Addressing Hunger

What is the issue?

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- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has recently released the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report. Click here to know more on the report.
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- It calls for a review of India's approach to food security in the recent years.
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How has India's record been?

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- India’s relative rank among the countries deteriorated between 2008 and 2011; but the score remained more or less the same.
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- India’s relative rank and score improved significantly between 2011 and 2014;
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- However there has been a significant **decline in the score since 2014.**
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- An observation of the period between 2006 and 2016 reveals that there has been progress in many dimensions:
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i. as a proportion, stunting among children has declined.
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ii. anaemia among women of reproductive age has declined.
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iii. low birth weight has declined.
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iv. exclusive breastfeeding has improved.
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- But the concern is that **wasting** among children had **worsened**.
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- None of the states in India reached acceptable levels of wasting in 2016, based on the WHO cut-off rates for public health significance.
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Why is the dip after 2014?

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- The most decisive intervention in this regard was the passing of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
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- The NFSA declared entitlements to food grains every month at subsidised prices. Under this -
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i. Every person in a ‘priority household’ will be entitled to 5 kg of food grain.
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ii. Every ‘Antyodaya’ household gets 35 kg of food grain.
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iii. Every pregnant woman or lactating mother is entitled to a daily free meal during pregnancy and for six months after childbirth, plus Rs 6,000.
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iv. Every child under six years is entitled to a daily free meal.
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v. Every child between 6 and 14 years gets a free mid-day meal.
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- It was intended to cover around 75 % of the rural population and 50 % of the urban population.
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- A State Commission would oversee the implementation of the Act in each state.
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- Despite this, studies and observations suggest that when the government changed in 2014, **NFSA was gravely neglected**.

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- Nor was an alternative proposed for the food security mission.
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- There is a **decline in the government expenditure** figures in this regard over the last few years.
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- Also there is a huge **gap between revenue estimate and the actual expenditure**, suggesting further neglect in implementation.
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- Recently the Supreme Court also noted that State Commissions charged with implementation had not even been set up.
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What should be done?

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- Governments must take serious attention of India's position in global hunger index and device a comprehensive solution to address the woes of hunger.
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- Also proper governmental mechanisms should be put in place to ensure its fair and effective implementation.
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- Besides, ideas like that of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) could be of help.
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- FSSAI plans for the Indian Food Recovery Alliance (Ifra) as a portal to facilitate recovery and distribution of leftover food.
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- It acts as the aggregator where NGOs already working to feed the needy by collecting leftover food can meet volunteers and donors on one platform.
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Source: Indian Express

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