

## Social Justice: Food Insecurity and hunger.

### GS Paper 2: Social Justice – Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

#### What is Food Insecurity?

The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.

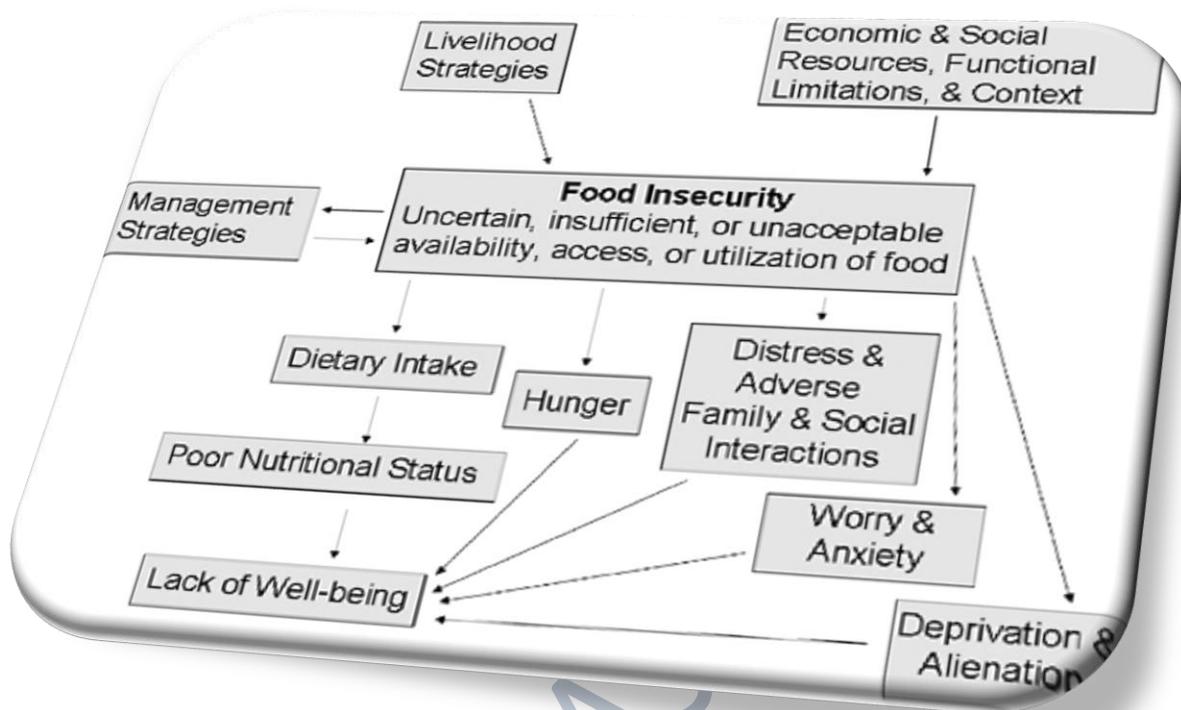
Food insecurity offers an accepted method for measuring food deprivation. The USDA defines food insecurity as a state in which “consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year.” Good shorthand terms for food insecurity are “struggling to avoid hunger,” “hungry, or at risk of hunger,” and “hungry, or faced by the threat of hunger.”

#### According to the World Health Organization, food security is built on three pillars:

Food availability	Sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis.
Food access	Having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
Food use	Appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition, care, adequate water and sanitation.

#### What does “food insecurity” not mean?

- Food insecurity is not “the government’s definition of hunger.” It is a broader term that describes outright hunger and the coping mechanisms that households use to avoid hunger.
- Food insecurity is a household situation, not an individual situation. While food insecurity affects everyone in a household, it may affect them differently. Specific individuals in a home (such as children) may be shielded from some aspects of food insecurity by caregivers.
- Food insecurity is a year-long measure. It is impossible to say whether a food insecure household is “hungry right now,” “going hungry tonight” or “does not know where their next meal is coming from.” Research shows that food insecurity tends to be episodic and often cyclical.



