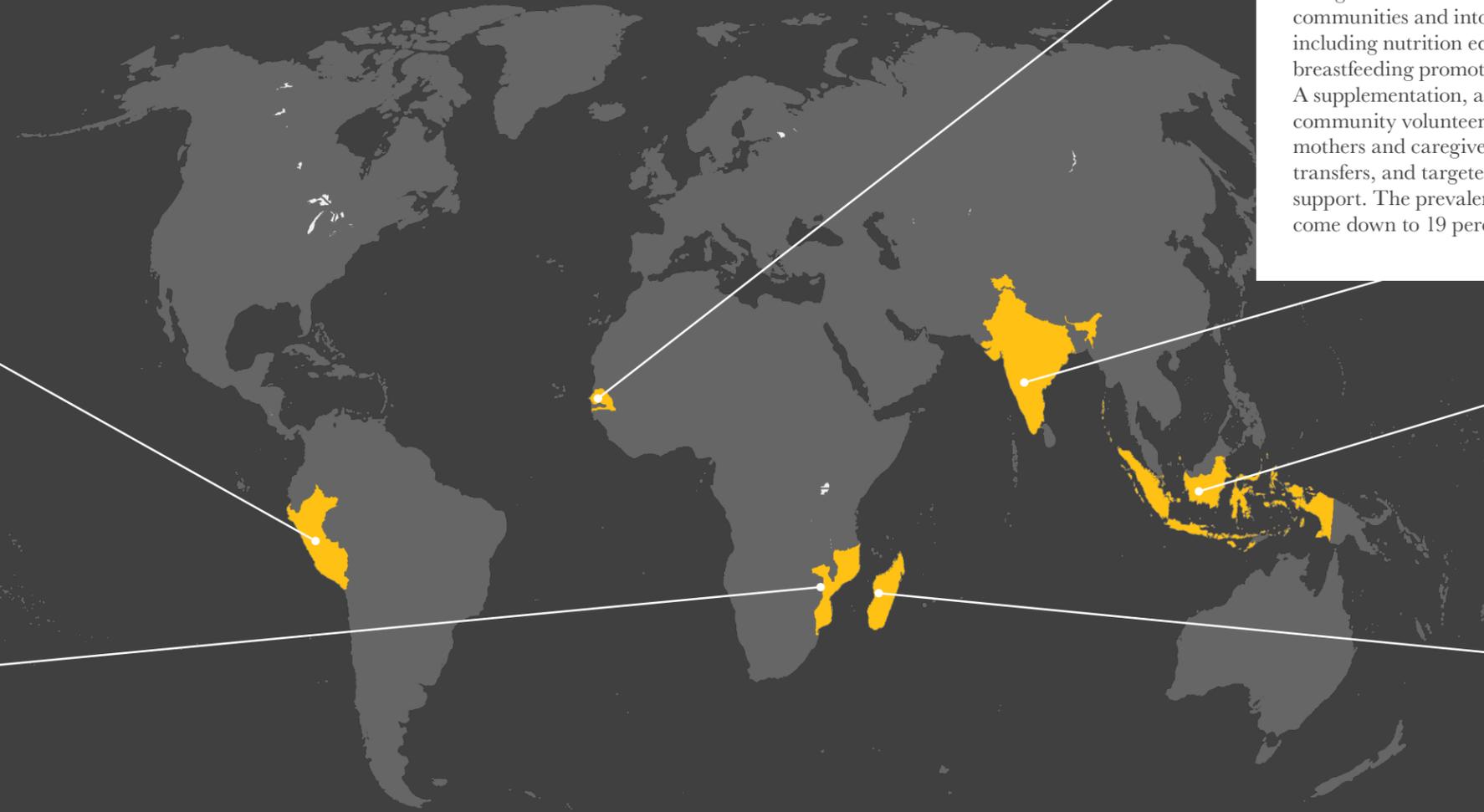




Photo by Dominic Chavez.

SNAPSHOT:
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PARTNERSHIPS FOR INVESTING IN THE EARLY YEARS

The World Bank Group is working with many foundations, United Nations agencies and bilateral partners, regional development banks, and civil society organizations to increase collective efforts around investing in the early years.

SCALING UP NUTRITION

The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) global movement has signed up 56 countries, 100+ global partners, and over 3,000 CSOs worldwide. It has increased political commitment from donors, ministers of health and agriculture, and CSOs.

ECD ACTION NETWORK

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Action Network, launched during the 2016 WBG-IMF Spring Meetings by UNICEF and the WBG, is supported by foundations, multilateral and bilateral organizations, regional ECD networks, NGOs, and the private sector. The Network seeks to advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals for ECD.

