Childhood Development – The Target Areas

What is the issue?

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Our policy makers need to recognize that investing in our children is indispensible for reaching our full potential.

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What is the case for investing in childhood development?

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- While only 85 out of every 100 children born would live to age five in 1980s, currently the number stands at 96.
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- Improved child survival has also helped in reducing fertility rates, as people do not have to compensate for deaths by having more children.
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- But mere survival is not enough as cognitively development, illnesses free life and good education are critical in realising one's full potential.
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- Countries that make early investments in their children are more likely to have the workforce to support economic growth over the decades.
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- All upper-middle income countries like "South Korea, Singapore & Thailand" have achieved sustained growth by investing in child development.
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- These include vaccination, good nutrition for mother and child, clean water and sanitation, and protection from vector-borne infectious diseases.
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How important is vaccination & nutrition?

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- Vaccines are the most cost effective, life-saving interventions of all times.
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- It holds particular significance in child development and is usually administered when the rate of brain development is at its peak.
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- On the nutrition front, protein rich supplements before 24 months of age were found to increase overall cognitive skills significantly and male wages by 46%.
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- Better nourished & healthy children tend to stay longer in schools.
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- As research across countries show that merely being literate raises earnings by 10%, investments in vaccines & nutrition is sure to have economic spill over.
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What lies ahead?

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- The number of children born in India each year is greater than those born in any country at any point in human history.
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- If we give them the right start by providing a childhood free of diseases and proper nutrition, we have the opportunity to create a strong & powerful nation.
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- The cost of failure would also be high, as large number of people will be condemned to poverty & lack of livelihood.
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- This would be accompanied by growth rates that will eventually drop back to under 4% as Indian children fail to become internationally competitive.
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Source: The Hindu

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