

Global hunger index 2022

October 31, 2022

Manifest Pedagogy:

Global Hunger Index report ranked India **107th out of 121 countries** that could be ranked and 136 countries that were assessed. India is a self-sufficient nation in food production for decades and having leaped forward economically over the past 20 years. It is painful to see that despite having surplus food, hunger still persists. The government has rejected the Global Hunger Index report, claiming it is an effort to 'taint' India and questioning its methodology. The findings of the report must be carefully analysed and the government must take all measures to ensure Zero hunger in the country.

In News: The Global hunger index report was released recently which ranked India poorly.

Placing it in the Syllabus: Social Justice.

Static Dimensions

- About Global Hunger Index
- Why does GHI look at all these variables for hunger?
- The reasons behind India's persistent problem of hunger

Current Dimensions

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- Why has the Indian government criticised GHI 2022?
- Steps taken by Government to fight hunger

Content

More on news

- **Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe** released the latest edition of the Global Hunger Index report.

- It ranked India **107th out of 121 countries** that could be ranked and 136 countries that were assessed; for 15 countries, individual scores could not be calculated and ranks could not be determined owing to lack of data.
- The Indian government responded by summarily dismissing the report, going so far as to claim that it was done to “taint India’s image”.
 - This is not the first time the Indian government has responded like this when faced with India’s poor ranking in the GHI.

About Global Hunger Index

- In common parlance, hunger refers to discomfort due to a lack of food. However, the GHI is not such a simplistic measure. Instead, it uses four separate measures to “capture the multidimensional nature of hunger”.
- To be sure, it has used multiple measures since its inception in 2006. The last update to the methods happened in 2015.
- These are the four measures it uses:
 - **Undernourishment:** the share of the population whose caloric intake is insufficient. This is closest to the everyday notion of hunger. This makes up 1/3 of the GHI score.
 - **Child stunting:** the share of children under the age of five 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 five 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 fifth 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.**

Why does GHI look at all these variables for hunger?

- The problem of hunger is complex. The GHI includes four indicators to reflect the multidimensional nature of hunger. Together, they reflect deficiencies in calories as well as in micronutrients.
- The report explains why using this combination of indicators to measure hunger offers several advantages.
- The indicators included in the GHI formula reflect caloric deficiencies as well as poor nutrition.
 - The undernourishment indicator, for instance, captures the food access situation of the population as a whole, while the indicators specific to children reflect the nutrition status within a particularly vulnerable subset of the population for whom a lack of dietary energy, protein, and/or micronutrients (essential vitamins and minerals) leads to a high risk of illness, poor physical and cognitive development, and death.
- Further, by combining multiple indicators, the index “minimises the effects of random measurement errors”.
- Moreover, these four indicators are all part of the indicator set used to measure progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Findings of GHI 2022

- Typically, GHI ranks and scores are not comparable from one year to another. That’s because data is often revised and methodology changes over time. However, each year, the report provides data for three reference

years, making the data comparable, to provide a trend for different countries.

- The results for India and some other comparable countries are summarised below.

TABLE 1					TABLE 2				
PROPORTION OF UNDERNOURISHED IN THE POPULATION (%)					PREVALENCE OF WASTING IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS (%)				
	'00-'02	'06-'08	'13-'15	'19-'21		'98-'02	'05-'09	'12-'16	'17-'21
India (107)	18.4	17.5	14.8	16.3	India (107)	17.1	20.0	15.1	19.3
Bangladesh (84)	15.9	13.9	14.1	11.4	Bangladesh (84)	12.5	17.5	14.4	9.8
Brazil (20)	10.7	5.6	2.5	4.1	Brazil (20)	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.3
China (1*)	10.0	5.0	<2.5	<2.5	China (1*)	2.5	2.6	1.9	1.9
Indonesia (77)	19.2	18.5	7.9	6.5	Indonesia (77)	5.5	14.8	13.5	10.2
Nigeria (103)	8.9	6.6	9.2	12.7	Nigeria (103)	14.0	10.1	7.9	6.5
Pakistan (99)	21.1	15.8	13.4	16.9	Pakistan (99)	14.1	12.0	10.5	7.1
South Africa (59)	3.9	3.6	4.8	6.9	South Africa (59)	4.5	4.8	3.5	3.4

TABLE 3					TABLE 4				
PREVALENCE OF STUNTING IN CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS (%)					UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY RATE (%)				
	'98-'02	'05-'09	'12-'16	'17-'21		2000	2007	2014	2020
India (107)	54.2	47.8	38.7	35.5	India (107)	9.2	6.8	4.6	3.3
Bangladesh (84)	51.1	43.2	36.2	28.0	Bangladesh (84)	8.6	5.8	4.0	2.9
Brazil (20)	9.9	7.0	6.8	6.5	Brazil (20)	3.5	2.2	1.6	1.5
China (1*)	17.8	9.8	8.1	4.8	China (1*)	3.7	2.0	1.2	0.7
Indonesia (77)	42.4	40.1	36.4	30.8	Indonesia (77)	5.2	3.8	2.9	2.3
Nigeria (103)	48.3	41.1	33.6	31.5	Nigeria (103)	18.3	14.6	12.8	11.4
Pakistan (99)	41.4	42.0	45.0	37.6	Pakistan (99)	10.8	9.3	7.8	6.5
South Africa (59)	30.1	24.9	21.4	21.4	South Africa (59)	7.2	7.5	3.8	3.2

In parentheses, the overall GHI rank; *17 countries collectively ranked at 1-17 because all have a GHI score less than 5. Source: Global Hunger Index

- **India specific**

- India has made significant improvements in under-5 mortality and even child stunting has improved a bit. However, the proportion of undernourished population has gone up over the past few years.
- But most worrisome is the trend on child wasting where India has slid back to a level worse than what it was three decades ago; worse still, at over 19%, India's child wasting is the worst among all countries in the world.
- **India's child wasting rate at 19.3%**, is worse than earlier levels recorded in 2014 (15.1%) and 2000 (17.15) and is the highest for any country in the world. It drives up the South Asian region's average due to

India's large population.

