

# Malnutrition a big challenge for the development

## -The acne scar of the rising India

Ms. Mayuri Gaur

Jesus and Mary College

University of Delhi

[gaurmayuri@gmail.com](mailto:gaurmayuri@gmail.com)

### Abstract:

Take a moment and imagine a hungry child without food since 3 days – what can he do? He would cry, fight, and ultimately die. Is this his fate? There are millions of children who have little or nothing to eat. India is one of the highest ranking countries in the world for the number of children suffering from malnutrition, deprivation, ill-health, poor quality of life coupled with Government's apathy towards providing food for all has made hunger a "National Disease" for the underprivileged children. India has the highest number of underweight children in the world.

Ensuring food security to all these malnourished children is of prime importance for a country like India, where more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the population is estimated to be absolutely poor and ½ of all the children malnourished in one way or the other.

The paper is presented to throw light on the malnutrition problem the children of this country are facing. It is divided into sections. First section will have the discussion on what is malnutrition in a child and the factors determining malnutrition. Second section would touch upon the sufferings and the immense pain of the aching empty bellies and bodies. Third section shall further move to the directions and efforts undertaken by the Government of India for improving the availability of food to the poor through Nutritional Programmes to bring relief to the hungers. Fourth section makes an attempt to find the weakness and detect the implementation problems to achieve the mission of food security to all. Last but not the least, a conclusion drawn to fight against malnutrition would require a "Right Approach" in its

efficient and effective implementation of various schemes and nutritional programmes so that no is left out. The paper does not pretend to provide conclusive or comprehensive policies but lays down its concern for further improvement in these existing schemes and policies. Key words: Malnutrition, Nutritional Programmes.

### 1.1 Introduction

What is Malnutrition? Malnutrition is lack of adequate nutrition and nourishment resulting from insufficient food required by the body, which leads to a number of nutritional disorders like Marasmus, Kwashiorkor, Anemia, Goiter, Hypernatremia, Hypokalemia, vitamin deficiency and many more diseases. According to World Health Organization (WHO) malnutrition is the biggest contributor to the child mortality, as it directly or indirectly leads to many disorders.

When you go to the market, visit religious places, historical monuments, traffic light and many other places around you may often find women with a poor starving child begging for money and food. Do you think about the pains they are going through? India is a home to 25% of world's hungry poor. 43% of children under the age of 5 years are malnourished and more than ½ of all pregnancy women aged between 20-48 years suffer anemia. (Source: UNICEF: 2009)

### 1.2 Objective of study:

The objective of this paper is to throw light on persistent problem of malnutrition in our country even after 67 years of independence and to draw comprehensive and strategic policies to alleviate

malnutrition. critically analyze the food security situation in India while focusing on various Programmes that are being implemented by the Government of India to deal with the hunger problem

### **1.3 Methodology:**

This study employs the use of secondary sources of data. This is because the necessary information required for the work is more easily available in documented form. The source of data includes journals, magazines, newspapers (The Economics Times, The Times of India, The Hindu, The Financial Express, The Hindustan Times) and findings of other scholars. Visits to Anganwadi, Midday meal centres for current findings and problems. Open interviews of poor deprived of food in Chandani Chock, Sarojini Market, Khan Market and others.

### **1.4 Literature Review:**

According to International Food Policy Research Institute Global Hunger Index, India ranks top 4 in the world for undernourished children under age of 5. The World Bank estimates that India is one of the

The 2013 report goes beyond measuring food deprivation. It presents a broader suite of indicators that aim to capture the multidimensional nature of food insecurity, its determinants and outcomes. This suite, compiled for every country, allows a more nuanced picture of their food security status, guiding policy-makers in the design and implementation of targeted and effective policy measures that can contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

About 58 per cent of people in the country are food insecure, says the findings of the National Nutritional Survey (NNS) 2011. The situation has deteriorated from the previous nutritional survey published in 2003 which had recorded 50 per cent people food insecure. The situation has gone from bad to worse for malnutrition and food insecurity among women and children has increased.

Malnutrition is alarmingly high in India. A time to think, a time to act and a time to serve the most vulnerable creation of God a “Child”. Ill health, disability or serious illness makes them physically weak. Poor women receive very less care (and food) on their way to motherhood. Their children are less likely to survive or be born healthy. In comparison to India, other emerging economies with high growth

highest ranking countries in the world for the number of children suffering from malnutrition. The prevalence of underweight children in India is among the highest in the world.

