

**FINANCIAL TIMES**

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/087428aa-ff72-11dd-b3f8-000077b07658.html>

## **India faces crisis as boom fails rural poor**

By James Lamont in New Delhi

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High economic growth rates have failed to improve food security in India leaving the country facing a crisis in its rural economy, the United Nations World Food Programme warned on Friday.

India has grown at about 9 per cent a year over the past three years, making it the second fastest growing economy in the world. Yet the WFP's report on State of Food Insecurity in Rural India said rural unemployment was rising, and had worsened over a decade celebrated for rising prosperity.

They warned that the economic downturn threatened to deepen the crisis by forcing workers who have been made redundant out of cities and into the resource-starved countryside.

The findings are particularly worrying as 60 per cent of India's 1.2bn population lives in villages of no more than 5,000 people.

India has more than 220m hungry and ranks 94th out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index. About 56 per cent of women are anaemic and just under half the children are underweight.

The WFP report said the number of undernourished people was increasing, reversing earlier gains made in the 1990s. Falling food production growth, rising unemployment and declining purchasing power of the poor in India were combining to weaken the rural economy.

“By far the greatest contribution to the number of undernourished people in South Asia has come from changes in the state of food and nutrition insecurity in India,” the report said. “The deterioration in the state of food and nutrition insecurity in India should be a serious concern for public policy.”

Professor Venkatesh Athreya of the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, the WFP's research partner, said India was facing a “major crisis” of rural unemployment reinforced by declining rural development.

Critics say high growth rates are confined to some service and industrial sectors, such as its IT outsourcing and telecommunications. The rural economy, meanwhile, is only growing at about 2 per cent. They say feeding schemes are often preyed upon by corrupt politicians and bureaucrats and never reach the rural poor.

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## **BBC NEWS**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south\\_asia/7902136.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/south_asia/7902136.stm)

### **Many rural Indians 'malnourished'**

By Sanjoy Majumder  
BBC News, Delhi

A new UN report says that many Indians in rural areas suffer malnutrition, despite government programmes.

The report says that 40% of children under the age of three are underweight and a third of all men and women suffer from chronic energy deficiency.

Almost three quarters of India's population - some seven hundred million people - live in rural areas.

They work in labour intensive occupations and so require more energy than urban Indians, the report says.

The report was created by the World Food Programme and India's MS Swaminathan Research Foundation.

MS Swaminathan, founder of the research foundation, said: "If you want to achieve food security for an individual you must bring three things together - availability of food, access to food - that means the purchasing power needed to buy the food - and finally the ability to absorb the food into the body."

Price rises

The report says that global food price rises and climate change have contributed to growing food insecurity in rural India.

But it adds that despite a number of government programmes, the country's malnutrition figures are not coming down.

Part of the problem is that India's rural economy has not grown as fast as the rest of the country, so villagers are unable to pay higher prices for food.

India has a successful public distribution system without which, the report says, a large number of Indians would have gone hungry.

But sharp reductions in subsidies have meant that food supplied through the system now costs significantly more.

The report recommends that India refocuses its economic policies to support its rural population.

### **REUTERS NEWS COVERAGE**

<http://in.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idINBOM11782420090220>

NEW DELHI - United Nations World Food Program releases report on food insecurity in rural India. Venue: India Habitatat Centre; 3 p.m. (0930 GMT)

<http://in.reuters.com/article/companyNews/idINDEL23623720090220?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>

### **Indian food policy failing, millions stay hungry-UN**

Fri Feb 20, 2009 10:22pm IST Email | Print | Share| Single Page[-] Text [+]

By Matthias Williams

NEW DELHI, Feb 20 (Reuters) - A flagship government food subsidy scheme is failing and millions in India remain hungry despite years of economic boom, a U.N. report showed on Friday.

The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), meant to sell food essentials to India's poorest people at subsidised prices, has excluded large numbers because of poor data and lack of adequate definitions of hunger, the report said.

