

A study on the food security, hunger and poverty: A social menace of the nation

Jhikmik Kar *

Department of Geography, Vidyasagar College, Kolkata, India.

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Abstract

The concept of Food Security is multifaceted and varied. Food is as essential for living as air is for breathing. But food security means something more than getting two square meals. It lies on the three basic concept- availability, accessibility and affordability i.e how much food is produced within a nation; whether the food is equally distributed in all the section of the population irrespective of caste creed; and the dietary food can be purchased by all. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the problems created by food security in different parts of the nation and suggest mitigation measures to combat the problem.

Keywords: Hood availability; Hunger; Undernourished; Global Hunger Index; Poverty

1. Introduction

Food security is the measure of the availability of food and the individual ability to procure it. According to United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, it is defined as the means that all people, at all times have physical social and economic access to sufficiently safe and nutritious food that meet their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life. According to UN-India, there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India, which is a quarter of the world's hunger burden. Also, roughly 43% of children in India are chronically undernourished. India ranks 68 out of 113 major countries in terms of food security index 2022.

Objective

The main objective of study is to know the present socio-economic status of the country in respect of poverty and hunger and its adverse impact on the food security of the nation specially during the phase of Covid 19 pandemic which had greatly changed the social fabric of the nation.

2. Methodology

The entire work is based on secondary data collected from various articles and books. Reports from various agencies and commissions have been taken for analysis. Statistical representation of the various data has been done for detailed analysis of the problems of food security in different parts of India. Hunger and Poverty data are collected from various sources to have an idea of the present social status of the country.

3. Hunger and poverty in Indian scenario

Developing country such as India is challenged by the problem of hunger and food instability which has been aggravated in recent years due to the pandemic situation created by Covid 19. Poverty, hunger, misuse of natural resources is a pronounced phenomenon in a country like India. Climate change have severely affected the farming practices and

* Corresponding author: Jhikmik Kar

production of crops which had an adverse impact on the livelihood pattern of the farmers, which forms a larger section of the population of India. In the 2022 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 107th out of the 121 countries. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels. GHI scores are based on the values of four component.

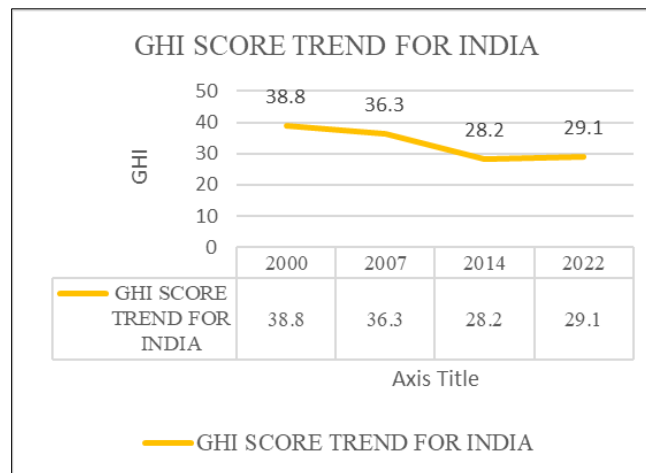


Figure 1 GHI score trend for India

indicators-undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting (the share of children under age five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition. and child mortality. Based on the values of the four indicators, a GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale reflecting the severity of hunger, where 0 is the best possible score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from low to extremely alarming. With a score of 29.1, India has a serious hunger issue. (Fig1) China and India both have one billion people, posing a challenge and putting strain on both countries. According to research, these nations have roughly half of the world's wheat stocks and the greatest stores of rice. India saw a bountiful harvest in 2010, but because to poor storage facilities, about one-third of the food grains were destroyed. As a result, the government has made a firm decision to save rather than sell the market's equities. India is the world's greatest food security conundrum since the country plays such a huge role in global food and nutrition security. Hunger, food scarcity is intimately related to poverty. A major section of the population of India lives below the poverty line and are unable to procure their basic dietary needs. According to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022, around 415 million people in India climbed out of poverty between 2005-06 and 2019-21, with the incidence of poverty falling from 55 per cent to just over 16 per cent over this period.(Fig2) Despite the significant reductions, however, the largest number of poor people in the world — 228.9 million — lived in India in 2020, said the MPI report, released by the United.

