

Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019

February 12, 2020

Source: *PIB & The Hindu*

A new report, 'Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019', prepared by the Government of India and the United Nations World Food Programme, paints a picture of hunger and malnutrition amongst children in large pockets of India.

Key highlights of the report

- **Stunting:** As per the report the highest levels of stunting and underweight are found in Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra
- At the national level, among social groups, the prevalence of stunting is highest amongst children from the Scheduled Tribes (43.6 percent), followed by Scheduled Castes (42.5 percent) and Other Backwards Castes (38.6 percent).
- The prevalence of stunting in children from ST in Rajasthan, Odisha and Meghalaya is high while stunting in children from both ST and SC is high in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.
- Prevalence of wasting is highest in Jharkhand (29.0%) and above the national average in eight more States (Haryana, Goa, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat) and three UTs (Puducherry, Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli).
- The prevalence of underweight is also highest in Jharkhand (47.8%) and is above the national average in seven more States (Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar) and one UT (Dadra and Nagar Haveli).
- According to the report, almost one in three Indian

children under five years will still be stunted by 2022 going by current trends

- Over the last decade, child stunting – which is a measure of chronic malnutrition – has reduced at a rate of about 1% per year, the slowest decline among emerging economies.
- At this rate, 31.4% of children will still be stunted by the 2022 deadline. India must double its rate of progress to reach the target of 25% by that time, says the report.
- **Food grain yield target:** Foodgrain yields have risen 33% over the last two decades, but are still only half of 2030 target yields, says the report.

Food and malnutrition in the country

- Over the last 20 years, total food grain production in India increased from 198 million tonnes to 269 million tonnes. Despite an increase in food production, the rate of malnutrition in India remains very high.
- In the food basket, it turns out that in both urban and rural areas, the share of expenditure on cereal and cereal substitutes has declined between 1972-73 and 2011-12, from 57% to 25% in rural areas and from 36% to 19% in urban areas.
- The energy and protein intake from cereals has decreased in both rural and urban India, largely because of increased consumption of other food items such as milk and dairy products, oils and fat and relatively unhealthy food such as fast food, processed food, and sugary beverages.
- The consumption of unhealthy energy and protein sources is much higher in urban areas.

The double burden of malnutrition

- For several decades India was dealing with only one form of malnutrition– undernutrition. In the last decade, the

double burden which includes both over- and undernutrition, is becoming more prominent and poses a new challenge for India.

- From 2005 to 2016, prevalence of low (< 18.5 kg/m²) body mass index (BMI) in Indian women decreased from 36% to 23% and from 34% to 20% among Indian men.
- During the same period, the prevalence of overweight/obesity (BMI > 30 kg/m²) increased from 13% to 21% among women and from 9% to 19% in men.
- Children born to women with low BMI are more likely to be stunted, wasted, and underweight compared to children born to women with normal or high BMI.