

2025
GLOBAL
FOOD POLICY
REPORT

50 YEARS OF
IFPRI
LOOKING TOWARD 2050

FOOD POLICY
LESSONS *and* PRIORITIES
for a CHANGING WORLD

South Asia Launch Dialogue

September 2025

Opportunities to transform nutrition in South Asia

Policies and programs

Purnima Menon (Senior Director, IFPRI)

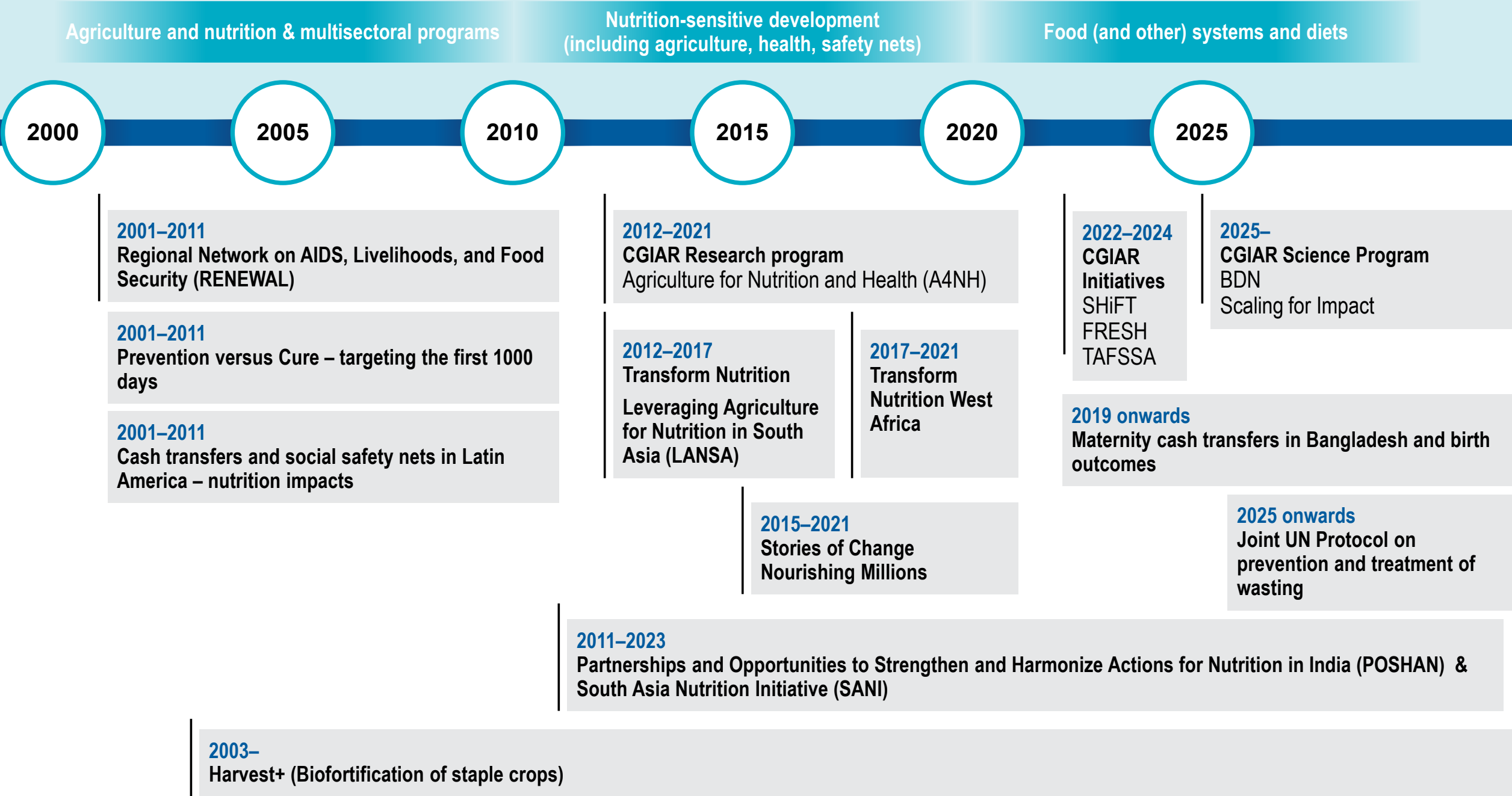
GFPR Nutrition chapter authors: Stuart Gillespie (Non-Resident Senior Fellow); Deanna Olney (Director, Nutrition, Diets and Health)

South Asia Chapter lead author: Shahidur Rashid

Additional inputs: Rasmi Avula

IFPRI

IFPRI's PROGRAM AND POLICY RESEARCH IN NUTRITION SPANS OVER 25 YEARS



Nutrition-sensitive development

- Defined and conceptualized nutrition-sensitive development
- Supported operationalization and design of nutrition-sensitive programs
- Developed methods to rigorously evaluate complex nutrition-sensitive programs
- Nurtured strong partnerships with implementers and governments
- Reviewed evidence/revised guidance
- Shifted to food systems framework and focus on sustainable healthy diets



IFPRI's four-point approach to impactful research and engagement has been fully applied to nutrition in S. Asia



1. Clarifying the situation and outlook

IFPRI provides foresight and policy modeling on food system trends and future scenarios, conducts ex ante assessments of potential policy pathways and investments, and develops metrics and frameworks to analyze and monitor impacts on the poorest and most marginal populations.



2. Testing and scaling solutions

Together with partners, IFPRI identifies, develops, and assesses promising policy, institutional, governance, and behavioral change innovations and technologies for sustainable, equitable food systems transformation. IFPRI also assesses alternative pathways for delivery and scaling up of sustainable food systems solutions, with a focus on improving livelihoods, well-being, equity, and inclusion.



3. Shaping enabling environments

IFPRI explores and advises on enabling governance environments at the local, national, and international levels to facilitate and incentivize innovative solutions and investments in sustainable food systems transformation from the public and private sector, civil society organizations, and individuals.

WEMNS component domains and indicators

Intrinsic agency

Endorsement of women's freedom in livelihood choices*
Endorsement of women's freedom in family formation choices*
Rejection of women's subjection to sexual harassment*

Instrumental agency

Influence over time allocation
Influence in spending decisions
Influence in own health decisions

Collective agency

Participation in organizations
Leadership in organizations
Support for women's community engagement

Agency-enabling resources

Use of information and communication technologies
Use of financial services and access to credit
Secure property rights

