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Neurodevelopment, vision and auditory outcomes at age 2 years in offspring of participants in the 'Women First' maternal preconception nutrition randomised controlled trial

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ABSTRACT

Background Maternal nutrition in preconception and early pregnancy influences fetal growth. Evidence for effects of prenatal maternal nutrition on early child development (ECD) in low-income and middle-income countries is limited.

Objectives To examine impact of maternal nutrition supplementation initiated prior to or during pregnancy on ECD, and to examine potential association of postnatal growth with ECD domains.

Design Secondary analysis regarding the offspring of participants of a maternal multicountry, individually randomised trial.

Setting Rural Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, India and Pakistan.

Participants 667 offspring of Women First trial participants, aged 24 months.

Intervention Maternal lipid-based nutrient supplement initiated preconceptionally (arm 1, n=217), 12 weeks gestation (arm 2, n=230) or not (arm 3, n=220); intervention stopped at delivery.

Main outcome measures The INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment (INTER-NDA) cognitive, language, gross motor, fine motor, positive and negative behaviour scores; visual acuity and contrast sensitivity scores and auditory evoked response potentials (ERP). Anthropometric z-scores, family care indicators (FCI) and sociodemographic variables were examined as covariates.

Results No significant differences were detected among the intervention arms for any INTER-NDA scores across domains, vision scores or ERP potentials. After adjusting for covariates, length-for-age z-score at 24 months (LAZ_{24}), socio-economic status, maternal education and FCI significantly predicted vision and INTER-NDA scores (R^2=0.11–0.38, p<0.01).

Conclusions Prenatal maternal nutrition supplementation was not associated with any neurodevelopmental outcomes at age 2 years. Maternal education, family environment and LAZ_{24} predicted ECD. Interventions addressing multiple components of the nurturing care model may offer greatest impact on children's developmental potential.

Trial registration number NCT01883193.

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC

⇒ Improved maternal nutrition during the preconception and early gestation periods improves fetal and child growth in settings with high rates of stunting.
⇒ Poor physical growth and impairments in early child development (ECD) frequently co-exist.

WHAT THIS STUDY ADDS

⇒ Maternal nutrition supplementation initiated before and early in pregnancy and discontinued at delivery did not improve cognitive, language, gross motor, fine motor, positive and negative behaviour scores; visual acuity and contrast sensitivity scores and auditory evoked response potentials markers in children aged 2 years from Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, India and Pakistan.
⇒ Maternal education, family environment and child length at 24 months were associated with multiple ECD outcomes in these diverse settings, based on a multidomain, rapid, low-cost ECD assessment tool designed for low-resource settings.

HOW THIS STUDY MIGHT AFFECT RESEARCH, PRACTICE OR POLICY

⇒ Our study emphasises that a single nutritional strategy, that is, preconception and prenatal maternal nutrition supplementation, is insufficient to demonstrate positive gains in young children's development.
⇒ Rather, a multisectoral approach is needed to maximise opportunities to improve children's early development.

INTRODUCTION

The first 1000 days of life are a well-established critical window of opportunity for improving child growth and development.[1–3] While numerous early life exposures (ELEs) are associated with delays in early childhood development (ECD),[4] four key

risk factors (stunting, iodine deficiency, iron deficiency anaemia and inadequate cognitive stimulation) have been identified by the *Lancet*'s International Child Development Steering Group as urgent needs for intervention globally.[3] Three of these relate specifically to maternal and child nutrition.[3]

Evidence from both preclinical and human studies indicate that preconception or periconception maternal nutritional status influence fetal growth and development, with life course effects on health and neurocognitive function.[5] Strong associations between intrauterine and extrauterine growth, and ECD, have been demonstrated across disparate populations,[6 7] so that, in some comparisons, childhood stunting is considered a proxy for neurodevelopmental risk.[6] Undernutrition during early life may, therefore, be considered to be a potentially preventable cause of ECD delay. This presents a strong theoretical rationale for the initiation of maternal nutrition supplements prior to conception, to correct both maternal underweight and micronutrient deficiencies before and during sensitive periods of fetal brain development. Preconception and early pregnancy maternal nutritional supplementation are reported to improve birth outcomes and postnatal linear growth, but understanding of its impact on ECD remains limited.[8]

The 'Women First' Preconception Maternal Nutrition Trial (WF) was undertaken in four countries with high rates of childhood stunting.[9] The trial resulted in significant improvements in birth length-for-age z-scores (LAZ), early postnatal growth and linear growth trajectories from birth to 24 months in the offspring of women who received nutritional supplementation initiated preconceptionally (arm 1) or at approximately 12 weeks gestation (arm 2) compared with no supplement (arm 3).[8–10] WF is the first multicountry randomised controlled trial (RCT) to (i) examine associations between preconception maternal nutrition and ECD outcomes in four geographically and culturally disparate low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) populations; (ii) measure neurocognitive outcomes using a comprehensive, rapid, low-cost ECD assessment (INTERGROWTH-21st Project Neurodevelopment Assessment (INTER-NDA))[4]; (iii) categorise ECD delay based on prescriptive, international standards rather than population-specific references; and (iv) include measurements of vision and cortical auditory processing.

In the present study, we compared multiple domains of neurodevelopment at age 2 years in a randomly selected subset of children in each WF intervention arm. Our aims were to (1) examine associations between WF intervention arm and ECD outcomes and (2) determine which, if any, ELE predict ECD outcomes at age 2. Our a priori trial hypothesis was that the gains previously reported for postnatal growth would be associated with gains in ECD scores at 2 years among the offspring of mothers who received nutritional supplementation.

METHODS

Study design

This analysis included prospectively planned neurodevelopmental testing and anthropometry on live-born infants of WF participants. For this report, these outcomes were obtained on a randomly selected subset of the infants, representing approximately one-third of the WF offspring, evenly distributed across intervention arms and research sites. The remaining offspring were evaluated with the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (Pearson, San Antonio, Texas, USA).[11]

The primary WF trial was a multisite, individually randomised clinical trial of a daily 22-micronutrient fortified small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplement formulated for pregnancy (Nutriset, Malauney, France; online supplemental material S1). The supplement was initiated at randomisation with continuation for ≥3 months (average ~9 months) before conception through delivery (arm 1), vs initiation of the same supplement late in the first trimester of pregnancy and continued through delivery (arm 2), vs no trial supplement (arm 3).[12] Additionally, women in arms 1 and 2 who were underweight or had inadequate gestational weight gain were provided a balanced protein-energy lipid-based supplement (without additional micronutrients). No postnatal interventions were offered. Details on the trial's protocol and follow-up procedures have been previously published.[8 10 12]

Setting

The study sites were rural communities in India (Belagavi, Karnataka), Pakistan (Thatta, Sindh), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, Sud-Ubangi) and Guatemala (Chimaltenango).[12]

Participants and eligibility

Eligible participants for the primary WF trial were identified through the NICHD Global Network (GN) Maternal and Newborn Health Registry, household surveys and community meetings at each site.[9 12] Infants who completed the birth, 6-month and at least two of the three 12–24 months follow-up visits were assessed for ECD outcomes at 24 months between August 2016 and March 2019.

Enrolment and randomisation

The central data coordinating centre (RTI International, Durham, North Carolina, USA) created the initial randomisation scheme, which included a permuted block design stratified by GN with a trial arm allocation ratio of 1:1:1 within blocks.[9 12] Random assignment to neurodevelopment assessment was made before the 24-month visit and included approximately one-third of infants, evenly distributed across arms and sites.

Follow-up and ECD outcomes

Anthropometric measurements (weight, length and head circumference) were performed on children at 0 (birth), 6, 12, 18 and 24 months according to standardised procedures by trained research team members in the home or clinical environment (online supplemental material S2).[10] Demographic, medical and perinatal information was collected at birth.[9] Using WHO Child Growth Standards,[13] z-scores, accounting for sex and age at time of measurement, were determined for length-for-age (LAZ), weight-for-age (WAZ) and head circumference-for-age (HCAZ). Home environments were assessed with family care indicator (FCI) Questionnaire at 24 months (online supplemental material S2).[14] Assessors were blinded to the original randomisation assignment.

A holistic approach to ECD measurement, involving multiple outcomes, was undertaken at 24 months as follows:

1. *Neurocognitive development:* cognitive, language, fine and gross motor, positive and negative behaviour scores and corresponding risks of delay were measured on INTER-NDA . The INTER-NDA is an international, psychometrically valid, standardised, ECD assessment whose norms (online supplemental file 1) are international ECD standards, constructed according to WHO's prescriptive guidelines.[4]
2. *Vision:* visual acuity (VA; measured in Logarithm of Minimum Angle of Resolution) and contrast sensitivity (CS; %) were assessed using Cardiff tests (PA Vision, UK).[15 16]
3. *Cortical auditory processing:* amplitudes and latencies of auditory evoked response potentials (CA-ERPs) to three types

of auditory stimuli (frequent, infrequent and novel) were measured for three ERP components (P1, N2 and P3a waves) using the 'novelty oddball' ERP task[17] (online supplemental material S4).

The administrative protocols for the ECD assessments are available at: https://www.intergrowth21.org.uk.

Sample size estimations and power calculations

Allowing for multiple comparisons (arm 1 vs arm 2 and arm 1 vs arm 3, within each site; total of 8 comparisons), a conservative sample size of 44 children/arm/site (combined site total of 176/arm) would have allowed detection of a statistically significant mean difference of 1.3 (1.5) or greater with 80% (90%) power (assuming two-sided test with overall 5% type I error). The actual number of infants who survived, were retained for follow-up, and were consented to the INTER-NDA assessment was greater than initial estimates, and included >200 children per arm (combined site).

Statistical methods

Statistical analysis was performed in SPSS V.25.0 (IBM, Armonk, New York, USA). Prenatal, perinatal and postnatal characteristics were compared between arms and for children completing the ECD assessment and those lost to follow-up.

The distributions of ECD outcomes were inspected visually. ERP data were normally distributed; INTER-NDA and vision data were not. No transformation was identified that suited the latter; therefore, we used non-parametric tests (Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)) to compare outcomes among arms. ANOVAs were used for ERP comparisons (effect sizes as eta-squared (η^2)). Proportions of ECD delays between arms were compared using χ^2 tests (effect sizes as Cramer's V).

As ELEs were normally distributed, covariate analyses were undertaken to determine if any ELEs were associated (independently of maternal intervention arm) with ECD outcomes using correlations, followed by independent sample t-tests for associations identified as significant. Effect sizes were quantified using Cohen's d and 95% CIs.[18] We used generalised linear regression analysis, adjusting for child sex and age at measurement, to determine exposures that predicted ECD outcomes at 2 years independent of other ELEs. Generalised linear models were selected for their utility when outcome variables (INTER-NDA and vision outcomes) were not normally distributed or when the relationship between the exposure (ELEs) and outcome was non-linear.

