



## **AFRICA/DR CONGO - Rapes and violence against innocent little victims still go unpunished**

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) – A wave of recent cases of rape has sparked local criticism on the weakness of the justice system in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where inadequate resources and incompetence provide little hope for victims who suffer sexual violence. They are mostly girls abused by adults, including some 6-year-old children. This is what Father Jean Okutu, parish priest at the Church of Sacre Coeur in the remote territory of Mushie, to the west of the country, denounced in recent weeks. To prosecute criminals the survivors' mothers came together to complain about the failure of the local and provincial legal system and asked the Government to take into account the movement of these children to enable them to study abroad at the expense of the State and ensure that they are protected from abuse and isolation from other children of their age. In the province of Bandundu a program against impunity for sexual violence is already in force, but many of the residents are skeptical because the criminals who are arrested are often able to escape from prison because of poor security measures. In Mushie, there is only one judge for all cases and it is urgent to strengthen the justice system. With a population of about 80 million people, there is a judge every 20 000 residents in the DRC. Even if 2000 new judges have just been appointed, the entire Congolese judicial system has only 4,000 members. We need the cooperation of all the people, every citizen has the obligation to report a crime. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 03/10/2012)