

August 26, 2010 - Pakistan – Some 100 families a day are arriving



(ANS – Quetta) – “Our contribution to the disastrous emergency created by the floods is to note where they are and give them what they need for survival.” According to Fr. Peter Zago, this in simple terms is what he and some volunteers in Quetta do for families displaced by the natural disaster.

Jugend Eine Welt, the Vienna-based Salesian NGO, contacted Fr. Zago on August 17, giving him an initial contribution of 5,000 euros for “flood victims.” He let them know that it was impossible to reach the flood areas in the northwest region of the country, and set about using the funds to look after the thousands of families the government had moved from Sibi and other areas -- more than 50,000 families spread over 4 or 5 camps.

As occurred in 2005 at the time of the earthquake in Pakistan, the Salesians in Quetta mobilized around 20 young leaders, organizing them into 4 groups so they could reach more people. Transport issues were entrusted to others.

The idea has been to give each family a survival kit to last for a month. Each family receives 50 kg of flour, 5 of cooking oil, 10 of lentils, 6 of tea and sugar, a box of medicines, spices, mineral water, and some small cooking stoves. Each kit costs around 8,800 rupees (81.50 euros). “The amounts have been worked out for a month, so families can return to their places with food to last for the trip. We are preparing a second stage: helping families once they return to their villages to rebuild their homes and recover animals and other items.”

Some 350 kits have been distributed in recent days, “an average of 100 families a day,” explained Fr. Zago. “Our initial aim has been to reach 1,500 families, but this requires a lot of money!”

Fr. Zago explains that the first approach has not been easy: “We were literally besieged by people of every age -- men, women, and children in tears. They quickly surrounded our vehicle. For safety’s sake we distributed goods through the windows of the Toyota van. Things changed once people had enough food given to each family.”

The other Salesian community in Pakistan, in Lahore, is making preparations to give direct aid in the flooded Sindh and north Punjab areas.

The Salesian website in Quetta -- www.donboscoquetta.multiply.com – offers photos and video of what they are doing.