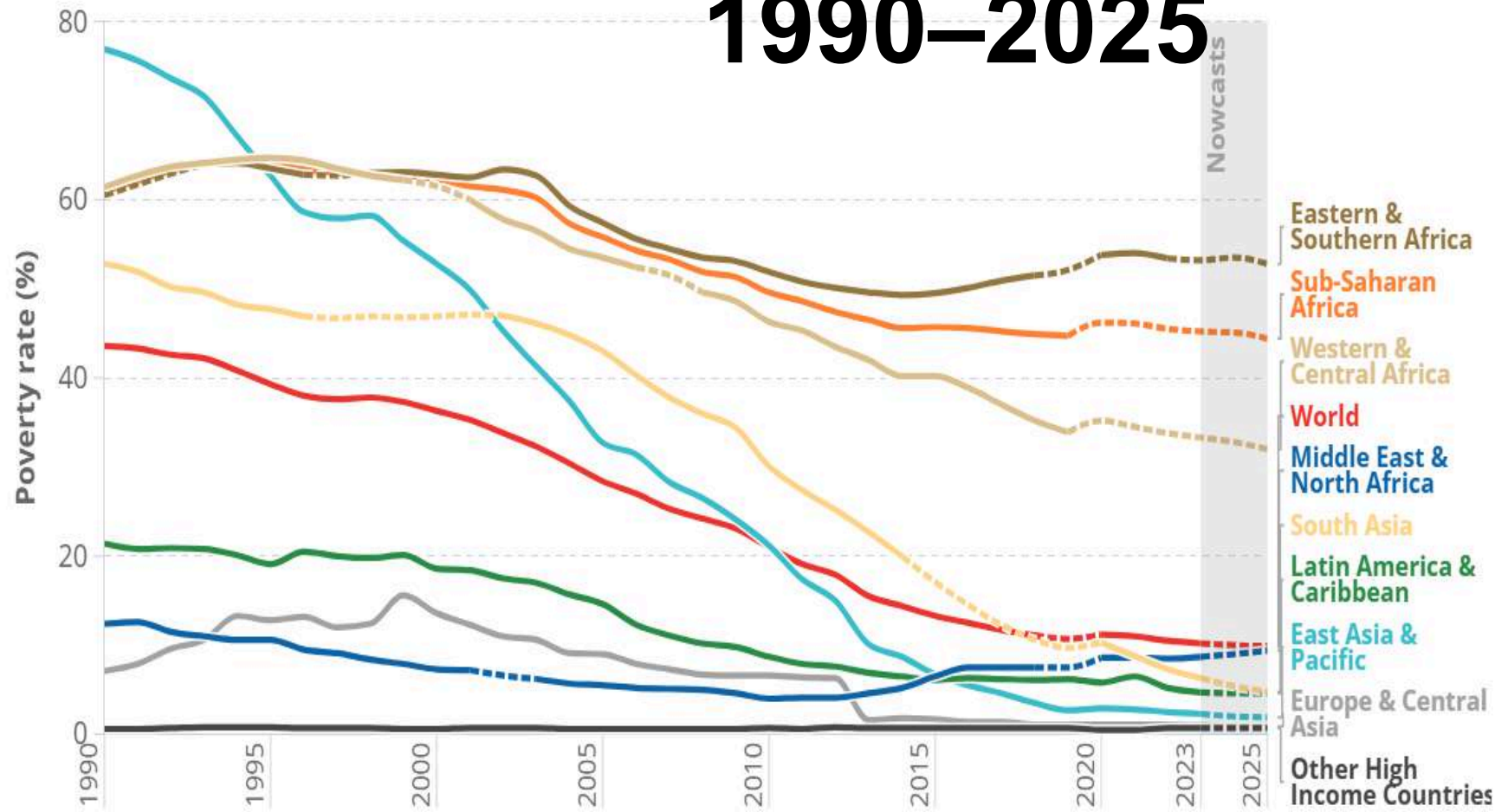# Poverty Alleviation, Inequality Reduction, and Food Security

Dr. Sharif Ahmed Chowdhury

October 28, 2025

Global and regional extreme poverty (PPP$3.0) trends, 1990–2025

- Today, 1 out of 10 people in the world is considered extreme poor

- Extreme poverty rates are highest in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, especially in the Eastern & Southern subregion

- Conversely, **East Asia & Pacific** has been the region experiencing the most gains

Poverty trends in Bangladesh (% of population)
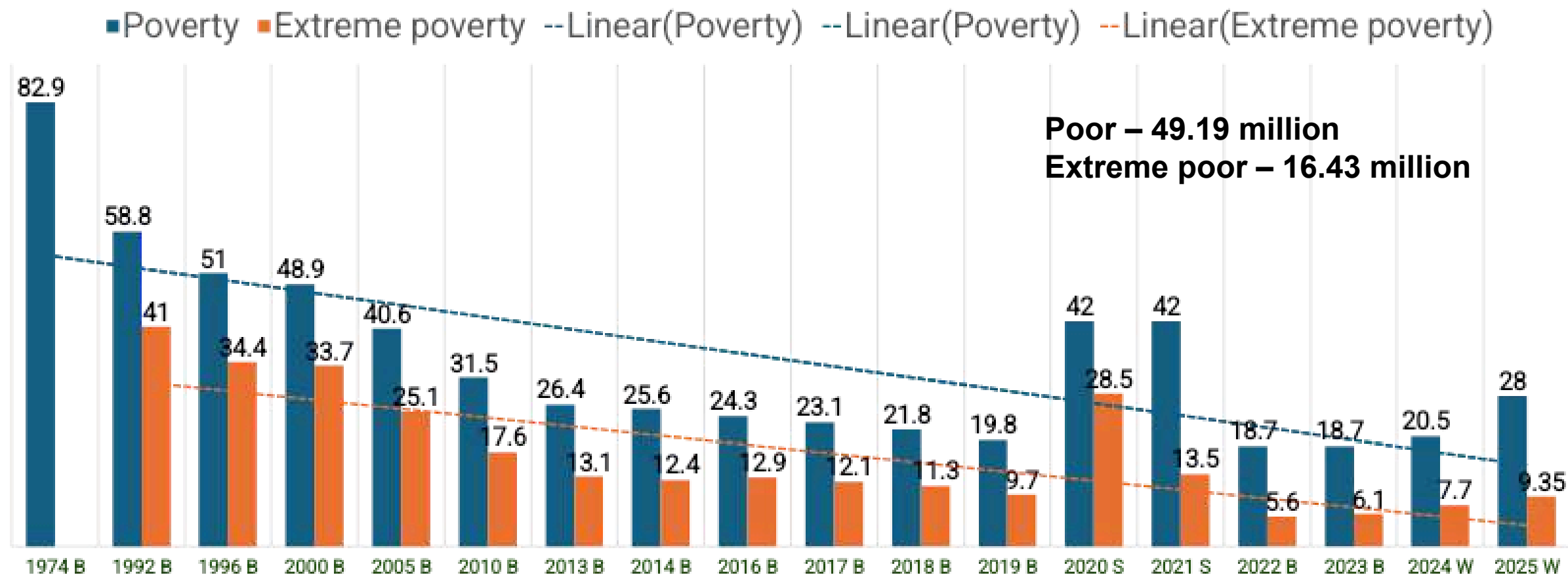
Regional variation of poverty

Regional variation: *Poverty pockets vary in their geophysics, agro-ecology, socio-economic, climate-vulnerability and accessibility. Poverty alleviation in each of them needs some special features to be addressed across the depth as well as the dimensions of poverty*

