



**BERGEN SUMMER
RESEARCH SCHOOL**
GLOBAL CHALLENGES



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Food and Nutrition Education: The importance of raising food awareness in India



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▶ ▶ ▶ The analysis presented here is based on literature review and group discussion in the scope of 2021 Bergen Summer Research School (BSRS)'s joint sessions consisting of creative interdisciplinary problem-solving, systems thinking and project management. Our group members had various backgrounds in education and work experience. We used tools such as Zoom Meeting and Google Document to collaborate online.

Food challenges are key to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of developing countries such as India, food and nutrition are linked to a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). In addition to increased food supply, the nutritional quality of food must be given greater awareness via educational programmes.

3 key points

- India has a rapidly growing population with increasing demand for food. However, food security must include considerations of nutritional quality in addition to food quantity.
- A lack of food and nutritional awareness adversely impacts a country's potential for economic growth, with poor health and reduced productivity, particularly among women and the rural population.
- This makes it imperative for India to invest not only in sustainable food production, but to also generate greater awareness in regard to food and nutrition among its population.

Introduction

Although the 'right to food' has been recognised by the international community as one of the most basic human rights, it has been estimated that around two billion people in the world lack access to adequate amounts of safe and nutritious food. Consequently, eradicating hunger across the world has been one of the most consistent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the years, which is reiterated in SDG 2030 with Zero Hunger (SDG 2). However, overcoming hunger is only one part of the challenge. Measures to eradicate hunger by ensuring the availability and accessibility of food of need to be accompanied by proper utilisation of food, i.e. the ability for individuals to efficiently absorb nutrients from consumed food to lead an active and healthy life (SDG 3, Good Health and Wellbeing).

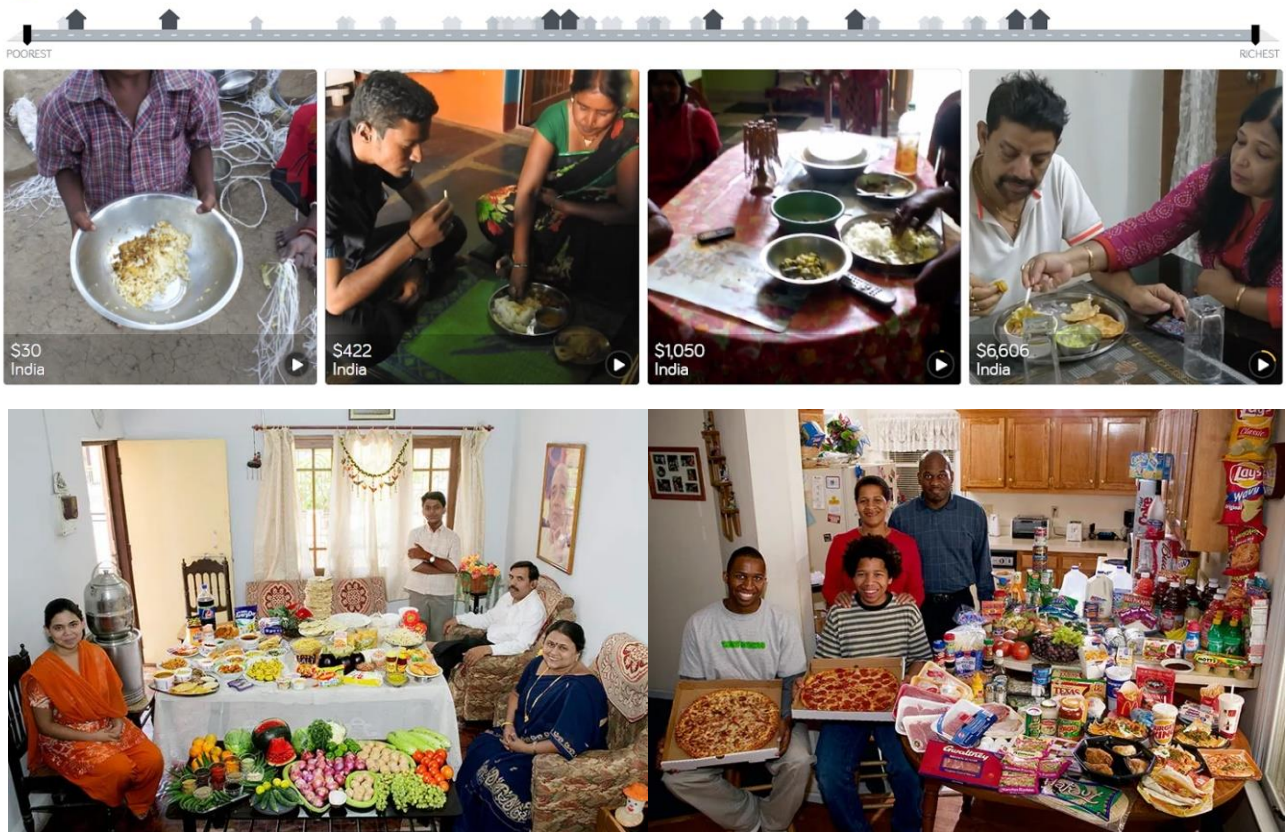
This calls for greater knowledge and awareness with regard to food and nutrition. The importance of this aspect of food security was recognised by both the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. Nevertheless, it continues to be a major challenge for several South Asian countries including India, where 40% of children were estimated to be malnourished in 2015 (NITI Aayog, 2021). In this context, this policy brief emphasises the importance of generating greater awareness of food and nutrition so as to promote improvements in health, education and economic growth.

