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AFRICA/MADAGASCAR - Even for disabled children an opportunity to receive adequate education

Antananarivo (Agenzia Fides) - In Madagascar there are about 200 000 children who are excluded from school because they are handicapped. In 2008, the Government had issued a decree with the introduction of a program providing for the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities. Unfortunately it was
blocked the following year, after the army had removed the former president. Following the coup, the education budget was significantly reduced, limiting it to the funding of benefactors and going from $82 million in 2008 to 14.9 million in 2012.
The inability of the government to satisfy the teachers salary has imposed poor families to pay school fees making their economic situation even worse. According to the Southern Africa Regional Food Security Update of February 2012, four fifths of the population of Madagascar is forced to live on less than $ 1 a day, and poor households spend 74% of their income on food. As a result, school enrollment has declined. In 2010, they were 73.4%, compared to 83,3% in 2005. In the malagasy southern regions of Atsimo Atsinanana, Melaky, Atsimo Andrefana, Androy and Anosy, the fee for primary school enrollment is less than 55%. A quarter of young Malagascans, about 1 million do not go to school. The number of those who drop out of school has increased, out of 100 who start elementary school, 25 do not reach middle school, and only 33 attend secondary school. The situation is worse for children with disabilities, with an enrollment rate of 11%. The parents of these children prefer not to send them to school to avoid them marginalization and because they are convinced that sending a child with disabilities to school is a waste of time and money. Finally now, three years later, a program is being carried out which includes a workshop for children with visual, physical and mental disabilities, in addition, about 400 teachers have received training on teaching these children. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 02/10/2012)

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