Upazila level Poverty Groups by Division
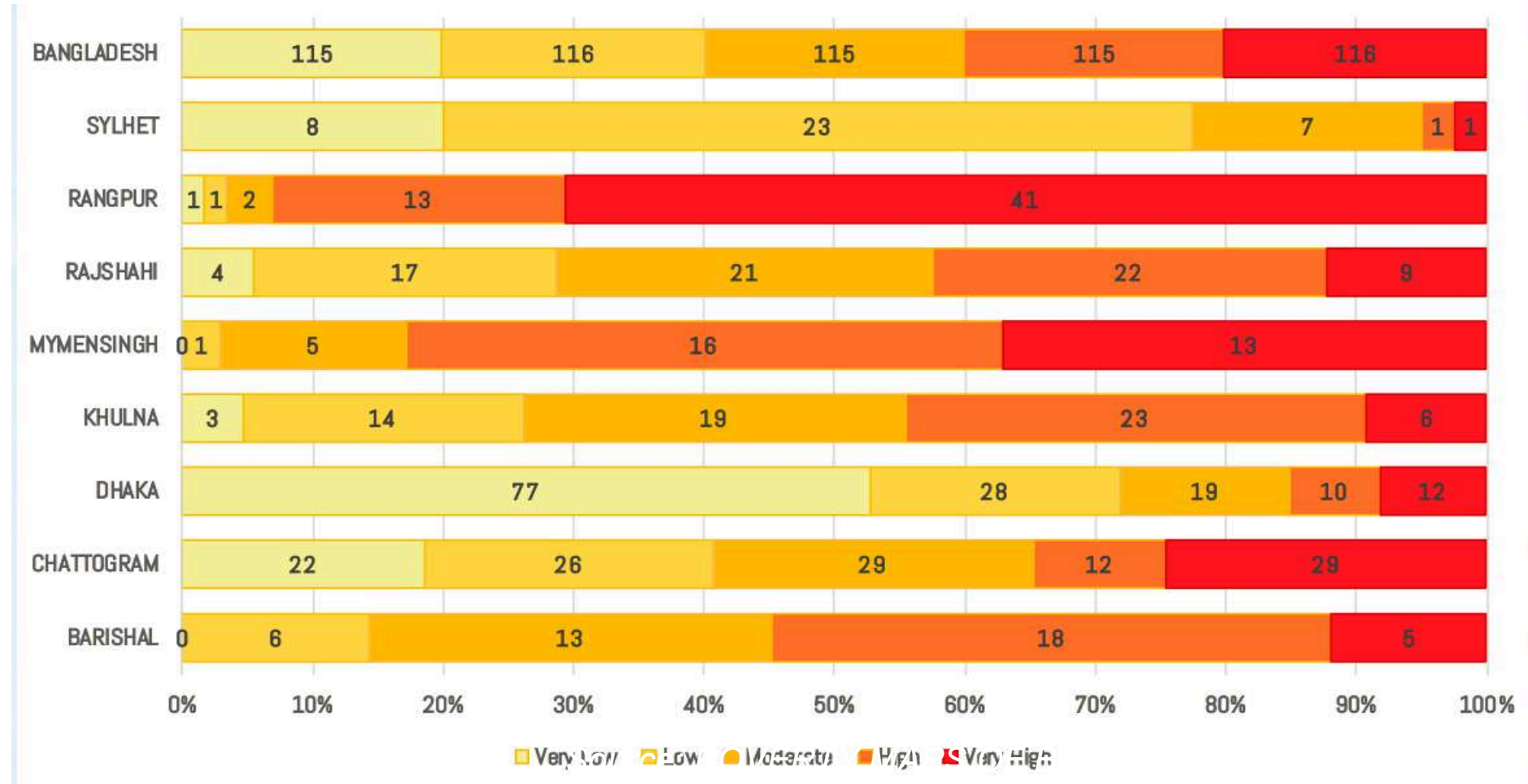
Multidimensional poverty

Multidimensional Poverty 2025 (survey year 2019)

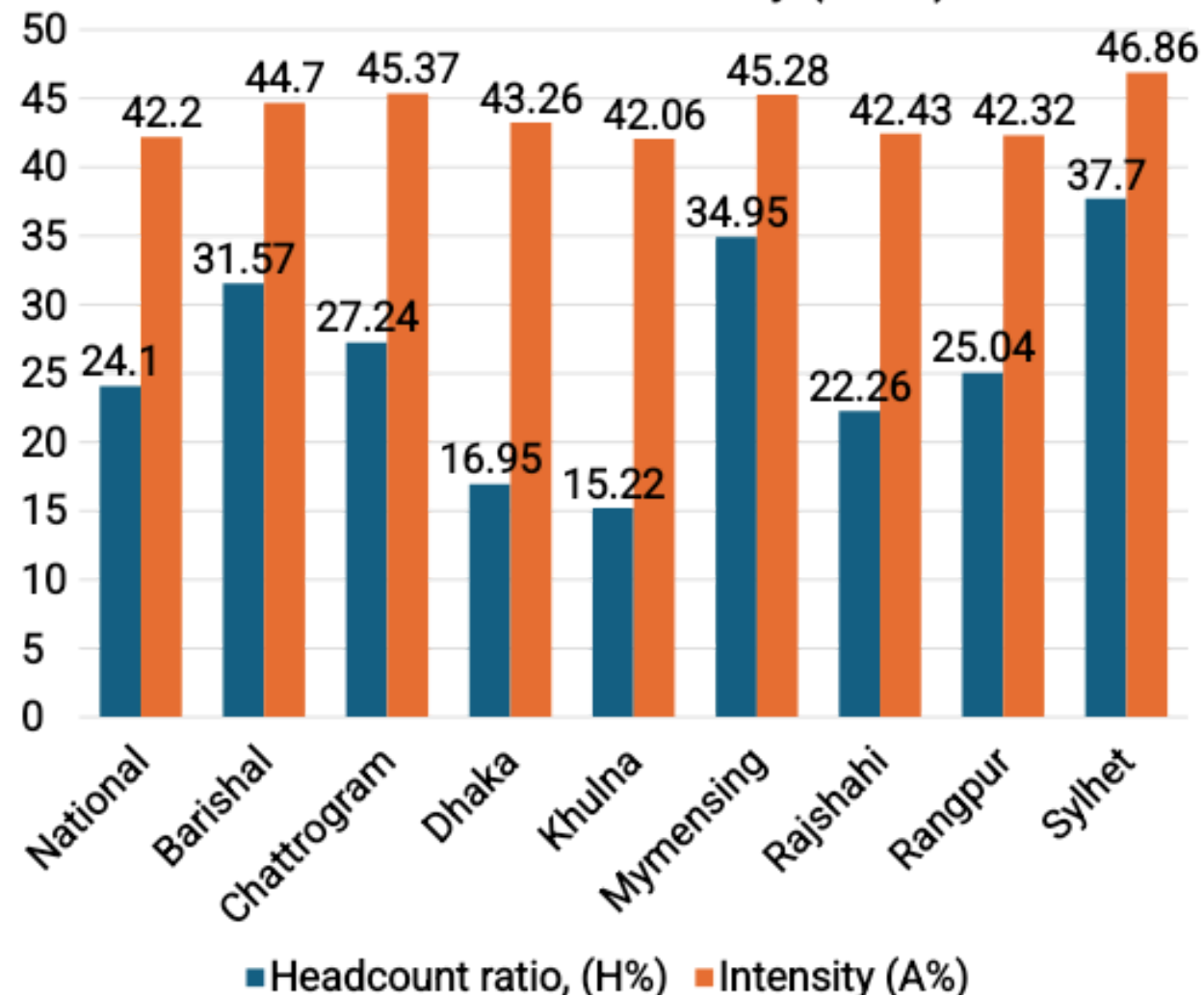| Parameter	Urban	Rural	Overall
MPI Value (survey year 2019)	0.059	0.119	0.106
Head count multidimensional EP (H, %)	13.48	27.00	24.05
Intensity of deprivation (A, %)	42.98	44.25	44.17

Regional variation in multidimensional poverty

Multidimensional poverty index (MPI) 2025

Region	MPI
Sylhet	0.177
Rangpur	0.106
Rajshahi	0.094
Mymensing	0.158
Khulna	0.064
Dhaka	0.073
Chattrogram	0.124
Barishal	0.141
National	0.106

Multidimensional Poverty (2025)

Region	Headcount ratio, (H%)	Intensity (A%)
National	24.1	42.2
Barishal	31.57	44.7
Chattrogram	27.24	45.37
Dhaka	16.95	43.26
Khulna	15.22	42.06
Mymensing	34.95	45.28
Rajshahi	22.26	42.43
Rangpur	25.04	42.32
Sylhet	37.7	46.86

