

Levels and Inequities in Chronic Undernutrition Among Urban Children in South Asia

Siddharth Agarwal, Prakash C Sahoo and Vani Sethi
Urban Health Resource Centre, India [www.uhrc.in]



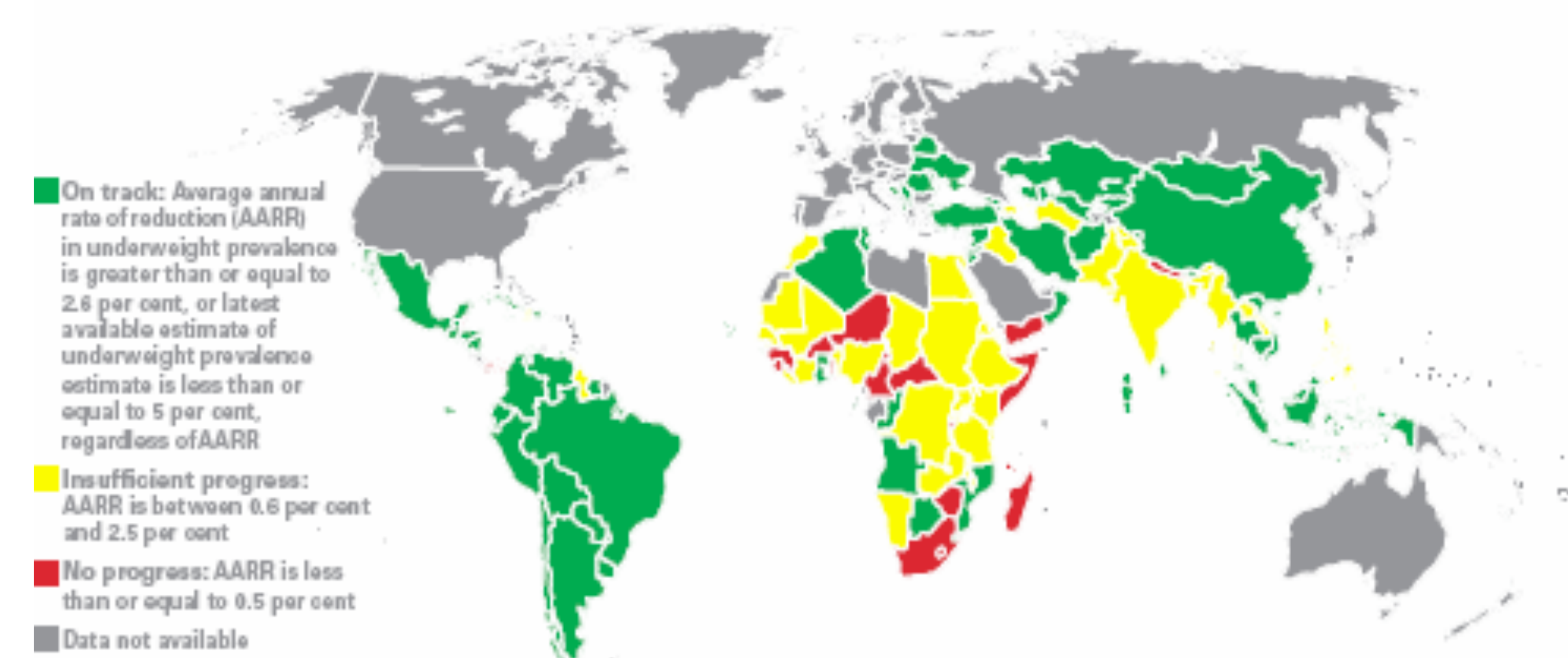
1. Introduction:

1.1 40% of developing world's chronically undernourished (stunted) under-fives live in 6 Asian Countries¹

Country	Stunted Under-fives (%)	No. of Children who are stunted (thousands, 2008)	Percentage of Developing World's Total Stunted Children (195.1 million)
India	48%	60,788	31.2%
Pakistan	42%	9868	5.1%
Bangladesh	43%	7,219	3.7%
Afghanistan	59%	2,910	1.5%
Myanmar	41%	1,880	1.0%
Nepal	49%	1,743	<1%

