

## Cote d'Ivoire: “Alarming” malnutrition in north

In Côte d'Ivoire government health officials and aid agencies are launching emergency feeding and special nutritional training in the north to respond to what nutrition experts call “alarming” malnutrition levels.

DAKAR, 24 October 2008 (IRIN) - Nearly 18 percent of children in the north are acutely malnourished according to a July 2008 nutritional survey by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) conducted in collaboration with the national government nutrition programme.

The survey showed a global acute malnutrition rate of 17.5 percent among children from six months to five years old - up from 11.6 percent two years ago. Global acute malnutrition, or wasting, means children have low weight for their height because they lack required nutrients.

“This situation is really alarming,” Abdelhak Bendib, head of UNICEF's child survival section in Cote d'Ivoire, told IRIN on 23 October from Odienné, capital of the northwest region of Denguele, 850km from the commercial capital Abidjan. “This level is nearly double what is considered a nutritional emergency.”

Following the July survey, Médecins Sans Frontières-Belgium (MSF-B) did a study of children in eight villages in Denguele, finding that 23.9 percent of children aged six months to five years are acutely malnourished, MSF-B head of mission Nathalie Cartier told IRIN.

Côte d'Ivoire is emerging from years of conflict triggered when a 2002 rebellion split the country in two - the government-controlled south and rebel-held north. While humanitarian assistance has decreased as the conflict wanes, conditions like those in the north indicate that significant needs remain, nutrition experts told IRIN.

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