■ Headcount ratio, (H%) ■ Intensity (A%)
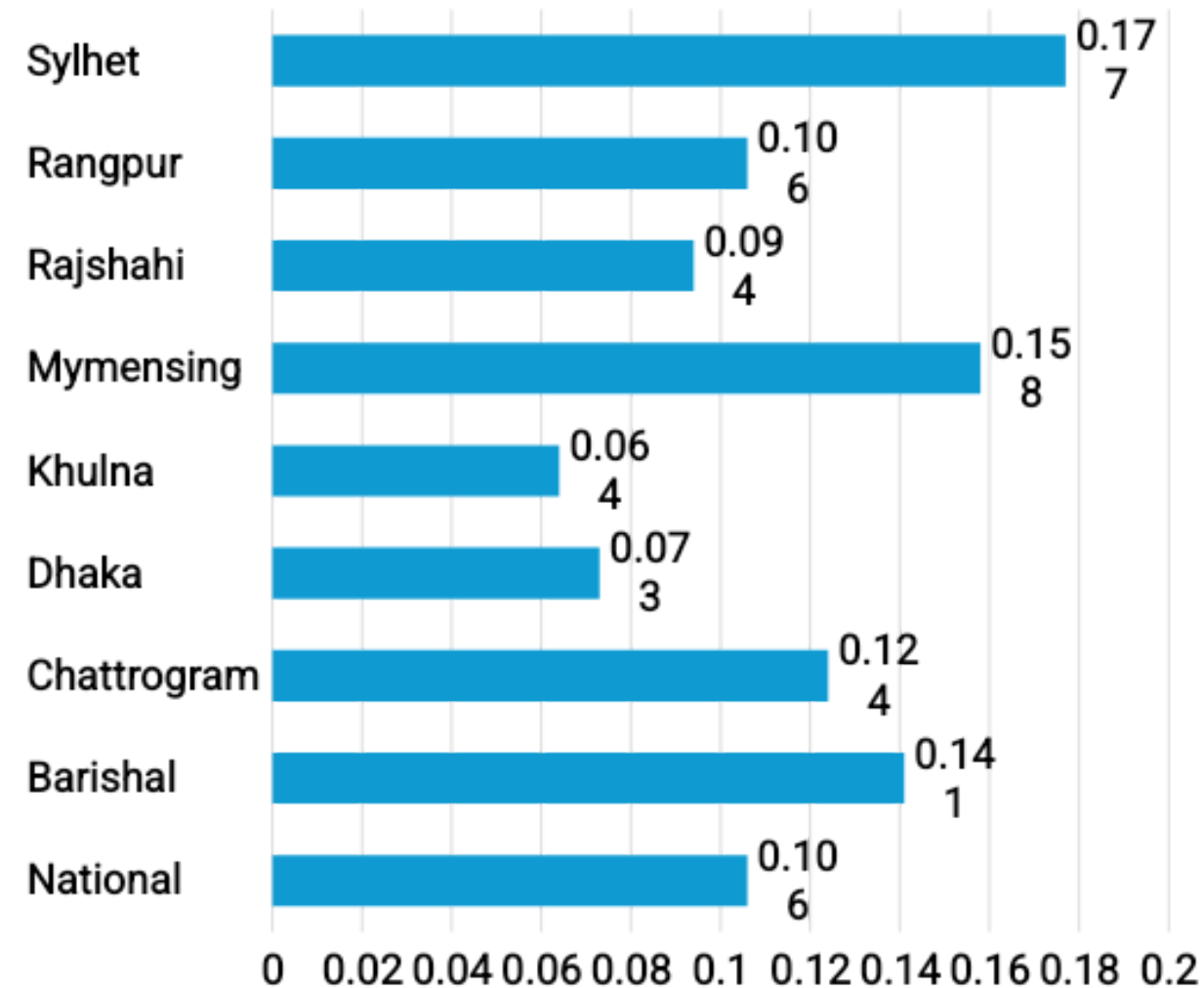
The poor are heterogeneous

% of households out of total 3911 HHs

Vulnerable HHs (20%)
Prioritize poverty eradication by investing in human, physical, and financial capital, resilient IGA, and resilience against shocks

Transient HHs (52%)
Diversify income, prioritize the growth of microenterprise, ensure market and income that reduce vulnerability

Progressive HHs (28%)
Prioritize sustainable micro-enterprises, ensure growth that enables better functioning labour markets, reduce vulnerability, and promote climate-resilient, resource-efficient, cleaner production (RECP) practices among microentrepreneurs

Data points: 5.3, 1.6, 2.2, 3.7, 6.9, 9.9, 12.8, 11.8, 9.4, 8.6, 6.8, 5.3, 4.3, 3.0, 2.7, 1.9, 1.9, 1.2, 0.7

Per capita income per day (BDT): <17, 17-33, 34-50, 51-67, 68-83, 84-100, 101-117, 118-133, 134-150, 151-167, 168-183, 184-200, 201-217, 218-233, 234-250, 251-267, 268-283, 284-300, 301-317

Source: PPEPP project, PKSF 2025

The poor vary in their capital
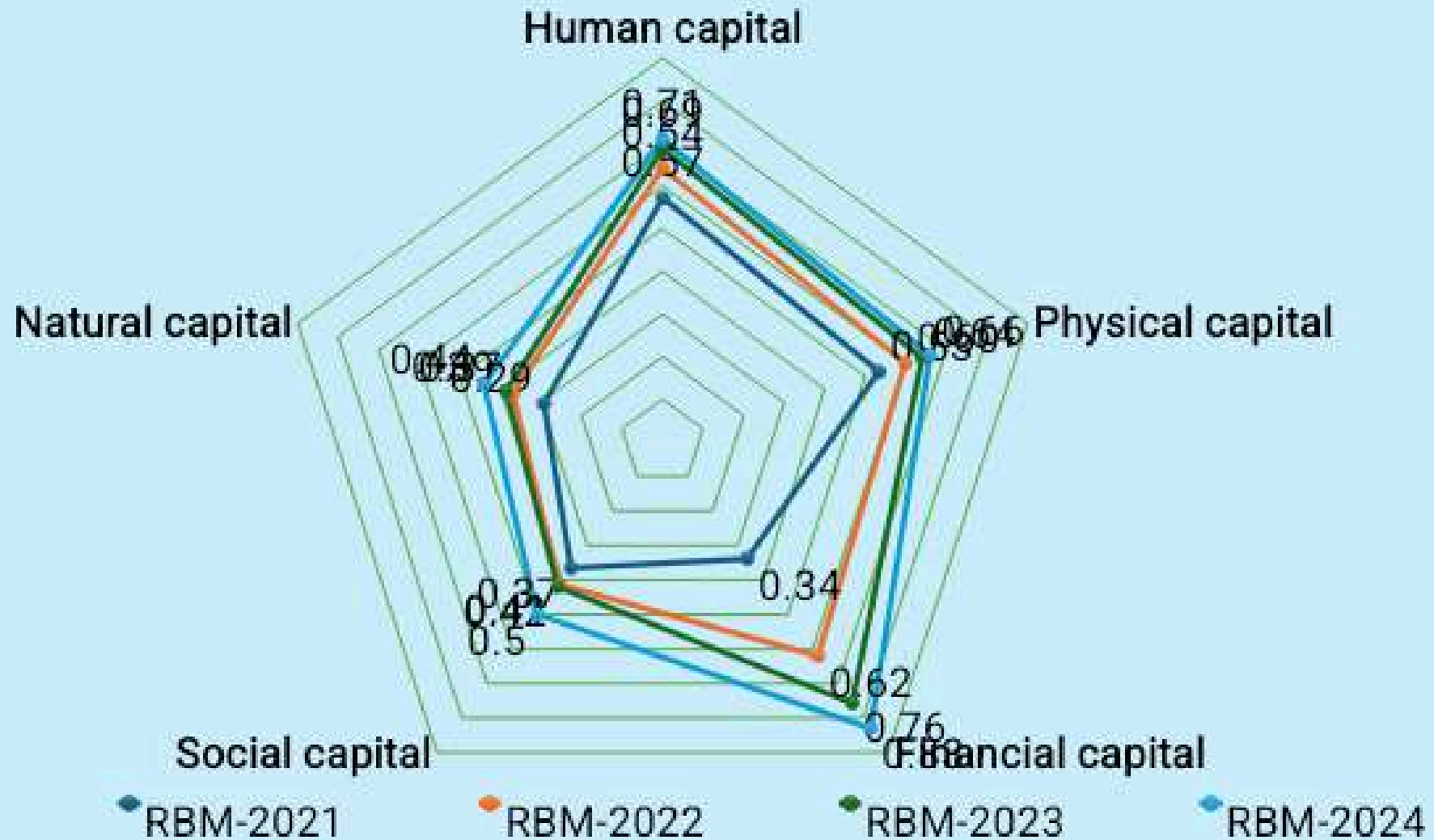
Source: PPEPP project, PKSF

Drivers of Global and National poverty

Uneven economic recovery and global headwinds

Slow growth: The IMF projects global growth to slow to 3.2% in 2025, driven by trade tensions, policy uncertainty, and geopolitical risks.

Impact on developing nations: Low-income countries face headwinds from high debt, rising interest rates, and declining donor support, while per capita income growth remains insufficient to reduce poverty significantly.

Limited job creation: Weak economic prospects, external shocks and political shocks, slowed down trade & investment, import-export, construction and other public development spending – all these combined to suppress labour demand.

Climate change as a driver of poverty

Widespread exposure: Nearly 80% of multidimensionally poor people reside in areas affected by climate hazards, including extreme heat, drought, floods, or air pollution.

Multiple hazards: Of those exposed, 80% people face two or more concurrent climate hazards, and this "triple or quadruple burden" disproportionately affects the poor, who have limited resources to adapt.

Future inequity: 80% of countries in the South Asian region are projected to experience the greatest increases in temperature and flooding by the end of the century, intensifying the cycle of poverty and climate risk.

