

# Maharashtra's Child Stunting Declines: What has Driven Them?

## Findings of a Multidisciplinary Analysis

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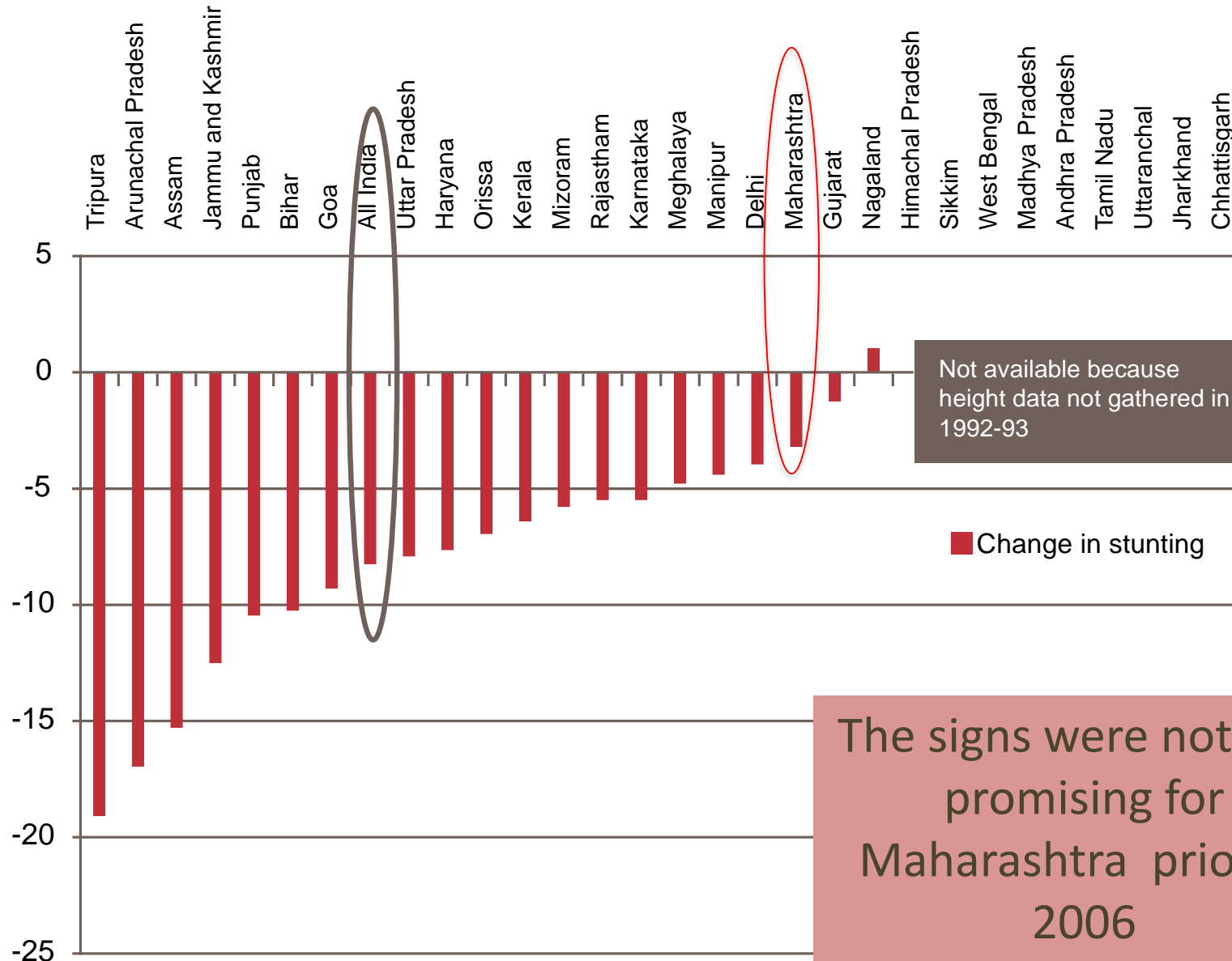
# Outline

- The Question
- Methods
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Implications

# The Question

- Stunting in the State has declined from 39% to 24% between 2006 and 2012 (AARR ~ 7%)
- Much faster than most other places
  - Ethiopia ~ 2, Cambodia ~2, Bangladesh ~3, Vietnam~4, China ~8
- Stunting declines in Maharashtra were not spectacular between 1993 and 2006
- Are the declines real and what has driven them?

