

The Deplorable Impact of Malnutrition in India

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Abstract—According to World Health Organization, Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. The term malnutrition covers 2 broad groups of conditions. One is 'undernutrition'—which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals). The other is overweight, obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer).

According to Global nutrition report 2018, India has one-third of world's stunted children. With 46.6 million children who are stunted, India tops the list of countries followed by Nigeria (13.9 million) and Pakistan (10.7 million). Stunting, or low height for age, is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient-intake and frequent infections. In urban areas, there are 7.1 per cent overweight children on average, whereas in rural areas 6.2 per cent children are overweight. It is slightly more common among boys (6.9 per cent) than girls (6.1 per cent), the report highlighted. As with obesity, among adults, women are more overweight than among men (39.2 pc and 38.5 pc respectively in 2016). Conversely, diabetes is more common among men than women (9.0 pc and 7.9 pc respectively in 2014).

This paper is an attempt to identify the real causes of the malnutrition and its impact on our society due to low nutritious food intake.

In future, the upcoming generation either will suffer from the malnutrition or obesity. This is what is said by the report of a new research by WHO and Lancet. According to them in 2022, throughout the world, the children effected by malnutrition will be lesser than the number of children facing obesity. From 1975, the problem of obesity is increasing 10 times per year.

As reported by the *New England Journal of Medicine* – 2017, In 2015, the total number of children facing obesity were 1.44 crore in India. Children living in the urban areas of India are

facing more problems of obesity. And the main cause of this is the irresponsibility of the parents. In India, more than 23 crore people are affected by the obesity.

On the other hand, According to the report of WHO and Lancet, 9.70 crore children are affected by malnutrition in India. Such children are more in rural areas as compared to the urban areas.

As per the Global Hunger Index 2018, India ranked 103 out of 119 qualifying countries on the level of hunger and undernutrition. Although Indian government started Mid-day meal to overcome this problem, but this attempt is really very weak to end this problem of malnutrition.

➤ *How are the GHI scores calculated?*

GHI scores are calculated using a three-step process that draws on available data from various sources to capture the multidimensional nature of hunger.

First, for each country, values are determined for four indicators:

1. **UNDERNOURISHMENT:** the share of the population that is undernourished (that is, whose caloric intake is insufficient);
2. **CHILD WASTING:** the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (that is, who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition);
3. **CHILD STUNTING:** the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (that is, who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition); and
4. **CHILD MORTALITY:** the mortality rate of children under the age of five (in part, a reflection of the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environments).

Second, each of the four component indicators is given a standardized score on a 100-point scale based on the highest observed level for the indicator on a global scale in recent decades.

Third, standardized scores are aggregated to calculate the GHI score for each country, with each of the three dimensions (inadequate food supply; child mortality; and child

undernutrition, which is composed equally of child stunting and child wasting) given equal weight.

This three-step process results in GHI scores on a 100-point GHI Severity Scale, where 0 is the best score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. In practice, neither of these extremes is reached. A value of 0 would mean that a country had no undernourished people in the population, no children younger than five who were wasted or stunted, and no children who died before their fifth birthday. A value of 100 would signify that a country's undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality levels were each at approximately the highest levels observed worldwide in recent decades. The GHI Severity Scale shows the severity of hunger - from *low* to *extremely alarming* - associated with the range of possible GHI scores.

According to the report, prepared by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide, India is among the 45 countries that have "serious levels of hunger". In 2017, India was ranked at the 100th position but ranking for this year is not comparable, it said. The GHI, now in its 13th year, ranks countries based on four key indicators -- undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting and child stunting. Child wasting refers to share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition.

India is ranked below many neighbouring countries, including China (25th spot), Nepal (72), Myanmar (68), Sri Lanka (67) and Bangladesh (86). Pakistan is placed at the 106th position. India has shown improvement in three of the indicators over the comparable reference years. The percentage of undernourished people in the population has dropped from 18.2% in 2000 to 14.8% in 2018. The child mortality rate has halved from 9.2% to 4.3%, while child stunting has dropped from 54.2% to 38.4% over the same period.

However, the prevalence of child wasting has actually worsened in comparison to previous reference years. It stood at 17.1% in 2000, and increased to 20% in 2005. In 2018, it stands at 21%. South Sudan's child wasting prevalence is at 28%.

Child wasting is high across South Asia, constituting a "critical public health emergency", according to UN organisations. The report notes that wasting rates are highest for infants aged 0 to 5 months, suggesting that attention to birth outcomes and breastfeeding is important.

Also, child wasting in the region is associated with a low maternal body mass index, suggesting the need for a focus on the nutritional status of the mother during pregnancy.

According to the World Bank's 2016 data, 1 in every 5 Indians is poor, and the 7 poorest states – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh – house 62% of the country's poor. Unemployment in these regions is high, hence, the lack of funds to sustain life. While in our urban bubbles, we hardly

realise the plight of more than half of our country's population.

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This work is dedicated to Supreme Personality of Godhead and Radhika.

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