RESULTS

Of the 730 children eligible for testing at 2 years, complete INTER-NDA data were obtained for 667 children (91.4% of eligible population), vision data for 613 children (83.9%) and ERP data of sufficient quality for analysis for 123 children (16.8%) (figure 1). Across ECD outcomes, the mean proportional contribution by study arm and site were well balanced (online supplemental material S5).

Characteristics of study population

Prenatal, perinatal and postnatal characteristics of the ECD cohort are presented in table 1. The mean (±SD) age at assessment was 24.6 months (±0.94), with 48% (n=323) male. Mean

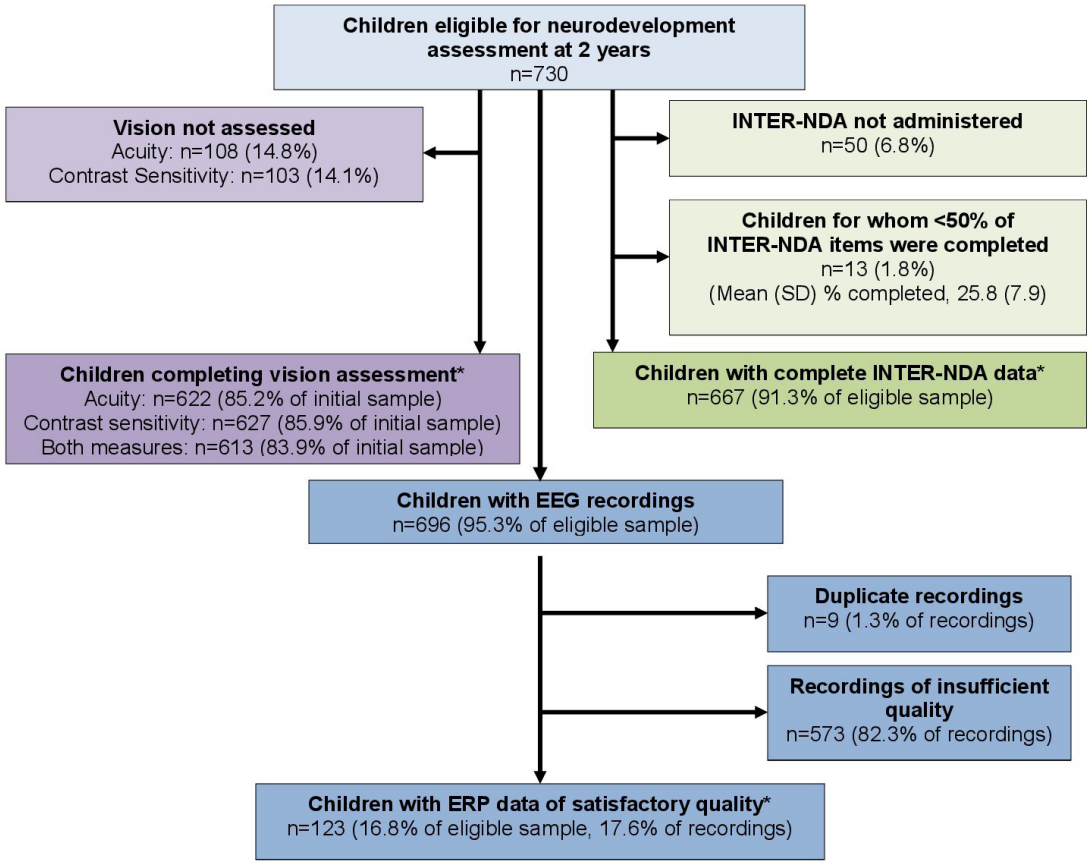

Figure 1 Participant flow. Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials diagram. EEG, electroencephalogram; ERP, auditory evoked response potential; INTER-NDA, INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment. *Sample included in analyses.

Table 1 Sample characteristics

	Pooled cohort (n=667)	Arm 1 (n=217)	Arm 2 (n=230)	Arm 3 (n=220)	Unadjusted pairwise arm comparisons
Age at INTER-NDA assessment, month	24.6±0.9	24.4±0.8	24.4±0.8	24.±0.6	F=0.15, p=0.86
Perinatal characteristics					
Female	344 (51.6)	110 (50.7)	126 (54.8)	108 (49.1)	χ^2=1.56, p=0.46
Male	323 (48.4)	107 (49.3)	104 (45.2)	112 (50.9)	
Maternal age at birth, years	23.3±4.1	23.0±4.0	23.3±4.3	23.4±3.7	F=0.06, p=0.94
Parity					
Nulliparous	135 (20.2)	53 (24.4)	43 (18.7)	39 (17.7)	χ^2=12.76, p=0.24
1	190 (28.5)	63 (29.0)	62 (27.0)	65 (29.5)	
2	159 (23.8)	43 (19.8)	58 (25.2)	58 (26.4)	
3	78 (11.7)	21 (9.7)	30 (13.0)	27 (12.3)	
4	55 (8.2)	19 (8.8)	23 (10.0)	13 (5.9)	
5	28 (4.2)	10 (4.6)	5 (2.2)	13 (5.9)	
Missing	22 (3.3)	8 (3.7)	9 (3.9)	5 (2.7)	
Gestational age* at birth, week	39.2±4.2	39.1±2.2	39.2±1.5	39.4±7.0	F=0.25, p=0.78
Delivery Mode					
Normal	560 (84.0)	178 (82.0)	195 (84.8)	187 (85.0)	χ^2=3.93, p=0.42
Assisted†	6 (0.9)	3 (1.4)	0 (0)	3 (1.4)	
Caesarean section‡	101 (15.1)	36 (16.6)	35 (15.2)	30 (13.6)	
Postnatal health and growth					
Number of children admitted to hospital for ≥3 days in the first 2 years of life	45 (6.7)	19 (8.8)	14 (6.1)	12 (5.5)	χ^2=0.83, p=0.66
Breast fed at 6 months	663 (99.4)	216 (99.5)	227 (98.7)	220 (100.0)	χ^2=3.32, p=0.19
WAZ_{birth}	−1.11±0.92	−1.08±0.93	−1.09±0.92	−1.14±0.91	F=0.23, p=0.79
LAZ_{birth}	−1.06±1.10	−0.94±1.17	−1.07±1.04	−1.15±1.03	F=2.00, p=0.14
$HCAZ_{birth}$	−0.79±1.09	−0.74±1.10	−0.83±1.06	−0.78±1.10	F=0.37, p=0.69
WAZ_{12}	−1.50±1.19	−1.43±1.19	−1.55±1.17	−1.51±1.20	F=0.56, p=0.57
LAZ_{12}	−1.90±1.17	−1.80±1.13	−1.95±1.27	−1.96±1.10	F=1.30, p=0.27
$HCAZ_{12}$	−1.18±1.08	−1.19±1.10	−1.23±1.04	−1.11±1.11	F=0.73, p=0.49
WAZ_{24}	−1.76±1.11	−1.71±1.14	−1.81±1.08	−1.76±1.10	F=0.51, p=0.60
LAZ_{24}	−2.38±1.15	−2.30±1.13	−2.46±1.16	−2.39±1.15	F=1.03, p=0.36
$HCAZ_{24}$	−1.22±1.03	−1.26±1.08	−1.23±0.99	−1.18±1.01	F=0.28, p=0.76
Family environment					
Maternal education, years	4.5±4.2	4.6±4.5	4.7±4.1	4.2±4.0	F=0.47, p=0.62
Socio-economic status§	4.4±2.9	4.4±2.9	4.7±2.9	4.3±2.7	F=0.92, p=0.40
FCI: play activities§	5.5±2.0	5.5±2.1	5.6±1.8	5.4±1.9	F=0.32, p=0.73
FCI: varieties of play materials¶	4.4±1.7	4.4±1.6	4.4±1.7	4.3±1.7	F=0.71, p=0.49
FCI: sources of play materials¶	2.4±0.7	2.4±0.7	2.4±0.7	2.4±0.7	F=0.03, p=0.97
FCI: household books¶	0.3±0.8	0.4±0.9	0.3±0.7	0.3±0.8	F=0.47, p=0.63

Date presented as mean±SD or n (%).
Arm 1: preconception intervention; arm 2: prenatal intervention; arm 3: no intervention.
*Gestational age data not available for Democratic Republic of the Congo.
†Ventouse or forceps-assisted delivery.
‡Emergency or elective caesarean section.
§Socio-economic status tally provides the number of indicators available from the following list: electricity, improved water source, sanitation, synthetic flooring, improved cooking fuels, transportation and household assets.
¶Assessed at 24 months.
F, analysis of variance test statistic; FCI, family care indicators; $HCAZ_{birth}$, $HCAZ_{12}$, $HCAZ_{24}$, WHO z-scores for head circumference at birth, 12 and 24 months; INTER-NDA, INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment; LAZ_{birth}, LAZ_{12}, LAZ_{24}, WHO z-scores for length at birth, 12 and 24 months; WAZ_{birth}, WAZ_{12}, WAZ_{24}, WHO z-scores for weight at birth, 12 and 24 months.

maternal education was 4.5 years (±4.2) and 31.9% of the cohort met criteria for low socio-economic status (SES). Forty-five children (6.7%) spent ≥3 days in hospital during the first 2 years, and >99% were breast fed at 6 months.

Comparisons in ECD outcomes between study arms

The associations between ECD outcomes and study arm are presented in table 2. No differences in INTER-NDA, vision and ERP outcomes were detected among treatment arms.

Overall, high rates of cognitive and motor delays and negative behaviour problems were reported: 246 (36.9%), 506 (75.9%) and 379 (56.2%) children, respectively, scored in the INTER-NDA's range for severe delays in these domains; 444 (66.6%), 609 (91.3%) and 615 (92.2%) children scored in the range for *any* delay (table 2). Low VA and CS were reported in 24.0% and 19.3% of the cohort. Delays and behaviours did not consistently differ by maternal intervention arm.

