

# React and Respond: The Phenomenon of *Kony 2012*

Written on behalf of the *Outreach Council of the  
African Studies Association*

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## A Brief Guide to the LRA & Joseph Kony

From 1987 to 2006, the violent rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) fought the Ugandan government and terrorized the northern Ugandan population. The fighting was rooted in a longstanding divide between Uganda's north and south.<sup>1</sup> Today, the LRA is reduced to about 200 militia members, due to defections and to military attacks on them. In 2006 they left Uganda but continue to plunder in neighboring countries

### The Origins

Armed conflict erupted in its current form after president Museveni, from southern Uganda, seized power in 1986 from the northern-dominated government and its army. After Museveni's coup, the Ugandan army committed revenge killings and massacres against people of the north that fueled resentment and led to the emergence of several rebellions.

The LRA emerged in this context, headed by Joseph Kony, a former army commander with little formal education. Kony saw himself as a messenger of God and a liberator of the Acholi people (a large ethnic group in northern Uganda). He had his own beliefs and rituals, drawn from a mixture of Christianity, Islam, and traditional religions. Joseph Kony, however, failed to garner popular support.

### The Violence

Rejected by local leaders and the population of the north, Kony increasingly turned against

the civilians, accusing them of aiding the government in seeking his defeat. Kony's military campaigns became increasingly focused on "cleansing" the Acholi population, although he also preyed on civilians in neighboring regions.

The conflict in northern Uganda escalated, resulting in large-scale killings and mutilations. By the end of 2005, more than 1.8 million people were displaced and moved into camps. To fill its ranks, the LRA abducted as many as 60,000 civilians, often children, to serve as porters, soldiers, or sexual and domestic servants. LRA human rights abuses have been extreme.

But the LRA was not alone in committing abuses in the north. The Ugandan army has recruited children, committed torture and killings against civilians, and destroyed civilian targets. The government of Uganda also established a prolonged encampment policy, in effect moving much of the northern population into squalid camps that failed to provide adequate protection, food and sanitation services.

### Ending the War

A number of attempts have been made over the last 20 years to end the war, both militarily and through dialogue. Large-scale military campaigns over the years, some with U.S. support, have failed to weaken the LRA significantly or to capture Joseph Kony. Each time, the LRA has managed to escape and regroup, responding to the military operations by carrying out massive attacks on civilians. With a vicious war continuing, the newly established International Criminal Court (ICC) began to investigate the situation in northern Uganda. In 2005, it released a warrant for the arrest of Kony and his top

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<sup>1</sup> Since colonial times, the two regions have contested over political and military power. Legitimate grievances emerged on both sides due to the history of violence and discriminatory practices of subsequent governments.

commanders. Various peace talks, as recently as 2008, also failed, allowing the LRA to regroup and launch new attacks.

The LRA has been substantially weakened by successive military attacks and by successful efforts to bring combatants out of the bush by offering amnesty to LRA forces who defect. In 2006, Kony withdrew the LRA from northern Uganda and moved to the neighboring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and South Sudan, where he could once again hide and continue marauding. The Ugandan army has crossed the border into the CAR to fight the LRA. There, new accusations of sex and mineral trafficking have been made against the Ugandan army.

In Uganda itself, the population has enjoyed peace, or at least the absence of violence, for the first time in decades. Children and families now can sleep in their homes and no longer must walk for miles to seek a safe haven at night. With international support, people are rebuilding homes and planting their fields. However, the northern region remains economically marginalized. The situation has only been exacerbated by the Museveni government's interest in "developing" the region by transferring land

ownership to foreign interests and political allies. Poverty and other problems related to the long-term impact of war, government neglect, and social upheaval continue to make life difficult for many northerners.

### **Toward the Future**

Joseph Kony remains wanted by the ICC. In 2006, UN Special Operation Forces trained in jungle combat failed to capture Kony. In May 13, 2010, the U.S. Congress passed the "Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act" to fund efforts to apprehend Kony. One hundred U.S. advisors have been sent to support the Ugandan army, but Kony has continued to escape capture, and civilians continue to pay the price. Most recently, the African Union announced the deployment in the region of 5,000 troops.

