

## Good early nutrition can make you richer

Eating nutritious food at an early age will not only ensure a source of income as an adult but also better pay, according to a study published in the current issue of The Lancet.

The study, conducted in four villages in Guatemala, found that boys who received atole, a gruel made of skimmed milk powder, sugar and vegetable protein, in the first two years of life earned on average 46 percent higher wages as adults, while boys who received atole in their first three years earned 37 percent higher wages on average. Those who first received the supplement after age three did not gain any economic benefits as adults.

Children and infants aged under seven in two of the villages were given atole, while those in other two settlements were given a placebo drink until 1977.

The research is the first to show direct evidence of the effects of early childhood nutrition programmes on adult economic productivity and incomes, said John Hoddinott, lead author of The Lancet's article and a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Until the Guatemala study, "substantial, but indirect, evidence from previous research suggested that providing infants and very young children with healthy, nutritious food is a long-term economic investment for developing countries," he told IRIN.

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