Associations between ECD outcomes and early life exposures

After adjusting for infant sex, age at ECD assessment and multiple covariates (table 3), LAZ at 24 months was the only anthropometric variable that was significantly associated with ECD, including VA, gross motor, language (p<0.001 for all) and positive behaviour (p=0.01). Among other ELEs, maternal education was positively associated with vision, cognition, fine motor and language (p<0.001 for all); FCI (play activities) was associated with language (p<0.001) and SES was marginally

Table 2 All sites unadjusted treatment effects for ECD outcomes at 24 months of age

ECD outcome		Pooled cohort (n=667)	Arm 1 (n=217)	Arm 2 (n=230)	Arm 3 (n=220)	Unadjusted pairwise arm comparisons
INTER-NDA domain scores*, median (IQR)						
Cognitive		30.77 (23.10)	30.77 (25.60)	30.77 (20.50)	36.59 (23.10)	H=1.65, p=0.44 η^2<0.001
Language		50.00 (41.70)	47.22 (41.70)	47.22 (38.90)	51.52 (41.70)	H=2.82, p=0.24 η^2<0.001
Fine motor		11.11 (16.70)	11.11 (16.70)	11.11 (22.20)	11.11 (16.70)	H=0.09, p=0.96 η^2<0.001
Gross motor		11.11 (22.20)	11.11 (22.20)	22.22 (22.20)	22.22 (33.30)	H=0.54, p=0.76 η^2<0.001
Positive behaviour		90.00 (50.00)	100.00 (40.00)	100.00 (50.00)	90.00 (50.00)	H=5.05, p=0.08 η^2=0.004
Negative behaviour		100.00 (25.00)	100.00 (25.00)	100.00 (25.00)	100.00 (50.00)	H=3.44, p=0.18 η^2=0.002
Risk of severe delay/problems†¶, n (%)						
Cognitive		246 (36.9)	89 (41.0)	82 (35.6)	75 (34.1)	χ^2=3.81, p=0.43 Cramer's V=0.05
Language		37 (5.6)	17 (7.8)	9 (3.9)	11 (5.0)	χ^2=3.95, p=0.41 Cramer's V=0.06
Fine motor		506 (75.9)	164 (75.6)	170 (73.9)	172 (78.2)	χ^2=3.98, p=0.41 Cramer's V=0.06
Gross motor		506 (75.9)	166 (76.5)	178 (77.4)	162 (73.6)	χ^2=4.11, p=0.39 Cramer's V=0.06
Positive behaviour		49 (7.4)	15 (6.9)	18 (7.8)	16 (7.3)	χ^2=6.33, p=0.18 Cramer's V=0.07
Negative behaviour		379 (56.8)	136 (62.7)	123 (53.5)	120 (54.6)	χ^2=5.92, p=0.21 Cramer's V=0.07
Risk of *any* delay/problems‡**, n (%)						
Cognitive		444 (66.6)	150 (69.1)	156 (67.8)	138 (62.7)	χ^2=2.26, p=0.32 Cramer's V=0.06
Language		78 (11.7)	30 (13.8)	21 (9.1)	27 (12.3)	χ^2=2.49, p=0.29 Cramer's V=0.06
Fine motor		583 (87.4)	191 (88.0)	202 (87.8)	190 (86.4)	χ^2=0.33, p=0.85 Cramer's V=0.02
Gross motor		609 (91.3)	195 (89.9)	210 (91.3)	204 (92.7)	χ^2=1.13, p=0.56 Cramer's V=0.04
Positive behaviour		173 (25.9)	47 (21.7)	58 (25.2)	68 (30.9)	χ^2=4.96, p=0.08 Cramer's V=0.09
Negative behaviour		615 (92.2)	202 (93.1)	214 (93.0)	199 (90.5)	χ^2=1.40, p=0.50, Cramer's V=0.05
Vision, median (IQR)		(n=613)	(n=206)	(n=205)	(n=202)	
Visual acuity (logMar)		0.40 (0.20)	0.30 (0.20)	0.40 (0.30)	0.40 (0.10)	H=0.33, p=0.85 η^2=0.002
Contrast sensitivity (%)		3.00 (1.00)	3.00 (1.50)	3.00 (1.00)	3.00 (1.00)	H=0.11, p=0.95 η^2=0.003
Risk of low vision, n (%)						
Visual acuity		160 (24.0)	53 (24.4)	58 (25.2)	49 (22.3)	χ^2=0.70, p=0.71 Cramer's V=0.03
Contrast sensitivity		129 (19.3)	46 (21.2)	46 (20.0)	37 (16.8)	χ^2=1.54, p=0.46 Cramer's V=0.05
Cortical auditory ERPs: peak amplitudes (in µV)§, median (IQR)						
		(n=123)	(n=39)	(n=39)	(n=45)	
P1	Frequent	4.65 (4.36)	4.63 (3.84)	4.77 (4.68)	4.05 (3.18)	F=0.39, p=0.67 η^2=0.007
	Infrequent	3.57 (2.27)	3.29 (2.55)	3.96 (2.31)	3.56 (1.93)	F=0.89, p=0.41 η^2=0.015
	Novel	3.74 (2.55)	3.48 (3.07)	3.78 (2.25)	3.85 (2.30)	F=0.23, p=0.79 η^2=0.004
N2	Frequent	4.30 (8.67)	3.31 (3.24)	3.19 (2.20)	4.14 (3.53)	F=1.20, p=0.30 η^2=0.02
	Infrequent	2.81 (1.94)	3.34 (2.00)	2.39 (1.59)	2.62 (2.01)	F=2.69, p=0.07 η^2=0.04
	Novel	2.74 (1.98)	2.48 (2.06)	3.12 (1.30)	2.64 (2.38)	F=1.10, p=0.34 η^2=0.04

Continued

Table 2 Continued

ECD outcome		Pooled cohort (n=667)	Arm 1 (n=217)	Arm 2 (n=230)	Arm 3 (n=220)	Unadjusted pairwise arm comparisons
P3a	Frequent	3.68 (3.28)	3.52 (2.28)	3.90 (3.21)	3.09 (1.74)	F=1.14, p=0.32 η^2=0.02
	Infrequent	2.93 (1.58)	2.65 (1.43)	2.98 (1.64)	3.14 (1.60)	F=1.06, p=0.35 η^2=0.02
	Novel	2.82 (1.70)	3.03 (1.81)	2.64 (1.52)	2.77 (1.78)	F=0.53, p=0.59 η^2=0.009
Cortical auditory ERPs: latencies (in ms)§, median (IQR)						
P1	Frequent	180.73 (37.92)	183.42 (39.22)	181.26 (36.18)	176.23 (37.59)	F=0.40, p=0.67 η^2=0.007
	Infrequent	182.59 (34.01)	181.35 (33.42)	181.05 (32.70)	185.27 (36.57)	F=0.20, p=0.82 η^2=0.003
	Novel	190.16 (34.96)	189.59 (35.13)	181.97 (31.83)	197.65 (36.87)	F=2.11, p=0.13 η^2=0.034
N2	Frequent	294.29 (26.86)	293.13 (30.03)	291.14 (25.69)	297.40 (24.98)	F=0.59, p=0.55 η^2=0.01
	Infrequent	297.78 (30.60)	293.78 (33.91)	304.27 (27.89)	296.23 (29.62)	F=1.27, p=0.29 η^2=0.02
	Novel	298.60 (32.33)	293.89 (31.79)	294.22 (33.51)	306.90 (31.14)	F=2.25, p=0.11 η^2=0.04
P3a	Frequent	389.33 (32.07)	389.86 (36.77)	387.42 (29.82)	390.45 (30.54)	F=0.09, p=0.91 η^2=0.002
	Infrequent	389.32 (34.14)	396.31 (35.55)	392.44 (33.87)	380.08 (32.14)	F=2.64, p=0.08 η^2=0.04
	Novel	387.57 (34.31)	381.68 (34.26)	394.94 (33.71)	386.03 (34.81)	F=1.52, p=0.22 η^2=0.03

Arm 1: preconception intervention; arm 2: prenatal intervention; arm 3: no intervention.
*For all INTER-NDA outcomes, except negative behaviour, higher scores reflect better outcomes.
†For all INTER-NDA outcomes, except negative behaviour, high and *any* risk of delay are defined as domain scores ≤3rd and ≤10th centiles on the INTER-NDA standards, respectively. For negative behaviour, high and *any* risk of problems are defined as domain scores ≥97th and ≥90th centiles on the INTER-NDA standards, respectively.
‡For all INTER-NDA outcomes, except negative behaviour, mild-to-moderate risk of delay is defined as domain scores between the 3rd and 10th centiles on the INTER-NDA standards. For negative behaviour, mild-to-moderate risk of delay is defined as domain scores between the 90th and 97th centiles on the INTER-NDA standards.
§ERP values presented are averaged across the four temporal electrodes (T3–T6).
¶Comparisons made between arms for children with no delay versus mild-to-moderate delay versus severe delay.
**Comparisons made between arms for children with any delay versus no delay. η^2=eta square.
ECD, early child development; ERP, evoked response potentials; INTER-NDA, INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment; logMar, logarithm of the minimum angle of resolution.

associated with cognition, fine motor and positive behaviour ($p<0.05$).

Correlations between ECD outcomes and ELEs are presented in online supplemental material S6. Anthropometry z-scores (length, weight and head circumference), SES and play activities (FCI) were positively correlated with all vision and INTER-NDA outcomes. Only 3% (n=11/360) of associations between ERP outcomes and ELEs studied were significant, with no clear pattern of association detected; hence, further analyses were not undertaken. Comparisons of ELEs in children with low vision, and *any* INTER-NDA delay, are presented in online supplemental material S7. Higher maternal age at birth, lower anthropometry z-scores and lower SES, FCI and years of maternal schooling were associated with low VA and CS scores. Effect sizes were small to moderate for all associations (d=0.20–0.45) except for maternal schooling (d=0.99).

Lower anthropometry z-scores at all time points were associated with cognitive delay with moderate effect sizes (d=0.3–0.7). Lower LAZ_{24} and FCI were significantly associated with delays across all INTER-NDA domains. Lower $LAZ_{12,}$ $WAZ_{12\&24}$ and $HCAZ_{12}$ were also significantly associated with delays across all INTER-NDA domains except behaviour problems. Where domains were associated with serial growth measurements, effect sizes increased as children aged. For example, for cognitive delay, LAZ effect sizes were 0.31, 0.56 and 0.69 at 0, 12 and 24 months, respectively. Similar patterns were observed for weight, and for gross motor, fine motor and language delays (online supplemental material S7).