Global Hunger Index (GHI) Report 2011, ranked India 15th among leading countries with hunger situation. It also places India amongst the 3 countries where GHI between 1996-2011 went up from 22.9 to 23.7 (which is alarming) while 78 out of 81 developing countries studied including Nepal, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Uganda, Zimbabwe succeeded in improving hunger conditions.

The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013 presents updated estimates of undernourishment and progress towards the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and World Food Summit (WFS) hunger targets. The latest assessment shows that further progress has been made towards the 2015 MDG target, which remains within reach for the developing regions as a whole, although marked differences across regions persist and considerable and immediate additional efforts will be needed.

trajectory have done much better job at pulling people out of hunger.

In India more than 300 million children go to sleep without food every day. It's even more depressing when we see the disturbing facts where 3000 children below the age of 5 years die every day because of acute poverty and hunger. The basic root cause for their hunger related diseases is Poverty. Poverty is hunger. It is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. It is not being able to go to school. It is the fear for the future, having food once in a day. It is illness, powerlessness and pain.

India has moved from 65 to 63 in Global Hunger Index (GHI), making a marginal improvement since 2012 but continues to languish far behind other emerging economies. The score for the country improved slightly from 22.9 in 2012 to 21.3 in 2013.

As has been the trend within SAARC countries India continues to trail behind Pakistan and Bangladesh on the index.

China improved its ranking by 57.69% between 1990-2012 while India showed 34% improvement in the same period. Countries that have achieved the highest progress of 55% increase in the GHI score

include- Mexico, Cuba, Ghana, Thailand, Vietnam, Venezuela.

### **1.5 Problems faced by the hungry poor and deprived people in India:**

When the children of a country are not strong how can the country become strong? India known as a young country today has 28% stunted, 70% anemic and 2% wasted in its young population. Acute

space with 2 other countries at the bottom of the table, failing on both commitments and outcomes. Number of children dying before their 5th birthday declined from 12 million to 6.9 million in 1990-2011.

India State Hunger Index (ISHI) is a tool to calculate hunger and malnutrition at the regional level of India was constructed in 2008 in the same manner like Global Hunger Index (GHI). World Bank reports that malnutrition in the poorest countries slashes 3% of annual economic growth.

The main drivers of under nutrition in developing countries are:

Food intake and diet diversification:

Health and related diseases

Poor maternal care and child care practices

Under nutrition is more common for children of mothers who are undernourished themselves (i.e. body mass index below 18.5) than for children whose mothers are not undernourished.

Children from scheduled tribes have the poorest nutritional status on almost every measure and the high prevalence of wasting in this group (28 per cent) is of particular concern.

- India has the highest number of low birth weight babies per year at an estimated 7.4 million.
- Only 25 per cent of newborns were put to the breast within one hour of birth.

while child malnutrition is 46%. Thus reduction in malnutrition is going to be a bigger challenge than income growth and reducing poverty.

poverty, unemployment, poor income, lack of health services adding on Government's neglect has made hunger a "National Disease" for underprivileged children. India's tragedy is once again reflected in its unfavorable latest report "Nutrition Barometer" announced by a voluntary organization, "SAVE THE CHILDREN". Nutrition Barometer is a study of nutrition specific commitment by 36 developing countries across globe. The study finds out India sharing

- Less than half of children (46 per cent) under six months of age are exclusively breastfed.

• Only 20 per cent children age 6-23 months are fed appropriately according to all three recommended practices for infant and young child feeding.

• 70 per cent children age 6- 59 months are anaemic. Children of mothers who are severely anaemic are seven times as likely to be severely anaemic as children of mothers who are not anaemic.

• Only half (51 per cent) of households use adequately iodized salt

• Only one third (33 per cent) Indian children receive any service from an anganwadi centre; less than 25per cent receive supplementary foods through ICDS; and only 18 per cent have their weights measured in an AWC.(Source NFHS 3, 2005-2006)

Low income growth is one of the reasons for low access to food and malnutrition. The cross section data across countries showed that the percentage decline in malnutrition is roughly half the rate at which GNP per capita grows. Thus economic growth alone cannot reduce malnutrition. Eg. In India, GDP was 6 to 7% p.a during 1992-93 to 2005-06 and 9% in last four years. However child malnutrition declined from 52% to 46% at the rate of 0.5% points p.a. This distortion between GDP growth and changes in the status of malnutrition is due to a distribution problem.

