**Authors’ reply**

Our reference to the work of Mason and colleagues was in a sentence that stated that “until this [an improvement in the overall nutrition of the population, including through dietary diversification and improved access to vitamin-rich foods, and improved access to treatment for infectious diseases] happens, large scale or targeted supplementation or fortification strategies will probably have some beneficial effect on mortality in these [south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa] regions”. This approach, whose ultimate aim is regular intake, largely through diet, is not inconsistent with the prudent phase-over approach outlined by Mason and colleagues.!

We declare no competing interests.

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*Majid Ezzati, James E Bennett, Robert E Black, Zulfiqar A Bhutta, Wafaie Fawzi
majid.ezzati@imperial.ac.uk

MRC-PHE Centre for Environmental Health, School of Public Health, Imperial College London, London W2 1PG, UK (ME, JEB); Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, USA (REB); Center of Excellence in Women and Child Health, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan (ZAB); Centre for Global Child Health, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (ZAB); Department of Global Health and Population, Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA (WF)
