



Green over brown

Crux: India's climate goals are on track, but future investments must be sustainable.

On Target:

1. Emission intensity already 21% less than 2005 level
2. Expansion of forests and renewable energy capacity

Highlights:

1. India asserted at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit that it is exceeding its Paris climate commitment.
2. Indeed, the Emissions Gap Report 2020 of the UNEP includes India among nine G20 members who are on track to achieve their unconditional commitments.
3. The brief reduction in global GHG emissions brought about by the pandemic has given all countries an opportunity to review their development trajectories.
4. India faces a particular challenge, in moving its pandemic rehabilitation spending away from traditional brown sector policies aligned with fossil fuel use to green territory.

Assessing Indian Claims and Way forward

1. State-level Data on afforestation is questionable
2. Achieving 100 gigawatts of solar power capacity from 36 GW now needs a steep scale-up that must actively promote rooftop solar installations.
3. To reduce transport-related emissions we need to reorder cities for cycling and pedestrianisation.
4. For adaption, Large-scale agriculture insurance against climate disasters also needs attention.



India needs to rethink its nutrition agenda

Opening statement

The World Health Organization calls stunting “*a marker of inequalities in human development*”.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released data for 22 States and Union Territories (UTs) based on the findings of Phase I of the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5).

Issues with Data

The 22 States/ UTs don't include some major States such as Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

Worrying findings

1. The prevalence of severe acute malnutrition increased in 16 States/UTs (compared to NFHS-4 conducted in 2015-16).
2. The percentage of children under five who are underweight has also increased in 16 out of the 22 States/UTs.
3. Anaemia levels among children as well as adult women have increased in most of the States
4. There is also an increase in the prevalence of other indicators such as adult malnutrition measured by those having a Body Mass Index of less than 18.5kg/m² in many States/UTs.
5. increase in overweight/obesity prevalence among children and adults, showing the inadequacy of diets in India both in terms of quality and quantity.
6. The data report an increase in childhood stunting (an indicator of chronic undernutrition and considered a sensitive indicator of overall well-being) in 13 of the 22 States/UTs compared to the data of NFHS-4.
7. All indications from these initial results of NFHS-5 are that we are likely to see an increase in the prevalence of childhood stunting in the country during the period 2015-16 to 2019-20.



Model of Economic growth

This is extremely alarming and calls for serious introspection on not just the direct programmes in place to address the problem of child malnutrition but also the overall model of economic growth that the country has embarked upon. Over the last three decades, there have been phases where India has experienced high rates of economic growth. Issues with the economic model

1. increasing inequality,
2. greater informalisation of the labour force, and
3. reducing employment elasticities of growth
4. stagnant rural wages and highest levels of unemployment

Problematic moves and results

1. Some expansion in social protection schemes and public programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the Public Distribution System, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), and school meals have contributed to a reduction in absolute poverty as well as previous improvements in nutrition indicators.
2. However, there are continuous attempts to weaken these mechanisms through underfunding and general neglect.
3. This pandemic we have seen the rising number of reported starvation deaths from different parts of the country.

Pandemic trauma

In the Hunger Watch survey carried out in 11 States, two-thirds of the respondents reported that the nutritional quality and quantity of their diets worsened in September-October compared to before the lockdown. All of this calls for urgent action with commitment towards addressing the issue of malnutrition.

Something Positive

There are some improvements seen in determinants of malnutrition such as access to sanitation, clean cooking fuels and women's status – a reduction in spousal violence and greater access of women to bank accounts, for example.



Way Forward

1. Direct interventions such as supplementary nutrition (of good quality including eggs, fruits, etc.), growth monitoring, and behaviour change communication through the ICDS and school meals must be strengthened and given more resources.
2. Universal maternity entitlements and child care services to enable exclusive breastfeeding, appropriate infant and young child feeding as well as towards recognising women's unpaid work burdens have been on the agenda for long, but not much progress has been made on these.
3. Overall, one of the main messages is that the basic determinants of malnutrition – household food security, access to basic health services and equitable gender relations – cannot be ignored any longer.
4. An employment-centred growth strategy which includes the universal provision of basic services for education, health, food and social security is imperative.