

INVISIBLE HUNGER – A GLIMPSE OF THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Hunger is a condition in which adults and children cannot always get adequate food, forcing them to eat less or eat poorly or even often go without food. The troubled or painful sensation brought on by a lack of food is another definition of hunger. Hidden hunger or malnutrition often goes unnoticed without attracting much attention which might lead to grave problems in the future, leaving the population vulnerable to various forms of diseases. Every human being has the basic right to live with dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. This mandates that the right to food is an essential human right, the protection and promotion of which is imperative. Right to food has been recognized as a human right by international human rights laws as well as a legal right creating a legal obligation on the state to ensure the same to its citizens. This paper aims to conceptually analyze the right to food as a fundamental human right. The paper will focus on the current status of upholding the right to nutritious food in India by critically analysing and evaluating the governmental schemes and policies relating to food supply and security touching upon the contemporary issues at hand.

Keywords: Human Right, Hunger, Malnutrition and Right to Food

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Hunger – A Prevailing Problem

According to Global Hunger Index, India's level of hunger stands at a serious rate with a score of 29.1 ranking 107th out of the 121 countries.² The problem of hunger is complex. Food deprivation, a component in calculating the Global Hunger Index is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the habitual (or chronic) consumption of too few calories to meet the minimum dietary energy requirements for a person to live a healthy and productive life, given that person's sex, age, stature, and level of physical activity.³ At its worst, hunger can result in famine and starvation. With hunger deaths being reported in India, the Global Food Policy Report of 2022 warns an expected 73.9 million to be at risk of suffering from hunger by 2030.⁴ Food and nutrition are crucial for the development and maintenance of good health. Proper food and nutrition contribute to the all-round development and growth of an individual as well as protection from all forms of illness and sickness. Healthy human resource plays an active and integral

part in the future development of a nation. Thus, the right to food, a complete and nutritious formula forms a fundamental part in the realization of human rights. .

Right to Food as a Human Right

Right to food is not merely being fed. It goes beyond simply having the legal obligation to consume a certain amount of calories, proteins, and other nutrients. It is a right to have access to all the dietary components one needs in order to have an active and healthy life. Availability, accessibility and adequacy of nutritious food are key indicators in securing right to food. The interdependency, indivisibility and interrelation between human rights highlight the fact that impairment of this basic right to food of an individual will affect the right to life, health and right against torture, cruel or inhuman treatment.

Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including foods, clothing, housing and

² GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX, <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html> (last visited Aug.20, 2023).

³ FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, <http://www.fao.org/home/en> (last visited Aug. 27, 2023).

⁴ INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE, <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2022-global-food-policy-report-climate-change-and-food-systems> (last visited Aug. 27, 2023)

medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.’ The declaration denotes that an individual along with his family has the right to attain a standard of living to be free from hunger and illness with basic housing, health care and protection during times of uncertainty. Furthermore, Article 2 entitles individuals to enjoy the same with no discrimination or distinction. The declaration was made binding through the drafting of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights mandates adequate food as an integral part of adequate standard of living and recognises the fundamental right to be free from hunger. The convention fixes the responsibility of the state to take individual and collective measures through means of programs and initiatives in the utilization of natural resources and import-export policies.⁵The inherent right to

life of every human being as enshrined in Article 3 of UDHR and Article 6 of ICCPR includes as the right to not to be deprived of one’s subsistence.⁶The Food Aid Convention, 1999 was brought forth to address world food security through food aid.⁷In order to properly develop one's mental and physical faculties, it is a fundamental human right to be free from hunger and malnutrition, as stated in the 1974 Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition. This Declaration, which grew out of growing concerns about global famine, emphasized that every nation that is in a position to help developing nations get access to more food of higher quality, has a responsibility to see to it that this right to food is realized. The declaration proclaimed, “Every man and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties” and was aimed at hunger eradication as its prime objective through national and international efforts.⁸The World Declaration on Nutrition 1992, solemnly recognized the right to nutritious, adequate and safe food as a fundamental right of each individual with

⁵ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, G.A. Res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc. A/810 at 71, Art. 3, 1948)

⁶ *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, December 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, Art. 6.

