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AFRICA/D.R. CONGO - Sexual abuse in schools continues to increase

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - In some schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, teachers and school authorities take advantage of their status to abuse some of the students who are unaware of their rights. According to the local organization African Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AADHR), victims remain silent and are often intimidated by the teachers, and the fear of the victims to denounce their abusers continue to fuel sexual abuse in Kinshasa and Matadi, one of the major cities in the western province of Bas Congo. In the recent report of the AADHR, entitled "School and sexual abuse in DRC: knowledge is power", about 100 cases of rape were reported between the months of April and June in 45 schools in the capital of the DRC and Matadi. The data was collected by the local police with regards to Matadi, while the AADHR dealt with those of Kinshasa. In Matadi 40 cases of sexual violence were reported in the month of June.
In 2006 the country passed two laws which provide for severe sentences against sexual assaults against children under 16 years of age. However, the national vice president of the Congolese Association for Access to Justice (CAAJ) stated that these laws are not enough. It is fundamental to urge students to report any attempt of abuse. On average, according to the CAAJ, the prosecutor's office receives 10 to 15 complaints a week. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 18/07/2013)

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