



What about Kony 2012?

What is Kony 2012?

Joseph Kony is the self-proclaimed leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which started in Uganda and now operates in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan. Kony is notorious for abducting children and forcing them to commit brutal acts.

Kony 2012 is a campaign begun by a group of US activists after they visited Uganda and met some of the children who had been forced to be part of Kony's army. The campaign encourages people, US citizens in particular, to take part in a day of action on 20 April 2012 to raise awareness of Kony's actions and to demand his arrest.

Purpose of this resource

It is fantastic that so many young people are becoming engaged in important issues of justice and peace. Young people have significant power to make a difference in the world, and the Kony 2012 campaign reminds us that nothing is impossible if we are prepared to take action and to work together.

Each person has a responsibility to do their own research and make a considered decision about the best way to respond. We hope that this resource will help your students to do just that.

Classroom activity

- Watch the Kony 2012 video from 17:30 – 21.00.
 - What have students heard about Kony 2012?
 - What are their questions about this issue?
 - Does this year's Project Compassion theme, "*If you want peace, work for justice*" (Pope Paul VI), prompt any additional questions?
 - List the students' most important questions.
- Ask the students to read page 2. Discuss:
 - How are children affected by life in the LRA?
 - Why might Archbishop Odama not support military intervention in Kony's capture? How does this differ from the Kony 2012 approach? Which is most in keeping with [Catholic Social Teaching](#)?
- Share out the students' list of questions and ask them to do their own research, using the inquiry questions below as they examine any information that they find on the internet:
 - Who said this and what are their motivations?
 - Is emotive imagery or language being used? Does this affect my judgement?
 - Is the human dignity of those portrayed/featured being respected?
 - What is the wider picture?

- Are there child soldiers elsewhere?
- What are local people saying and how might a violent attack on Kony impact on them?
- Are there aspects of the situation that Kony 2012 campaigners may not have considered?
- What does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have to say?
- What does Catholic Social Teaching say?

Possible courses of action

In the light of their research, ask students to decide whether to support the Kony 2012 campaign and to decide whether to take other action, e.g. find ways to raise awareness of the wider picture or support Caritas through initiatives like Project Compassion. You might challenge them to produce posters that inform other students about some of the wider issues.

Useful web links:

- Reactions of local people to the Kony 2012 film: <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-03-15-outrage-violence-greets-kony-2012-video-in-uganda/>
- The opinions of some local Catholic bishops: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/94263/Analysis-Taking-on-the-LRA>
- Comments on Invisible Children's reporting methods: <http://m.irinnews.org/95083.htm>
- Animated clip on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (including Kony's rights): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJ2XMRJkyv4&feature=related>
- Overview of LRA activity and Caritas' work in Uganda: http://caritas.org/activities/peace_reconciliation/SteppingOnEggsInUganda.html
- Caritas Congo helping ex-child soldiers: http://www.caritas.org/activities/peace_reconciliation/HelpingExSoldiersInCongo.html
- Other Caritas International members in Congo: <http://www.caritas.org/activities/emergencies/CaritasWorkingToRebuildLivesInCongo.html>
- Film of refugees from LRA violence helped by Caritas: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrMM2bbwP14&feature=plcp&context=C4877f0eVDvjVQa1PpcFPNYeejKHr4MxE5PYBzoc453Wb8cPevFg>
- Interactive map with information on child soldiers: <http://www.childsoldierrelief.org/about-child-soldiers/map/>
- Story from Project Compassion 2012 on the theme from Catholic Social Teaching, "*If you want peace, work for justice.*" (Pope Paul VI): <http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion/weekly-stories/Bae-Lisa-week-4>
- Caritas Australia's position on supporting those affected by Kony: <http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/newsroom/news-detail?ID=2901c356-719c-401a-bc62-df3c4fbb580f>



Caritas in Uganda

During the LRA conflict in Uganda, Caritas Gulu - helped by Caritas Australia - supported reception and reconciliation centres where children were taken after falling sick and being abandoned by the LRA. Radio Wa, run by the Catholic diocese of Lira, also ran a radio campaign encouraging children to escape.

Centres of healing

Children arriving at the centres often had severe health implications from wounds, malnutrition, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They were also traumatised by what they had seen and been forced to do.



Children sometimes refused to spend time inside buildings, seeing them as areas of potential capture and far too dangerous. Some children had thrown grenades into buildings in the past. They preferred to 'live in the trees' where they could see what was happening and did not have to engage with others.

The staff would take out their mattresses and sleep under the trees and call up to the children: "It's okay... it's not your fault. You are safe; you are forgiven. Come down and let the healing begin. We love you, you're important to us."

The centres provided accommodation, food, health care and trauma counselling while staff tried to locate where the children came from so that, eventually, they could return home. Staff also worked with the children's families and communities to help them to reconcile what had happened in the past, forgive the children and allow them to return.

A new life

Children unable to return home were sometimes relocated to the south, after being trained in vocational skills to help them to gain employment. In the south, Caritas Uganda helped the young people to set up income generation activities and to share their stories and to connect with their southern neighbours, many of whom were unaware of the conflict and could be disbelieving of their stories.

Caritas and the conflict

In 2006, Caritas Uganda helped with peace negotiations between the military and the LRA. As a result, there is a reasonable amount of stability now in northern Uganda although, tragically, the LRA violence has spread to other countries.

Hope for the future

The centres have now closed and the focus of Caritas Uganda's program in the area is sustainable agriculture, supporting people who fled their villages because of LRA violence but have now returned home to rebuild their lives. They are receiving help with seeds, animals, water and sanitation.

A visiting Caritas Australia staff member, Janeen Murphy, asked the local community what their hope for the future was. They all said the same word at the same time: Peace! They explained how the war had cost them their livelihoods and security and that peace is paramount to building their future. They also said that, in order to have peace, they must forgive.

One Ugandan's view on Kony 2012

Archbishop Odama of Gulu, who took part in the 2006 peace negotiations, says: *"We do not want the aspect of pursuing Kony with military means. History has taught us, pursuing these people militarily will just make the conflict and suffering spill over to other places."*



Caritas beyond Uganda

Beyond Uganda, LRA violence has also displaced hundreds of thousands of people in northern DR Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Caritas Australia's CEO, Jack de Groot, says: "The people of these nations need our support immediately... They are constantly on the move which makes it almost impossible to develop livelihoods, achieve food security, get an education and keep their children safe – all of the things we are able to take for granted."

Caritas Australia partners in DR Congo are ensuring that around 30,000 people receive basic necessities like food, clean water and blankets.

Picture credits: Caritas Australia; Caritas Internationalis