

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Meeli Papp

**SETTING AN AGENDA FOR ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY: A
CASE STUDY OF INDIA FROM 2009 TO 2019**

Master's Thesis

International Relations and European-Asian Studies

Supervisor: Holger Mölder PhD

Co-supervisor: Vlad Alex Vernygora, LL.M., MA

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same thesis has not been previously presented for grading.

The document length is 11204 words from the introduction to the end of conclusion.

Meeli Papp

.....

(signature, date)

Student code: 183809TASM

Student e-mail address: meeli.pappe@mail.ee

Supervisor: Holger Mölder, PhD

Co-Supervisor: Vlad Vernygora, LL.M, MA

The paper conforms to requirements in force.

.....

(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

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(name, signature, date)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis sheds light on the handling of the food insecurity issue in the Republic of India in a decade, covering the years from 2009 to 2019. Evidently, the situation improved in a steady way, but there is a debate in the field on a framework that can be attributed to this relative success. Engaging with and analytically building on agenda-setting's theoretical instrumentarium (Princen 2011), this research tests an argument that, in the process of eliminating food insecurity, the actual "employment" of agenda-setting by the Government of India on both local and national levels became a crucial factor in terms of the complicated policy's delivery in the world's second most populous country. Characteristically for this research, the process is measured through the prism of agenda-setting theory. More specifically, the theory outlined two challenges in putting difficult issues on the agenda, namely gaining attention and building credibility.

Keywords: food security, India, malnutrition, agenda-setting theory.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALRD	Association of Land Reform and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GFSI	Global Food Security Index
GHI	Global Hunger Index
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IFBN	India Food Banking Network
IFSA	Indian Food Sharing Alliance
IMSE-India	Institute of Motivating Self Employment India
NFSA	National Food Security Act
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHRC-Bangladesh	National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh
NHRC-India	National Human Rights Commission India
NITI Aayog	National Institution for Transforming India
NNM	National Nutrition Mission
PDS	Public Distribution System
TPDS	Targeted Public Distribution System
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

INTRODUCTION

Achieving an appropriate level of food security in times where the world's population is growing exponentially (World Bank, Population, total) has been one of the most important as well as challenging tasks. As recently as 2015, the United Nations (UN) member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. Each of these goals is either directly or indirectly related to the global response to food-associated challenges. (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015). There is even a noble as well as a complex aim set forth in the UN General Assembly's resolution 70/1 (2015) that by 2030 the world will have enough food for everyone that is safe, nutritious, and most importantly affordable. This is not to mention the relatively recent and still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic outbreak as well as the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, which has added plenty of complexity to the process, jeopardising many socio-political and economic processes, including general security, food production, food supply, and their various combinations (World Bank 2022). Furthermore, the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) policy-bound strategic setting is linked to one of the fundamental human rights. Achieving global food security was set forth already in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948 art.25) when it was underlined that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing [...]"; and "the highest attainable standards of physical and mental well-being".

That clearly indicates that, over the last seven decades, the international community has been acknowledging the problem that requires finding a comprehensive solution. Of course, in this context, it is crucial to note that a set of multi-dimensional food security concerns are not only associated with a handful of countries, but with all members of international community (FAO *et al.* 2020). Food security is commonly defined as a four-dimensional framework: availability of food in sufficient quantity, access to adequate food resources, utilisation of food through adequate diet, and consistent access to food at all times (FAO 1996). According to Adan *et al.* (2019), there is conceptual support from the academic side that the issue of food security is clearly characterised by a distinct link between good physical and mental well-being and our diet, and, in recent years, academic scholarship on the subject has increased in both volume and quality, continuously

drawing attention to the goal of ensuring food security for all people. However, until the problem genuinely becomes a major concern for all, the process is arguably characterised by a significant degree of localisation, representing an array of policies being implemented by different governments separately from each other.

This research work's country-in-focus, the Republic of India (further India), a sub-continental giant of geo-strategic significance, represents one of the largest nations that suffers from food insecurity. In principle, the theme does not resemble a new sub-field of scholars. Many academics have previously made notable attempts to tackle the issue from various perspectives. For example, Pillay and Kumar (2019) focused on India's general food (in)security. Isnarti (2020), and Fiedler and Yadav (2017), in turn, focused on food insecurity at the household level. Kumar and Sharma (2013) dedicated their research to the correlation between climate change and food insecurity. Finally, Mahadevan and Suardi (2013) investigated food insecurity through the inequalities caused by the caste system. Despite this extensive research on the issue, there is a lack of conceptual scholarly work on Indian politics in the context of detecting any possible connection between the operationalisation of the Government's policy (it exists) on eradicating food insecurity, a specific theoretical take (if it exists) chosen by India to establish an effective framework for the policy's implementation, and on the outcome as being accentuated through the prism of the policy's longevity within a certain period (it can easily be seen, for example within a decade-long time-frame).

Although the number of undernourished people is still significant, it has been steadily decreasing since the mid-2000s (FAO, Number of people...). This objectively measurable success has raised the question of how a country of 1.4 billion people (World Bank, Population, total – India), despite having numerous multi-level gargantuan challenges, has managed to reduce food insecurity, and progress toward the theme-associate goal at such a rapid and relatively steady pace.

On the governmental level, the process of resolving an issue is always directly interlinked with the implementation of agenda-setting. According to Princen (2011) there are two challenges, that must be addressed by the policymakers in order to effectively respond to an issue: “how to gain attention” and “how to build credibility”. According to the challenges, there are exclusive strategies to overcome them: “mobilising supporters”, “arousing interest”, “capacity building”, and “claiming authority” (Princen 2011, 931). This factor holds a lot of promise for the students of international relations seeking for measurability of a phenomenon under study. In order to establish analytical boundaries, this research concentrates on food security-related topics from 2009 to 2019. This time-

frame was justifiably chosen because it represents the most recent data-providing cluster that has not yet been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 or the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2022, both of which have added significant uncertainty to any data-gathering process (Sj, Babu 2022).

The first objective of this research is to determine whether the policies implemented by the Government of India during the decade from 2009 to 2019 fall under the agenda-setting approach. The research presented in this paper will be framed by an extrapolation of Sebastiaan Princen's seminal work on challenges in the agenda-setting process in policy-making (Princen 2011), as well as the sets of strategies for overcoming these challenges. Princen's study provides a platform to investigate the Government of India's process of solving food insecurity by overcoming two challenges: gaining attention by mobilising supporters to arouse interest and building credibility through capacity building to claim authority. The second objective is to see if the agenda-setting approach has helped improve food security in India. To achieve these objectives, the following research questions were raised: 1. How does Princen's agenda-setting theory fit into India's domestic policy-making for achieving food security?; 2. How did the food security-related *status quo* in India change as a result of agenda-setting strategies implemented between 2009 and 2019?