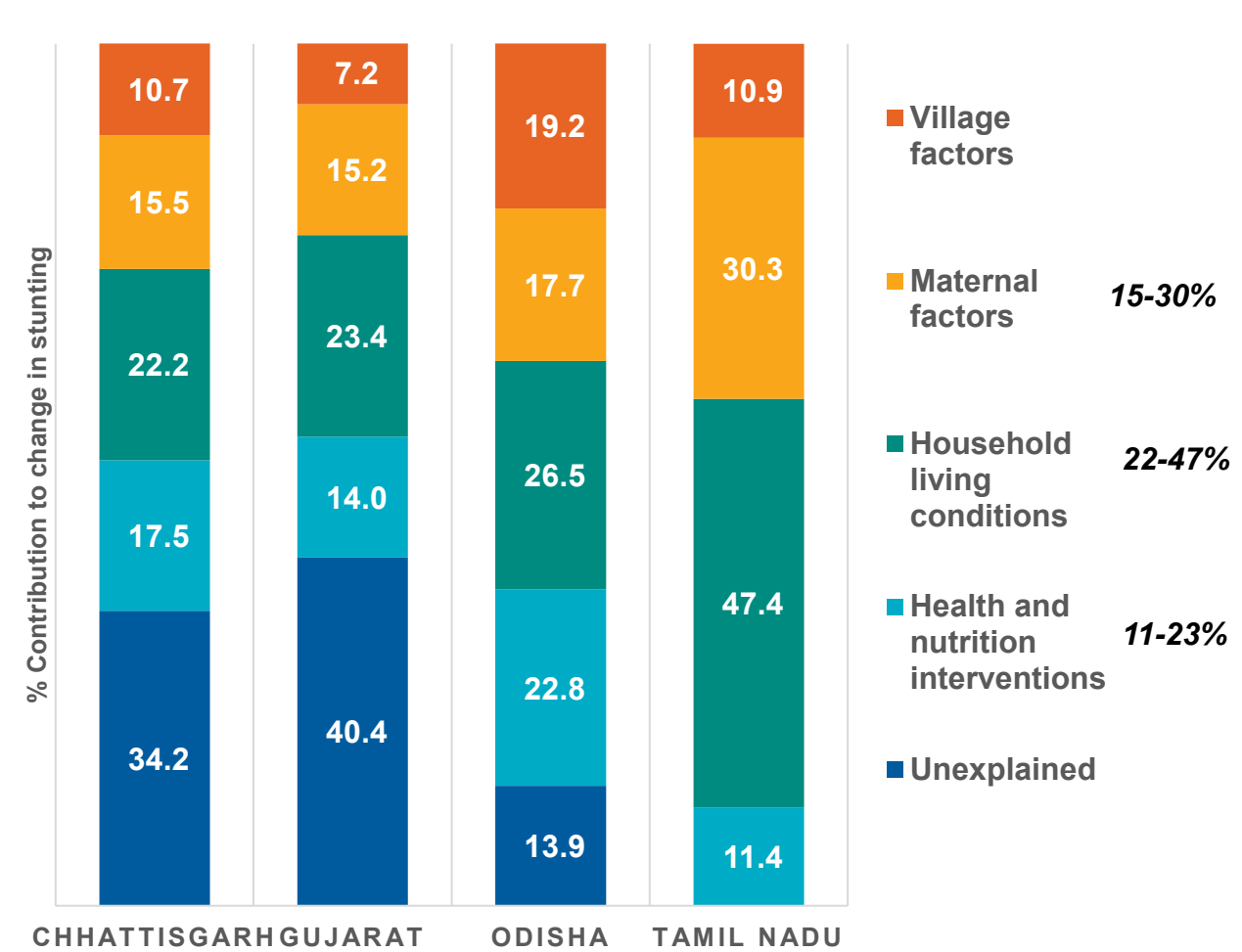
*Applicable only to women

Estimated implementation time: 13 – 20 minutes

4. Strengthening tools, methods and capacity

IFPRI works with partners to develop research methods and tools to advance knowledge and strengthen measurement around various development issues. Working with diverse institutions, IFPRI also strengthens capacity for research and policy development in diverse settings

Lessons from Indian states that reduced stunting (2006-16) reinforce multisectoral drivers of change – *No magic bullets*. Similar findings from Bangladesh and Nepal stunting reductions



- Policies evolved – programmatic expansions
 - States complementary efforts
 - Food security, poverty policies/programs too + economic growth
- Changes supported by
 - Vision
 - Capabilities
 - Financing
 - Strengthen implementation systems
 - Catalysts, champions

