



AFRICA/NIGERIA - Damage to agriculture, boats to rescue people on the roofs of houses: new testimony from flooded areas

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "The population has never seen a flood like this," says in a note sent to Fides Agency Brother Damian Krzystof, a Polish missionary, who works in the Apostolic Vicariate of Bomadi, in the Delta State, in southern Nigeria, one of the areas most affected by the recent floods that have devastated several countries in West Africa.

"The Niger, the largest river in Nigeria, has swept away the levees after the opening of dams, flooding homes, farms and roads" says the missionary. "The authorities have decided to open the gates of the dam after the water level in the reservoirs dangerously increased due to the heavy rains." Controversy arose because the authorities failed to inform the farming communities downstream who were about to release the waters of the dam, thus preventing the establishment of preventive measures.

Among the hardest hit states in the federation is that of Kogi (central Nigeria), where boats of the rescue teams are committed to recovering the people who have found a precarious refuge on the roofs of houses. In Kogi, on whose territory there are the two major rivers of the country, the Niger and Benue, one third of the 21 local communities are invaded by water.

There is considerable damage to the agricultural sector, which represents 40% of the Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria and employs 60% of the country's workforce.

At least 150,000 hectares of agricultural land flooded and several head of cattle lost. Fortunately, before the floods, farmers had completed the harvest of rice, maize, millet and sorghum, but the cocoa harvest remains a risk. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 12/11/2012)