⁷ *Food Aid Convention* 1999, June 25, 1999, T.I.A.S. No. 13157, Vol. 2325 U.N.T.S. 9

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *The Right to Food within the International Framework of Human Rights and Country Constitution*, Pg. 4-5, <https://www.fao.org/3/i3448e/I3448E.pdf>

equitable and efficient distribution aimed at eliminating hunger.⁹The right to development of an individual is inclusive of right to equal opportunity in access to all basic amenities of living such as food, education, health, employment etc.¹⁰ The Rome Declaration on World Food Security signed in 1996 at the World Food Summit along with a Plan of Action under the aegis of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations reaffirms the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.¹¹

The Heads of State and Government reiterated "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food" in the Declaration passed at the World Food Summit: Five Years Later in June 2002. An Intergovernmental Working Group for the Elaboration of a Set of Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food was set up under the Committee on World Food Security to further

implement, monitor and report on the realisation of the right. A Special Rapporteur on the right to food was established by the Commission on Human Rights in April 2000 and endorsed and extended by the Human Rights Council in 2007.¹² There are various other instruments which touch upon the right to food such as the Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War which discusses the prisoners right to food to various specific conventions relating to children, persons with disability, indigenous persons, internally displaced and refugees. All of the specific conventions discuss right to food as a fundamental right regardless of circumstances and without discrimination.¹³

India's Approach to Right to Food

'Government has a constitutional obligation to preserve human life. Good health of its citizens is its primary duty. International covenants also aim at highest attainable standards of physical and mental health. This is in interest of social justice. Inadequate supply of nutritious food to the citizens, more

⁹ Chizuru Nishida, *The 1992 International Conference on Nutrition: How it was prepared, what was achieved and lessons learnt*, Pg. available at www.unscn.org (last visited Aug.20, 2023)

¹⁰ *Declaration on the Right to Development*, G.A. Res. 41/218, U.N. Doc. Adopted on December 04, 1986

¹¹ *Rome Declaration on World Food Security*, 35 I.L.M. 1554 (1996)

¹² Jean Zeigler, *UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*, RIGHT TO FOOD (last visited Aug.29, 2023) UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food | Right to food

¹³ Geneva Convention (III) on Prisoners of War, 1949, Art.26.

particularly to the children and the women shall affect their health. Therefore, the same shall be in violation of their fundamental right to health/right to live with dignity guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.’

Deepika JagathramSahani v. Union of India¹⁴

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru while addressing the first session of the Constituent Assembly, 1946 stated “The first task of this Assembly is to free India through a new constitution, to feed the starving people, and to clothe the naked masses, and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity.”¹⁵ On the constitutional debate of including socio-economic as a justiciable right, Dr. B.N Ambedkar favoured a social scheme to nationalize major industries in ten years after the commencement of the constitution. Finally, these rights were included in the directive principles of state policy serving as a guideline for the policy making of the government.¹⁶ The right to food in India has been recognized under Article 21 of the constitution read with Article 39(a) of the Constitution which requires the State to direct

its policies towards securing that all its citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and Article 47 vest the duty on State to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people as a primary responsibility. The right to food is enforceable through Articles 32 and 226. The National Food Security Act, 2013 and the public distribution system are two prime players in ensuring food security and supply apart from other central government and state government schemes such as subsidized grains, community kitchens and mid-day meal programmes.

The Commission on Human Rights in its press release has also reported that there is a fundamental right to be free from hunger and that starving is a flagrant breach of this right. The Commission further stated that there is a need to include this right under the provisions of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, holding that starvation deaths occurring in various parts of the country are the result of "misgovernance," caused by acts of omission and commission on the part of public servants.¹⁷ The Indian Judiciary has also played a key role in upholding the right to

¹⁴A.I.R. 2021 S.C. 523(India).

¹⁵ Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings)- Volume II, pg1947

¹⁶ Constituent Assembly of India Debates (Proceedings)- Volume XIII,1947,pg 448-488

¹⁷National Human Rights Commission India, *Right to Food - a Fundamental Right*, (last visited Aug.29, 2023)(nhrc.nic.in)

nutritious food by interpreting the right to food under the right to life. Through successive judicial rulings, the court has repeatedly highlighted the importance of the right to food and the role of the government in ensuring the same to its citizens.

In *KishenPattnayak v. State of Orissa*,¹⁸ the petitioner sent a letter to the Supreme Court bringing the acute poverty of the people of Kalahandi in Orissa to the Court's attention. Hundreds of people were dying from famine there, and numerous individuals were being forced to sell their children. The letter requested that immediate action be taken by the State Government to improve the deplorable situation of the Kalahandi people. This was the first instance that the subject of famine and lack of food was expressly raised. In this decision, the Supreme Court adopted a very pro-government stance and directed that large-scale actions be taken to address the starvation problem, including the implementation of irrigation projects in the State to lessen the drought in the area, steps to ensure fair paddy selling prices, and the appointment of a Natural Calamities Committee. None of these actions really had

a direct impact on the petitioner's pressing requirements, namely preventing hunger-related deaths. More significantly, in this case of famine, the Supreme Court did not recognise the specific right to food.

The Supreme Court held that the right to food, water, a good environment, education, medical treatment, and shelter are all implied by the right to life, which is protected in every civilised society in *Chameli Singh & Others v. State of Uttar Pradesh*.¹⁹ The court also held that the three essential necessities of a person—food, clothes, and shelter—have historically been seen as being sufficient. Every civilised society guarantees the right to life. The right to food, the right to clothes, the right to a respectable environment, and the right to appropriate housing would all fall within its purview.²⁰ In *Dena Nath v. National Fertilisers Ltd*²¹, the Court noted that because the right to eat is a fundamental human right, it is important to implement the requirements of law that require the installation of a cafeteria in every company. The Supreme Court further ruled that everyone's access to eat is a basic human right and commanded that the

¹⁸A.I.R.1989 1S.C.R.57(India).

¹⁹A.I.R.1996 S.C. 1051(India).

²⁰*Shantisar Builders v Narayanan Khimala Totame*, A.I.R.1990 S.C. 630, (1990) 92 B.O.M.L.R 145(India).

²¹A.I.R.1992457, (1991) 2 S.C.R.401(India).

country's enormous food reserves be used immediately to end famine and starvation.²²

In a Public Interest Litigation²³ against the alleged breach of Articles 21 and 47, various interim orders were periodically passed directing the authorities to ensure that food is provided to the elderly, infirm, disabled, destitute women, destitute men in danger of starvation, pregnant and lactating women, and destitute children, particularly in situations where they or members of their family do not have enough money to provide for them. The Court noted that much more consideration than the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), which aims to give supplemental nourishment to children between the ages of 0 and 6 and to pregnant women should be undertaken. In further ruling the Court noted that much more needed to be done on the ground to guarantee that wholesome food is provided to individuals who are undernourished or malnourished or other people covered by the program. The Court additionally ordered that the Anganwadi Centres, which are where the ICDS is administered, to provide wholesome meals and supplements to children, teenage girls,

pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers for 300 days out of the year. Every State and Union Territory must now make sure that no one dies from famine or malnutrition as a result of the Supreme Court's ruling in this case. This suggests that the government should ensure a minimal standard of living to those who are unable to purchase food, either by direct food assistance or by providing them with work opportunities. The States are required by the Court to make sure that every store connected to the Public Distribution System is operational. Additionally, it gave the States a deadline for implementing Integrated Child Development Services, a Midday Meal Programme, and food-for-work schemes.

In the case of *Kapila Hingorani v. State of Bihar*,²⁴ hundreds of workers in state-owned businesses, public enterprises, and other statutory bodies in the State of Bihar perished from malnutrition or committed suicide as a result of severe financial difficulties brought on by prolonged delays in paying salary. When the Supreme Court was informed of this information, it ruled that the State cannot avoid its responsibility when serious

²² Peoples Union for Civil Liberties v Union of India, A.I.R. 2000 S.C.2456 (India).

²³ Peoples Union for Civil Liberties v Union of India (2001) S.C. Writ.196 (India).

²⁴(2003) 6 S.C.C.1 (India): (2004)S.C.C.(L&S) 586 (India).

violations of human rights result in starving fatalities. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 1966, and the 12 Myths About the Right to Food (FIAN) were cited by the Court in making its decision, and it was agreed that human beings have a right to food and that going hungry is against human rights. The Court issued many orders to prevent starving deaths after ruling that a lack of access to food constitutes a breach of the human right to food. In accordance with Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, government corporations and PSUs have a fundamental obligation to respect the life and liberty of every individual. Therefore, it was the State of Bihar's constitutional duty to safeguard the lives and liberties of Indian people who work for government-owned businesses or enterprises. The State is required to uphold its constitutional duties when doing commerce or business. It is responsible for ensuring that the rights mentioned in Articles 14, 19, 21, and 300-A are safeguarded and preserved. The court in *Peerless General Finance and Investment Co. Ltd. v. Reserve Bank of India*,²⁵ cited Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and held that the right to life includes the right to live with

the fundamental necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter over one's head, nutrition, and other basic necessities, as well as the right to access facilities for each person's cultural and socioeconomic well-being. The "right to life" is protected under Article 21. It ensures and draws from the bare necessities of life, including a brighter tomorrow. A lack of nutrient-rich food for the populace, especially for women and children, will have an impact on their health doing so would be a breach of their basic right to health/right to live in dignity, all of which are protected by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.²⁶

GOVERNMENTAL SCHEMES AND INITIATIVES

National Nutrition Policy 1993

The Government passed the National Nutrition Policy (NNP) in 1993. In areas such as agriculture, food production, food supply, education, information, health care, social justice, tribal welfare, urban development, rural development, labor, women and child development, people with special needs, and monitoring and surveillance, the National Nutrition Policy (NNP) identified key actions

²⁵1992 A.I.R.1033,(1992) 1 S.C.R. 406 (India).

²⁶Dipika JagatramSahani v. Union of India, A.I.R. 2021 S.C. 523(India).

that would have an impact on nutrition. The primary approach envisioned under NNP is to address the issue of nutrition through direct nutrition interventions for at-risk populations as well as through a variety of development policy instruments that will enhance access and foster circumstance.²⁷ The policy incorporated direct short term nutrition intervention and indirect long term nutrition intervention followed by a National Plan of Action 1995 to address malnutrition.

Integrated Child Development Scheme

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), a pioneering early childhood development program that was introduced in 1975, aims to meet the developmental, health, and nutritional requirements of young children as well as those of expectant and nursing mothers. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), Government of India (GoI), serves as the program's main sponsor. The Government of India currently distributes grants-in-aid to the States and UTs based on a cost-sharing ratio between the Center and States and UTs for the Anganwadi

Services (under Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services), which is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.²⁸ The scheme aims at providing 500 calories at Rs. 6 with 12-15 grams of protein for a child, 800 calories at Rs. 9 with 20-25 grams of protein for a malnourished child and 600 calories at Rs. 7 with 18-20 grams of protein for pregnant and lactating mothers.²⁹ Attractive recipes like Alloo-Puri, Stuffed Parantha, Meethe Chawal, Meetha Dalia, Panjiri, Gulgule and Pulaoo are given to beneficiaries which is commendable.

Mid-Day Meal Programme

The Mid-Day Meal, the biggest school feeding initiative in the world, serves over 12 crore students through more than 12.65 lakh schools and EGS facilities in India. The whole nation's elementary and upper primary school students are served under the midday meal programme.³⁰ The programme aims to increase enrolment, retention, and attendance among students in government, local body, and government-aided primary and upper primary schools, as well as the Centres run

²⁷ The National Food Security Act, 2013.

²⁸ Ministry of Woman and Child Development, Government of India, *Integrated Child Development Scheme, Manual for District Level Functionaries*, 2017, ICDS.pdf (darp.gov.in)

²⁹ Ministry of Woman and Child Development, Government of India, *Integrated Child Development*

Scheme, Women and Child Development Department, Haryana | India (wcdhry.gov.in)

³⁰ PM Poshan Scheme, Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2021, available at <https://www.akshayapatra.org/indias-mid-day-meal-scheme>

under the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Alternative & Innovative Education (AIE), and National Children Labour Project (NCLP) schools of all areas across the country. It also aims to improve nutritional levels among these students. During the summer break, MDM is also provided in places suffering from drought. The Government of India's flagship scheme the National Scheme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools (MDMS) was implemented to provide food containing at least 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein for a minimum of 200 days.