In the past, military attempts to capture Kony have only resulted in increased violence against civilians. At the same time, Kony has ultimately rejected every peace process, and current peace agreements do not grant amnesty for serious crime. Ultimately the strategy that has proven to be the most effective is to convince lower ranking LRA members to demobilize, while at the same time protecting the civilian population.

*Dr. Patrick Vinck, Harvard University, in collaboration with the African Studies Outreach Council  
April 2, 2012*

### **To learn more about the LRA:**

**Uganda** [www.peacebuildingdata.org/uganda](http://www.peacebuildingdata.org/uganda) **LRA CrisisTracker** <http://www.lracrisistracker.com/>

**The Lord's Resistance Army of Today** by Ledio Cakaj [http://www.enoughproject.org/files/lra\\_today.pdf](http://www.enoughproject.org/files/lra_today.pdf)

**A Letter From Uganda on #Kony2012** by Sara Weschler at <http://www.truthdig.com> : <http://bit.ly/GSK9w6>

**Obama Takes on the LRA: Why Washington Sent Troops to Central Africa** by Mareike Schomerus, Tim Allen, and Koen Vlassenroot at <http://www.foreignaffairs.com> : <http://fam.ag/HELi7R>

**What will it take to end the LRA conflict?** by Conciliation Resources <http://bit.ly/HcK3z2>

# Guidelines for teaching about issues raised by *Kony 2012*

## I. Introduction

The unprecedented attention generated by the *Kony 2012* video, which has been viewed by well over 100 million people worldwide since its release on March 5, provides a unique “teaching moment” about a number of crucial issues, including representations of Africa, resolving international conflicts, evaluating charities and social justice organizations, and campaigns spread by social media. We would like to share suggestions about how educators can engage and address issues raised by *Kony 2012*.

Teachers have communicated to us that it is important to affirm students’ interest and engagement that the *Kony 2012* campaign has sparked, even while raising questions about the campaign. Our classroom colleagues bring a wealth of experience in engaging their students in meaningful learning activities about controversial and difficult current events. We invite – and would welcome – your feedback. (See contact information below.)

## II. Risk of accepting stereotypes or untested generalizations

For people who saw the video with little or no contextual knowledge of recent African history, and particularly of the Great Lakes region of east and central Africa, the video may have reinforced - or even created - stereotypes about Africa.

**Here are some stereotypes of particular concern.**

1. Violent crises are part of the “African condition.” There is a popular conception that violent crises are endemic to Africa—almost genetically part of the *African condition*. There is, of course overwhelming evidence that challenges this perception.
2. Africa is all the same. Africa is often seen as homogenous, and a place of the exotic, primordial loyalties (*tribalism*), poverty, underdevelopment, and corrupt and ineffective governments, as well as a tendency towards violence. [A valuable resource on this topic is “The danger of a single story,” an 18.5-minute video TED talk by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie (<http://bit.ly/J5QQWI>).]
3. Africa and Africans have little capacity to solve problems. Both African states and societies and African individuals and members of civil society are often perceived as having little capacity to solve their problems, including, as in the *Kony 2012* video, the ability to deal with violent movements and their aftermath. In fact, there are recent cases of creative African initiatives from across the continent to deal with violence and its aftermath:
  - The women’s peace campaign in Liberia (West Africa) in 2003, which brought together women of all religions and economic classes in a protest movement that led to a negotiated settlement of the brutal civil war. [*Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (available in both 60- and 72-minute versions) tells this story (<http://www.praythedevilbacktohell.com>). Some graphic violence is shown.]
  - The *gacaca* village courts in Rwanda were established in 2001 as a local response to the need to “bring to justice” to thousands of Rwandans who took part in the 1994 genocide. The *gacaca* courts, loosely adapting a traditional Rwandan dispute resolution mechanism, aimed to establish a mechanism of *restorative justice*, with a concern for restoring community relations between perpetrators and victim, while holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes. While the success of *gacaca* at providing restorative rather than retributive justice is debated, the courts were clearly a creative local initiative. [*Co-exist* is one good film about the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda with a teacher’s guide (<http://www.peacedocumentary.org/>).]
  - The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), while not fully successful in realizing the goal of national reconciliation, was highly regarded by most South Africans. The TRC model has

been adopted by other nations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia for establishing post-conflict restorative justice. [Two films tell the story of the TRC, both of which have user's guides: *A Long Night's Journey Into Day* (<http://newsreel.org/video/LONG-NIGHTS-JOURNEY-INTO-DAY>) and *Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers* (<http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/publications/facing-truth>).]

