



World's Children Report 2019

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The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** has released its '**State of the World's Children**' report for 2019.

- The report is the UNICEF's most comprehensive report on children, food and nutrition in 20 years.
- The **Global Hunger Index report** was recently released by the organisation Welthungerhilfe.

Key Findings

- **Malnutrition:**
 - At least 1 in 3 children under 5 is undernourished or overweight.
 - At least 1 in 2 children suffer from hidden hunger.
- **Implications:**
 - The **triple burden of malnutrition - undernutrition, hidden hunger and overweight - threatens the survival, growth and development of children, young people, economies and nations.**
 - For example, Iron deficiency (a form of hidden hunger) reduces children's ability to learn and increases women's risk of death during or shortly after childbirth.
- **Causes:**
 - The triple burden of malnutrition is driven by the **poor quality of children's diets:** 2 in 3 children are not fed the minimum recommended diverse diet for healthy growth and development.
 - **Globalization, urbanization, inequities, humanitarian crises and climate shocks** are driving unprecedented negative changes in the nutrition situation of children around the world.

- **Suggestions:**
 - **Food environments** are crucial.
 - There is a need to empower families, children and young people to demand nutritious food.
 - Similarly, there is a need to drive food suppliers to do the right thing for children.
 - **Supportive systems** – health, water and sanitation, education and social protection– should be mobilized to scale up nutrition results for all children.
 - There is a need to collect, analyse and use **good-quality data** and evidence regularly to guide action and track progress.

India-Specific Findings

- **Malnutrition:**
 - **35%** of Indian children suffer from **stunting**, **17%** suffer from **wasting**, **33%** are **underweight** and **2%** are **overweight**.
 - Indian children are being diagnosed with adult diseases such as hypertension, chronic kidney disease and diabetes.
 - **Every second woman in the country is anaemic**, as are 40.5% children.
- **In comparison with other countries:**
 - Among countries in South Asia, **India fares the worst (54%)** on the prevalence of children under five who are either stunted, wasted or overweight.
 - Afghanistan and Bangladesh follow at 49% and 46%, respectively. Sri Lanka and the Maldives are the better performing countries in the region, at 28% and 32%, respectively.
 - **India also has the highest burden of deaths among children under five per year**, with over 8 lakh deaths in 2018.
 - It is followed by Nigeria, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, at 8.6 lakh, 4.09 lakh and 2.96 lakh deaths per year, respectively.
- **Causes:**
 - India is **moving away from seasonal food** as well as traditional food whereas the **consumption of processed food has increased**.
 - Urban India is moving into an **unhealthy food snacking environment**, which is influencing children's food choices and the same is also spreading to rural areas.
 - Food consumption patterns in India reveal that child diets are largely lack proteins and micronutrients and are influenced by household (adult) food choices.
 - Over the decades, despite growing incomes, **protein-based calories remain low** and unchanged, and the calorific share of fruits and vegetables has declined.

- **Steps Appreciated:**

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan** or the National Nutrition Mission is playing a major role in improving nutrition indicators across India.
- The **Anaemia Mukht Bharat programme** to fight anaemic prevalence has been recognized as one of the best programmes implemented by governments across the world to address malnutrition.

The **6X6X6 strategy** (six target beneficiary groups, six interventions and six institutional mechanisms) of the programme has been highlighted for using anaemia testing and treatment as the entry point to provide information on healthy diets.

Source: IE