Methodology wise, this paper employs a qualitative method – an instrumental case study – to analyse in depth whether the agenda-setting approach played a role in India's policy-making and thus affected food security between 2009 and 2019. The instrumental case study was chosen because it provides insight into a specific issue – overcoming food insecurity in India – while also facilitating understanding of something else (Stake 1995, 137) – whether setting the agenda the “right” way helps in tackling such a serious problem as food insecurity. The framework of this paper's analysis is Princen's (2011) agenda-setting approach. To limit the scope of the study, for each of the two challenges, five examples of food security-related policies from 2009 to 2019 are examined. These five examples were picked at random based on how they occurred during the research material collection process. For a better understanding of agenda-setting strategies, the examples are presented in a logical order. Applying Princen's agenda-setting strategies to India's policy-making allows for the collection of measurable results.

The thesis is divided into three sections. The first chapter introduces the premises of the agenda-setting theory, previous research, and contextualises it with the thesis-associated topic. The second chapter focuses on food security in India from 2009 to 2019, using Princen's agenda-setting strategies as a framework. The third and final chapter discusses the findings.

1 AGENDA-SETTING AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Every country has its own set of issues that policymakers must address. In order to effectively tackle a problem an agenda must be established. A political agenda, according to Baumgartner (2015), is a set of various topics that are being debated and decided within a specific political system. That indicates that not every issue fits under the political agenda umbrella as not every issue is being discussed although it might be important. Agenda-setting is not limited to a specific political system nor a specific type of issue, rather, it can be used to address any topic in any system.

In this thesis, to determine whether India's food security-related policy-making from 2009 to 2019 fits within the agenda-setting framework and whether this can be attributed to food security improving, the characteristics of the theory as a difference-maker must be clarified. In this chapter, the research briefly explains the main notions of the agenda-setting theory, how it has been applied in various studies and how it is applicable to the current study. As this research follows Princen's agenda-setting framework, the main postulates of his theoretical take are explained.

1.1 Agenda-setting in research

Agenda-setting theory emerged in the 1970's after McCombs and Shaw (1972), conducted a study regarding the impact news media has on the public. They concluded that the more news media talks about a certain issue, the more the public perceives it as important. Although throughout the years agenda-setting has been studied in various literatures, the main idea has remained the same – for an issue to be considered important, it must be kept relevant and talked about. The reason agenda-setting is important in political science and policy studies is the understanding that for an issue to get solved, a policy to be adopted, the decision-makers need to talk about it. The decisions are affected by how issues are understood by both the policy-makers as well as the general public. Setting an agenda is not about the decisions that are taken, but rather about the issues that the decision-makers are devoting their time and attention to – only if issues are discussed can they be subject to decision-making. (Princen 2009, 1; Baumgartner, Mahoney 2008, 435)

Agenda-setting has been studied in the context of US domestic political systems since the 1960's, but in the rest of the political West the agenda-setting related studies are relatively recent and started to appear more often from the beginning of 2000's. Princen (2009) points out that one of the reasons agenda-setting has not been used in research in the context of international relations much is that the international relations literature has a hard time distinguishing between agenda-setting as a separate process and rather focuses on the whole of decision-making as one unified process. Studies also tend to focus on specific aspects of agenda-setting or on it as a part of a broader study. Objectively, Princen's studies fall under the umbrella of European Studies, with a particular emphasis on agenda-setting in the European Union (EU) (2007; 2010; Princen & Kerremans 2008). It can, however, be applied universally, or better put, extrapolated, to any entity or country because agenda-setting is the first and most important phase of any policy-making process (Princen 2009, 2).

One of Princen's (2010) studies was regarding the EU originated fisheries policy changes, combining agenda-setting strategies with punctuated equilibrium theory. He argues that the interaction of policy images and policy venues has pushed for a change in the fisheries' policies within the EU. As a result, there has been a rise in environmental policymakers and attention to environmental issues regarding fisheries that has led to changes in the overall policies and the institutional organisation around fisheries' issues. He tracks the changes of Common Fisheries Policy since the 1970's, how the venues have shifted, and how this has resulted in policy change. It was argued that since the end of the 1990's, policymakers who had not previously been active in the field had become increasingly interested in fisheries. This built a link between fisheries' issues and environmental policies.

Jenny Cisneros Örnberg (2009) employed agenda-setting in research regarding alcohol policy-making in the EU, with the main goal of analysing two alcohol-related initiatives. One of the initiatives focused on young people's alcohol consumption, and the other on developing a Community Alcohol Strategy. Örnberg argues whether the EU alcohol policy decisions are based on four strategies: priority, anchorage, lowest common denominator, and small steps. Although alcohol policy has traditionally been defined within national boundaries, increased European integration has meant that policymakers at the national level have had to take this into account when attempting to define and categorise alcohol and what is considered a problem, what causes problems, and what the best solutions on the EU level could be. Every member state's cultural and ideological differences have made it hard to develop a common policy within the EU boundaries. Örnberg analyses the data acquired from various documents and interviews with high-ranking civil

servants with expertise of the EU's alcohol policy processes. She indicates that three of the four strategies were followed: priority, anchorage, and lowest common denominator, while the fourth, small steps, was potentially linked to institutional processes.

Beyers and Kerremans (2007) researched on trade issues and media coverage by determining the role of interest groups in generating public attention. They pointed out that since trade policy has become a contentious policy area, it has begun to get more public attention, which is considered politically important. Since most of the knowledge comes to public via media, the attention starts to reflect on the political agenda. They concluded that trade issues are publicly still not very visible compared to the total number of policy issues. Larger countries are more concerned with trade issues and are more likely to handle valence issues. Furthermore, issue-entrepreneurs help increase public visibility. Beyers and Kerremans' paper showed the advantage of using an agenda-setting approach when studying supranational policy-making.

Fabio Gilardi *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of social media on political agenda-setting. Supervised machine learning classifiers were used to analyse a vast amount of data from newspaper articles and tweets posted from politicians' accounts in Switzerland. The objective was to look into the connections between three agendas: the agenda of conventional media, the agenda of political parties on social media, and the agenda of politicians on social media. The results revealed that all three agendas impact one another and are closely intertwined. Advocacy efforts, on the other hand, may limit or enable parties to promote their agendas.

Tariro Portia Tendengu's (2021) researched on agenda-setting theory application to COVID-19 associated lockdown policy in Southern African countries. He employed John Kingdon's (1995) agenda-setting theory that divides problems into three streams: policies, politics, and policy window, as well as Lippman's four Ps: power, perception, proximity, and potency. Tendengu claimed that COVID-19 pandemic resulted in hegemonic dominance by Southern African governments because certain political groupings are more dominant than others and hence have more influence. He concluded that when dealing with the COVID-19 challenge, policy makers and entrepreneurs proposed possible remedies already in the beginning. Several stakeholders, including interest groups, the government and civil society organisations, influenced the pandemic-driven policy outcomes.

