

August 27, 2010 - Democratic Republic of the Congo – Second World Day of Humanitarian Assistance at the Don Bosco Center



(ANS – Goma) – On Thursday, August 19, the Second World Day of Humanitarian Assistance was celebrated. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the city of Goma was chosen as the site of the national celebration. A delegation from the Government visited the Don Bosco Center at Ngangi.

Goma and its region, North Kivu, have been a theater of war, violence, and disasters, which have stimulated an important undertaking of humanitarian assistance from both public and private organizations. On August 19 a large delegation arrived at Goma from Kinshasa, including the Minister of Social Concern, Humanitarian Action, and National Solidarity, the Hon. Ferdinand Kambere; the special representative whom the Secretary General of the UN has sent to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and head of the UN Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO), Fidèle Sarassoro; the British ambassador, Neil Wagan; the vice governor of North Kivu, Feller Lutaicire; representatives of the World Food Program and the FAO; representatives from other NGOs; and many journalists in their wake.

Besides the official commemorative speeches, the delegation visited the Don Bosco Youth Center at Ngangi, which from 1997 to today has welcomed more than 35,000 youngsters at risk: orphans, abandoned and refugee children, former child soldiers, girls who have become mothers or been victims of violence, families in difficulty.

The delegation was welcomed by the Center's director, Salesian Fr. Piero Gavioli, and then visited the work's buildings: the feeding center, where 200-300 children ages 0-5 and those who accompany them receive daily a normal meal and a protein-rich supplement; the kitchen, which during school terms prepares 3,000 noon meals for all the Center's students and the staff; and orphanage, which takes in about 50 little children from a few days old to age 3.

The delegation's visit had a twofold significance. It recognized that the emergency isn't over. And if Goma enjoys a relative tranquility, the consequences of the emergency will continue to be felt for many years yet. Humanitarian assistance is still necessary if we want to guarantee the rights of youngsters, by means of assistance and education. Goma was chosen because natural disasters, war, disease, and poverty have reduced to a condition of extreme vulnerability a striking number of boys and girls. The visit of the Congolese government delegation and of the Don Bosco Center's main benefactors in the Democratic Republic of Congo gives grounds for hoping that such help will continue.

At the same time, the celebration of World Day of Humanitarian Assistance at Ngangi constitutes an explicit recognition of the activity which the Salesians, the International Volunteers for Development (VIS), and their Congolese collaborators have carried out on behalf of the neediest youngsters.

This is the second year in which World Day of humanitarian Assistance has been observed on August 19. The day was established in 2008 by the United Nations General Assembly to raise public awareness in the area of international cooperation and humanitarian activity. The date chosen recalls the assault on a UN office in Baghdad in 2003 in which more than 20 humanitarian workers were killed.