



Nepal's Journey Towards Zero Hunger: The Triple Challenge of Food Security, Food Self-Sufficiency and Economic Prosperity

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Introduction

Nepal has made remarkable progress in reducing hunger, poverty, and malnutrition, yet faces persistent challenges in achieving food self-sufficiency and economic prosperity. While undernourishment has dropped to 5.7 percent and child stunting to 25 percent, malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies remain widespread, particularly in provinces such as Karnali, Madhesh, and Lumbini. Agriculture, which sustains most of the population, is still largely subsistence-based and heavily dependent on imports, making the country vulnerable to various shocks. Looking at the trends so far, globally, it is no longer realistic to expect to achieve Zero Hunger targets by 2030. In Nepal, despite the progress made so far, meeting those targets appears to be a daunting task though it may be possible to attain targets on some indicators with accelerated efforts. Food self-sufficiency is also a national security issue for a country like Nepal, which is vulnerable to external shocks as well as natural disasters. Nepal has the potential to be self-sufficient in food and attaining this should be a high priority.

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Approach

- **Purpose:** Provide evidence-based insights to guide policies for food security, self-sufficiency, and prosperity.
- **Collaboration:** A joint effort of NDRI and PRI to inform government, development partners, and civil society.
- **Focus:** Examines progress, challenges, and the policy landscape shaping Nepal's path toward Zero Hunger.
- **Structure:** Organized into four sections: **Introduction & Methods, Current Situation & Trends, Drivers of Food Security, and Governance, Policy & Way Forward**

