



OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Teenage pregnancies: the Church is alone in the prevention

Port Moresby (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic Church and other Christian churches are in fact left alone by the civil institutions and mass media in trying to prevent and curb the worrying phenomenon of teenage pregnancy in Papua New Guinea.

Each year, about 5% of adolescent girls attending schools become pregnant, while the overall national percentage touches 13%. This means that even a large number of male partners, probably of the same age, have sex with underage girls. It is in the vast majority of cases of unwanted pregnancies, and children born to couples of teenagers who are at high risk of abandonment, with a serious impact from a social point of view.

According to a note sent to Fides by the Communications Office of the Episcopal Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, if there is a general consensus on the necessity to prevent the phenomenon, "the question is how to do it." "Family and education are questioned", the Bishops noted. If it is the parents' duty to "educate young people to the beauty, value and greatness of love and sexuality," there are obvious shortcomings in the education system that "cannot only present the physiological structure of the human body as male and female" but, say the Bishops, "should present the sexual union in an authentically human, cultural and spiritual context". In Papua New Guinea Churches are often left alone in emphasizing "the inherently positive aspect of sexuality and promoting responsible behavior among young people." One prefers a massive distribution of contraceptives - says the statement - rather than educating to love as "a treasure to be lived in a constructive and positive manner". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 07/09/2013)