

Ulrike Krause. 2023. *Difficult Life in a Refugee Camp: Gender, Violence, and Coping in Uganda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 302 pp.

Difficult Life in a Refugee Camp provides a fascinating narrative of the gender-based violence among Congolese from the Kivu region who escaped conflict and settled in Kyaka II refugee camp in Uganda. The monograph is based on Krause's extensive research in Kyaka II in 2014. She used a mixed-methods approach, mainly qualitative methods such as individual and group discussions, to bring refugees' voices to light in telling their violent histories of being "beaten like a drum" (p. 1). The main argument is accessible and presented in the introduction and final chapters. Krause convincingly argues that gender-based violence, humanitarian structures, gender roles and relations, and coping strategies are interrelated themes that should be analyzed together. Her introduction builds on the concepts of gender, violence, displacement, protection, and coping, arguing that refugees' experiences in Kyaka II are deeply rooted in and significantly influenced by humanitarian aid structures, contestations of gender roles and relations, and coping strategies.

In Chapter Two, Krause argues that women, men, and youths were exposed to a continuum of gender-based violence during conflict, flight, and encampment. The encampment, however, has its forms, scopes, and conditions of violence, which affect all people in gender-specific ways. On top of cultural violence, sexual and domestic abuse, both men and women in Kyaka II face other manifold challenges such as limited livelihoods, unsatisfactory living conditions, and restrictions, which Krause called "multidimensional uncertainties" (p. 12). She further investigates why these manifold uncertainties occur in humanitarian spaces where refugees would seem to have support, protection, and accommodation.

Chapter Three argues that humanitarian agencies strive to address gender violence by educating women about their rights, providing "safe" houses, counseling, and reporting and assistance schemes in case of any attacks. However, the humanitarian top-down power structures contributed to gender-related violence through abuse by aid workers, the impacts of aid, and the difficult camp landscape. Because women in refugee camps are framed as more "vulnerable protection objects," the so-called empowering projects and campaigns are mostly directed at women. Yet, as Krause argues, such approaches reinforce existing social imbalances between displaced men and women in Kyaka II.

Chapter Four explores how adults and youths perceived gender roles and relations before displacement and how they maintained, challenged, and (re)negotiated them during the encampment. Krause argues that due to gender-specific experiences before flight and during the encampment, along with a changing locale and specific living conditions, the displaced could no longer exercise familiar gender roles (p. 186). Even though the Congolese in Kyaka II tried to preserve "traditional" gender practices, humanitarian structures on decision-making and campaigns towards equality challenged traditional gender practices in the camp. Krause contends, however, that these changes perpetuated gender violence. As Chapter Five shows, refugees in Kyaka II were not passive recipients of violence, camp conditions, and (future) uncertainties. Instead, they had coping strategies they forged through individual and collective practices. These included "getting by," "getting out," "getting (back) at," and "getting organized" (p. 191) through generating informal livelihoods, protecting themselves, claiming

their rights, creating a sense of belonging, and believing in a better future. Inhabitants also “resisted” the humanitarian and governmental structural regulations. However, their actions were not aimed at overcoming the hardships and violence but at improving their everyday life in the camp.

Krause ends the book by further identifying areas requiring further research on forced migrations and refugee studies, for instance, risks and violence against displaced LGBTIQ+ people. *Difficult Life in a Refugee Camp* makes a significant contribution to the growing field of forced migrations and refugee studies in Africa and globally. Oral narratives, reports, and secondary literature have given the work a methodological richness. Krause’s ethical component of research “with refugees” over research “about refugees” is crucial and remarkable. The book is well-organized and includes an in-depth analysis. This is a thought-provoking work that engages scholarly debates. It is also extremely valuable to policymakers and refugee agencies, particularly regarding the role of gender in refugee contexts.

Vongai Sagonda, *University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign*