

31.4% OF INDIAN CHILDREN WILL BE STUNTED BY 2022: REPORT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Children - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

Almost one in three Indian children under five years will still be stunted by 2022 going by current trends, according to an analysis of the country's food and nutrition security released on Tuesday. Over the last decade, child stunting — which is a measure of chronic malnutrition — has reduced at a rate of about 1% per year, the slowest decline among emerging economies. At this rate, 31.4% of children will still be stunted by the 2022 deadline. India must double its rate of progress to reach the target of 25% by that time, says the report.

Analysis of progress

The report, which is a baseline analysis of the country's progress in achieving the second Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger, was prepared by the UN World Food Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Foodgrain yields have risen 33% over the last two decades, but are still only half of 2030 target yields, says the report. Even so, the Indian farmer is producing more foodgrains than ever before, making the country self-sufficient in this regard. Unfortunately, the consumer's access to rice, wheat and other cereals has not increased at the same rate, due to population growth, inequality, food wastage and losses, and exports. As a result, the average per capita consumption of energy among the poorest 30% of the population is 1811 kilo calories, much lower than the norm of 2155 kilo calories per day. The signs of unequal access are starkest among children. In States like Bihar (48%) and Uttar Pradesh (46%), almost one in two children are stunted, while it is only one in five children in Kerala and Goa (20% each). There are high rates of stunting among children in the poorest wealth quintile (51.4%), Scheduled Tribes (43.6%) and Scheduled Castes (42.5%), and children born to mothers with no education (51%).

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