



Hunger in India

For Prelims: Hunger and related initiatives, Community Kitchen and related schemes in different states

For mains: Hunger and malnutrition in India, Related government Initiatives, Way forward for the situation

Why in News

Recently, the Union government informed the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) that no starvation death (Death by Hunger) has been reported by any state or Union territory (UT) in recent years.

Key Points

- **The Petition:**
 - The court is hearing a petition that **highlights how starvation deaths continue to eat into the right to life and dignity** of social fabric and a “radical” new measure like **community kitchens need to be set up across the country** to feed the poor and the hungry.
 - The petition also referred to **Rajasthan’s** Annapurna Rasoi, **Indira Canteens** in **Karnataka**, **Delhi’s** Aam Aadmi Canteen, **Anna Canteen** of **Andhra Pradesh**, **Jharkhand** Mukhyamantri Dal Bhat and **Odisha’s** Ahaar Centre.
- **SC’s Ruling:**
 - The SC asked the Centre to explore the possibility of a “model” [community kitchen scheme](#) by which it could support the States to ensure food security for the poor.
 - It asked the Centre to **make a model scheme and leave it to the States to follow** the guidelines depending on their individual food habits.
 - Called for the **creation of a national food grid** by the Centre which is beyond the scope of the [Public Distribution Scheme](#).

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- **Related Data:**
 - **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.

▪ **Causes of Malnutrition:**

- There are multiple dimensions of [malnutrition in India](#) that include
 - **Calorific deficiency-** Though the government has [surplus of foodgrains](#), there is calorific deficiency because the allocation and distribution is not proper. Even the yearly budget allocated is not fully utilised.
 - **Protein hunger-** [Pulses](#) are a major contributor to address protein hunger. However, there is not enough budgetary allocations done to tackle the problem. With Eggs missing from menus of Mid-day Meals in various States, an easy way to improve protein intake is lost.
 - **Micronutrient deficiency** (also known as [hidden hunger](#)): India faces a severe crisis in micronutrient deficiency. Its causes include poor diet, disease, or increased micronutrient needs not met during pregnancy and lactation.
- **Other factors:**
 - Poor access to [safe drinking water](#) and
 - Poor access to [Sanitation](#) (especially toilets),
 - Low levels of [immunisation](#) and
 - Education, especially of women.

▪ **Government Interventions**

- **Eat Right India Movement:** An outreach activity organised by the [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) for citizens to nudge them towards eating right.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan:** Launched by the [Ministry of Women and Child Development](#) in 2018, it targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls).
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:** A [centrally sponsored scheme](#) executed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, is a maternity benefit programme being implemented in all districts of the country with effect from 1st January, 2017.
- **Food Fortification:** Food Fortification or Food Enrichment is the addition of key vitamins and minerals such as iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A & D to staple foods such as rice, milk and salt to improve their nutritional content.
- **National Food Security Act, 2013:** It legally entitled up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidised food grains under the [Targeted Public Distribution System](#).
- **Mission Indradhanush:** It targets children under 2 years of age and pregnant women for immunisation against 12 Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD).
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** Launched in 1975, the ICDS Scheme offers a package of six services to children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Way Forward

- **Linking of Schemes:** Agriculture-Nutrition linkage schemes have the potential for greater impact in dealing with malnutrition and thus, needs greater emphasis.
- **Early fund disbursement:** The government needs to ensure early disbursement of funds and optimum utilisation of funds in schemes linked to nutrition.
- **Underutilisation of Resources:** It has been pointed out many times that expenditure made under many nutrition-based schemes is considerably lower than what was allocated under them. Thus, emphasis needs to be on implementation.
- **Convergence with other Schemes:** Nutrition goes beyond just food, with economic, health, water, sanitation, gender perspectives and social norms contributing to better nutrition. This is why the proper implementation of other schemes can also contribute to better nutrition.
- **PM Poshan Scheme:** The [PM Poshan Scheme](#) aims to enhance the nutrition of school children by providing a balanced diet in schools. **By including milk and eggs in each states' menu, preparing a menu based on climatic conditions, local foods etc. can help in providing the right nutrition** to children in different States.

[Source: TH](#)

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