

Best Buys for the MDGs

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Evidence in the fight against poverty

- Meeting the MDGs is a major challenge.
- Need to focus resources on anti-poverty strategies that are:
 - Practical and cost effective.
 - Based on rigorous evidence.
- Scientific rigor of randomized trials used to test anti-poverty strategies.
- Today's focus is on 7 highly effective anti-poverty programs, or “best buys” for the MDGs.

In-School Deworming

- Many reasons for children not to be in schools but addressing their health can be a cheap, effective and easy way to improve attendance.
- 400 million children infected with intestinal worms, causing them to be anemia and tired.
- Sick children skip school more often.
- School-based mass deworming costs 50 cents per child per year and increases attendance by 1/6 of a school year (about 30 days annually).
- Kenya launched national deworming program to treat 3.6 million children.

Goal 1: Extreme poverty and hunger

- Halve proportion whose income is less than \$1 a day.
- Halve proportion who suffer from hunger.

Goal 2: Universal primary education

- Ensure boys and girls complete a full course of primary education.

Goal 3: Gender equality

- Eliminate gender disparity.

Goal 4: Child mortality

- Reduce under-five mortality.

Goal 6: HIV, malaria, other diseases

- Halt spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Halt spread of malaria.

Goal 7: Sustainability

- Halve proportion without safe drinking water.

Basic Learning

- Primary school enrollment is rising but learning remains a challenge.
- Poor children often lack school preparedness and quickly fall behind. Unable to read and write in 3rd grade they gain little from school attendance.
- Simple remedial education focusing on basic skills is very effective:
 - Everyone could recognize letters.
 - 98 percent could read short story.
- Costs at most \$2.25 per child per year.
- More than 20 million children in India have benefitted from program already.

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Free bednets

- Large social benefits from use of insecticide treated bednets. WHO advocates free bednets.
- Proponents of user fees suggest charging helps ensure bednets get to those who need them and will use them.
- Evidence shows it simply excludes the poor and does not promote usage.
 - Coverage drop by 75percent with small user fees.
 - 90% of free or bought bednets are used.
 - \$200-300 per child life saved.
- ITN cost \$5.

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Quotas for women

- Women are highly under-represented in political structures.
- Reserving positions for them costs practically nothing. Yet, it boosts female political participation and spending on women's priorities, such as clean water.
- Voters systematically underrate successes of women politicians.
- Exposure to women politicians eliminates bias against them.

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Sugar Daddies

- 4 million people are newly infected with HIV yearly (UNAIDS).
- Youth are “window of hope” in fight against HIV/AIDS but many programs targeted at youth have had disappointing results.
- Unprotected sex with men in their 20s (or older) is a key driver of HIV pandemic amongst young girls.
- Information on relative risk of HIV transmission from older men vs. younger men:
 - Reduce teen pregnancies with older men by 65%.
 - Cost \$1 per student.

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Incentives to immunize

- Vaccines are highly cost effective and provided for free in many countries.
- Yet there are still areas with very low coverage.
- Small incentives (e.g. a bag of lentils for each shot) can dramatically increase uptake.
- By encouraging many more families to attend immunization clinics or camps, incentives can reduce the cost per child immunized.

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Smart incentives

- Simple agriculture technology have potential to dramatically increase income.
- Surprisingly low use even when farmers know the benefits.
- Smart subsidies can trigger big changes at low cost.
- Limited time offer at harvest time can be more effective than big subsidies at planting time.

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From evidence to action

- “Best buys” are effective, simple, and scalable programs. Potential for large effects if integrated into national policy and development programs.
- Evidence on programs that did not work, or where the findings were mixed, is important for learning too.
- To meet the MDGs we need to focus resources on strategies that are backed by rigorous evidence and cost effective.

Learn more:

www.povertyactionlab.org/MDG