



ASIA/NEPAL - 21 specialized paramedics for 30 million people; more support for hospital transport is needed

Kathmandu (Agenzia Fides) - According to the estimates of the Nepal Ambulance Service (NAS), in the country, where there are 30 million inhabitants, there are only 21 specialized paramedics and additional support services for ambulances is urgently needed. The Nepal Red Cross (NRCS), which is the largest NGO in the country, has 168 ambulances but no paramedic, and only 35% of the drivers have first aid training. Most of the cars that circulate as ambulances are private cars, totally unsuitable for medical care and have no necessary equipment. From a survey carried out by the Patan Hospital, fewer than 10% of people who go to the health facilities for first aid in the Kathmandu Valley come by ambulance, more than half use the taxi. Many of those who arrive in a police car, taxi or bus suffer further trauma due to transport. In Kathmandu there are about 2 million inhabitants and only 21 ambulances officially recorded, most of which are owned by local NGOs. In many mountainous areas, these vehicles do not exist, and only 2-3 hospitals in the most inaccessible areas of the country have qualified paramedics in their staff. Patients often die during transport due to the lack of suitable staff. The current ambulance service in Nepal is not able to handle even minor natural disasters, much less the expected major earthquake in the Kathmandu Valley. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 28/09/2012)