

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 597
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.02.2022

GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

597. SHRI S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India's Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranking continues to plummet as the other nations have made more substantial progress in improving nutritional levels that has caused a further fall in India's global standing; and
- (b) if so, the steps taken/being taken by the Government to accelerate improvement in the nutritional intake of the people in the country?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) and (b) As per Global Hunger Index 2021 report prepared by 'Welthungerhilfe' and 'Concern Worldwide', India's score is 27.5 and it has ranked 101 among 116 countries. Global Hunger Index is based on four indicators - Undernourishment, Child Stunting, Child Wasting and Child Mortality.

Global Hunger Index (GHI) does not reflect India's true picture as it is a flawed measure of 'Hunger'. It should not be taken at face value as it is neither appropriate nor representative of hunger prevalent in a country. Out of its four indicators, only one indicator, i.e., undernourishment, is directly related to hunger. The two indicators, namely, Stunting and Wasting are outcomes of complex interactions of various other factors like sanitation, genetics, environment and utilisation of food intake apart from hunger which is taken as the causative/outcome factor for stunting and wasting in the GHI. Also, there is hardly any evidence that the fourth indicator, namely, child mortality is an outcome of hunger.

Data used in the GHI report are sourced from international agencies which are not updated as per the latest data available in the country. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, the data source agency for the indicator 'Prevalence of Undernourishment', has relied on the opinion poll conducted telephonically, which has completely disregarded Government's economic response to Covid-19 of providing free foodgrains to 80 crore National Food Security Act beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna, and given an unacceptable estimate for India for the triennium period 2018-2020. The 4 questions asked in the poll have no links to availability of food or dietary energy. FAO's estimates on 'Prevalence of Undernourishment' in India for the triennium periods 2015-17, 2016-

18, 2017-19 are 14.8%, 14.5% and 14.0% respectively, which clearly show a declining trend. India has not faced any major challenges on the food production and supply part in the recent past which would adversely affect the 'Prevalence of Undernourished' score. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, have improved on this indicator during the triennium period 2018-20, signifying that these countries have not been affected at all by Covid-19 pandemic induced loss of job/business and reduction in income levels. These are counterintuitive in view of higher mortality rates due to Covid-19 in 2 countries during 2020. Thus, the assessment made by FAO does not reflect the ground reality and is not worthy of consideration.

The Government is implementing several schemes and programs under the Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services Scheme as direct targeted interventions to address the problem of malnutrition in the country. All these schemes address one or other aspects related to nutrition and have the potential to improve nutritional outcomes in the country. For alleviation of malnutrition, Government has approved **Mission Poshan 2.0** to strengthen nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcomes with focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity to disease and malnutrition. Steps have been taken to improve nutritional quality and testing in accredited labs, strengthen delivery and leverage technology to improve governance. Government has advised States/UTs to ensure that the quality of supplementary nutrition conforms to prescribed standards laid down under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and regulations made there under.

States/UTs have been advised to promote use of AYUSH systems for prevention of malnutrition and related diseases. A programme to support development of Poshan Vatikas at Anganwadi centres to meet dietary diversity gap leveraging traditional knowledge in nutritional practices has also been taken up.

In order to achieve zero hunger target, Government has implemented National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, which provides for coverage of upto 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population for receiving highly subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), which as per census 2011 comes to a maximum of 81.35 crore. Eligible households, which comprises Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) households and priority households, are entitled to receive food grains at Rs 1/2/3 per kg for coarse-grains/wheat/rice. While priority households are entitled to receive 5 kg per person per month, AAY households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, are entitled to receive 35 kg of foodgrains per household per month. At present, the Act is being implemented in all the States/UTs. The coverage under the Act is substantially high to ensure that all the vulnerable and needy sections of the society get its benefit.

The Government of India approved Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on "Fortification of Rice & its Distribution under Public Distribution System (PDS)" for a period of 3 years beginning in 2019-20 with total outlay of Rs 174.64 Cr. The Pilot Scheme is intended to focus on 15 Districts, preferably 1 District per State. Department of Food and Public Distribution in association with this Ministry and Department of School Education & Literacy have started distribution of Fortified Rice under ICDS and PM POSHAN (erstwhile Mid Day Meal) Schemes across the country during this year in an effort to scale up the distribution of fortified rice in the country.