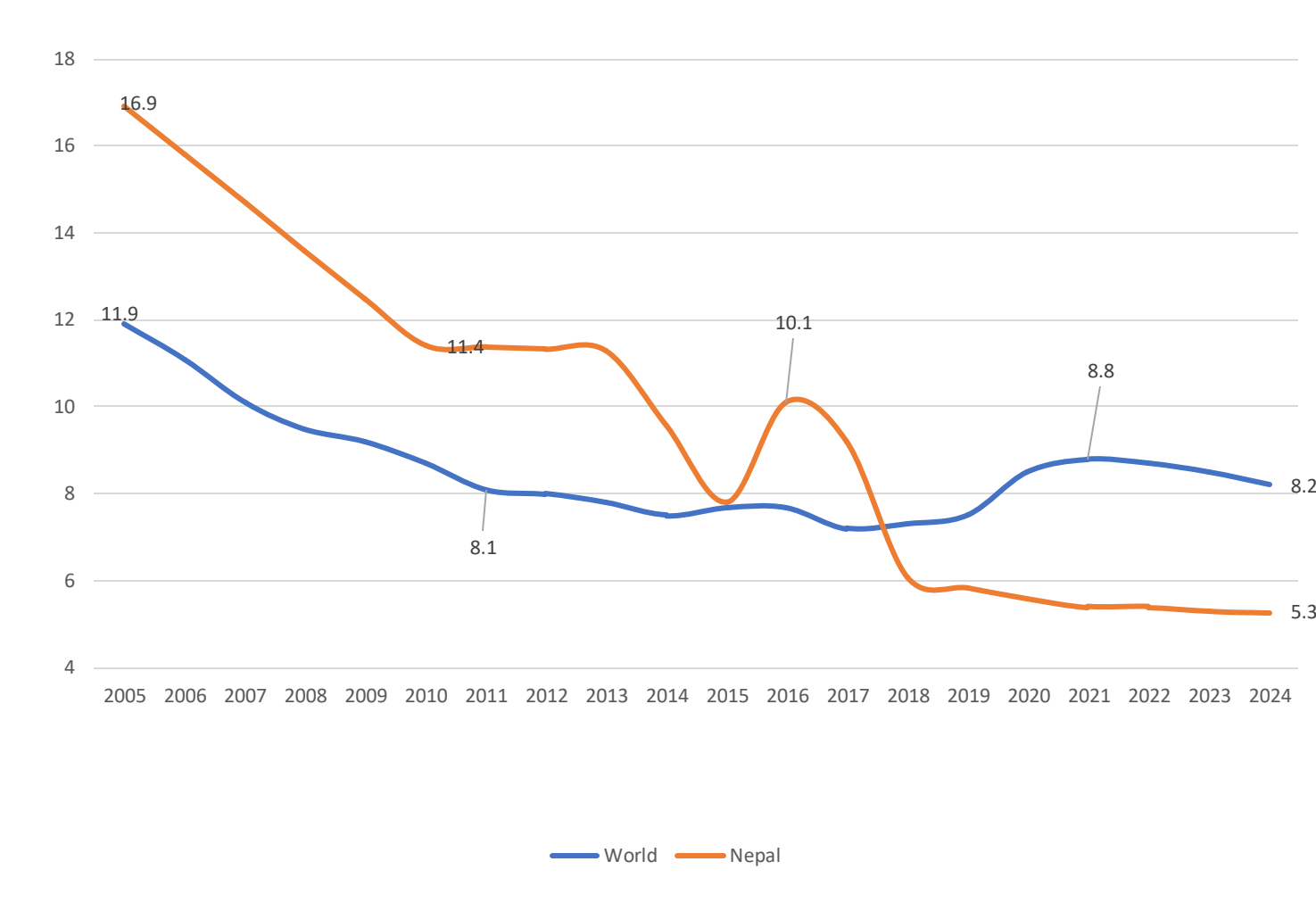
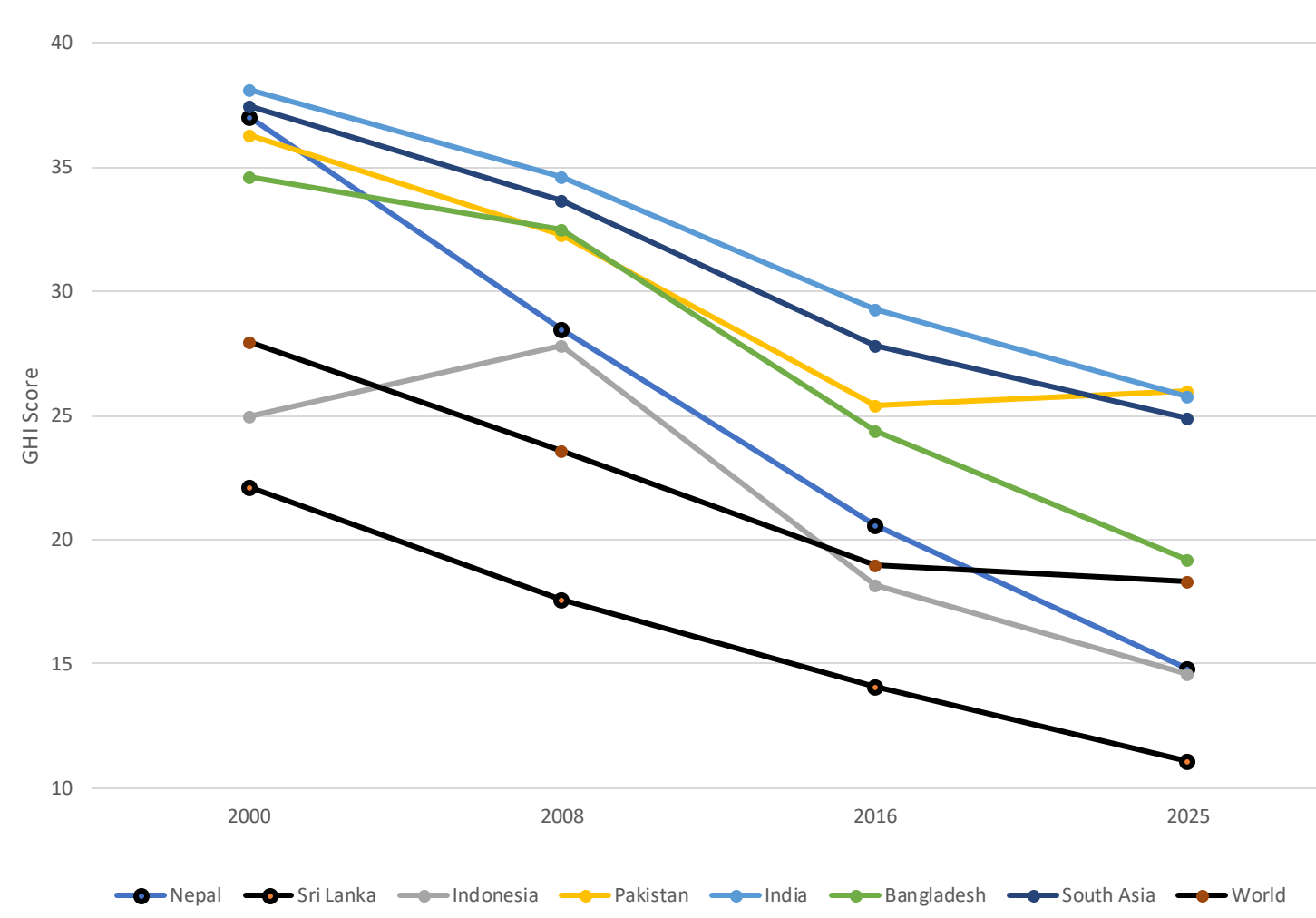
