

## Poverty and Hunger Issues

### Latest Context:

On 9th July 2021, Oxfam has released a report, titled, “The Hunger Virus Multiplies,” that talks about deaths from hunger in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Aspirants can get the key findings of this report in the article below.

Interested candidates can also read about:

[Main Causes Of Poverty In India](#)

[Policies And Programmes Towards Poverty Alleviation](#)

[Challenges to Food Security in India](#)

[National Food Security Bill 2013](#)

## Introduction to Poverty & Hunger

As per the [Asian Development Bank](#)'s figures:

- In India, 21.9% of the population lives below the national poverty line in 2011
- In India, the proportion of the employed population below \$1.90 purchasing power parity a day in 2011 is 21.2%
- For every 1,000 babies born in India in 2017, 39 die before their 5th birthday

## Who are the poor?

The World Bank sets the international poverty line at periodic intervals as the cost of living for basic food, clothing, and shelter around the world changes. In the 2008 update, the poverty line was set at \$1.25 per day. In 2015, the threshold was updated to \$1.90 per day, which is where it currently stands.

The characteristics of the poverty-ridden people are:

- The major percentage of poor people reside in rural areas of India
- The family size is comparatively larger
- The main occupation is agriculture
- They lack resources to grow
- Low-income group

To read more on '[Who are the poor?](#)', refer to the linked article.

## How are the poor people identified?

In India, [Niti Ayog](#) carries poverty estimation. It estimates the levels of poverty in the country on the basis of consumer expenditure surveys conducted by the [National Sample Survey Office \(NSSO\)](#) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Read more on [How Are Poor People Identified?](#) in the linked article.

## What causes poverty?

The following can be some reasons causing poverty in India

- Population Rise
- Low Productivity in Agriculture
- Under-Utilized Resources
- Low Rate of Economic Development
- Price Rise
- Unemployment
- Shortage of Capital and Able Entrepreneurship
- Social Factors

Read more on [What Causes Poverty?](#) in the referred link.

## 2021 Oxfam Report on Hunger

**Title of the Report** – The Hunger Virus Multiplies: (Deadly Recipe Of Conflict, Covid-19 And Climate Accelerate World Hunger)

**Summary of the Report** – Deaths from hunger are outpacing the virus. Ongoing conflict, combined with the economic disruptions of the pandemic and an escalating climate crisis, has deepened poverty and catastrophic food insecurity in the world's hunger hotspots and established strongholds in new epicentres of hunger.

### Highlights of the Report

- This year, 20 million more people have been pushed to extreme levels of food insecurity, reaching a total of 155 million people in 55 countries
- Since the pandemic began, the number of people living in famine-like conditions has increased sixfold to more than 520,000.
- Today, 11 people are likely dying every minute from acute hunger linked to three lethal Cs: conflict, COVID-19, and the climate crisis
- Conflict was the single largest driver of hunger since the pandemic began, the primary factor pushing nearly 100 million people in 23 conflict-torn countries to crisis or worse levels of food insecurity

- The most severe level of hunger has spiraled since the pandemic. The number of people facing famine-like conditions has drastically increased, reaching 521,814 people across Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Sudan, and Yemen. Most of the countries experiencing such catastrophic levels of hunger have witnessed prolonged periods of conflict, violence, and insecurity.
- The estimated number of people living in extreme poverty is projected to reach 745 million by the end of 2021, an increase of 100 million since the pandemic started. Marginalised groups, especially women, displaced people, and informal workers, have been hit hardest.
- The rich continued to get richer during the pandemic. The wealth of the 10 richest people (nine of whom are men) increased by \$413 billion last year
- The climate crisis was the third significant driver of global hunger this year. Nearly 400 weather-related disasters, including record-breaking storms and flooding, continued to intensify for millions across Central America, Southeast Asia, and the Horn of Africa, where communities were already battered by the effects of conflict and COVID-19-related poverty.

## Extreme Hunger Hotspots

As per the latest Oxfam’s report on hunger, the following are the extreme hunger hotspots:

LOCATION	NUMBER OF PEOPLE (IN MILLIONS) IN CRISIS-LEVEL HUNGER OR WORSE IN 2019	% OF TOTAL POPULATION ANALYZED FACING HUNGER	NUMBER OF PEOPLE (IN MILLIONS) IN CRISIS-LEVEL HUNGER OR WORSE IN 2020	% OF TOTAL POPULATION ANALYZED FACING HUNGER	RISE IN HUNGER %
Yemen*	15.9	53%	13.5	45%	-15%
DRC	15.6	26%	21.8	33%	40%
Afghanistan	11.3	37%	13.2	42%	17%
Venezuela	9.3	32%	No data	NA	NA
West African Sahel** 17	9.0	5%	15.0	7%	67%
Ethiopia	8.0	27%	8.6	16%	8%
South Sudan*	7.0	61%	6.5	55%	-7%
Syria	6.6	36%	12.4	60%	88%
Sudan	5.9	14%	9.6	21%	63%
Haiti	3.7	35%	4.1	40%	11%

## The Three Lethal Cs

The report reflects on the three lethal Cs:

