

Maternal Nutrition Program in Nepal

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Introduction

Optimal maternal nutrition is critical to end the intergeneration cycle of poverty, poor health and malnutrition. In Nepal, the government and partners have paid attention to maternal nutrition as both as an important contributor to improve child nutrition as well as through the lens of women's right to good nutrition for their own wellbeing. To overcome the maternal undernutrition challenges, Government of Nepal developed nutrition policies focusing on women and implemented the programme in the various timeframe as listed below:

1978	National Nutrition Strategy
1981-1991	Joint Nutrition Support Project (JNSP)
1988	Establishment of Nutrition Section in Ministry of Health
1979-1998	Goiter and Cretinism Control Project focusing on Women of Reproductive Age
1998	Nepal National Micronutrient Status Survey I
2000	Postpartum Vitamin 'A' dosing (200,000 IU)
2001-2017	Maternal and Child Health Care Programme
2002	National Strategy for the control of anemia among women and children in Nepal
2003	Intensification of Iron folic acid supplementation program
2004	National Nutrition Policy and Strategy
2004	Low dose Vitamin 'A' dosing to night-blind pregnant women and deworming after first trimester of pregnancy
2013	Multi Sector Nutrition Plan I (2013-2017) for accelerating the reduction of maternal and child undernutrition in Nepal.
2013-2017	Revision of HMIS to include maternal nutrition indicators.
2013	Health Sector Strategy for addressing maternal nutrition
2016	Weekly Iron folic acid supplementation guideline to Adolescent girls aged 10-19 years.
2016	Nepal National Micronutrient Status Survey II
2018-2022	Multi Sector Nutrition Plan II (2018-2022) for accelerating the reduction of maternal and child undernutrition in Nepal

Objective/Aim

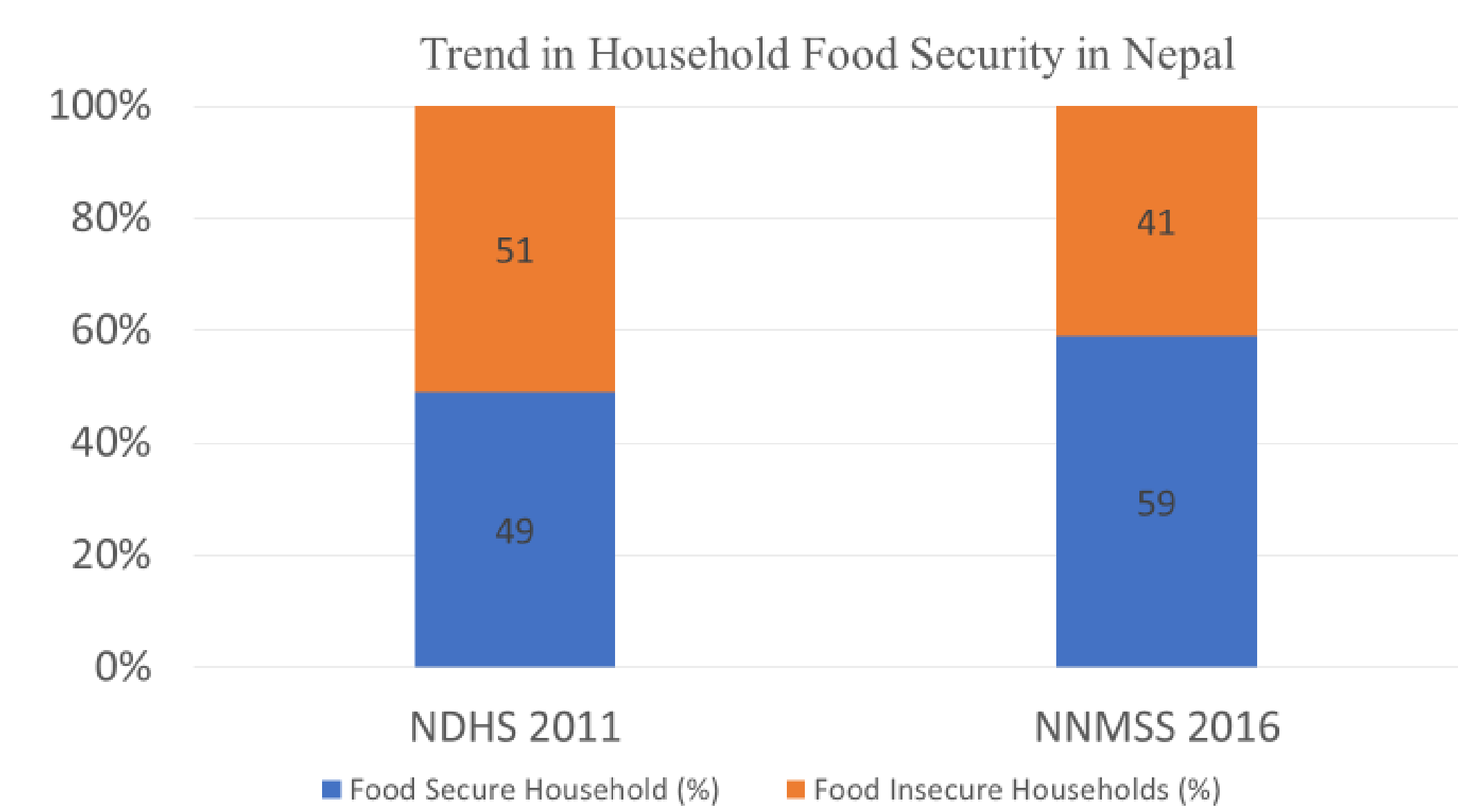
The study aims to systematically review the effectiveness, achievements, lessons and challenges of maternal nutrition program in Nepal which implemented during the Millennium Development Goal (2000-2015) era with the technical and financial support from Micronutrient Initiative and UNICEF Nepal. The findings from the study present important learning on the key factors that contributed in achieving MDG-1/ WFC goal on iron deficiency anaemia prevention and control in Nepal.