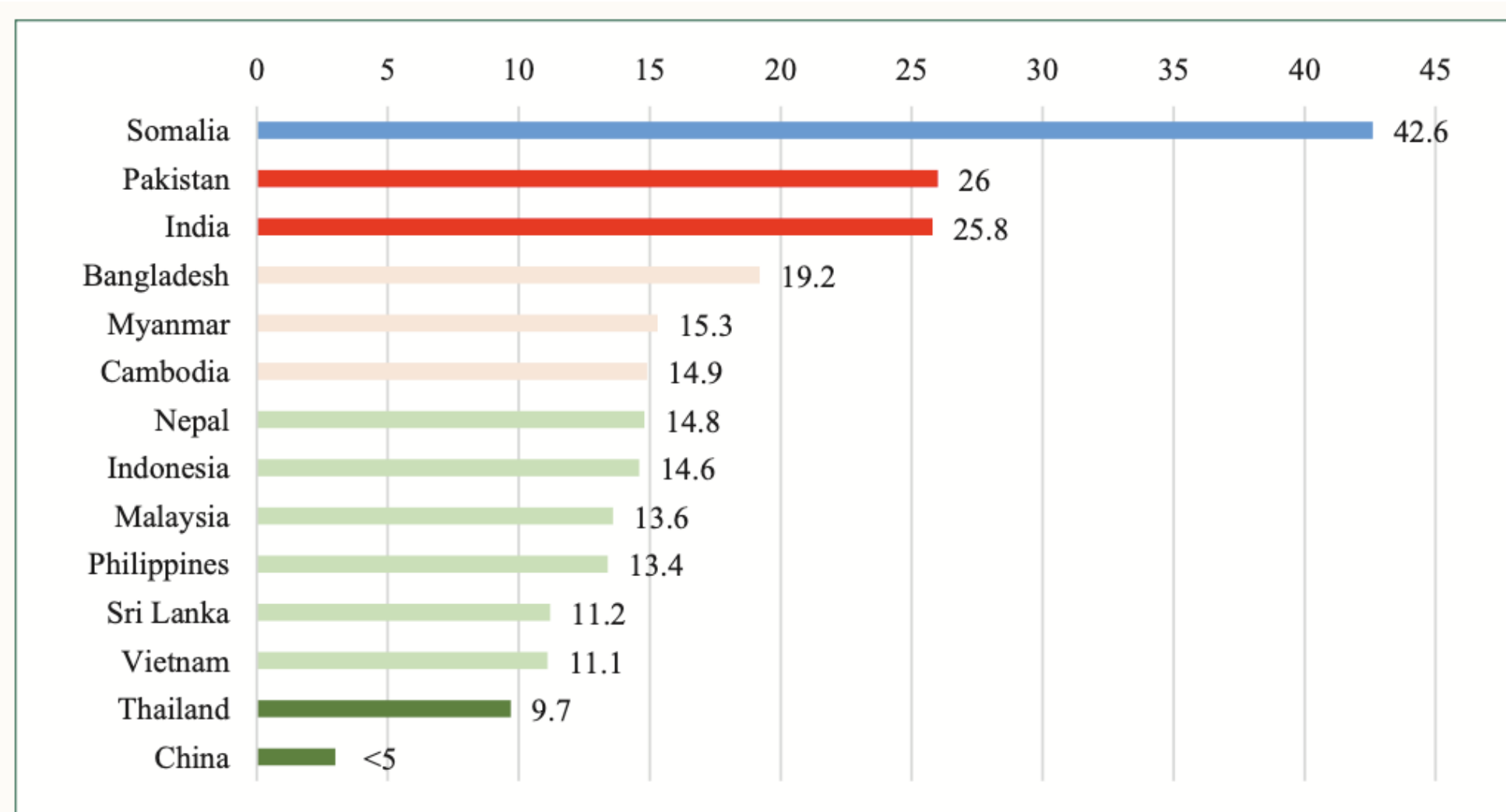
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Objectives