Income poverty is another reason for lower access to food and malnutrition. Studies shows that malnutrition exists even after reduction of poverty. Example: Income poverty in India is 29%

### **1.6 Malnutrition Eradication Programmes undertaken by the Government:**

ICDS- Integrated Child Development Services launched in 1975 aims at holistic development of

children upto six years of age, besides expectant and nursing mothers. Child malnutrition has barely declined at all. ICDS has to be universalized.

**MDMS-** Mid-day meal scheme has been revised and universalized at the primary level from 2004. It was supposed to cover 18 crore children by 2008-2009. There are problems with MDMS as regards to financial allocation and quality of scheme. The 11th Five Year Plan has given the following points for improving the performance of MDMS.

**National Rural Health Mission:** was created in 2005 with its goal to improve the availability of and access to quality health care by people, especially those residing in rural areas, poor women and children.

**National Plan of Action for Children:** The National Plan of Action for Children, 2005 commits itself to ensure all rights to all children upto the age of 18 years. The Government shall ensure all measures and an enabling environment for survival, growth, development and protection of all children, so that each child can realize his or her inherent potential and grow up to be a healthy and productive citizen.

**The National Children's Fund implemented by the Government of Women & Child Development** has a scheme to provide funds for NGOs supporting Children's cause. There are various features of these funds, the basic details are: Assistance under the

Child under nutrition remains one of the greatest development challenges to India and remains a major threat to the survival, growth and development of Indian children. India's biggest ever nationwide information, education and communication campaign developed by the Government in partnership with Mr Aamir Khan, UNICEF against malnutrition will highlight the importance of proper nutrition in the first two years of life. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Aamir Khan is the face of this communication initiative. Through almost 40 TV spots in 18 languages, Mr. Khan will educate people about how malnutrition, a silent destroyer, negatively impacts the lives of children -- the future of our country. He calls on the nation to support him in the fight against malnutrition. "There is no need to discover new vaccines or develop new drugs to prevent child malnutrition: we know what works. During the critical window of opportunity to prevent malnutrition -- while a mother

Fund is provided to promote the objectives and fund the different Programmes for children who are affected by natural calamities, disasters, distress, and in difficult circumstances through voluntary agencies and State Governments in un-served and under-served regions including tribal & remote areas including children of prisoners, children affected by riots, aggression, children affected by trafficking and children of prostitutes. These Programmes cannot be merged with any other Programmes that are already being funded or in any ways being supported by Central/State government or any other authorities like the Central Social Welfare Board.

**United Nation's Children Relief Fund UNICEF** has been working in India since 1949. The largest UN organization in the country. UNICEF is fully committed to working with the Government of India to ensure that each child born in this vast and complex country gets the best start in life, thrives and develops to his or her full potential. The challenge is enormous but UNICEF is well placed to meet it. The organization uses quality research and data to understand issues, implements new and innovative interventions that address the situation of children, and works with partners to bring those suffering. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Aamir Khan pledge to break the shackles to free India from malnutrition in his latest campaign against malnutrition-KUPOSHAN BHARAT CHODHO

is pregnant and during her child's first two years of live -- a set of proven interventions offer Indian children the best chance."

**Real Medicine Foundation:** RMF works with the World Bank. It provides humanitarian support to people living in disaster and poverty stricken areas, focusing on the person as a whole by providing medical/physical, emotional, social, and economic support. Madhya Pradesh carries India's highest malnutrition burden, with 60% of its children under 5 malnourished - approximately 6 million children whose futures are at risk. We decided to attack the problem head on by focusing our efforts on 600 of the worst hit villages across 5 districts. Our strategy is to close the gap between the resources available and the families who need them by focusing on the basics of malnutrition awareness, identification, treatment, and prevention and inserting simple, but innovative technologies and practices.

### **Delhi Government's Chacha Nehru Sehat Yojna:**

In an attempt to combat anaemia among children, all those between 10 and 18 years of age and studying in state government, MCD, NDMC and Delhi Cantonment board schools will be given iron and folic acid tablets from July 15, 2013. The move is part of Delhi government's Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) programme. More than 70% school going children in the national Capital were found to be anaemic by the Delhi government's health department after screening 26,411 school children last year. Iron deficiency among adolescents affects attentiveness, memory, physical growth and capacity, immune status and illness from infections. The Directorate of Health Services, Delhi Government, has trained principals of

- Pregnant women and lactating mothers entitled to nutritious meals and maternity benefit of at least Rs 6,000 for six months.
- The central government will provide funds to states in case of short supply of foodgrain.
- The current foodgrain allocation of the states will be protected by the central government.
- The state governments will provide food security allowance to the beneficiaries in case of non-supply of foodgrain.
- Public distribution system to be reformed.
- The eldest woman in the household, 18 years or above, will be the head of the household for the issue of the ration card.
- There will be state and district level redress mechanisms.

