

KINSHASA, DR Congo, September 11 (Infosplusgabon) - The education situation in DR Congo is alarming, with 7.4 million children out of school across the country due to civil conflicts, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) warned on Monday.

Despite this, only 4 per cent of humanitarian funds have been received for education, 9 months into the year, the Council said in a news dispatch.

“The dire education funding situation puts many children at risk of illiteracy, and puts them at a disadvantage for finding future employment for generations,” warned Celestin Kamori, the Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) education programme coordinator in DR Congo.

Over the last two decades, DR Congo has experienced new and recurrent conflicts that have forced more than 3.8 million people to flee their homes. At least 684,000 of these are school-aged children, NRC said.

“When children are displaced they are forced to suspend their education, or drop it all together,” he said.

The disruption to their development hinders their personal progress, and has detrimental effects to the socio-economic situations of the entire country.

NRC said the effects of a lack of education are most acute in DR Congo's Kasai provinces. Since August 2016, the intensifying violence in Grand Kasai province has displaced 850,000 children and left over 900 schools destroyed.

The schools that are open are being used as shelter for displaced families. Conflict has been detrimental to other parts of the country too.

In Kalemie town in Tanganyika province, out-of-school rates among displaced children from 6-11 years are as high as 92 per cent, an increase of 76 per cent over the course of the year, the Council said.

DR Congo's emergency education woes are compounded by an already weak educational system that is unable to absorb shocks caused by chronic conflict.

NRC said the decrease and slow trickle of funding for education in emergencies is the real gap donors should prioritise on the humanitarian relief agenda.

“Donors should recognise that education is also a protection tool. Children enrolled in emergency education classes, catch-up classes and child-friendly spaces are less likely to join armed groups,” said Kamori.

Since setting up the NRC education programme in DR Congo in 2001, thousands of displaced children have received education support through the programme, said NRC.

In 2016, NRC provided education support to close to 88,000 children. As of June 2017, the Council paid school fees for over 1,600 crisis-affected children in Kananga, in Kasai-Central province.

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