- **Conflict:**
  - The conflict has gone largely unabated and is the primary driver of hunger for almost 100 million people across 23 countries – including 22 million more people added just last year.
  - Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and Yemen – some of the world's worst hunger hotspots – are all torn by conflict.
- **COVID-19 economic fallout:**
  - The economic decline caused by lockdowns and closures of borders, businesses, and markets has worsened the situation for the most disadvantaged people and led to a spike in hunger. Global economic activity has declined by 3.5% and poverty increased by 16%.
  - Around the world, 33 million workers lost their jobs in 2020. The pandemic led to mass unemployment causing \$3.7 trillion in lost labour income – the equivalent to 4.4% of 2019 global GDP.
  - Globally, food prices have increased by almost 40 percent since last year, the highest rise in over a decade. This has been driven by increased demand for biofuels, lockdowns and border closures that continue to disrupt food flows.
- **Climate:**
  - Last year, the world saw a record \$50 billion worth of damages from extreme weather disasters exacerbated by climate change (including \$6 billion in Honduras alone), which were the primary driver responsible for pushing nearly 16 million people in 15 countries to crisis levels of hunger
  - Agriculture and food production bore 63% of the impact of these climate crisis shocks, and it is vulnerable countries and poor communities, who least contributed to climate change, that are most affected.

## Initiatives by Government to Curb Poverty in India

Ending poverty in all its forms is the first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Read more on [Sustainable Development Goals](#) on the given link.

The government of India took several initiatives to eradicate poverty from the country. A few of them are discussed below-

1. **Saansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)** – Ministry of Rural development initiated the scheme in 2014. The scheme aims to develop five 'Adarsh Villages' or 'Model Villages' by 2024. Further details on the [Saansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana \(SAGY\)](#) scheme are available on the given link.
2. **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** – Ministry of Rural Development started NRLM 2011 to evolve out the need to diversify the needs of the rural poor and provide them jobs with regular income on a monthly basis. Go through the [National Rural Livelihoods Mission \(NRLM\)](#) in detail here.
3. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** – In 2005 Ministry of Rural Development initiated MGNREGA to provide 100 days of assured employment every year to every rural household. One-third of the proposed jobs would be reserved for women. Read in detail about [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, \(MGNREGA\)](#) over here.

4. **National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM)** – In 2013, NULM was commenced by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs focusing on organizing urban poor in Self Help Groups, creating opportunities for skill development leading to market-based employment, and helping them to set up self-employment ventures by ensuring easy access to credit. You can go through the [DAY-NULM| National Urban Livelihood Mission](#) on the given link.
5. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** – the Ministry of Finance in 2014 initiated PMJDY that aimed at direct benefit transfer of subsidy, pension, insurance, etc., and attained the target of opening 1.5 crore bank accounts. The scheme particularly targets the unbanked poor. Further details on [Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana \(PMJDY\)](#) is available here.

## Initiatives by Government to fight against Hunger in India

As per the Global Hunger Index 2020, India is in 94th position out of 107 countries i.e. Hunger and malnutrition is a serious problem in India. A detailed report on [Global Hunger Index](#) on the linked page. The Government of India took several initiatives to fight against hunger across the nation which is discussed below-

1. **National Nutrition Mission (NNM), Poshan Abhiyan** – NNM was started in 2018 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to reduce the level of under-nutrition and also enhance the nutritional status of children in the country. Know in detail about the [National Nutrition Mission – Poshan Abhiyan](#) on the linked page.
2. **National Food Security Mission** – Ministry of Agriculture initiated NFSM in 2007 to increase the production of rice, wheat, pulses, and coarse cereals through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner.
3. **Zero Hunger Programme** – launched on October 16, 2017 with the aim to make farm inventions, Organising the farming system for nutrition, Setting up genetic gardens for biofortified plants and initiating Zero hunger training. You can know in detail about the [Zero Hunger Programme](#) in the given link.

Candidates can go through various other [Poverty Alleviation Programmes](#) initiated by the Government of India to fight against hunger and poverty across the country.

## Global Initiative Against Poverty and Hunger

Food is at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 2 of SDG deals with Zero Hunger. Given below are some global level initiatives to fight poverty and hunger-

1. **The End to Poverty Initiative** – This Centenary Initiative is designed specifically as the vehicle to take forward the ILO's work in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to alleviate poverty. Read more on [International Labour Organization- ILO](#) on the given link.
2. **Zero Hunger By World Food Programme** – with humanitarian food assistance, provide nutritious food to those in urgent need. Meanwhile, the complementary programs address the root causes of hunger and build the resilience of communities. Aspirants can know in detail about the [World Food Programme – WFP](#) in the given link.
3. **Fight Hunger First** – With a vision to have a world without hunger and poverty, Welthungerhilfe-WHH has been implementing several initiatives in rural areas of India and Bangladesh. It was set up

by a UN agency FAO. You can know in detail about [Food & Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) on the linked page.

4. **Zero Hunger Challenge (Save Food) by FAO** – The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, launched the Zero Hunger Challenge which includes addressing the sustainability of all food systems and the vision of zero food loss and waste (FLW).
5. **Feed the future** – is the US government’s Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative. It invests in countries that are committed to improving their own food security and nutrition by developing the agriculture sector and addressing the root cause of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. Candidates can know more about the [United Nations](#) on the linked page.