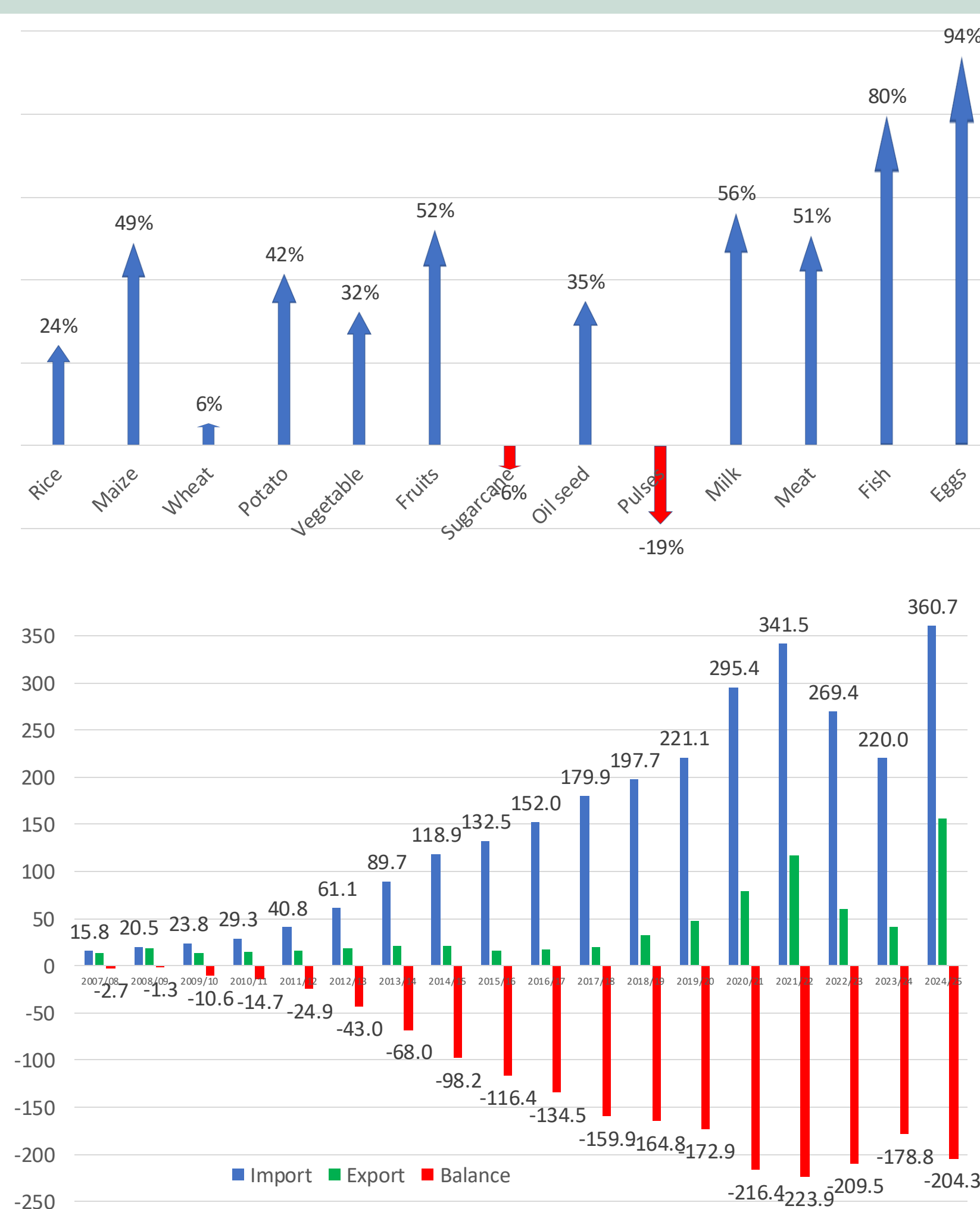
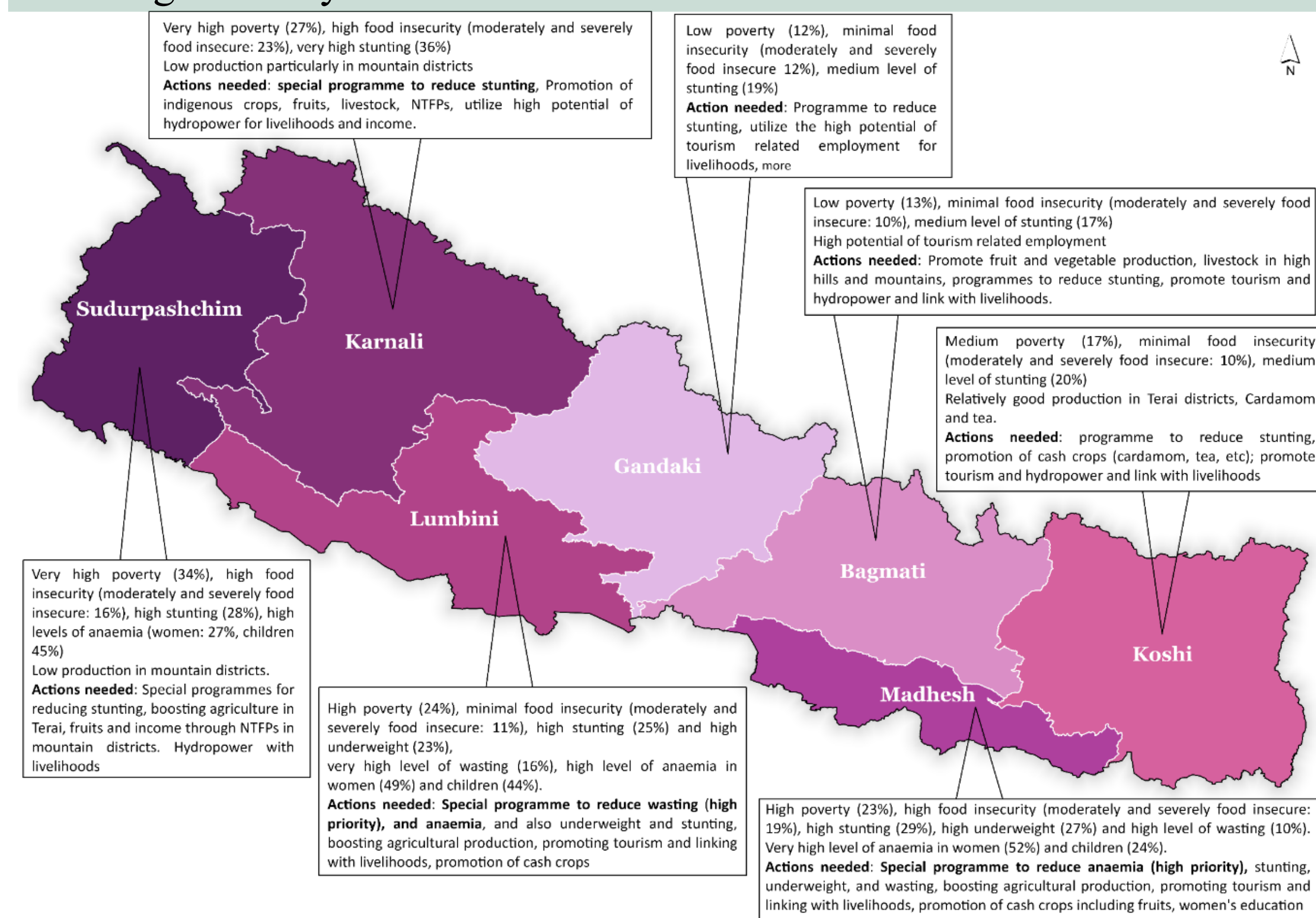
- Assess Nepal's progress towards achieving Zero Hunger by analyzing trends in food security, and nutrition.
- Examine key challenges hindering food security, including agricultural constraints, trade dependency, and climate risks.
- Evaluate the policy landscape, including existing food security programmes and their effectiveness.
- Provide recommendations to accelerate Nepal's path towards food self-sufficiency and Zero Hunger.