Poor people are more exposed to concurrent climate hazards
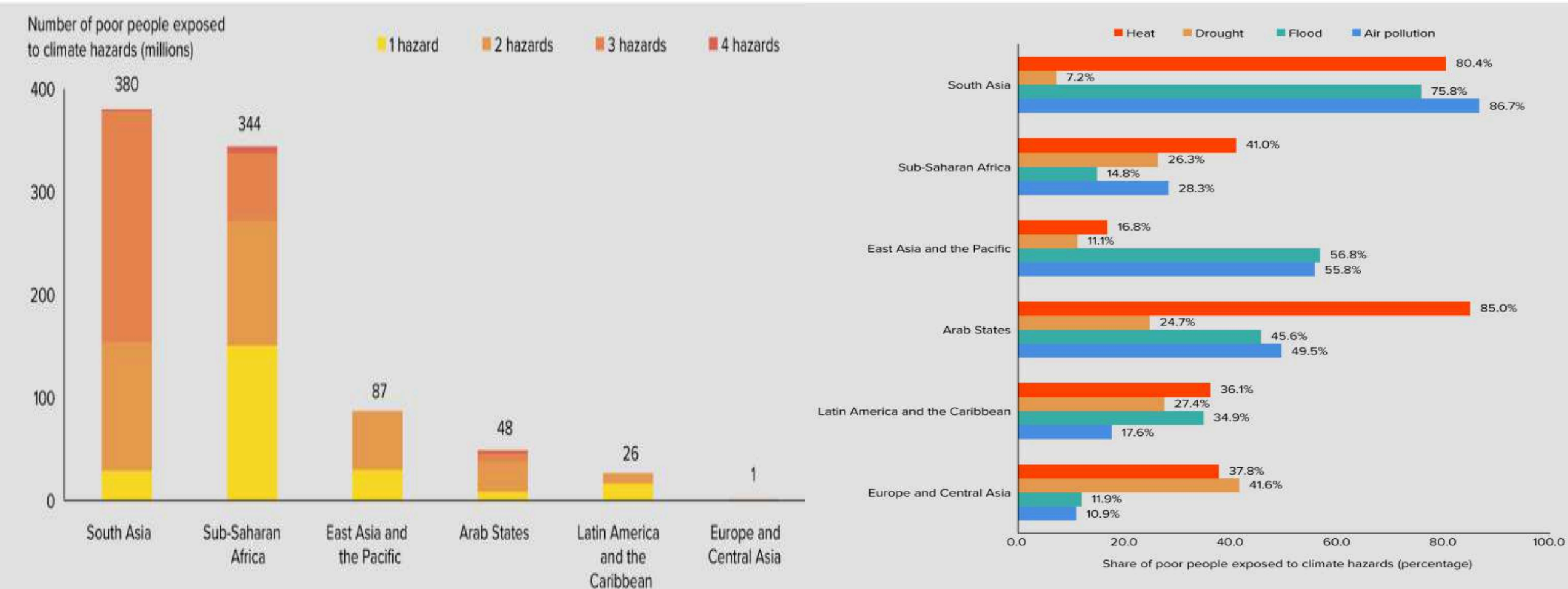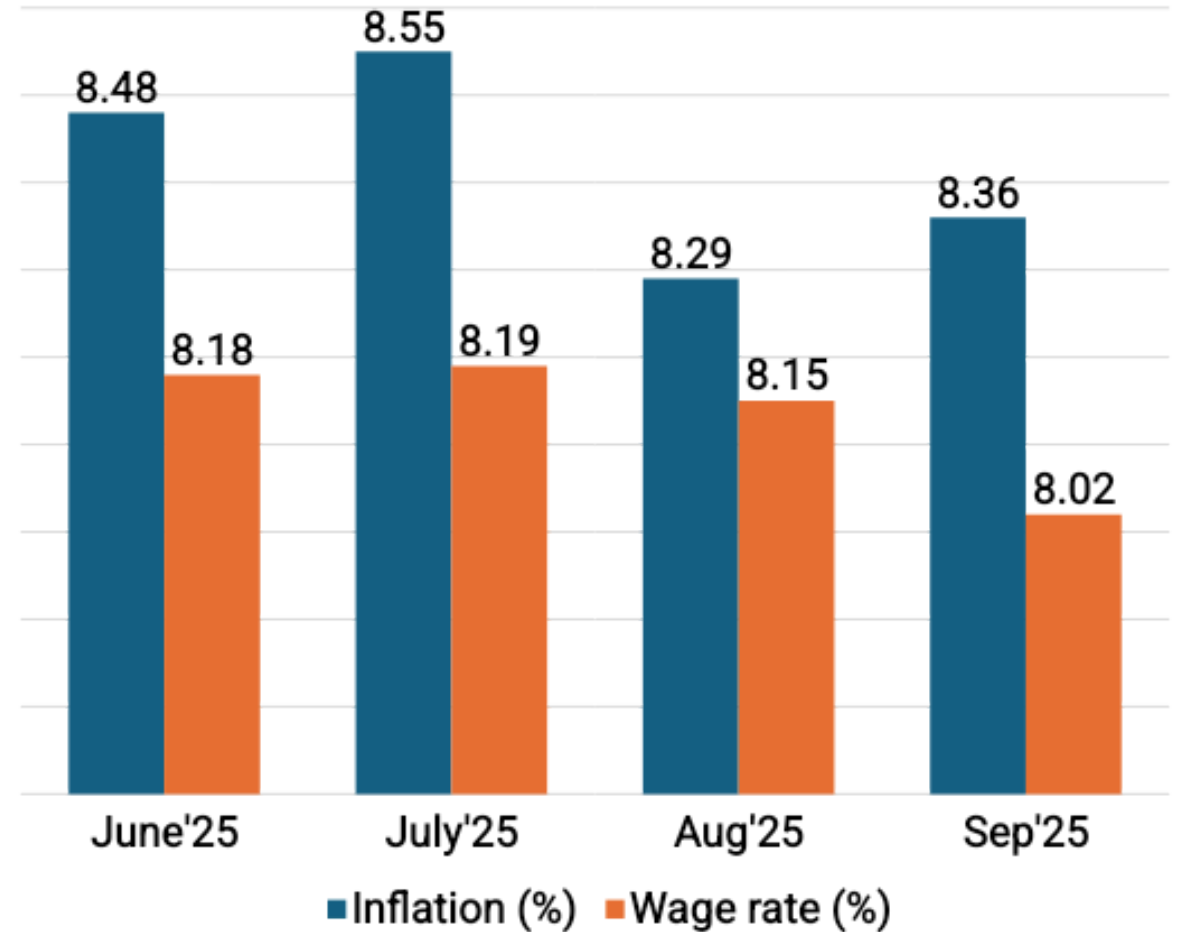

Source: Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2025: Poverty and Climate Hazards (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and UNDP 2025)

Inequality kept widening

Gini Coefficient (%, WB)

Inflation rate and Wage growth rate (%)

	June'25	July'25	Aug'25	Sep'25
Inflation (%)	8.48	8.55	8.29	8.36
Wage rate (%)	8.18	8.19	8.15	8.02

Gini values: 25.9, 26.9, 27.6, 28.8, 32.9, 33.4, 33.2, 32.1, 32.4, 33.4, 36.1

Drivers of Inequality in Bangladesh

Economic and structural factors

- **Unequal access to opportunities:** Lack of equal access to education, low-wage jobs, and opportunities for skill development creates economic inequality.

- **Lack of access to finance:** Wealthy individuals and influential businesses can access loans, while the poor and small businesses often lack collateral and cannot secure credit, hindering their economic advancement.

- **Corruption and lack of governance:** Corruption, tax evasion, and money laundering divert resources and prevent fair economic growth.

- **Low public spending:** Insufficient public investment in areas like health and education leads to a two-tiered system where the wealthy can afford private services while the poor cannot.

- **Jobless growth:** Despite economic growth, the creation of income-generating jobs has not kept pace, and many people lack formal employment.

- **Inflation:** Higher growth in household expenditure and food inflation outpaces income growth, disproportionately affecting the poor.

- **Taxation**: Discriminatory taxation systems that disproportionately burden the poor

Drivers of Inequality in Bangladesh

Governance and corruption

- **State-sponsored support for the elite**: Government policies such as tax exemptions for corporations and liquidity support for banks, which disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

- **Systemic corruption**: Widespread political corruption diverts public funds from education, healthcare, and social welfare, reducing the quality of public services and hindering economic potential. This also creates an environment of fear and distrust.

- **Weak governance**: leading to delays in infrastructure projects and exacerbating economic gaps.

Political participation and representation

- **Monopolized political space**: The ruling party monopolises political discussion and represses opposition activities, which limits meaningful political discourse and debate.

- **Limited democratic process**: Disputed elections and suppression of opposition candidates reduce the scope for alternative representation in parliament, further consolidating power.

