

Tackling the child malnutrition  
problem: from what and why to  
how much and how....

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# Two key messages

- Addressing child malnutrition makes good economic sense.
- But making the economic case - the ‘how much’ isn’t enough to leverage change – we need to focus with equal energy and rigor on the ‘how’ of policy and practice.

# Nutrition-related opportunities: Copenhagen Consensus

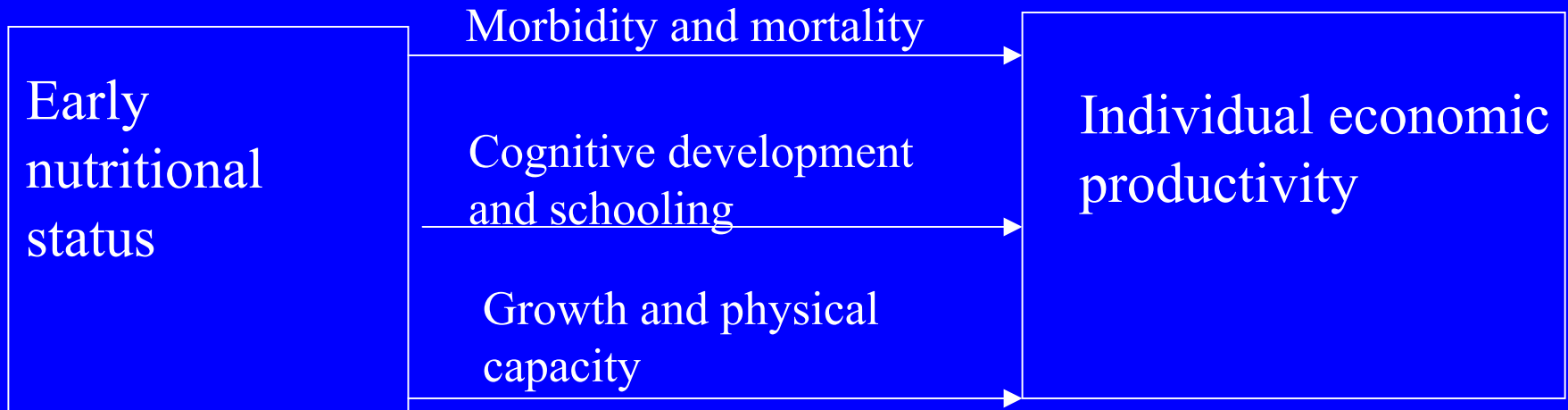
Rating	Challenge	Opportunity
1	Diseases	Control of HIV/AIDS
2	Malnutrition	Providing micro-nutrients
4	Diseases	Malaria Control
5	Malnutrition	New agric. technologies
7	Sanitation & Water	Community-managed water and sanitation
11&12	Malnutrition	Infant and child nutrition, LBW
13	Diseases	Scaled-up basic health services <a href="http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com">www.copenhagenconsensus.com</a>

