



## **AFRICA/MALI - Refugees, food shortages and mine clearance: new emergencies in the Country**

Bamako (Agenzia Fides) - "The security situation in Bamako and in most of the Country have improved, but we still have the problem of refugees and displaced persons to be accommodated in their places of origin," says to Fides Fr Edmond Dembele, Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Mali, where France has begun a first partial withdrawal of its troops that liberated the north by jihadist groups.

"In the same cities that were occupied by rebel groups, security has improved and life begins again, little by little," says the priest. "Although some IDPs are returning to the north, the majority of refugees abroad and internally displaced persons have remained in reception centres. Unfortunately, the aid is not sufficient to meet the needs of all these people, " continues Father Dembele. "The Church continues to support humanitarian efforts as much as it can. The reception center of the Diocese of Bamako is still crowded, while during Lent a national collection among the faithful to raise funds for the displaced was held. "

Don Dembele also points two further problems that complicate the situation. "The period from April to September is critical for crops, especially if the rains were not abundant. This year it rained too much to the point that there were floods that damaged crops. Mali is therefore experiencing a food crisis and in different regions people are suffering, " says Fr Dembele. In the north also the war and the flight of the population has blocked agricultural activities that are now affected by the presence of mines and other unexploded ordnance. "The harvest begins around May and without adequate clearance and remediation, it is likely to be compromised," concluded Fr. Dembele. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 10/04/2013)