



*Jesuit Refugee Service  
-Europe-  
Service Jésuite des Réfugiés*

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PRESS RELEASE: Universal Children's Day  
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### **Forcibly displaced children denied food**

Universal Children's Day, 20 November 2005, is an occasion to focus the world's attention on some of the most vulnerable children.

"Of the more than 40 million refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, more than half are children. Yet their rights and special protection needs are frequently neglected and when sufficient food is not available, it is children who suffer most," said Fr Lluís Magriñà, JRS International Director.

"In Guinea, lack of funding has repeatedly forced UN agencies to cut or interrupt flows of food to Liberian refugees. Many donor governments diverted their resources elsewhere, leaving refugee families and their children with few options. Some were obliged to return to areas of insecurity or work for little or nothing in the informal labour market. Keeping children in schools is especially challenging when families are forced to choose between survival and education," said Mr Robert Boedeker, Regional Advocacy Officer, JRS West Africa.

"According to the World Food Programme in Colombia, 23% of displaced children under six are malnourished. The worst affected are those between one and two years old. Over 25% of 6-9 year olds and 54% of 10-25 year olds are unable to afford an education. Consequently, displaced children are far more likely to be involved in delinquent behaviour, prostitution and be recruited by paramilitaries or armed forces. The Colombian government's only response is to offer economic incentives to desperate people to return to unsafe areas", said Mr Juan Manuel Bustillo, Advocacy Officer, JRS Colombia.

"Refugee families unable to survive are often forced to move on to other countries or to send their children to places of safety. Many end up in Europe. Once there, they may be denied social support or even detained. In Germany, forced migrants whom the government is unable to return to their countries of origin, considered as "tolerated persons", receive reduced or no social benefits. They are marginalised in European societies or worse made destitute", said Mr Renaud de Villaine, Regional Advocacy Officer, JRS Europe.

Many of the world's forcibly displaced children live in situations where their food supply is not guaranteed. Access to food is a basic human right. The international community, in particular the rich industrialised countries, has a moral obligation to protect them. There is no greater basic need than that of food.

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*JRS Europe is a network of 20 offices working in Europe with and for refugees and displaced people  
It is part of the JRS international network and a project of the Jesuit Conference of European Provincials.*

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'Serving Forgotten Refugees'