

PRESS RELEASE

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Presidential candidates: No rural education, no peace in Colombia

“The new elected president in Colombia must provide rural children and youth educational opportunities to be able to escape the cycle of forced recruitment and violence”, argues the Norwegian Refugee Council.

The last stage of the presidential election in Colombia will kick off on June 17th.

“The new president of Colombian must recognize that education will be key to end violence” said Christian Visnes, country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Colombia.

Only half of the children and youth in rural areas who gain access to education get beyond primary school. This means only 5 years of education. The main reasons are forced displacement, violence, interruptions in the school year, poverty, long distances between schools and homes and lack of teachers.

“Too many children in Colombia have not been in school for years due to conflict. To get these children back to school will be key to secure peace” said a teacher to NRC in a rural area of Tumaco in Colombia.

Inequality in education largely corresponds with the urban-rural divide. The rural areas have historically been most affected by armed conflict. There is now a three-year difference in learning levels between children in the same grade in urban and rural areas.

Children and youth who are lacking education, continue to become an easy prey for non-state armed groups in areas of Choco, Norte de Santander, Nariño or Putumayo departments. “The new president of Colombia should therefor redouble their investment in education in rural areas most affected by conflict as a key element to stabilization; a Marshall Plan for rural education in Colombia is needed” said Visnes.

The peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP represents a historic opportunity for the 8.2 million victims of the armed conflict. Implementation of the agreement will create a unique possibility for rural children and youth to finally overcome the crisis of forced displacement and be able to return to school.

Note to editors

- NRC Country Director – Christian Visnes - available for interview in English, Spanish and Norwegian. Tel: 3214957209
- The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an aid organisation working in 31 countries. Read more [here](#).

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