Analysis

Food and nutrition awareness is intricately linked to issues such as health, education, gender equality and economic development. Nutrition is essential to ensuring a healthy society, especially in developing countries such as India, which faces a severe crisis of widespread hunger and malnutrition. This is coupled with an increase in sedentary lifestyles, fast food consumption, and childhood obesity among its urban population (Khandewal and Kurpad, 2014). Studies additionally identify issues of gender inequality, with greater malnutrition among Indian women and girls (Aurino, 2017; Kingdon and Monk, 2010). Malnutrition not only increases vulnerability to diseases but also hinders cognitive development in children, which has the potential to inhibit educational attainments in addition to later life-earnings (Aizer, 2014).

Both health and education play a pivotal role in determining the trajectory of economic growth. International studies conducted by scholars conclude that improvements in nutrition are associated with increased productivity which in turn positively affects long-term economic growth (Wang and Zou, 2011). The positive correlation of education with economic growth is discussed additionally in studies indicating that additional years of education are associated with increased earnings (Ozturk, 2001). Poor socio-economic conditions and the inability to invest in quality food contribute towards poor health in both adults and children, with issues of reduced productivity, reduced income, and a decreased ability to access nutritious food or healthcare services.

To meet the nutritional needs of a growing population, there is a greater need for India to invest in responsible consumption and production. This includes the promotion of sustainable agriculture methods (Obaisi, 2017), with balanced land and water management via organic farming and agronomical activities (Kumar, 2003). Furthermore, there is a need to address food waste at both the consumer and producer level, with food waste a major sustainability challenge within India and globally (FAO, 2013).



Dollar Street - photos as data to kill country stereotypes. (n.d.). Retrieved June 14, 2021, from <https://www.gapminder.org/dollar-street>; Hungry Planet: What the World Eats - in pictures | Food | The Guardian. (n.d.). Retrieved June 14, 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/gallery/2013/may/06/hungry-planet-what-world-eats>

Conclusions

Food and nutrition are linked to a number of sustainable development challenges including children’s learning outcomes, individual health and wellbeing, economic growth, and responsible production and consumption. In addition to ensuring access to safe and sufficient food, especially for people living in developing countries, it is important to enhance individual awareness of making healthy food choices to address nutrition issues. Thus, educating the population on food and nutrition related matters can help individuals to acquire the knowledge and skills required to make informed food choices and practice healthy dietary behaviours in everyday life. Longer term, increased food and nutrition education can contribute to more sustainable patterns of food consumption and production on a global scale.

Recommendations

- Food and nutrition education can become a part of the school curriculum and national feeding programmes. India’s school feeding programme can be further extended to include courses and practical training about food, nutrition and sustainable food choices for both individual health and a healthy environment.
- Additionally, school curriculum can address the problem of food waste to generate awareness and prevent food waste at the household and community level.
- The target of food and nutrition education should not only be children but also adults, especially teachers and caregivers. This could involve a life-long learning process about food and nutrition in higher education institutions, workplaces and community centers in addition to schools.
- Policymakers can develop campaigns for food and nutrition education to generate greater awareness among the population through the use of social and mass media.

IMPRINT

SDG Bergen Science Advice in collaboration with Bergen Summer Research School's 2021 PhD course holders professor Birgit Kopainsky, Dr. Hiwa Målen and Dr. Ingunn Johanne Ness.

Relevance to the 2030 Agenda and SDGs:

Food challenges are key to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of developing countries such as India, food and nutrition are linked to a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

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