

Thousands more underfed children may die due to Covid-19



A 2-year-old Yemeni boy suffering from malnutrition is weighed at a hospital in the northwestern Hajjah province. (AFP pic)

An extra 10,000 children per month may die this year (2020) from malnutrition due to the Covid-19 crisis, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) warned on Wednesday (October 14, 2020). Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a UN Food and Agriculture (FAO) conference that due to the pandemic he expected a 14% rise in cases of severe child malnutrition this year – or 6.7 million more people — mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

“We cannot accept a world where the rich have access to healthy diets while the poor are left behind... the rich can afford to stay home, the poor must go out to work,” he said.

After the economic devastation of the pandemic, governments must work with the private sector and civil society to support sustainable food systems and end subsidies for producers of unhealthy foods, the WHO Director-General added. Millions of lives could be saved if countries expanded childhood feeding programmes, reduced marketing of unhealthy foods and used fiscal policies to drive better food choices amongst consumers, he said.

“COVID has reminded us that life is fragile, health is precious, and healthy diets are not just for the wealthy, they’re a human right,” he said.

“The pandemic has caused serious disruptions to essential services, immunisation, maternal services, child nutrition, family planning and more.” – **Reuters, London, October 14, 2020**
