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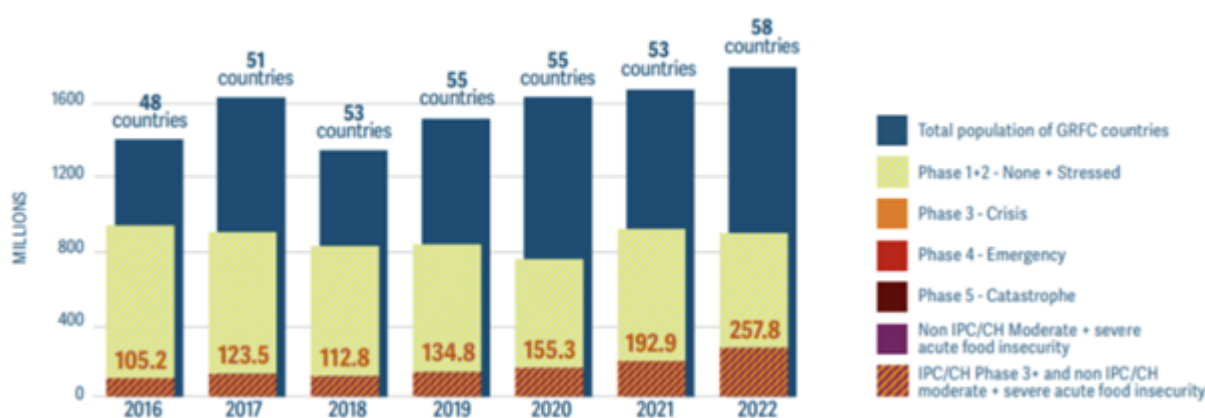
The Way to get to Zero Hunger in India

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Why in News

The Global Report on the Food Crises (GRFC) 2023 released recently estimated that between 691 million and 783 million people in the world suffered from hunger in 2022. While the two pandemic years did not record a growth in food insecurity, the data for 2022 shows levels far higher than pre-pandemic 2019.

A Number of people in GRFC countries facing acute food insecurity, 2016–2022



Source: FSIN, using data from 2016–2022.

Food security is defined (from the World Food Summit of 1996) thus: “When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, and healthy life”.

The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population is based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).

About the Report

The GRFC is produced by the Food Security Information Network in support of the Global Network against Food Crises, and involves 16 partners to achieve a joint consensus-based assessment of acute food insecurity in countries.

This year’s report records the historic moments that had an impact on the assessment — a pandemic and ensuing economic crisis, a war (in Ukraine), soaring prices of food, and agricultural inputs.

The Global Report starts with a qualified assertion that hunger is no longer on an alarming path upwards at the global level, but still far above pre-COVID pandemic levels, and that the world is far off track towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 — Zero Hunger.

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It sets the global contexts preceding and during the year under assessment, particularly paying attention to the increasing phenomenon of urbanisation, and its effects on food security.

Key Highlights of the Report

New estimates of FIES, as per the report, “confirm that for 2022, no progress was made on food insecurity at the global level.

Following a sharp increase from 2019 to 2020, the global prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity remained unchanged for the second year in a row, but remained far above pre-COVID-19-pandemic levels.”

In 2022, an estimated 2.4 billion people did not have access to adequate food. This is still 391 million more people than in 2019.

Global hunger, measured by yet another metric — the prevalence of undernourishment — remained relatively unchanged from 2021 to 2022 but is, again, far above pre-COVID-19-pandemic levels, affecting around 9.2% of the world population in 2022 compared with 7.9% in 2019, according to the report.

Some positive progress in the report is that stunting, another key metric, defined as the condition of being too short for one’s age, among children under five years of age has declined steadily, from 204.2 million in 2000 to 148.1 million in 2022.

Simultaneously, child wasting, caused by insufficient nutrient intake or absorption, declined from 54.1 million in 2000 to 45 million in 2022. In terms of children who are overweight or obese, the study indicated a non-significant increase from 5.3% (33 million) in 2000 to 5.6 % (37 million) in 2022.

The revised analysis presented in this year’s report shows that almost 3.2 billion people worldwide could not afford a healthy diet in 2020, with a slight improvement in 2021.

The cost of a healthy diet increased globally by 6.7% between 2019 and 2021. It also projects that almost 600 million people will be chronically undernourished in 2030.

Key drivers of food insecurity

The report notes the following reasons as being responsible:

slowing down, thanks to lockdowns, economic downturns, and other pandemic-related disruptions in 2020 that led to job losses and reduced incomes for many people;

the Ukraine war;

governmental policies that may not be entirely favourable; and

increasing urbanisation that drives changes through the agrifood systems.

The report’s comparison of food insecurity among rural, peri-urban and urban populations reveals that global food insecurity is lower in urban areas.

The Way Ahead

The report helps “identify vulnerable population groups, contributing to **evidence to inform decision-making** and effective action through the **appropriate targeting** and design of policies and programmes.”

As the authors record, **sound nutrition** is fundamental to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and must be central in government policy and supported by civil society and the private sector.

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Some of its recommendations include **supporting healthier food outlets** as key for enabling access to healthy diets.

Policy incentives are necessary to encourage shops to sell greater amounts of fresh and minimally processed foods.

Another key input is on **street foods**, which an estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide consume every day, thanks to the convenience and cost factor. The report calls for addressing multiple infrastructure and regulatory gaps to improve **nutritional safety and quality of street food**.

The GRFC also suggests building **rural infrastructure**, including quality rural and feeder roads to connect remote farms and enterprises to main road networks.

Other public investments to support linkages between (mainly small) farms and small and medium enterprises could include warehousing, cold storage, dependable electrification, access to digital tools and water supply.

Conclusion

It underlines several times the role of local governments as fundamental actors in leveraging multilevel and multi-stakeholder mechanisms that have proved effective in implementing essential policies for making healthy diets available and affordable for all.