



Press Release

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION, STILL I RISE: “DEMOCRATIZING ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION IS A MUST”

The number of children not attending school is growing globally, now at 250 million. Meanwhile, Still I Rise opens a new free International School for vulnerable children and adolescents in Colombia

ROME, 01/23/2024 - January 24 marks International Day of Education, proclaimed by the UN in December 2018 to celebrate the importance of education for peace and development. The following day, Still I Rise, a nonprofit organization that has always been oriented in ensuring excellent education for the most vulnerable children, will inaugurate its **new International School in Colombia**. A symbolic moment to highlight the urgent need to democratize not only access to education, but also of high quality, for all children around the world.

The global educational emergency continues to worsen year by year. According to [UNESCO](#), in 2023 the global **number of out-of-school children has surged by 6 million** since 2021 and now totals 250 million.

There are [617 million children and adolescents](#) in the world who are unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, despite two-thirds of them have access to education, as schools do not provide adequate skills and appropriate training. Globally, 16 percent of children do not attend school and one in 10 children do not receive primary education.

The emergency is even more critical in low-income countries, in 20 of which [more than 90 percent of children](#), by the end of elementary school, are unable to read or understand a basic text. The difficulty of access to education has also increased in these Countries compared to the pre-pandemic period, from 57 percent in 2019 to between 68 and 71 percent now. And where education is provided and guaranteed, it is not always accompanied by quality, and rarely aims to develop students' independent thinking.

“Out-of-school children are often put into a school by a charity or a government, and the box is ticked — there can be little regard to then keep pushing for excellence”, says **Mike Fisher**, Chief Schools Officer of Still I Rise. “In terms of education, the biggest thing that stands out, which Still I Rise does, is push for quality of service while operating in very deprived areas.”

STILL I RISE NEW SCHOOL IN COLOMBIA

The Still I Rise International School in Bogota is located in the **Ciudad Bolivar** neighborhood, which hosts 31 percent of the Colombian capital's slums, home to a high

STILL I RISE APS

Headquarter: via Adelaide Ristori 44, Roma, Italy | C.F. 91015070633

Press Office: media@stillirisengo.org | Web: www.stillirisengo.org



concentration of Venezuelan migrants and internally displaced persons. For minors, the context is particularly serious: Colombia's public school system operates for only half the day due to overcrowded facilities, and children are left unsupervised for long periods of time, increasing the chances of child labor and involvement in drug trafficking. According to Unicef data, about 16 percent of adolescents in Colombia do not attend upper secondary school.

"I am immensely proud of both the local and remote teams for their dedicated efforts in establishing this school," says **Laura Trujillo Muñoz**, Program Manager of Still I Rise in Colombia. "The journey has been challenging: **Bogota is not an easy city**. However, our collective efforts will undoubtedly be worthwhile as we have the privilege to serve children who need it the most."

Still I Rise International School in Bogota at full capacity will accommodate 180 students. The goal is to offer local refugee, vulnerable children, and adolescents an educational path of excellence - the International Baccalaureate - free of charge, following the same model as the International School launched in Kenya in December 2020.

"The traditional and notional educational model gives lessons, but does not develop creativity, individual consciousness, and independent thinking," concludes **Giulia Cicoli**, Chief Fundraising and Communication Officer of Still I Rise. "There is so much work to be done even in schools in high-income countries to improve not only the quality of education, but also the way students are involved in their own education. **It is necessary to democratize excellence in education**: only in this way we will have real change makers tomorrow who will impact concretely their communities and the rest of the world."

STILL I RISE APS

Headquarter: via Adelaide Ristori 44, Roma, Italy | C.F. 91015070633

Press Office: media@stillirisengo.org | **Web:** www.stillirisengo.org