

18 May 2022 – Seven hundred thousand more children face hunger in Syria due to the country's continuously deteriorating economy, especially in northeast Syria. In the last 6 months, the total number of food-insecure children across the country has risen to more than 4.6 million. After more than 10 years of conflict and displacement, an unprecedented number of children in Syria are now battling soaring rates of malnutrition.

The World Health Organization and the Nutrition Sector continue to expand detection, as well as preventive and specialized inpatient nutrition services for children with acute malnutrition and ensure the availability of critical supplies.

Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. The term malnutrition covers two broad groups of conditions. One is 'undernutrition', which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals). Malnutrition affects people in every country. Worldwide, some 159 million children are stunted and 50 million are wasted. Many families cannot afford or do not have access to nutritious foods like fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, meat, and milk.

Over the past 11 years, northeast Syria has suffered enormously due to the ongoing crisis. The deterioration of health services, the economic crisis, and the decrease in purchasing power, coupled with the difficulty of accessing safe drinking-water have all led to an increase in malnutrition rates. As evidence shows, in 2022–2023 about 5.5 million people, including mothers and children aged 0–59 months in Syria will need direct nutrition assistance; half of them live in northeast Syria. Subsequent surveys have shown that the incidence of acute and chronic malnutrition is twice as much in northeast Syria as compared to the rest of the country.

WHO continues to confront the deteriorating nutritional situation in northeast Syria by providing a package of different nutritional service programmes. The main aim is to detect cases of malnutrition and ensure they get the appropriate management needed. WHO supports the management of malnutrition associated with complications in stabilization centres, in addition to fulfilling the need to prevent malnutrition through multiple programmes, such as infant and young child feeding counselling, as well as the Baby-Friendly Hospitals Initiative.

Addressing malnutrition is one of the key priorities for WHO in northeast Syria. The latest survey

that was conducted in 2019 indicates that the rates of acute and chronic malnutrition cases in northeast Syria exceeded those recorded in other regions across the country. WHO expanded nutrition services in northeast Syria in 2021 to reach a large number of health facilities operating in the 3 governorates. Despite the challenges and the shortage of health care providers, WHO has covered large parts of northeast Syria, including hard-to-reach areas. However, more needs to be done to prevent or treat acute and chronic malnutrition in Syria.

Related link

[Malnutrition in northeast Syria: the case for urgent action](#)

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