Methods

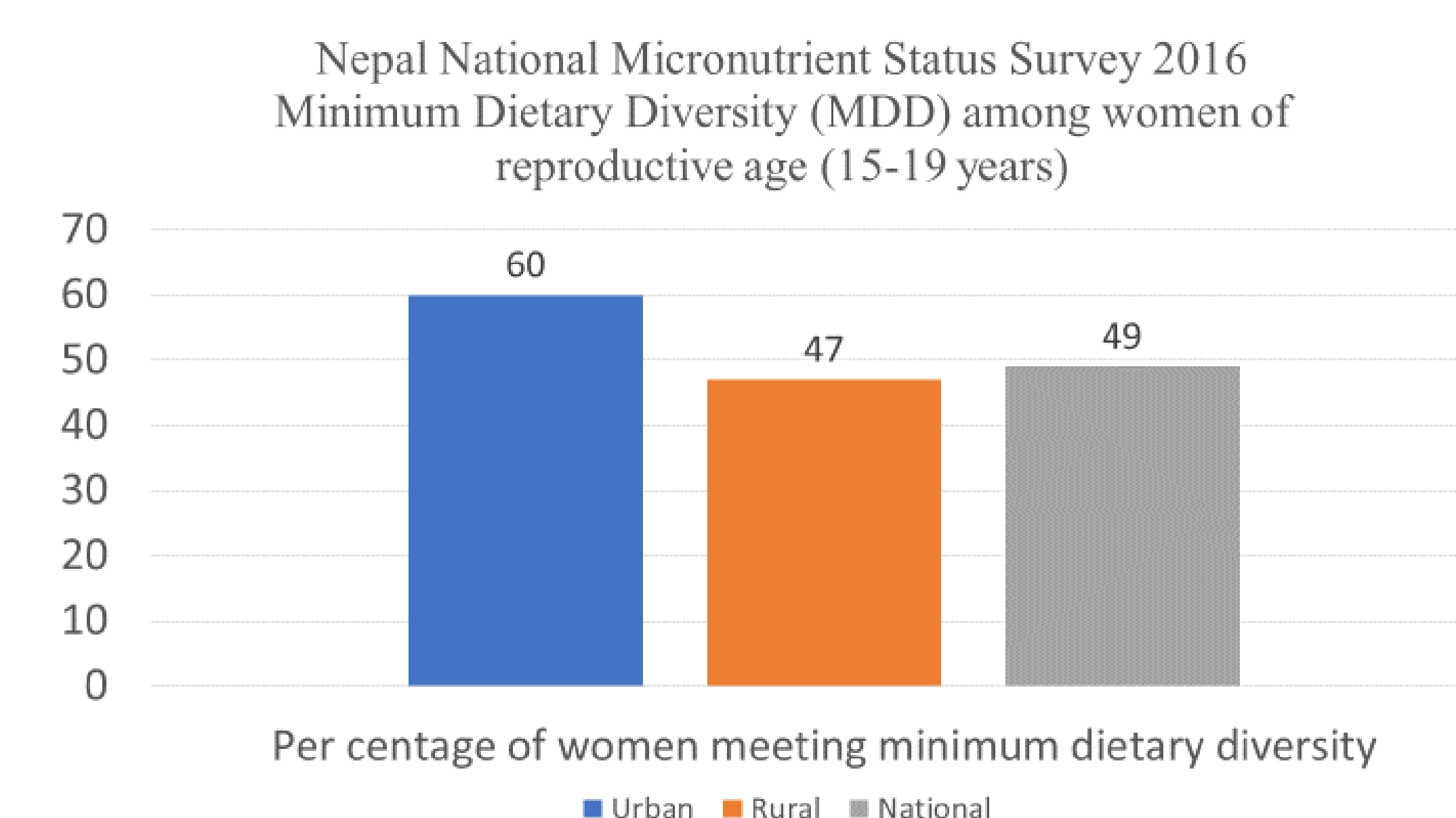
We carried out a trend analysis of BMI, IFA supplementation and Maternal Anaemia using nationally representative micronutrient surveys in Nepal as a proxy to explore the influence of programs and policies implemented by government and partners over the years.