Hung (2016), like Tendengu, used Kingdon's (1995) agenda-setting to research on the key factors that influenced the agenda-setting that ultimately led to Canada committing to foreign aid policy toward international food security. Recognising the link between hunger and retarded human

development the Canadian Minister of International Cooperation set offering assistance for increasing global food security as one of the priorities in Canada at the end of 2000s, during the global crisis. Canada committed to increasing its monetary support toward alleviating food insecurity through several programmes. Hung identified nine key factors that led to the change in foreign policy agenda in Canada.

Hung’s research is the most relevant to the current study, although it attempts to unravel the end result by reverse engineering a theory and getting back to the root cause of why the end result happened. The current study seeks to determine whether the outcome is the result of applying a theory. Based on the various policy-related research presented in this paper, it can evidently be argued that employing an agenda-setting approach while conducting issue-specific research helps frame the research and provides a clearer solution to a typically complex policy-related problem. Because Princen’s theoretical perspective on agenda-setting has not been used in food security-related research, the current study aims to fill this gap.

1.2 Princen’s main notions of agenda-setting

According to Princen (2011), for an issue to be solved, political actors must consider it. Setting an agenda is one of the methods to do this. Understanding agenda-setting allows us to gain a better understanding of a key element of policy processes as well as the functioning of a specific political system. (Princen 2011, 929-930)

Following is Princen’s table (Table 1) illustrating his agenda-setting approach based on the challenge, strategic venue, and strategic frame.

Table 1. Agenda-setting according to Princen

Challenge	Strategic venue	Strategic frame
gaining attention	mobilising supporters	arousing interest
building credibility	capacity building	claiming authority

Source: Agenda-setting Strategies in EU policy Processes, Sebastiaan Princen 2011, 931

Agenda-setting has two distinct challenges: attracting the “right” participants and establishing credibility by having the “right” participants engage in problem-solving. Each challenge has two

distinct methods for overcoming the problem, which are related to two unique factors: venues and frames. Venues are institutional domains, such as government departments. Consequently, to get the attention for a specific problem, it must be discussed in a specific venue that is connected to that topic and thus most responsive. Frames help arranging an issue in an appealing way in order to mobilise supporters. (Princen 2011, 929-930)

Firstly, to get the attention from the “right” members, the cause must be presented in a way that appeals to supporters while alienating those who oppose it. It is critical to engage with those institutional entities that are directly involved in the issue. Because policies are always multidimensional, an issue must be framed in a multidimensional manner, drawing attention to an issue from the supporters’ perspective. (Princen 2011, 930; Baumgartner & Mahoney 2008, 436) For example, for the Government of India to tackle food insecurity, the problem must be correctly defined by providing essential details and data to the relevant venues. This includes ministries and ministerial departments with authority over food insecurity related issues, such as the Department of Food and Public Distribution in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Ministry of Women and Child Development, among others.

Secondly, to develop credibility, adequate capacity needs to be established to tackle the issue from various angles. This means that there must be enough institutions who are legally competent and have expertise in the area. In addition, authority must be claimed by presenting a compelling justification for why the issue is handled by a particular institution. (Princen 2011, 930-931) For example, the Government of India should have enough ministries and ministerial departments to cover all aspects of food insecurity. To establish authority over the issue, international organisations such as the UN or WHO must not already be dealing with it on a local level; otherwise, the Government of India will lose its dominance.

This study is structured around Princen’s model of using specific agenda-setting strategies to overcome two distinct policy-making challenges. The biggest strength of his theory is that it helps create a structured discussion. As previously stated, Princen has employed agenda-setting primarily in the context of the EU policy-making to firstly understand the EU policy-making as a process, secondly, the process of European integration, and finally, normative discourse concerning the EU (Princen 2009, 3). Princen’s use of agenda-setting to understand the EU policy-making is applicable to the current study, as the purpose here is to understand India’s policy-making on food security and whether or not it has improved. The EU and India have similarities in that India is a federal state and the EU has federal governance tendencies (Ludwin 2021). While the EU is consisting of 27

independent nations, each with its own history, culture, and language, India is divided into 28 states and eight union territories, each with its own government and distinct characteristics. Each state and union territory can speculatively be regarded as a separate country (National Portal of India, States...). According to Census of India 2011 (Ministry of Home...2018, 4), there are 121 languages spoken in India, with nine of them closely following the borders of the states and union territories (Translators Without Borders, Language...). In keeping this in mind, Princen's agenda-setting theory is evidently applicable to the current study.

Although Princen's agenda-setting has considerable strengths, there are also some limitations. One of the key limitations is that his approach does not account the complexities of enforcing policies. In some cases, the policies may be in the agenda, but are dropped for various reasons, even if the agenda was properly set. In this thesis, the author focuses on the already implemented policies and does not seek to understand India's policymaking in depth. Secondly, as agenda-setting itself cannot be measured, the potential impact on the phenomena under study has been measured in this thesis.

To conclude the chapter, setting an agenda is essential for effectively resolving problems in a country. Previous research indicates that agenda-setting has been used in a variety of policy-related studies, but Princen's particular perspective has yet to be applied in the context of food security. Although Princen has used his theory primarily in the context of EU policy-making, the EU and India share many similarities that support the theory's applicability in the current study on Indian policy-making regarding food security.

2 FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA AS A PROCESS IN TIME

In this chapter, five randomly selected examples of India's food security-related domestic policies for both challenges and specific strategies to overcome these challenges are discussed using Princen's agenda-setting theory. The examples are also presented in tables at the end of each section to help better understand when specific food security-related policies were implemented, what the strategic venues and frames were, and who supported the cause.

India is an important actor from geo-strategic perspective, having been one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, UN, G77, G24, G20, and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). Apart from that, the politico-military environment around India is highly hostile for several reasons, and the country is dealing with a range of cross-societal problems, including the caste system that creates inequality by default (Human Rights Watch ...2021). India has come a long way since 1945 as one of the founding members of the FAO. At the time, India was a low-income food-deficient country. (FAO Representation in India 2011, 1) Currently, India is the largest country in South Asia, the second largest country in the world in terms of population, housing 1.4 billion people, and the seventh largest country in the world in terms of land area (Champakalakshmi 2022). According to a UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs report (2022, 5) India's population is expected to surpass China during 2023. 68% of the population are between the ages 15 and 64 (UNFPA, Population) and 189.2 million people are malnourished (IFBN 2022). This means that a significant amount of the population fuelling the country's rapid growth may be stifled by a lack of access to a basic requirement – food. Although population growth in India has decreased in recent decades (World Bank, Population growth...), concerns such as providing sufficient amount of nutritious food for the large population remain unresolved.

