



AFRICA/MADAGASCAR - Chronic malnutrition is a silent crisis: one of the most severe problems in the country

Antananarivo (Agenzia Fides) - Madagascar is one of the six countries where there is the highest rate of undernourishment in the world. Half of all children in the country under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, and to diversify their diet is a key element of the National Community Nutrition Program initiated in 6 000 centers across the African insular region. Chronic malnutrition, in fact, depends not only from access to food but also due to their variety. The villagers are accustomed to eating rice, but one must learn to vary the diet and that of their children according to local products. The objective of the program is to demonstrate how to prepare food and especially how to preserve food.

The nutritional center of Rantolava, 450 km from the capital, reserved a space for the cultivation of various vegetables such as zucchini, tomatoes, cabbage, moringas, sweet potatoes, green beans and Chinese cabbage. Unlike severe malnutrition, which is manifested by a drastic drop in weight, the effects of the chronic disease are less evident and is more subtle, slowing down growth. Parents often do not realize how much their children are suffering, compared to normal children they are more fragile and more vulnerable to diseases such as diarrhea or malaria. Even cognitive development is limited and does not have good educational results. However, the diversification of childhood diets itself is not the solution to the problem in Madagascar. According to UNICEF, it is equally important to improve access to clean water, sanitation and health care, and reduce early marriages and improve the nutrition of adolescents and women, particularly pregnant and during breastfeeding . (AP) (Agenzia Fides 18/7/2012)