

BUILDING BRAINS: Early Stimulation for Children from Birth to Three



Recent evidence from neuroscience has led to a revolution in our thinking on the importance of the first 1000 days. Now more than ever before, the early years are being recognized as the foundation of human development and life-long learning. A child's brain is built, not born¹. In the first years of life, 1 million new neural connections are formed per second, a rate unmatched during any other period in life.² In fact, **by the time a child reaches school age, most key brain wiring, language abilities, physical capabilities and cognitive foundations have been set in place.** During these first years, caregivers play an essential role in supporting their child's healthy brain development through reciprocal interactions that provide the neural connections in the brain that build learning, social and behavioral pathways. Thus, the quality and frequency of interactions between young children and their caregivers are critical for their growth and development. Reaching caregivers is the gateway to ensuring the

youngest children reach their fullest developmental potential.

The early years offer a crucial window for intervention. By age 3, a baby's brain has the greatest density of brain cells connectors.

Research has indicated that chronic under-nutrition, poor health and lack of stimulation impair healthy development.³ Integrated programs targeting children's holistic development have the potential to address multiple child outcomes. An expanding body

of evidence shows the benefits of 0-3 programming are greatest for children from poor and marginalized communities. This is largely because comprehensive early interventions have the potential to level the playing field for disadvantaged children and reduce both economic and social inequalities, helping close the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers early on. Thus, **early interventions support equity from the start**, particularly those that are integrated across sectors.

Building Brains leverages proven implementation experience and integrates the latest science and evidence into future programming. In

addition, Building Brains presents information on the program delivery mechanisms and the expected outcomes with case studies from country experiences. Technical and field personnel gain a roadmap with operational and practical guidance for implementing 0-3 programming across multiple sectors. Offering key messages about the first 1000 days, Building Brains also provides stakeholders an advocacy

250 million are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential. Building Brains reaches every child through any platform in the first 1000 days.

¹ Jack P Shonkoff, M.D., Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

² Center on the Developing Child. 2017. Five numbers to remember about early childhood development. Brief. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University website. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/five-numbers-to-remember-about-early-childhood-development>

³ Black MM, Walker SP, Wachs TD, et al. 2008. Policies to reduce undernutrition include child development. Lancet. 371(9611): 454-455.

platform on the importance of early brain development, with practical solutions and interventions that integrate into health, nutrition and community-based programs.

Building Brains provides simple guidance on early stimulation, brain development and holistic wellbeing built on the latest neuroscience and evidence-based practices to offer the youngest children a strong start in life.



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