2.1 India responding to the challenge of gaining attention

Controlling participation, particularly the number of participants, is critical for a favourable issue outcome. The agenda must be presented in a way that includes supporters and excludes opposers. The venue in which the issue is taken up is equally as important since it determines the type of

participants. The more diverse the participants' background, the more diverse aspects of the issue will be explored. (Princen 2011, 929)

2.1.1 Mobilising supporters and arousing interest

According to Princen's (2011) perspective on agenda-setting, one of the strategies for gaining attention to the issue is mobilising supporters. It is accomplished by convincing the "right" supporters to devote their time and effort to the cause. To arouse the interest in supporters, the issue must be organised in an appealing manner. To do so, the issue can be linked to a larger moral purpose, such as human rights, or it can be more focused on the specifics of the issue. The latter takes longer to take impact since research of a particular type may be conducted, conferences and workshops organised to attract individuals who have authority over an issue. Based on their name, several ministries under the Government of India appear to be dealing with the issue of food insecurity in some form. Such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution etc. Although ministries can accomplish a lot on their own, there may be a need for assistance from international food security related organisations such as the World Food Programme, FAO, and various organisations in India, like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC-India), Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) and Akshaya Patra Foundation – all of which are very valuable supporters of the agenda and collectively have a larger number of resources and a larger impact.

An example of a more detail-focused strategy to arousing interest is the Human Rights Awareness Programme which began in 2009 in chosen 28 Indian districts, one in each state. The National Human Rights Commission implemented and carried out the programme in order to gain a thorough understanding of how human rights issues were handled on the ground level (Ministry of Home Affairs ...2009-10, 64). Its primary goal was to oversee the execution of the government's flagship programmes related to human rights issues, including food insecurity, through field visits to schools, hospitals, and police stations, among other places. Government schemes such as the Mid-day Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) and the National Rural Health Mission help raise public knowledge about human rights issues such as food security, education, health, and sanitation. (Ministry of Home Affairs ...2015-16, 79) The last update on the Programme was in the Ministry of Home Affairs' Annual Report 2016-17 (85) when 17 out of 28 districts had been visited.

On April 4th and 5th, 2012, Dhaka, Bangladesh, hosted the South Asia Regional Workshop on Human Rights, People Rights to Land and Food (Ministry of Home Affairs ...2012-13, 65). The workshop was organised by the National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh (NHRC-Bangladesh), Association of Land Reform and Development (ALRD), and Institute of Motivating Self Employment India (IMSE-India). The workshop's main subjects were land disputes and violation of human rights, land rights of women and marginalised people, right to food and human rights, and protection of agricultural land. It was emphasised that ensuring appropriate levels of nutritious food for its people is the State's responsibility. (NHRC-India 2022a)

On January 4th, 2013, NHRC-India organised a Right to Food Conference in New Delhi (Ministry of Home Affairs ...2012-13, 69). Participants included NHRC-India members, several academics, representatives of the civil society, and representatives from India's Central and State governments. The aim of the conference was to assess the current food security related schemes and the state of hunger in the country. The conference concluded with several agreements: the amount of food produced, stored and distributed for domestic purposes must be increased, in addition to grains it must include pulses, food oil, fresh food and animal-based food; safe drinking water must be available for everyone; Targeted Public Distribution System's (TPDS) leakages must be reviewed to ensure assistance for all those in need; the food distribution system in general needed reform; and the food distributed under the ICDS and Mid-day Meal Schemes must be nutritionally balanced. (NHRC-India 2022c)

Dhaka, Bangladesh, hosted the first South Asia Right to Food Conference in 2015, from May 30th to June 1st, attracting over 2000 delegates from several South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and beyond, such as Myanmar. Civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations were present alongside government representatives. Among the topics discussed were various aspects of sustainable development, investments and development related to food security and food sovereignty. Particular emphasis was placed on violations based on gender, caste, race, and other factors. By the end of the conference, several collective decisions had been made, such as countries and civil society working together to achieve regional food security and reach those in need, investing in agriculture and combating exploitation of small producers, and holding political leaders accountable for their words and actions regarding food insecurity in their respective countries. These decisions were summarised in the Dhaka Declaration. (FAO 2015)

On April 12th, 2019, an Open House Discussion on Right to Food and Nutrition was held in the National Human Rights Commission. The aim was to review the progress of the National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA) implementation and address any difficulties or shortcomings in the effective execution of the Act's key provisions. Aside from the Council's members, other high officials from various ministries and states, in addition to representatives of NGOs, civil society organisations and subject experts. A secretary from Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, secretary and director from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, secretary-cum-commissioner from Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of New Delhi, joint director from Department of Social Welfare, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi were among those present. (NHRC-India 2022b; Ministry of Home Affairs ...2019-20, 64)

Several positive and already well-working initiatives were noted throughout the presentations, including the ICDS, Mid-day Meal Scheme, and complete digitisation of beneficiary databases of ration cards under NFSA. Some of the other initiatives, such as reaching out to all poor people, had remained out of reach since the state governments had imposed a limit on the number of poor that could benefit from the NFSA. Another shortcoming was the insufficient quality of the food grains supplied under the Act, particularly under the maternity entitlement since the nutritional requirements were not met. (NHRC-India 2022b) The discussion concluded with several recommendations, such as distribution of millets and provision of culturally appropriate food through the TPDS, ICDS focuses on children under the age of three, NFSA Maternity Entitlements to all pregnant and lactating women, and ensuring food to extremely vulnerable segments of the population. (NHRC-India 2022b)

The following table (Table 2) summarises how the Government of India gained attention to the issue of food insecurity based on the five chosen examples from 2009 to 2019. The table is organised similarly to Princen's (Table 1) with strategic venues and strategic frames highlighted, as well as the supporters whose attention was gained.

Table 2. Indian government gaining attention to achieving food security

Year	Strategic venue	Strategic frame	Supporters
2009- ...	Ministry of Home Affairs	Human Rights Awareness Programme	India's State Governments, district authorities, schools, hospitals
2012	Central Government	The South Asia Regional Workshop on Human Rights, People Rights to Land and Food	NHRC-Bangladesh, NHRC-India, ALRD, IMSE-India
2013	Central Government	Right to Food Conference	India's Central and State Governments, NHRC-India, academics, civil society representatives
2015	Central Government	South Asia Right to Food Conference	Central Governments of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar, Bhutan, civil society representatives, NGOs' representatives, international organisations
2019	Central and State Governments	Open House Discussion on Right to Food and Nutrition	India's Council members, high officials from ministries and states, NGOs' representatives, civil society organisations, subject experts

Source: Author's table based on chapter 2.1

As can be seen from the table above, the Government of India was the primary strategic venue for gaining attention for the issue of food insecurity between 2009 and 2019. The strategic frames for gaining attention were national and international conferences on the right to food, short- and long-term humans rights programmes, and an open house discussion on the right to food. Many different national and international supporters, including members of both India's Central and State Governments, NGOs, civil society organisations, and the Central Governments of other South Asian countries supported the cause. Although the aim was to consider domestic policies, based on Princen's strategy for overcoming the challenge of drawing attention to the issue, some international collaboration was expected to emphasize the importance of cooperating in tackling food insecurity. Such cooperation occurred in 2012 at the South Asia Regional Workshop and in 2015 at the South Asia Right to Food Conference, both of which included government representatives from other South Asian countries.

