

# UNIT 19 – UPSC - Issues relating to poverty and hunger

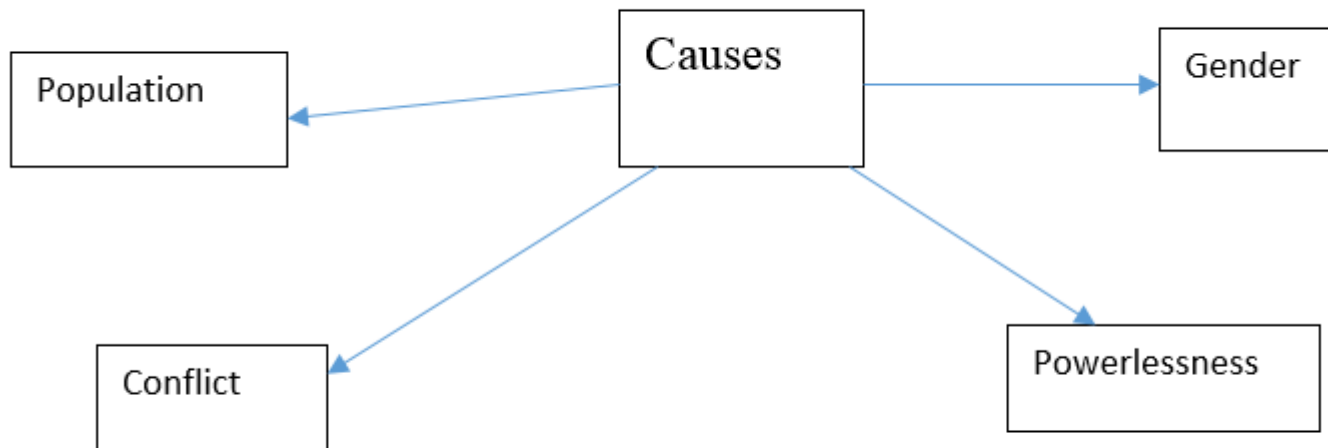
Poverty and hunger have been a universal and increasing menace to humankind. Research reports have indicated that most of the people in African countries are exposed to poverty and hunger. About 70% of Africa's poor are rural inhabitants. There are many inter-related issues that cause hunger and poverty that are related to socio-economic and other factors. A large proportion of people have very limited access to income, resources, education, health care and nutrition.



## **Hunger:**

Hunger is the condition where both adults and children cannot access food constantly and have to decrease food intake, eat poor diets, and often go without any food. (Dillon and Marquand, 2011). Hunger is also explained as the troubled or painful sensation caused by lack of food. According to Amartya Sen, he discovered that the real cause for hunger is the lack of ability to pay for food.

Root causes of hunger



Hunger at global scale is one of the main problems that large number of the global population faces presently. Hunger varies with severity. World hunger has many annoying factors and major causes, such as insufficient economic systems, misinformation, and climate changes. But the main unbearable factor is poverty as poverty always has led to people going without regular meals because they cannot afford to eat. There are majority of people in developing countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia that are in desperate need of food. It has been observed that with the growth of population, the number of hungry people also increases at an uneven rate.

Table: Global Hunger Index of India and Neighbouring Countries (Source: Global hunger Index 2012 International Food Policy and Research Institute and Green Scenery and Concern Worldwide)

	1990 (with data from 1988-92)	1995 (with data from 1994-98)	2001 (with data from 1999- 2003)	2012 (with data from 2005- 2010)
Bangladesh	37.9	36.1	27.8	24
India	30.3	22.6	24.2	22.9
Nepal	26.9	24.4	23	20.3
Pakistan	25.5	21.8	21.7	19.7
Sri Lanka	20.8	18.4	15.2	14.4
China	11.8	8.9	6.7	5.1

Climate change is also a major issue for world hunger. With the amount of rain that a country gets increases, it can possibly lead to serious flooding. This can devastate an entire year's harvest, destroying whatever the farmer may have prepared for his family or the market. Flooding adversely affects how much food is produced and available to the impoverished and raises the costs of these farm products. This indicates that the poor can afford even less than they would usually be able to buy. Many people in developing countries depend on farmers in order to live, so with the weather changing so drastically with each season, it ruins their chances of growing food to either eat or sell. (Climate changes is worsening world hunger, 2013). It makes difficult for them to produce food because changes in weather are increasing severely. Farmers already scuffle with growing food, so with the climate changes increasing, it is not only affecting them but also affecting their nation's budget.

