

December 2019

RELEASE AND REINTEGRATION

Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

Situation overview

The conflict that began in December 2013 continues to affect the lives of millions. Violence is widespread and human rights violations are common. Insecurity and active hostilities continue despite the signing of peace agreements by the parties to the conflict.

In 2017, the conflict expanded to new areas and reports of killing, recruitment and use of children and denial of humanitarian access increased in the Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Equatorial regions. With the signing of the latest peace agreement in September 2018, the security situation has improved and with it more and better access to those in need.

Releases of children 2015 – 2019

Since the beginning of the conflict, UNICEF has supported the release of more than 3,200 children from armed forces and armed groups.

In 2017, UNICEF registered and provided social and economic reintegration services to 101 children (99 boys; 2 girls), who were informally released or escaped.

Since April 2018 UNICEF in collaboration with UNMISS has supported the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC) in the release of: 348 children (248 boys; 100 girls) in Yambio in February 2018; 248 children (137 boys; 111 girls) in Bakiwiri in April 2018; 210 children (207 boys; 3 girls)

in Pibor in May 2018; 149 children (98 boys; 51 girls) in Asanza in August 2018; 106 children (27 girls; 79 boys) in Asanza in January 2019; 119 children (48 girls; 71 boys) in Duduma in February 2019; 32 boys in Mirmir in July 2019; and 29 boys in Aweil in September 2019.

In addition, 29 children (23 boys; 6 girls) who have escaped from the armed group NAS are receiving interim care services pending improved security in their home community, while 21 boys released in September 2019 from Aweil, were reunified and reintegrated into the community.

A final verification of individual status of 205 children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) (150 boys and 55 girls) and 122 Other Vulnerable Children (86 boys and 36 girls) is underway in Ngo Halema of Wau State.

In July 2019, Chairman Riek Machar of SPLA-IO wrote to his base commanders in Western Equatoria State and instructed them to release all girls and women who are involuntary in their bases. In collaboration with UNMISS and UNFPA, UNICEF is supporting the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee (NDDRC) in planning of the releases of all the women and children from the SPLA-IO controlled bases in Western Equatoria State.

Situation of children



3,677

verified reported incidents of grave violations against children reported, affecting an estimated **98,481** children

Results of UNICEF and partners (since December 2013)



3,232

children formally released or escaped from armed forces/ groups provided with social and economic reintegration services



28%

of children released in Western Equatoria were under the age of 15



19,180

children supported with access to education across Boma State



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Community-Based Reintegration Programming across South Sudan

UNICEF is supporting the National Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Commission (NDDRC) with advocacy and resources at both the national and state levels to support the continued release of children in South Sudan.

UNICEF is currently supporting the NDDRC in the verification of children in the cantonments in Unity State. In addition there are reports of children in the cantonments in Western Equatoria State. In Central Equatoria State, due to recent fighting, children are escaping from the opposition group National Salvation Army.

Case management and family reunification

The priority for released children is reunification with their families. Only children who cannot be reunified with their parents are supported with interim community-based care. Following reunification, children receive three months' worth of food rations and various necessities, including civilian clothing, blankets, cooking utensils, and fishing gear. Released children receive follow-up visits by case managers to facilitate access to services, address protection issues that arise, and monitor their transition back to their families to prevent re-recruited.

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More information on the situation in South Sudan and UNICEF response, including the latest situation reports, can be found at www.unicef.org/southsudan

Children who are unable to safely return to their families are placed in a family-based care arrangement.

Social development

UNICEF and partners engage youth in social development activities to reduce inter-communal violence and to build resilience against (re)joining in hostilities. This begins with intensive psychosocial support for two months following their release to promote healing and normalcy, followed by ongoing support and engagement at youth centers. In addition, children participate in activities and clubs that aim to build valuable life skills, build peace, and bridge social capital.

Socioeconomic reintegration

UNICEF is working through partners to improve livelihoods and income generating opportunities for released children and other vulnerable children/households. Children receive hands-on vocational training and apprenticeships in a wide range of activities that include animal health care, beekeeping, soap making, tailoring, hairdressing, and leather work.

Additionally, vulnerable children and households are provided with economic strengthening activities to include agriculture activities, inclusive of cash crops and vegetable production, livelihoods activities such as fishing, poultry or small animal husbandry, and/or income generation activities through small business enterprises.

A total of 3,422 (2,988 Boys; 434 Girls) of formally released children received social reintegration services to ensure effective reintegration with their families/communities.

1,302 (1005 boys; 297 girls) previously released children received economic reintegration services.

453 other vulnerable adolescent and households were reached with economic strengthening services to reduce the risk of recruitment.

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