2.2 India responding to the challenge of building credibility

According to Princen (2011) merely attracting attention is insufficient for policy-makers to take the issue seriously. As a result, policy-makers must be convinced that the chosen venue is the best one for dealing with the issue at hand. Choosing the best venue is dependent on several factors, including legal competence – is there a legal foundation for adopting certain policies. The appropriate legal foundation outlines which actions can be conducted without regard for competence. Another important factor is the availability of necessary skills and organisational capabilities. Finally, the arguments for why a specific venue is the best one to deal with the issue, or at least how it adds value, must be clearly stated, since other venues and organisations may be dealing with it as well.

2.2.1 Building capacity and claiming authority

Princen (2011) says that capacity building must synchronise legal competence, high-level expertise, and institutional capabilities, and it can take place both inside and outside of the institutions of the chosen venue by networking with different experts and stakeholders. To claim authority over an issue it can be linked to an already existing policy or finding common ground within the institutions. In India's example, multiple ministries deal with various aspects of food insecurity and their legislation might help to push toward a positive change. Because India is made up of many states and union territories, local governments also play an important role in the decision-making process and pushing the agenda up. Aside from that, certain international organisations, such as the WHO or World Food Programme (WFP), can be involved in problem-solving. In addition to initiating programmes and schemes, comprehensive reporting and progress tracking is equally as crucial.

One of the biggest achievements by the Government of India is the National Food Security Act (NFSA) which was implemented in 2013 by the Ministry of Law and Justice. Delhi was the first city to implement the act (Ministry of Home Affairs ...2013-14, 102), and by 2018 all 28 states and eight Union Territories had followed its lead. It was estimated that the Act would reach close to 2/3 of the country's population. State and Union Territory Governments were responsible for identifying beneficiaries under NFSA. A noteworthy principle of NFSA is that it has a life-cycle approach meaning that there are special provisions for specific age groups. NFSA combines the TPDS for food-insecure households, the Mid-day Meal Scheme aimed at children aged 6-14, and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). (National Food Security Portal 2022)

TPDS is considered to be the largest safety net programme in India, launched in 1997. Based on World Food Programme's data in 2014 the programme targeted nearly 800 million people. The Supreme Court considers TPDS a fundamental part of India's food security. The scheme is managed by both the Central and State Governments. The Central Government is responsible for procurement, packaging, transporting and distributing food grains with the help of the Food Corporation of India to the State Governments that then allocate necessary items to eligible families within the State. State Governments are also responsible for issuing ration cards and supervising the Fair Price Shops. (Ministry of Consumer Affairs ...2021)

ICDS was launched already in 1975 and is another flagship programme by the Government of India that is also supported by the World Bank. It is considered the largest programmes for early childhood care and development. The programme is aimed at both providing pre-school non-formal education and fighting malnutrition among children (Ministry of Women and Child Development 2022a). An example of a programme implemented under ICDS is the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), also known as Poshan Abhiyaan, that was announced by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2017 and began to be implemented in 2018. It is chaired by the Prime Minister. The Mission's goal is to monitor, supervise, and guide nutrition-related schemes across Ministries to eliminate stunting, undernutrition, iron deficiency, and low birth weight in new-borns. (Press Information Bureau 2017) It is directed towards children under the age of six, teenage girls between the ages of 11 and 14, pregnant women, and lactating mothers within a specific time frame. The programme distributed 7.5 kilograms of food grains and fortified oil per beneficiary each month in 2018. (Ministry of Home Affairs ...2018-19, 86; Ministry of Women and Child Development 2022)

One of India's flagship programmes aimed at achieving food security is its subsidised canteens. The canteens' management and financing methods, as well as their size and focus groups vary from state to state, but the main aim is the same: to feed the hungry. Although low-cost canteens have been around in India for decades, like the Kashtachi Bhakar in Pune opened in 1974, the subsidised canteens gained popularity after Tamil Nadu's Government opened the Amma Unavagam canteens in 2013 (Navya P K 2017). Under the food subsidisation scheme, municipal corporations offer subsidised local dishes at a low price. In 2019, there were 294 Amma Unavagam canteens throughout the state of Tamil Nadu, all of which served about 250 000 people per day. Each canteen was located on government land or buildings to lower the cost of the rent. State authorities offered free rice, pulses, and food oil through the public distribution programme for the Amma Canteens scheme. (Sarva *et al.* 2019)

In Bangalore and Chennai, the canteens were also opened in government buildings or on government land to reduce costs. The service provider in Bangalore was a private company and an NGO. The local administrative body in Bangalore reimbursed the private company monthly based on the number of issued food tokens. (Navya P K 2017) Another scheme that issued food tokens to the public in exchange for food was the Annapurna Bhojnalaya scheme. This scheme was launched by the Uttar Pradesh state government in 2017. The subsidised canteens under this scheme were opened in the most important sites of the cities, where local food was available at a low price, primarily meant for people like daily wage workers. (Shankar 2022)

In 2016 the State Government of Rajasthan launched the Annapurna Rasoi scheme. There were 80 mobile kitchens that catered to 12 cities around the state. The kitchens served breakfasts and local dishes. The Annapurna Akshaypatra Yojana scheme in Chandigarh, was similar to the scheme in Rajasthan. It was launched in January 2017 by the Indian Red Cross Society in Chandigarh with the assistance of the Union Territory Labour Department. Local dishes were offered by mobile food trucks under this initiative. The scheme was sponsored via voluntary donations from numerous organisations, including Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, and others, as well as Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. (Sarva *et al.* 2019)

In 2017 Karnataka's Government opened the Namma Canteen, the Indira Canteen and the Namma Appaji Canteen (Sarva *et al.* 2019). Due to astrological issues, the Appaji canteen was closed already in 2018 (Yacoob MD 2018). In addition, in 2017 the chief ministers of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh announced the Aahaar and Deendayal Rasoi Yojana schemes. The infrastructure for the canteens was built as a part of cities' infrastructure plans. (Sarva *et al.* 2019)

The National Institution of Transforming India (NITI Aayog), which was launched in early 2015 by the Government of India to replace the Planning Commission, covers the comprehensive reporting and progress tracking aspect of claiming authority. The institution serves as a knowledge centre for internal and external resources, as well as a collaborative platform that provides information and strategic expertise to all levels of government. The chairperson of NITI Aayog is the Prime Minister of India while the Governing Council is comprised of the Chief Ministers of all states and Union Territories. The aim of NITI Aayog is to serve as a development catalyst by expanding the scope of the Public Sector and the Government of India as they believe that states are equal partners in national development. NITI Aayog has published comprehensive annual reports on India's progress in a variety of areas since 2015. (NITI Aayog ...2014-15, 1-2) For example, it reports on the status

of the National Nutrition Mission’s implementation every six months, in addition to providing technical, research and policy support (Digit 2022).

