

**Ulrike Krause, "Difficult Life in a Refugee Camp. Gender, Violence, and Coping in Uganda", Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 2021, ISBN 978-1-108-83008-9, 302 pages**

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"Difficult Life in a Refugee Camp. Gender, Violence, and Coping in Uganda" by Ulrike Krause is a well documented and meaningful work related to subjects like gender-based violence, gender roles and relations, humanitarian aid as well as strategies of displayed women and men in encampment in Uganda's camp Kyaka II, for the refugees who mainly escaped the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their voice becomes the voice of a collective character, with specific male or female features, cited at the bottom of the pages, which suffers a continuous process of traumas. The message that the work transmits is a lucid, sympathetic and painful one, making the reader wonder what would happen if the scene changed its location. At the final page, we get to meditate about the profoundness of human condition and we expect a sequel.

The book consists of five chapters: *Introduction*, *Gender Based Violence in the Camp and Beyond*, *Humanitarian Aid and the Camp Landscape*, *Changing Gender Relations in the Camp* and *Coping with Difficult Life in the Refugee Camp*, each chapter is formed of some subchapters. Reading each unit, we are introduced to another episode of a harsh life filled with cruelty and endurance from the part of the refugees, whose limits were put to test on and on again. The author managed through these empirical stories to find, beyond the horrified challenges, the strategies and the strengths the women and the men in Kyaka II possessed and that helped them survive such unimaginable traumas.

In *Introduction* is presented the framework of the themes developed later on-how is it possible, that after more than thirty years of a broad spectrum of conflicts in the Kivu regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the refugees in search for security and safety to find a new jungle in the camps that are suppose to protect them and serve as humanitarian sites for refugees' accommodation and

support. An accurate exploration is made regarding the concept of gender, with a focus on difficulties and violence within camps. For a better understanding of the historical background, some subchapters explain in detail the situation of the refugees in Uganda since independence from British rule in 1962 until 2020 and the creation of camps, in particular Kyaka II, that served to provide assistance to more than 68,000 refugees from Rwanda in 1967, and in 2020 to almost 122,000 refugees from DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan. The issues faced by the people that had to settle there are in general the limited livelihoods, prevailing violence, unsatisfactory living conditions, diverse restrictions and, according to the author, “multidimensional uncertainties” (lack of freedom of movement and work, but also of basic products-hygiene products, food, clothes, money). Other subchapters bring information about the author’s research with the refugees in Kyaka II, the ethical considerations regarding researches with human participants, choosing the writing style of the situations met.

The second chapter, *Gender Based Violence in the Camp and Beyond*, seems to be the unfolding of a TV series that points out the violence that women in particular, but also men, faced during three main moments: during the conflicts (from stealing, burning down houses to sexual violence-rape, loss of some family members, kidnapped and murdered by rebels), during flight (again sexual violence-rape, murders) and in the camp - a phenomenon that is visible, widespread and omnipresent (sexual assault, rape, forced marriage, domestic violence, physical assault, psychological and emotional abuse). The author analyses the scope of violence, who were the victims and the perpetrators in the cases discovered, the location of violence, the specific type of abuse (sexual abuse of adults and minors, prostitution, commercial sex, sex for favors, militarized violence), the conditions of sexual violence and of domestic abuse (women as perpetrators), the forms of structural and cultural violence (early and forced marriage). Ulrike Krause states as a conclusion that there are three key factors that contribute to the violence: the insufficient or ineffective law enforcement, the traumatic events and their consequences, as well as the gendered power structures.

The *Humanitarian Aid and the Camp Landscape* is the title of the third chapter and it develops the dramatic connections between camp conditions and gender-based violence. The paradox of self-reliance strategies and the refugees dependency on aid, the power structures of the agencies imposed on the camp’s inhabitants, the camp hierarchies and hierarchizations, the refugees treated as

“protection objects” (especially the women) and not as actors are all deeply and accurately researched. The image of the situation increases with the subchapters regarding the signposts and the measures against gender-based violence applied by the local agencies (preventive projects, focus on victims-mostly women). Empowering vulnerable women through access to different skills training for income generating activities (tailoring and sewing-fields typically for women and for the domestic tasks) was entangled with vulnerability, economic performance. The research tracks down another horrifying issue-the camp as a site of humanitarian control and the aid workers themselves as perpetrators of violence (they traded food and relief items for sexual favors, teachers in schools in the camps exploited children in exchange for passing grades, medical care and medicines were given in return for sex).

The discussions and interviews with Congolese men and women revealed the tendencies of gender role and relations experienced by the refugees in Uganda’s Kyaka II, reflected in the fourth chapter - *Changing Gender Relations in the Camp*. A distinct situation of the gender roles and relations is exhibited before the flight, which was described as the “normal situation” by the refugees (the patriarchal, “familiar” gender relations - men had responsibilities and women were being in charge of the domestic tasks, but genders having strictly defined roles) and in the camp (negotiating roles, men-women as equals, social changes and settings, aid workers as patriarchal structures and the humanitarian influence). The chapter is a comprehensive insight into how the experiences and change of location, living under different conditions affect the practices and perspectives of the living group regarding gender systems.

The final chapter tries to observe the profundity of *Coping with Difficult Life in the Refugee Camp*. Ulrike Krause included many dialogues in the entire chapters, but we consider that the most emotional and shattering are in this chapter. People witnessed and experienced such catastrophes outside the camp and had to continue living and staying alive during encampment, with the tremendous memories of earlier forms of violence and also with others on-site. They all had to cope with. Their stories proved the long aftermath of violence that can unfold. After claiming of their rights, fear of repatriation, there is still hope in these long-tested people. The hope that requests for changes.