



ASIA/YEMEN - Humanitarian Disaster: One child out of 3 is malnourished, hospitals are overcrowded or closed, access to water is difficult

Sa'dah (Agenzia Fides) - Yemen is on the verge of a real and serious humanitarian disaster. In some areas of the country vaccination for children has decreased by 40%, fueling the rapid spread of polio and measles epidemics in addition to the growing collapse of public services. The warning comes from UNICEF officials in Yemen. Every day hundreds of thousands of people face food insecurity. The situation is tragic, even according to the World Food Programme (WFP) which has defined the country 'chronically underdeveloped'. Yemen is the second country with the highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world, after Afghanistan, and about half the population lives in a state of deep poverty. More than half of the children under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition. According to UNICEF, the preliminary results from a study conducted in the month of September in the Governorate of Abyan, which since last May 28 is a battlefield between government troops and Islamic militants, there is an estimated global acute malnutrition rate (GAM) of 18.6%, a figure that exceeds the threshold of a state of emergency, of which 3.9% are cases of acute malnutrition and 14.7% are moderate cases. Even in Sa'dah high rates of malnutrition continue and children are the most vulnerable victims. The conflicts, poverty, drought, rising food prices and the collapse of state services continue to cause serious problems for the survival of millions of people, including 100 000 displaced due to recent fighting in the south, thousands of refugees from the Horn of Africa, and 300 000 displaced people from previous conflicts in the north. In some parts of the country 1 child out of 3 is malnourished, hospitals and clinics are overcrowded or closed, and access to clean water becomes increasingly difficult. Tens of thousands of children have stopped going to school because schools have been closed. Both the WFP and UNICEF believe that the way for the resumption of this war-torn population will be very slow and difficult. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 26/10/2011)