3.7 million children across the Middle East and North Africa suffer from acute malnutrition and are too thin for their height = wasted.

Among them, 1.6 million children are severely wasted.
5.4 million children are overweight, up from 3.4 million in 2000, placing the Middle East and North Africa second in the world for overweight children.
Only 38% of children in the region are fed a diverse diet.

Less than 1/4 meet the minimum acceptable diet for healthy growth and development.

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In Yemen, 2 million children are acutely malnourished, including 360,000 children under the age of five suffering from severe acute malnutrition fighting to survive, and are 11 times more likely to die if they do not receive treatment.
In Syria, acute malnutrition among pregnant or nursing women increased more than two-fold.

In northwest Syria, 1/3 of all pregnant and nursing mothers are anemic, with serious consequences on birth outcomes and children’s physical and mental development.
90% of children from low to middle income families around the region are given fluids other than breastmilk in their first four months of life.

1/4 of children are fed solid foods,

Foods given to children lacked diversity, are of low nutritional value and typically include starchy staple foods.

Recommended practice:
- Start breastfeeding within one hour of birth
- Breastfeeding exclusively for the first 6 months of life
- Provide nutritionally adequate, age appropriate and safely prepared complementary foods starting at 6 months; and continue breastfeeding until age of 2 or longer.

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Highly Processed foods and sugary drinks are usually poor in micronutrients which are essential for children’s survival, growth and development and increases their risk for becoming overweight.
As the world marks the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child this year, UNICEF is calling for the following actions to allow millions of children around the Middle East and North Africa to exercise their right to good nutrition:

- Create and adhere to higher health standards for children’s nutrition
- Invest in quality diets for children
- Empower families to have access to healthy foods for their children including in school meals, better labelling for food products for children, and more hygienic practices for food preparation
- Provide parents with parental leave and dedicated time and facilities for breastfeeding
- Expand data on child nutrition to produce better policies for children around the region
EFFECTS OF STUNTING ON CHILDREN'S BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:

**NORMAL**
- Extensive branching

**STUNTING**
- Limited branching
- Abnormal branches

Source: Cordero E et al, 1985 (Adapted from Figure 2 & Figure 4), Benitez-Bribiesca et al, 1999 (Adapted from Figure 4)

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