- **Suppression of dissent**: Dissenting voices from academia, civil society, and the public result in suppression of the aspirations of the poor and marginalized.

- **Exclusion from policy-making**: Ordinary citizens have limited, if any, meaningful participation in policy formulation, and discussions are often nominal, with little effective input from marginalized groups.

Factors affecting inequality in Bangladesh

Socio-cultural factors

- **Gender inequality:** Women face challenges in education, employment, and social protection, with higher unemployment rates and lower access to resources. Traditional patriarchal systems contribute to this.

- **Urban-rural divide:** Poverty rates are higher in rural areas, and there is a significant gap in access to essential services like healthcare and the internet between urban and rural populations.

- **Socioeconomic status:** Inequality is evident across socioeconomic classes in access to education, healthcare, and other services.

Other contributing factors

- **Healthcare system:** The substandard public health system and reliance on expensive private healthcare create a significant barrier for the poor.

- **Digital divide:** Unequal access to the internet and digital literacy skills further exacerbates existing inequalities between urban and rural populations and across different socioeconomic groups.

- **Inadequate social protection:** Social protection programs are often insufficient and suffer from corruption, meaning they do not benefit the poor as intended.

# Positive drivers for Poverty & Equality in Bangladesh

- **Remittance inflow** – Remittances are growing from approximately 0.450billion in 2000 to over 30 billion in the fiscal year 2024-2025, from 10 million citizens.

- **Microfinance** – During FY2022-23, 45.3 million HHs availing US$23.47 billion as microcredit. The direct contribution of micro credit towards poverty reduction in rural Bangladesh has been about 5% for overall poverty and 10% for extreme poverty.

- **Ready Made Garments (RMG)** – Employ over 4.2 million workers (60-80% female), and contribute 11-13% of GDP

- **Agricultural production** – Employ nearly 23 million people (nearly 35.27 % of the workforce)

- **Social Safety Net Programme** – Extending US$ 9.57 billion (14.78% of the total budget of 2025-26), over 76 million people, will be covered by 39 designated "pro-poor" programs

- **Human capacity development** – Education, Vocational & Skill Training, Women's empowerment

Intergenerational poverty

Intergenerational poverty: Undernutrition, especially in U5 children, pregnant & lactating mothers, and adolescent girls, leads to intergenerational poverty. The per capita income losses (penalty) due to stunting range from 5 to 7%

East vs. West in Poverty Dynamics: The stronger progress of poverty reduction in the eastern regions widened the gap between eastern and western Bangladesh (WB, 2023)

Stunting in U5 Children
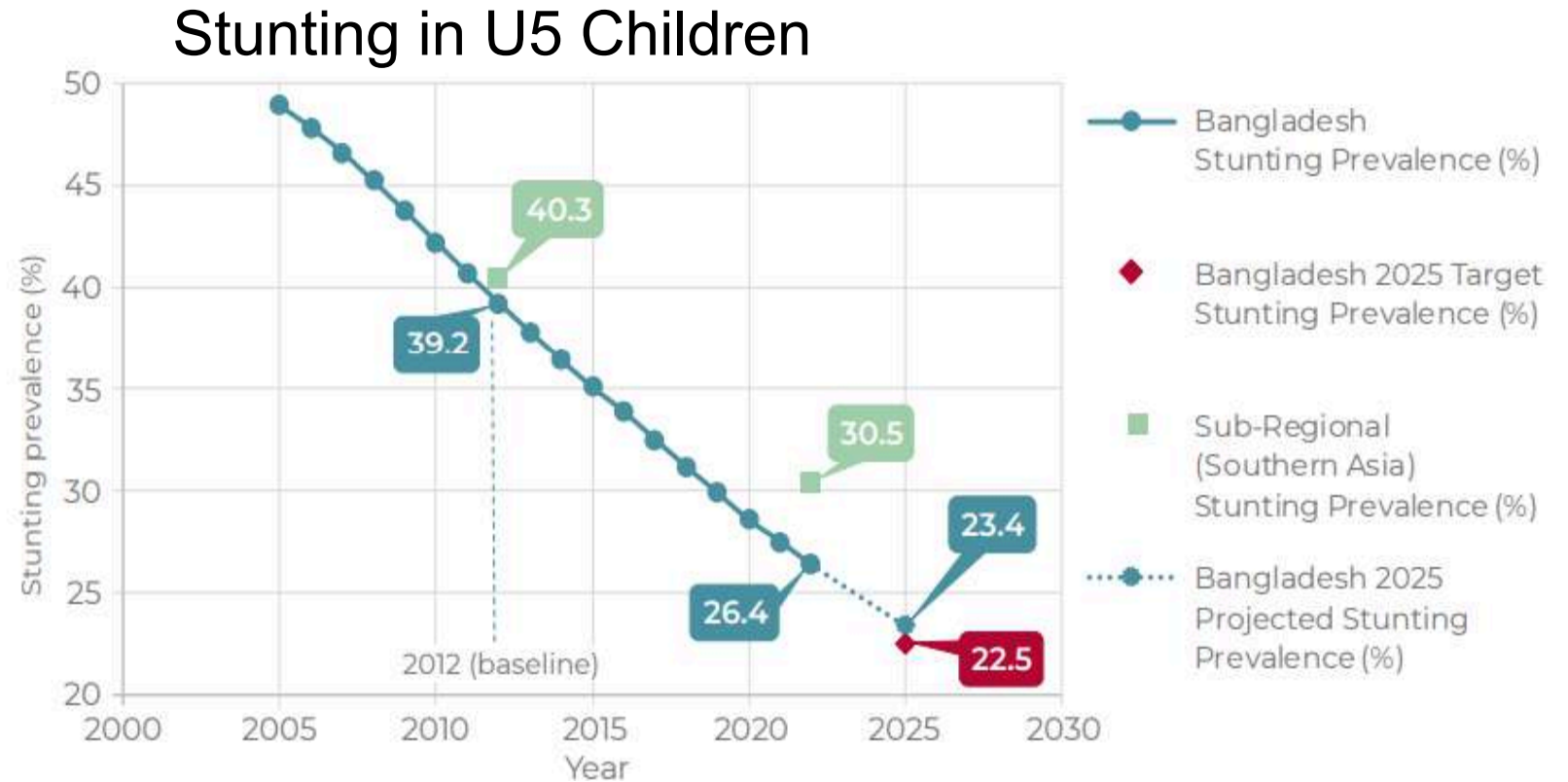
FOOD INSECURITY STATUS OF BANGLADESH (IPC, 2024)

PROJECTED SITUATION: APRIL - OCTOBER 2024

16.5M

(22% of the population analysed)

People facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above)
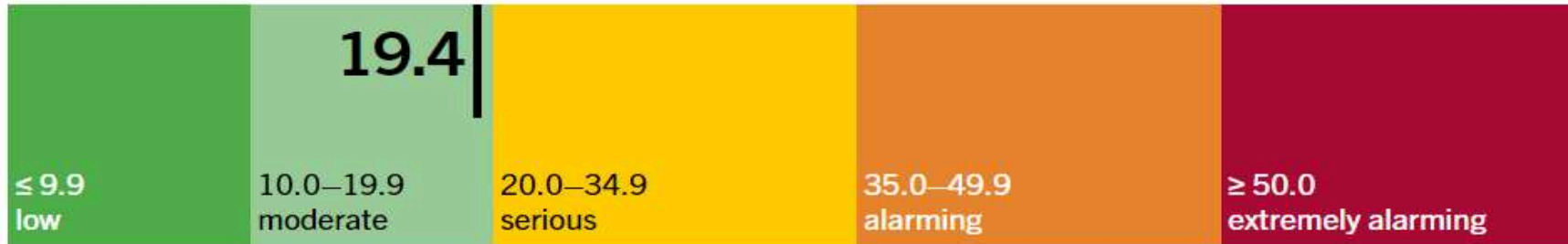
IN NEED OF
URGENT ACTION

Phase	
Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe
Phase 4	785,000 People in Emergency
Phase 3	15,745,000 People in Crisis
Phase 2	28,502,000 People in Stress
Phase 1	29,251,000 People in food security

The majority of the population in Emergency are Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN) and populations in Sunamganj and Kurigram. The food insecurity of the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) is likely to increase in the projection period in case of funding shortfalls leading to decreased levels of humanitarian food assistance due to their high dependence

Bangladesh Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity Analysis, February - October 2024 (Published on April 2, 2024) https://reliefweb.int/

Global Hunger Index (GHI) and Bangladesh

≤ 9.9 low	10.0–19.9 moderate	20.0–34.9 serious	35.0–49.9 alarming	≥ 50.0 extremely alarming
	19.4			

In the 2024 Global Hunger Index, Bangladesh ranks **84th** out of the 127 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2024 GHI scores. With a score of **19.4** in the 2024 Global Hunger Index, Bangladesh has a level of hunger that is **moderate.**

Bangladesh's GHI Score is based on the values of four component indicators:

| **11.9%**	**23.6%**	**11.0%**	**2.9%**
of the population is undernourished	of children under five are stunted	of children under five are wasted	of children die before their fifth birthday

Bangladesh is not food sufficient yet

❑ Bangladesh has ranked **3rd among food-importing countries in the world** in 2021. It produced around 93.3 million tons of agricultural produce in 2021 (FAO, 2023).

