

**Background.** Uganda last year held the Solidarity Summit for Refugees and more than \$350m was pledged to cater for the refugees.

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**KAMPALA.** The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) has been hit by a scandal of abuse of funds for refugees, and the UN and other major donors have asked the government to take action on the culprits.

Sources have told *Daily Monitor* that police have begun investigations into the alleged scam that has consumed hundreds of millions of dollars, with many officials in OPM facing interdiction.

Mr Musa Ewuru, the State minister for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, said police had been directed to investigate the matter but declined to divulge more details.

"There have been concerns but I don't know what latest administrative measures have been taken," Mr Ewuru said and referred *Daily Monitor* to Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda.

Dr Rugunda could not be reached for a comment as he did not pick our repeated phone calls or respond to our text messages by press time.

Sources say the scam was first raised by Ms Rosa Malango, the UN Country Representative, who wrote to Dr Rugunda, querying the management of the refugee situation in Uganda.

**“It reached a level where I had to bring this to the Prime Minister's attention,”**  
ROSA MALANGO, THE UN COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Ms Malango raised three major issues; doubtful number of refugees in Uganda; abuse of funds and other resources by some officials and suspected trafficking in girls and women refugees.

When contacted, Ms Malango said her team periodically reviews the refugee situation and they discovered it had become pathetic.

# OPM hit by refugee corruption scandal



Seeking help. South Sudan refugee children line up for food in Rhino Camp in Arua District last year. PHOTO BY CLEMENT ALUMA

accuracy of the refugee numbers that have been reported.

*Daily Monitor* understands that one spot-check was conducted in Kampala. When the more than 26,000 refugees, who were purportedly receiving provisions were asked to physically turn up and collect their share, only about 7,000 showed up, suggesting that about 19,000 were "ghosts" whose monies and other resources had been pocketed by some individuals in OPM.

The sources also pointed to collusion between OPM officials and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to steal the monies and other

of UNHCR, was in the country about a week ago and held a series of meetings with different stakeholders, which sources say

## DOUBTS OVER NUMBERS

**Numbers.** It is estimated that Uganda now hosts up to 1.6m refugees but the UN and major donors – US, UK and the European Union now doubt the figures.

**Demand.** They want a 10-finger biometric verification of all refugees to be carried out to ascertain the actual number,

were dominated by concerns about the abuse of money and other resources for refugees and related matters.

At a press conference with Mr Grandi last week, Dr Rugunda said the government was committed to its policy of "zero tolerance to corruption" and that any concerns would be investigated and appropriate action taken.

Before the press conference, the duo held a meeting at the Prime Minister's office, which was also attended by deputy Inspector General of Police John Martins Okoth-Ochola. Our sources say it was at this meeting, where a decision was taken to commence