Annapurna Plan

The Ministry of Rural Development is in charge of carrying out this Scheme. The National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) provides 10 kilograms of food grains per person, per month, free of charge, to indigent seniors 65 years of age or over who are not receiving a pension.³¹ The Department of Food & Public Distribution offers food grains under the Scheme at BPL prices.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Development Guarantee Act, 2005

A national "employment guarantee act" is one of the long-standing demands of the right to food campaign (and of the Indian labour movement). With the passage of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA 2005) in the middle of 2005, this desire was partially satisfied.³² The largest social welfare program in the world, MGNREGA, pledges in its preamble to improve the livelihood security of rural households by offering at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to each household whose adult members volunteer to perform unskilled manual labour each fiscal year, as well as for expenses related to or incidental to that employment. The creation of durable assets for the community's welfare, including wells, ponds, roads, and other amenities, the provision of minimum wages, and the security of income and employment are the main goals that drove the launch of the MGNREGA program. This initiative was aimed to lower poverty and keep many people from becoming poor. The Scheme also aimed at increasing consumption, wages, and the creation of new jobs thus improving food

³¹ *Guidelines for Annapurna Scheme 2000*, National Informatics Centre (last visited Aug. 15, 2023) <https://nsap.nic.in/>

³² Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Development Guarantee Act, Act of Parliament, 2005 (India) available at <https://nrega.nic.in/>

and nutrient intake as well as the health quotient.

Scheme for Adolescent Girls - Earlier known as Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) – 'SABLA'

On November 19, 2010, the Ministry of Women and Child Development introduced the SABLA program by combining the Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) and the Nutrition Programme for Adolescent Girls (NPAG) programs into one program.³³ The Programme seeks to empower teenage girls between the ages of 11 and 18 by enhancing their nutritional and physical well-being and improving a variety of skills, including domestic, social, and career-related ones. In addition to mainstreaming out-of-school girls into formal or non-formal education, it strives to equip the girls with knowledge of family welfare, health hygiene, etc. as well as information and counselling on current public services. The Department of Food & Public Distribution allots food grains to the Ministry of Child and Women Development at below

poverty line prices for the purpose of the program.

National Food Security Act, 2013

The National Food Security Act, 2013, was enforced on September 10th, 2013 with the intention of guaranteeing access to enough quantities of high-quality food at reasonable rates to people in order to enable them to live dignified lives. By allowing up to 75% of rural and up to 50% of urban residents to receive subsidized food grains through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS),³⁴ the Act effectively covers two-thirds of the population. Each month, the qualifying individuals are allowed to get 5 kg of food grains at discounted rates of Rs. 3/2/1 per kg for rice, wheat, and coarse grains.

The Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families represents the poorest of the poor. The current Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families, which represent the most impoverished people, would continue to get 35 kg of food per home each month.³⁵ The Act also places a particular emphasis on providing mothers and children with nutritional support.

³³ Rajiv Gandhi Scheme For Empowerment Of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) – SABLA, 2011, Ministry of Woman and Child Development, Government of India available at <https://wcd.nic.in/>

³⁴ National Food Security Portal, Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India,

'Targeted Public Distribution System,' (last visited Aug. 28, 2023) <https://nfsa.gov.in/>

³⁵ Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, 'Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY),' (last visited Aug. 28, 2023) <https://dfpd.gov.in/>

In addition to receiving meals throughout pregnancy and for six months following childbirth, pregnant women and nursing mothers are also eligible for maternity benefits of at least Rs. 6,000. Children up to the age of 14 have a right to wholesome meals that adhere to the established dietary criteria. The recipients will get food security payments in the event that the required food grains or meals are not provided. The Act also includes provisions for the establishment of grievance mechanisms at the District and State levels. The Act also includes specific procedures for maintaining accountability and transparency.

