



PRESS RELEASE

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India Faces Urgent Hunger Situation New Reports Compare Country's Hunger Levels across States, World

New Delhi—According to the first-ever India State Hunger Index, Madhya Pradesh has the most severe level of hunger in the country, followed by Jharkhand and Bihar. Punjab and Kerala scored the best on the Index.

Released today by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in conjunction with Welthungerhilfe (formerly known as German Agro-Action) and the University of California, Riverside, the India State Hunger Index analyzes hunger levels in 17 major states across India. State hunger index scores range from “serious” to “extremely alarming.”

The India State Hunger Index measures hunger on three leading indicators and combines them into one index. The three indicators are prevalence of child malnutrition, rates of child mortality, and the proportion of people who are calorie deficient. This approach is similar to the 2008 Global Hunger Index, which includes India, and is also being released today for World Food Day (October 16) by IFPRI in conjunction with Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.

The India Hunger Index found that not a single state in India falls in the ‘low hunger’ or ‘moderate hunger’ categories. Twelve states fall in the ‘alarming’ category, and one state—Madhya Pradesh—falls in the ‘extremely alarming’ category. Four states—Punjab, Kerala, Haryana and Assam—fall in the ‘serious’ category.

“This new state-focused index is an important advocacy tool to build awareness of the disparities in hunger across India, which has more hungry people than any other country in the world,” said Bernhard Hoeper, regional director South Asia, Welthungerhilfe. “With this year’s Global Hunger Index, we can also see how India compares to the rest of the world in the fight against hunger.”

According to the 2008 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 66 out of 88 nations (developing countries and countries in transition). Despite years of robust economic growth, India scored worse than nearly 25 Sub-Saharan African countries and all of South Asia, except Bangladesh.

India’s slightly better performance relative to Bangladesh is entirely due to better access to food in India relative to Bangladesh, which in turn is a consequence of India’s higher agricultural productivity. On the other two components of the Global Hunger Index—child underweight and child mortality—India ranks below Bangladesh.

When Indian states are compared to countries in the 2008 Global Hunger Index, Madhya Pradesh ranks between Ethiopia and Chad. Punjab, the best-performing state, ranks below Gabon, Honduras, and Vietnam. India’s poor performance is driven by its high levels of child undernutrition and calorie insufficiency. Its rates of child malnutrition are higher than most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

“The India State Hunger Index is particularly insightful because it measures hunger across the country by ranking states on three leading indicators and combining them into a composite index – somewhat akin to the Human Development Index,” said Anil B. Deolalikar, professor of economics and associate dean of social sciences at the University of California, Riverside, and co-author of the India State Hunger Index.

The India State Hunger Index also found that poorer Indian states have substantially higher levels of hunger than their more prosperous counterparts. However, the report identified that strong economic growth does not necessarily translate into lower hunger levels. Even states with high rates of economic growth in recent years, such as Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, and Maharashtra, have high levels of hunger, while states with relatively slower economic growth, such as Punjab, achieved a lower hunger level.

“Hunger and malnutrition are often rooted in poverty,” said Ashok Gulati, IFPRI director in Asia. “Part of the solution rests with increasing investments in agriculture and poverty reduction programs.”

Child underweight accounts for the greatest contribution to the India State Hunger Index for almost all states, followed by calorie deficiency and child mortality. In a few states, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, calorie deficiency contributes almost as much as child underweight.

“India needs to use existing programs and systems to ensure that all women and children are reached with evidence-based interventions during the window of opportunity—the first two years of life for children and before, during, and immediately after pregnancy for women,” said Purnima Menon, IFPRI research fellow and lead author of the India State Hunger Index. “This would lead to much progress in reducing child undernutrition.”

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations. Please visit our website at www.ifpri.org.

Welthungerhilfe is convinced that all people of this world shall lead an independent life in dignity and justice, free from hunger and poverty. Welthungerhilfe was founded in 1962 as the national committee of the "Freedom from Hunger Campaign" set up by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Today, it is one of Germany's largest non-governmental organizations, which besides advocacy, provides help by means of rapid humanitarian aid in acute crisis regions and cooperates closely with local partners where hunger and poverty are chronic. www.welthungerhilfe.de