### III. The core approach: critical inquiry

As Africanist educators, we have long embraced pedagogical methodology of critical inquiry, believing that it can ameliorate people's understanding of Africa and reduce unfounded stereotypes.

1. Providing historical context: The *Kony 2012* video vividly depicts the atrocities of Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) committed over the past two decades. While these atrocities certainly took place and should be condemned, the video does not provide, nor does it suggest that it would be appropriate to explore, the historical context that gave rise to the LRA. [The 2006 film *Uganda Rising* provides both historical and global context for this conflict. (<http://www.ugandarisingmovie.com/home.html>)]
2. Encouraging students to "complicate" their analysis: As educators, we encourage our students to "complicate" their analysis of important, complex issues. This is certainly true when trying to understand the issues related to the atrocities committed by the LRA and the failure of central African governments to arrest Kony.
3. Encouraging students to differentiate between cause and effect: History and social studies standards and benchmarks include students developing the analytical ability to distinguish between cause and effect of events. When discussing the issues raised in the *Kony 2012* video, it is important to explore the history of the conditions under which the LRA arose, how it was moved out of northern Uganda, the several efforts to negotiate with the LRA, and why it continues to exist in neighboring countries.
4. Importance of timely and appropriate response: The *Kony 2012* video requests immediate actions from its viewers, with the goal of capturing Joseph Kony by the end of 2012. Clearly, there are times of crisis—natural disaster, genocide—when immediate humanitarian action is essential. However, there are other conditions when some people call for military action and others call for a more deliberative process, out of concern for possible unintended consequences that may worsen the crises. We should critically engage in a discussion of the type(s) of intervention that are most appropriate regarding the LRA and are most likely to produce the desired results while minimizing negative consequences.
5. Listening to Ugandan and African perspectives: The voices and perspectives of Ugandans and others in Central Africa who have been affected by the LRA are conspicuously absent from the *Kony 2012* video. Their absence may reinforce the negative and erroneous stereotype of Africans as lacking agency, of not having the will or capacity to act in their own interest. Fortunately, the enormous reach of the *Kony 2012* video has led to lively debate in the United States and many statements by Ugandan journalists, civil society leaders, and scholars that are accessible on the Web. [See attached resource list and, in particular, <http://ugandaspeaks.com>.]
6. Supporting open-ended evaluations of social justice organizations: The *Kony 2012* video provides an opportunity for educators and students to reflect upon how to research and select civic organizations with which to be civically engaged as local, national and global citizens. When you're looking to support a civic or social justice organization, what are your criteria for supporting them? What criteria might make you want to know more? What would you be made uneasy by? How would you learn more?

A more detailed version of these guidelines is available upon request. Write to: [metzler@msu.edu](mailto:metzler@msu.edu).

# Media literacy inquiry: Thinking about the *Kony 2012* video & about social media

Media literacy is a key goal in education today. We, and especially young people, learn through the media, much more than through print. *Kony 2012* provides an opportunity for critical thinking. Using open-ended questions and critical inquiry, diverse perspectives can be heard and a variety of aspects investigated. The questions below are divided into two sections: 1) analyzing the video's content and appeal and 2) analyzing the impact of social media.

In order to have enough time for discussion, we recommend audiences watch the video in advance, if possible: <http://vimeo.com/37119711>. You may find that a transcript (unofficial) of the video is useful: <http://lybio.net/joseph-kony-2012-raise-support-for-his-arrest/people/>.

*Leading a discussion based on the questions below:*

The video raises compelling questions on a wide range of topics, many more than can easily be covered in a single discussion. To focus your discussion, we suggest using one of two approaches: select a few questions, ones you find most useful for your audience or "jigsaw" the discussion. (For a "jigsaw", break up into small groups, giving different sets of questions to small groups. After a time, either the groups write a summary report, or everyone comes back together to hear summary reports from each group.)

