Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2019

Why in News?

The 14th Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2019 was released recently and it had ranked India a lowly 102 among the 117 countries it had mapped.

What is the Global Hunger Index?

- The GHI has been brought out almost every year by Welthungerhilfe (lately in partnerships with Concern Worldwide) since 2000.
- A low score gets a country a higher ranking which implies a better performance.
- The reason for mapping hunger is to ensure that the world achieves "Zero Hunger by 2030" - one of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.
- This is why GHI is not calculated for certain high-income countries.
- As GHI tracks the performance of different countries on four key parameters, it provides a far more comprehensive measure of hunger.

What are the four indicators of GHI?

- **Undernourishment** (which reflects inadequate food availability): calculated by the share of the population that is undernourished (i.e., whose caloric intake is insufficient).
- **Child Wasting** (which reflects acute under nutrition): calculated by the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (i.e., those who have low weight for their height).
- **Child Stunting** (which reflects chronic under nutrition): calculated by the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (i.e., those who have low height for their age).
- **Child Mortality** (which reflects both inadequate nutrition and unhealthy environment): calculated by the mortality rate of children under the age of five (in part, a reflection of the fatal mix of inadequate nutrition.
- Each country's data are standardised on a 100-point scale and a final score is calculated after giving 33.33% weight each to components 1 and 4, and giving 16.66% weight each to components 2 and 3.

What does 2019 index reveal?

- In 2018, India was ranked 103 among the 119 countries were mapped.
- The rank is one better in 2019 i.e. at 102, but in reality, India is not better off in comparison to the other countries.
- The GHI slots countries on a scale ranging from 'low', 'moderate', 'serious', 'alarming' to 'extremely alarming' hunger levels.
- India is one of the 47 countries that have **'serious' levels of hunger**.
- On the whole, the 2019 GHI report has found that,
    1. Number of hungry people has risen from 785 million (2015) to 822 million.
    2. Multiple countries have higher hunger levels now than in 2010.
    3. Approximately 45 countries are set to fail to achieve 'low' levels of hunger by 2030.

What is India's score relative to those of the others?

- Among the BRICS grouping, India is ranked the worst, with China at 25.
- Within South Asia, India is behind Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Some of the other countries ahead of India are Saudi Arabia (rank 34), Venezuela (rank 65), Lesotho (rank 79) and North Korea (rank 92).
- India has the world's largest democracy and one of the biggest economies, but most of the countries below India on the GHI are either poorly governed or war-torn or ravaged by natural calamities. (e.g.): Afghanistan, Haiti, Yemen etc.,

Why is India ranked so low on GHI?

- With an overall score of 30.3 (rank 102), India is between Niger (score 30.2) and Sierra Leone (score 30.4).
- In 2000, India's score was 38.8 and its hunger level was in the 'alarming' category.
- Since then, India has steadily improved on most counts to reduce its score and is now slotted in the 'serious' category.
- But the pace of India's improvement has been relatively slow.
- This is illustrated in the trajectory of Niger and Sierra Leone's scores, which in 2000 was of 52.1 and 53.6, respectively.
- They found themselves in the "extremely alarming" category of hunger and were much worse off than India.
- Despite achieving relatively fast economic growth since 2000, India has not been able to make commensurate strides in reducing hunger.

What are the reasons for slow improvements in India?

- **Child Wasting** - Notwithstanding the broader improvements, there is one category - Child Wasting is where India has worsened.
- In other words, the percentage of children under the age of 5 years suffering from wasting has gone up from 16.5 (2010) to 20.8 (2019).
- India's child wasting rate is extremely high at 20.8%, the highest wasting rate of any country in this report.
- **Child Stunting** – India's child stunting rate, 37.9%, is also categorized as very high in terms of its public health significance.
- In India, just 9.6% of all children between 6 and 23 months of age are fed a minimum acceptable diet.
- In 2014, the prime minister instituted the 'Clean India' campaign to end open defecation and ensure that all households had latrines.
- Even with new latrine construction, population's health, and children's growth and development as their ability to absorb nutrients is compromised.

Source: The Indian Express

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