

UN reveals half of Yemeni children under 5 face acute malnutrition



Sanaa, February 14 (RHC)-- Nearly 2.3 million children under the age of five are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition this year in war-torn Yemen, UN agencies have warned, as the United States steps up efforts to end six years of devastating war.

Of these, 400,000 are projected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition and could die if they do not receive urgent treatment. "These numbers are yet another cry for help from Yemen where each malnourished child also means a family struggling to survive," World Food Programme chief David Beasley said in a joint statement on Friday.

The number of Yemeni children in danger of death from lack of food has increased to 400,000, an increase of 22 percent over 2020. "More children will die with every day that passes without action, said

Henrietta Fore, head of the United Nations children's agency UNICEF.

"Humanitarian organisations need urgent predictable resources and unhindered access to communities on the ground to be able to save lives." The UN agencies warned that about 1.2 million pregnant or breastfeeding women are also expected to suffer from extreme malnutrition in 2021.

"Families in Yemen have been in the grip of conflict for too long, and more recent threats such as COVID-19 have only been adding to their relentless plight," said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu.

"Without security and stability across the country and improved access to farmers so that they are provided with the means to resume growing enough and nutritious food, Yemen's children and their families will continue to slip deeper into hunger and malnutrition."

Yemen is engulfed in a war that erupted in 2014 when Houthi rebels took control of the capital Sanaa and most of the country's north after overthrowing the internationally-backed government. Months later, a Saudi-led coalition launched a military offensive in support of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

After nearly six years of war, millions of Yemenis are on the brink of famine with the economy destroyed, schools and hospitals barely functioning, and tens of thousands killed.

Last week, US President Joe Biden's administration ended support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen and appointed Timothy Lenderking as the US envoy for Yemen.

On Thursday, Lenderking met Yemeni President Hadi in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, where the exiled Yemeni government is based.

According to the United Nations, more than three million people have been displaced and close to 80 percent of the 29-million population is in need of some form of aid for survival.

The UN says in 2020 it received only \$1.43bn of the \$3.2bn needed to fund aid projects in Yemen.

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