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ASIA/INDIA - A Bishop of Orissa: "The Church relieves the suffering of the people affected by the cyclone"

Balasore (Agenzia Fides) - Because of cyclone Phailin, which in recent weeks "has caused untold misery and tragedies in Orissa, the Church prays for the victims and is fully committed to alleviating the suffering of the people". This is what His Exc. Mgr. Thomas Thiruthalil, Bishop of Balasore writes in a note sent to Fides. According to official sources, some children and adults, who were staying in mud houses swept away by the waters unfortunately drowned. Over 930 villages have been flooded, thousands of homes have been destroyed, and the homeless displaced are more than 100,000. Humanitarian aid is still very difficult because of transport problems and impracticality of the roads. The dioceses have organized a special collection of funds, which will last for the entire month of November, and will be dedicated to the victims of the cyclone. "We are working in close collaboration with the state government", said the Bishop. "We have provided direct support to people who are suffering. For two weeks, our volunteers have organized camp kitchens and provided shelter for refugee communities in two districts. Caritas has distributed food to displaced families in remote areas and prepared tents for temporary shelter, also distributing hygiene items. We have equipped ourselves with 1,200 liters of potable water, while our mobile clinics with doctors and nurses have been working tirelessly for two weeks".
The Bishop explains to Fides: "There is a huge damage to the local economy, people here were mainly composed of farmers and cattle ranchers. Large coastal areas are still vulnerable to flooding, and dozens of villages are at high risk". The Bishop appealed to the institutions. "The state is expected to develop a land use planning that is sustainable and resilient, in the face of possible natural disasters".
Torrential rains and floods have hit Orissa in recent weeks, submerging especially the two districts of Balasore and Mayurbhanj. According to meteorologists, cyclone Phailin lasted only 24 hours, but the overflowing of rivers, swollen by the rains, will cause damage for weeks, especially in the agricultural areas. (SD-PA) (Agenzia Fides 09/11/2013)

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