



Introduction

Hunger, a basic human need, continues to be a global challenge. Zero Hunger is one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture are all critical issues addressed by this goal. In this article, we will look at what hunger is, what the SDG Zero Hunger says about it, and the most recent global and Indian data on hunger as reported by the UN.

Recognizing Hunger

In its most basic form, hunger refers to the feeling of discomfort or weakness caused by a lack of food. However, the consequences of hunger extend beyond physical sensations; it is a complex issue that includes food insecurity, malnutrition, and undernourishment. People who are hungry may not have consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, which can lead to a variety of physical and mental health issues as well as stymie socioeconomic development.

The 2023 Global Hunger Index paints a bleak picture of both India and the global hunger situation. According to this year's report, India is ranked 111th out of 125 countries with enough data to calculate GHI scores, indicating a serious level of hunger. With a GHI score of 28.7, India falls into the "serious" category, indicating that a significant portion of its population is food insecure and malnourished. Hunger levels are classified as "low" for scores of 9.9, "moderate" for scores of 10.0-19.9, "serious" for scores of 20.0-34.9, "alarming" for scores of 35.0-49.9, and "extremely alarming" for scores of 50.0.

SDG 2 aims for the abolition of poverty and hunger, with the goal of ensuring that all people have access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food. Nonetheless, despite significant worldwide accomplishments in reducing hunger over the years, malnutrition remains a vital issue that requires our attention. As a development student and practitioner, it is critical to realize the gravity of this problem and comprehend its far-reaching implications.

Recognizing the Scope of Goal 2:

Goal 2 serves as the cornerstone for all other growth objectives. Zero hunger includes not just the lack of food scarcity but also the absence of malnutrition and undernourishment, which affect millions of people globally. A major barrier to accomplishing the more general objectives of sustainable development is malnutrition, whether it takes the form of undernutrition, overnutrition, or deficits in certain micronutrients.

Impact of Malnutrition

The complexity of malnutrition's effects accounts for its gravity. It impacts not just physical health but also cognitive growth and economic output. Undernutrition hinders children's ability to overcome the cycle of poverty by stunting their growth and impairing their cognitive development. On the other hand, the worldwide obesity epidemic is partly caused by overnutrition, which is frequently linked to the intake of unhealthy, processed foods. All forms of malnutrition have a significant effect on people as individuals, families, and society.

Poverty and Malnutrition: A Vicious Cycle

The vicious cycle of poverty is one of the most fundamental obstacles in treating hunger. Malnutrition is caused and exacerbated by poverty and food insecurity. Families that are trying to make ends meet sometimes resort to low-cost, calorie-dense, but nutritionally deficient diets. As a result, malnutrition and bad health persist, making it difficult for individuals to escape the grip of poverty. Combating malnutrition is critical to breaking the cycle.

What can we, as social workers/practitioners/development professionals do?

We must confront the seriousness of SDG 2 and malnutrition as development students and practitioners –

- ❖ **Promote Evidence-Based Policy Changes:** We can push for evidence-based policies that support equitable access to nutrient-dense foods, nutrition education, and food security.
- ❖ **Put Nutrition Programs into Action:** To increase dietary diversity and food security, we can collaborate locally to establish and implement nutrition programs in communities that are at risk.
- ❖ **Educate and Raise Awareness:** By bringing attention to the issue of malnutrition, we can gather support and resources for programs that fight hunger and malnourishment.
- ❖ **Encourage Sustainable Agriculture:** To ensure long-term food security and lessen the impact of food production on the environment, it is essential to promote sustainable agricultural practices. Healthy eating habits and local economies can both benefit from sustainable agriculture.
- ❖ **Work together with Stakeholders:** To address malnutrition effectively, cooperation with governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders is essential. By combining resources, expertise, and experience, these alliances can produce more long-lasting and efficient solutions.

Summary

In conclusion, when we concentrate on the problem of malnutrition, the seriousness of SDG 2, Zero Hunger, becomes even more evident. It is a complicated issue with wide-ranging effects that have an impact on all facets of an individual's life. It is our responsibility as development scholars and practitioners to understand how these issues are related to one another and to put forth endless effort to end the cycle of poverty and malnutrition.

We cannot genuinely advance toward attaining the more general objectives of sustainable development and ensuring a brighter future for everybody until we address malnutrition. We can move closer to a world where everyone has access to the nourishing food they need to

thrive, where health is valued, and where the grip of poverty is lessened by our combined efforts to combat malnutrition and hunger.

Although the work is not easy, it is crucial, and as practitioners and students of social work/development studies, we are in a unique and responsible position to support and act upon the important cause.