



## The Situation of Food Security and Malnutrition in INDIA

### ORIGINAL ARTICLE



#### Authors

**Kalp Das**, Research Scholar  
Punjab Agricultural University  
Ludhiana, Punjab, INDIA

**Dr. Kusum Chandrakar**  
Assistant Prof., Govt. Naveen College,  
Gudhiyari, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, INDIA

**Dr. D. K. Chandrakar**  
Principal Scientists  
Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya  
Raipur, Chhattisgarh, INDIA

**Debasis Das**  
Ph.D. Scholar  
College of Agriculture,  
Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya  
Raipur, Chhattisgarh, INDIA

### Abstract

*Malnutrition in children is a public health problem in many developing countries. Apart from great human suffering, both physical and emotional, it is a major drain on the prospects for development in these countries. Every year, about half of all children in India are malnourished, and nearly a million children die before reaching the age of one month. In India, 43% of children under the age of five are underweight, and 48% are stunted as a result of severe malnutrition (3 out of every 10 children). In terms of infant under five mortality rate (U5 MR) and infant mortality rate (IMR), India outperforms emerging countries with similar health characteristics. When underweight in children under the age of five is used as an indicator of food security, India performs poorly, with rates comparable to Sub-Saharan Africa. The Indian Government has noticed this in recent years and has expanded, consolidated, and established different programmes to tackle child malnutrition.*

### Key Words

*Malnutrition, Children, Health, Poverty, Food Security.*

### Introduction

Malnutrition in children is a public health problem in many developing countries. Apart from immense human misery, both physical and mental, it is a major drain on these countries' growth prospects. Why? they require more intensive parental care and are less physically and mentally productive as adults. Malnutrition is another infringement of a child's human rights. Ideas for the causes of child malnutrition, as well as Government measures to manage and eliminate child malnutrition in emerging economies such as India, should be valuable for other similar countries seeking

to reduce child malnutrition at home and improve public intervention strategies. India is one of the fastest expanding economies in the South Asian region, both commercially and educationally and technologically.

Despite economic progress, India has failed to fight malnutrition, which has hampered the country's socioeconomic development. India is home to more than one-third of the world's malnourished children. Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan are home to half of the world's malnourished children.

India ranks 94th out of 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2020. Malnourished children are roughly twice as common in India as in Sub-Saharan Africa, affecting mortality, productivity, and economic growth. Every year, about half of India's children are malnourished, and nearly a million children die before reaching the age of one month. In India, 43% of children under the age of five are underweight, and 48% are stunted as a result of severe malnutrition (3 out of every 10 children).

Although the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme mandates nutrition education, along with other services, to pregnant and lactating women through its frontline workers, analysis of District Level Household Survey data shows that the proportion of women who received nutrition and health education from an 'Anganwadi worker') during their pregnancy and lactation is low.

Nutrition plays a important role in healthy growth and development (physical and cognitive) and socio-economic standing of the child and is that the key to physiological state. Disease threatens the long-run human development and can interfere with psychological feature development and adulthood labour productivity within the families whose resources place them below the poverty line.

### Classification of Malnutrition

According to the WHO, 'malnutrition' refers to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's energy and/or nutrient consumption. It might be 'undernutrition' or 'overnutrition'. Physical and mental tiredness, low weight in relation to height (wasting) and shortness for age (stunted), decreased skin folds, exaggerated skeletal outlines, and lack of skin elasticity are all symptoms of malnutrition.

**Fig.1:** Classification for assessing severity of malnutrition by prevalence ranges among children under 5 years of age

Indicator	Severity of malnutrition by prevalence ranges			
	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)	Very high (%)
Stunting	< 20	20–29	30–39	≥ 40
Underweight	< 10	10–19	20–29	≥ 30
Wasting	< 5	5–9	10–14	≥ 15

### Factors Responsible for Malnutrition

#### Poverty

Because of low purchasing power, poor cannot afford to buy desired amount of food.

#### Feeding Habits

Undernutrition in the family is caused by a lack of properties of food, illogical views about food, and poor-child care and feeding behaviours.

#### Socio-cultural Factors

- Inequitable food distribution throughout the household.
- The mother's nutritional state is harmed by a rapid series of pregnancies. She may ignore her own health and antenatal exams during pregnancy as she strives to manage the large family. Undernutrition might result in a low birth weight infant. Food availability per capita is also lower in large families.

### Food Security and Malnutrition from Indian Perspective

India is self-sufficient in a number of food crops including rice and wheat, which are among the national staples, and there is enough food to meet demand. Despite this, hundreds of millions of Indians have poor nutritional health. India has been successful in ensuring that its population has access to food, but it has failed to ensure that it includes the necessary diversity in the types of food available. Micronutrient deficiencies

are common in India, mainly as a result of a focus on calorie availability and not dietary diversity. Poor water management and subsidies that encourage wasteful practices in agricultural production could come to present a danger to Indian food security.

## **How Covid-19 Further Shook the Food Security System of India**

By March, when the first COVID-19 cases were found in the country, the situation had completely changed. According to the FAO, over 40% of food produced in India is not used each year owing to inefficient supply systems.

In India, a shortage of cooling and storage facilities means that 20% of total food production is lost before it reaches the market. The epidemic exacerbated the weaknesses of the country's food system. It has changed supply networks, exacerbating the country's food waste issue. Small growers have been forced to sell their produce at a loss, if they can sell it at all. As a result of the decline in catering services, onions are decaying in containers. The lockdown tactics caused serious manpower shortages, delaying the by mid-April. Food imports have also been halted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Partial port operations, as well as road and air cargo closures, have impeded grain movement.

## **Management of Malnutrition Through Food Security**

The Govt. of India has already undertaken many management to manage such as, such as lowering poverty, increasing sanitation, fortifying foods with key nutrients, enhancing women's education, and improving agricultural practises.

According to Article 47, living standards, as well as public health is to be improved." Because malnutrition is a high priority for the Indian Government, it is implementing several programmes to improve the nutritional situation in India.

## **Conclusion**

Many new mothers are teenagers, the majority are un nourished. In comparison to the world, they gain half the maximum amount of weight during pregnancy. In India, maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition rates are also frighteningly high. Sixty million children are underweight for their ages, with half of those being severely malnourished. According to UNICEF, the prevalence of undernutrition in India has decrease to 40% India outperforms other developing countries with similar health characteristics in terms of IMR and under five mortality rate (U5 MR). The Indian Government has noticed this in recent years and has expanded, consolidated, and established different programmes to tackle child malnutrition. Nevertheless, understanding of these initiatives, as well as certain lessons learned from them, can be beneficial for countries seeking to reduce child malnutrition in similar contexts.

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