



Malnutrition

For Prelims: [Malnutrition](#), **SAM**, **MAM**, **NFHS**, [Global Hunger Index](#), [POSHAN Abhiyaan](#).

For Mains: Malnutrition and its Prevalence.

Why in News?

Recently, the Orissa High Court has directed the State government to draw an action plan to ensure complete absence of **Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)** children and reduction of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) children by half in the State, by the end of 2023.

What is Malnutrition?

▪ About:

- 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**.
- Undernutrition manifests in four broad forms: **wasting, stunting, underweight, and micronutrient deficiencies**.

▪ Severe Acute Malnutrition:

- The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) defines 'severe acute malnutrition' (SAM) by **very low weight-for-height** or a mid-upper arm circumference less than 115 mm, or by the presence of nutritional oedema (**abnormal fluid retention in the tissues** resulting especially from lack of protein in states of starvation or malnutrition).
 - Children suffering from SAM are **nine times more likely to die in case of diseases** due to their weakened immune system.
- The SAM children are those in the red zone with a **higher risk of contracting secondary infection**. This category may suffer from severe illnesses.

▪ Moderate Acute Malnutrition:

- MAM, also known as wasting, is defined by a weight-for-height indicator between -3 and -2 z-scores (standard deviations) of the international standard or by a mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) between 11 cm and 12.5 cm.
- MAM children show signs of malnourishment but are in the yellow zone which means their lives are not under threat.

▪ Prevalence:

- India is ranked at the bottom of the [Global Hunger Index \(2022\)](#), which is determined by factors such as **child stunting, wasting, and death placing India in 107th** rank of 121 Countries.
- According to India's National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) from 2019-21 reported that in children below the age of five years, **35.5% were stunted, 19.3% showed wasting, and 32.1%** were underweight.
 - The most cases of SAM are in Uttar Pradesh (3,98,359) followed by Bihar (2,79,427).

- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are also home to the highest number of children in the country.

▪ **Initiatives:**

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** The government of India has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or POSHAN Abhiyaan to ensure a “Malnutrition Free India” by 2022.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme:** It aims to improve nutritional levels among school children which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.
- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** It was launched in 1975 and the scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.
- **Anemia Mukht Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.

Way Forward

- To improve the health and well-being of women and children, **it is crucial to increase financial investments** in their health and nutrition. This will contribute to their sustainable development and overall quality of life.
- India should adopt an outcome-oriented approach when implementing nutrition programs. This means **focusing on achieving specific results and outcomes** rather than just implementing activities.
- It is essential to directly engage with nutritionally vulnerable groups such as the elderly, pregnant women, individuals with special needs, and young children. This will ensure that **key nutrition services and interventions reach** those who need them the most.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following is/are the indicators/ indicators used by IFPRI to compute the Global Hunger Index Report? (2016)

1. Undernourishment
2. Child stunting
3. Child mortality

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 3
(d) 1 and 3 only

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. How far do you agree with the view that the focus on lack of availability of food as the main cause of hunger takes the attention away from ineffective human development policies in India? (2018)

[Source: TH](#)

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