



afford sufficient and nutritious food. Economic disparities mean that while some have access to ample resources, others remain food insecure.

- 2. Infrastructure and Distribution Challenges:** Inefficiencies in food distribution and infrastructure hinder the effective delivery of food supplies to those in need. Issues such as inadequate storage facilities, poor transportation networks, and logistical bottlenecks contribute to food wastage and uneven distribution.
- 3. Agricultural Productivity:** While India has made strides in agricultural production, challenges such as fluctuating crop yields, reliance on monsoon rains, and land degradation impact food availability. The agricultural sector's productivity issues can lead to shortages and higher food prices, affecting the poorest segments of society the most.
- 4. Access to Education and Healthcare:** Limited access to education and healthcare exacerbates hunger. Low levels of education, especially among women, affect the ability to make informed decisions about nutrition and health. Poor healthcare infrastructure can lead to malnutrition and related health issues, which further perpetuate the cycle of poverty and hunger.
- 5. Multi-Dimensional Issues:** Hunger in India is not only about food availability but also involves multiple dimensions including sanitation, clean drinking water, and overall living conditions. Poor sanitation and limited access to clean water contribute to health problems, making it harder for individuals to maintain good nutritional status.

Government Measures Towards Addressing Hunger

The Indian government has implemented various measures to combat hunger and improve food security:

- 1. Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY):** Launched in April 2020, the PMGKY is a significant initiative aimed at providing free food grains to over 800 million people. This scheme offers 10 kg of food grains per person per month, helping to ensure that vulnerable populations receive the essential nutrition they need. The initiative was a direct response to the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2. Public Distribution System (PDS):** The PDS is a long-standing program designed to provide subsidized food grains to low-income families. It includes the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which aims to ensure food security and provide subsidized food to those living below the poverty line.
- 3. National Nutrition Mission:** This program focuses on improving nutritional outcomes among children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. It seeks to address malnutrition through a range of interventions including supplemental nutrition, health education, and community-based monitoring.
- 4. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):** The ICDS program provides a range of services including supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, and



early childhood education. It is aimed at improving the health and nutritional status of children under six years of age, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

- 5. Agricultural Reforms:** The government has introduced various reforms to boost agricultural productivity and ensure better food security. These include initiatives to improve irrigation, provide better seeds and fertilizers, and support farmers through various schemes.
- 6. Food Processing and Storage:** Investments in food processing and storage infrastructure aim to reduce food wastage and enhance the efficiency of the food supply chain. Improved storage facilities help in maintaining the quality of food products and ensuring their availability throughout the year.
- 7. Nutritional Education and Awareness:** Efforts are being made to enhance awareness about nutrition and healthy eating habits. Educational programs aim to inform individuals and communities about the importance of balanced diets and the prevention of malnutrition.

Conclusion

In summary, while hunger in India has shown improvement according to the latest FAO report, challenges persist due to a variety of socio-economic and infrastructural factors. The reduction in the prevalence of undernourishment is a positive development, reflecting the impact of government measures and interventions. However, addressing the root causes of hunger requires a multi-faceted approach that includes continued efforts in poverty alleviation, agricultural development, and improving access to education and healthcare. The ongoing initiatives by the Indian government, coupled with strategic reforms and investments, are essential to achieving long-term food security and eradicating hunger effectively.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 1. Evaluate the effectiveness of India's food security measures in reducing hunger as reflected in the recent FAO report. What are the main challenges that still persist despite these measures?**
- 2. Discuss the role of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) in assessing hunger levels and its implications for India. How can the index be improved to provide a more accurate representation of the hunger situation?**

Answer



1. Evaluate the effectiveness of India's food security measures in reducing hunger as reflected in the recent FAO report. What are the main challenges that still persist despite these measures?

Introduction : India has made notable strides in improving food security, as evidenced by the recent FAO report indicating a reduction in the prevalence of undernourishment from 16.6% to 13.7% during the 2021-23 period.

Core : The primary food security measures include the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY), which provides free food grains to over 800 million individuals, and the Public Distribution System (PDS) that offers subsidized food to low-income families. These initiatives are complemented by the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which aims to ensure food access and security for vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, programs such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) target specific groups such as children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers, focusing on improving their nutritional outcomes through supplementary nutrition, health education, and community-based interventions.

Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain. Poverty and economic inequality continue to be major barriers, with large segments of the population unable to afford adequate and nutritious food even when subsidies are available. Infrastructure issues, such as inefficient food storage and distribution systems, lead to substantial food wastage and prevent effective delivery to those in need. Agricultural productivity remains inconsistent due to dependency on monsoon rains and land degradation, impacting food availability and pricing.

Conclusion : Additionally, socio-economic factors, including inadequate access to education and healthcare, exacerbate malnutrition. These issues necessitate a multi-faceted approach that includes economic reforms, infrastructural improvements, and enhanced access to education and healthcare to achieve sustainable food security and eradicate hunger comprehensively.

2. Discuss the role of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) in assessing hunger levels and its implications for India. How can the index be improved to provide a more accurate representation of the hunger situation?

Introduction : The Global Hunger Index (GHI) plays a critical role in assessing and comparing hunger levels across countries by combining indicators such as the prevalence of undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality rates.

Core : This index provides valuable insights into the extent of hunger and malnutrition and helps identify countries requiring urgent interventions. For India, the GHI has highlighted concerns about child malnutrition and mortality rates, ranking it 107th out of 121 countries in recent reports.



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However, the GHI has faced scrutiny for its methodology and the weightage of different indicators. Critics argue that the GHI's heavy reliance on child-specific indicators—stunting, wasting, and child mortality—may not accurately represent the overall population's hunger situation. Additionally, the use of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) survey, with its limited sample size and potential biases, has raised questions about its accuracy, particularly in a large and diverse country like India.

To improve the GHI's accuracy, several measures can be adopted. Expanding the sample size and incorporating more comprehensive data sources, such as national food consumption surveys and detailed caloric intake data, would enhance the reliability of the index. Revising the weightage of various indicators to reflect the broader population's food security situation more accurately is also crucial. Furthermore, integrating a multi-dimensional approach, similar to the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI), could provide a more holistic view of hunger by accounting for factors such as socio-economic conditions, access to healthcare, and educational levels.

Conclusion: These improvements would help ensure that the GHI provides a more accurate and representative assessment of hunger, facilitating better-informed policies and interventions to combat food insecurity effectively.

