

# INDIA'S POSITION DROPS ON GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX 2021 TO 101 FROM 94, WCD MINISTRY SAYS RANKING UNSCIENTIFIC

Relevant for: Economy | Topic: Food processing and related industries in India: scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements and supply chain management

India was ranked 101 in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) for 2021 from 94 in the previous year, trailing behind its South Asian neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

India reacted angrily on Friday, calling the methodology used for the rankings unscientific and saying it was shocked by the drop in its position.

The Global Hunger Index (GHI), which tracks hunger and malnutrition, showed that 18 countries, including China, Brazil and Kuwait, shared the top rank, with GHI scores of less than five. The report was prepared by the Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide and Germany's Welt Hunger Hilfe. The report termed the level of hunger in India as "alarming".

For the 2021 report, data was assessed for 135 countries. Out of these, there were sufficient data to calculate GHI scores for 116 countries (in comparison, 107 countries were ranked in the 2020 report). For 19 countries, individual scores could not be calculated, and ranks could not be determined owing to a lack of data.

The GHI score is based on four indicators—undernourishment; child wasting or the share of children under the age of five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition; child stunting or the number of under-5 children who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition; and child mortality.

The report said that wasting among children in India increased from 17.1% between 1998 and 2002 to 17.3% between 2016 and 2020. "People have been severely hit by covid-19 and the pandemic-related restrictions in India, the country with the highest child-wasting rate worldwide," the report stated.

Neighbours Nepal (76), Bangladesh (76), Myanmar (71) and Pakistan (92) are also in the 'alarming' hunger category but have fared better at feeding its citizens than India, the report said.

Though India showed improvement in indicators such as the under-5 mortality rate, prevalence of stunting among children and prevalence of undernourishment owing to inadequate food remained high, the report said. It further said food security is under assault on multiple fronts.

The report highlighted that worsening conflict, weather extremes associated with global climate change, and the economic and health challenges associated with the covid-19 pandemic are all driving hunger.

Further, the report noted that it is difficult to be optimistic in 2021 because the forces driving hunger are overpowering good intentions and lofty goals. Among the most powerful and toxic of these forces are conflict, climate change, and covid-19—three Cs that threaten to wipe out any progress that has been made against hunger in recent years, the report said.

In reaction to the index, the ministry of women and child development said India's rank was

lowered on the basis of FAO estimates on the proportion of the undernourished population, which is found to be “devoid of ground reality and facts and suffers from serious methodological issues”.

“The publishing agencies... have not done due diligence before releasing the report,” the ministry said in a statement.

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