

National News

The lack of funding options has left the Uganda Police Force grappling with an unacceptably high attrition rate.

BY ARTHUR ARNOLD WADERO

The Uganda Police Force finds itself in a difficult position after a series of recent high-profile crimes helped reinforce the view that vast swathes of Uganda are in the grip of a crime wave. The perception of runaway crime has been met with fears that the Force does not have much in its arsenal to address the growing demand for security.

The portrait sketched when one of the Force's top accounting officers met the House Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs to plan and endorse projected wage budgets scheduled to sustain the entity for the next four Financial Years (FY) was hardly reassuring.

Mr Aggrey Wunyi, the Force's under-secretary, stopped short of saying they are working off a shoestring budget. The lack of funding options has left the institution grappling with an unacceptably high attrition rate.

While the January 2026 polls saw the Government of Uganda (GoU) ring-fence some funds for new police recruits, the numbers—a 58,000-strong Force—translate into a police-population ratio of 1:819. Whereas there is no universally accepted police-population ratio, with the effectiveness of officers contingent on variables like training, strategy, and deployment, a 1:220 or 1:500 ratio is considered ideal.

"We have given a projection of what we shall require as wage over the medium term, in the next financial year, 2026/2027. We shall require Shs550 billion, the other year, assuming we recruit on replacement basis, Shs578 billion, then [the] financial year 2028/2029 [requires] Shs606 billion and 2029/2030 [requires] Shs634 billion," Mr Wunyi told the House committee chaired by Mr Wilson Kajwengye last month.

It is not a given that the Force will get the finances that are desperately needed to do police work. To make ends meet, its budget for items like uniforms has been cut. Figures capture a drop from Shs23 billion allocated in FY2025/2026 budget to Shs15.4 billion for the FY2026/2027. The budget for staff training has also dropped from Shs41 billion to Shs23.4 billion in the incoming FY.

CCTV deficits

Last month, Gen David Muhoozi, the junior Internal Affairs minister, said such downward revisions will negatively impact plans to professionalise the

Why Uganda finds self in grip of a crime wave



A section of police constables in Uganda's Ssezibwa region undergo training on December 11, 2025. The police budget for staff training has dropped from Shs41 billion to Shs23.4 billion in the incoming FY. PHOTO/DENIS EDEMA

There are a number of blind spots in the network that have complicated some of the policing work. While the Force has taken great pride in an 85 to 95 percent functionality, with nearly 42,000 incidents handled since 2018, the Phase III expansion to tie up a number of loose ends has struggled to kick on. As much as Shs200 billion is needed to implement the third phase of installing cameras across the country.

"We have been struggling with maintenance, but I think it is high time you supported us to expand the coverage. [...] we had even mooted the idea of integrating private cameras to the national grid, but the essence of these cameras is collective security instead of individual security," Minister Muhoozi said last month, adding that the CCTVs would greatly reduce the bill spent on ring-fencing police escorts and bodyguards for the country's very important persons or VIPs.

Because the police escorts and bodyguards are said to come with the cost implication of procuring new lead cars, the Internal Affairs ministry said it will only prioritise offices of the Vice President, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and Chief Justice.

"We can't afford to buy vehicles for other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and this is the essence of CCTV," Minister Muhoozi revealed.

al increase from 6,761 cases reported to the police in 2019 to 8,163 cases reported in 2024. Kampala Metropolitan Policing (KMP) area registered the highest number of robberies in 2024 (2727 cases). In 2024, a total of 1,968 cases of aggravated robbery (where lethal weapons like firearms, knives, hammers and machetes etc were used) were reported to the police countrywide compared to 2,978 cases reported in 2023, giving a 34 percent decrease.

Per the Budget Framework paper, the police wage bill is expected to remain at Shs522.481 billion in FY 2026/2027 with current staff covered. However, the document adds, "salaries for 10,000 PPCS recruited and trained in FY2025/26 (Shs28.016 billion) are not included in the new estimate." The Force also plans to, per the Budget Framework paper report, "recruit and train 4,000 additional personnel next year under its strategic plan."

Mr Remigio Achia, the deputy chairperson of the House Budget Committee, recommended the allocation of "an additional Shs28.016 billion to the [Force's] wage bill for FY2026/2027 to cover for the 10,000 PPCs (probationer police constables) recruited last year."

It remains to be seen whether this will materialise or indeed translate into a noticeable reduction in crimes. But the numbers are already tangible.

Looking inwards

On his part, Mr Julius Mukunda, the executive director of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), said there is "need to understand security probably in another way." The government, he further observed, should consider channelling available resources to empower community policing systems.

"If we do not invest in our community work, in our community security, these [insecurity] things will continue to happen. There is no way in the world that you'll find that the police are manning each and every household. It is not there," Mr Mukunda told *Saturday Monitor*.

"The best person to help you arrest a thief immediately is the LC1 chairperson and his defence person. But if people are not trained, if these people are not facilitated with the equipment, if these people are not given surveillance, are not given gadgets, are not educated on how they can handle these cases, thieves will continue, will continue to have crime rates in this country," Mr Mukunda added.

The economist also noted that the problem at hand is worsened by the GoU's preference to spend "in areas that don't give us returns." He further observed that "every project of [the] government has 10 to 100 plus vehicles," which is wasteful. At least in his assessment.

Dr Yusuf Sserunkuma, an academic, links the persistent problem of runaway crime to neoliberal character of our country, drawing parallels with Uganda's education system.

"The people who run the government schools at the same time run private schools. So public schools have poor. So they are not going to do a good job at the public facility so there is demand for their service," he opined, adding, "You need to apply this logic to our security problem. This insecurity works for them because it creates demand for their services. [...] This spate of violence in the country has a pattern. Every time after the election there is a wave of violence. We just ran through an interesting election. Remember after 2021, we had bijambiya in Masaka. [In 2016, there were the murders of women in Entebbe.] Right now we are talking about break-ins and violence, clearly the attention has shifted to something."

Mr Solomon Asiimwe, an associate professor of Security Studies and International Relations at Nkumba University, said the police should be commended for "still doing some work" amid the "re-



Community policing. The tested approach of fighting crime is intensifying intelligence, community policing. The police should bring awareness to the people on how to report and where to report. But before security forces come, we should [as individuals] know that security starts with us in

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