Wheat Based Nutrition Programme (WBNP)

The Ministry of Women & Child Development is responsible for carrying out this Scheme. Foodgrains for the country as a whole are distributed by the Department of Food and Public Distribution to the Ministry of Women & Child Development under the Wheat Based Nutrition Programme.³⁶ MoWCD is in charge of state-by-state sub-allocating funds. As of April 1, 2016, the

scheme's central issue price is set at NFSA prices, or Rs. 3/2/1/kg for rice, wheat, and coarse grains, respectively. The programme aims to give pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, as well as children aged 0 to 6 years old, nourishing and energising meals. The States/UTs use the food grains provided under this Scheme as part of the Umbrella Scheme known as the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS).

Scheme for Welfare Institutions And Hostels

The Welfare Institutions and Hostels Plan is administered by the Department of Food and Public Distribution, and it was inaugurated on September 1, 2017, combining the SC/ST/OBC Hostels Scheme and the Welfare Institutions Scheme into a single plan.³⁷ To satisfy the needs of charity institutions such as beggar homes, Nariniketans, and other similar welfare organisations, as well as the students of hostels with a majority of SC/ST/OBC inhabitants, food grains are distributed under the plan at BPL prices.

³⁶ Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 'Wheat Based Nutrition Programme', (last visited Aug. 28, 2023) <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1911780>

³⁷ Ministry of Consumers Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, 'Scheme for Welfare Institutions And Hostels,' (last visited Aug. 21, 2023) <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease>.

Poshan Abhiyan

The Government of India started Poshan Abhiyan, commonly known as the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), in 2018 with the purpose of addressing the widespread malnutrition problem in India. The mission's main goals are to lower the rate of undernutrition and improve the nutritional status of children in the nation. By 2022, the multi-ministerial campaign hopes to eradicate malnutrition from the nation. The main program for improving the nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers in India is called Poshan Abhiyan. The mission makes use of technology and departmental and module convergence. The acronym "Poshan" refers to "Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition" and appears in the program's name. The program has particular goals for lowering low birth weight, anaemia, stunting, and undernutrition. The National Nutrition Mission's goal is to reduce stunting from 38.4% to 25% by 2022, as stated in "Mission 25 by 2020." In addition to conducting social audits, the mission includes mapping numerous other malnutrition-related programs and enabling synergies through

ICT-based real-time monitoring systems, robust convergence between programs, rewarding states and UTs for meeting their goals, and optimizing the operation of Anganwadi centres.

Every year, the month of September is recognized as a PoshanMaah under the PoshanAbhiyaan. To raise nutrition awareness in the neighbourhood, a number of initiatives are carried out. Of which one of the main goals of the POSHAN Abhiyaan, which was established in March 2018, is to reduce anaemia. The AnaemiaMukt Bharat strategy³⁸ has been developed to reduce the prevalence of anaemia by 3 percentage points per year among children, adolescents, and women in the reproductive age group (15-49 years), between the years 2018 and 2022, in accordance with the targets of the POSHAN Abhiyaan and National Nutrition Strategy set by NITI Aayog.

Conclusion and Recommendation

While nutrition security requires the consumption of a variety of meals that give the key needed nutrients, food security is defined as the availability and access of food to all people. Thus, averting hunger with a

³⁸Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 'Anaemia Mukt Bharat' (Published on Feb 04, 2022) Press Information Bureau (pib.gov.in)

focus on the consumption of calories without addressing the dietary needs or food preferences would not achieve its ultimatum. Hence nutrition security is the need of the hour.³⁹ This needs a comprehensive and multifaceted approach encompassing both food security and nutrition.