### **1.7 Concerns and areas where the Nutritional Programmes needs improvement-**

Midday Meal Scheme face funds hurdle- MDM has to make pre-payment before lifting food grain from Food Corporation of India(FCI) godowns. The payment for foodgrain would be decentralized at district level. It was done due to complaints that payment to FCI is delayed. Payments from states are usually delayed which directly affects the functioning and bottomline of FCI.

The state of mid day meal scheme is in a shambles in Jharkhand with children in many schools not getting regular food, the latest report by the state advisor to the supreme court appointed commissioners in the right to food case reveals.

government schools in administering the iron supplements, "More than a lakh tablets have been procured that will be given once a week to the children and also to some teachers, who are anaemic.

**The National Food Security Bill, 2013** gives right to subsidised food grain to 67 percent of India's 1.2 billion people and provides for penalty for non-compliance by public servants. The bill's salient features include:

- Seventy five percent of rural and 50 percent of the urban population entitled to five kg foodgrains per month at Rs 3, Rs 2, Re 1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains, respectively.
- The work of identification of eligible households has been left to the states.

The report compiled after field visits in October 2013 by state advisor Balram and other right to food activist also states that the Integrated Child Development Scheme, Malnutrition Treatment Centres and Public Distribution System is in pitiable condition. The team during its visit to Utkramit Madhya Vidhyalaya(Upgrade Middle School) in Sabejor village found 223 children from 6 villages. Meals have not been cooked since many months because of the lack of funds.

There is black marketing of Fair Price Shops (FPS) commodities. The corrupt officials of FPS sell grains to shopkeepers and make money out of illegal sale of goods. Poor people suffer due to artificially created shortage of goods at FPS.

Public Distribution System (PDS) covers only a small section of population and there is lopsided inequality in all poor population. PDS has not benefitted all the states and regions equitably. Some states like Maharastra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh have made maximum use of centre's allocation to benefit their people through PDS while other states like UP, Bihar, MP, Rajasthan, have not benefitted from PDS.

There are many flaws in procurement policy: Government's procures food grains for building up buffer stock, but it has been continuously raising procurement prices to please strong farmer's lobby and thus catering to the vote bank policy. As a result, foodgrains are overflowing in the godowns of FCI. This surplus buffer stock carry heavy holding cost (25% of total subsidy bill) for storing, saving and

transporting the food grains. Government must take immediate action to correct the weakness on its procurement policy.

Recently Delhi Government suspended 6 food officials for alleged irregularities in distribution of food grains under PDS. Government came into action after a TV Channel aired a sting operation showing irregularities in PDS. PDS reforms are taking place like 27 Fair Price Shops have been sealed, 18 FIR's lodged against corrupt elements.

### 1.8 Conclusion and recommendations:

India has the largest nutritional programs in the world. However there is something intrinsically wrong with the entire implementation of the program, otherwise so many children would not have died due to malnutrition related problems. Several schemes are already running to battle malnutrition but still reforms need to be made to address these problems more seriously. No quick fix no magic wand would work, yet there are many things which we all can do to stop waste age of food.

distribute the food to the poor and the needy. Minimizing food wastage is something that all of us should work towards and in the process help those who are not as fortunate as we are.

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There is a need for a strong law and legal actions against corrupt officials and there should be timely surprise checks and visits by the team of officers appointed by the Government to the Fair Price Shops to avoid black marketing and hoarding of essential commodities.

Government may supply packed food grains at the ration shops, to plug leakages in PDS and supply quality food grains under the new food law.

If you host a function, party at your home and when you see lots of food may get wasted, don't hesitate to call 1098( only in India) Child Helpline number. They will come and collect the food. Please circulate the message which can feed children. A call or a text message can be sent to the nearest NGO so that they can come quickly to collect the surplus food left after the wedding or any function before it gets stale. These NGO's can then

Youtube

Times of India, The Hindu, The Economic Times

World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, CRY.

Economy Development and Policy Book by Deepashree, Indian Economic Development – Uma Kapila

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