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Investing in Children

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Abstract

Poverty reduction is best sustained when the lives of young children are transformed. Investment in children, particularly in the early and primary school years, yields long-run benefit streams to economies, families, and individuals. Coordinated health and nutrition interventions to mothers and young infants protect the young child's biological integrity, and reduce mortality, morbidity and disability. Focussed programs that integrate food, health, and care for the young child raise educational level, schooling achievement, and later wages and family incomes, while reducing the child's vulnerability to illness and premature death in youth and midlife. These investments have a preventive character, because they add efficiencies in the state's use of resources in public education, public health, and protecting the social welfare for the poor. Well-developed children will be more productive, contributing citizens. Enriched human development investment for children may reduce poverty more sustainably than any other strategy. Child-centered investments are most cost-effective when they are poverty-targeted, and contribute to equitable and sustained economic growth.

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