

The Global Hunger Index 2022: An Erroneous Measure of Hunger

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022, has slashed India's global rank to 107 out of 121 countries. India is ranked behind its neighbours; Bangladesh (84) Sri Lanka (64) Nepal (81) and Pakistan (99), with a score of 29.1, which lies in the serious category of hunger. Last year in 2021, India ranked 101 out of 116 countries. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, has out rightly rejected the report stating it, miss leading and based on an erroneous measure of Hunger. This ranking has placed India below all South Asian nations except Afghanistan and also below many African poverty-stricken countries like; the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Nigeria. There has been decreasing trend in the global hunger index score over the past years and in 2000 it was recorded at 38.8- an alarming score, which improved to 28.2 by 2014, thereafter continuously recording the high score. European countries like; Montenegro, Croatia and Estonia are at the top of the list while in Asian countries Kuwait and China are at the top. Yemen with the highest score ranked in the lowest position at 121. The Global Hunger Index is an annual report jointly published by a Germany-based NGO, Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe (CWW) since 2000 with a vision of achieving Zero Hunger by 2030. The Global Hunger Index has a wide scope than just understanding hunger as food deprivation and tracks the performance of the countries on four key parameters viz; Undernourishment, Child Wasting (low weight for height), Child Stunting (low height for age) and Child Mortality to analyse multiple dimensions. The Undernourishment indicator weighs 0.33 in GHI calculation while the other two variables, Child Wasting and Child Stunting together weigh 0.33 and the fourth variable of mortality rate also has a weight of 0.33. Thus, the two- thirds of the weights in the overall GHI calculation are of children under 5 years of age. The index can be understood as having many conceptual and empirical problems and has the scope to improve. Three out of four indicators used for calculating the index are related to the health of the children and cannot be representative of the entire population. The fourth indicator estimates the proportion of the undernourished population and in the Hunger report of 2022, this indicator for India is based on an opinion Poll administered on a sample size of 3000, which is very small for a country of 1.4 billion population. The PMGKAY scheme of the Government of India allows the distribution of rice/ wheat @10 kg per person per month to more than 800 million people. India has exported around 30 million metric tons of cereals in 2021 to many poor countries. The scheme is prevalent since April 2022 amidst Covid-19. The indicator seems to suffer from the serious problem of underestimation and Indicators like calorie intake can be used for index calculation. Statistical experts have reported a significant gap in calorie consumption as estimated from the NSSO consumption survey and those from production statistics of food and it is growing over years. There is 15 to 20 per cent higher

calorie consumption than NSSO as shown in the food balance sheet approach. The NSSO consumption survey of 2011 is still at 2,088 calories while for 2019, the food sheet balance estimated 2,581 calories of consumption. Even in the case of mortality rates, there is a notable decline over time and the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age in India has fallen from 88.1 to 32.6 from 2001 to 2020 for 1000 live births. Moreover, the stunting and wasting phenomena are not just because of a lack of food multi-dimensional approach like female education, better sanitation facilities and access to immunization are needed.



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