SUB-COUNTY POLICING MODEL

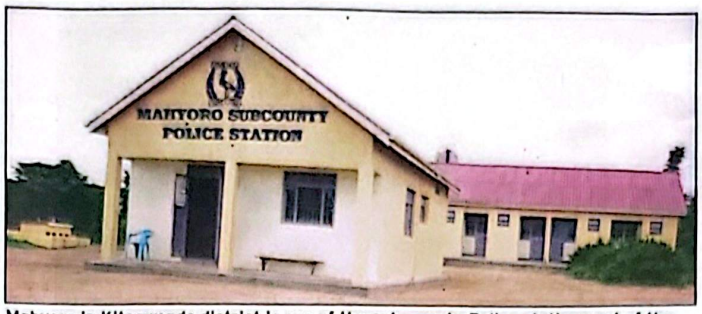
BY SIMON MASABA

In a country as geographically diverse and densely populated as Uganda, the challenge of delivering policing services to every community has historically been formidable. Districts, towns, and trading centres have long had police presence, but the vast majority of Uganda's population lives in rural sub-counties, far from divisional or district headquarters. For generations, residents of these communities knew the police only as a distant institution – one that might eventually respond to a crisis, but was rarely a proactive presence in their daily lives. The Sub-County Policing Model has changed that.

Introduced on the directive of President Yoweri Museveni, the Sub-County Policing Model represents the most significant structural reform in the Uganda Police Force's community engagement strategy in recent memory. Its premise is elegantly simple: police should live and work among the communities they serve. By deploying personnel at the sub-county level – the most granular unit of local government in Uganda – the Force has brought law enforcement physically and psychologically closer to the citizens it protects.

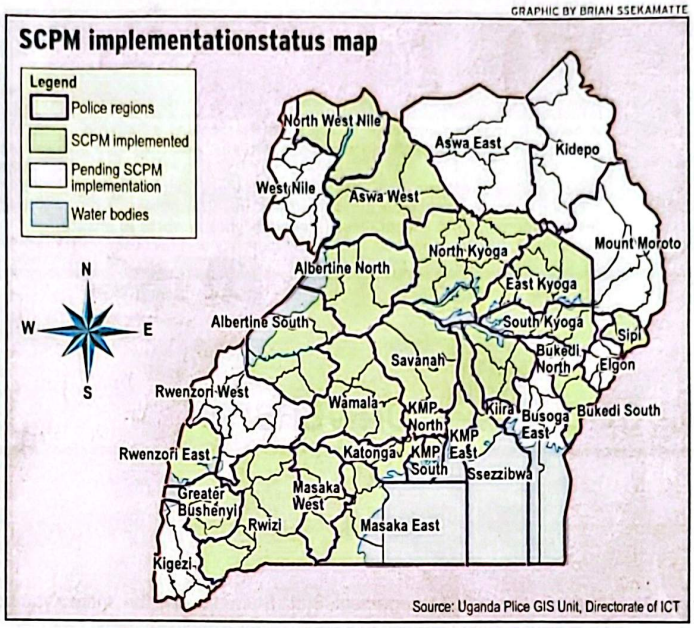
IGP Byakagaba Abas has described the Sub-County Policing Model as a cornerstone of the Force's strategy for achieving sustainable crime reduction.

"In line with the President's directive, we have sustained the implementation of the Sub-County Policing Model, deploying personnel closer to the communities," the IGP noted in the foreword to the 2025 Annual Crime Report. The direct attribution to the President is deliberate and accurate: this model is a presidential initiative that the Force has embraced and operationalised with conviction.



Mahyoro in Kitagwenda district is one of the sub-county Police stations out of the 200 being built alongside the 2,000 housing units for accommodation

GRAPHIC BY BRIAN SSEKAMATTE



Source: Uganda Plice GIS Unit, Directorate of ICT

FROM HEADQUARTERS TO HOMESTEAD

The Sub-County Policing Model works by stationing officers – not merely desks or contact numbers, but actual, uniformed, active police personnel – within sub-county offices and community centres. These officers are embedded in the communities they serve. They know the local leaders, the social dynamics, the economic pressures, and the crime vulnerabilities of their areas. They are not strangers who descend from a distant station when crime has already occurred; they are neighbours who can prevent crime before it happens.