**Figure 2.1: Change in stunting, by state, in India, 1992/1993 to 2005/2006**



Source: Adapted from Menon (2012).

# Methods

- Evidence from existing reports and studies
  - Organized by basic, underlying, immediate determinants and corresponding interventions
- Evidence from key informant interviews
  - 28 key stakeholder interviews and 4 focus groups in 4 Districts
- Evidence from comparing the 2 surveys
  - 2005-6 (NFHS3) and 2012 (MCNS)
- Do the 3 methods tell complementary stories?

# Findings—Evidence from Reports and Studies

Determinants	Performance
State GDP	Highest in India, rapid growth, above all-India average
Household income	Changes in 1999-2008, slightly below all-India average
Income Inequality	Highest in India, but declining in 2000s
Poverty	Level in 2004 same as All-India, declines have been stronger than all-India average
Quality of Governance	4 studies → Maharashtra is a middle ranked State (transparency, service delivery, anticorruption, law & judiciary)
State Budget to Nutrition	% of budget to nutrition 1% in 2009 → 1.5% in 2012
Food Security	State is mid-ranking in GHI, agricultural growth is low
PDS	Leakages: 49.3 (2005) → 42.5 (2008) % (12 <sup>th</sup> /20 States)
Women's status	Various measures show State to be in top third of states
Open defecation	58.5% in 2011 Census
Health system	Not clear
ICDS	2 <sup>nd</sup> best performer ion 2005-6; Improvements 2009-2013 in filling AWW vacancies much better than All India average

# Conclusions from Existing Reports and Studies

- Enabling environment has been supportive
  - Strong GDP levels and growth
  - Poverty reduction
  - Leakage in PDS declining
  - Filling of front line ICDS expertise
  - Increased spending on nutrition
- But vulnerabilities remain
  - Weak agricultural growth
  - High inequality (although declining)
  - High levels of OD
  - PDS leakages still very high

