

Inquiry finds refugee numbers were exaggerated by 300,000 in Uganda

Tuesday 6 November 2018, by [OKIROR Samuel](#) (Date first published: 30 October 2018).

Government investigation into alleged fraud and mismanaged funds confirms Uganda hosts 1.1 million refugees, not 1.4 million

A Ugandan government investigation into alleged fraud over refugee numbers has confirmed that previous figures were exaggerated by 300,000.

An official inquiry, conducted since March by the office of the prime minister and the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, found that Uganda hosts [1.1 million](#) refugees rather than 1.4 million.

The investigation followed allegations that senior officials had inflated figures and mismanaged the funds meant to support them.

Apollo Kazungu, commissioner for refugees in the prime minister's office, and three of his senior staff – Walter Omondi, John Baptist Sentamu and Francis Nkwasiwe – [were suspended](#) over allegations of collusion with staff from the UNHCR and the World Food Programme to inflate refugee figures. The officials allegedly created fake names in refugee settlements and defrauded millions of dollars in aid.

"There were also some cases of multiple registrations by refugees at the height of the emergency influxes of South Sudanese refugees between mid-2016 and mid-2017, when registration systems were sometimes overwhelmed by the sheer number and speed of arrivals. These cases were identified and removed from the database," the government and UNHCR said in [a joint statement](#) on Monday.

New food collection procedures have now been rolled out.

"These procedures mitigate the risk of fraud, ensuring that assistance is well managed and provided only to verified, eligible refugees and asylum seekers," said the statement.

Thijs Van Laer, programme director for prevention and resolution of exile at the International Refugee Rights Initiative, said: "It's good news that the verification exercise has been concluded. The numbers show that it was necessary, and that Uganda still hosts one of the largest numbers of refugees in the world. We hope that this can be the basis of a more honest discussion about the number of refugees in [Uganda](#) and about what should be done to ensure accountable and sufficient funding.

"Now that there is more clarity, donors should step up their funding, to ensure that Uganda's progressive refugee policy is fully translated into practice. At the same time, the Ugandan government should continue to show that it is willing to improve accountability for the funding it receives. In the end, it is refugees who suffer the negative consequences of any allegations of corruption and funding cuts."

Samuel Okiror

[Click here](#) to subscribe to our weekly newsletters in English and or French. You will receive one email every Monday containing links to all articles published in the last 7 days.

P.S.

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/30/inquiry-finds-refugee-numbers-exaggerated-in-uganda>