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KAMPALA. A team of investigators of the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations body responsible for distributing food relief, arrived in the country on Monday, sources have told *Daily Monitor*.

Our sources say that the investigators work with the Inspector General and Director of Oversight Office of WFP.

The investigators, we have been informed, immediately got down to work and yesterday held meetings with a number of stakeholders, including officials of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

Mr Peter Smerdon, a spokesperson at WFP in Kampala, declined to confirm the presence of WFP investigators in the country.

He, however, said: "There is no space for fraud or corruption in any of WFP's operations. If fraud or corruption is confirmed, funds or assistance will be recovered where possible, and controls tightened further if necessary."

The sources say that the investigating team is charged with auditing and inspecting the system and operations of WFP in respect of the allegations that have been raised.

According to information on the website of WFP, "the mission of the Office of the Inspector General is to conduct objective and independent oversight activities to detect and deter fraud, waste and abuse."

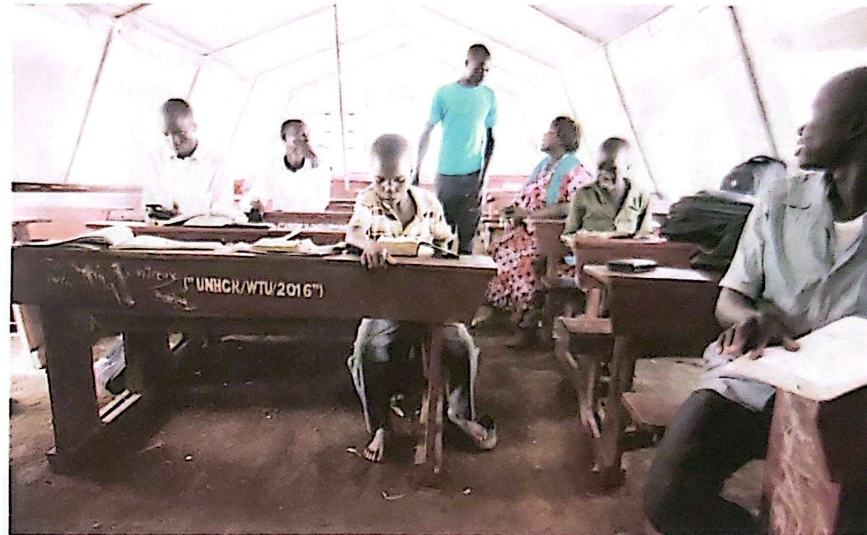
In broad terms, the office is responsible for internal auditing, advisory assurance, investigations into potential wrongdoings such as fraud, theft and harassment; and inspections of units, systems or practices perceived to carry potential risk.

Our sources say that the Inspector General and Director of Oversight Office of WFP has embarked on investigations of its own to determine the truth following allegations of abuse in the management of refugee programmes in Uganda. Whenever the office does such investigations, its reports are made available on the website of WFP.

The investigations that our sources say WFP has launched will just be another front.

The European Union Delegation to

Refugee scandal: Top UN investigators arrive



Settlement. A boy (left) reads the Bible in a classroom at Bidibidi Refugee Settlement Camp, Yumbe District. Sources say a UN probe team has arrived in the country following reports of alleged abuse of refugee resources. DAILY MONITOR PHOTO

day, said: "...as soon we were informed about allegations of corruption and fraud affecting EU supported humanitarian actions, we formally submitted the case to the EU's anti-fraud office (OLAF), for investigation."

These efforts aside, the Office of the Prime Minister has during multiple meetings with officials of UN agencies, donors and different statements already committed to conducting a police investigation into the allegations.

But we were unable to confirm with the police whether the investigations into the matter have commenced. Mr Joseph Obwona, the deputy director at the Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Crime Intelligence who sources say is supposed to lead the investigations, would not say whether he has already started investigations.

Mr Obwona told *Daily Monitor* that he had already briefed the police's pub-

ISSUES

Suspended. The Office of the Prime Minister has suspended four officials as investigations into the alleged abuse of resources meant for refugees commence.

Allegations. The allegations that have been made range from fraud regarding food assistance and refugee numbers, refugees being required to pay bribes in order to get registered and that scholarships meant for refugees going to Ugandans.

Probe. Sources say that the Inspector General and Director of Oversight Office of WFP has embarked on investigations of its own to determine the truth.

which he referred us for a comment.

of the directorate, however, said he had no information to that effect.

We were unable to reach police spokesperson Emilian Kayima, as we were told he was attending the Tarehe Sita celebrations in Butaleja.

It is not clear how long the Prime Minister's Office and the police will remain tight-lipped on the subject of the investigations in light of pressure from donor agencies and countries, especially the European Union, UK, and US.

The donors have demanded that investigations are carried out into the matter and offenders brought to book if their assistance to the refugee effort is to continue.

Uganda maintains an open-door policy towards refugees, which has seen an influx of refugees from 12 countries, with most of the refugees coming from South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The country hosted a refugee "solidarity"

was pledged to assist refugees and the country was praised for its willingness to receive desperate refugees fleeing fighting and other catastrophes in their countries of origin.

UN agencies involved in the effort to cater for the refugees have been put under nearly as much scrutiny as officials of OPM's Refugee Department, with the four officials that OPM has interdicted to pave way for investigations throwing some of the allegations back to WFP and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

When the accusations of abuse of the refugee programme were first raised, OPM ordered the concerned officials to explain themselves.

In his defence, one of the officials who worked in Nakivale Refugee settlement in Isingiro District wrote:

"As soon we were informed about allegations of corruption and fraud affecting EU supported humanitarian actions, we formally submitted the case to the EU's anti-fraud office (OLAF), for investigation."

EU DELEGATION STATEMENT

"Besides, allegations are not only raised against OPM but also UNHCR, WFP and implementing partners. A case in point is when I was still in Nakivale last year, refugees wrote to Geneva (Inspector General) complaining and pinning key staff from UNHCR that they were selecting refugees at a fee and many partners. Therefore it is unfair for the UN to consider refugee allegations as gospel truth, especially when it is against government officials yet they have also been falsely accused the same way by the refugees."

The allegations that have been made range from fraud regarding food assistance and refugee numbers, refugees being required to pay bribes in order to get registered and that scholarships meant for refugees going to Ugandans.

There are also allegations of trafficking of minor girls and women to marry men who are not of their choice after paying a bribe to officials at the border crossing points and claims that officials interfere in the election of leaders in refugee communities to prevent individuals deemed too vocal from getting