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AFRICA - A million severely malnourished children in Sahel

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - A million severely malnourished children are waiting to receive care in Sahel. According to the latest figures released by UNICEF, it is the highest number in the history of humanitarian aid. This year, for the first time, all Countries of Sahel most affected by the phenomenon, along with international humanitarian organizations, developed a prevention plan emergency response already at the end of 2011, which includes treatment for approximately one million severely malnourished children and the distribution of food to prevent malnutrition, including milk-based products designed specifically to meet their nutritional needs. The annual peak began, exacerbated in some parts of the region because of higher market prices, due to epidemics and political instability. Moreover, a particularly heavy rainy season in southern Niger and parts of eastern Chad, anticipated the expected seasonal peak of malaria, which, together with malnutrition, is a deadly combination for children. Over the last 6 months, about 56 000 children were admitted to the medical humanitarian organization nutritional programs Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in seven Countries of the region, more than 36 000 of these live in Niger. MSF currently operates 21 nutrition programs in Sahel, nine of which were opened this year in response to urgent needs in Chad, Mali, Senegal and Mauritania. The team are also working in the north of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania to assist people displaced by the conflict in Mali. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 19/7/2012)

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