

MEDIA RELEASE

UNICEF expresses ‘deep concern’ on the impact of continuing violence on children in Southern Thailand

Bangkok, 25 July 2006 – The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today said it was deeply concerned about the impact of continuing violence on children in Thailand’s restive southernmost provinces, including yesterday’s slaying of a school teacher in front his fourth grade students.

According to Thai media reports, a gunman shot the teacher three times in his classroom at Baan Buerang school in Narathiwat province as his terrified students looked on. Teachers and schools have been repeatedly targeted in the on-going violence in Thailand’s three Muslim majority southern provinces, often resulting in the temporary closure of numerous schools.

“UNICEF is deeply concerned about the impact of the continuing violence upon children in Southern Thailand,” the organization said in a statement released Tuesday by its Thailand Country Office in Bangkok. “We call upon all involved to ensure that children, those charged with protecting and educating them, and educational facilities for them, do not fall victim to the violence.”

Since renewed violence broke out in January 2004 in the provinces along Thailand’s southern border with Malaysia, an estimated 1,300 people have been killed.

Thailand’s Ministry of Education (MOE) reports that as of mid-July 2006, 50 teachers had been killed and 47 more injured in the violence, while eight students had been killed and 37 injured. In addition, teachers have been kidnapped, numerous schools have been heavily damaged or destroyed, and many teachers now travel to and from schools under armed guard.

In its statement, UNICEF urged “all parties to cooperate in finding a peaceful solution that will guarantee the rights of all children to grow up in a safe and peaceful environment and to receive an education. Under international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, schools must be treated as violence-free zones.”

In the southern provinces, UNICEF has provided school supplies and sporting equipment for some of the children whose schools have been damaged or destroyed. UNICEF is also working in partnership with the Young Muslim Association of Thailand to provide HIV/AIDS life skills training to young people made vulnerable by the violence, and in cooperation with MOE to improve the quality of education in schools in the affected provinces.

For more information, please contact

Mark Thomas, UNICEF Thailand, 662 356 9481, Mobile: 661 172 9902
Andrew Morris, UNICEF Thailand, 662 356 9488
Natthinee Rodraksa, UNICEF Thailand: 662 356 9478, Mobile: 669 825 0933

United Nations Children’s Fund	Telephone	662 356 9499
UNICEF Thailand Country Office	Facsimile	662 281 6032
19 Phra Atit Road	E-mail	thailandao@unicef.org
Banglumpoo		
Bangkok 10200, Thailand		

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UNICEF Statement on the Continuing Violence in Southern Thailand 25 July 2006

UNICEF is deeply concerned about the impact of the continuing violence upon children in Southern Thailand.

We call upon all involved to ensure that children, those charged with protecting and educating them, and educational facilities for them are not targeted in the violence.

UNICEF urges all parties involved to cooperate in finding a peaceful solution that will guarantee the rights of all children to grow up in a safe and peaceful environment and to receive an education. Under international humanitarian law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, schools must be treated as violence-free zones.