Global Hunger Index

Why in news?

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Global Hunger Index prepared by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide has been released recently.

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What is the report based on?

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- The report defines “hunger” by using four specific parameters –
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1. prevalence of undernourishment
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2. child stunting (low height compared to their age) < Age 5
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3. child wasting (low weight for their age) < Age 5
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4. Under-5 child mortality i.e who did not live to be five-years-old.
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- The higher the score of a country on the list, the lower it was ranked.
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What does the report say?

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- The world has made gradual, long-term progress in reducing overall hunger, but there is an **uneven progress**.

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- GHI scores for South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara reflect **serious levels of hunger**.
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- Areas of severe hunger and undernutrition stubbornly persist which reflects the human misery for millions.
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- Since the number of forcibly displaced people is on the rise, and hunger is often both a cause and a consequence of displacement, co-ordinated actions needs to be taken by international community, national governments, and civil society.
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- Around 124 million people suffer acute hunger in the world.
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- About 151 million children are stunted and 51 million children are wasted across the globe.
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- Hard-won gains are being further threatened by conflict, climate change, poor governance, and a host of other challenges.
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- It further warned that at least 50 nations all over the globe were on a path to miss their SDG target of achieving low-levels of hunger by the year 2030.
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What is the case with India?

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- India has been ranked at the 103rd position among 119 countries and is among the 45 countries that have "serious levels of hunger".
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- The proportion of undernourished population in India has come down from 18.2% to 14.8%.
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- The prevalence of stunting in children below the age of five has gone down sharply from 54.2% to 38.4%.
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- The Under-5 child mortality rate has declined from 9.2% to 4.3%.
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- India is ranked below many of its neighbouring countries, including China (25), Nepal (72), Myanmar (68), Sri Lanka (67) and Bangladesh (86).
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What are the concerns?

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- India continues to stay in the “serious” category of the GHI.
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- There are still way too many children suffering from stunting, which reflects chronic undernourishment.
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- The biggest worry is the level of wasting in Indian children, which has actually gone up over these years from 17.1% to 21%.
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- Wasting reflects acute malnutrition and the fact that it has gone up sharply in the past 5 to 10 yearsis a massive blot on India’s growth story.
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- As the report claimed that children aged 0-5 months were at the most risk of child wasting, attention to birth outcomes and breastfeeding should be an important priority for India.
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- There were numerous policy attempts were made both at the central and state levels such as hunger missions launched by Maharashtra to directly attack the problem of widespread hunger.
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- This is also coincided with the rights-based approach where mid-day meals and nutrition of mothers were also improved.
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- Thus the solution lies in adequately distributing nutritious food and health care services to children and lactating mothers.
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- Though the government was working to achieve zero hunger by 2030, it focusses on higher farm output as a tool to achieve it.
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- But, as various researchers have shown, child undernourishment does not go away by merely having more food grain output.
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- It is the distribution, along with timely availability of food that matters.
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What does the report recommend?

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- The international community should focus resources and attention on the regions of the world where the majority of displaced people are located.
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- It should also provide stronger political and humanitarian support to internally displaced people.
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- Prioritized actions to address the special vulnerabilities and challenges of women and girls should be taken.
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- Certain long-term solutions, like strengthening the resilience of displaced populations by providing access to education and training, employment, healthcare, agricultural land, and markets have also been proposed.
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Source: Business Standard

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