About 20 percent of the world's 1 billion hungry poor live in India. Though numbers fell until 2003, the report said since then "the number of undernourished in India reportedly (is) increasing substantially".

India ranks 94th in the Global Hunger Index of 119 countries, the report said, adding nearly half of Indian children are underweight.

Food subsidies were almost universally available until 1997, the report said, but criticisms of their inefficiency led to a policy change.

In theory, cut price food essentials would be sold only to those who really needed help, but in practice the TPDS excluded large numbers of people and reclassified others as better off than they actually were.

"Apart from failing to serve the intended goal of reduction of food subsidies, the TPDS also led to greater food insecurity for large sections of the poor and the near-poor," the report, written by the U.N. World Food Programme and a think-tank, said.

"These targeting errors arise ... due to imperfect information, inexact measurement of household characteristics, corruption and inefficiency."

The report cited one survey which said an estimated 18 percent of households below the poverty line did not have ration cards needed to claim benefits.

The document questioned the government's definitions of hunger and poverty.

"The fact that calorie deprivation is increasing during a period when the proportion of the rural population below the poverty line ... is claimed to be declining rapidly, highlights the increasing disconnect between official poverty estimates and calorie deprivation," it said.

The report also blamed a fall in foodgrain production, higher unemployment and a decrease of the poor's purchasing power for India's high malnutrition levels at a time when the economy has grown at about 9 percent in recent years.

Food insecurity in rural areas has dropped in several states, but has risen in others, the report said, using a range of indices such as calorie intake, energy deficiency and anaemia.

Large sums of government subsidies are lost because of rampant corruption at local level, said a lawmaker from one of India's poorest states, Jharkhand, who spoke at the report's launch in New Delhi.

"In Jharkhand hardly 20 percent of people get rations," Mabel Rebello said. (Editing by Janet Lawrence)

## **THE INDIAN EXPRESS**

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/rural-sanitation-improves-but-anaemia-a-concern/426270/>

### **‘Rural sanitation improves but anaemia a concern’**

Express news service

Posted: Feb 21, 2009 at 0100 hrs IST

The latest report of the Food Insecurity Situation in Rural India has revealed that while the stunting in children, access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities have improved, the prevalence of anaemia has worsened in rural India. The report, first prepared by the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and the World Food Programme in 2001, has also pointed out that calorie intake has remained stagnant in the last decade with about 13 per cent of the rural population consuming less than 1,890 Kcal/day.

The report, released on Friday, revealed that the proportion of stunted children (6-35 months old) has declined by about eight per cent to 40.70 in the six years till 2005-06. In fact, Assam, Bihar, Haryana, MP, Rajasthan and UP, which earlier had over 50 per cent stunted children, has improved their situation.

However, during the same period the proportion of anaemic children went up by about six per cent to 81.20. According to the report, the situation has worsened in MP, UP, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, all of which slipped from High to Very High levels.

In fact, the proportion of anaemic women aged between 15 and 49 has also gone up by about four per cent from the 53.90 per cent as the situation worsened in Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, all of which slipped from moderate (43.4-53.5 per cent) to high (53.6-63.8 per cent) levels.

However, on the positive side, the report points out that people without access to safe drinking water has declined from 44.5 per cent in 1991 to 26.8 per cent in 2001. Similarly, the percentage of rural households without access to toilet facilities within the premises declined from 90.52 per cent to 78.08 per cent in the same period.

According to the composite index, prepared using indicators from the Census and National Family Health Survey 2005-6, Jharkhand has the highest level of food insecurity, followed by Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Gujarat.

### **ANI News Coverage**

#### **UNWFP report says most of rural India malnourished**

The United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) says that most rural Indians are victims of malnutrition, despite the introduction of several government schemes to end the problem.

New Delhi, Feb 21 : The United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) says that most rural Indians are victims of malnutrition, despite the introduction of several government schemes to end the problem.