DISCUSSION

To our knowledge, this is the first multicentre RCT to examine the effect of preconception maternal nutrition supplementation on comprehensive ECD outcomes using a standardised ECD measure developed specifically for LMICs. Our key finding was that the benefits of the maternal intervention previously reported for fetal[9] and postnatal growth[8] did not extend to gains in ECD scores or to reduced rates of ECD delays at 2 years among the offspring of mothers who received nutritional supplementation. Linear growth status at 24 months was a significant predictor of scores in several domains, including vision (VA), language, gross motor and positive behaviour. Additionally, indicators of family environment (play activities and play materials) and SES predicted several ECD scores, although differential associations existed between these and ECD domains. Notably, maternal education was a consistent and potent predictor for several domain scores, including vision (VA and CS), cognitive, language and fine motor. High rates of cognitive and motor delays and negative behaviours were observed, as expected in low-resource populations with rates of child stunting≥60%[19 20]; delayed ECD and stunting share many drivers.

Our findings differ only slightly from those of the preconceptual micronutrient supplementation trial (PRECONCEPT) from Vietnam, the only other RCT to report the effects of preconception maternal supplementation on child growth and ECD.[21] PRECONCEPT reported small group differences favouring preconception iron-folate supplementation for fine motor development (effect size 1.3 SD; 95% CI 0.05 to 0.77), but not for

Table 3 Adjusted comparisons: early life exposures as predictors of ECD outcomes at 24 months of age

ECD outcome		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients			95% CI	
		Beta	SE	Beta	t	P value	Lower bound	Upper bound
Visual acuity (n=622)								
	Constant	0.34	0.31		1.11	0.27	−0.26	0.95
	Sex	−0.01	0.01	−0.06	−1.26	0.21	−0.04	0.01
	Age at ECD assessment, months	−0.02	0.01	−0.09	2.18	0.03*	−0.03	0.00
	Maternal age at birth, years	0.00	0.00	−0.07	1.46	0.15	0.00	0.01
	Parity	0.00	0.00	0.02	−0.34	0.73	−0.01	0.01
	Gestational age at birth, weeks	0.00	0.00	−0.06	−1.48	0.14	0.00	0.00
	LAZ_{12}	−0.01	0.00	−0.15	1.57	0.12	0.00	0.01
	LAZ_{24}**	−0.01	0.00	−0.31	−2.94	<0.001**	−0.02	0.00
	WAZ_{12}	0.00	0.01	−0.02	−0.20	0.84	−0.02	0.02
	WAZ_{24}	−0.01	0.01	−0.12	1.18	0.24	−0.01	0.03
	$HCAZ_{birth}$	0.00	0.01	−0.05	0.90	0.37	−0.01	0.01
	$HCAZ_{12}$	−0.01	0.01	−0.16	−1.58	0.11	−0.03	0.00
	$HCAZ_{24}$	−0.01	0.01	−0.12	1.19	0.24	−0.01	0.03
	SES	0.00	0.00	−0.03	−0.56	0.57	−0.01	0.00
	Maternal education, years	−0.01	0.00	−0.41	−7.95	<0.001**	−0.01	−0.01
	FCI: play activities	0.00	0.00	−0.01	−0.24	0.81	−0.01	0.01
	FCI: household books	0.00	0.01	−0.02	−0.37	0.71	−0.02	0.01
Contrast sensitivity (n=627)	Constant	2.70	2.36		1.14	0.26	−1.95	7.34
	Sex	−0.06	0.09	−0.03	−0.63	0.53	−0.23	0.12
	Age at ECD assessment, months	−0.05	0.05	0.04	0.86	0.39	−0.06	0.15
	Maternal age at birth, years	−0.01	0.01	0.02	0.60	0.55	−0.01	0.03
	LAZ_{birth}	−0.02	0.03	0.03	0.63	0.53	−0.04	0.07
	LAZ_{12}	−0.01	0.03	0.01	0.17	0.87	−0.06	0.07
	LAZ_{24}	−0.01	0.03	−0.04	−0.38	0.70	−0.06	0.04
	WAZ_{12}	−0.03	0.08	−0.03	−0.38	0.70	−0.20	0.13
	WAZ_{24}	−0.01	0.08	−0.01	−0.07	0.95	−0.16	0.15
	$HCAZ_{birth}$	−0.04	0.04	−0.05	−0.85	0.40	−0.12	0.05
	$HCAZ_{12}$	−0.04	0.06	−0.05	−0.63	0.53	−0.16	0.08
	HAZ_{24}	−0.05	0.06	−0.06	0.76	0.45	−0.07	0.16
	SES	−0.00	0.02	−0.01	0.10	0.92	−0.04	0.04
	Maternal education, years	−0.10	0.01	−0.40	−8.82	<0.001**	−0.12	−0.08
	FCI: varieties of play materials	−0.02	0.03	−0.02	0.47	0.64	−0.05	0.08
	FCI: play activities	−0.03	0.02	−0.05	−1.24	0.22	−0.08	0.02
	FCI: household books	−0.03	0.06	−0.02	−0.49	0.63	−0.15	0.09
Cognition (n=667)	Constant	82.66	43.42		1.90	0.06	−2.67	168.00
	Sex	−3.08	1.51	−0.09	−2.04	0.04*	−6.06	−0.11
	Age at ECD assessment, months	1.94	1.03	0.08	1.88	0.06	−0.09	3.97
	Parity	−0.52	0.56	−0.04	0.92	0.36	−0.59	1.62
	Gestational age at birth, week	0.24	0.17	0.06	−1.43	0.16	−0.09	0.44
	LAZ_{birth}	0.14	0.60	0.02	0.24	0.82	−1.04	1.33
	LAZ_{12}	0.05	0.54	0.01	0.08	0.94	−1.02	1.11
	LAZ_{24}	0.79	0.49	0.17	−1.63	0.10	−0.16	1.74
	WAZ_{birth}	1.27	3.21	0.03	0.39	0.69	−5.05	7.58
	WAZ_{12}	0.80	1.43	0.05	0.56	0.58	−2.02	3.61
	WAZ_{24}	1.09	1.37	0.08	−0.79	0.43	−3.77	1.60
	$HCAZ_{birth}$	0.63	0.76	0.05	−0.83	0.41	−2.11	0.86
	$HCAZ_{12}$	0.08	1.05	0.01	0.07	0.94	−1.98	2.13
	$HCAZ_{24}$	0.14	1.06	0.01	0.13	0.90	−1.94	2.21
	SES	0.68	0.33	0.10	−2.03	0.04*	0.02	1.34
	Maternal education, years	1.09	0.20	0.28	−5.63	<0.001*	0.71	1.48
	FCI: varieties of play materials	1.03	0.56	0.09	−1.84	0.07	0.07	2.14
	FCI: play activities	0.53	0.39	0.06	−1.36	0.18	0.24	1.29
	FCI: household books	0.32	1.03	0.01	−0.31	0.76	1.71	2.35
Fine motor (n=667)	Constant	−1.02	1.36	−0.03	−0.75	0.46	−3.70	1.66
	Sex	0.59	0.81	0.03	0.72	0.47	−1.01	2.19
	Age at ECD assessment, months	0.53	0.45	0.10	1.19	0.24	−0.35	1.41
	LAZ_{12}	0.82	0.41	0.18	−2.02	0.04*	0.02	1.62

Continued

Table 3 Continued

ECD outcome		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients			95% CI	
		Beta	SE	Beta	t	P value	Lower bound	Upper bound
	LAZ_{24}	0.00	1.31	0.00	0.00	1.00	−2.57	2.57
	WAZ_{12}	0.83	1.20	0.06	−0.69	0.49	−1.53	3.49
	WAZ_{24}	0.43	0.90	0.04	−0.47	0.64	−2.20	1.35
	$HCAZ_{12}$	0.18	0.91	0.02	0.19	0.85	−1.61	1.96
	$HCAZ_{24}$	0.12	0.28	0.02	−0.45	0.66	−0.66	0.42
	SES	1.14	0.52	0.11	−2.19	0.03*	0.12	2.16
	Maternal education, years	1.14	0.36	0.14	−3.18	<0.001**	0.44	1.83
	FCI: varieties of play materials	0.11	1.03	0.00	0.10	0.92	−1.92	2.13
	FCI: play activities	0.50	0.85	0.02	−0.59	0.56	−2.16	1.16
	FCI: sources of play materials	1.02	1.36	0.03	−0.75	0.46	−3.70	1.66
	FCI: household books	0.59	0.81	0.03	0.72	0.47	−1.01	2.19
Gross motor (n=667)	Constant	148.70	48.52		3.06	0.00	53.41	243.99
	Sex	−1.85	1.79	−0.04	−1.03	0.30	−5.37	1.67
	Age at ECD assessment, months	2.03	1.07	0.08	−1.90	0.06	−0.07	4.13
	LAZ_{birth}	0.68	0.69	0.07	0.98	0.33	−0.68	2.04
	LAZ_{12}	0.62	0.62	0.09	1.00	0.32	−0.59	1.83
	LAZ_{24}	1.71	0.54	0.29	−3.18	<0.001**	0.65	2.77
	WAZ_{birth}	6.23	3.48	0.11	−1.79	0.07	−0.59	13.62
	WAZ_{12}	0.80	1.73	0.04	0.46	0.65	−2.60	4.19
	WAZ_{24}	1.19	1.59	0.07	−0.75	0.46	−4.30	1.93
	$HCAZ_{12}$	1.15	1.19	0.08	0.96	0.34	−1.20	3.49
	$HCAZ_{24}$	0.74	1.20	0.05	−0.61	0.54	−3.09	1.62
	SES	0.34	0.36	0.05	−0.95	0.35	−1.04	0.36
	FCI: varieties of play materials	1.20	0.62	0.09	−1.95	0.05	−0.01	2.42
	FCI: play activities	0.65	0.47	0.06	−1.39	0.16	−0.27	1.57
Language (n=667)	Constant	244.77	52.44		4.67	0.00	141.71	347.82
	Sex	−7.11	1.93	−0.15	−3.69	<0.001**	−10.90	−3.32
	Age at ECD assessment, months	2.02	1.32	0.06	−1.53	0.13	−0.48	4.61
	Gestational age at birth, week	0.12	0.21	0.02	−0.58	0.57	−0.54	0.29
	LAZ_{12}	1.08	0.67	0.13	1.60	0.11	−0.25	2.40
	LAZ_{24}	2.19	0.60	0.34	−3.65	<0.001**	1.01	3.37
	WAZ_{12}	0.45	1.81	0.02	−0.25	0.80	−4.02	3.11
	WAZ_{24}	0.41	1.62	0.02	0.25	0.80	−2.77	3.58
	$HCAZ_{birth}$	0.87	0.78	0.05	−1.12	0.27	−0.66	2.40
	$HCAZ_{12}$	0.43	0.86	0.03	0.50	0.62	−1.26	2.12
	Maternal education, years	2.32	0.21	0.44	−10.82	<0.001**	1.90	2.74
	FCI: play activities	1.63	0.46	0.14	−3.52	<0.001**	0.72	2.54
	FCI: household books	2.23	1.28	0.07	−1.74	0.08	−0.29	4.75
Positive behaviour (n=667)	Constant	−27.63	43.47		−0.64	0.53	−112.99	57.73
	Sex	1.23	2.18	0.02	0.57	0.57	−3.05	5.52
	Age at ECD assessment, months	0.74	1.38	0.02	0.54	0.59	−1.96	3.45
	LAZ_{12}	0.53	0.67	0.06	−0.80	0.42	−1.84	0.77
	LAZ_{24}	1.37	0.56	0.18	2.46	0.01*	0.28	2.46
	SES	1.03	0.46	0.11	2.27	0.02*	0.14	1.93
	FCI: varieties of play materials	1.26	0.87	0.08	1.45	0.15	−0.45	2.95
	FCI: play activities	0.21	0.60	0.02	−0.34	0.73	−1.38	0.97
	FCI: sources of play materials	2.63	1.75	0.06	1.51	0.13	−0.80	6.07
Negative behaviour (n=667)	Constant	−41.72	41.55		−1.00	0.32	−123.31	39.88
	Sex	2.27	2.13	0.04	1.07	0.29	−1.91	6.45
	Age at ECD assessment, months	−2.62	1.32	−0.08	1.98	0.05	−0.02	−5.22
	LAZ_{24}	−0.61	0.30	−0.08	2.01	0.05	−0.02	−1.20
	FCI: varieties of play materials	−1.50	0.69	−0.09	2.18	0.03*	−0.15	2.85