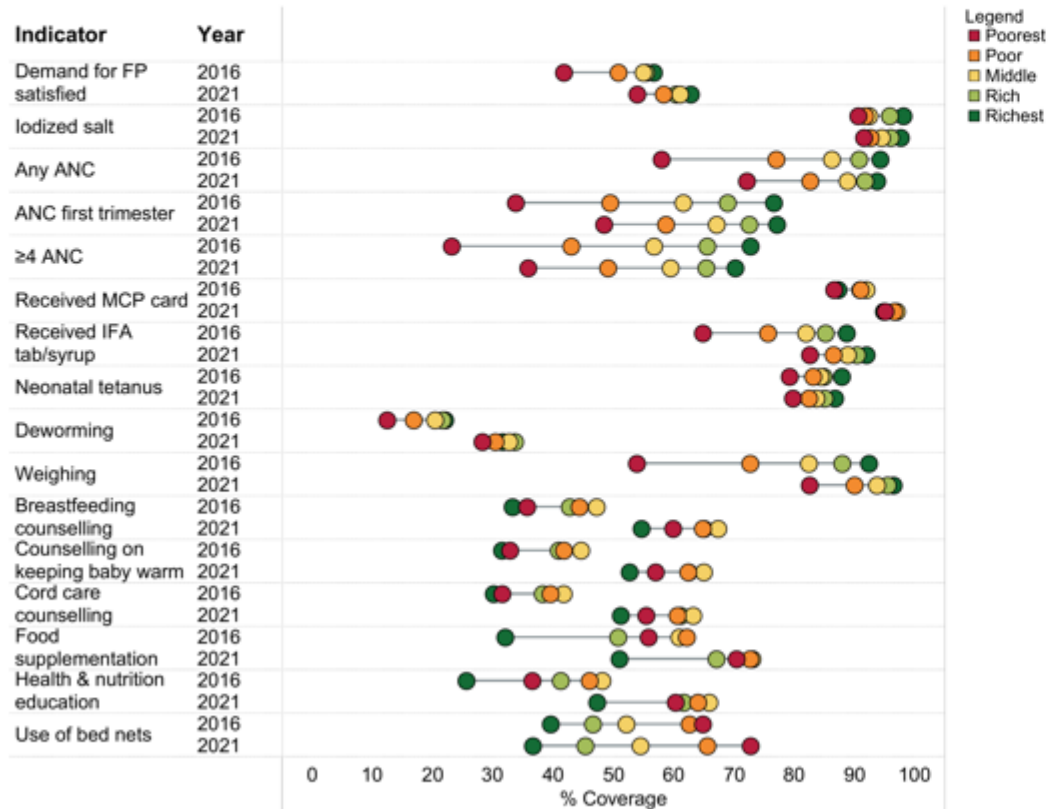
Source: Avula et al. 2022. [Reducing childhood stunting in India: Insights from four subnational success cases. Food Security.](#) doi:

Clarifying situation and outlook: Massive progress on scaling up nutrition actions in India

Coverage inequities declined (2016-2021)