❑ Bangladesh **imported 9.3% of its total food demand & in 2022 that went up to 11.2%.** Bangladesh's imports of rice, wheat, and edible oil have been rising (FAO, 2023).

❑ Per capita **calorie consumption is 2,393 calories, 2816 in Asia, and the global average is** 2,978 calories.

❑ Agricultural production is still lower than the global standard due to the **'low technology trap'**

❑ Natural resources management & environmental degradation of soil, water and overall ecology is expectedly to take a toll unless the process is reversed.

KEY DRIVERS of FOOD INSECURITY IN BANGLADESH (IPC 2024)
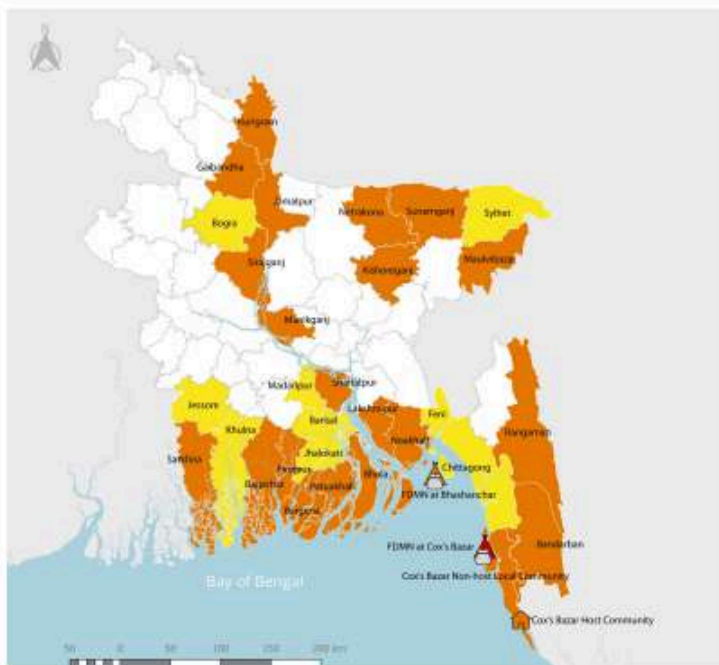
Key for the Map

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification
(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20 percent of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas not analysed

Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs)

Host communities

Area receives significant humanitarian food assistance
(accounted for in Phase classification)

> 25% of households meet 25-50% of caloric needs through assistance

> 25% of households meet > 50% of caloric needs through assistance

Evidence Level
** Medium

Key Drivers

High food prices

Bangladesh's general inflation rate has continued to remain over 9 percent since March 2023 with the food inflation rate above 9.24 percent since May 2023 impacting the purchasing power of poor households.

Economic shocks

Households' vulnerability to economic shocks was predominant across the majority of the districts, including loss of income, and high fuel and transportation costs.

Climatic shocks:

In 2023, three cyclones struck the coastal region, while flash floods and landslides hit the Hill Tracts, affecting crops, livestock and fisheries production, while there would be a higher risk of cyclones in 2024 due to the El Niño effect.

Agriculture and Food Culture In BD
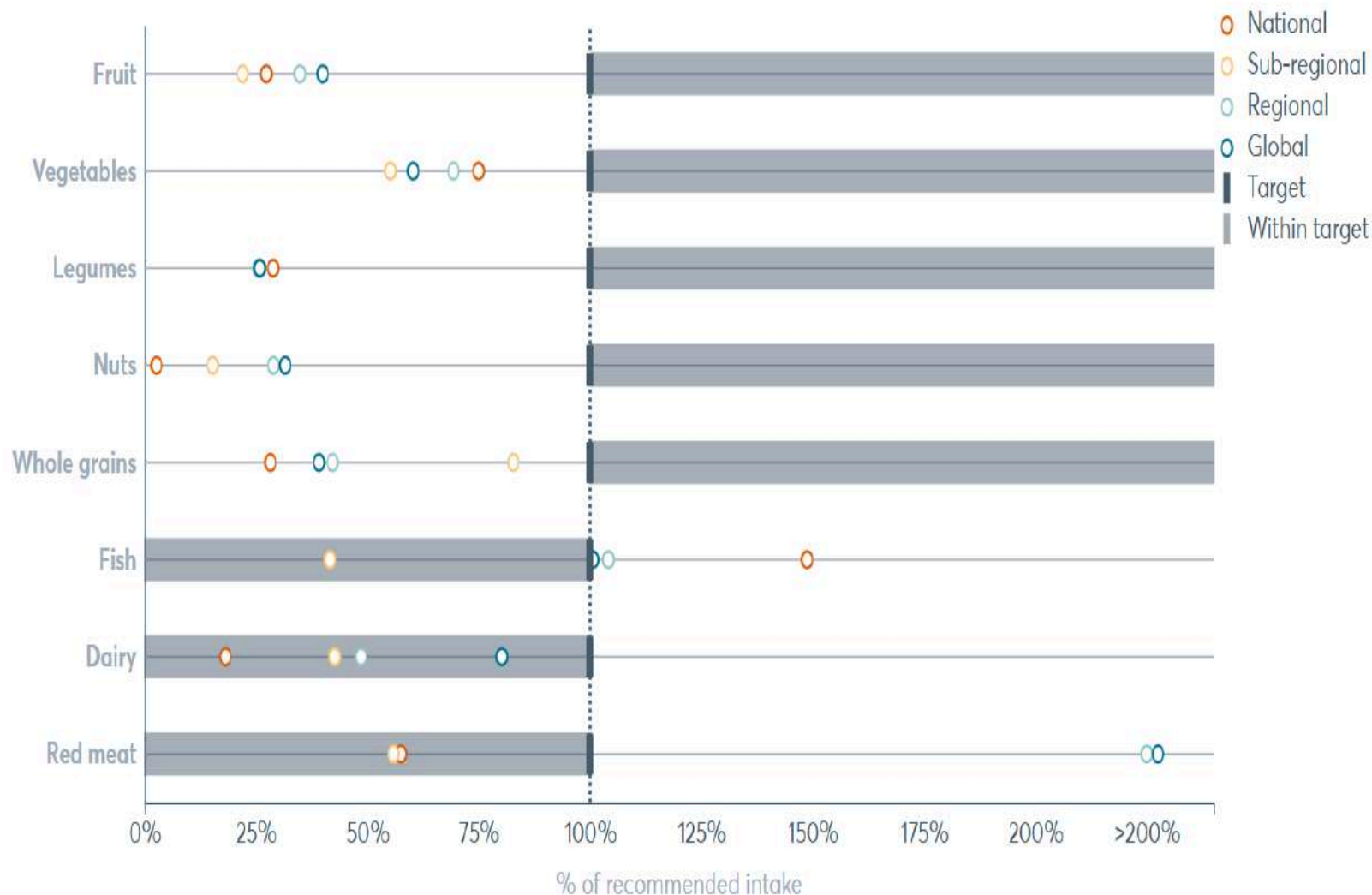# (Global Nutrition Report 2022)
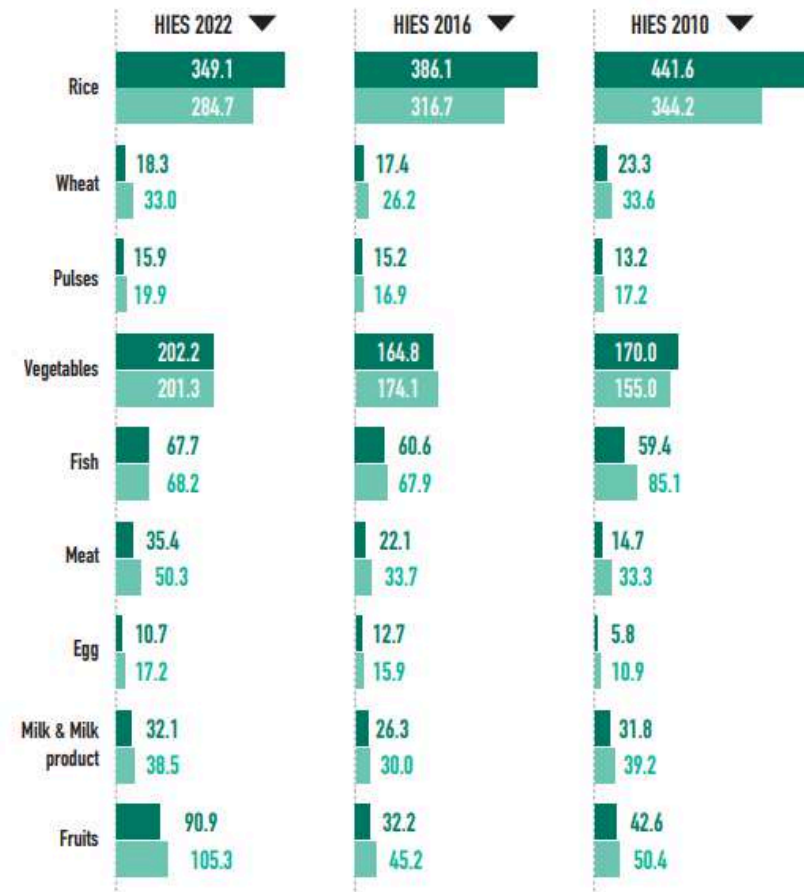
Food Intake (g/h/d)

