



AFRICA/MADAGASCAR - Fighting malnutrition among children under 5 years of age suffering from rickets

Antananarivo (Agenzia Fides) - In Madagascar, about half of the children under 5 years of age are rickety because of the irreversible effects of malnutrition that affect them during the first thousand days of life. These children are exposed to a higher risk of contracting illnesses and have a compromised cognitive development, as well as premature death. The African country is the sixth which has the highest rate of rickets in the world, poverty is the main cause of it. According to the estimates by the Southern Africa Regional Food Security Update 2012, 80% of the 20 million inhabitants of Madagascar live on a dollar a day or less, and poor households spend nearly three-quarters of their income on food. Another contributing factor to rickets on the island is made by high rates of infections during pregnancy and childhood. Poor nutrition means that girls do not reach full physical development at least until the age of 21, the age when many of them are already mothers. Approximately 39% of malagasy women are a meter and a half and are more likely to give birth to underweight children. In the capital, Antananarivo, the preference of the population to eat rice flakes preclude a varied diet and therefore has a negative impact on nutrition. At a national level, in 6000 centers a nutrition program with the aim of improving the health food industry has been launched. The centers offer nutritional proposals and cooking classes, to encourage the consumption of a wide variety of locally nutritious foods. Also, here children under 5 years of age are monitored. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 21/09/2012)