Among numerous issues, Hunger and malnutrition are closely associated in Indian scenario. The Global Study revealed that 42% children in India are underweight and 58% of children are stunted by two years of age. The results of the HUNGaMA Survey Report also indicated the same findings that 59%, instead of 58%, children are stunted. Furthermore, hunger and malnutrition have a separate gender dimension and are prevalent among the women and mothers. Malnutrition occurs when a person's body receives little or no nutrients. People who are malnourished get sick more often and as a result in many cases die. According to Muller & Krawinkel (2015), "Malnutrition is consequently the most important risk factor for the problem of disease in developing countries. It is the direct cause of about 300,000 deaths per year and is indirectly responsible for about half of all deaths in young children" (p. 279). When the individual does not eat a proper meal that provides nutrients and vitamins, it contributes to malnutrition. It not only harms the body but also the mind.

It can be said that world hunger must be taken seriously and should be approached with all deliberate and instant policies. There are different issues of world hunger but the three main ones are poverty, climate changes, and also feeble economies.

**Poverty:** According to many scholars, poverty is a condition characterised by lack of basic needs such as water, health care, foods, sufficient access to social and economic services, and few opportunities for formal income generation. Poverty is often described in terms of the income level below which people are unable to access sufficient food for a healthy working life. Poverty has grabbed attention of the international academician and health experts during the last decade. Successive Summits have made commitments to radically reduce the misery from which so many humans suffer throughout their lives. Hunger and food insecurity are the most serious forms of extreme poverty. To eradicate these issues from society is the prime concern of international organizations. Extreme poverty remains an upsetting problem in the world's developing regions, regardless of the advances made in the 1990s. Progress in poverty reduction has been concentrated in Asia and especially East Asia. In other areas, the number of people in extreme poverty has increased especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Table: Poverty statistics in world (Source: World Bank, Development Research Group, 2009)

Proportion of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day in countries of South Asia (%)			
Country	1981	1990	2005
Nepal	No data	77	54.7
Bangladesh	44.2	49.9	50.5
India	59.8	51.3	41.6
Bhutan	47.4	51	26.8
Pakistan	72.9	58.5	22.6
China	84.0	60.2	15.9
Sri Lanka	31	15	10.3

Poverty in India is primarily due to improper government policies and the misuse of the financially weaker section by the wealthier community. The main outcome of poverty is hunger. Hunger's seriousness can be understood easily from the fact that every year, 5.8 million children die from hunger related-causes around the world (FAO Hunger Report 2008). Customarily, poverty has been explained as income inadequacy. In developing countries, poverty has been conventionally evaluated with reference to sufficient calorie consumption. Poverty involves more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include

hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and elimination as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Various social groups bear uneven burden of poverty. Reports of World Bank revealed that India is one of the poorest countries in the world. Some of the main issues associated with prevalent poverty in India are poor health services, and insufficient education and training. Almost half of India's population drops out of school by the age of thirteen and only one in ten people receive some form of job training.

**Poor health services:** It has been observed that People of developing countries have less access to good health services as compared to industrialized nations. Deficiencies that lead to ill health are common in developing countries, and the poor community in developing countries are particularly at risk (World bank. 2000). The relationship between poverty and access to health care can be seen as part of a larger cycle, where poverty leads to ill health and ill health maintains poverty (Wagstaff, A. 2002).

**Child malnutrition:** The occurrence of under-nutrition in India is amongst the highest levels found in any country in the world and in spite of the development in food production, disease control and economic and social development, India is facing an acute problem of child malnutrition.

**Insufficient education and training:** In developing countries, children do not have access to basic education because of inequalities that originate in sex, health and cultural identity. These children find themselves on the margins of the education system and do not get benefit from learning which is vital for their intellectual and social development. It has been revealed in reports that illiteracy and lack of education are common factor that lead to poverty. Governments of developing countries often cannot have enough money to provide for good public schools, especially in rural areas. Poor people also often sacrifice schooling in order to concentrate on making a minimal living. Additionally, developing countries tend to have few employment opportunities, especially for women. As a result, people do not want to attend school.

Rooted factors associated with poverty in many developing countries are political power, corruption and warfare. Political power is unreasonably centralized. Instead of having a network of political legislatures distributed equally throughout society, in centralized systems of governance one major party, politician, or region is in charge for decision-making throughout the country. This often causes development problems. In these situations politicians make decisions about places that they are unaware with, lacking sufficient knowledge about the context to design effective and appropriate policies and programs.

Another issue related with poverty is corruption often accompanies centralization of power, when leaders are not accountable to those they serve. Corruption hinders development when leaders help themselves to money that would otherwise be used for development projects. In other cases, leaders reward political support by providing services to their factions.

Warfare also lead to entrenched poverty by diverting scarce resources allocated for reducing poverty to maintaining a military. Environmental degradation is also a major issue in increasing poverty. In the developing world, the poor communities depend on natural resources to fulfil their basic needs through agricultural production and gathering resources essential for household maintenance, such as water, firewood, and wild plants for consumption and medicine. Therefore, the depletion and impurity of water sources directly impend the livelihoods of those who depend

on them. One of the more deep-rooted sources of poverty around the globe is social inequality that stems from cultural ideas about the relative worth of different genders, races, ethnic groups, and social classes.