The SES tally provides the number of indicators available from the following list: electricity, improved water source, sanitation, synthetic flooring, improved cooking fuels, transportation and household assets.
*P<0.05, **p<0.001.
ECD, early child development; F, analysis of variance test statistic; FCI, family care indicators; $HCAZ_{birth}$, $HCAZ_{12}$, $HCAZ_{24}$, WHO z-scores for head circumference at birth, 12 and 24 months; LAZ_{birth}, LAZ_{12}, LAZ_{24}, WHO z-scores for length at birth, 12 and 24 months; SES, socio-economic status; WAZ_{birth}, WAZ_{12}, WAZ_{24}, WHO z-scores for weight at birth, 12 and 24 months.

other ECD domains at 2 years, or for any ECD outcomes at 1 year, despite gains in LAZ and lower rates of stunting at 2 years.[21] A prenatal and postnatal maternal multiple micronutrient supplement (MMS) trial from Bangladesh found no impact of maternal supplementation on children's cognitive and motor scores at 2 years.[22] Likewise, a meta-analysis of prenatal MMS trials from LMICs (88 057 women) concluded that prenatal MMS did not lead to a consistent cognitive benefit for children.[23]

It is not clear why previously reported early gains in length and weight following maternal supplementation are not consistently associated with ECD benefits for children.[21 23 24] One reason may be because extant maternal supplementation trials were powered to detect differences in child growth and that larger sample sizes are required to detect differences in ECD outcomes.[23] It is also possible that ECD measures developed for high-income countries may not be sensitive indicators for LMICs.[25] Nevertheless, in our study, even with the use of the INTER-NDA designed specifically for LMICs, we did not detect treatment effects. Some ECD effects may remain latent and manifest at older ages.[21] Additionally, as a screening tool, the INTER-NDA is not intended to detect subtle differences. Although in the WF trial maternal supplementation was associated with improved fetal[9] and postnatal growth,[10] multiple critical aspects of neurological maturation occur postnatally and are influenced by environmental factors, many of which differ among settings.[26] Finally, although poor compliance with the maternal intervention could theoretically explain the lack of ECD differences between arms, overall compliance was ≥80%.[9] The improved birth and postnatal anthropometry reported for both intervention arms (compared with controls) make this explanation unlikely.

Our findings of the associations between general family environment, particularly maternal education and SES, the provision of stimulating environments (as assessed by FCI) and better ECD outcomes are consistent with previous reports[27–29] and emphasise the importance of socio-environmental determinants in addition to biomedical determinants on long-term neurodevelopment.[30 31]

Key strengths of our study are the multicentre design in low-resource populations from four geographically and culturally distinct LMICs; incorporation of measures of vision and cortical auditory processing in ECD measurements; the use of the INTER-NDA and its international ECD standards and our adoption of a LMIC-centric approach to assessment (viz, low cost, rapid assessment time and non-reliance on specialists for administration).

Study limitations include sample size that was insufficient for intersite comparisons within arms. The diverse sites' heterogeneity[20] may have masked treatment-arm effects. The number of auditory ERP assessments of suitable quality for analyses was small due to the technical challenges of collecting high-quality recordings in these field conditions. Our experience emphasises the need for more refined, low-cost tools suitable for large-scale implementation in field settings.

CONCLUSION

In our study, maternal nutrition supplementation initiated either before or early in pregnancy and discontinued at delivery did not improve cognitive, language, gross motor, fine motor, positive or negative behaviour scores; VA or CS scores; or auditory ERP markers in children aged 2 years from diverse low-resource settings. These findings emphasise that a maternal nutritional intervention strategy alone was insufficient to demonstrate positive gains in young children's development. Rather, multiple socio-environmental factors, including family environment, maternal education and children's postnatal linear growth, were positively associated with ECD outcomes.

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Contributors NFK, MF and MH conceived and designed the study; MF, NFK and JW wrote the final protocol in collaboration with all members of the trial group (AT, AL, MB, ALG, LF, SS, SAA, RLG, SSG, SMD, RJD, MK-T, AS, EMMcC and members of the Women First Preconception Nutrition Trial Group listed above); MF provided expert training to research assessors in each site; AT, AL, ALG, LF, SS, SAA, SSG and SMD coordinated implementation of the study at the country level; NFK, CLB, RLG and RJD provided overall supervision of study conduct; AA, GG, MLA, ZA, SA, SF, SM, RK, CG, MG, PZ, PF and JE performed developmental assessments; MF and NFK drafted the manuscript with critical input from all authors for subsequent revisions; JFK supported data base management and statistical analyses; MF, AS, EMMcC, DC, VRT and AD provided statistical analyses. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript. NFK acts as guarantor for the manuscript.

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Supplemental Information

S1 Table: Nutrient content of lipid-based micro-nutrient supplement (SQ-LNS).

S2 Figure: Study Design & Follow-up.

S3 Table: INTER-NDA thresholds for delay according to the INTERGROWTH-21st Project International INTER-NDA standards for child development at two years of age.

S4 Supporting Information: Auditory Cortical Evoked Response Potentials experiment protocol.

S5 Table: Proportional contribution of study site and arm to Early Child Development outcomes at the 2-year follow-up.

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S7 Table: Comparisons of Early Life Exposures between children with delay/low vision and without delay/low vision.

S1 Nutrient content of lipid-based micro-nutrient supplement (SQ-LNS).

Nutrient	**Amount**
Energy, kcal	118
Protein, g	2.6
Fat, g	10
Linoleic acid, g	4.6
A-Linolenic acid, g	0.6
Calcium, mg	280
Copper, mg	4
Folate, µg	400
Iodine, µg	250
Iron, mg	20
Magnesium, mg	65
Manganese, mg	2.6
Niacin, mg	36
Pantothenic acid (B5), mg	7
Phosphorus, mg	190
Potassium, mg	200
Riboflavin (B2), mg	2.8
Selenium, µg	130
Thiamine (B1), mg	2.8
Vitamin A, µg	800
Vitamin B12, µg	5.2
Vitamin B6, mg	3.8
Vitamin C, mg	100
Vitamin D2, IU	1000
Vitamin E, mg	20
Vitamin K, µg	45
Zinc, mg	15
Total daily dose	**20 g**

Source: Hambidge, K.M., Krebs, N.F., Westcott, J.E. *et al.* Preconception maternal nutrition: a multi-site randomized controlled trial. *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth* **14,** 111 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2393-14-11.

S2 Study Design & Follow-up.

Timeline ▶	Preconceptional period	Prenatal period	0 (Birth)		12 months	24 months			
Arm ▼	Maternal supplementation	Maternal supplementation n	Birth & health outcomes	Weight, length & HC	Weight, length & HC	Weight, length & HC	Family care indicators	ECD assessment: INTER-NDA, vision, CA-ERPs	Health outcomes
1									
2									
3									

ECD: Early child development; INTER-NDA: The INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment; CA-ERPs: Cortical Auditory Evoked Response Potentials

S3 INTER-NDA thresholds for delay according to the INTERGROWTH-21st Project International INTER-NDA standards for child development at two years of age.

INTER-NDA domain	Pooled Centiles (n=1181)						
	c3	c10	c25	c50	c75	c90	c97
Cognitive[1]	27.4	38.5	62.2	79.5	88.8	92.6	99.6
Fine motor[1]	17.5	25.7	74.2	91.4	100.0	100.0	100.0
Gross motor[1]	31.1	51.7	66.7	81.6	100.0	100.0	100.0
Language[1]	12.1	17.8	45.7	71.7	88.5	95.1	100.0
Positive behaviour[1]	37.8	51.4	70.0	90.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Negative behaviour[2]	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	25.0	50.0	76.5

INTER-NDA: The INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment
[1]For these domains, higher scores reflect better outcomes; the thresholds for severe delay and mild-to-moderate delay are defined as ≤3rd and 3rd-10th centiles. The threshold for *any* delay is defined as ≤10th centile.
[2]For negative behaviour, lower scores reflect better outcomes; the thresholds for severe delay and mild-to-moderate delay are defined as ≥97th and 90th-97th centiles. The threshold for *any* delay is defined as ≥90th centile.

Source: Fernandes M, Villar J, Stein A, Urias ES, Garza C, Victora CG, Barros FC, Bertino E, Purwar M, Carvalho M, Giuliani F. INTERGROWTH-21st Project international INTER-NDA standards for child development at 2 years of age: an international prospective population-based study. BMJ open. 2020 Jun 1;10(6):e035258.

S4 Auditory Cortical Evoked Response Potentials experiment protocol.

Cortical auditory evoked response potentials (CA-ERP) acquisition:
The ability of children to detect and discriminate novel auditory events was assessed by measuring CA-ERPs to the 'novelty oddball' ERP task using wireless, gel-free electroencephalography (EEG). In the novelty oddball task, three types of auditory stimuli were presented to the child: (i) pure sinusoidal tones (1.5 kHz, 200 ms long, 5 ms rise and fall time, 70 dB SPL) repeated at high probability ('frequent'); (ii) pure sinusoidal tones (2 kHz, 200 ms long, 5 ms rise and fall time, 70 dB Sound Pressure Level, SPL) repeated at low probability ('infrequent'); and (iii) trial-unique novel stimuli presented at low probability e.g. dog bark, bell ring ('novel'). Two-blocks of 700 stimuli each were presented (560 frequent, 70 infrequent and 70 novels). The duration of each stimulus was 200 ms with an onset asynchrony of 700 ms.

