

## General Studies-1; Topic: Poverty and hunger

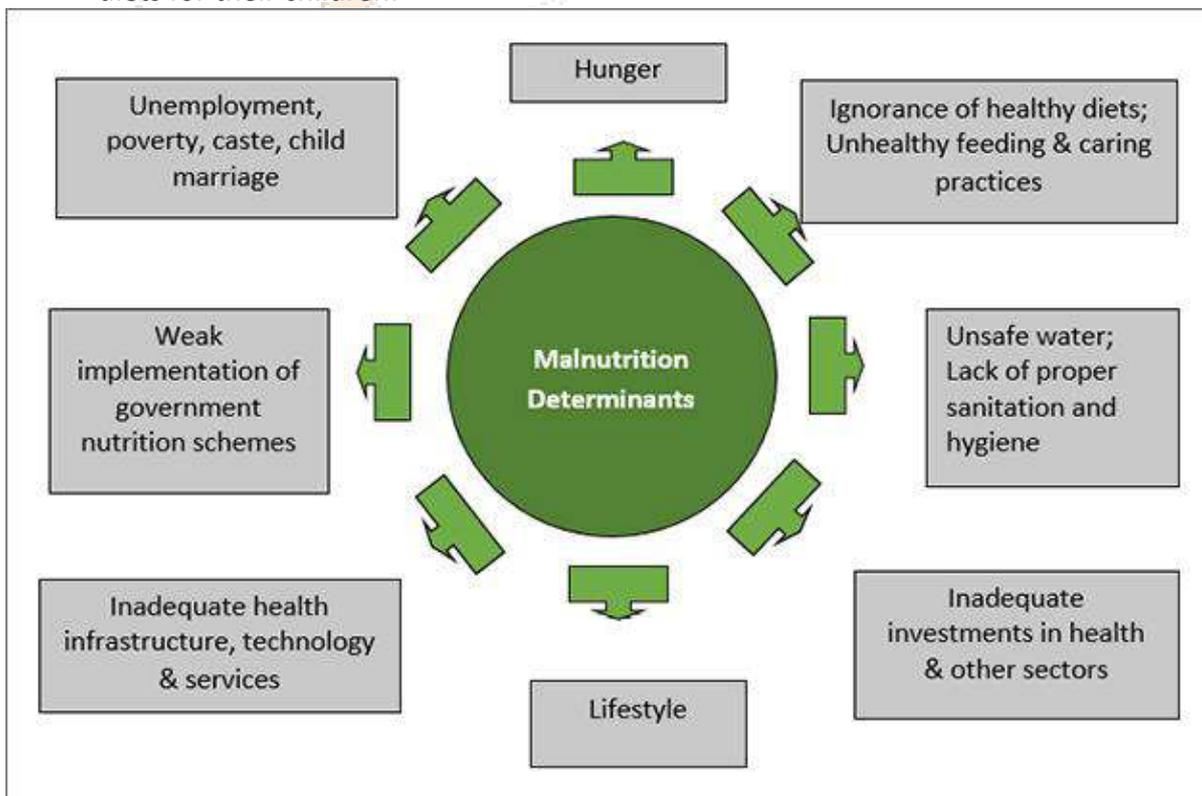
### Malnutrition in India

#### 1) Introduction

- The prevalence of malnutrition—encompassing both undernutrition and overnutrition—is an important indicator of a country’s health.
- Those who are either undernourished or are obese underperform in various aspects of life
- As the country aspires to fulfil its economic and social development goals, malnutrition is one area which requires greater attention.

#### 2) Reasons

- Study shows that, factors like poverty, dietary issues, poor sanitation and low social status of women are the likely reasons for high child malnutrition in India.
- One of the primary reasons for children being undernourished is that often their mothers are undernourished.
- Malnourishment in a girl, combined with early marriage, has a cascading effect of health complexities across generations.
- Women without education or without much voice in their families often fail to ensure adequate diets for their children.



#### 3) Concerns / Challenges

- India has the highest levels of malnutrition and the highest number of stunted children in the world.
- India loses over \$12 billion in GDP to vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

- Childbearing at an early age can cause nutritional deficiencies in the womb and increase the risk of death by 2-10 times.
- Poor people avoid hospitals due to the high out-of-pocket expenditure during delivery.
- Inadequate iron intake can lead to iron deficiency anaemia (IDA) which leads to permanently impaired cognitive abilities, which leads to a reduction in adult wages.
- National Family Health Survey IV of 2015-16 suggests only modest improvement in child malnutrition since the National Family Health Survey III of 2005-06.

#### 4) Implications

- A high proportion of children with anaemia, low weight, lower levels of breast feeding and evolving problems of obesity
- Anaemia and other deficiencies can have irreversible damage on a child's ability to learn.
- Losses via poorer cognition and losses via reduced schooling for children.
- Every year, one million children die in India due to causes related to the lack of nutrition.

#### 5) Solutions

- Research suggests that \$1 spent on nutritional interventions in India could generate \$34.1 to \$38.6 in public economic returns.
- Boosting nutrition levels across the country is one of the biggest low hanging fruit in the Indian public policy sphere
- According to M S Swaminathan, to promote nutrient value food production, a multi-pronged strategy involving academic institutions, government, scientists and farmers should be evolved
- Ingenious tribal women are growing plants of nutritious value following their age-old tradition and other people must follow it by including such plants in their backyard.
- Sustained efforts to promote millets and pulses production and distribution under food security programme
- To exploit the rich coast line, sea water tolerant plant varieties and developing genetic shield to grow plants in saline and marsh lands
- Creation of web-enabled Nutrition Information System, which should be synergised with the health information management system and mother- and child-tracking system
- Engaging the private sector for fortification of wheat, flour, rice, edible oils and milk.
- Fortified food can be incorporated into mid-day meals, public distribution shops and anganwadi centres
- State governments must adopt a comprehensive and coordinated approach and demonstrate better governance
- Women empowerment can help India end malnutrition
- A food and nutrition commission should be established, headed by the prime minister
- Seeking the help of corporates is an easy way out
- Focus also on adequate intake of oils and fats, which are necessary for the absorption of micronutrients and something poorer households often miss in their diet.
- If we can conquer space, we can conquer childhood hunger.