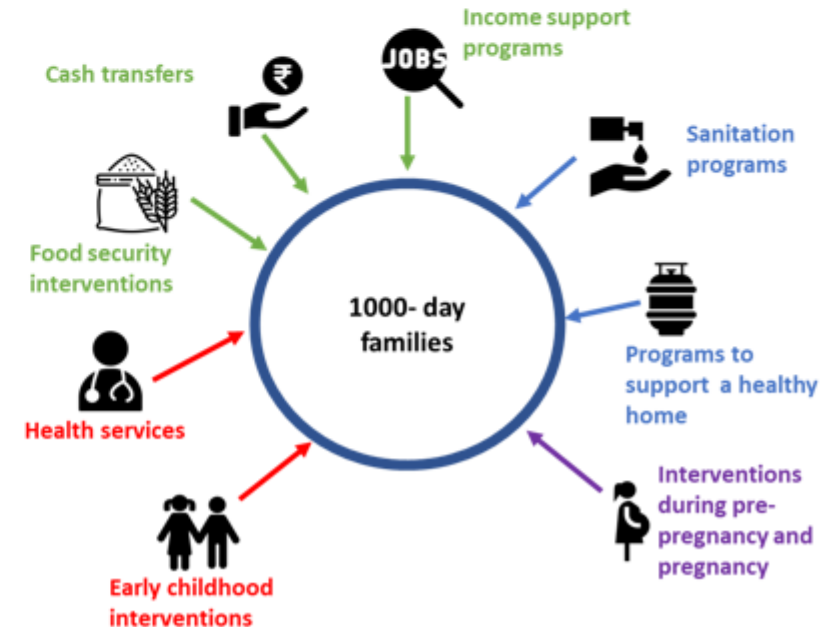
Quality and co-coverage



Rethinking Effective Nutrition Convergence

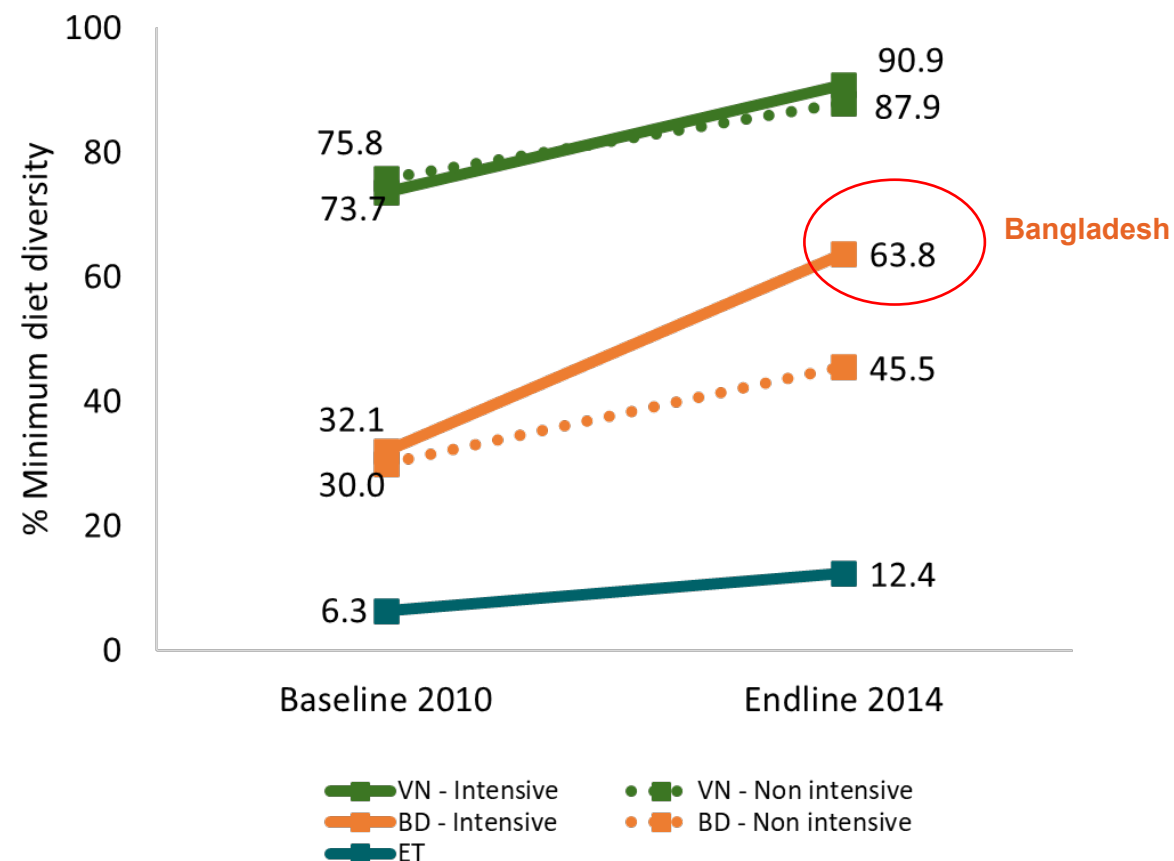
An Analysis of Intervention Co-coverage Data

PURNIMA MENON, RASMI AVULA, SHINJINI PANDEY, SAMUEL SCOTT, ALOK KUMAR



Improving diets of vulnerable populations: A decade of testing behavior change efforts in health systems and communities at scale

- **Alive & Thrive: large-scale behavior change interventions targeting diets of young children in Bangladesh, Vietnam, Ethiopia (2009-2014)**
 - Improvements in **child dietary diversity**
 - Substantial **variability by context**
 - *Impact: Systems strengthening interventions scaled up into large-scale programs globally*
- **Alive & Thrive: behavior change and systems strengthening interventions to support maternal diets during pregnancy in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and India (2015-2023)**
 - Improvements in **maternal dietary diversity**, varied by context
 - Improved consumption of iron supplements
 - Insights on systems levers for nutrition improvements in health systems.
 - *Impact: Maternal nutrition efforts being scaled into health systems in focus countries*



Sources: Menon P et al, *JN* 2016; Menon P et al., *PLOS Med* 2016; Nguyen et al., *JN* 2017; Kim SS et al., *JN* 2018; Nguyen et al., *JN* 2021; Kim et al., *JN* 2022