FOOD INTAKE

Gram per capita per day: HIES 2022, HIES 2016 and HIES 2010 by residence

RURAL | URBAN

	HIES 2022	HIES 2016	HIES 2010
Rice	349.1 / 284.7	386.1 / 316.7	441.6 / 344.2
Wheat	18.3 / 33.0	17.4 / 26.2	23.3 / 33.6
Pulses	15.9 / 19.9	15.2 / 16.9	13.2 / 17.2
Vegetables	202.2 / 201.3	164.8 / 174.1	170.0 / 155.0
Fish	67.7 / 68.2	60.6 / 67.9	59.4 / 85.1
Meat	35.4 / 50.3	22.1 / 33.7	14.7 / 33.3
Egg	10.7 / 17.2	12.7 / 15.9	5.8 / 10.9
Milk & Milk product	32.1 / 38.5	26.3 / 30.0	31.8 / 39.2
Fruits	90.9 / 105.3	32.2 / 45.2	42.6 / 50.4

Food Intake (% against recommendation)

Legend: ○ National, ○ Sub-regional, ○ Regional, ○ Global, ▮ Target, ▮ Within target

Categories: Fruit, Vegetables, Legumes, Nuts, Whole grains, Fish, Dairy, Red meat

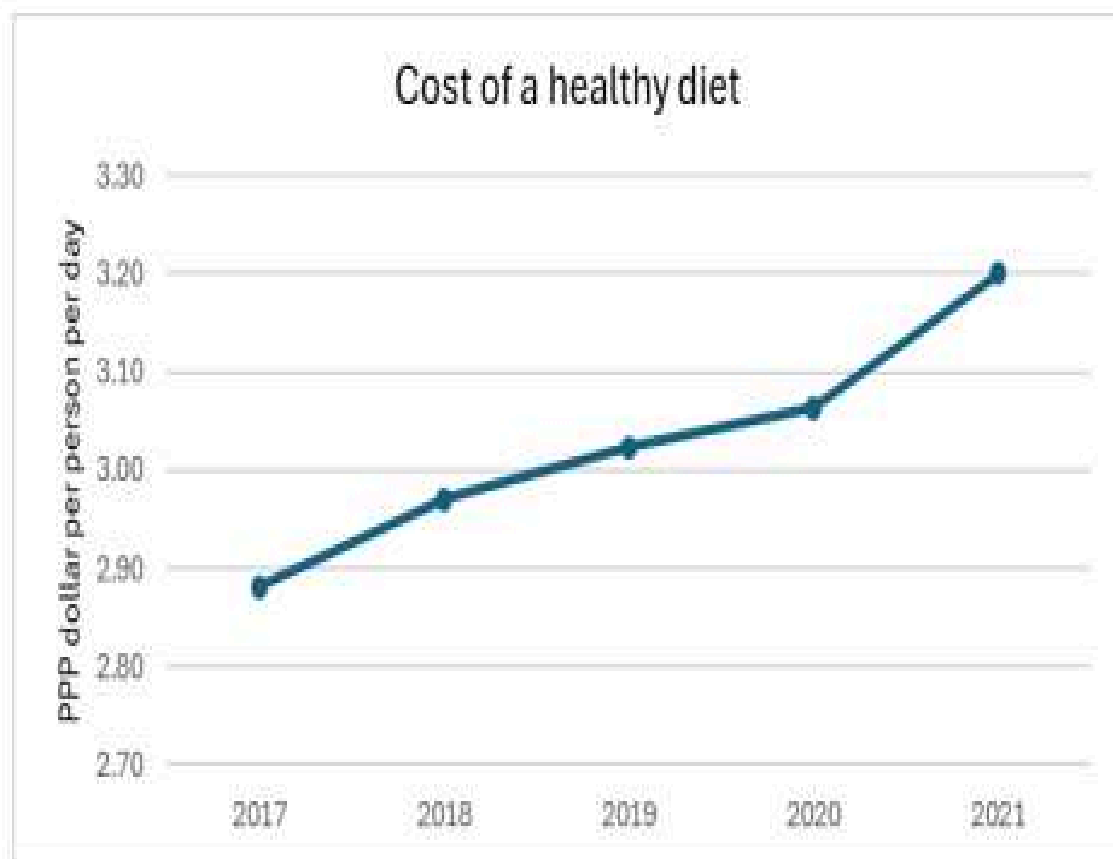X-axis: 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%, 125%, 150%, 175%, 200%, >200%
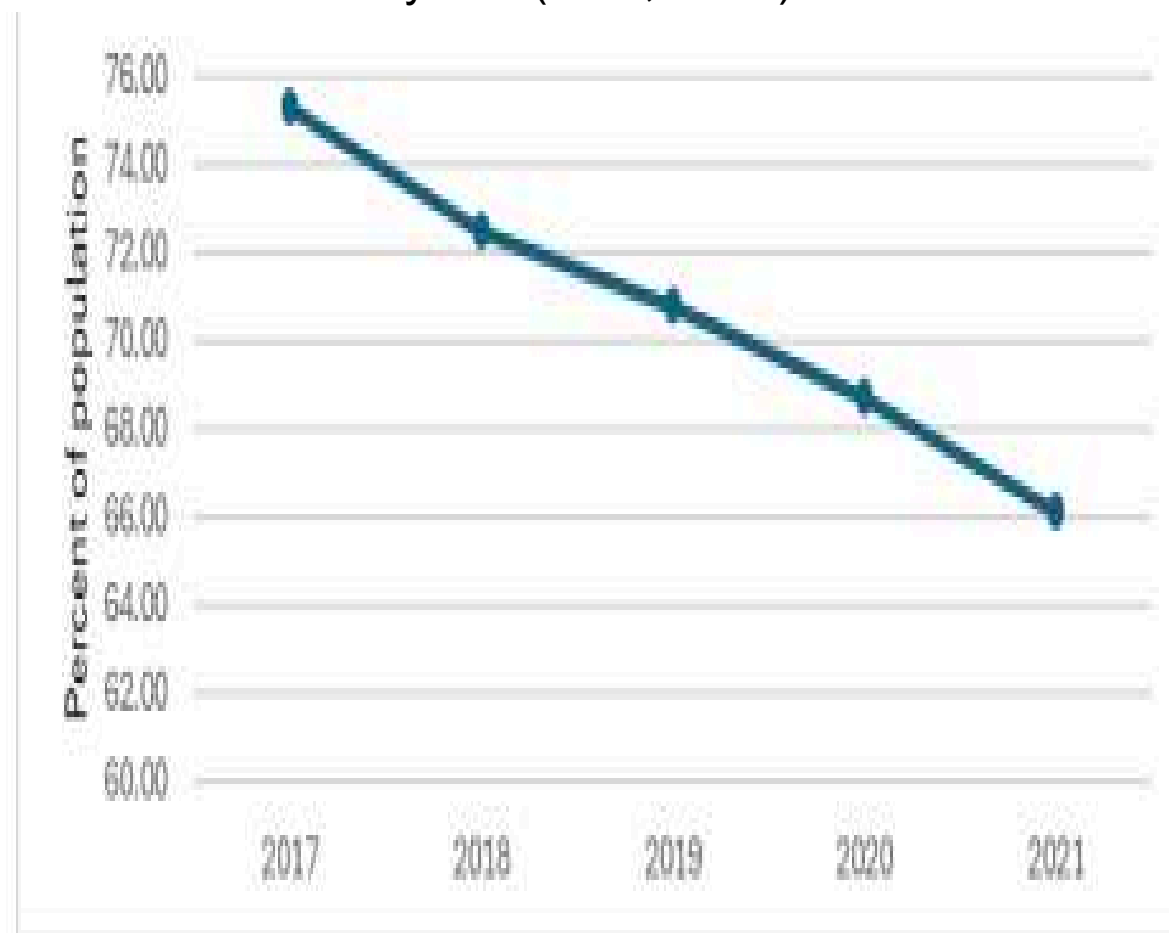
% of recommended intake