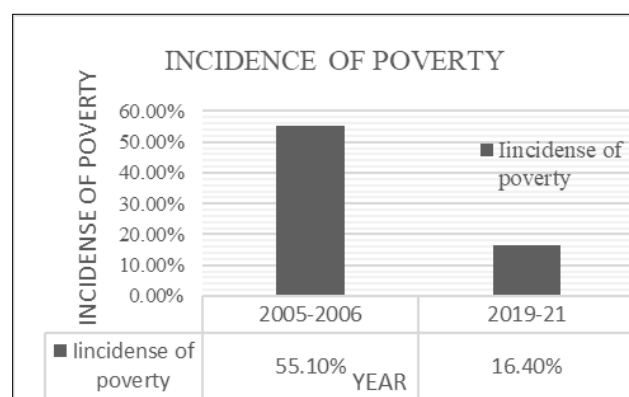


Figure 2 Incidence of Poverty over the years

significant reductions, however, the largest number of poor people in the world — 228.9 million — lived in India in 2020, said the MPI report, released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at the University of Oxford. A Niti Aayog report on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) has thrown up some worrying details. It shows that the states are struggling to control 'poverty' and

'hunger'. A total of 20 states and three Union Territories (UTs) have scored less than 50 (out of 100) in the Zero Hunger category. These states include Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Gujarat. When it comes to poverty, 14 states and three UTs fell behind scoring even 50 points in the 'No Poverty' category. Low agricultural productivity, unemployment, population explosion, inefficient use of resources, low rate of economic development is a possible cause of poverty in India. Though poverty alleviation program has been pretty successful in India, yet the goal of no poverty is yet to be achieved. For a country struggling and crippled by the menace of hunger and poverty, food security will naturally be the greatest threat in the all-round economic development of the country. The problem of food security is further exaggerated during the pandemic situation.

4. Food security in India

Food security entails ensuring adequate food supply to people, especially those who are deprived of basic nutrition. Food security has been a major concern in India. According to UN- India, there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India, which is a quarter of the world's hunger burden. Also, roughly 43% of the children in India are chronically undernourished. India ranks 71 out of 113 major countries in terms of food security index. Though the available nutritional standard is 100% of the requirement, India lags far behind in terms of quality protein intake at 20% which needs to be tackled by making available protein rich food products such as eggs, meat, fish chicken etc. at affordable prices. In order to provide the right to food to every citizen of the country, the parliament of India, enacted a legislation in 2013 known as the National Food Security Act, 2013. Also called as Right to Food Act, this act seeks to provide subsidize food grains to approximately 2/3rds of India's 1.33 billion population. It was signed into law on 12th September 2013 retroactive to 5th July 2013.