Testing, adapting, and scaling solutions: Gender- and nutrition-sensitive agriculture improves more than diets in Bangladesh



- Women's empowerment is associated with household food security, better diets and nutrition ([Quisumbing et al. 2023](#))
 - In Bangladesh, women's involvement in agricultural decisions and participation in groups associated with greater crop diversification away from rice and towards fruits and other crops. ([De Pinto et al. 2020](#))
- **Four years post-program**, a nutrition-sensitive and gender-responsive program (ANGeL) in Bangladesh had sustained impacts on women's empowerment, consumption, and diet quality, and reduced the likelihood that households relied on harmful coping strategies ([Hoddinott et al. 2023](#))

Testing, adapting, and scaling solutions: Mobilizing the power of the collective through group-based approaches

- Women's group-based platforms increasingly used as a modality for empowering women and delivering nutrition interventions
- SHG platforms in India have helped women build assets ([Raghunathan et al. 2022](#)), improve empowerment ([Kumar et al. 2021](#)), increase knowledge of agricultural practices ([Raghunathan et al. 2019](#)) and **improve diets**.
- Yet, must be realistic about using these platforms. Overloading them can detract from their core functions; not involving men is a missed opportunity ([Kumar et al. 2024](#))



Tackling affordability of nutritious diets and stunting by combining cash transfers and nutrition behavior change in Bangladesh



Photo credit: Aminul Khandaker, IFPRI-Dhaka

Cash plus behavior change had the greatest impact on diversity of diets			
NORTH		SOUTH	
Cash	Fruit	Cash	Eggs
Food	Legumes	Food	Legumes
½ Cash, ½ Food	Legumes	½ Cash, ½ Food	No significant impacts
Cash+BCC	Legumes Leafy green vegetables Fruit Meat Fish Eggs Milk/dairy	Food+BCC	Legumes Leafy green vegetables Fruit Fish Eggs

Cash + BCC arm also had greatest stunting impacts



Testing solutions: Reaching young girls and adolescents with interventions like school meals can have intergenerational impacts



ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-24433-w>

OPEN



Intergenerational nutrition benefits of India's national school feeding program

Suman Chakrabarti¹, Samuel P. Scott^{1✉}, Harold Alderman¹, Purnima Menon¹ & Daniel O. Gilligan¹

