



AFRICA/KENYA - Overcrowding and lack of assistance aggravate the situation of children in refugee camps

Kakuma (Agenzia Fides) – More and immediate physical space and additional support for children are among the emerging priorities in the Kakuma refugee camp, in north-western Kenya, where waves of refugees continue to arrive, fleeing from the conflict in South Sudan. Since the outbreak of hostilities in mid-December, 36,450 people have crossed the borders of the two Countries. In total 328 thousand have left South Sudan to head towards neighboring countries. In Kenya, 1,750 children arrived alone. Over 5000 accompanied by an adult. Currently 2000 children have arrived in Kakuma camp in need of psychosocial support and assistance of all kinds. Overall, according to an update of the United Nations for Refugees, 71% are under 18 years of age; nearly a quarter are under 5.

The camp is home to more than 16 thousand residents, and in December 2013, 20 thousand other refugees arrived in Kakuma. All these difficulties are compounded by the fact that every day about 150 people arrive, and to provide sufficient water in such an overcrowded area is really difficult for humanitarian agencies. This involves a significant risk of spread of diseases like malaria and cholera.

Before the current crisis in South Sudan, the new arrivals in Kakuma generally remained in tents for a little less than a month waiting for permanent structures to be made. Unfortunately those who arrived in December are still living in tents. The overcrowding of different ethnic groups in Kakuma has also led to growing concerns about safety. The Nuer and Dinka refugees are housed in the same places, in an effort to promote the integration between the two communities, but for many of the newcomers, living together and overcrowding are cause for concern, particularly for the Nuer, who are a minority in the camp. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 20/05/2014)