## ***I. Analyzing the Video***

### **1. A few factual basics**

- Who made the video?
- What audience did they create it for?
- Who speaks on the video? (How much time for each?)
- What are the main types of visuals used?
- What are the main topics or points?
- Do a content analysis of how much time is spent on each of the main topics in the 29-minute video. (How much time was spent on understanding the crisis? On the support for the earlier campaign to send US military advisor to Uganda? On supporting the current campaign?)
- How much of the video time is spent in the US? In Uganda?

### **2. Analyzing the problem**

- What did you learn about Uganda? (Is there more you would like to know?)
- As every conflict has its explanations or origins, what explanations are offered for this conflict?
- What did you learn about the Central African region? (Kony is no longer in Uganda.)
- What goal does the video seek in order to achieve social justice?
- What specific strategies does the video endorse to achieve this end?
- What additional information would you like, if any (or questions you need answered) in order to understand or agree with the goal and the strategies to achieve this goal?
- After the *Kony 2012* video received wide publicity, it was shown to a large group in northern Uganda, a different audience than it was designed for. What problems did these Ugandans express in this 2:40 min news report: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rU\\_1jnrj5VI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rU_1jnrj5VI).
- Understanding the larger context: What else do you know about Africa? Where did you learn this? (such as church, school, the news?)
  - *Kony 2012* is a story about a grossly unjust man. Do you know of any positive movements or leadership within Africa for social justice?

- Do you know the names and stories of any of the 10 African leaders who've won the Nobel Peace Prize? [These are: [Albert John Luthuli](#) (South Africa) – 1960; [Anwar el-Sadat](#) (Egypt) – 1978; [Bishop Desmond Tutu](#) (South Africa) – 1984; [F. W. de Klerk](#) and [Nelson Mandela](#) (both South Africa) – 1993; [Kofi Annan](#) (Ghana) – 2001; [Wangari Maathai](#) (Kenya) – 2004; [Mohamed ElBaradei](#) (Egypt) – 2005; Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia), Leymah Gbowee (Liberia) – 2011.]

### 3. Analyzing the proposed solutions

- What solution does *Invisible Children* propose for ending this violence? Is it targeting an individual or an institution? [Bringing Kony to the ICC]
- What are the several strategies that *Invisible Children* wants used in order to bring Kony to justice? [sending US military advisors to Uganda & funding the Ugandan army]
  - What are the potential benefits of these strategies? What are the potential drawbacks?
  - Is there more you'd like to know?

### 4. Analyzing the appeal of the video

- This is an emotional video. Name the different emotions that the video seeks to elicit. How does it elicit them?
- What role does Jason Russell, the head of *Invisible Children*, play?
  - What are the benefits of having a white American man tell the story? What are the drawbacks?
- What role does the son of the head of *Invisible Children* play?
  - What are the benefits of him playing this role? What are the drawbacks?

## II. Analyzing Social Media as a Political & Educational Tool

### 1. How information can spread

- How did this first come to your attention?
  - a. Through a friend? An organization? A celebrity?
  - b. Through which media (talking? Facebook? Twitter? Email?)
  - c. What was the message you received—to see this video? to help?
- Did you share it? Through which media (talking? Facebook? Twitter? Email?)
- Why did you decide to share it? How many people did you share it with?

### 2. Your response to the video

- Did you watch the whole video? Why/why not?
- What response/s did you have to the video?
- Have you seen information critical of the video? What was the criticism?

### 3. The political campaign of Kony 2012

- Think about how social media was used in different ways by the Arab Spring and by the Kony 2012 campaign. (who initiated it; why they used it –e.g., for both: its broad reach and for the Middle East: censorship problem)
- One innovation from this campaign is the ability to click on the images of selected celebrities and politicians to send a pre-typed tweet to them. Comment on the use of celebrities.
- What are the benefits of using Facebook and Twitter for a campaign for social justice? What are the drawbacks?



