



ASIA/YEMEN - Thousands of people at risk of hunger and health for the blocking of humanitarian aid, children, as always are the most vulnerable

Sana'a (Agenzia Fides) - Thousands of people in a stage of seige of armed rebel troops in northern Yemen are in urgent need of food and health care. According to humanitarian sources involved on the premises, there have been many victims and wounded so far. Four children have died of hunger since the gunmen belonging to the Houthi group denied access to humanitarian aid in the village of Dammaj over a month ago. Dammaj, 9 km southeast of Sa'ada City, capital of the governorate of Sa'ada, has about 12 thousand people. The area is controlled by the rebels but is home to an institute for Islamic Salafists, who are at the center of the conflict. If no access to humanitarian organizations continues, there will be a high-risk for food, water and medical supplies, so another 200 children could die.

According to the local NGO Seyaj Organization for Childhood Protection (SOCP), the situation of children is becoming increasingly serious. The health centers have become inaccessible, all roads are blocked or unsafe. For this reason, many women are forced to give birth at home without any assistance and often die during childbirth, along with their children. SOCP recently launched a humanitarian appeal for the life of about 3 000 children in Dammaj. A team in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was able to reach the area and provide immediate aid, distributing 500 rations of food, wheat, rice, beans, sugar, salt and cooking oil. ICRC also provided medical kits, drugs, solutions for intravenous, antibiotics and analgesics. In addition, many people have been transported to hospitals for treatment. In view of the cold season, the organization has also made available 1000 blankets, soap and diapers to improve the hygienic conditions. The sectarian tensions between Shiites Houthi and Salafist students have been around for years, everyone tries to spread their ideology in the area. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 17/12/2011)