- Prevalence of undernourishment has also risen in **India from 14.6% in 2018-2020 to 16.3% in 2019-2021**. Thus, 224.3 million people in India are considered undernourished.
- Improvement in: **Child stunting has declined from 38.7% to 35.5%** between 2014 and 2022.
 - **Child mortality has also dropped from 4.6% to 3.3%** in the same comparative period.
- **India and the neighbourhood:**
 - India fares worse (rank lower) than all South Asian countries- Sri Lanka (64), Nepal (81), Bangladesh (84), and Pakistan (99); except war-torn Afghanistan (109).
- **Global Scenario:**
 - Top rankings in GHI are dominated by European nations including Croatia, Estonia, and Montenegro etc.
 - Yemen lies at the lowest position (121).
 - In Asia, only China and Kuwait are ranked at the top of the list.

Why has the Indian government criticised GHI 2022?

- This is the second year running when the Indian government has criticised the GHI report. Based on the press release, dated October 15, there are three essential parts of the government's reaction.
- First, it claims that a "consistent effort" is yet again visible "to taint India's image as a Nation that does not fulfil (sic) the food security and nutritional requirements of its population"
- Secondly, it has questioned the methodology of GHI,

claiming that “misinformation seems to be the hallmark” of the annually released report. There are three sub-parts to the government’s contention:

- That GHI uses “an erroneous measure of hunger”. In other words, it defines hunger in terms of other variables beyond the lack of food.
 - That 3 out of the 4 variables used are related to children, and as such, cannot be representative of the entire population.
 - Lastly, the government claims that the fourth indicator, the proportion of undernourished population is “based on an opinion poll conducted on a very small sample size of 3000”.
- Thirdly, the government details how it has been providing additional free-of-cost foodgrains to 80 crore Indians since March 2020, over and above the entitlements under the National Food Security Act.
- It also mentions the supplementary nutrition provided to 1.78 crore women and 7.7 crore children via the Angandwadi scheme as well as the monetary help (Rs 5000) provided to 1.5 crore women at the time of the birth of their first child.

The reasons behind India’s persistent problem of hunger

- **Poverty:** Poverty restricts the food choices and has been the causative factor of hunger related deaths. If the persistent high prices of food items and the regional disparities in terms of development, especially the backwardness among the hilly and tribal areas are also taken into account, the percentage of people who cannot afford balanced nutrition will be much higher in India.
- **Multidimensional nature:** Hunger and the related undernutrition is the result of various associated factors ranging from water, sanitation, access to food items. A person’s ‘nutritional quotient’ is also dependent on demographic factors like gender, caste,

age, etc.

- For instance, the nutritional needs of girl children and elderly are not adequately addressed in our society.
- **Ineffective food policies implementation:** Poor implementation of the schemes and policies. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the National Health Mission (NHM) have not achieved adequate coverage.
- **Climate change impact:** Erratic rainfall and increasing frequency of extreme events have impacted agricultural activities everywhere creating unfavourable conditions for food production.
 - Climate variability affecting rainfall patterns and agricultural seasons, and climate extremes such as droughts and floods, are among the key drivers behind the rise in hunger, together with conflict and economic slowdowns.
- **Issues with agriculture:** The change from multi to mono cropping systems limits the diversity of agricultural products.
 - Inclination towards cash crops and changing food habits result in malnutrition, undernutrition and even micro-nutrient deficiencies.
- **Food wastage:** Food wastage is also an emerging challenge that undermines the efforts to end hunger and malnutrition.
 - According to the FAO, the global volume of food wastage is estimated at 1.6 billion tonnes of primary product equivalents.
- **Unstable markets:** Rising food prices make it difficult for the poorest people to get nutritious food consistently which is exactly what they need to do.
- **Natural disasters:** Natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and long periods of drought are on the increase with calamitous consequences for the hungry poor in developing countries.

- **Gender inequality:** In many parts women's nutritional requirements are often unmet as they consume whatever is left after everyone else has eaten.

Steps taken by Government to fight hunger

- **Eat Right India Movement:** By the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for citizens to nudge them towards eating right.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan:** Targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls).
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:** Is a maternity benefit programme being implemented in all districts of the country with effect from 1st January, 2017.
- **Food Fortification:** 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.
- **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 and pregnant and lactating mothers

Way Forward

- Achieving zero hunger requires agriculture and food systems to become more efficient, sustainable, climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive.
- **Linking of Schemes:** Agriculture-Nutrition linkage schemes have the potential for greater impact in dealing with malnutrition and thus, needs greater emphasis.
- **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.
- Policies must pay special attention to groups who are the most vulnerable to the harmful consequences of poor food access: infants, children aged under five, school-aged children, adolescent girls, and women.
- A sustainable shift must be made towards nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems that can provide safe and high-quality food for all.

Mould your thoughts

1. India has ranked low in the latest edition of Global hunger index and has been criticised by the government. Discuss the findings of the report and reasons behind prevalence of hunger in India. Also suggest measures to be taken to make India hunger free.

Approach to the answer.

- Introduction about GHI
- Findings of the report and reasons for governments criticism.
- Reasons behind prevalence of hunger in India
- Measures to be taken to make India hunger free

- Wayforward and conclusion.