

'ONLY 3.9% CHILDREN MALNOURISHED'

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Stunted future: The Global Hunger Index 2021 ranked India at 101 out of 116 countries. File Photo

The value of a key indicator used in the Global Hunger Index is 'inflated' as only 3.9% of the anganwadi children were found to be undernourished, the Union Government said on Sunday.

"The real-time data of beneficiaries registered on the Anganwadi platform include 7.79 crore children aged between 6 months to 6 years as per real-time Poshan Tracker data [as on 16-10-2021]. Corresponding number of undernourished children reported on Poshan Tracker is 30.27 lakh which comes to only 3.9%," according to a reply from the Ministry of Women and Child Development to a report in *The Hindu*, "Global Hunger Index not based on an opinion poll", published on October 17.

It said, "These beneficiaries are representative of the poorest strata of society and the low levels of undernourishment in them surely reflects that the Indian data is highly inflated."

The GHI 2021 ranked India at 101 out of 116 countries. The index is based on four indicators — under-nourishment, wasting, stunting and under-five mortality. Of these, India's performance is shown to deteriorate only for undernourishment, which is what the Government has challenged. According to FAO's data, which is used in the Index, the prevalence of undernourishment in India rose from 14% in 2017-2019 to 15.3% in 2018-2020 which the Government has called exaggerated.

However, undernourishment and undernutrition used as synonyms by the Government are treated as two different indicators by FAO and in the GHI.

The Government has also alleged that there has been a "selective approach adopted to deliberately lower India's rank" by relying on higher values of indicators such as stunting and wasting from different datasets available.

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