## Explaining Hunger

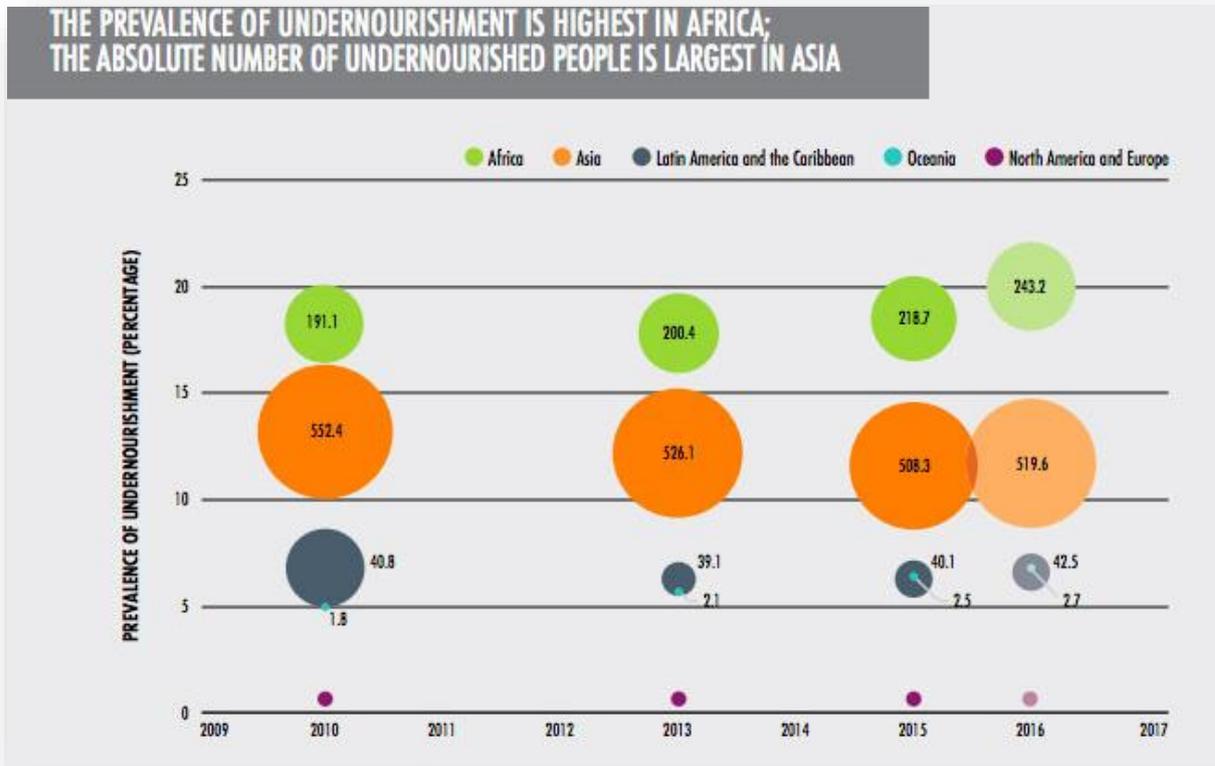
Hunger defines a short-term physical discomfort as a result of chronic food shortage, or in severe cases, a life-threatening lack of food.

World hunger refers to hunger aggregated to the global level. Related terms include food insecurity and malnutrition. Food insecurity refers to limited or unreliable access to foods that are safe and nutritionally adequate. Malnutrition is a condition resulting from insufficient intake of biologically necessary nutrients.

## Children and hunger

Children are the most visible victims of undernutrition. It is estimated that undernutrition—including stunting, wasting, deficiencies of vitamin A and zinc, and foetal growth restriction (when a baby does not grow to its normal weight before birth)—is a cause of 3.1 million child deaths annually or 45 percent of all child deaths in 2011. Undernutrition magnifies the effect of every disease, including measles and malaria. The estimated proportions of deaths

in which undernutrition is an underlying cause are roughly similar for diarrhoea (61%), malaria (57%), pneumonia (52%), and measles (45%).



*The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2017.*

## Hunger in India

With nearly 195 million undernourished people, India shares a quarter of the global hunger burden. Nearly 47 million or 4 out of 10 children in India are not meeting their full human potential because of chronic undernutrition or stunting. Stunting has consequences such as diminished learning capacity, poor school performance, reduced earnings and increased risks of chronic diseases. The impacts are multi-generational as malnourished girls and women often give birth to low birth-weight infants. There has also been an increase in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents in India, which has life-long consequences of non-communicable diseases in adulthood.



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## Govt initiatives to address the issue

With a five-fold increase in food grain production from 50 million tonnes in 1950-51 to about 250 million tonnes in 2014-15, India has moved away from dependence on food aid to become a net food exporter. In 2016, the government launched a number of programmes to double farmers' incomes by 2022. These seek to remove bottlenecks for greater agricultural productivity, especially in rain-fed areas. They include: the National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), the Integrated Schemes on Oilseeds, Pulses, Palm oil and Maize (ISOPOM), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the e-marketplace, as well as a massive irrigation and soil and water harvesting programme to increase the country's gross irrigated area from 90 million hectares to 103 million hectares by 2017.

The government has also taken significant steps to combat under- and malnutrition over the past two decades, such as through the introduction of mid-day meals at schools, Anganwadi systems to provide rations to pregnant and lactating mothers, and subsidised grain for those living below the poverty line through a public distribution system. The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.

## Questions

1. What are the causes of food insecurity and hunger? Enumerate the initiatives by the government to eliminate the threat of hunger and malnutrition.
2. What role can technology play in achieving food security for all?
3. Elaborate on how conflicts and displacement aggravate the problem of global hunger.