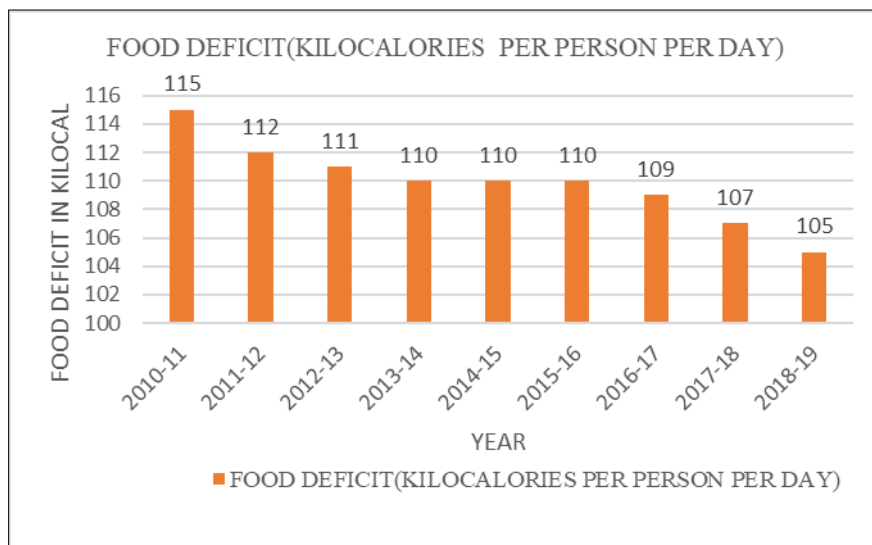


Figure 3 Year wise food deficit

Year wise food deficit: An estimation: According to World Bank Data food deficit of 152 calories was obtained in 2006-07 and food deficit of 105 calories was obtained in 2018-19. (Fig 3). The food deficit was lesser compare to 2006-07 and 2016-17. The daily wages of worker are low in India. The public servants do not enjoy the benefits of government nutrition schemes particularly in rural areas. The improper distribution of meal in various parts of the state and to different section of the population is the foremost cause of food deficiency in India. The purchasing power of the people are very much varied and only a small section of the people enjoys the benefits of healthy food owing to their high prices.

5. Food security in the phase of covid-19

Covid 19 is a respiratory and there is no evidence that food itself is a vector of its transmission (ICMSF, 2020). However, the virus and measures to contain its spread, have had profound implications for food security, nutrition and food systems. At the same time, malnutrition (including obesity) increases vulnerability to Covid19. Initial and ongoing uncertainty surrounding the nature of the spread of Covid19 led to the implementation of strict lockdown nationwide. These measures caused a serious slowdown in economic activity and disrupted supply chains, unleashing new dynamics with cascading effects on food systems and people's food security and nutrition. The six dimensions of food security proposed by High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HDPE)-availability, access, utilization, stability,

agency and sustainability are greatly affected by the pandemic situations. The pandemic has created rapid disruptions to food environment caused by both external aspects, such as food availability, prices and vendors as well as personal aspects including geographical access, affordability, convenience and desirability. (United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition 2020). The pandemic has completely disrupted the agricultural and food supply chain worldwide. Covid 19 hit at a time when hunger or undernourishment was once again on the rise in the world with an estimated 690 million people already going hungry in 2019. Based on the recent UN estimate, the economic recession triggered by the pandemic may lead to another 83 million people and possibly as many as 132 million going hungry in 2020. This is mainly due to the lack of access to food owing to the falling income of the people, lost remittances and in some cases a rise in food prices.

6. Strategies for improvement

Hunger poverty and food scarcity are an interrelated social phenomenon which are interdependent on one another. Eradication of one problem will help to meet the problem of the other. Governmental interference is the prime need to combat with these social menaces. Integrated policy framework to increase the agricultural productivity of the nation will help to eradicate hunger and food scarcity problems. In an agri-based country like India scientific methods in agricultural practices is very much essential. Crop rotation, diversification, multiple cropping must be encouraged in agricultural sector to increase productivity. Resources must be utilized judiciously to get the maximum profit out of it which will increase the purchasing power of the people. Employment opportunities must be created which would improve the livelihood pattern of the people. Efforts must be made by the concerned health departments and authorities to initiate and supervise the functioning of the nutrition related schemes in an efficient way. Government should introduce food rehabilitation centres in every state with low price meal so that every section of the population can afford it.

7. Conclusion

Food security and hunger have been constants throughout history. During times such as the Great Depression the government has stepped up in an effort to help those suffering. Today, there are many in similar situations although the problem of hunger has become invisible. The government is still making effort to aid those in need and thanks to research and media coverage the issue of food security as well as food insecurity is becoming more transparent. Communities and colleges are also battling social stigmas and lending a hand to those suffering from hunger. The corona virus pandemic has seriously challenged more than just our health. Food security has decreased in these situations rapidly. Awareness camps, proper functioning of the governmental policies and schemes will definitely help to combat the menace of food security, hunger and poverty from the country.

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