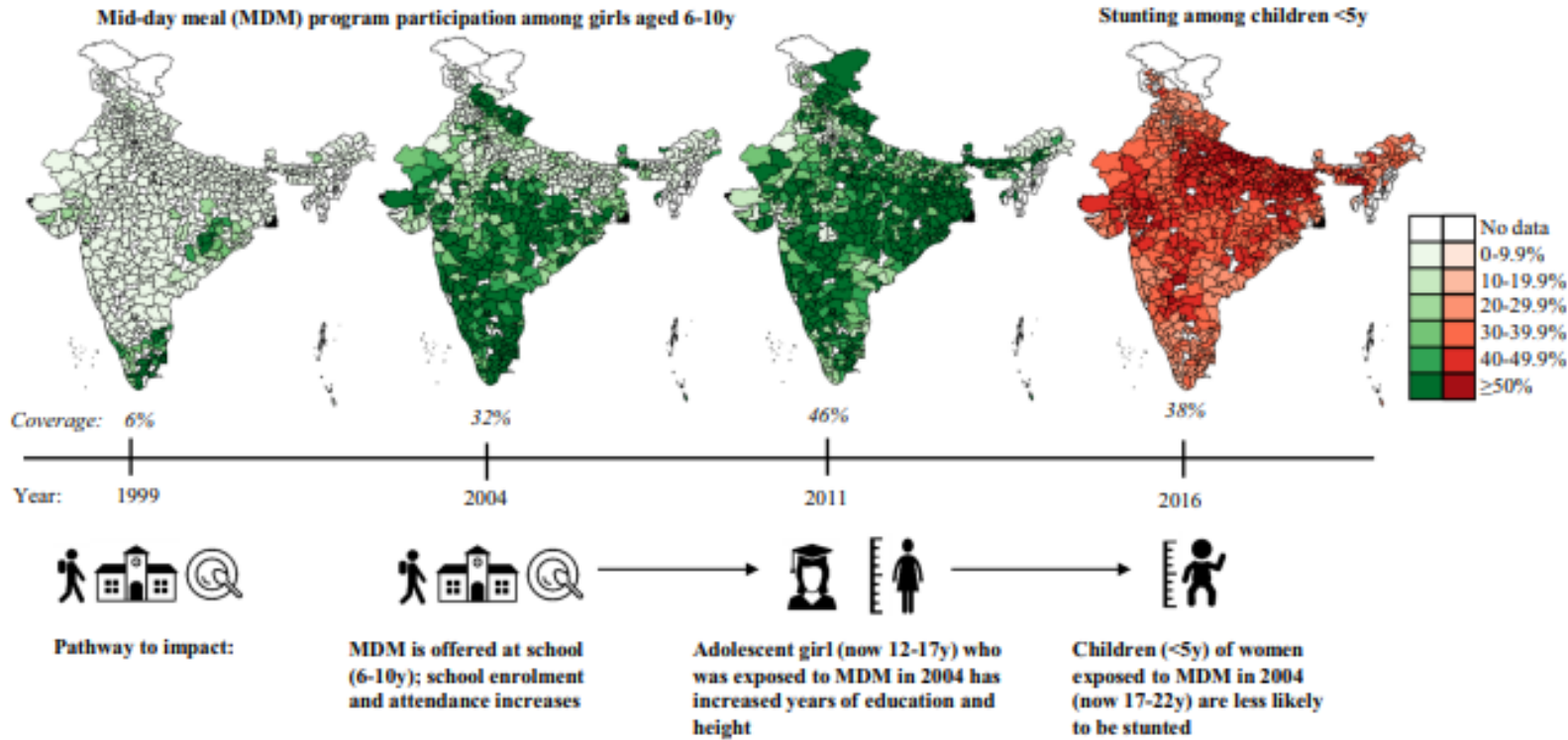


Fig. 1 Overview of study design and proposed pathway. Coverage refers to the proportion of girls aged 6–10 years who received a MDM in school. Source for MDM program coverage data (green maps): NSS-CES 55 (2000), 61 (2005) and 68 (2012). Source for child stunting data (red map): NFHS4 (2016). MDM, mid-day meal. Source data are provided as a Source Data file.

Connecting the nutrition policy community in S. Asia

Delivering for Nutrition (D4N): South Asia's premier nutrition conference.

- D4N2025 will be the fifth regional conference and the eighth overall.
- 32 co-hosts (global, regional & national)
- This year's conference focuses on ***solutions to address nutrition challenges***

Nutrition leadership: To create and support cadre of nutrition leaders and local institutes

- Conducting specialized short nutrition courses for administrators and officials across geographies.
- Support nutrition courses organized by development and government partners like Tata Trusts, CCDC, SJRI & MANAGE
- Develop online learning modules to expand access to systems thinking for nutrition transformation.



Future directions for addressing South Asia's nutrition challenges

- **Clarifying situation and outlook**

- Understand, diagnose and predict South Asia's nutrition challenges using diverse data sources and foresight models
- *Trends*: Urbanization, changes in food/nutrition laws/policies, economic shocks, climate shocks, heat

- **Testing and scaling solutions: A focus on food systems and wider sectoral action**

- Develop learning approaches and tools to capture systemwide effects of innovations on healthy diets
- Plate-to-farm: Start with consumers, diets and food environments to understand how to achieve healthy diets, including innovative end-to-end approaches
- Examine how social protection, health, water & sanitation, education, women's empowerment actions can complement and enhance food systems transformation efforts for nutrition

- **Enabling environments & capacity strengthening: Policy and stakeholder support on new nutrition challenges**

- On-demand, responsive and pro-active capacity strengthening and policy support to nutrition stakeholders in S. Asia
- Delivering for Nutrition platform – leveraging and deepening network for nutrition leadership