



AFRICA/CHAD - The children who emigrated finally reunited with their families

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - The majority of the students of the Koran in Chad who were in Nigeria for study reasons, and who in March were forced to flee back to their country because of the ongoing violence in northern Nigeria, are now reunited with their parents. About 575 of the 1,000 young people who fled from Nigeria were children, 80% of whom, traveling alone with their marabout - Muslim guru - or a Koran teacher. For months they remained in the villages of N'Gouboua in the region of Lac in western Chad, where local families, local authorities and humanitarian agencies provided them with food, shelter and school supplies. Since March UNICEF, the Red Cross of Chad and the Ministry of Social Affairs, had gathered 340 children with their families in 48 villages. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, thousands of West African families send their children to learn the Koran outside their own country, under the guidance of a religious teacher or an imam. Some people do not experience problems, but children traveling alone often spend most of the day begging instead of going to school, have poor health care, inadequate food, and suffer abuse. Students of the Koran are not allowed to have formal education with recognized qualifications, and now there is the risk that their formation can be inspired by ideologies suggested by Boko Haram. Agencies and the Ministry are monitoring every progress made by the school children when they are reunited with their families. It is a very difficult process because many children are initially rejected because their families cannot afford to keep them. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 18/10/2012)