



India's Response to Global Food Crisis

This editorial is based on [“India's food response as ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 31/03/2022. It talks about how India, in line with its vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, has assisted in managing the global food crisis.

For Prelims: Hunger and Malnutrition, World Food Programme, Sustainable Development Goals, Green Revolution, NFSA 2013, Targeted PDS, Global Hunger Index, Goal of Zero Hunger, PMGKAY

For Mains: Global hunger and India's assistance, India's notion of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, India's problem of Hunger and measures to combat it, India's Humanitarian Assistance for Food Crisis in Afghanistan

[Global hunger](#) is on the rise, driven by the climate crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic shocks, conflicts, poverty, and inequality. **Millions are living in hunger** and many more do not have access to adequate food.

Amid the global food crisis, **India has emerged as the friend in need** for a number of food-insecure countries fulfilling its **notion of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**. In the past decades, India has **transformed from requiring assistance to providing aid** to several countries.

What is the Global Hunger Scenario?

- In 2019, **650 million people around the world** suffered from **chronic hunger** — 43 million more than in 2014.
 - Since the onset of the pandemic, the number of people on the brink of starvation has doubled from 135 million people (pre-Covid) a year ago to 270 million.
- **More people are living in hunger than in 2015** when the member states of the [United Nations](#), including India, agreed to [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) that provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.
- The global burden of [malnutrition](#) remains enormous, with almost **150 million children stunted**, nearly **50 million wasted**, and every other child (and two billion adults) suffering from [micronutrient deficiencies](#).
 - The number of people in need of urgent food assistance — estimated at 270 million in 2021 — will grow significantly due to the [crisis in Afghanistan](#) and the [ongoing war in Ukraine](#).

What is India's Concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'?

- The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (meaning '**Earth is One Family**') from India's traditional philosophical outlook that has gained huge relevance over the past 75 years since being cited in

the [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#) to underline the collective nature of the crises and a matching response that is needed.

- The concept describes how **different nations form one collective** and cannot escape the **common connection of concern and humanity**.
- In his 2014 UNGA address, the Prime Minister of India described the country's outlook towards the world as one family underlining its relevance not just for **global peace, cooperation, environment protection** but also for **humanitarian response including rising global hunger** and leaving no one behind.

How India has Fulfilled this Vision in terms of Food Crisis?

- [India's recent and ongoing humanitarian food assistance to the people of Afghanistan](#), through the [UN World Food Programme \(UN WFP\)](#) is an example of its commitment and commendable steps towards humanitarian crises.
 - India, as per its commitment, is sending **50,000 Metric Tonnes (MT) of food** assistance in the form of **wheat** to Afghanistan, through Pakistan.
 - Considering that half the population of Afghanistan (22.8 million people) is projected to be acutely food insecure in 2022 including 8.7 million at risk of famine-like conditions, this assistance was extremely important.
- In the past two years, India has also **provided aid to several countries in Africa and the Middle East/West Asia** to overcome natural calamities and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Where does India Stand in terms of Food Sufficiency?

- Since the [Green Revolution](#), India has made enormous progress in food production with an inspiring journey towards **self-sufficiency in food production**.
 - In 2020, India produced over 300 million tonnes of cereals and had built up a food stock of 100 million tonnes.
 - **In 2021, India exported a record 20 million tonnes of rice and wheat.**
- The [UN Food Systems Summit 2021](#) also highlighted India's long journey from a country with chronic food shortage to being a surplus food producer which offers several **valuable lessons for other developing countries** in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
 - The period between 1991 to 2015, saw the **diversification of agriculture beyond field crops** and brought greater focus on the **horticulture, dairy, animal husbandry, and fishery sectors**.

How India Envisaged to Ensure Food Security within the Country?

- One of India's greatest contributions to equity in food is its [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) 2013](#) that anchors the [Targeted Public Distribution System \(TPDS\)](#), the [Mid-Day meals \(MDM\)](#), and the [Integrated Child Development Services \(ICDS\)](#).
 - Today, India's food safety nets collectively reach over a billion people.
- Food safety nets and inclusion are linked with public procurement and buffer stock policy.
 - **TPDS** with a robust stock of food grains became a **lifeline for the marginalised and vulnerable** families during the global food crisis of 2008-2012, and more recently during the Covid-19 pandemic fallout.
- The [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana \(PMGKAY\)](#) introduced in 2020 to provide **relief to 800 million beneficiaries covered under the NFSA** from Covid-19 induced economic hardships has been extended by another six months up to September 2022.

What about India's own Hunger Scenario?

- **Food and Agriculture Report, 2018** stated that **India houses 195.9 million** of the 821 million undernourished people in the world, accounting for approximately **24% of the world's hungry**.
 - Prevalence of **undernourishment** in India is 14.8%, **higher than both the global and Asian average**.
- It had been reported in 2017 by the [National Health Survey](#) that approximately **19 crore people** in the country were **compelled to sleep on an empty stomach every night**.

- Moreover, the most alarming figure revealed is that approximately **4500 children die every day under the age of five years** in the country **due to hunger and malnutrition**, amounting to over three lakh deaths every year, owing to hunger, of children alone.
- India slipped to **101st position** in the [Global Hunger Index \(GHI\) 2021](#) of 116 countries, from its 2020 position of **94th**.

What Can Be the Way Forward?

- **Towards Global Peace: Humanitarian food assistance** and partnerships that help create robust policy innovations by way of food safety nets and resilient livelihoods, will contribute towards global peace.
 - India's support to its neighbours and other countries that struggle with food emergencies and food insecurity must continue for its growth trajectory as well as to maintain good ties with other countries.
- **India - WFP Partnership:** India has made major progress in addressing hunger and malnutrition, but a lot needs to be done to deliver the [goal of Zero Hunger](#) and **food equity globally**.
 - For over five decades the WFP has been partnering with India and seen its transition from being a recipient to a donor.
 - As the world's largest humanitarian agency, the WFP, and India, as the largest democracy, can **leverage this partnership to contribute to addressing food emergencies** and strengthening humanitarian response, embodying the **spirit of 'leave no one behind' and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**.
- **Eradicating Hunger from the Country:** Although India's efforts in assisting other countries are commendable, it is also important to take a look at India's own problems of hunger.
 - The government needs to **ensure early disbursement of funds and optimum utilisation** of funds in schemes linked to nutrition.
 - The sharp increase in food insecurity points to an urgent need for the government to **establish systems for regular monitoring of the food security situation** in the country.
 - Also, the proper **implementation of schemes regarding health, water, sanitation** etc. is equally important as **nutrition goes beyond just the availability of food**.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss how India, in line with its vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, has assisted in managing the global food crisis.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs):

Q. Which of the following is/are the indicator/ indicators used by IFPRI to compute the Global Hunger Index Report? (2016)

1. Undernourishment
2. Child stunting
3. Child mortality

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3
- 1 and 3 only

Ans: (c)

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