

PRESS RELEASE

World Children’s Day celebration in Mondulkiri empowers youth and inspires climate action

MONDULKIRI, 22 November 2024 – Children, young people, authorities, civil society organizations, development partners from all sectors, and celebrities are coming together in Mondulkiri, a province in northeastern Cambodia, to celebrate World Children’s Day and commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This year, UNICEF Cambodia aims to continue amplifying the voices of children and young people as advocates for children’s rights in the country. Partnering with Plerng Kob, UNICEF is co-organizing a *Bonn Phum on the Move*, a youth-led, three-day event focused on climate adaptation and environmental preservation.

“We are here in Mondulkiri to celebrate the promise of children and youth in Cambodia,” said Dr. Will Parks, UNICEF Representative in Cambodia, at the World Children’s Day celebration at Pulung Primary School with the Deputy Governor Cheak Mengheang in attendance. “However, today also serves as a reminder of the profound challenges facing children in remote areas, who are disproportionately deprived of access to essential services and increasingly vulnerable to the devastating and life-threatening impacts of climate change.”

Despite Cambodia’s impressive achievements in implementing the Convention of the Rights of the Child over the past decades, challenges persist, particularly in remote regions such as Mondulkiri. Many children in this province face significant inequalities and multiple deprivations. Close to one-third (29 per cent) of children under five are stunted, and approximately one in ten (11 per cent) children in Mondulkiri have not received any vaccines, which is 3 per cent above the national average. Alarming, one-third of women aged 20–24 were married before they turned 18, also the second-highest rate in the country.¹

Mondulkiri’s children are also facing an uncertain future, burdened by an increasingly unpredictable climate and environmental threats that disproportionately impact their well-being. According to the recent Children’s Climate and Environmental Risk Index (CCRI) for Cambodia, 92 per cent of the population under 18 is highly or very highly vulnerable to climate and environmental hazards, shocks, and stresses because they have limited access to essential social services.

From 22 to 24 November, 2024, over 100 young volunteers will lead the organization of the *Bonn Phum on the Move* at the Bunong Indigenous village of Mondulkiri. Youth, including those from ethnic minorities, will conduct workshops on child rights, climate adaptation, mental health, nutrition, and other essential life skills. On Saturday, 23 November, prominent artists like Chacha, Roxy, Jany, Peak Mi, Mengkeo Pichenda, Kesorr, Suzana,

¹ Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS), 2021–2022.,

Yubin Shin, and other celebrities will perform in Senmorom town to celebrate child rights and inspire young people.

"While we mark this day with humility, I also want to share a message of hope. By empowering young people and children to lead and take action against the issues that impact their lives, their communities and their futures, we all benefit from their tremendous potential as drivers of social change," said Dr. Parks.

"On this World Children's Day, let us all be inspired by these young leaders as we work together to build a healthier, more resilient future for Cambodia and its children," Dr. Parks emphasized.

In Mondulkiri, where indigenous Bunong communities represent a significant portion of the population, multilingual education programs play a vital role. By teaching children in their native language alongside Khmer, these programs ensure that children develop foundational literacy skills while maintaining their cultural identity for a brighter future.

"World Children's Day is a day for children like me who commemorate the rights of all children, including the right to education, growth and care," said Phea Mani, a Grade 6 student at Pulung Primary School in Mondulkiri. "I am glad that my school taught me both my native language and Khmer. Teachers have bilingual lessons that help me and all my friends know our language and Khmer. This learning helps us read, write, and listen well."

World Children's Day is a global day of action for children, by children. It commemorates the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November, 1989, which Cambodia ratified in 1992. UNICEF and its partners are calling for a united world where no child is left behind, where their rights are protected, and where their voices shape a brighter future.

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