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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by India Water Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 January 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Feeding the Poor and Vulnerable in India

Globally, around 65 million people are at risk due to climate change-induced hunger, with 17 million people in India facing hunger by 2030, the highest among all countries. The report further notes that although global food production may increase by 60 per cent by 2050, 50 crores of Indians would still be at the risk of going hungry. Of these 50 crores, seven crore people would suffer from hunger due to climate change. One of the most significant impacts of climate change is on our food system. It affects the way we produce as well as consume food. The impact is even more on a predominantly agrarian economy like India, creating ripple effects on the entire food production chain. 2023 has been considered one of the hottest years globally.

The damage caused to agriculture and food security by the ongoing heat wave is multi-dimensional. It damaged the wheat crop, and affected the food supply, prompting a phenomenal rise in the price of wheat products. The loss to wheat is both qualitative as well as quantitative as besides the low output, the grain is also of poor quality. It should be seen in the light of the fact that food security is as much about the quantity of food, as it is about the nutritional value. Higher temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, sea-level rise, and growing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, extreme heat, and cyclones are already reducing agricultural productivity, disrupting food supply chains, and displacing communities.

Although the Government of India has been actively addressing food security at households for a long time through the Public Distribution System and the National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013, there are still concerns related to Food Security in India amidst increasing population, climate change and global supply chain disruption (the Russian Federation-Ukraine War) that need to be addressed. The Government has also taken several steps to ensure the availability and accessibility of food resources through increasing agricultural production and improving distribution networks. The Government has implemented various policies such as Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for Agricultural products, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to provide crop insurance against natural calamities, and National Horticulture Mission, etc. to bring improved Agriculture Production and Distribution.

National Nutrition Mission- India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM) or the POSHAN Abhiyaan, on International Women's Day 2018. NNM targets children, pregnant women and lactating mothers, aiming to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. It uses Lives Saved Tool, also known as LiST, to gather results on increased interventions of maternal, newborn and child health, and nutrition.

National Food Security Mission- Though the issue of 'food security' at the household is continuously being addressed by the Government since long, through the Public Distribution System and the Targeted Public Distribution System, the enactment of the National Food Security Act, (NFSA) 2013 on July 5, 2013 marks a paradigm shift in the approach to food security from welfare to rights based approach. The Act legally entitles upto 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under Targeted Public Distribution System. About two thirds of the population therefore is covered under the Act to receive highly subsidized food grains. As a step towards women empowerment, the eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is mandated to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing of ration cards under the Act. The Act is being implemented in all the states/UTs, and on an all India basis, out of maximum coverage of 81.34 crore persons, around 80 crore persons have been covered under NFSA at present for receiving highly subsidized food grains. One of the guiding principles of the Act is its life-cycle approach wherein special provisions have been made for pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years, by entitling them to receive nutritious meal free of cost through a widespread network of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres, called Anganwadi Centres under ICDS scheme and also through schools under Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme. Higher nutritional norms have been prescribed for malnourished children upto 6 years of age.

Pregnant women and lactating mothers are further entitled to receive cash maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000 to partly compensate for the wage loss during the period of pregnancy and also to supplement nutrition.

Zero Hunger Programme- The Zero Hunger Programme in India began in 2017 to improve agriculture, health and nutrition. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the Indian Council of Medical Research, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) created it. The program focuses on developing farm equipment, revamping the farming system, setting up genetic gardens for biofortified plants and beginning zero hunger training. In India, most farmers do not have an adequate amount of land to support their families plus the growing population. Without proper storage available, transportation and marketing places, most food goes to waste. The Zero Hunger Programme aims to: Decrease child stunting for children 2 years and younger, Ensure access to food all year round, Create stable food systems, Increase small farmer productivity and income, Eliminate food waste.

Eat Right India Movement- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India started the Eat Right India movement to ensure that the Indian population has access to food that is healthy and safe. The program stands on the foundation of regulatory capacity building, collaborative and empowerment approach. Overall, the purpose of Eat Right India Movement is to encourage communities to eat healthy, safe and sustainably. It aims to help all age groups since diet-related illnesses affect everyone if their eating habits are poor. With this common ground, the movement is banding with restaurants, agriculture, food producers, ministries and professional cooks to ensure change.

The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) helped lakhs of poor people during the coronavirus pandemic. Free ration was distributed to lakhs of families under the scheme and it has helped lessen the worries of poor during the pandemic. As a matter of fact the World Bank appreciated the steps taken by the government of India for the poor and needy people during covid and advised countries around the world to take such special steps for the poor like the Indian government. Through digital cash transfer, India was able to provide food and cash support to 85 per cent of the households in rural areas and 69 per cent of the households in the urban area, which is remarkable.

To fight stunting and malnutrition in infants and kids POSHAN Abhiyaan² was launched by the Government of India. Principal goal of the POSHAN Abhiyaan is to improve nutritional status of children (0-6 years), adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers. POSHAN Abhiyaan is a three-year programme to ensure a holistic approach, covering all 36 states and union territories. The target of the mission is to bring down stunting in children (0-6 years), from 38.4% in 2016 to 25%. POSHAN Abhiyaan also aims to reduce anemia among women and adolescent girls (15-49 years) and improve birth weight. The strategy presents a unique opportunity to eradicate undernutrition in the grassroots. It is an overarching multi-ministerial convergence mission that is working towards a malnutrition-free India. The women and child welfare department decided to have saplings of vegetables and fruit-bearing trees planted on the premises of anganwadi centres. Only those plants will be selected which do not have to be closely monitored for the growth and development.

The mission is conjunction of various schemes/programmes including Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Anganwadi Services, Scheme for Adolescent Girls under the Ministry of Women & Child Development, National Health Mission of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Swachh Bharat Mission of the Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Public Distribution System of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and other urban local bodies through relevant ministries.

National Food Security is critical for National Security as it ensures that no citizen is deprived of access to food and nutrition. These measures and others have helped India achieve National Food Security and National Security by supplying access to a nutritious diet at affordable prices. This has eventually led to improved economic growth, poverty alleviation, and better health outcomes in the country. National security also depends on balanced distribution and consumption of food commodities nationwide.

Further, National Food Security is vital for achieving National Security as it has far-reaching implications for economic prosperity and social welfare and ensures everyone can access nutritious food to meet their daily needs.

<https://www.businessworld.in/article/World-Bank-Praises-Indian-Govt-For-Taking-Special-Policies-For-Poor-During-Pandemic/05-10-2022-449361/>