Results

Household food security situation relatively improved in last five years

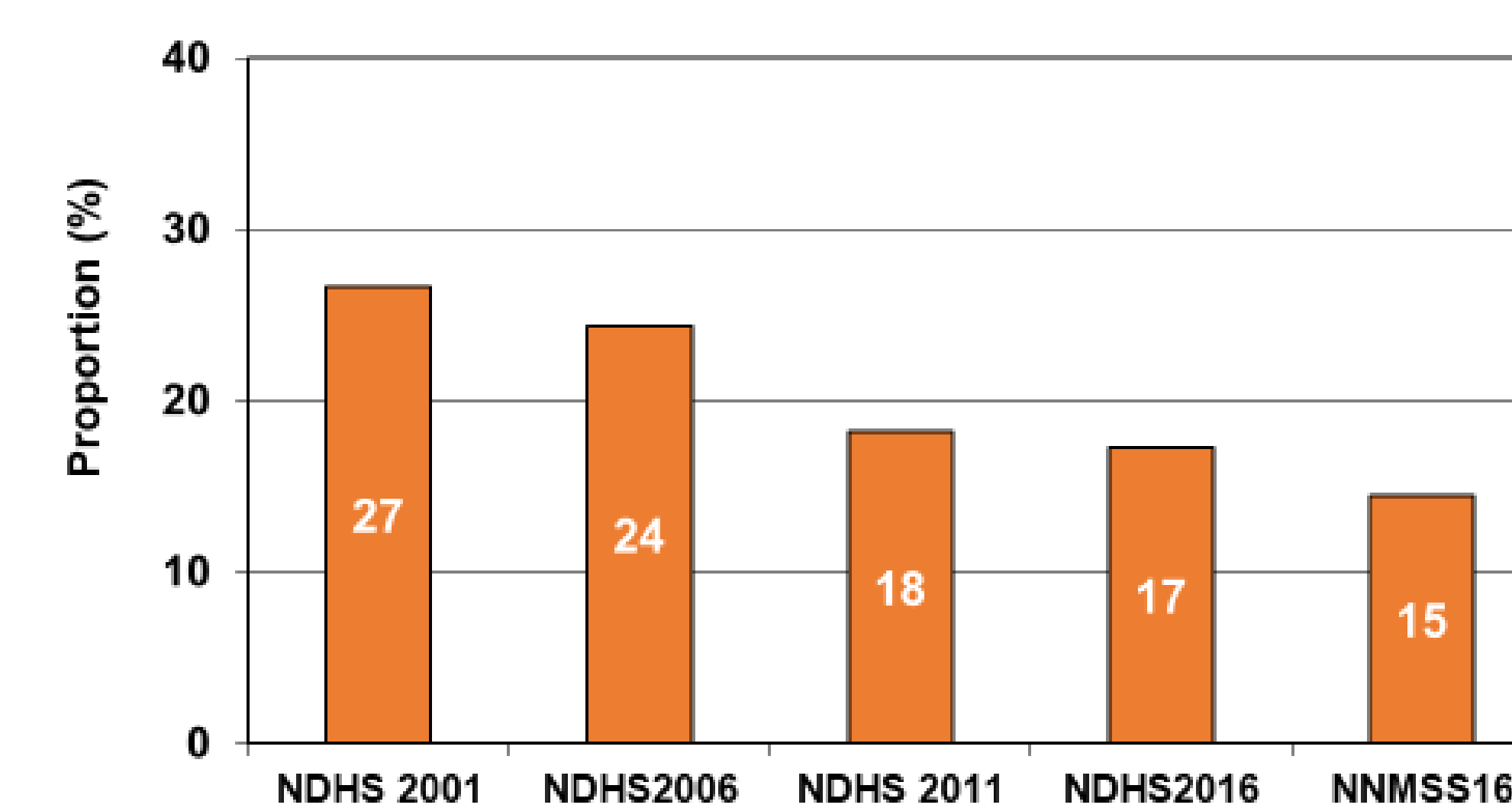


Resulting almost half of the women meeting their dietary diversity.

