Global Hunger Index - India

What is the issue?

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- Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has recently released the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report.
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- India's low 100th rank among 119 countries calls for serious attention to the issue.
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What is Global Hunger Index?

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- The GHI score is a multidimensional index composed of four indicators:
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1. proportion of **undernourished** in the population.
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2. **mortality** rate of children under the age of five (deaths per 1000 live births).
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3. proportion of children under five suffering from **wasting** (low weight for height).
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4. proportion of children under five suffering from **stunting** (lower height than typical for age).
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- India's 100th rank is worse than the likes of North Korea, Bangladesh, and Iraq.
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- And is only better than Pakistan and Afghanistan among Asian countries.

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- Notably, India is at the high end of the “serious” category.
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What is the anomaly in this regard?

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- India is the world’s second largest food producer; but is also home to the second highest population of under-nourished in the world.
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- India has taken some successful measures in addressing lack of access to food.
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- E.g. The Food Security Act, mid-day meals, ICDS, etc.
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- Also, India has witnessed a decline in stunting and a sharp fall in under-5 mortality in the last 25 years.
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- India is thus not "hungry" in terms of calorific intake.
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- However, the **calorific intake is poorly reflected in the physiological outcomes** such as height and weight.
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- More than one-fifth of Indian children under five are 'wasted' and over a third are 'stunted'.
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- Therefore, despite the relative progress over the years, the numbers remain still high for child wasting and stunting.
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What is the cause?

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- Household's poor access to **sanitation**, one of the factors that GHI also points out, is said to be the prime cause for child wasting and stunting.
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- Poor sanitation causes poor absorption of nutrients.

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- Also, the ill-effects of **open defecation** and **water contamination** are hampering the possible positive results of nutrients intake.
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- Notably, water-borne diseases like diarrhoea have been responsible for most of the under-5 deaths.
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What should be done?

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- It is essential for India to take measures on improving sanitation and fighting related infections.
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- The children and their caregivers should be trained to follow hygienic practices and take healthy foods.
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- Inequality in all its forms must be addressed to meet Sustainable Development Goal 2 of Zero Hunger for everyone by 2030.
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- This can not only improve India's ranking but also render meaningful its efforts on food security.
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Source: Financial Express

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