1.2 Urban – rural aggregate comparisons mask inequities and deprivation of urban poor.

1.3 Insufficient or No Progress made by 6 Asian Countries for Achieving MDG-1¹



1.4 Reducing Inequities-Key to achieving MDGs²

2. Objective:

Assess inequities in stunting among urban under-five children in South-Asia

3. Methodology:

3.1 Country-level Demographic Health Survey (DHS) provides adequate sample to unravel inequity among economic segments in urban areas based on wealth-index used by DHS

3.2 DHS Nutrition Data was available for India, Bangladesh and Nepal

3.3 Official country estimates of urban poverty were used to determine cut-offs

3.4 DHS urban- nutrition data was analyzed by disaggregated by wealth-quartiles of population/sample for Bangladesh and India and deciles for Nepal

4. Key Results:

4.1 India, Bangladesh & Nepal home to 10.6 million urban poor under-fives. Of which, 5.8 million suffer from chronic undernutrition

Parameters	India	Bangladesh	Nepal
Population (in millions)			
• Total	1210	164	29.2
• Urban	377.1	17	5.4
• Urban Under-fives	41	2.0	0.58
Urban Annual Growth Rate (%)	2.38	3.21	4.98
Official Urban Poverty Estimate (%)	25.7	28.4	9.6
Method of calculation of Official poverty estimate	Per Capita Consumption	Cost of Basic Needs	Minimum Calorie Requirements
Total No. of Urban Poor under-fives (in Millions)	10	0.6	54,000

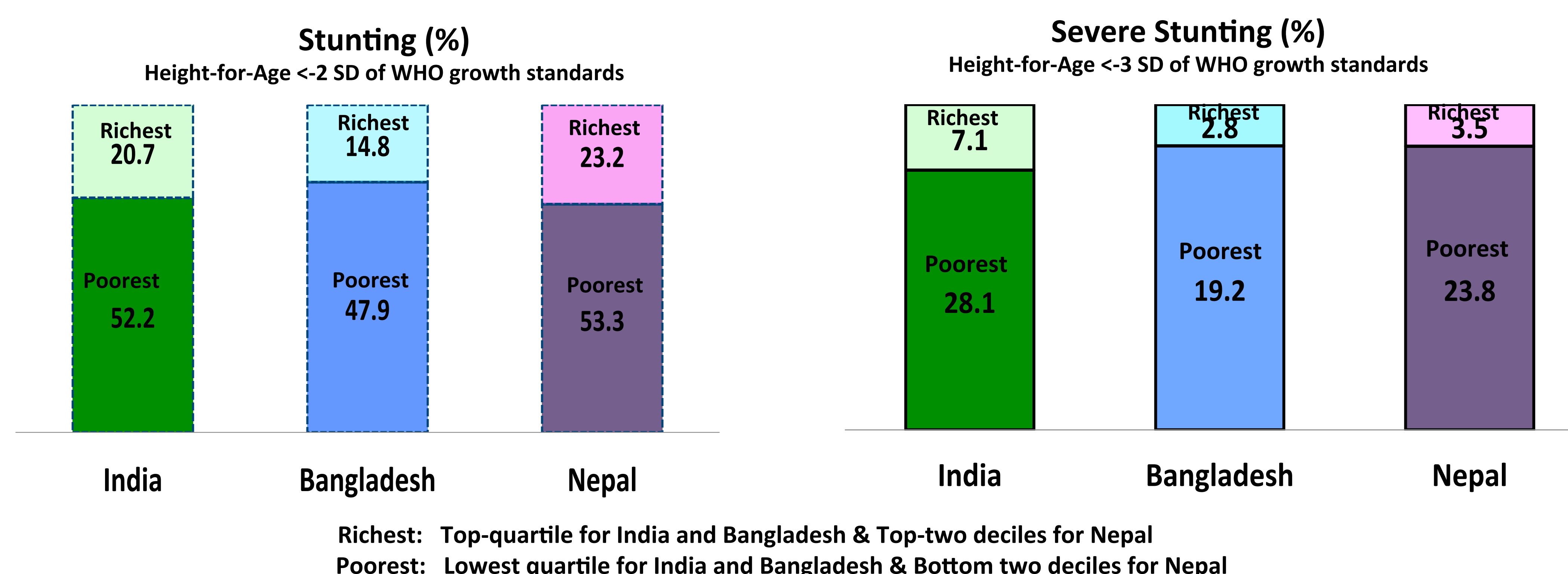
Parameters	India	Bangladesh	Nepal
DHS Year	2005-06	2007	2006
Urban sub-set sample size	11331	1109	639
Type of dis-aggregation of wealth index of urban sub-set done for inequity analysis	Quartile-wise	Quartile-wise	Decile-wise
Poorest	Lowest Quartile	Lowest Quartile	Bottom Two deciles
Richest	Top-most Quartile	Top-most Quartile	Top-two deciles
No. of Urban Poor under-fives (in Millions)			
• Stunted	5.5	0.3	28,782
• Severely Stunted	2.8	0.1	12,852

