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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Children and armed conflict - Report of the Secretary-General

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Extract on Myanmar

Myanmar

67. The number of complaints of underage recruitment, including children under 15 years of age, continued to rise, from 194 in 2010 to 243 in 2011, reflecting an increased awareness of the age of recruitment by the Tatmadaw, and the existence of reliable vetting mechanisms, including the International Labour Organization forced labour complaints mechanism and community-based structures for complaints about underage recruitment. The Committee for the Prevention of Recruitment of Underage Children in Myanmar received more complaints than in previous years as a result of its extensive public awareness campaign. The vast majority of complaints in 2011 reflected recruitment in Yangon, Ayeyarwaddy and Mandalay regions.

68. Children continued to be recruited by the Tatmadaw. The majority of underage recruits interviewed after release stated that their recruiter had not asked their age, or had falsified age documentation for presentation at the recruitment centre. Reports continued to indicate that, in addition to children who were formally recruited into the Tatmadaw, children were also used by the Tatmadaw for forced labour, including as porters. In Kachin State, there were verified reports in late 2011 of children being used by the Tatmadaw alongside adults as porters on the front line.

69. Reports of recruitment and use of children by non-State actors in Myanmar also continued to be received. In 2010, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) split into two factions, with the majority joining the Tatmadaw as a border guard force, and the remainder allying itself with the Karen National Union/Karen

National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA). In 2011, with respect to both the DKBA border guard force and the separatist DKBA troops, reports were received of forced recruitment of children, unless payment in lieu of recruitment was received. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting was able to verify this practice in Kayin State, Ta Nay Cha and Thandaunggyi townships, in April and August 2011. Reports of increased recruitment by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) were also received in the second half of 2011, as tensions mounted in Kachin and northern Shan State. The country task force also received allegations of children joining KIA purportedly to avoid being used by the Tatmadaw as porters on the front line. The country task force also confirmed one report of a 15-year-old boy recruited by the Kachin Defense Army (KDA) in northern Shan State.

70. As conflict escalated in Shan State in 2011, reports of Shan State Army South (SSA-S) perpetrating underage recruitment increased. Children are also reportedly present in the ranks of the KNU/KNLA, Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, Karen Peace Front (KPF), Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA), and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). However, the country task force was unable to verify information about these armed groups owing to travel restrictions imposed on it by the Government.

71. The country task force verified that 43 children had been killed or maimed as a result of conflict-related violence in 22 separate incidents. During the reporting period, children continued to be victims of landmines, explosive remnants of war, mortar and rocket-propelled grenade attacks, and of crossfire between non-State armed groups and the Tatmadaw.

72. There were a number of verified cases of children killed in retaliatory actions by members of the Tatmadaw in villages where non-State armed groups were based, or in villages considered aligned to non-State armed groups. For example, in October 2011 the country task force verified an incident where, after having sustained a severe beating, a one-year-old child in a village in Hsipaw township in northern Shan State died by drowning, when soldiers of the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) threw the child and his parents into a pit filled with water.

73. Of the 22 verified incidents, a total of 9 occurred in Kachin State as a result of fighting between the Tatmadaw and KIA, during which 22 children were killed or maimed. In June 2011, for instance, a 16-year-old girl from Bamaw township was shot and killed in crossfire between the Tatmadaw and KIA. In another example, in August 2011, a 3-year-old boy was shot and killed in the crossfire while fleeing his village in Bamaw Township with his grandmother.

74. In 2011, both the Tatmadaw and non-State armed groups, such as KNU/KNLA, KNPP/KA, DKBA, UWSA, KIA and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) continued to use anti-personnel mines in order to restrict the movement of people, hinder the movement of troops, or to mark areas of operations.

75. The United Nations received a number of reports of attacks on schools or hospitals by the Tatmadaw and other non-State armed groups during the reporting period. The country task force verified that, during the fighting in May 2011 in

Kayin State, the Tatmadaw and DKBA/KNLA allied forces had partially destroyed a hospital in Kawkareik.

76. During the reporting period, there were also a number of documented reports in Kachin and Kayin States of schools being closed for long periods and schools being damaged by shelling and mortar fire. In August 2011, the country task force verified one case of a school in Kawng Lwin village in Mansi Township being damaged by artillery fire in exchanges between the Tatmadaw and KIA. In July 2011, the country task force documented the incident of a school in Mone Hkawng village in Mansi Township, Kachin State, being damaged by a Tatmadaw mortar attack.

77. Access to vulnerable groups in many areas of the country, including children, remained limited for United Nations system agencies in Myanmar. The Government continued to restrict access to various parts of the country, citing security concerns as the main reason for limiting the presence and travel of international as well as national personnel of relief agencies. Access was particularly limited in ceasefire and non-ceasefire areas, including mixed administration areas. However, some progress was made when, in December 2011, a United Nations mission visited inaccessible areas along the Myanmar-China border where displacement was recorded.

Full text at http://www.un.org/children/conflict/_documents/A66782.pdf