



11 February 2015 – Following the release of 249 children two weeks ago, UNICEF and partners are now overseeing the [release of another 300 children from the armed SSSA Cobra Faction](#) in South Sudan. Meanwhile, UN Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, [Forest Whitaker expressed his concerns](#) about the heavy toll of the protracted conflict.

[UNICEF](#) helped negotiate one of the largest ever demobilizations of children. As a result, up to 3,000 child soldiers from the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA) Cobra Faction will be gradually released in the coming weeks.

The first group of children was released two weeks ago, followed by another 300 yesterday.

A successful reintegration process

These released children face enormous challenges as they adapt to civilian life after up to four years in the armed group.

"To avoid the risk of re-recruitment and to ensure that each child can fulfil their potential, they need a protective environment where they not only receive food and water, but also counselling, life skills and the opportunity to go back to school", said UNICEF South Sudan Representative Jonathan Veitch.

But there have already been positive signs that the reintegration process is working. In the two weeks since their release, 179 children have returned home to their families. Seventy children currently live in the UNICEF-supported interim care centre as family tracing and reunification is carried out. All 249 boys attend the care centre every day for meals, recreational activities and psychosocial support.

Desperate for peace

Meanwhile, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, and [UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation Forest Whitaker](#) call on all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law.

"People are desperate for peace. They are tired of living in fear. Many had had to flee several times. They are exhausted", Ms Amos stated at the end of their [three-day mission to South Sudan](#)

"This is a country rich in talent and resources. If this conflict continues, we will lose a generation of South Sudan's children."

"Only with peace can young people in South Sudan play an important role in rebuilding their lives and face the future without fear", Mr Whitaker added.

Al-Jazeera Interview with Forest Whitaker

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