In this study, we implemented the EEG acquisition and extraction protocol as described by Kihara et al[1]. Auditory stimuli were presented to the child through earphones integrated into a wireless EEG recording cap (Enobio® EEG systems[2]). EEG was recorded at a sampling rate of 500 Hz (band-pass 0.1–70 Hz) from midline leads at Fz, Cz and Pz; lateral leads T3, T4, T5, T6; an ocular lead Fp2 and the left mastoid process (M2). All locations were referenced to the left mastoid (M2). Impedances were maintained at ≤10 kΩ. The operational manual for the auditory assessment is available at https://www.intergrowth21.org.uk.

CA-ERP Processing:
EEG processing was undertaken in MATLAB 2019a (© 1994-2021 The MathWorks, Inc.). EEG data were band-pass filtered offline at between 0.5 and 10Hz using a feed-forward zero-phase filter. All trials were baseline corrected. Trials containing amplitude deflections exceeding ±75uV were rejected, as they were considered affected by external and/or physiological artifacts. ERP waveforms were visually identified. For the analysis of infrequent and novel stimuli, all artifact-free trials were employed. In order to maintain an equal distribution of frequent, infrequent and novel tones, and to provide similar signal-to-noise ratios, the frequent stimulus immediately preceding each infrequent stimulus were selected for averaging[1]. A minimum of 20 trials for each stimulus was required for inclusion of an individual average ERP waveform.

The components of interest were the: P1, N2 and P3a, automatically detected in the time frames 70–110 ms, 210–270 ms and 270–370 ms, respectively, from midline and temporal locations[1]. In children, these peaks are the typical components observed in a passive auditory novelty oddball. The P1 is a positive peak around 100 ms after stimulus onset and represents an obligatory cortical auditory ERP reflecting sensory encoding of auditory stimuli[3]. The N2 in a negative peak around 200 ms after stimulus onset and represents a response to deviations in a prevailing stimulus[4]. The P3a is a positive peak around 250–350 ms, and represents involuntary orienting of attention to

distracting/unexpected environmental sounds occurring among frequently repeated tones[5].

The ERP metrics studied in this analysis in a given epoch, for each peak, are: (1) the Maximum Amplitude (A_{max}) ERP peak (expressed in microvolts, μV), calculated as the maximum amplitude in the observation window; and (2) the latency (T_{lat}) of the ERP peak (expressed in ms) defined as the duration from stimulus presentation to A_{max}[1]. For comparison between study arms, values were averaged across the 4 temporal electrodes.

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Table S5 Proportional contribution of study site and arm to Early Child Development outcomes at the 2-year follow-up.

Study Site	Arm			Total
	Arm 1: Preconception intervention	Arm 2: Pregnancy intervention	Arm 3: Control	N(%)
INTER-NDA Outcomes				
DRC (n)	43	44	47	**134 (20.1)**
Guatemala (n)	51	61	61	**173 (25.9)**
India (n)	56	60	53	**169 (25.3)**
Pakistan (n)	67	65	59	**191 (28.7)**
Total (n, %)	**217 (32.5)**	**230 (34.5)**	**220 (33.0)**	**667 (100)**
Vision Outcomes				
DRC (n)	43	38	44	**125 (19.9)**
Guatemala (n)	49	57	57	**163 (26.0)**
India (n)	52	57	52	**161 (25.7)**
Pakistan (n)	59	60	59	**178 (28.4)**
Total (n, %)	**203 (32.4)**	**212 (33.8)**	**212 (33.8)**	**627 (100.0)**
CA-ERP Outcomes				
DRC (n)	8	10	3	**21 (16.9)**
Guatemala (n)	12	7	13	**32 (25.8)**
India (n)	12	12	13	**37 (29.8)**
Pakistan (n)	13	11	10	**34 (27.4)**
Total (n, %)	**45 (36.3)**	**40 (32.3)**	**39 (31.5)**	**124 (100)**

INTER-NDA: The INTERGROWTH-21st Neurodevelopment Assessment; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo; CA-ERP: Cortical auditory evoked response potentials.

Table S6 Correlations between Early Child Development Outcomes and Early Life Exposures.

		Vision n=613		INTER-NDA scores n=667						ERP Latencies n=123									ERP maximum amplitudes n=123								
		Visual Acuity	Contrast Sensitivity	Cognition	Fine Motor	Gross Motor	Language	Positive Behaviour	Negative Behaviour	P1 - frequent	P1 - infrequent	P1 - novel	N2 - frequent	N2 - infrequent	N2 - novel	P3a - frequent	P3a - infrequent	P3a - novel	P1 - frequent	P1 - infrequent	P1 - novel	N2 - frequent	N2 - infrequent	N2 - novel	P3a - frequent	P3a - infrequent	P3a - novel
Age at INTER-NDA assessment	r	-0.05	-0.08	0.14	0.13	0.01	0.03	0.06	-0.02	-0.24	-0.16	0.02	-0.04	-0.14	-0.03	0.04	0.01	-0.17	-0.12	-0.27	-0.12	-0.04	-0.16	-0.18	-0.16	-0.06	-0.17
	p	0.24	0.04*	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.81	0.48	0.11	0.57	0.01*	0.10	0.84	0.69	0.14	0.72	0.66	0.89	0.07	0.20	<0.001**	0.18	0.67	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.51	0.08
Maternal age at birth	r	0.12	0.10	-0.06	-0.06	-0.02	0.06	0.00	-0.02	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.11	0.17	0.01	0.01	0.14	0.03	-0.04	0.19	-0.11	-0.06	0.07	0.01	-0.03	0.03
	p	<0.001**	0.01*	0.10	0.14	0.71	0.12	0.92	0.56	0.61	0.97	0.96	0.06	0.25	0.06	0.88	0.91	0.11	0.76	0.65	0.04*	0.22	0.54	0.44	0.94	0.73	0.78
Number of previous pregnancies	r	-0.09	-0.03	-0.08	-0.03	-0.01	-0.13	-0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.11	-0.12	0.11	0.05	-0.07	0.05	0.05	-0.02	0.02	-0.05	0.10	-0.10	-0.05	-0.12	-0.11	-0.03	0.05
	p	0.02*	0.46	0.04*	0.50	0.83	<0.001**	0.54	0.90	0.97	0.25	0.20	0.25	0.60	0.43	0.58	0.59	0.80	0.87	0.60	0.28	0.28	0.60	0.21	0.25	0.76	0.56
Gestational age at birth, in weeks	r	-0.14	-0.11	0.15	0.07	0.06	0.15	0.04	-0.07	-0.15	0.15	0.08	0.03	0.11	0.03	0.09	0.01	-0.07	-0.05	-0.01	-0.06	-0.15	-0.08	0.01	-0.12	-0.21	-0.13
	p	<0.001**	0.02*	<0.001**	0.13	0.20	<0.001**	0.37	0.14	0.15	0.14	0.45	0.77	0.29	0.79	0.37	0.90	0.47	0.62	0.91	0.54	0.13	0.41	0.89	0.23	0.04*	0.19
Number of hospital admissions in the first 2 years of life	r	0.13	0.07	-0.02	-0.18	-0.03	-0.11	0.03	0.02	-0.15	0.16	0.08	0.03	-0.03	-0.06	-0.17	0.16	0.03	0.03	0.14	0.64	0.10	-0.02	-0.14	0.02	-0.04	0.16
	p	0.44	0.64	0.92	0.25	0.84	0.49	0.86	0.90	0.20	0.14	0.55	0.78	0.60	0.51	0.19	0.14	0.65	0.78	-0.14	-0.26	0.21	0.84	0.29	0.84	0.14	0.84
LAZ_{birth}	r	-0.08	-0.08	0.16	0.07	0.13	-0.15	0.04	-0.04	-0.07	0.05	0.01	-0.06	-0.03	-0.05	-0.03	0.02	0.06	-0.03	-0.19	0.10	-0.19	-0.05	0.10	-0.02	-0.14	0.02
	p	0.06	0.04*	<0.001**	0.06	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.29	0.35	0.47	0.57	0.91	0.49	0.75	0.60	0.72	0.86	0.54	0.74	0.04*	0.29	0.03*	0.59	0.29	0.84	0.14	0.84
LAZ_{12}	r	-0.17	-0.19	0.28	0.18	0.22	0.28	0.15	-0.07	-0.06	0.08	-0.02	-0.11	-0.04	-0.09	-0.03	0.06	0.07	-0.07	-0.01	0.09	-0.14	-0.04	0.11	-0.01	-0.08	0.02
	p	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.09	0.51	0.38	0.85	0.22	0.63	0.33	0.73	0.51	0.42	0.45	0.88	0.35	0.13	0.66	0.22	0.88	0.36	0.86
LAZ_{24}	r	-0.20	-0.19	0.34	0.25	0.29	0.34	0.20	-0.11	-0.08	0.08	0.01	-0.07	0.04	0.08	0.00	0.05	0.12	0.00	0.05	0.05	-0.12	-0.08	0.11	0.06	-0.03	-0.04

