



Reading Global Hunger Index 2022

This article is based on [“Reading Global Hunger Index and Indian govt’s response”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 18/10/2021. It talks about India's position in Global Hunger Index 2022 and related issues.

For Prelims: Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022, Child Wasting, POSHAN Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Food Fortification, Micronutrient Deficiency, Mid-day Meal, Public Distribution System, Sustainable Development Goal- 2.

For Mains: Global Hunger Index (GHI), Factors Responsible for Hunger and Malnutrition in India , Recent Government Initiatives to Tackle Hunger.

India has experienced remarkable economic growth in recent years and **remains one of the fastest growing economies in the world**. However, [hunger](#) and [malnutrition](#) are still areas of concern in spite of many strides.

While the food security situation is progressively improving, **access to nutritional and balanced food is problematic** for the vulnerable population. India has slipped 6 places and ranked **107, out of 121 countries, in [Global Hunger Index \(GHI\) 2022](#)**. **In response the Indian government has raised methodological concerns.**

Let’s understand the issues related to the **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022** and the extent of **Food and Nutritional Security in India**.

What is the Global Hunger Index (GHI)?

- In common parlance, hunger refers to discomfort due to a lack of food. However, the **GHI** is not such a simplistic measure **“it captures the multidimensional nature of hunger”**.
- There are **4 measures** it used by GHI:
 - **Undernourishment:** The share of the **population whose caloric intake is insufficient**.
 - This makes up 1/3 of the GHI score.
 - **Child Stunting:** The share of children under the age of 5 **who have low height for their age**, reflecting chronic undernutrition.
 - This makes up 1/6 of the GHI score.
 - **Child Wasting:** The share of children under the age of 5 **who have low weight for their height**, reflecting acute undernutrition.
 - This makes up 1/6 of the GHI score.
 - **Child Mortality:** The share of children who **die before their 5th birthday**, reflecting in part the fatal mix of **inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments**.
 - This makes up 1/3 of the GHI score.

- The overall score is placed on a **100-point scale** and a lower score is better.
 - A score between **20 and 34.9 is pegged in the “serious” category and this is where India finds itself with a total score of 29.1. (GHI 22)**

Why has the Indian government criticised GHI 2022?

- The **Indian government has questioned the methodology of GHI**. There are two major sub-parts to the government’s contention:
 - First, that the GHI uses **“an erroneous measure of hunger”**, that **3 out of the 4 variables used are related to children** and cannot be representative of the entire population.
 - Second, that the **4th indicator of GHI**, the proportion of undernourished population is **“based on an opinion poll conducted on a very small sample size of 3000”**, which is **not justified with a country like India** representing one-fifth of the world’s population.

What are the Recent Government Initiatives to Tackle Hunger?

- [POSHAN Abhiyan](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana](#)
- [Food Fortification](#)
- [Mission Indradhanush](#)
- [Eat Right India Movement](#)

What are the Factors Responsible for Hunger and Malnutrition in India?

- **Poverty Backing Hunger: Poor living conditions** limit the availability of food for children, while **overpopulation**, coupled with **limited food access**, result in **malnutrition** in children, especially in rural India.
- **Faulty Public Distribution:** There has been a **wide variation in the distribution of food in urban and rural areas**, with **grains being diverted to the open market in order to make a higher profit**, and poor quality grains being sold in ration shops, and the irregular opening of these shops contributing to hunger and malnutrition.
- **Unidentified Hunger:** Due to the **arbitrary nature of the criteria used to determine a household's Below Poverty Line status** and the fact that these criteria vary from state to state, **food consumption has declined significantly due to the inaccurate classification** of above poverty line (APL) and below poverty line (BPL).
 - Besides this, the **poor quality of grains** have further contributed to the problem.
- **Hidden Hunger:** India is experiencing a severe **micronutrient deficiency (also known as hidden hunger)**. There are several causes of this problem, including **poor diet, disease, and a failure to meet micronutrient needs during pregnancy** and lactation.
 - Lack of **adequate knowledge amongst mothers regarding nutrition, breast-feeding and parenting** is another area of concern.
- **Gender Inequality:** Due to patriarchal mindset, **gender inequality places the girl child at a disadvantage** compared to boys and causes them to suffer more since they are last to eat and considered less important.
 - In contrast to boys, **girls are deprived of mid-day meals due to a lack of access to school.**
- **Lack of Immunisation:** Children are neglected when it comes to **preventive care (specifically immunizations)** due to lack of awareness and not given access to health care for diseases due to **affordability issues.**
- **Lack of Audit for Nutritional Programmes:** Although a number of programmes with improving nutrition as their main component are planned in the country, there is **no specific nutritional audit mechanism at local governance level.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Viewing Nutrition Through Different Lenses: Better nutrition involves more than just food**, it includes health, water, sanitation, gender perspectives, and social norms. Therefore, there is a **need to look forward to comprehensive policy to fill the nutritional gap**.
 - If [Swachh Bharat Abhiyan](#), [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#) and nutrition policies like [Poshan Abhiyan](#) are interlinked, India's nutritional situation will undergo holistic changes.
- **Bringing Social Audit Mechanism:** States and Union Territories should compulsorily carry out the **social audit of the mid-day meal scheme in every district**, with the help of local authorities and simultaneously work on **nutritional awareness**.
 - Use of [information technology](#) to improve program monitoring can be thought of too.
- **Re-orienting PDS:** There is a need to be re-orient and an up-scale [Public Distribution System](#) to make it more transparent and reliable and ensure availability, accessibility and affordability of nutritious food, also making a positive impact on the purchasing power of the lower socio-economic segment of the population
- **Agriculture-Nutrition Corridor:** Currently, India's **nutritional hubs (villages) are the most deprived of adequate nutrition**, there is a need to devise mechanisms to check **"Nutritional security of villages"** in line with **agricultural-commerce**.
 - Recognising the importance of this link, the **Ministry for Women and Child Development** launched the [Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh](#) in 2019.
- **Women-led SDG Mission: There is a need to** redesign existing **direct nutrition programs** and linking it with [women's self-help groups](#) can make India realise the [Sustainable Development Goal- 2](#) to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030.
- **Reducing Waste, Reducing Hunger: India wastes about 7% of its total annual food production** and almost 30% of the fruits and vegetables because of **inadequate warehousing facilities and cold storages**.
 - According to the [International Institute of Refrigeration](#), if developing countries had the same level of refrigeration infrastructure as developed countries, they would save **200 million tonnes of food or around 14% of their food supply**, which can help in tackling hunger and malnutrition.

Drishti Mains Question

Despite major strides in nutritional security, India's position in the Global Hunger Index remains an area of concern. Critically analyse.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

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:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 3
(d) 1 and 3 only

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India? (2018)

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