



## **AFRICA/DR CONGO - Caritas Goma assists victims of sexual violence in the camps for displaced persons**

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - There are dozens of cases of sexual violence against refugee women in camps for displaced people near Goma, capital of North Kivu, province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo for months disturbed by the violence of the M23 guerrillas and various other armed groups.

According to Caritas Goma between 20 and 30 November 17 cases of sexual violence against women and girls were recorded. The victims reported that the perpetrators of these acts were unidentified armed men, since in the province there are the regular troops of the Congolese army, rebels and Mai-Mai groups (militias of "self-defense", which in many cases have lost their original purpose and have taken up banditry).

The 17 women were taken by Caritas Goma, thanks to a fund donated by Caritas Australia. Some were treated at the health center Afia Mugunga and the most serious cases were transferred to a specialized center of Carmel. The program of care and rehabilitation of women victims of sexual violence involves four aspects: medical, psychological and social, socio-economical and legal aspects.

The social aspect is particularly painful because as Lycie Baganda explains, the animator of the program Sexual Violence of Caritas Goma, "for fear of being rejected by the community, very often women do not report rape. Only the most serious or known cases come to us. "

The scourge of sexual violence in eastern DRC is one of the most serious crimes. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/12/2012)