

January 11, 2012 - India - Cyclone Thane: the emergency continues



(ANS – Madras) – Some days after the passage of Typhoon Thane, the situation in many of the villages in Tamil Nadu State remains serious and difficult. Even though the media seem to have downgraded it, there is still need for help to restore some normality. According to the first estimates, the cost of the damage has been put at about €300 million. There are four Salesian presences in the area, and after counting the initial costs and providing first aid, they are now preparing for the longer-term needs.

The typhoon devastated the fields and houses in the districts of Cuddalore and Villupuram and the Puducherry area. In these rural areas inhabited for the most part by peasants and fishermen, many of the houses were built of cheap, light material. The villages on the coast, hit earlier by the tsunami in 2004, were once again battered by the rains and winds and the new houses were badly damaged.

For most of the people in the villages conditions have not yet improved; many areas are still without electricity and running water.

The four Salesian centers also suffered damage: Puducherry, DBRITE in Cuddalore, and the missions in Gedilam and Maranodi Vinnarasi were all affected. At DBRITE the wind damaged the welding and mechanics workshops, and all the windows were broken. Statues inside the buildings were shattered to pieces, the palms and other trees were uprooted, and the water tanks on top of the buildings destroyed.

In spite of the damage, the Salesians are doing their best to help the local people in the villages and those entrusted to their pastoral care.

In a first phase, water was pumped and distributed together with food, stoves, clothes, bedding, and school materials. Medium-term projects planned include the repair or the rebuilding of homes, and then in the long term rural development programs and cooperative work for the large number of country people in the area.