



28 January 2015 – According to the United Nations children’s agency (UNICEF), at least 3,000 children will be gradually [released from the SSDA](#) , an armed group in South Sudan. The first group of 280 children were released yesterday. UNICEF helped negotiate the demobilizations of children - one of the largest ever-, and says more phased releases will happen in the coming weeks.

Recruited by the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA) Cobra Faction led by David Yau Yau, the children range in age from eleven to seventeen years old. Some have been fighting for up to four years and many have never attended school. According to UNICEF’s numbers, up to 12,000 children have been recruited and used as soldiers by armed forces and groups in South Sudan over the last year.

The [children released from the Cobra Faction](#) are being supported with basic health care and protection services and necessities such as food, water and clothing to help them get ready to return to their families. Counselling and other psychological support programmes are urgently being established. The children will soon have access to education and skills training

programmes.

A daunting task

In addition, UNICEF is working to trace and reunify the children with their families, a challenging task in a country where over one million children have either been displaced internally or have fled to neighbouring countries since fighting broke out in December 2013.

"These children have been forced to do and see things no child should ever experience", UNICEF South Sudan Representative Jonathan Veitch said in a statement.

Their support will extend to local communities as well to prevent and reduce discrimination against the returning children, and also to prevent possible recruitment.

"The successful reintegration of these children back into their communities depends on a timely, coordinated response to meet their immediate and long-term needs. These programmes require significant resources", Veitch concluded.

"The release of thousands of children requires a massive response to provide the support and protection these children need to begin rebuilding their lives."

Source: [UNICEF](#)