

[Philippines: UN reports significant progress in child protection, despite ongoing violations](#)

2 May 2017 – The Government of the Philippines and a rebel group with which it signed a peace accord have made progress in ending and preventing the recruitment of children on the southern island of Mindanao, according to a new United Nations report.

The Secretary-General's fourth report on the impact on children of armed conflict in the Philippines "describes [significant progress](#) in the protection of boys and girls, despite ongoing violations against children," according to the UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba.

In 2009, the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict on Mindanao.

Since then, more than 1,850 children have been identified and formally disengaged, the UN reported.

Special Representative Gamba encouraged the MILF to "draw on the current momentum to fully implement the Action Plan and to reinforce the necessary safeguards to prevent future recruitment and association of children."

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She also commended the Government, which strengthened the national framework to address violations against children by forming an inter-agency committee to monitor, report and respond to such grave violations.

In the report, the Secretary-General calls on the Government to actively use these tools to ensure independent, prompt and thorough investigations into alleged violations committed against children and guarantee appropriate services for child victims.

Despite noted progress, the report highlighted that killing and maiming of children in the Philippines remains a concern with 116 documented cases.

"Most incidents were the result of crossfire, unexploded ordnance or shelling, but others involved the targeting of children," according to the Ms. Gamba's Office.

The Abu Sayyaf Group and the Armed Forces of the Philippines took responsibility for nearly half of the 116 children killed or injured.

Among other issues, the report noted a "high number" of attacks on schools

and teachers, and an increase in attacks on indigenous communities.

The Special Representative responded by urging all parties to the conflict to end attacks or threats of attacks on schools, teachers and students.

“Using schools for military purposes is unacceptable. Children should be guaranteed safe access to education,” she said.