The model leverages Uganda's Local Council system, which provides a sophisticated network of community governance from the village (LC1) through the parish (LC2) to the sub-county (LC3) and beyond. Police officers at the sub-county level work in close partnership with these local governance structures, creating a seamless web of community security that complements and extends formal law enforcement. Local Councils provide intelligence, mobilise community participation, and serve as the first point of contact for citizens with security concerns.

This integration of formal policing with traditional community governance is one of the most innovative aspects of Uganda's crime-reduction strategy. It recognises that the state cannot police a community from the outside; effective policing requires the active participation of the community itself. The Local Council system provides the infrastructure for that participation, and the Sub-County Policing Model provides the professional backbone that gives community security activities the authority and effectiveness they need.

The community policing approach has enabled the Force to do something that was once considered extremely difficult: to distinguish between law-abiding citizens and criminal elements in communities where the two often live in close proximity. By building relationships with community members over time, community police officers develop the local intelligence that is essential for early intervention – identifying potential offenders before they act, rather than responding after the harm has been done.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

The sub-county policing model is currently fully operationalised in 23 regions with 21,773 personnel deployed with 1,260 brand new motorcycles recently procured and distributed for operation, with 1,260 counter phones.

The following regions have already reorganised their police stations and posts awaiting full implementation: Aswa East, Bukedi North, Busoga East, Elgon, Kidepo, Kigezi, Mt. Moroto, Rwenzori West and West Nile.

COMMUNITY POLICING

The Sub-County Policing Model is the latest evolution of a community policing philosophy that has roots reaching back over thirty years. The community policing programme was established in 1992 at Old Kampala by a police sergeant, on the advice of British police advisor David Lawson, in direct response to emerging crime patterns. What began as a small-scale pilot was quickly recognised as transformative and was elevated to a national programme in 1993.

For over two decades, community policing has been a tool used in prevention of crime, mobilisation, education, and sensitisation. The programme has grown from a handful of officers to a nationwide network of Community Liaison Officers, neighbourhood watch schemes and citizen engagement platforms. The current Sub-County Policing Model is the institutional crystallisation of those 30 years of learning.

SALARY INCREASES: OFFICERS FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

Construction, including accommodation for officers across the 32 Policing regions and salaries, has been a motivator for the Police officers.

The Uganda Police Force implemented a 77.7% pay target increment for lower-cadre officers from the rank of Police Constable to Inspector of Police, lifting starting salaries for constables from sh466,933 to sh583,666.

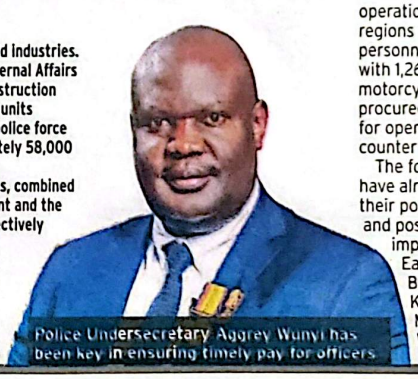
The salary increment was implemented across the board to the highest-ranking officer, the police chief, resolving a long-standing grievance about remuneration. Total salary enhancements for the police amounted to sh99.8b. For the 2025/26 financial year, the police wage bill has increased to sh522.5b, up from sh517.5b the previous year, largely to accommodate the increments for lower-cadre officers.

FROM IRON SHEETS TO DIGNITY

On housing, the Police is constructing 1,200 housing units at Naguru for officers operating under the Kampala Metropolitan Policing area, with plans to roll out similar projects across the country. The multi-billion-shilling project, expected to be completed within a year, is intended to improve the living conditions of low-cadre officers at the rank of Inspector and below.

The project has created up to 30,000 jobs in construction and related industries. Nationwide, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced a five-year construction programme of 53,000 housing units across the country. The total police force currently stands at approximately 58,000 personnel.

Police staffing improvements, combined with the 77.7% salary increment and the housing programme, have collectively produced what officers on the ground describe as a profound change in how they feel about their institution – and about the president who leads the country they serve.


Police Undersecretary Aggrey Wunyi has been key in ensuring timely pay for officers.

CamScanner