

General Studies-1; Topic: Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

National Nutrition Strategy

1) Introduction

- NITI Aayog launched National Nutrition Strategy aimed at Kuposhan Mukh Bharat - linked to Swachh Bharat and Swasth Bharat.
- It intends at bringing nutrition to centre-stage of National Development Agenda.
- It lays down roadmap for targeted action to address India's nutritional needs.

2) Key features of the Strategy include:

- **Reduce all forms of malnutrition by 2030**
 - a. Focus on the most vulnerable and critical age groups.
 - b. Assist in achieving the targets identified as part of the SDGs related to nutrition and health.
- **National Nutrition Mission**
 - a. National Nutrition Mission, similar to the National Health Mission.
 - b. Integration of nutrition-related interventions across sectors like women and child development, health, food and public distribution, sanitation, drinking water, and rural development.
- **Decentralised approach**
 - a. A decentralised approach will be promoted with greater flexibility and decision making at the state, district and local levels.
 - b. This is to enable decentralised planning and local innovation along with accountability for nutrition outcomes.
- **Healthcare and nutrition among children**
 - a. Promotion of breastfeeding for the first six months after birth
 - b. Universal access to infant and young child care
 - c. Enhanced care, referrals and management of severely undernourished and sick children
 - d. Bi-annual vitamin A supplements for children in the age group of 9 months to 5 years
 - e. Micro-nutrient supplements and bi-annual de-worming for children
- **Maternal care and nutrition**
 - a. Supplementary nutritional support during pregnancy and lactation
 - b. Health and nutrition counselling
 - c. Adequate consumption of iodised salt and screening of severe anaemia
 - d. Institutional childbirth, lactation management and improved post-natal care
- **Governance reforms**
 - a. Convergence of state and district implementation plans for ICDS, NHM and Swachh Bharat
 - b. Focus on the most vulnerable communities in districts with the highest levels of child malnutrition
 - c. Service delivery models based on evidence of impact.

3) What is malnutrition?

- Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients.
- One is 'undernutrition'—which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies.

- The other is overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer).

4) **Malnutrition in India**

- India is in 100th position among 119 countries in the 2017 Global Hunger Index
- The malnutrition rate (among children below five years) is 38.4 per cent according to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS 4)
- This is because of poor diet, poor healthcare and poor sanitation.
- For very young children, only about one in 10 meet diet adequacy (NFHS 4).
- Such deficiencies take a toll not only on an individual's health but also on the economy and society at large, as the productivity declines and the cost incurred on healthcare increases.

5) **Concerns / Challenges**

- Poor nutrition affects early childhood development, learning and earning potential with life-cycle effects on national health and economic growth.
- India has the highest levels of malnutrition and the highest number of stunted children in the world.
- The pace of decline of under nutrition is far below what numerous countries with similar growth trajectories to India have achieved.
- India pays an income penalty of 9% to 10% due to a workforce that was stunted during their childhood.

6) **Way Forward**

- Boosting nutrition levels across the country is one of the biggest low hanging fruit in the Indian public policy sphere.
- Need for more research on increasing the efficiency of public distribution system.
- States and communities must focus on improved outcomes for the poor and accountability for those in governance
- Creation of web-enabled Nutrition Information System, which should be synergised with the health information management system and mother and child-tracking system
- A food and nutrition commission should be established, headed by the prime minister
- 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