# Resources about Uganda, the LRA, and the *Kony 2012* video

*Note:* Use the URLs containing “bit.ly”; they are “tiny URLs” that connect to the full-length web address.

## **1. *Kony 2012* Video and Invisible Children**

The video: <http://vimeo.com/37119711> Unofficial video transcript at <http://lybio.net> :  
<http://bit.ly/H54QnB> Website: [www.invisiblechildren.com](http://www.invisiblechildren.com) Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/invisible>  
Letter to President Obama from Invisible Children, Resolve, and Enough Project <http://bit.ly/H7k5Yp>

## **2. Sources of continuing coverage about Uganda and the LRA**

**Uganda Speaks – Trending Our Own Story** <http://ugandaspeaks.com/>  
**allAfrica.com** InFocus page on Uganda and LRA <http://bit.ly/GSeEw3> and <http://allafrica.com/uganda/>  
**AfricaFocus** <http://www.africanfocus.org> and particularly <http://bit.ly/GSm8BS> (Also on Facebook.)  
**African Arguments** <http://africanarguments.org/>  
**Association of Concerned Africa Scholars – Resources about Uganda, the LRA, and Central Africa**  
<http://concernedafricascholars.org/uganda-lra-central-africa/>  
**Making Sense of Kony** <http://makingsenseofkony.org/>  
**Ugandan media** <http://www.monitor.co.ug/> <http://www.ntvuganda.co.ug/>  
**Twitter** <http://twitter.com/#!/search-home> Some hashtags to search for include: #Kony2012, #StopKony, #StopStopKony, #Uganda2012, #Ug2012, #UgandaSpeaks

## **3. Diverse African commentary on *Kony 2012* (from the continent and the diaspora)**

**My response to KONY2012** by Rosebell Kagumire, Ugandan journalist. 6:21-minute *video* <http://bit.ly/GTlv8T> and transcript at <http://lybio.net> : <http://bit.ly/GQXHUd>  
**Selling Old Newspapers Shouldn't Be Profitable: Invisible Children and Kony 2012** by David Sangokoya, a Nigerian-American, creatively discusses stereotypes of Africa. <http://bit.ly/GUPJYu>  
**The White Savior Industrial Complex** by Teju Cole, Nigerian American novelist gives criticism in 7 Tweets and comments on response to it. <http://www.theatlantic.com> : <http://bit.ly/GSsbe8>  
**Kony screening provokes anger in Uganda** by Malcomb Well, 2:40 minute *video* <http://bit.ly/GRltBb>  
**Women Civil Society Groups in Uganda: Kony2012 Campaign, Blurring realities!** at: <http://www.isiswomen.org> : <http://bit.ly/H5vrMr>  
**Kony 2012 Video is Misleading** by a Ugandan American teenager. 5:47 minute *video* viewed more than four million times on YouTube. (There is one brief expletive.) <http://bit.ly/GUbA8U>  
**“I'd Tell Anyone” – Food for thought about “helping Africans”** by Juliane Okot Bitek, Ugandan poet and author. <http://bit.ly/HBtCcE>  
**I've met Joseph Kony and Kony 2012 isn't that bad** by Norbert Mao, former head of the Gulu Local Government (2006-11), saying the debate caused by the video is timely. <http://bit.ly/HflQ63>  
**Central Africa: There's a Light in the Get Kony Campaign** – Jay Naidoo, a South African social justice activist, argues that the horrors of the LRA – and the global system that lets it continue – cannot be ignored. <http://bit.ly/HMpECh>



#### **4. Other Critiques of the Kony 2012 campaign**

**Unpacking Kony** by Ethan Zuckerman, director of MIT's Center for Civic Media and co-founder of Global Voices, discusses the simplicity of the Kony 2012 message - and its dangers – and the Invisible Children's theory of change. At: <http://www.ethanzuckerman.com> : <http://bit.ly/GUiuWH>

**Juice Rap News with Robert Foster: Yes We Kony-** An irreverent parody of *Kony 2012* – a rap about then “white man’s burden” and the role of AFRICOM. 3:37 minute *video* <http://thejuicemedia.com>