	p	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.01*	0.36	0.41	0.89	0.43	0.64	0.36	0.96	0.59	0.19	0.97	0.58	0.60	0.19	0.38	0.25	0.54	0.78	0.63
WAZ_{birth}	r	-0.04	-0.05	0.14	0.08	0.15	0.11	0.00	-0.01	-0.05	0.18	-0.06	-0.02	0.13	0.14	-0.03	0.01	0.08	-0.10	-0.17	0.09	-0.20	-0.08	0.09	-0.05	-0.19	-0.01
	p	0.38	0.26	<0.001**	0.05	<0.001**	0.01*	0.97	0.75	0.62	0.05	0.55	0.85	0.16	0.14	0.71	0.93	0.42	0.29	0.06	0.35	0.03*	0.41	0.32	0.58	0.04*	0.88
WAZ_{12}	r	-0.18	-0.17	0.25	0.19	0.19	0.26	0.05	-0.03	-0.09	0.14	-0.07	-0.04	0.01	-0.02	0.04	0.06	0.10	-0.03	-0.04	0.02	0.00	-0.04	0.10	0.00	-0.04	0.06
	p	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.20	0.42	0.34	0.12	0.48	0.63	0.90	0.85	0.67	0.51	0.27	0.73	0.64	0.81	0.98	0.68	0.27	0.99	0.68	0.55
WAZ_{24}	r	-0.17	-0.16	0.27	0.21	0.24	0.30	0.08	-0.02	-0.09	0.10	-0.02	-0.04	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.05	0.12	0.04	-0.04	0.04	-0.06	-0.07	0.09	0.02	-0.04	0.02
	p	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.05	0.53	0.33	0.30	0.79	0.67	0.99	0.90	0.98	0.62	0.20	0.69	0.65	0.68	0.55	0.45	0.35	0.85	0.65	0.85
$HCAZ_{birth}$	r	-0.12	-0.09	0.16	0.08	0.07	0.20	0.05	-0.13	-0.10	0.07	0.03	0.06	0.16	0.20	-0.03	0.05	0.05	-0.12	-0.05	0.14	-0.14	-0.06	0.06	-0.08	-0.19	-0.03
	p	<0.001**	0.03*	<0.001**	0.05	0.06	<0.001**	0.24	<0.001**	0.30	0.48	0.71	0.54	0.08	0.03*	0.76	0.56	0.57	0.20	0.61	0.13	0.14	0.54	0.52	0.37	0.04*	0.77
$HCAZ_{12}$	r	-0.17	-0.14	0.20	0.16	0.11	0.22	0.00	-0.08	-0.04	0.01	0.08	0.10	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.10	0.03	0.00	0.07	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.02	0.01	0.04
	p	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.94	0.03*	0.67	0.95	0.39	0.30	0.63	0.95	0.87	0.78	0.27	0.76	0.98	0.46	0.35	0.54	0.40	0.85	0.93	0.69
$HCAZ_{24}$	r	-0.10	-0.08	0.18	0.14	0.13	0.18	0.01	-0.06	-0.07	0.01	0.07	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.03	-0.05	0.02	0.18	0.13	0.06	0.07	0.09	0.03
	p	0.01*	0.04*	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.83	0.12	0.48	0.94	0.43	0.20	0.86	0.84	0.76	0.81	0.60	0.73	0.61	0.86	0.05	0.16	0.54	0.46	0.35	0.76
Socio economic status	r	-0.10	-0.16	0.30	0.16	0.15	0.22	0.19	0.11	0.02	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.01	0.01	0.08	0.02	0.11	0.03	-0.03	0.08	0.05	0.00	0.14	0.05	0.03	0.12
	p	0.02*	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.01*	0.83	0.28	0.33	0.31	0.94	0.90	0.36	0.81	0.24	0.77	0.76	0.37	0.60	0.99	0.14	0.62	0.75	0.21
Number of years of maternal education	r	-0.40	-0.38	0.37	0.16	0.07	0.43	0.06	-0.04	0.09	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.02	0.01	0.08	0.15	0.10	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.18	0.06	0.17	0.05
	p	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.09	<0.001**	0.15	0.31	0.31	0.50	0.55	0.45	0.38	0.80	0.95	0.39	0.10	0.28	0.96	0.62	0.69	0.77	0.05	0.54	0.06	0.59
FCI: varieties of play materials	r	-0.07	-0.13	0.27	0.28	0.21	0.22	0.20	-0.10	0.09	0.11	0.04	0.01	0.08	0.06	0.15	0.13	0.10	0.08	-0.01	0.07	0.18	0.00	0.10	0.07	0.01	0.11
	p	0.08	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.01*	0.35	0.23	0.70	0.91	0.38	0.55	0.09	0.15	0.28	0.39	0.89	0.43	0.05	0.98	0.30	0.46	0.91	0.23
FCI: Play activities	r	-0.17	-0.11	0.21	0.25	0.17	0.27	0.08	-0.01	0.14	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.09	-0.06	0.15	0.12	0.01	0.04	0.11	0.16	0.07
	p	<0.001**	0.01*	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.05	0.82	0.13	0.71	0.68	0.31	0.65	0.51	0.66	0.94	0.99	0.36	0.49	0.10	0.20	0.93	0.67	0.25	0.08	0.48

FCI: Sources of play materials	r	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.13	0.07	0.00	0.12	-0.07	0.11	-0.02	-0.02	-0.03	-0.19	-0.05	-0.04	-0.13	-0.08	-0.02	-0.04	0.02	-0.16	0.02	0.03	-0.06	0.11	0.05
	p	0.74	0.77	0.16	<0.001**	0.06	0.98	<0.001**	0.07	0.25	0.81	0.82	0.72	0.04	0.60	0.66	0.17	0.39	0.87	0.65	0.79	0.09	0.87	0.74	0.51	0.22	0.58
FCI: Household books	r	-0.12	-0.11	0.18	0.13	0.06	0.16	0.04	-0.06	0.12	-0.10	0.06	0.10	-0.05	0.06	-0.01	0.00	-0.20	-0.01	0.03	0.15	-0.08	0.03	-0.11	-0.06	0.01	0.00
	p	<0.001**	0.01*	<0.001**	<0.001**	0.14	<0.001**	0.30	0.15	0.20	0.30	0.51	0.29	0.57	0.50	0.94	1.00	0.03*	0.91	0.79	0.11	0.37	0.78	0.24	0.52	0.93	1.00

r: Pearson correlation (as early life exposures were normally distributed). **p<0.001; *p<0.05.
LAZ_{birth}, LAZ_{12}, LAZ_{24}: WHO z scores for length at birth, 12 and 24 months; WAZ_{birth}, WAZ_{12}, WAZ_{24}: WHO z scores for weight at birth, 12 and 24 months; $HCAZ_{birth}$, $HCAZ_{12}$, $HCAZ_{24}$: WHO z scores for head circumference at birth, 12 and 24 months. FCI: Family Care Indicators. Socio-economic status: the SES tally provides the number of indicators available from the following list: electricity, improved water source, sanitation, synthetic flooring, improved cooking fuels, transportation and household assets. F: ANOVA test statistic; X^2: Chi-Square test statistic.

Table S7 Comparisons of Early Life Exposures between children with delay/low vision and without delay/low vision.

Early Life Indicator (Mean, SD)	Normal vision/no delay	Low vision/any delay	Unadjusted pairwise comparisons^	Effect Size (95% CI)
I. Visual Acuity	n=453	n=160		
Maternal age*	23.02 (4.07)	24.26 (3.91)	t=-3.35, p=0.001	-0.31 (-0.49, -0.13)
Parity*	1.64 (1.32)	1.91 (1.53)	t=-2.14, p=0.03	-0.20 (-0.37, -0.02)
Gestational age at birth*	39.47 (4.94)	38.58 (1.84)	t=2.07, p=0.04	0.21 (0.01, 0.41)
LAZ_{12}*	70.39 (2.87)	69.48 (3.15)	t=3.36, p=0.001	0.31 (0.13, 0.49)
LAZ_{24}**	80.01 (3.41)	78.53 (3.99)	t=4.48, p<0.001	0.41 (0.23, 0.60)
LAZ_{12}**	8.01 (1.04)	7.53 (1.21)	t=4.85, p<0.001	0.45 (0.26, 0.63)
LAZ_{24}**	9.82 (1.19)	9.32 (1.43)	t=4.29, p<0.001	0.40 (0.21, 0.58)
$HCAZ_{birth}$**	33.32 (1.31)	32.85 (1.49)	t=3.71, p<0.001	0.34 (0.16, 0.53)
$HCAZ_{12}$**	44.06 (1.47)	43.41 (1.69)	t=4.63, p<0.001	0.43 (0.24, 0.61)
$HCAZ_{24}$**	46.12 (1.43)	45.70 (1.70)	t=2.97, p=0.003	0.28 (0.09. 0.46)
SES**	4.74 (2.86)	3.61 (2.52)	t=4.40, p<0.001	0.41 (0.23, 0.59)
Number of years of maternal schooling**	5.43 (4.20)	1.59 (2.67)	t=10.83, p<0.001	0.99 (0.81, 1.18)
FCI: Play activities*	5.62 (1.90)	5.09 (2.09)	t=2.95, p=0.003	0.27 (0.09, 0.46)
FCI: Household books*	0.36 (0.79)	0.19 (0.74)	t=2.31, p=0.02	0.21 (0.03, 0.40)
II. Contrast Sensitivity	n=484	n=129		
Maternal age*	23.14 (4.13)	23.99 (3.96)	t=-2.10, p=0.04	-0.21 (-0.40, -0.01)
Gestational age at birth	39.35 (4.75)	38.66 (1.59)	t=1.46, p=0.15	0.16 (-0.06, 0.38)
LAZ_{birth}*	47.63 (2.05)	47.19 (2.29)	t=2.10, p=0.04	0.21 (0.01, 0.40)
LAZ_{12}**	70.38 (2.87)	69.27 (3.20)	t=3.79, p<0.001	0.38 (0.18, 0.57)
LAZ_{24}**	79.93 (3.53)	78.45 (3.87)	t=4.10, p<0.001	0.41 (0.21, 0.61)
WAZ_{12}**	7.96 (1.07)	7.54 (1.16)	t=3.91, p<0.001	0.39 (0.19, 0.58)
WAZ_{24}*	9.76 (1.24)	9.34 (1.30)	t=3.32, p=0.001	0.33 (0.13, 0.53)
$HCAZ_{birth}$*	33.24 (1.33)	32.90 (1.45)	t=2.49, p=0.01	0.25 (0.05, 0.45)
$HCAZ_{12}$**	43.98 (1.48)	43.38 (1.66)	t=3.99, p<0.001	0.40 (0.20, 0.59)
HAZ_{24}*	46.05 (1.49)	45.71 (1.52)	t=2.33, p=0.02	0.23 (0.04, 0.43)
SES**	4.73 (2.89)	3.43 (2.48)	t=4.65, p<0.001	0.47 (0.27, 0.66)
Number of years of maternal schooling**	5.20 (4.22)	1.58 (2.80)	t=9.25, p<0.001	0.91 (0.71, 1.11)
FCI: Varieties of play materials*	4.47 (1.65)	3.98 (1.62)	t=2.97, p=0.003	0.30 (0.10, 0.49)
FCI: Play activities*	5.57 (1.86)	5.06 (2.22)	t=2.63, p=0.009	0.26 (0.07, 0.46)
FCI: Household books*	0.33 (0.75)	0.16 (0.54)	t=2.37, p=0.02	0.24 (0.04, 0.43)
III. Cognition	n=223	n=444		
Parity*	1.62 (1.32)	1.90 (1.48)	t=-2.42, p=0.02	0.20 (0.04, 0.37)
Gestational age at birth*	39.57 (4.97)	38.46 (1.75)	t=2.82, p=0.005	-0.27 (-0.45, -0.08)
LAZ_{birth}**	47.76 (1.89)	47.12 (2.38)	t=3.76, p<0.0001	-0.31 (-0.47, -0.15)
LAZ_{12}**	70.70 (2.79)	69.07 (3.06)	t=6.85, p<0.001	-0.56 (-0.73, -0.40)
LAZ_{24}**	80.38 (3.35)	77.96 (3.81)	t=8.34, p<0.001	-0.69 (-0.86, -0.52)
WAZ_{birth}**	2.85 (0.38)	2.73 (0.41)	t=3.81, p<0.001	-0.31 (-0.48, -0.15)
WAZ_{12}**	8.07 (1.04)	7.52 (1.15)	t=6.31, p<0.001	-0.52 (-0.68,-0.36)

