



## **ASIA/BANGLADESH - Poor farmers sell kidneys to pay off debts: the complaint of the NGOs**

Dhaka (Agenzia Fides) – It is a growing practice that is becoming a real scandal: in the North of Bangladesh, the poor farmers, who are reduced to poverty, sell their kidney to pay off debts. The transplant is carried out in medical centers and complacent clinics in Bangladesh, India and Singapore: this is the complaint Fides received by different NGOs working in Bangladesh and by Catholic aid operators who report the phenomenon as "increasingly common and worrying".

Rosaline Costa, an NGO Catholic activist "Human Rights Hotline Bangladesh", explains to Fides: "The victims are farmers and tribal people who are reduced to poverty. Criminal gangs who are organized on a regional basis exploit the misery of innocent people, especially in rural areas, where the presence of the government and the police is of less importance and there is more corruption. But the practice has been going on for years, in silence, even in the slums of cities such as Dhaka. Now everything is coming to light. As organizations of civil society we ask for a decisive intervention on behalf of the authorities and to stop and dismantle criminal groups".

A kidney can be worth between 130 thousand Takase (1,700 dollars) up to 400 thousand Takase (over \$ 5,000). The farmers are not often aware that the whole business of illegal organ trafficking, goes against international law, and is punished by fine and imprisonment in Bangladesh.

As the local press, in Joypurhat district (northern Bangladesh) report, the police have already identified 42 cases where impoverished farmers have sold their kidney, but more than 200 confirmed cases, victims of the racket that has been going on and has increased in the last five years.

In the last decade, human organs trade was valued at around 50 million dollars a year -it has become flourishing in South Asia, especially in India and Pakistan. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/09/2011)