#### **5. History of the conflict with the LRA and policies proposals**

**A Letter From Uganda on #Kony2012** - Sara Weschler of Information for Youth Empowerment Programme in Northern Uganda summarizes recent Ugandan history. <http://bit.ly/GSK9w6>

**The downside of the Kony 2012 video: What Jason did not tell Gavin and his army of invisible children** by Mahmood Mamdani, Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/80787>

**Obama Takes on the LRA: Why Washington Sent Troops to Central Africa** by Mareike Schomerus, Tim Allen, and Koen Vlassenroot <http://fam.ag/HELi7R>

**Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Northern Uganda** Books and articles included in syllabus by Adam Branch, Fall 2011 <http://bit.ly/H1r993>

#### **6. Recommendations and commentary on current U.S. policy**

**What Can We Do about Uganda and the LRA?** by Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, addressing issues of military vs. negotiated solutions and deciding where to make donations. At: <http://concernedafricascholars.org> : <http://bit.ly/GVGURP>

**Kony: What's to be done?** by Alex de Waal, Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, discusses the military and non-military framework proposed by the International Crisis Group, at: <http://africanarguments.org> : <http://bit.ly/GQzbaF>

**KONY 2012, and a military solution to the LRA crisis** by anthropologist Richard Vokes, a detailed discussion of the LRA and dangers of a military solution, at: <http://theafricanist.blogspot.co.nz> : <http://bit.ly/H6giiY>

**Beyond Kony2012** by Nicolas Tillon of Conciliation Resources (a peacebuilding organisation working with people affected by violent conflict) and Ernest Sugule Kangoyangala. <http://bit.ly/HLyyAv>

**#Kony2012 and the Warping Logic of Atrocity** by Scott Edwards of Amnesty International USA, regarding human rights concerns in Uganda and Central Africa. <http://bit.ly/GTWXck>

**Kony 2012, Save Darfur, and the US' place in the world** by Rohit Negi, Assistant Professor at Ambedkar University, Delhi. <http://bit.ly/GUxrbb>

**Interview with Ethan Zuckerman** by WBZ NewsRadio 1030, discusses difficulties of capturing Kony and need to listen to Ugandans about solutions, 2:20 minute *audio* at: <http://cbsloc.al/GSQYOb>

#### **7. How KONY 2012 went viral**

**[Data Viz] KONY2012: See How Invisible Networks Helped a Campaign Capture the World's Attention** by Gilad Lotan, VP of Research and Development at <http://blog.socialflow.com> : <http://bit.ly/GRPXDdb>

**Useful reads on Kony 2012** by Ethan Zuckerman <http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/>

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**Association of Concerned Africa Scholars**

<http://concernedafricascholars.org/>

## What can we do about Uganda and the LRA?

Many of the millions of people who watched the *Kony 2012* video were touched by the Ugandan children it portrayed and the need for an end to the wars and violence involving the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). But what are the most effective – and least potentially damaging – ways we can respond?

The *Kony 2012* video has been widely criticized by many Ugandans, who fear more military intervention and believe the video misrepresents them, their situation, and their pressing needs (see: <http://ugandaspeaks.com/>). Africa experts also have criticized it for being overly simplistic, out-of-date, and too narrow in focusing on capturing Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). It also has been criticized for contributing to stereotypes of Africans as needy and unable to solve their problems and of Africa as a continent in perpetual conflict. Invisible Children, which produced the video, has been scrutinized as well; much of its budget goes to the U.S. "awareness" campaign – for showing the video across the country and product merchandising. And *Invisible Children* is only one of many organizations with projects in Uganda and surrounding countries, and it has obtained more funding than most.

### 1. Learn about Uganda & Central Africa

Before advocating that the U.S. government adopt a particular policy or deciding to donate to an organization, it is important to learn more from a variety of sources, especially people from the countries involved.

→ Consult resources produced by many individuals and organizations about both Uganda and Central Africa listed on the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS) website: (<http://bit.ly/GVGURP>)

Here are some issues to learn more about.

