

# Invisible Killers Stalk Children in Post-Kony Uganda

Spurred by the viral video phenomenon *Kony 2012*, millions of Americans are expected to participate in the “Cover the Night” activities on April 20.

Christian aid group World Vision today released a video warning that, while now-infamous warlord Joseph Kony no longer threatens Ugandan communities, invisible killers continue to stalk the nation’s children—killers with far more reach than Kony’s army, even at its worst.

The violence executed by Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) was maniacal in its brutality. The LRA targeted innocents, abducting children and forcing them to commit inhumane acts of brutality—often against their own families—before using them as child soldiers in its military campaign.

While human toll is hard to calculate, during the early 2000s, an estimated 120 to 150 people died every day as a direct result of the LRA conflict, particularly due to conditions in the squalid displacement camps where many fled to avoid LRA attack.

The LRA left Uganda in 2006, and the millions affected by the war have since been rebuilding their lives after a generation of war. But as they do, poverty-related diseases like malaria, diarrhea and malnutrition continue to kill hundreds of Ugandan children every day. Some 4 percent of infants in Uganda die in their first year of life; 9 percent die before the age of 5.

“I experienced Kony’s violence myself,” says James Odong, who was abducted by the LRA at the age of 19. “I saw children killed—their lives tragically cut short. Today, hundreds of Uganda’s children were taken by the invisible killers of malaria, malnutrition and diarrhea. These deaths aren’t

violent, but each loss is tragic.” Odong now serves as World Vision’s associate director for peacebuilding.

During the conflict, World Vision provided counseling and support to former child soldiers through its Children of War Rehabilitation Program. Outside of Uganda, World Vision offices carried out extensive advocacy campaigns to raise awareness and political support for a peaceful end to the conflict.

Now that peace has returned to Uganda, World Vision’s community development programs—funded by the sponsorships of thousands of children in Uganda—continue to help provide anti-malarial bed nets, clean water systems, rehydration treatment, nutritional education, agricultural training and many more initiatives to combat these silent killers—each and every day.

All of these killers are easily prevented and easily treated with the right resources. Extreme poverty keeps most of these children’s families from accessing the preventative care and treatment they need, but with the support of groups like World Vision and others, many of these families are gaining access to lifesaving resources.