Though India has achieved food sufficiency and food security, child stunting, wasting and underweight still remain prevalent in less developed states as a result of under nourishment. Anaemia is a major public health issue in India prevalent among women and children leading to poor cognitive and physical development. Increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity is also to be noted.⁴⁰ There is a need to develop comprehensive indicators to assess malnutrition in India with associated policy targets. This can be done by periodic review of government initiatives. The current Food Security Act has failed to address the main objective which is to solve hunger and malnutrition in India. The state government is vested with the major responsibility resulting in differential response such as determination

of recipients of benefits under the Act leading to spurious beneficiaries. Stolen food grains during conveyance and redirection to non-beneficiaries through fair price shops are other implementation and monitoring glitches under the Act. The CAG audit found that the storage capacity was insufficient to hold the quantity of food grains that were allotted.⁴¹ People frequently remark that the food grains' quality is subpar and that sometimes they need to be combined with other grains in order to be edible. There have also been complaints made that the grains contain pebbles and other non-food items. The biggest flaw is that the beneficiaries have not been specified and the mechanism for working of this law is not provided. Implementing this measure would cause the already-large budget deficit to grow worse as there is a deficiency of funds and resources. This Act mentions food standards in general but doesn't go into specifics on the nutritional requirements that must be satisfied. The Act is silent on the standards that must be met in order to identify households that qualify for PDS benefits.

³⁹John Ingram, *Nutrition security is more than food security*, *Nature Food*, (Published on Jan 13, 2020) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-019-0002-4>

⁴⁰*The Burden of Child and Maternal Malnutrition and Trends and Its Indicators in the States of India – Global Burden of Diseases Study 1990-2017*, 3(12) *Lancet*

Child Adolescent Health 2019 (last visited Aug.15, 2023) The burden of child and maternal malnutrition and trends in its indicators in the states of India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990–2017 - The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health

⁴¹The National Food Security Act, 2013.

The One Nation One Ration scheme which was softly launched in 2020 under the NFSA, aimed at a central repository for all NFSA ration cards and beneficiaries by integrating the state and union territories PDS systems and portals with those of the Centre. The central repository also makes sure that no state or union territories have any duplicate ration cards or beneficiaries. Though this move seeks to address the current issues in the PDS, collection, analysis and updating data, especially of the frequently migrating population is a critical challenge. Storage and allocation of grains in relation to updated data requires digitization and cooperation from all states, a major hurdle that has its own implications. The main objective of bringing this scheme is to address the issue of migrant labour and this mandates a thorough study of the migration patterns to make this scheme viable. State-level policies would be more ideal in the given situation. Despite the NFSA's restrictions, state governments can make the most of its provisions by taking proactive steps, such as formulating useful State Rules and allocating sufficient funding for their implementation. The extensive coverage provided by the NFSA presents a

chance to address the pervasive hunger and malnutrition. To maximize the potential of the NFSA in preserving food security in India, progressive and comprehensive laws must be matched with increased financial allocations. Consumption of food meeting the dietary requirements can be met with changes in food grains and pulses by including coarse grains in the PDS.

The main nutrition program platform in India, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), has an insufficient focus on the child's first 1000 days of life, according to the NITI Aayog's 2019 report, "Strategy for New India @ 75." The program primarily serves children between the ages of 3 and 6. However young children under the age of 2 or 3 should receive the highest priority in order to ensure their healthy growth and development. On the other hand Poshan Abhiyan 2018 is found only to reduce stunting among children aged 0 to 3 years old by one percentage point.⁴² Thus, nutrition assessment, periodic reports and review of policies in place with proper implementation and reaching the target groups at the grass hood level should be achieved by overcoming administrative latches and by including all

⁴²Subashree Ray, Shoba Suri, *Global nutrition report 2021 – India's nutrition profile and how to meet global nutrition target*, Observer Research Foundation (last

visited Aug.15, 2023) *Global nutrition report 2021 – India's nutrition profile and how to meet global nutrition target* | ORF (orfonline.org)

stakeholders for a healthy and nutritious India. This can be done through community kitchens or food banks which deliver nutritious meals at low or even free of cost and are run by religious or charitable institutions. Tamil Nadu's Amma's Canteens, formerly known as Amma's Unavagam, is a state-sponsored program aimed at ensuring food security in urban areas, a commendable effort which could be adopted in other states too. In order to achieve the global nutrition targets by 2030, India also needs a stronger data management system, improved responsibility in the food distribution system, effective resource management, enough nutrition education, increased staff, and rigorous monitoring.