

NewsUpdate

A Caritas India weekly

INTER RELIGIOUS

delegation to visit
Assam flood site



INTER-RELIGIOUS delegation to visit Assam flood site

Report by Amrit Sangma, PRCOM

At a time when the Catholic Church in India is allegedly tagged for religious conversions, Caritas India, its social wing has called for an inter-religious solidarity visit to Assam Flood.



The three-day visit from August 4 will have representatives from Rama Krishna Mission, Brahma Kumaris, Islamic Relief and Caritas India. The group will visit an ongoing relief works in Morigaon district. They will meet Assam's Inter Agency group (IAG) that comprises of 50 civil society organizations with primary focus on emergency response. A meeting with the Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal may also be possible, which is subject to confirmation as of now.

Caritas India's emergency response work in Assam spans across three districts of Lakhimpur, Karimganj and Morigaon. Despite all transparency measures, the organization has time and again been accused of ulterior religious

motives. The latest accusation is a twitter comment on a video that the organization had put out explaining how it is working on solutions to some of the critical problems faced by flood survivors in Assam.

It reads, "Sites of #NaturalDisasters are opportunities for Christian #SoulVultures."

Executive Director Fr. Frederick D'Souza dismissed the allegations saying, 'we do not have to pay attention' to such accusations.

Caritas India's work is inspired by the Church but "we do not preach (religion) or convert" he said. "There has not been a single incident of conversion or not even the intent of it", confirmed Fr. D'Souza who has been heading Caritas India for more than a decade. Our staff coming



from different religious background are witness to it, he substantiated.

Coming back to interfaith visit, he said that these are times to unite which is necessary for the nation building rather than stand divided. All religions teach love, peace and humanity, he explained.

We are hopeful that this joint exercise will pave way for bigger opportunities to work together, wherein people will benefit the most. Our services should bring hope to the suffering people of Assam.

Between 2012 and 2017, Caritas India has responded to almost every emergency in the Northeast benefitting a population of 1.2 lakhs in the sectors of health, cash support, temporary shelter, education, WaSH, livelihood, livestock and food.



Three-fold responsibility of Church explained to Andhra Pradesh Partners

Report by Isaac Newton, SO- AP & TS
Edited by Patrick Hansda, Documentation & Publications

Development sector need to reflect on the current situation as the social forces are dominating the market through communication and funding scenario. "The Diocesan Social Service Societies need to understand the current socio-political and economic perspective in this back ground and promote Justice Social Order which is the crux in social development," said Fr. Paul Moonjely, Deputy Director of Caritas India to the Directors and Project Coordinators of Andhra Pradesh.

Fr. Paul was addressing at the cluster orientation and volunteerism workshop for coastal diocese of Andhra Pradesh at Hyderabad on July 28, 2017. He was on the mission to explain volunteerism and Christian service in the backdrop of present socio political situations.

Explaining the mission of the Church, he shared the three-fold responsibility as Kerygma (Proclamation), Liturgia (Sacrifice) and Diakoina (being open and generous with those in need). He said that the parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a gold standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter "by chance", whoever they may be.

The analysis of development indicators presented at the workshop:

- Poverty, violence and marginalization are the major problems. The extreme and extensive poverty in the country is a scandal.
- Poverty is a symptom of the deeper problems of injustice, greed and the massive accumulation of wealth, encouraged by the neo-liberal paradigm and implemented through multilateral corporations and institutions
- 50% of Indians are Below the Poverty Line as per the criterion of calorie intake according to N. C. Saxena Committee
- The World Bank estimates that India is ranked 2nd - children suffering from malnutrition.
- 1 million Indian children die before reaching the age of 5 every year – four in every minute mostly from preventable diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid, malaria, measles etc.
- Every day, 1,000 Indian children die because of

diarrhea alone.

- The 2011 Global Hunger Index (GHI) Report ranked India 15th, amongst leading countries with hunger situation.
- These provoke us to move into more prophetic expressions of diakonia.

Explaining Diakonia and Caritas India, Fr. Paul shared the meaning of Caritas is love - Love of God incarnated in the person of Jesus in the fullness of time and therefore caritas is the person of Jesus in the teaching of bible. The Diakonia is teaching in action or in other words actions that unfold the love of God in the historical times and situations. He said, Diakonia is propelled by the supreme act of love one emanates from another complementing the other.

Diakonia stands on the pillars of Empowerment Animation, Dialogue, Volunteerism and Giving community. Empowerment Animation promotes freedom and opportunity of people through the process of empowerment animation in which People Led Development Initiatives as the ownership of development process lies with people and they become the change agents in the social process.

Dialogue means solidarity with the poor, table fellowship with the outcasts, healing the sick and the afflicted, feeding the hungry, confronting the dehumanizing structures, advocating the affluent to share the riches with the poor and giving his own life as a ransom for many.

Volunteerism is a call towards committed willing service and it is not just a token of service but a fundamental option, a way of life, which leads to self-sacrifice and can result in total denial of oneself.

Giving communities – Caring for the poor and needy is one of the divine purposes of the church. Giving cannot be limited to just economic resources, but it is all about giving ethics, values, resources, compassion and dignity.

The workshop was co-organised by Caritas India and Andhra Pradesh Social Services Forum which was attended the 31 Directors and Project Coordinators from Andhra Pradesh.