A UNWFP with MS Swaminathan Research Foundation report released here said that 40 per cent of children under the age of three are underweight and a third of all men and women suffer from chronic energy deficiency. It also stressed nutritional outcomes and the associated factors which influence them.

MS Swaminathan, the founder of the research foundation, said: "If you want to achieve food security for an individual you must bring three things together - availability of food, access to food - that means the purchasing power needed to buy the food - and finally the ability to absorb the food into the body."

The report examines the effectiveness of some of the important food-based interventions like the Public Distribution System, the Integrated Child Development Services and the Mid Day Meal Scheme and recommends measures for improved performance.

A survey by the Indian health ministry, backed by UNICEF, had found that almost 46 percent of children under the age of three are undernourished.  
END

*The story was picked up by the following news-based portals:*

- [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/india-news/unwfp-report-says-most-of-rural-india-malnourished\\_100157896.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/india-news/unwfp-report-says-most-of-rural-india-malnourished_100157896.html)
- <http://jackmyers.daylife.com/article/008yajH6GucFJ?q=United+Nations>
- <http://www.andhranews.net/India/2009/February/21-UNWFP-report-says-91048.asp>
- [http://www.newstin.co.uk/related.a?edition=uk&group\\_id=en-010-011136084&similarFilter=IN](http://www.newstin.co.uk/related.a?edition=uk&group_id=en-010-011136084&similarFilter=IN)
- [http://www.silobreaker.com/DocumentReader.aspx?Item=5\\_2262119000710316032](http://www.silobreaker.com/DocumentReader.aspx?Item=5_2262119000710316032)
- <http://www.zeenews.com/nation/2009-02-21/509501news.html>
- <http://news.webindia123.com/news/articles/India/20090223/1183339.html>
- [http://www.newstin.co.uk/related.a?edition=uk&group\\_id=en-010-011136084&similarFilter=IN](http://www.newstin.co.uk/related.a?edition=uk&group_id=en-010-011136084&similarFilter=IN)
- <http://www.in.com/news/readnews-current-affairs-unwfp-report-says-most-of-rural-india-malnourished-8120043-57990-1.html>
- <http://www.newkerala.com/topstory-fullnews-97747.html>
- <http://in.news.yahoo.com/139/20090221/808/tnl-unwfp-says-rural-india-malnourished.html>
- <http://www.morungexpress.com/national/14891.html>
- <http://silverscorpio.com/unwfp-report-says-most-of-rural-india-malnourished/>
- <http://www.chinanationalnews.com/index.php/ct/10/id/b8de8e630faf3631>
- [http://sify.com/news/videos/index.php?channel=News&video\\_id=1239](http://sify.com/news/videos/index.php?channel=News&video_id=1239)
- <http://in.truveo.com/Most-of-rural-India-malnourished/id/3750755707>
- <http://content.usatoday.com/topics/article/Organizations/Government+Bodies/United+Nations/008yajH6GucFJ/1>
- <http://news.krify.com/India/72821.html>

## **VIDEO COVERAGE**

**BBC** – International news channel conducted a live interview with Ms Mihoko Tamamura, Representative and Country Director, WFP India on Friday, Feb 20, 10 pm news bulletin.

**DOORDARSHAN** – India’s National Channel carried the news report on the release of the Report on the national news bulletin at 7.30 pm and 9 pm on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**CNNIBN** – One of the leading news channels of India carried a news item on the launch of the Report on Saturday Feb 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Websites carrying videos on the coverage**

- <http://video.aol.com/video-detail/unwfp-says-rural-india-malnourished/2702875860/?icid=VIDLRVNWS03>
- <http://in.truveo.com/Most-of-rural-India-malnourished/id/3750755707>

### **AUDIO COVERAGE**

BBC Radio Hindi service carried an audio report on the release of the report with sound bytes from Professor Swaminathan.

*News coverage attached*