WAZ_{24}**	9.91 (1.22)	9.21 (1.28)	t=6.82, p<0.001	-0.57 (-0.73, -0.40)
$HCAZ_{birth}$**	33.37 (1.31)	32.89 (1.47)	t=4.31, p<0.001	-0.36 (-0.52, -0.19)
$HCAZ_{12}$**	44.11 (1.50)	43.50 (1.57)	t=4.88, p<0.001	-0.40 (-0.57, -0.24)
$HCAZ_{24}$**	46.19 (1.47)	45.65 (1.53)	t=4.39, p<0.001	-0.37 (-0.53, -0.20)
SES**	4.93 (2.91)	3.4 (2.42)	t=6.63, p<0.001	-0.55 (-0.72, -0.39)
Number of years of maternal schooling**	5.52 (4.20)	2.31 (3.32)	t=9.73, p<0.001	-0.82 (-0.99, -0.65)
FCI: Varieties of play materials**	4.64 (1.58)	3.81 (1.69)	t=6.16, p<0.001	-0.51 (-0.68, -0.35)
FCI: Play activities**	5.76 (1.82)	5.01 (2.18)	t=4.61, p<0.001	-0.38 (-0.55, -0.22)
FCI: Household books**	0.41 (0.91)	0.12 (0.45)	t=4.38, p<0.001	-0.37 (-0.53, -0.20)
IV. Fine Motor	n=84	n=583		
LAZ_{12}**	70.35 (2.88)	68.77 (3.29)	t=-4.55, p<0.001	-0.54 (-0.77, -0.30)
LAZ_{24}**	79.90 (3.54)	77.23 (3.94)	t=-6.20, p<0.001	-0.75 (-0.99, -0.51)
WAZ_{12}**	7.96 (1.06)	7.37 (1.27)	t=-4.59, p<0.001	-0.54 (-0.77, -0.31)
WAZ_{24}**	9.77 (1.24)	9.03 (1.39)	t=-4.85, p<0.001	-0.59 (-0.82, -0.35)
$HCAZ_{12}$**	43.99 (1.51)	43.33 (1.69)	t=-3.63, p<0.001	-0.43 (-0.67, -0.20)
$HCAZ_{24}$**	46.09 (1.47)	45.48 (1.71)	t=-3.36, p=0.001	-0.41 (-0.64, -0.17)
SES**	4.64 (2.85)	2.86 (2.37)	t=-5.26, p<0.001	-0.64 (-0.87, -0.40)
Number of years of maternal schooling**	4.69 (4.23)	2.67 (3.54)	t=-3.91, p<0.001	-0.49 (-0.73, -0.24)
FCI: Varieties of play materials**	4.51 (1.60)	3.30 (1.75)	t=-6.20, p<0.001	-0.79 (-0.99, -0.51)
FCI: Play activities**	5.63 (1.92)	4.63 (2.13)	t=-4.26, p<0.001	-0.51 (-0.75, -0.28)
FCI: Sources of play materials*	2.46 (0.65)	2.22 (0.80)	t=-2.97, p=0.003	-0.36 (-0.60, -0.12)
FCI: Household books*	0.35 (0.84)	0.05 (0.27)	t=-3.12, p=0.002	-0.38 (-0.61, -0.14)
V. Gross Motor	n=58	n=609		
LAZ_{birth}*	47.62 (2.05)	46.78 (2.35)	t=-2.94, p=0.003	-0.40 (-0.67, -0.13)
LAZ_{12}**	70.34 (2.91)	68.15 (2.99)	t=-5.36, p<0.001	-0.75 (-1.03, -0.47)
LAZ_{24}**	79.87 (3.53)	76.46 (3.95)	t=-6.80, p<0.001	-0.96 (-1.24, -0.68)
WAZ_{birth}**	2.83 (0.38)	2.62 (0.44)	t=-3.85, p<0.001	-0.53 (-0.80, -0.26)
WAZ_{12}**	7.95 (1.07)	7.26 (1.30)	t=-4.54, p<0.001	-0.63 (-0.91, -0.36)
WAZ_{24}**	9.75 (1.25)	8.93 (1.37)	t=-4.63, p<0.001	-0.65 (-0.93, -0.37)
$HCAZ_{12}$**	43.97 (1.52)	43.26 (1.70)	t=-3.29, p=0.001	-0.46 (-0.73, -0.18)
$HCAZ_{24}$**	46.07 (1.48)	45.36 (1.69)	t=-3.39, p=0.001	-0.48 (-0.76, -0.20)
SES**	4.61 (2.86)	2.44 (1.86)	t=-5.62, p<0.001	-0.78 (-1.05, -0.50)
FCI: Varieties of play materials**	4.47 (1.63)	3.26 (1.64)	t=-5.32, p<0.001	-0.74 (-1.01, -0.46)
FCI: Play activities*	5.58 (1.95)	4.79 (2.10)	t=-2.90, p=0.004	-0.40 (-0.67, -0.13)
VI. Language	n=589	n=78		
Parity	1.69 (1.37)	1.71 (1.38)	t=0.13, p=0.89	0.02 (-0.23, 0.26)
Gestational age at birth**	41.61 (13.19)	38.98 (1.89)	t=-3.90, p<0.001	-0.64 (-0.96, -0.31)
LAZ_{birth}	47.96 (1.85)	47.49 (2.11)	t=-1.86, p=0.06	-0.22 (-0.46, 0.01)
LAZ_{12}*	71.14 (2.39)	70.02 (3.03)	t=-3.12, p=0.002	-0.38 (-0.62, -0.14)
LAZ_{24}*	80.93 (2.90)	79.41 (3.74)	t=-3.44, p=0.001	-0.42 (-0.66, -0.18)
WAZ_{birth}	2.85 (0.33)	2.80 (0.40)	t=-1.10, p=0.27	-0.13 (-0.37, 0.10)
WAZ_{12}*	8.20 (0.99)	7.85 (1.12)	t=-2.56, p=0.01	-0.31 (-0.55, -0.07)
WAZ_{24}*	10.11 (1.14)	9.63 (1.29)	t=-3.15, p=0.002	--0.38 (-0.62, -0.14)
$HCAZ_{birth}$*	33.52 (1.36)	33.27 (1.38)	t=-2.14, p=0.03	-0.26 (-0.46, -0.02)

$HCAZ_{12}$*	44.27 (1.40)	43.86 (1.56)	t=-2.19, p=0.03	-0.27 (-0.50, -0.03)
$HCAZ_{24}$**	46.28 (1.32)	45.99 (1.53)	t=-1.64, p=0.10	-0.20 (-0.44, 0.04)
SES	4.43 (2.77)	4.39 (3.42)	t=0.11, p=0.91	0.01 (-0.22, 0.25)
Number of years of maternal schooling*	5.66 (4.04)	4.31 (4.20)	t=-2.62, p=0.009	-0.32 (-0.57, -0.08)
FCI: Varieties of play materials	4.55 (1.98)	4.34 (1.62)	t=-1.03, p=0.30	-0.13 (-0.36, 0.11)
FCI: Play activities**	6.30 (1.75)	5.40 (1.98)	t=-3.78, p<0.001	-0.46 (-0.70, -0.21)
FCI: Household books**	0.58 (1.12)	0.28 (0.74)	t=-3.21, p=0.001	-0.39 (-0.63, -0.15)
VI. Positive Behaviour	n=494	n=173		
LAZ_{12}*	70.37 (2.87)	69.53 (3.19)	t=3.20, p=0.001	0.28 (0.11, 0.46)
LAZ_{24}**	79.95 (3.53)	78.52 (3.95)	t=4.38, p<0.001	0.39 (0.22, 0.57)
SES**	4.80 (2.81)	3.13 (2.68)	t=5.95, p<0.001	0.54 (0.36, 0.71)
FCI: Varieties of play materials**	4.59 (1.55)	3.69 (1.81)	t=6.22, p<0.001	0.56 (0.38, 0.74)
FCI: Play activities*	5.61 (1.92)	5.22 (2.10)	t=2.22, p=0.03	0.20 (0.02, 0.38)
FCI: Sources of play materials*	2.48 (0.64)	2.28 (0.75)	t=3.26, p=0.001	0.29 (0.12, 0.47)
VII. Negative Behaviour	n=52	n=615		
LAZ_{24}*	79.67 (3.58)	78.57 (4.70)	t=-2.08, p=0.04	-0.30 (-0.58, -0.02)
$HCAZ_{birth}$	33.45 (1.35)	33.19 (1.38)	t=1.32, p=0.19	0.20 (-0.09, 0.47)
HAZ_{12}	44.17 (1.77)	43.89 (1.52)	t=1.24, p=0.21	0.18 (-0.11, 0.47)
SES	4.44 (2.85)	4.16 (2.90)	t=-0.67, p=0.51	-0.09 (-0.39, 0.19)
FCI: Varieties of play materials*	4.41 (1.63)	3.78 (1.95)	t=-2.57, p=0.01	-0.38 (-0.67, -0.09)

^Unadjusted pairwise mean differences and effect sizes with 95% confidence limits were obtained from *t* test assuming equal variance across arms; effect sizes are presented as Cohen's d. **p<0.001; *p<0.05.

FCI: Family Care Indicators. LAZ_{birth}, LAZ_{12}, LAZ_{24}: WHO z scores for length at birth, 12 and 24 months; WAZ_{birth}, WAZ_{12}, WAZ_{24}: WHO z scores for weight at birth, 12 and 24 months; $HCAZ_{birth}$, $HCAZ_{12}$, $HCAZ_{24}$: WHO z scores for head circumference at birth, 12 and 24 months. SES: Socio-economic status, the SES tally provides the number of indicators available from the following list: electricity, improved water source, sanitation, synthetic flooring, improved cooking fuels, transportation and household assets. F: ANOVA test statistic; X^2: Chi-Square test statistic.