

One in Seven Somali Children Dies before 5, WHO Says



United Nations, March 8 (RHC-Xinhua) -- One out of seven Somali children dies before its fifth birthday, and acute malnutrition weakens the immune system, which makes affected children more susceptible to disease such as measles, a UN spokesman told reporters Tuesday.

Only about half of the Somali population, some 6.2 million people, has access to basic health services, and less than half of all pregnant women have access to assisted deliveries, Farhan Haq, the deputy UN spokesman, quoted the World Health Organization (WHO) as saying at a daily news briefing.

Food insecurity has been worsened by drought in Somalia, where famine killed around 260,000 people in 2011.

In Somalia, drought conditions are threatening an already fragile population battered by decades of conflict. Almost half the population are facing acute food insecurity and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Some 185,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition this year, and the figure may rise to 270,000 in the next few months, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in February.

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