INNOVATIVE FINANCING

The Global Financing Facility in support of Every Woman Every Child and the Power of Nutrition, both of which are working to scale up domestic, international and private resources for investing in children's health.



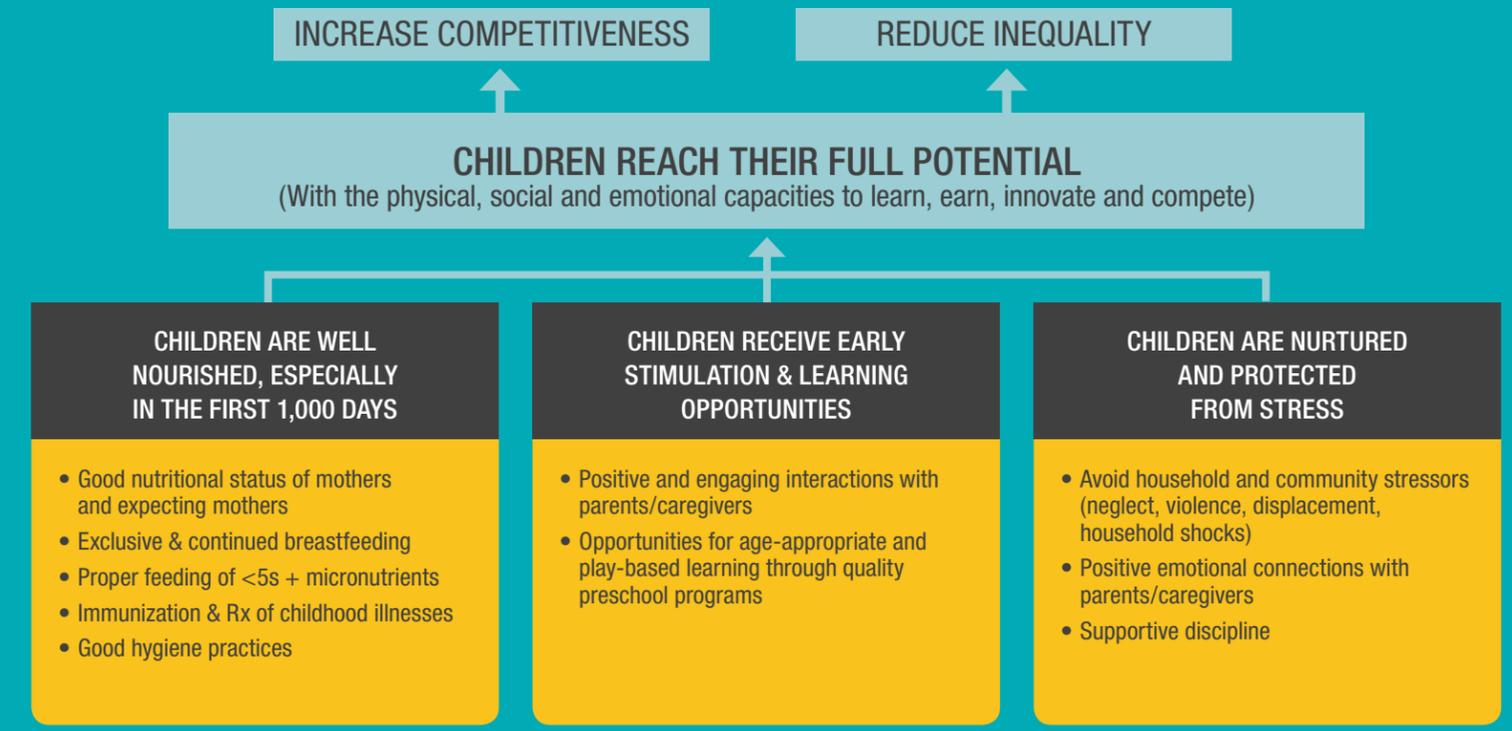
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SNAPSHOT:
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INFOGRAPHIC



WORLD BANK GROUP
INVESTING IN THE EARLY YEARS TO END
EXTREME POVERTY AND BOOST SHARED PROSPERITY



DELIVERING ON THE ESSENTIAL INTERVENTIONS ABOVE REQUIRES EFFORTS ACROSS SECTORS

- Quality, Diverse and Affordable Food
- Quality Health Care and Reproductive Health Services
- Water and Sanitation
- Educated and Empowered Women
- Family Leave and Quality, Affordable Childcare
- Reduced Income Poverty
- Safety Nets and Response to Shocks



Front and back cover photos by Dominic Chavez. Inside cover photos by the World Bank Group.



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