

June 24, 2010 – Salesian GHQ – African Children's Day



(ANS – Rome) – In June in all of Africa, African Children's Day is celebrated. It is an occasion to give special attention to the children in the youngest continent (demographically speaking) and to foster greater concern on their behalf. Salesian centers have also marked the day.

On Tuesday, June 16, in the Salesian house in Tonj, Sudan, Fr. Cyril Odia, councilor for youth ministry in the Provincial Delegation of Sudan, organized the day in which the Salesian Sisters and teachers in the public schools also took part.

The day began with a lively and well attended Mass, at the end of which all the children were given a special blessing. This was followed by games and cultural events with singing and dancing which, in spite of the rain, went on all day. In the afternoon Radio Don Bosco FM, of which Fr. Odia is the director, began broadcasting and held a phone-in which kept seven translators busy with questions and answers on subjects connected with children and the youth situation.

In Luanda, Angola, too, on Sunday, June 20, a great children's festival was organized by the Salesians in the St. Paul community, and in particular by Fr. Stefano Francesco Tollu, provincial delegate for sports activities with the team leaders of the Friends of Avô Ximinha. Avô Ximinha, the leader of the group, is a Catholic woman involved for many years in a great variety of activities for African children. With her team she produces music and stories for children in which she also directly involves the children.

The festival, held at the Good Shepherd community in the Mota district, was also an occasion to provide the children with food: while for the children entry was free, the adults who came were asked to give some food.

African Children's Day was first introduced in 1991 by the then-Organization of African Unity, now the African Union, in memory of the victims of the killings in Soweto in 1976 and of the denial of children's rights in the continent. On June 16, 1976, thousands of black youngsters and young students took to the streets in Soweto, a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa, protesting the poor quality of their education and the imposition of the Afrikaans language in schools. The police reaction was extreme, and in the protests on the following days hundreds of young Africans were shot.