
Refugees in Uganda: The value of a million human lives

17/11/2018



In the first half of November, 1,750 new refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan entered Uganda. This brings the total from these two countries for this year to 100,000. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1.4 million refugees live in Uganda, men, women and children who need food, a roof over their heads and healthcare.

Uganda, itself a developing country, is a front runner when it comes to progressive refugee policy. Duniya Aslam Khan, UNHCR spokeswoman for Uganda, explains: "Refugees are granted freedom of movement, they have access to medical and educational institutions and have the right to work." But, she says, schools and hospitals are not well enough equipped and the local population also needs to be provided with these services.

"Uganda wants to offer a life worth living to refugees and is therefore sharing all the little it has. This should be an eye-opener for wealthy states from the west and America when they talk about funding," Khan said in an interview with DW. Every family, after being registered and given refugee status, is allocated a piece of land for living and cultivation.

All this needs to be paid for. In October, Uganda requested more support from the international community to help it cope with the flood of refugees coming in. Uganda should not be obliged to borrow money for this purpose but feels forced to do so if there is no support from outside, said parliamentary spokesperson Rebecca Kadaga during a meeting with the World Bank's new country manager for Uganda, Tony Thompson. If financial aid is withheld, the state has to dig deep into its own almost empty pockets. The UNHCR's Khan sees an obligation here for the international community and says it is not enough to give money and support to refugees but exclude the local population from the measures implemented.

"Therefore, we are pursuing the 30/70 principle", Khan said. This means that 30 percent of all measures invested in must also benefit the local population. "This is to stabilize the harmonic coexistence between the local and the refugee population," Khan emphasized. When Ugandans are also involved, a stable and well-functioning

community can evolve — and emergency measures can become progressive refugee policy.