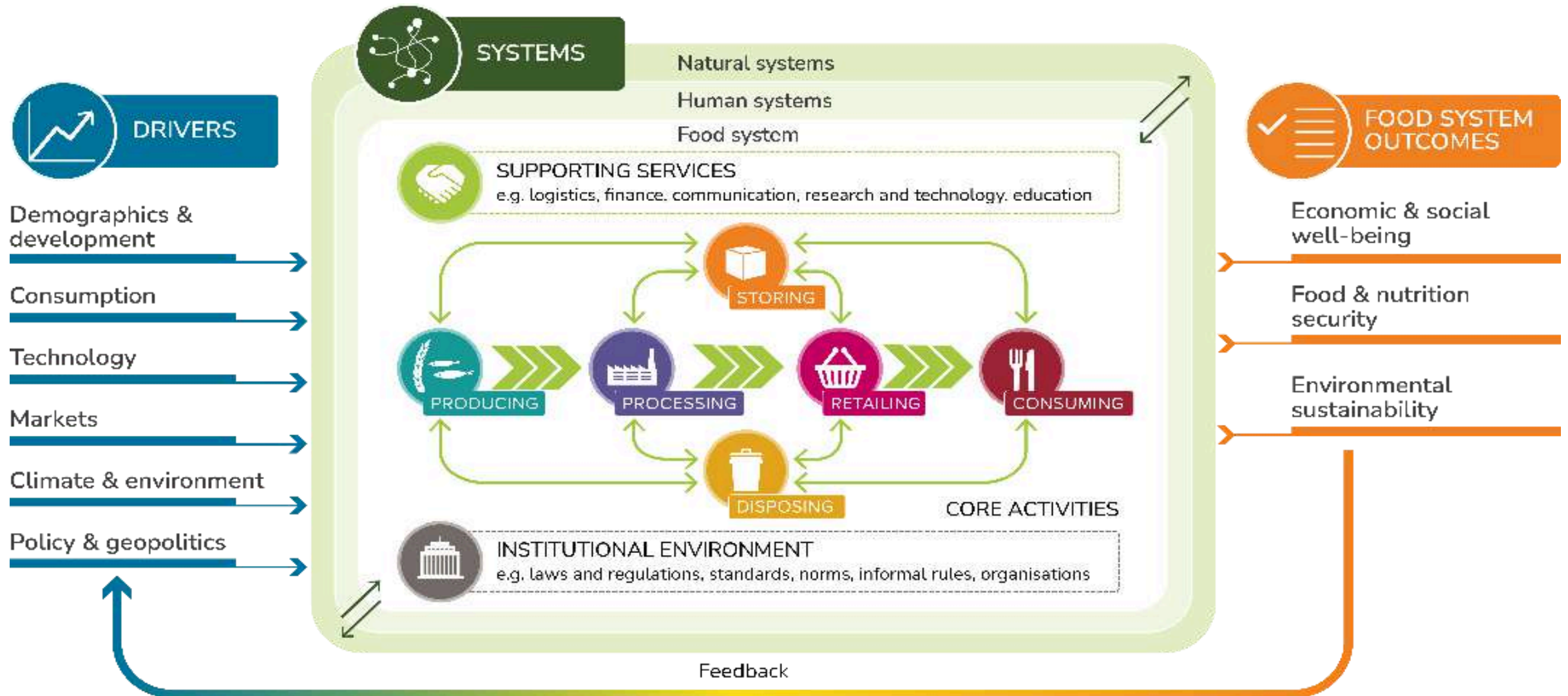# Most of the people in BD can not afford a healthy diet

Cost of a healthy diet (dollar/person/day; FAO 2023)

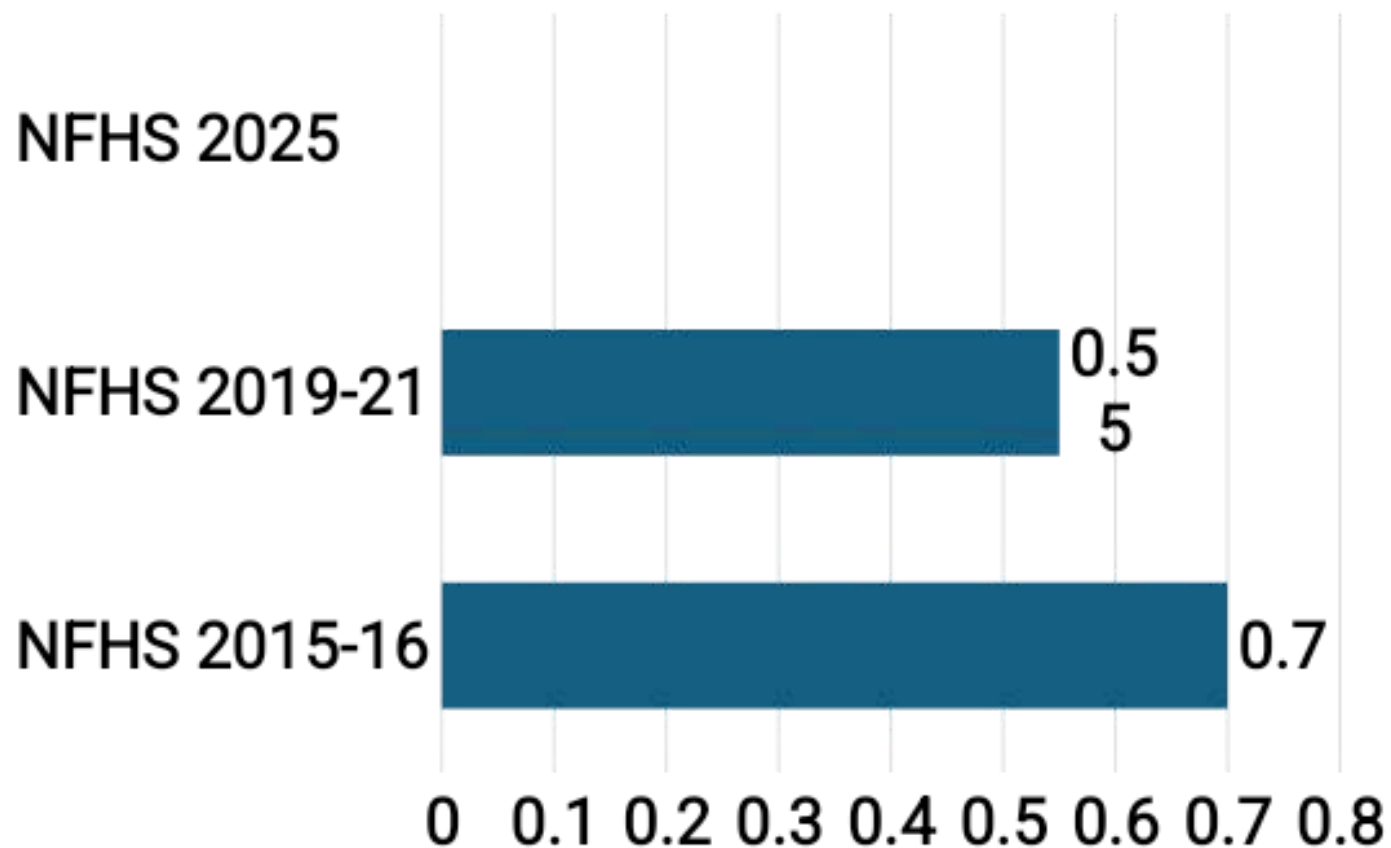Percentage of the population unable to afford a healthy diet (FAO, 2023)

Resilient food system for Food Security

Reduction of poverty, inequality, and food insecurity

Political will + Welfare ecosystem

(1) Political reforms & Good Governance
(2) Progressive reforms- land reforms, literacy, digital literacy (100%), universal primary health care, welfare pension and food security
(3) Climate-resilient food system transformation that prioritises redistribution and welfare

Decentralized Governance

(3) Empowering local self-governance
(4) Ensure that local government and municipalities are the decision makers and executors
(5)) Ensure that the local authority leads surveys, identifies poor HHs, and frames a micro-action plan for climate action, food-system transformation

Precision Poverty Mapping

(6) Adopt HH-level poverty mapping through social audit, volunteer surveys, and community vetting
(7) No one left behind, and everyone has the 'Right to be counted'.

Multisectoral Micro-Intervention Plans – Each HH get:

(8) Immediate support: food kits, housing aids, medical help
(9) Long-term plan: links with IGAs, Skill development, pensions, health insurance, etc.
(10) Reflects principles of Inclusive and Sustainable Development