In late 2019, FAO and NITI Aayog signed a Memorandum of Understanding to monitor and analyse food security and agricultural policies. The aim was to assess the impact of the Food Security Policy in Chhattisgarh and Bihar, as well as the impact of the Agricultural Marketing Policy in Haryana and Odisha. The analyses were meant to serve as a guide for targeted changes in food and agricultural policies. The project involves the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare’s Department of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution’s Department of Food and Public Distribution, together with the State Departments of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Bihar. (NITI Aayog 2022)

The Indian Food Sharing Alliance (IFSA) was formed in late 2017 by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The aim was to collaborate with various organisations, Food Recovery Agencies and NGOs to help solve India’s food waste and hunger crisis, as there is a significant amount of food loss and waste while approximately 196 million people are undernourished (Food Safety and Standards Authority in India 2022). The objectives were to reduce food waste throughout the supply chain by redistributing it to the needy, to raise awareness through awareness programmes for people to reduce their food waste, to facilitate surplus food distribution, to educate food businesses to prevent food loss, and to support food loss and waste reduction initiatives through strategic policy, regulatory and programme support. (IFSA 2022)

The following table (Table 3) concludes how the Government of India built credibility in dealing with the issue of food insecurity based on the five chosen examples from 2009 to 2019. The table is organised similarly to Princen’s (Table 1) by highlighting strategic venues and strategic frames.

Table 3. Indian government building credibility to achieve food security

Year	Strategic venue	Strategic frame
2013	Ministry of Law and Justice	NFSA 2013
2015	Central Government	NITI Aayog
2017	Ministry of Women and Child Development	NNM
2013- ...	Central and State Governments	Government funded canteens
2017	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	IFSA

Source: Author’s table based on chapter 2.2

According to the table above, the primary strategic venues for building credibility were India's Central and State Governments as well as ministries within the Central Government. Depending on their expertise and capabilities, each institution claimed authority over a specific aspect of the food insecurity issue. The adopted policies were all vastly distinctive, but they all had a long-term impact as every policy is still in effect today.

In conclusion, for gaining attention between 2009 and 2019, the Government of India served as the strategic venue for all strategic frames. This included the Human Rights Awareness Programme starting from 2009, the South Asia Regional Workshop on Human Rights, People Rights to Land and Food in 2012, the Right to Food Conference in 2013, the South Asia Right to Food Conference in 2015 and the Open House Discussion on Right to Food and Nutrition in 2019. The main supporters that the Indian government gained from the strategic venues were State Governments as well as the Central Governments of the other South Asian countries, civil society, and NGOs.

With the purpose of gaining attention, the Government's initiatives were mostly one-time events that addressed the same issue from various perspectives. Because the potential supporters were diverse, both national and international, the issue needed to be framed appropriately in order to appeal to all of them. Rather than resolving the issue immediately, different experts and stakeholders networked and discussed the common issue from various perspectives, which potentially contributed to the next challenge – building credibility.

In an effort to build credibility between 2009 and 2019, the Government of India and its various ministries, depending on the frame, served as strategic venues. This included adopting the NFSA in 2013 combining three important food security-related programmes to reach different age groups of food insecure people, establishing NITI Aayog in 2015 to cover comprehensive reporting, and National Nutrition Mission in 2017 to cover lactating mothers and new-borns in particular, opening many government-subsidised canteens commencing in 2013 to make local food affordable and accessible, and launching the IFSA programme in 2017 to reduce and avoid food waste.

Building credibility was clearly intended to have a long-term impact on as large a segment of the population as possible, as all of the policies and initiatives that were implemented continue to stay on the government's agenda today.

3 AGENDA SETTING AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

In this chapter, a more detailed analysis is conducted to see how Princen's agenda-setting theory fits into India's domestic food security-related policy-making between 2009 and 2019, as well as how the country's food security changed during this time. The emphasis has been on two major challenges that must be overcome for policy-makers to pick up and prioritise the issue in their agenda: drawing attention to it and building credibility to deal with it. The study showcased how the Government of India mobilised supporters and aroused the interest of potential supporters, as well as how they built capacity to tackle food insecurity and claimed authority over it.

Princen highlighted that to arouse interest and mobilise supporters, an issue could be approached from a human rights perspective, as supporting the cause would then be seen as morally right. In India's case, it is evident that gaining attention to food security was approached primarily from a human rights perspective during the chosen time period. Two of the five events had "human rights" in their titles, while the other three had "right to food" in their titles. Topics that were discussed in the international workshop in 2012 and the international conference in 2015, included not only food security, but also other important human rights issues such as gender, caste and race equality, right to land, and even sustainable development, which ultimately have an impact on food security. According to this, it is evident that the aim was to emphasise that access to adequate amounts of nutritious food is a fundamental human right.

Various ministries and ministry departments from the Indian government including State Governments and NHRC-India, collaborated closely on each initiative to attract the "right" supporters. In some cases, the "right" supporters were other ministry departments that were directly involved in resolving the issue. As Princen pointed out, engaging with institutions like this, is critical to drawing attention to the issue. This demonstrates that food security is not solely the responsibility of a single institution, but that potentially the entire government must collaborate to address the country's complex aspects of food insecurity. This specific point was stated in the South Asia Regional Workshop in 2012, when participants agreed that the state should provide its people with enough nutritious food.

The Central Governments of several other South Asian countries participated in the workshop in 2012 and the international conference in 2015, both held in Bangladesh, emphasising that food security is a complex issue that necessitates cross-national collaboration. Although the conference resulted in the Dhaka Declaration, it was not available for analysis on the official website at the time of writing this thesis. Because South Asian countries, particularly India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, are the most densely populated countries in the world (Population Reference Bureau, Population mid-2022...), and have the highest number of undernourished and food insecure people (FAO *et al.* 2022), a collaborative approach to overcome the issue may accelerate positive change.

For some context we can consider the three-year average of malnutrition in these three most populous South Asian countries. The undernourished population in Bangladesh was relatively stable from the early 2000s until the mid-2000s, when it increased rapidly, possibly due to the political tensions in the country (Mastoor 2009). The number has been declining since early 2010s, with the country reaching a low of 11.5% (18.5 million people) between 2017 and 2019 (FAO, Bangladesh: Prevalence of...; FAO, Bangladesh: Number of...). The prevalence of undernutrition in Pakistan began to decline in the beginning of 2000s, reaching 12.3% (26 million people) between 2017 and 2019. (FAO, Pakistan: Prevalence of...; FAO, Pakistan: Number of...). The proportion of undernourished people in India began rapidly declining in the mid-2000s, reaching 13.3% (180.2 million) between 2017 and 2019 (FAO, India: Prevalence of...; FAO, India: Number of...). This data proves that the number of undernourished people is very concerning in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India.

When looking at the topics that were discussed during the process of drawing attention to the food insecurity issue, it is clear that the majority of initiatives were aimed not only at politicians to devote their time and attention to the cause, but also at common citizens to show them what they can do to contribute to solving it. For example, the Human Rights Awareness programme, which began in 2009, has included visits to hospitals, schools, and police stations overseeing the execution of programmes that, among other things, help raise public knowledge on the topic of food security. To discuss food insecurity at the grassroots level, civil society representatives and NGO representatives attended the Right to Food Conference in 2013, the South Asia Right to Food Conference in 2015, and the Right to Food Open House Discussion in 2019. Members of civil society and NGOs may have had valuable connections with different organisations and significant input on the subject that helped in the further formulation of government policies. Princen underlined that policies are multidimensional by default and therefore the issue has to be

approached multidimensionally and from the perspective of the supporters. This is demonstrated by India's approach to gaining supporters' attention.