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Key Findings



Nepal has progressively improved its Global Hunger Index score and fares better than many neighbouring countries. Prevalence of undernourishment has gone down significantly.



However, an overview of the provincial-level food security and nutrition status shows significant variations across the country.

- Nepal has made significant improvements in reducing poverty. Estimates by NSO indicate that the prevalence of poverty has decreased from 42 percent in 1995-96 to 30.8 percent in 2003-04, 25.2 percent in 2010-11 and 20.3 percent in 2022-23. However, with a lack of adequate livelihoods, and high unemployment, the working-age population are increasingly relying on out-migration in search of income opportunities.
- Climate change impacts all aspects of food security including availability, access and utilization. Proper investment is needed in the preparedness and anticipatory actions to enhance resilience.
- Successive governments in Nepal have been taking various policy measures related to food security in Nepal, and since 2015, their policies have been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 2 (Zero Hunger).

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Broad Policy Recommendations

- **Coordinated governance across levels:** Strengthen coordination among federal, provincial, and local governments, while improving collaboration between the National Planning Commission, sectoral ministries, development partners, academia, research institutions, and civil society.
- **Food self-sufficiency in key staples:** Prioritise self-sufficiency in basic food items through improved access to quality seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, climate-adaptive farming practices, better soil and water management, stronger extension services, and enhanced market support.
- **Adopt a food systems approach:** Address food security and nutrition holistically by strengthening the entire food value chain, from production and processing to storage, distribution, consumption, and waste management, through coordinated multi-stakeholder efforts.
- **Prioritise nutrition interventions:** Apply a life-cycle approach to tackle malnutrition, focusing on adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and young children, while targeting high-burden regions for stunting, wasting, and anaemia reduction.
- **Strengthen targeted social protection:** Continue and improve social protection programmes with more effective targeting to ensure vulnerable populations receive appropriate support and limited resources are used efficiently.
- **Promote resilient livelihoods and economic growth:** Reduce long-term dependence on remittances by accelerating economic growth and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities within the country.
- **Increase financing for Zero Hunger:** Mobilise greater domestic and international investment for food security and nutrition, including through climate finance mechanisms and a broader donor base.
- **Promote evidence-based programming:** Strengthen food security and nutrition planning through regular evidence generation, including district- and municipality-level data and small-area estimation techniques for better resource targeting.



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