

Church brings relief to flood victims in central Vietnam

Church brings relief to flood victims in central Vietnam. Priest traveled by raft in the rain to hand out food to people isolated by floodwater.



The diocese of Vinh has given emergency aid to tens of thousands of people who were affected by floods caused by heavy rains and released dam water in central Vietnam.

Flooding caused by torrential rain in Vietnam on Oct. 13-16 killed 25 people, injured 18 and four are missing. Four provinces were affected: Ha Tinh, Nghe An, Quang Binh and Quang Tri, according to an Oct. 16 report by the Department of Natural Disaster Prevention and Control.

The floods destroyed nearly 1,000 houses, submerged 120,700 and damaged 15,000 hectares of crops.

"We asked local Caritas workers to provide emergency aid such as food and clean water," Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop of Vinh Diocese said.

On Oct. 17 Bishop Hop and other priests visited affected parishes to distribute money, medicine, instant noodles and drinking water.



Father Michael Hoang Xuan Huong, priest of Hoa Ninh parish in the worst-hit province of Quang Binh, said 17 parishes had been inundated.

"People had to climb onto roofs and other high places to avoid being drowned. Their cattle and belongings were washed away," Father Huong said. "We had to open the church to shelter 500 people and 100 cattle."

Many churches were also submerged, the priest added.

"Now the floods have receded, people remain in bad conditions with no electricity, clean water and food and have a high risk of getting diseases," he said.

Anna Truong Thi Hanh from Hoa Ninh parish said the floodwater rose so quickly that she could only shelter two buffalos in the church. One pig and all her belongings were lost.

"We do not know what we will do for a living in the future," the 55-year-old mother of four said.

She said Father Huong was asking for donations and financial support from benefactors to help parishioners restore their normal life.

"We were moved to tears when we saw Father Huong traveling by raft in rain to hand out food to people trapped on roofs, isolated by floodwater," Hanh said.



Floods worsened by dam error

Local media reported that the Ho Ho Hydroelectric Plant Dam in Quang Binh province unexpectedly released floodwater at 5:45 pm on Oct. 14 inundating thousands of households in Huong Khe district.

"Plant officials unexpectedly discharged floodwater into the area from their dam in the evening without informing local people in time so the flood washed away all their things," Bishop Hop said.

Nguyen Quang Tien, president of Phuc Trach Commune, said at a press conference on Oct. 17 that plant officials were required to inform people 10 hours before discharging water but they "informed local residents only one hour before."

"How can people have enough time to move their belongings in a rain storm at night?" he said.

Vice Director Nguyen Van Thong from the 13 megawatt power plant said they "had informed all local authorities about the water discharge in accordance with the process."

Industry and Trade Minister Tran Tuan Anh on Oct. 16 sent a delegation to probe the incident. He promised to severely punish officials involved.

Bishop Hop said people should have been informed about the water discharge one day in advance.

"Local people will protest against the plant and ask it to dismiss culpable officials and pay compensation," Bishop Hop said.

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