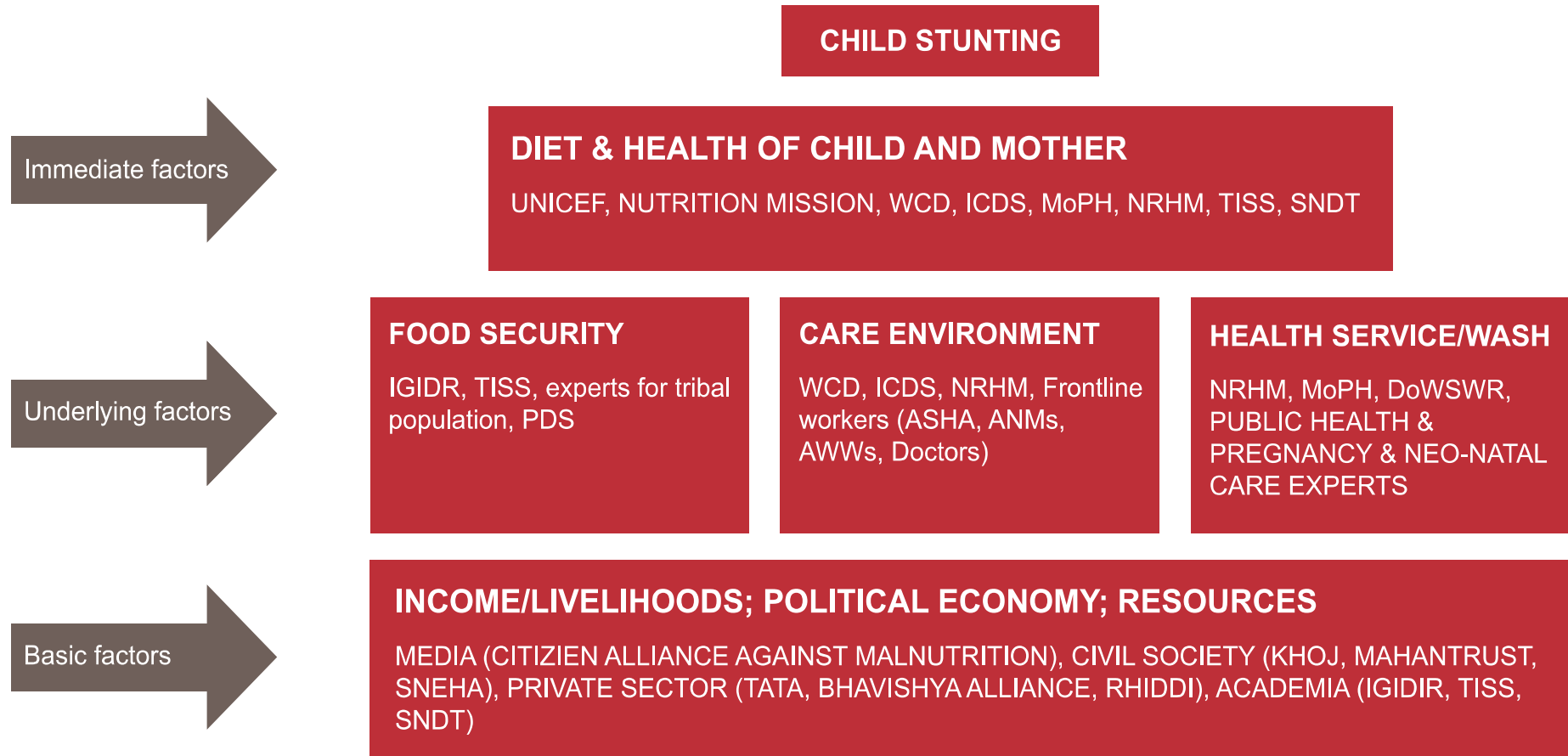
## Findings—evidence from the surveys

- Once adjusted for age, decline is actually 12.5% rather than 15%, but still very large
- Declines in stunting are broad based and are largest in the most deprived groups (e.g. lowest wealth, least literate, no improved water)
- The relationship between the determinants of stunting and stunting rates is unchanged in the 2 years—what is driving the declines are changes in the levels of the determinants
- Broad range of determinants have improved: age of mother at first birth, maternal underweight, maternal literacy, antenatal visits, delivery at home, child feeding practices, access to toilets, access to ICDS
- Some determinants have not improved: educational attainment, improved water access; some breastfeeding practices (e.g. early initiation); child dietary diversity
- Household food security and water and sanitation access are not associated with stunting in the regressions



# Findings from Stakeholders

**Figure 4.1: Schematic guiding stakeholder selection for interview**



Source: Adapted from UNICEF (1990).

# Findings from the stakeholder analysis

## Perceptions about why stunting has declined

- Strong economic growth
- Improved social, nutrition and health programming (especially the NRHM—ANC, skilled birth attendant, early initiation of breastfeeding)
- State's Nutrition Mission seen as a key way of making nutrition visible
- Increased state budget allocations to nutrition
- Strong media and civil society
- Strong focus on frontline worker strengthening in nutrition and health
- Introduction of community management of severe acute malnutrition in Village Child Development Centres
- Yet to be resolved: poor access to sanitation and improved water, tribal inequalities, urban poverty

# Conclusions and Implications

- The decline in stunting is real
- Similar findings on reasons across 3 methods
- It is broad based—at many levels and many sectors
- It is the result of multiple improvements, some modest
- But there are still vulnerabilities
- If stunting cannot decline in Maharashtra it cannot decline anywhere—good enabling environment
- But enabling environment is sufficiently imperfect to assume similar declines will be achieved by some other Indian states -- and other countries
- Maharashtra's success is spectacular, but it was 10 years in the making and required sustained commitment from government and civil society