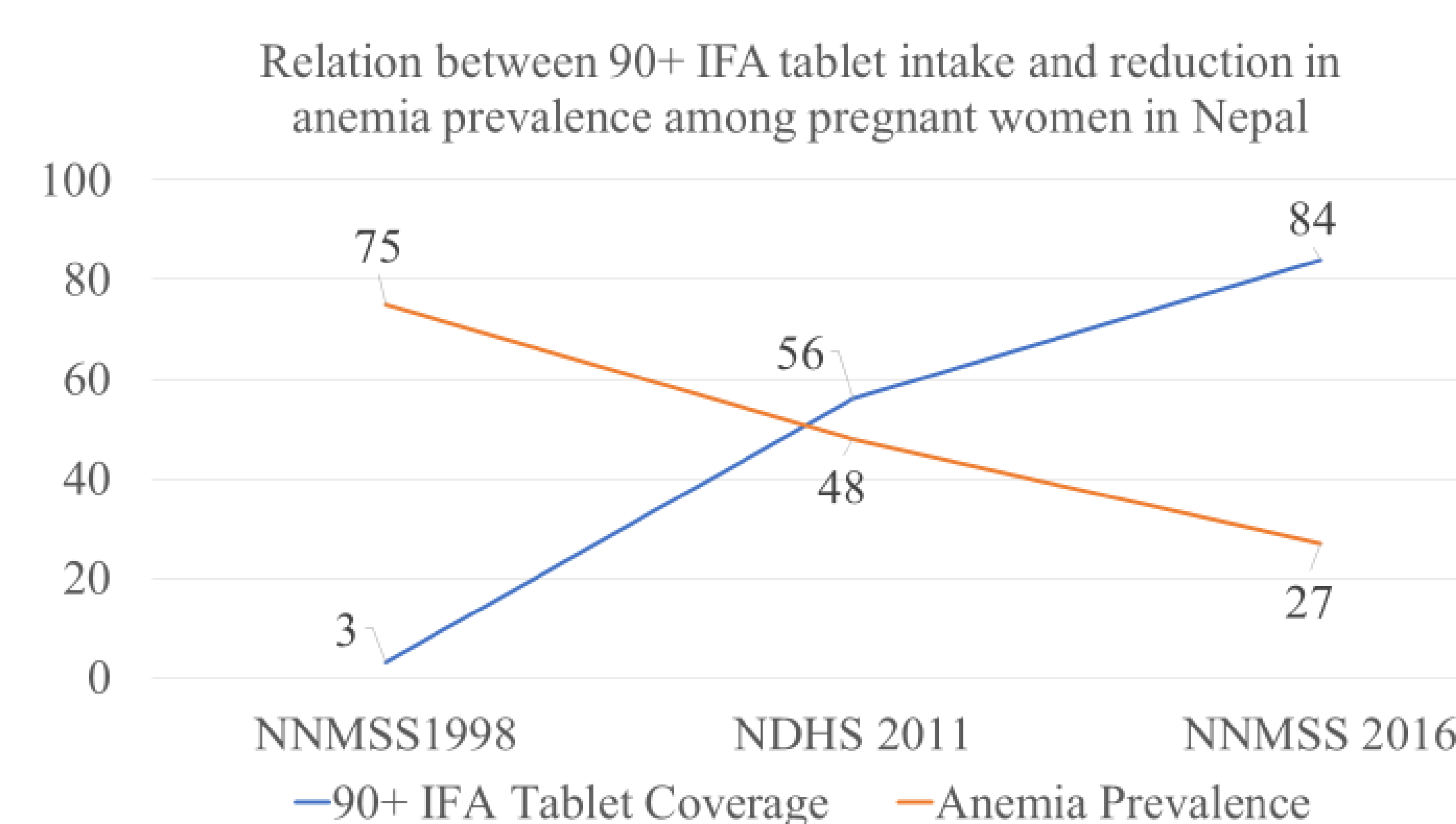


Which further contributed in reducing maternal undernutrition in Nepal

Trend in thinness (BMI<18.5) among women of reproductive age (15-49 years)



Program like Intensification of Iron folic acid supplementation program helped in improving Iron folic acid compliance (at least 90+ IFA tablet) which helped in reducing maternal anemia in Nepal.



Conclusions

Nepal has made significant improvements in maternal nutrition over last decade. This is mainly due to closeness of maternal nutrition services with the community under 'intensification of iron folic acid supplementation' program. Through this program, Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), in addition to health workers, were mobilized in distributing iron folic acid tablet as well as counselling of women on healthy and nutritious diets, together with the other maternal health services. The maternal minimum dietary diversity has also improved. The National Nutrition Program has paid high attention to improve maternal nutrition by integrating nutrition counselling and educational messages on dietary promotion together with the micronutrient supplementation as a part of 'intensification of iron folic acid tablet supplementation' program during the MDG ERA. .



Photo courtesy: UNICEF Nepal 2007/Pragya Mathema/ FCHV delivering Nutrition Education to mothers during mother group meeting/ Kavrepalanchowk.

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