While building credibility between 2009 and 2019, the Government of India took significant steps to claim its authority over solving food insecurity in the country and ensure the long-term effects. It is worth noting that all of the implemented policies and programmes are still in effect. Different ministries claimed authority over specific policies based on their skills and organisational capabilities. This demonstrated that despite tackling the issue from different angles, all ministries share a common ground and goal: achieving food security. According to Princen, this is the most important approach when attempting to build credibility. Furthermore, the fact that different ministries are dealing with the issue confirms the multifaceted approach to solving the issue once more.

The adoption of the NFSA in 2013 was an important milestone for India. With the adoption of the Act, the Government, Ministry of Law and Justice at the forefront, took responsibility for solving the food insecurity by ensuring that all beneficiaries under the Act would receive appropriate assistance. Because the Act takes a life-cycle approach, covering all age groups, it combines TPDS, which is regarded as the most important general support for poor households, the Mid-day Meal programme for young children, and the ICDS scheme, where support varies depending on the specific scheme. The National Nutrition Mission that is under the authority of the Ministry of Women and Child Development is one of the more well-known ICDS programmes that provides benefits to both pregnant and lactating women, as well as children aged new-born to six years.

Although it appears that the NFSA would cover everyone who needed support, some questions arise, such as how long this Act would be viable considering the global rise in grain and other food items' prices that we are all experiencing today (FAO 2022). The point raised in the 2019 Open House Discussion about foods distributed under the Act failing to meet nutritional requirements, particularly under the maternity benefit scheme, could have been connected to the continuous food price increase. In addition to that, farmers who produce the grains are missing out on the fair price that an open market would offer because the prices are forced down by the government subsidising them. Furthermore, it was also mentioned in the Open House Discussion that reaching all beneficiaries remained a challenge because the states had set a cap on the number of people that could benefit from the Act. As India's population grows, albeit at a slower rate than a few decades ago, so might the number of potential beneficiaries. This raises the question of how the Indian government obtains sufficient funds to cover the costs of implementing the programmes under the

Act. Even though the Act had been in effect for nearly six years at the time of the Open House Discussion, it had still not reached all those in need.

Another large-scale initiative was the establishment of government-subsidised canteens. Although this was not a completely new initiative, opening government-funded canteens became popular after the Tamil Nadu government opened Amma Canteens in 2013. Given the large number of undernourished people in India, both the Central and State Governments are likely to have expended significant resources, including time and money, but also government-owned land and buildings, to establishing the canteens. It is also worth noting that the canteens serve local and culturally appropriate dishes rather than of a unified menu, demonstrating that the canteens' goal is to accommodate and make people feel included in the community in addition to feeding them at a low cost. Because the government has been so supportive of the canteen initiative, it can be regarded as the ultimate credibility ramp up.

Although the main aim of the subsidised canteens was to provide people with affordable food, the initiative has several other advantages. For example, it has provided jobs for local women, a place to socialise (Khera 2017), and even an opportunity to promote alternative energy production, such as the use of solar panels in some Amma Unavagam canteens in Coimbatore (Staff Reporter 2013).

However, considering the continued large number of undernourished people it must be acknowledged that the subsidised food may not be available to all those in need, as the initiative appears to be suited more toward the urban poor. Indira canteens in Bangalore, for example, serve only one percent of the city's population, but the homeless population is much higher (Navya P K 2017, Doval 2017). Even so, the amount of food that can be prepared during a day, as well as the available space for people to eat in, may be limited. Given the size of Indian cities, distance to the nearest canteens may be too far for some people, despite the fact that there appear to be many canteens throughout the states. In Tamil Nadu alone, for example, there were a total of 294 subsidised canteens in 2019 (Sarva *et al.* 2019). Even though the food in canteens is heavily subsidised, some people may still be unable to afford it. It should be noted that the price of raw materials generally rises faster than people's incomes over time, and fixed prices have a limited impact. This once again raises the concern of how the Indian government intends to continue supporting the canteens.

The IFSA initiative, launched in 2017, was a significant step toward addressing food insecurity by redistributing food that would otherwise be wasted to those in need. The initiative was intended to have a long-term positive impact as one of its goals was to educate common citizens as well as

food-handling businesses on how to manage their surplus, reduce food waste and prevent it altogether. Given that we live in a globalised world, food waste is undoubtedly a major issue to tackle in any country and supply chain (UN 2021). India is making good progress with similar initiatives.

The initiatives for gaining attention were mostly one-time events that would lead to building credibility, while building credibility itself was reflected in long-term policies. We can compare numerical data that ultimately shows food insecurity in India from various perspectives, such as the number of undernourished people, India’s Food Security Index, and Global Hunger Index, with the policies implemented in the chosen time frame to see if there is a correlation. The expectation is that the food security improves.

The table (Table 4) below depicts the prevalence of undernutrition in India over three-year periods between 2009 and 2019. Because malnutrition is directly related to food insecurity, it is one of the best indicators to investigate.

Table 4. Three year average of undernourished people in India

Three-year period	Three-year period prevalence of people (%)
2009-2011	15.9
2010-2012	15.4
2011-2013	14.9
2012-2014	14.9
2013-2015	14.8
2014-2016	14.5
2015-2017	13.9
2016-2018	13.2
2017-2019	13.3

Source: FAO, India: Prevalence of ...

Between 2009 and 2011, the undernourishment in India’s total population was 15.9%. This was also the highest percentage during the time period under study. Following the first three-year period, the prevalence steadily decreased, reaching the lowest level of 13.2% between 2016 and 2018. There appears to be a correlation between the long-term credibility-building initiatives and the number of undernourished people in India. All of the credibility building initiatives mentioned in this paper

were implemented in 2013 and afterwards, and we can see that the prevalence of undernourished people in India decreased steadily from 2013 to 2019.

Another good statistical indicator that illustrates India’s food security is the Global Hunger Index (GHI) presented in Table 5. GHI was developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute in 2006 (Wiesmann *et al.* 2006). It is a tool for measuring hunger on a global, regional, and national level. GHI scores are calculated using four components: undernourishment (a part of the population that is undernourished), child wasting (the proportion of children under the age of five who have low weight-to-height ratio, indicating acute undernutrition), child stunting (the proportion of children under the age of five who have a low height for their age, indicating chronic undernutrition), and child mortality (mortality rate of children under the age of five). The GHI is presented on a 100-point scale based on those four indicators, with 100 being the worst possible score and zero being the highest possible score. A score of less than 9.9 is regarded low, a score of 10-19.9 is considered moderate, a score of 20.0-34.9 is considered serious, a score of 35.0-49.9 is considered alarming, and a score of 50 and higher is regarded as extremely alarming. (Concern Worldwide & Welthungerhilfe 2022a)

Table 5. India’s Hunger Index and Rank Among Other Countries 2009-2019

Report year	Rank	Hunger Index
2009	65	23.9
2010	67	32/*32.2/*24.1
2011	67	23.7
2012	65	29.3/*22.9
2013	63	21.3
2014	55	17.8
2015	80	29
2016	97	28.5
2017	100	31.4
2018	103	31.1
2019	102	30.3

Source: Concern Worldwide & Welthungerhilfe 2022b

Notes: An asterisk before the Hunger Index marks that there are some inconsistencies in the data reported in the Global Hunger Index’s annual numbers. This might be due to reporting discrepancies in India.

