



ZE12022902 - 2012-02-29

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-34380?l=english>

Vatican Aid Group for Africa Gives \$2M to 200 Projects

John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel Concludes 30th Council Meeting

VATICAN CITY, FEB. 29, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Choosing causes ranging from drought to education, the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel has assigned this year more than \$2 million to more than 200 projects in the nine countries assisted by the group.

The administrative council of the foundation recently concluded its 30th meeting in Rome.

The sahel is the sub-Saharan region of Africa, which includes countries on the west coast and central part of the continent.

Monsignor Giampietro Dal Toso, secretary of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, of which the foundation is part, told Vatican Radio that the administrative council had focused its attention on the financing of a number of projects, involving "the struggle against desertification and drought, as well as irrigation and education."

Monsignor Dal Toso noted that the re-emergence of the problem of drought in the Sahel highlights the urgency of the measures taken. The lack of food resulting from the impact of drought on agriculture "will reach its peak in the coming months. ... Both the international community and, more specifically, a number of Catholic organizations are seeking to intervene to prevent this crisis," he said.

Interreligious dialogue

The Church represents a minority in the countries of the Sahel. "In some cases a truly minuscule minority, in an environment characterized by the presence of Islam and of traditional religions," Monsignor Dal Toso noted. For this reason the John Paul II Foundation also serves as "an instrument of dialogue with other religions. ... As the Pope's teaching has recently been highlighting, faith is expressed in works, and what we manage to express through charity seeks in its own small way ... to bear witness to Christ."

The John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel came into being following that Polish Pontiff's first trip to Africa in May 1980, where he was greatly struck by the tragic consequences of desertification. The foundation was established on Feb. 22, 1984, and is actively involved in managing and protecting

natural resources, in the struggle against drought and desertification, in rural development and in the fight against poverty, through the involvement of local people.

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