

Global Nutrition Report 2021 and India's Progress

Syllabus-GS 2: Issues relating to Health, poverty & hunger

Why in News:

- India has made **no progress** on **anaemia** and **childhood wasting** according to the 2021 **Global Nutrition Report (GNR, 2021)** released Nov 23, 2021 .
- The country featured among the 161 countries documented in the report as having made no progress or said to be worsening with regards to reducing anaemia.
- India is also among 23 countries that have *made no progress or are worsening on reducing 'childhood wasting'*.

More India specific findings:

- Over half of Indian women in the age group 15-49 years are anaemic, according to the report.
- There has been a **rise in anaemic Indian women** since 2016. In 2016, 52.6 per cent of Indian women were anaemic. But in 2020, **53 per cent were found to be anaemic**.
- Over 17 per cent of Indian children under 5 years of age are affected by anaemia. This figure is much higher than the average for Asia where close to **9 per cent children are affected**.
- India is **'off-course'** in meeting **7 of the 13 global nutrition targets**, according to the report. These include **sodium intake, raised blood pressure** (both men and women), **obesity** (both men and women) and **diabetes** (both men and women).

Malnutrition:

- Malnutrition refers to deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization. The double burden of malnutrition consists of both undernutrition and overweight and obesity, as well as diet-related noncommunicable diseases.
- In India, malnutrition is not uncommon even in economically well-off sections of the population. It must be understood that malnutrition is not just hunger. It also includes:
 - Undernutrition –which includes wasting, stunting and being underweight
 - Micronutrient-related malnutrition –which includes deficiency of important vitamins and minerals or micronutrient excess; and
 - Overweight, obesity and diet-related lifestyle diseases
- Together, these 4 are responsible for 45% of deaths among children younger than 5.
 - Wasting is defined as low weight-for-height.
 - Stunting is defined as low height-for-age.
 - Underweight is defined as low weight-for-age. A child who is underweight may be stunted, wasted or both.
 - Micronutrient deficiencies are a lack of vitamins and minerals that are essential for body functions such as producing enzymes, hormones and other substances needed for growth and development.

Anaemia is a condition in which there is a deficiency of red cells or of haemoglobin in the blood, resulting in pallor and weariness.

Positive findings:

- India is among 53 countries **'on course'** to meet the target for **stunting**, the report said. But over 34 per cent of children under 5 years of age are still affected, it added. This figure is **higher than average for Asia**, where close to 22 per cent are affected by stunting.
- The country is among 105 countries that are **'on course'** to meet the target for **'childhood overweight'** and among 53 countries **'on course'** to meet the target for **'exclusive breast feeding'**. Some 58 per cent of infants in the age group 0-5 months are exclusively breastfed in India.

India's Targets:

- In 2017, the NITI Aayog had launched a 'National Health Strategy' which laid out a vision called "**Kuposhan Mukh Bharat**". It described a strategy to
 - reduce the prevalence of underweighting among children younger than 3 years by 3% per year and
 - to reduce anemia among children and women by 33% (from NFHS 4 levels).
- The POSHAN Abhiyaan had set a target of achieving **two percentage points per annum reduction in stunting and underweight prevalence**.

However, NFHS 5 indicates that India will miss these targets. In fact majority of states reported increase in child wasting and stunting between the two surveys.

Among the world's countries, **India has the most malnourished children as well as has reported a rise in the fraction of undernourished children**. We must treat this as an alarm bell. The report has done a remarkable job of narrowing down the areas for policy intervention down to the district level. It is now up to the local, state and Central governments to work together and intervene effectively.

Global Nutrition Report

- The Global Nutrition Report was conceived following the **first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G)** in 2013. It is a **multi-stakeholder initiative**, consisting of a Stakeholder Group, Independent Expert Group and Report Secretariat.
- The first report was published in 2014.

Global Nutrition Targets

In 2012, the World Health Assembly (the decision-making body of the World Health Organisation) identified **six nutrition targets** to be met by 2025. These are:

- Reduce stunting by 40% in children under 5.
- Reduce the prevalence of anaemia by 50% among women in the age group of 19-49 years.
- Ensure 30% reduction in low-birth weight.
- Ensure no increase in childhood overweight.
- Increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months up to at least 50%
- Reduce and maintain childhood wasting to less than 5%.



Composition of Global Hunger Index

