Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Micronutrient deficiencies represent a significant challenge to India's public health and human capital development despite improvements in food availability. Examine the causes and consequences of hidden hunger and suggest measures to address regional nutritional inequalities.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 18/11/2026	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Hidden hunger, micronutrient deficiency, thiamine, dietary diversity, polished rice, food fortification, POSHAN Abhiyaan, public health surveillance, regional food habits, women's nutrition.

Model Answer

Introduction

Hidden hunger refers to deficiencies of essential vitamins and minerals despite adequate calorie consumption. The reported ICMR-NIN findings on Vitamin B1 deficiency among women in parts of Northeast India highlight the importance of nutritional quality alongside food availability.

Causes of Micronutrient Deficiencies

1. **Dietary monotony:** Heavy dependence on polished rice can reduce the intake of essential micronutrients.
2. **Food processing:** Excessive polishing of cereals removes nutrient-rich outer layers.
3. **Socioeconomic factors:** Poverty, limited dietary diversity and unequal access to nutritious food increase vulnerability.
4. **Awareness gaps:** Inadequate knowledge of balanced diets can contribute to nutritional deficiencies.

Health and Developmental Consequences

- Impaired energy metabolism and physical weakness.
- Neurological and cardiovascular complications in severe thiamine deficiency.
- Reduced productivity and quality of life.
- Greater nutritional vulnerability among women, particularly during pregnancy and lactation.

Measures to Address the Problem

- Promote diversified diets incorporating pulses, whole grains, nuts and other locally available nutrient-rich foods.
- Strengthen appropriate food fortification and supplementation programmes.
- Improve nutrition education through Anganwadi centres and public health systems.
- Expand region-specific nutritional surveillance and community-level screening.
- Integrate maternal nutrition with existing programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan.

Conclusion

India's nutritional strategy must move beyond calorie sufficiency towards micronutrient adequacy. Region-specific interventions, dietary diversification and stronger public health surveillance are essential to reduce hidden hunger.

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