

There is powerful scientific evidence that low-cost interventions which facilitate and support 'nurturing care' for children in their first years of life contribute to lifelong health, wellbeing and productivity with economic impacts which far outweigh the investment costs.

The world's most prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*, has published three scientific papers and six commentaries on early childhood development. Production of the series, *Advancing Early Childhood Development: From Science to Scale*, was led by Professor Linda Richter, Director of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development.

The launch took place in Washington D.C. in October 2016 to coincide with the World Bank Summit: 'Investing in the Early Years for Growth and Productivity', as part of its Annual Meeting of Finance Ministers.

The series, which brings together the work of 45 authors from 22 institutions around the globe, considers new scientific evidence for multi-sectoral interventions; proposes pathways for implementation at scale; and emphasises 'nurturing care' as the key determinant of early childhood development.

'Nurturing care' is characterised by a stable environment that promotes affectionate relationships, health and nutrition, protection from threats, and opportunities for early learning. It is now well established that the first 1000 days of life, from conception to two years of age, lay the foundation for future

Nurturing Care – the basis for lifelong health and wellbeing



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health, wellbeing and productivity. However, an estimated 250 million children living in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of under-development due to poverty and malnutrition.

The burden and cost of this is high – in South Africa, it is estimated that stunting results in a loss in future earnings of R62 billion per annum.

The series argues that nurturing

care services can, successfully and affordably, be delivered to all children who need them – a vision that aligns with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. To do this requires government commitment and leadership. ■

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www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016
www.wits.ac.za/coe-human



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