As can be seen from the table above, India’s position among other countries improved until 2014, when it reached the lowest Hunger Index and “moderate” category. From 2009 to 2013 India’s Hunger Index was classified as “serious”, but it remained relatively stable. From 2015 to 2019, the Hunger Index gradually increased and returned to the “serious” category. Adapting long-term initiatives, especially those that were aimed at children like the NFSA and National Nutrition Mission, and India’s Hunger Index do not appear to correlate in this case, as India’s Hunger Index was increasing over the period under study. The reasons for this might not be related to the adopted policies, but to other things like economy and climate.

The Global Food Security Index (GFSI) is another indicator that shows how India’s food security has changed over time. GFSI has been calculated and reported yearly by the Economist Intelligence Unit since 2012. It is based on 28 indicators and includes factors such as the affordability, availability, and safety of food, as well as sustainability and adaptability. The affordability factor considers the population’s capacity to pay for food both under normal circumstances as well as during food-related shocks. The availability factor considers factors that influence easy access to food and its supply. The quality and safety factors explore to nutritional quality of average diets and the environment of food safety. The aim is to establish which nations are the most and least vulnerable to food insecurity. (Izraelov & Silber 2019, 1137) India’s ranking among 113 countries based on the GFSI from 2012 to 2019 is presented in the table below (Table 6).

Table 6. India’s Food Security Index 2009-2019

Report year	Ranking	Food Security Index
2012	66	45.0
2013	70	44.4
2014	69	48.3
2015	68	50.9
2016	75	49.4
2017	74	48.9
2018	76	50.1
2019	72	58.9

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2022

According to the table, we can see that food insecurity in India was the lowest in 2013 and the highest in 2019. From 2014 to 2018, it remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 48 and 50 points. Once again, there does not appear to be a correlation between the policy initiatives and India's Food Security Index as India has become more food insecure during the time period under study.

Unfortunately, the results in Tables 4, 5 and 6 cannot be adequately compared since every result was measured differently and consisted of various datapoints to calculate the score. Furthermore, the data on undernourished people was reported as a three-year average, whereas the GHI and GFSI reflected yearly fluctuation. Table 5 also brings out one of the biggest limitations of this research – some numeric data varies depending on where the data was obtained therefore making it unreliable. It can also vary from year to year within the same report.

Although Princen's agenda-setting strategies fit into the Government of India's approach to improve food security setting an agenda does not seem to have improved the situation a lot. It appears that the attention gaining challenge was a necessary step before the credibility building challenge. Gaining attention did not have as much impact as it included more one-time events, while building credibility had more long-term challenges tackled. Aside from improving food security, several of the initiatives had other positive side effects.

Setting up an agenda the right way can potentially help overcome one of the biggest human rights issues, but it will take time. In India's example during the decade from 2009 to 2019 the state of food insecurity improved only slightly although based on this research there were right steps taken toward that. Solving food insecurity requires consideration of many factors other than government policies, such as the climate, the state of national and global economy, military conflicts, and force majeure events. This conclusion is also mentioned in the Census of India's Projections for the years 2011 to 2036 (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 2019, 2).

Because the scope of this research was limited, the author suggests conducting larger-scale, longer-term research on agenda-setting and policy-making in India. In this research, five examples were chosen at random for each challenge, but the number of examples could be increased. For instance, consider going month by month, year by year. Going more in depth within the chosen time frame would lead to a more comprehensive result and understanding of how agenda-setting has impacted

food security in India. And possibly uncover underlying issues affecting food security that are unrelated to policy-making.

Although Princen's agenda-setting approach that he used in the context of the EU can be applied to research on India, as the two share several similarities, it should be noted that there is a significant difference in population size that was not addressed in this thesis. It remains to be determined whether or not this has an impact on policy outcomes.

CONCLUSION

India has always been a significant political actor as a founding member of several international organisations and a geo-strategically important state, despite its struggle to ensure food security for its people. Even though the population growth has slowed down, and the number of food insecure people has been steadily decreasing for the past two decades, the state of food insecurity is still considerably high. The purpose of this thesis was to determine whether the domestic policies implemented by the Indian Government between 2009 and 2019 fell under agenda-setting approach and whether they helped improve food security in the country. For solving any issue in any political system, the policymakers must include it in their political agenda. The characterisation of agenda-setting by Princen and overcoming its two challenges by implementing corresponding strategies were used for analysis.

The first research question was: “How does Princen’s agenda-setting theory fit into India’s domestic policy-making for achieving food security?”. To answer this question, Princen’s theory was applied to the Indian government policies. Five randomly selected policy examples from 2009 to 2019 were used to demonstrate how the government overcame each challenge by employing a specific set of strategies: gaining attention by mobilising and arousing interest in potential supporters of the cause and building credibility by establishing adequate capacity and claiming authority over the issue. Various conferences and workshops were held to gain attention to food security issues both on a national and regional scale by collaborating with other South Asian countries. Especially Pakistan and Bangladesh. Collaboration is required as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have the world’s highest number of malnourished people. The conferences and workshops emphasised the importance of solving food insecurity in order to ensure one of the most fundamental human rights.

Building credibility required both legislative changes and the implementation of programmes that changed the previously established approach to food security. Some of the most impactful changes were the implementation of the NFSA, which takes a lifecycle approach and therefore covers all age groups of food insecure people, the opening of numerous government-subsidised canteens, and the

IFSA that focuses on reducing food waste and distributing the surplus to those in need. Gaining attention appeared to be an important and necessary step before building credibility.

The second research question was: “How did the food security-related *status quo* in India change as a result of agenda-setting strategies implemented between 2009 and 2019?”. The qualitative research method used in this research helped in analysing the impact of Princen’s agenda-setting on India’s food security. Based on the analysis it can be concluded that the Government of India improved the state of food security slightly during the period under review by implementing the agenda-setting approach.

As food security is the goal of any country, particularly those suffering from severe food insecurity, this research confirms that setting the agenda in the “right” way can help a country overcome important issues. What must be remembered is that food security is a complex problem by definition, and thus improving it is equally complex and multifaceted. In many cases international dialogue and cooperation in raising awareness to the issue might be needed to get more support. The solution to food insecurity is dependent on several other factors besides government policies, such as the global economy, military conflicts and other unforeseeable events, but it can be improved as long as the policies consider the surrounding velocity.

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