

Press centre

Press release

Sixty-eight more children and young people released by Myanmar armed forces

YANGON, 7 August 2013 – The United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNICEF welcomed the release today of a further 68 children and young people from the Myanmar armed forces, or Tatmadaw, bringing the total number of children and young people released by the armed forces to 110 in the last month.

A month ago, 42 children and young people were released just over a year after an accord between the Myanmar Government and UN to clear the way for the discharge of all children from the Tatmadaw.

Today's release was attended by senior Tatmadaw officials, representatives of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Ministry of Immigration, and the UN Resident Coordinator and UNICEF as co-chairs of the UN Country Taskforce along with Taskforce members including the International Labour Organization, the UN refugee agency, Save the Children and World Vision.

The release is the fourth under an Action Plan agreed between the Government and UN Country Taskforce on monitoring and reporting grave child rights violations in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1612.

"This discharge of 68 children and young people from the Tatmadaw is a positive step towards the commitment by the Myanmar Government under the Action Plan to prevent and end the recruitment or use of children by the Tatmadaw," said UN Resident Coordinator for Myanmar Ashok Nigam.

"I have always said the military is not a place for a child to grow up. We are very happy for the children and young people being discharged today," Mr. Nigam said. "We congratulate them and wish them and their families well as they reunite."

Today's discharge follows the release of 42 children in September 2012, 24 children in February 2013, and a further 42 children and young people on 7 July 2013. "Over the past 13 months, the Tatmadaw has discharged 176 children and young people formerly used and recruited as children to jubilant families and friends," said UNICEF Myanmar's Deputy Representative in Yangon Shalini Bahuguna.

"Today's release is the largest since the UN signed the historic agreement with the Myanmar Government and the Tatmadaw in June 2012 to end the use and recruitment of all and any children by the armed forces for all time," Ms. Bahuguna said. "We encourage the Myanmar Government and the Tatmadaw to continue accelerating identification and registration so that all children are discharged as a matter of urgency."

"The time has come for the mass release of all children from the Myanmar armed forces," Ms. Bahuguna added. "The Myanmar Government should also now ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflicts to bolster these current positive actions."

In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1612 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNICEF also strongly urged all non-state armed groups in Myanmar listed in the annex to the UN Secretary-General's 2013 report to immediately end the use and recruitment of children.

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Note to Editors:

UN Security Council Resolution 1612 – adopted in 2005 - requested the UN Secretary-General to establish a

monitoring and reporting mechanism to provide timely and reliable information on six grave children's rights violations including the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups.

The six grave violations monitored and reported are:

- killing or maiming of children
- recruitment and use of children in armed forces and armed groups
- attacks against schools or hospitals
- rape or other grave sexual violence
- abduction of children
- denial of humanitarian access for children

The Tatmadaw (together with its integrated border guard forces) is listed in Annex 1 alongside 7 other non-state armed group persistent perpetrators in Myanmar in the 2013 report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict as follows:

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)
2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)
3. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council
5. Karenni Army (KA)
6. Shan State Army South (SSA-S)
7. United Wa State Army (UWSA)

The UN Country Taskforce in Myanmar includes the UN Resident Coordinator, UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO, UN OCHA, UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, Save the Children and World Vision.

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in more than 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: <http://www.unicef.org>

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