# Economists' questions

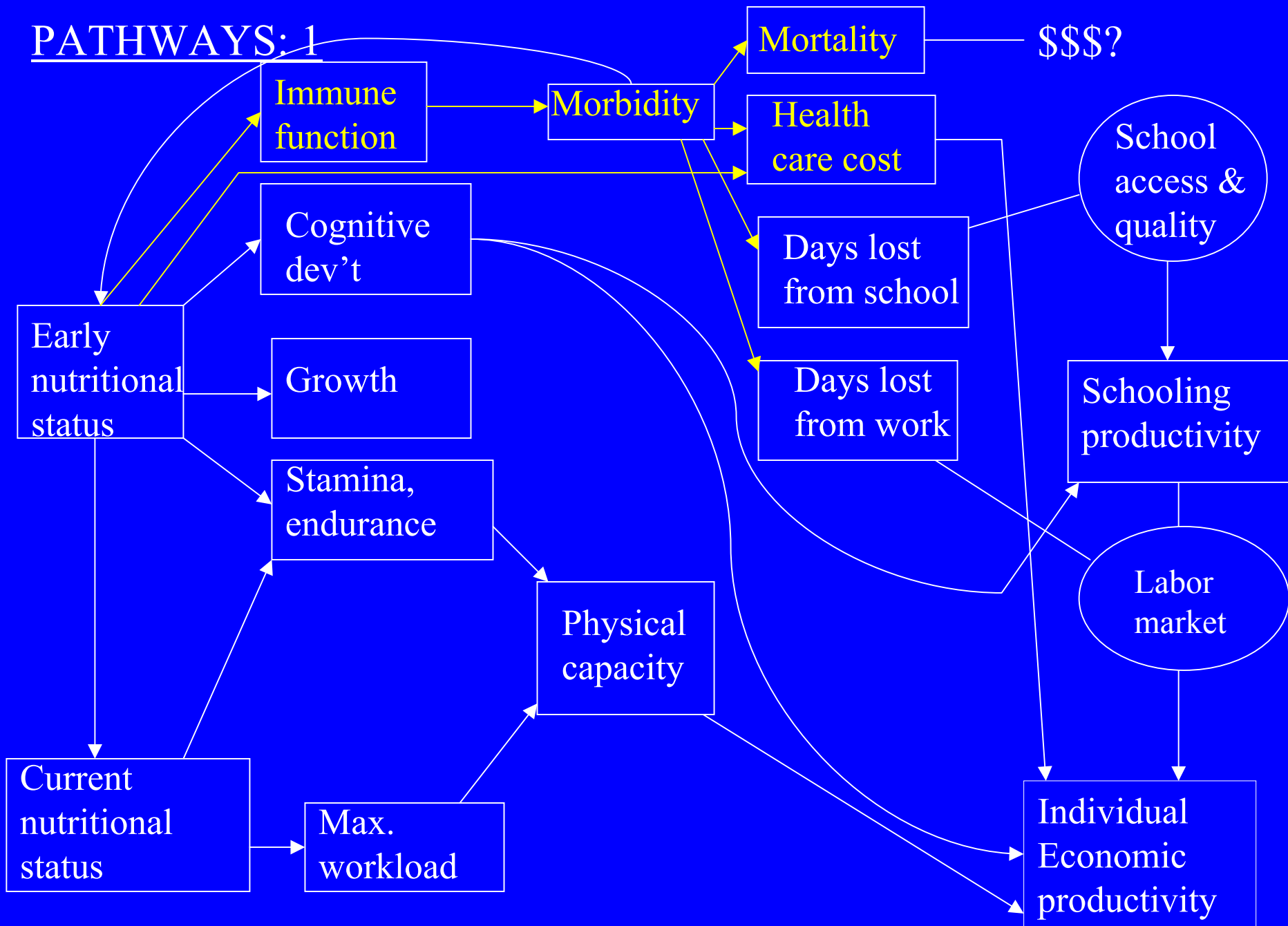
- What is the relationship between nutritional status and economic productivity?
- Do the benefits from improving nutritional status outweigh the costs associated with interventions?
- Is public investment to improve nutritional status justified on economic grounds?
- What is the total estimated cost to improve nutritional status?
- Can society afford it?