Stunted: height-for-age <-2 SD of WHO growth standard median
Severely Stunted: height-for-age <-3 SD of WHO growth standard median

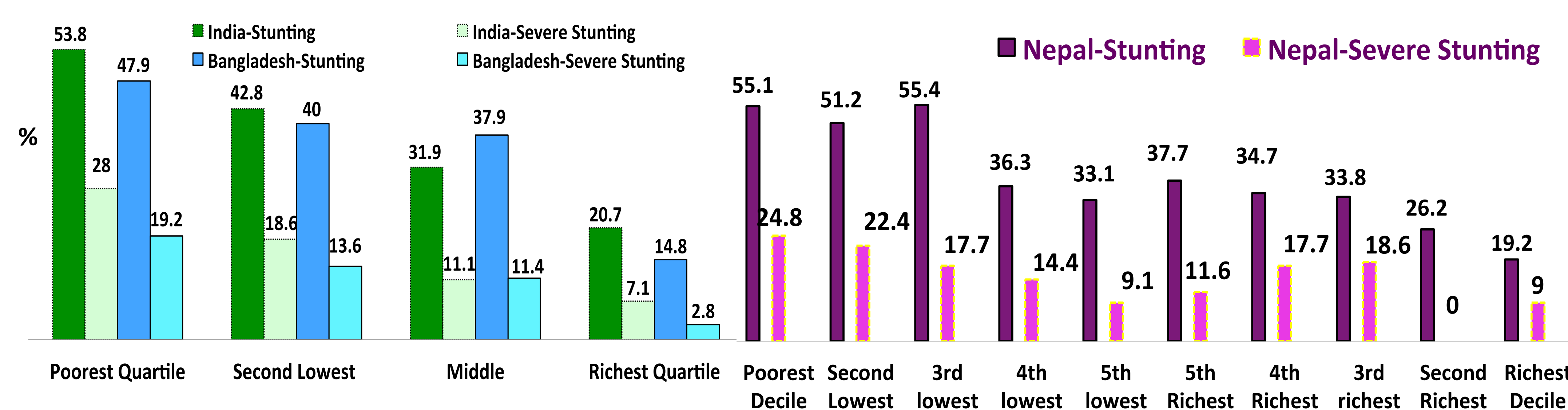
4.2 Compared to Richest, in poorest children:

(i) Stunting was 2-3 times higher in the 3 countries

(ii) Severe stunting was 3-4 times higher in India /Nepal & 9 times higher in Bangladesh



4.3 Stunting in quartile/decile next to the poorest was also high at 40-50%



5. Conclusion:

5.1 There is an urgent need for disaggregating urban data and accelerating action for addressing high-levels of stunting in urban poor in South-Asia.

5.2 Stunting in quartile/deciles next to lowest is equally high.

References:

1. UNICEF 2009. Tracking progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition. 2. UNICEF 2010. Narrowing the Equity gap.