- **What are the conditions in northern Uganda today, and what support are its people seeking from us?** Children are no longer in danger of being abducted in northern Uganda, and the LRA has not operated there since 2006. Today, northern Ugandans are focused on post-conflict reconstruction, renewing farming, and health issues such as *nodding disease* that emerged during the war in the resettlement camps where the Ugandan government forced them to live. And, as people have returned to their land from the camps, their rights to land ownership have been challenged in some areas.

- **Where is this conflict and the violence now?** The LRA is no longer in Uganda, and its forces have been reduced to only a few hundred, but their brutal attacks have continued in Democratic



Republic of the Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and South Sudan.

- **Why does this part of Africa seem so conflicted?** There are powerful competing international, national, and local interests that seek advantage and that are prepared to initiate and support violence. Multiple militias and armies have disrupted the CAR, DRC, and South Sudan for many years. And national governments often have not given priority to ending the violence and protecting their populations. (Resources for learning more about this conflict are on the ACAS website.)



## 2. What should we urge the U.S. government to do?

The *Kony 2012* video calls for an expanded military effort to capture LRA leader Joseph Kony, arrest him by the end of 2012, and bring him before the International Criminal Court (ICC). But increased cooperation between U.S. Army Special Forces, Ugandan, and other armies in the region to find and arrest Kony is highly likely to have dangerous consequences for civilians. Often in the past, they have been caught in the crossfire or become targets of retaliatory attacks by the LRA. Most people want to end the violence, find justice for the victims, and reintegrate the LRA soldiers into society. But how can that best be achieved, and are foreigners far from the region in the best position to know how to make this happen? An end to these wars needs to be negotiated by the local people directly affected by the conflict – recall the long negotiations of South Africans for ending that conflict and for seeking justice through their *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.

### → Here are some policy recommendations from ACAS.

- **Urge President Obama and the Congress:**

® To focus primarily on ***negotiated, not military, solutions***. In March 2012 the peace-building organization *Conciliation Resources* reported from its study of the impact of the LRA on local communities in the DRC, CAR, and South Sudan: “Those who bear the brunt of the LRA’s violent retaliations are ... all too aware of the risks of a renewed military strategy... An overwhelming majority of those consulted expressed a desire for a solution based on protection and political engagement.” [<http://ow.ly/9QfpO>]

Similarly, in June 2009, Ugandan Acholi Religious Leaders Initiative (ARLPI) said, “The military option has been explored numerous times in the past... Military strategies launched against the LRA have time and again led to severe reprisal attacks on the innocent civilian community... [We] advocate for dialogue and other non-violent strategies to be employed so that long term sustainable peace may be realized. Let us learn from the past experiences where we have seen that violence only breeds more violence.” [<http://ow.ly/9Qg4S>]

® To cooperate closely with the ***African Union (AU)*** and ***United Nations (UN)*** for a negotiated settlement and give them the financial and logistical support needed to support negotiations and to increase security for civilians of the affected regions without further escalating violence.

® To actively seek an effective ***United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)*** [<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ArmsTradeTreaty>] to end trade in weapons, munitions, and other military and policing equipment that often inflict misery and carnage on civilians, especially in Africa.

® To take a strong stand against child soldiers by fully enforcing without exceptions the ***U.S. Child Soldier Prevention Act***, unanimously passed by Congress in 2009, to prohibit military assistance to governments not taking action to demobilize child soldiers. [[www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/child-soldiers](http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/child-soldiers)]. *Amnesty International* has campaigns on both child soldiers and small arms. Use of child soldiers and raping of women and girls are common horrors of war, not just by the LRA – and not only in Africa.

## 3. Do you want to donate for urgent human needs in Uganda and this region of Africa?

Research what organizations are doing, how they work with the people who are affected, and how much of their donations go to activities on the ground. Many people urge providing support to locally-based organizations.

→ **As a start, two international agencies have focused on the child soldiers and displaced people in Central African Republic, Congo, South Sudan, and Uganda.** They are very short of funds to care for and rehabilitate the injured. These are:

**UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)** - Addressing urgent needs of children, women, and men affected by insecurity and chronic conflict in the four countries. [<http://donate.unhcr.org/>]

**UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** – Working with former child soldiers, refugees, rape and abuse victims, and displaced by the LRA, other militias, and national armies. [<http://www.unicef.org/>]