# The relationship between nutritional status and economic productivity:

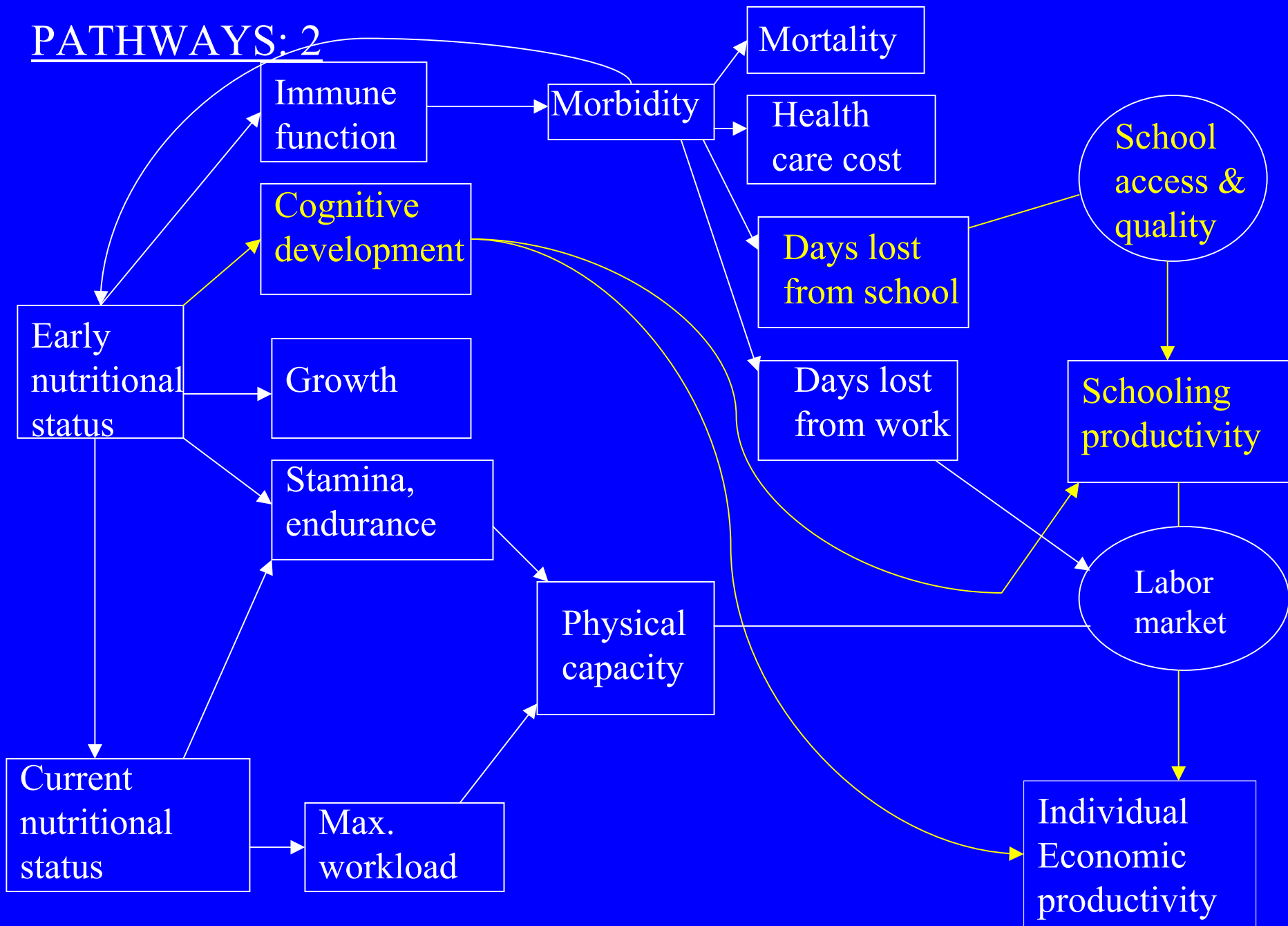
## Pathways



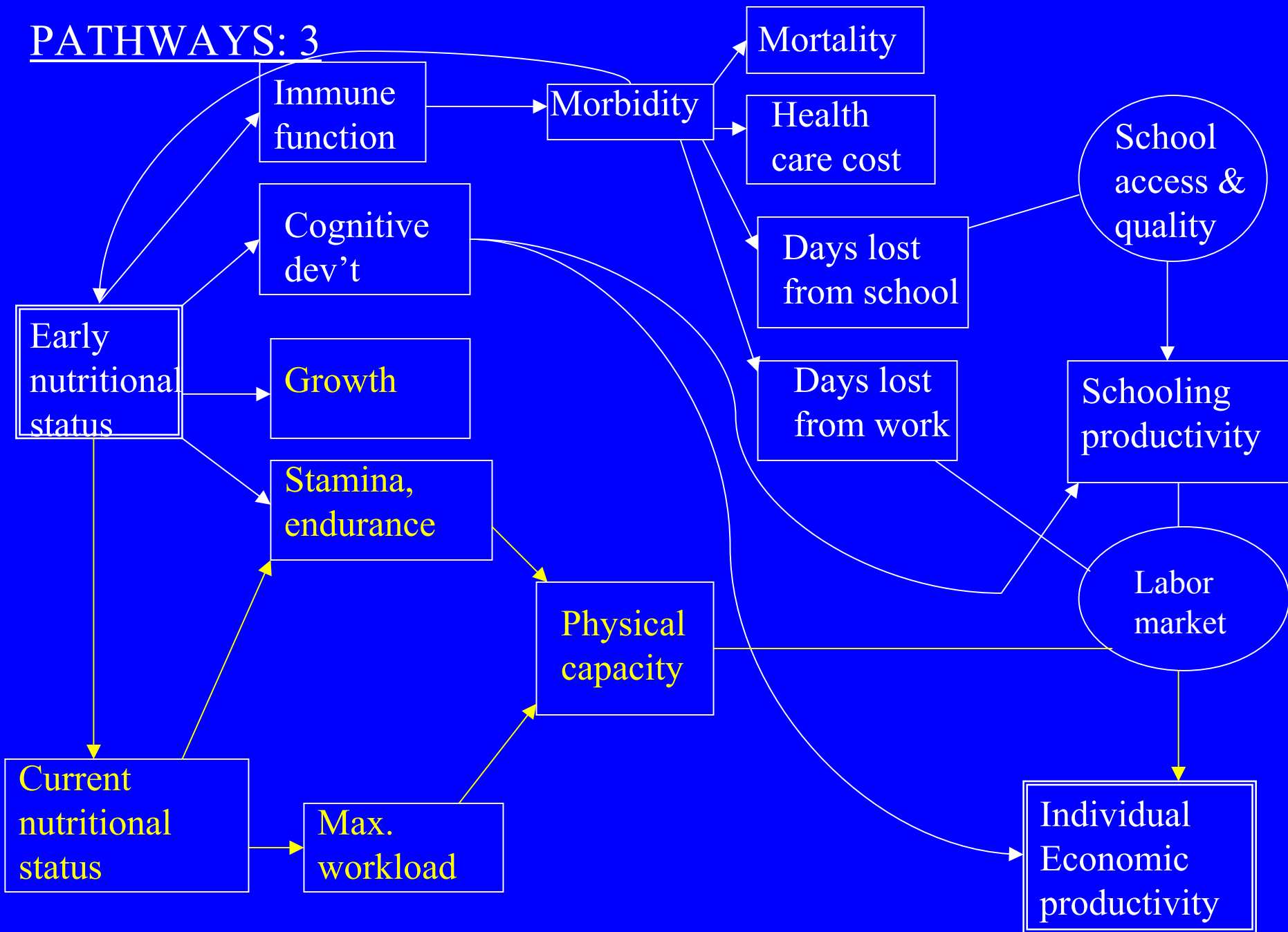
# PATHWAYS: 1



## PATHWAYS: 2



# PATHWAYS: 3



# Productivity losses (%): the economic cost of malnutrition

Type of malnutrition	Losses due to cognitive impairment	Direct impact on labor capacity
PEM	10	2-6 (moderate) 2-9 (severe)
Iron deficiency	4	17 (heavy labor) 5 (blue collar)
Iodine	10	n.a.

# Do the benefits from improving nutrition outweigh the costs?

- Reducing LBW (medical treatment for mothers): 0.58 - 35.2
- Breastfeeding promotion (hospital-based): 5.6 – 67.1
- Integrated child care programs: 9.4-16.2
- Vitamin A supplementation: 4.3-43
- Iodine: 15- 520

# Is public investment justified on economic grounds?

- Individual benefits, but
- Lack of incentives to invest
  - Information gaps
  - Insurance and capital market gaps
  - Economic prospects low
- Social benefits
  - Decrease infectious diseases
  - Shifting the norm to adequate height
  - Improve efficiency of other social investments
- Equity – benefiting the poor?

# What is the total estimated cost to improve nutritional status?

Estimated program costs for 10 years US\$ billion

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Micronutrient supplementation:	15.5- 30.5
Micronutrient fortification	2.54
Community based health and nutrition programs (100 million children x 2 years)	10-20
Estimated total for 10 years:	\$ 28 – 53 bn

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Source: Hunt, 2005

# Can society afford [not] to invest in child nutrition?

- WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and health estimated \$75 billion over ten years for childhood illnesses and malaria.
- Other comparisons:
  - 1 B-2 bomber costs \$2.2 billion
  - annual US Defense Budget estimated to be 150 times the \$2.8 billion estimate .....

Sources: Hunt, 2005;

[http://borgenproject.org/Defense\\_Spending.html](http://borgenproject.org/Defense_Spending.html)

# What do we do with this information?

- Advocacy
- Build and use country specific information bases
- Give as much attention to policy design and program implementation

*“no more prizes for forecasting the rain, only for designing, [and building] the ark”*

(Don Beck)